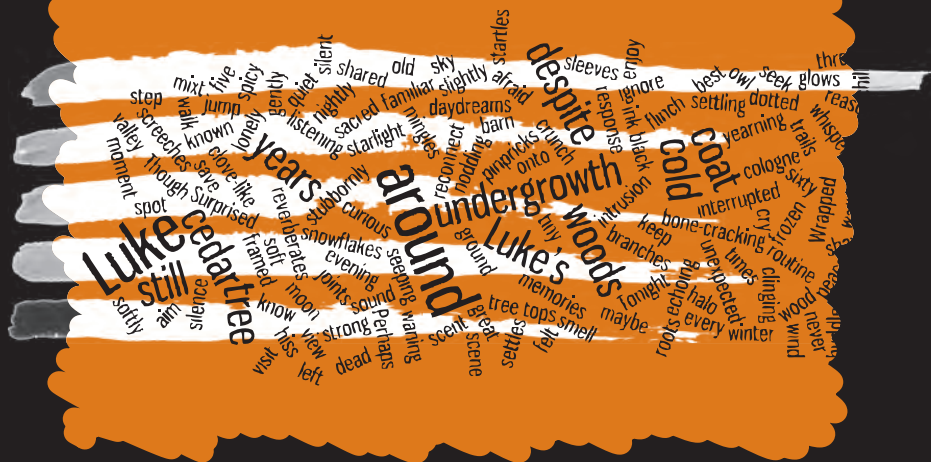


# Our Own Expressions

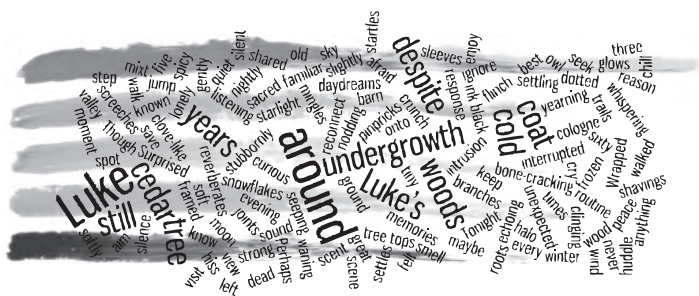


Pierce County Library System 15th Annual

Teen

Writing & Art Contest

2011 Winners



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# 2011 Winners

Pierce County Library System celebrates the amazing contributions from teenage writers and artists in the Our Own Expressions – Teen Writing & Art Contest. For the past 14 years, the Library offered a writing contest, Our Own Words, for 7th – 12th graders. In recent years, the Library added art to the contest. In 2011, it added photography.

This year, students submitted nearly 1,000 writing and art entries.

Volunteers, including Library staff and Pierce County Library Foundation Board members, reviewed the entries. Author Nisi Shawl and poet Kevin Miller selected this year's writing winners, evaluating originality, style, general presentation, grammar, and spelling. Photographer Don Briggs and art expert Ken Murphy selected the photography and drawing winners based on composition, artistic skills, creativity, and an effective use of media.

Pierce County Library Foundation awarded the winners with cash prizes and the winning entries are published in this book.

Pierce County Library System gratefully acknowledges the support of the Pierce County Library Foundation, The News Tribune, and other community partners for their continued support of the teen writing and art contest.



Our Own  
Expressions



## Poetry Winners

### Grades 7 and 8

<b>1st</b>	<b>She's Indigo</b> Sarah Mernaugh	Pioneer Middle School
<b>2nd</b>	<b>The Fantastic Four</b> Treja Jones	Curtis Junior High School
<b>3rd</b>	<b>The Unnoticed</b> Hailey Maher	St. Charles Borromeo

### Grades 9 and 10

<b>1st</b>	<b>Sunday Afternoon</b> Amelia Wolfe	Stadium High School
<b>2nd</b>	<b>Sea Stones</b> Sheena Yvarra	Curtis Junior High School
<b>3rd</b>	<b>How Many Toys?</b> Piper Kachman	Home School

### Grades 11 and 12

<b>1st</b>	<b>In the Interest of Time</b> Benjamin Roidl-Ward	Stadium High School
<b>2nd</b>	<b>Building Ships</b> Darlee Hart	Cascade Cristian
<b>3rd</b>	<b>The Wannabe</b> Rachel Brewster	Fife High School

## Drawing Winners

## Grades 7 and 8

## 1st Lions

Lauren Sullivan

St. Charles Borromeo

### 2nd Girl on Balcony

Sarah Mernaugh

Pioneer Middle School

### 3rd Losing Total Feeling

Lexy Hobson

Curtis Junior High School

## Grades 9 and 10

### 1st Native Figure

Jesse MacKinnon

Life Christian

## 2nd Turtle Watercolor

Molly MacKinnon

Life Christian

### 3rd Owl in Sepia

Bailey Coates

# Tacoma School of the Arts

## Grades 11 and 12

## 1st Shanty Town Watercolor

Yujin Lee

# Clover Park High School

## 2nd Jay Baruchel: Sorcerer's Apprentice

Rachel Brewster

Fife High School

### 3rd Isolation

Kayla Wyatt

Bonney Lake High School



## *Photography Winners*

### **Grades 7 and 8**

**1st      Hide from Yourself**

Amy Craig

Key Peninsula Middle School

**2nd      Mini Mouse Meal**

Jodi Miculinich

Home School

**3rd      Imagine**

Hayley King

Key Peninsula Middle School

### **Grades 9 and 10**

**1st      Mirror Reflection x2**

Brianna Bogart

Bonney Lake High School

**2nd      Expanded**

Caitlin Martin

Franklin Pierce High School

**3rd      Grass with Bubble**

Emma Morem

Other

### **Grades 11 and 12**

**1st      Life is Better with Art in it**

Danielle Hadaway

White River High School

**2nd      Life is Better with Art in it**

Alexandria Wagner

White River High School

**3rd      Firebird Rising**

Jaquie Miller

Home School



## *Short Story Winners*

### **Grades 7 and 8**

<b>1st</b>	<b>About Antoinette</b> Jessi Pitts	Ferrucci Junior High
<b>2nd</b>	<b>Delayed</b> Tony Shelton	Home School
<b>3rd</b>	<b>Home</b> Mikaela Gray	Other

### **Grades 9 and 10**

<b>1st</b>	<b>Dream Play</b> Madelynn Lumsden	Foss High School
<b>2nd</b>	<b>Bread</b> Mariah Bellamoroso	Home School
<b>3rd</b>	<b>Bound</b> Erin Haas	Bellarmino Preparatory

### **Grades 11 and 12**

<b>1st</b>	<b>Nightwalk</b> Benjamin Roidl-Ward	Stadium High School
<b>2nd</b>	<b>The Clear Air</b> Mackenzie Adix	Home School
<b>3rd</b>	<b>Chapter 8</b> Aeron Lloyd	Mount Tahoma High School



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## Grades 7 & 8





# She's Indigo

by Sarah Mernaugh

*First Place Winner*

She was right handed and scared.  
And she was left brained and worried.  
She wished she were indigo.  
But they told her she was too pastel.

Sometimes she mumbled,  
Because she feared her voice was too loud.  
She wondered about being maroon.  
But they reminded her that she's pastel.

She thought of things in shades,  
of the colors they wouldn't let her ever be.  
Once she said she was lime green.  
But they scoffed at her not being pastel.

And so she lived in black and white,  
because she could never be lavender,  
and she could never be pink,  
she'd never ever, be sky blue.

But soon she had a secret  
because black and white didn't work.  
She was finally resting in indigo.  
She just wouldn't tell them this time.



# The Fantastic Four

by Treja Jones

*Second Place Winner*

Leaves are falling from the trees  
Bushes rustling in the breeze  
Oranges, yellows, reds and greens  
Hearing birds and crickets sing  
Snow is falling from the sky  
Hands are cold and lips are dry  
Everything is bathed in white  
Coco, cookies, Christmas lights  
Snow is melted, flowers blooming  
Lots of colors, bees are looming  
Greener grass and growing weeds  
Chewing on sunflower seeds  
Beaches, buckets, lots of water  
Now the weathers getting hotter  
Shade, swimsuits and sun lotion  
Children playing in the ocean  
These are things you see and hear  
During seasons of the year



# The Unnoticed

by Hailey Maher

*Third Place Winner*

I Walk.

My feet shuffle as they will—as always.

Thump the street, slow,

Feeling heavy, pained.

Then I watch.

On the corner men shout,

Hold up their signs, and smile, plead, beg,

Exaggerate

Until the car is gone.

Then their faces slump back to grim.

And they bicker.

A woman, worn-down,

Tired, used, abused

Pushes her grocery cart along.

Before though,

She arranges her garbage bags, neat.

She pushes past and on to the bus stop,

Waiting for number 44.

The men whistle.

I Walk.

# Poetry

Grades 9 & 10



*Our Own  
Expressions*



# Sunday Afternoon

by Amelia Wolfe

*First Place Winner*

Rain pats down in time with the slap of wet shoes on cracked pavement. Sandy hair grows maple with moisture, and loose tendrils crown that grinning countenance. And all he can do, is smile back.





# Sea Stones

by Sheena Yvarra

*Second Place Winner*

When those small  
stones were in  
clear water and  
nets of seaweed

crushed and tumbled by tides  
teased by spray

they glowed  
moonsilver,  
glinted goldsparks on  
their speckled skins.

Spilled on the  
rock shelf  
they were  
crystal clear jewels  
wave-green  
still flecked with  
bubbles.

Where are they now?



# How Many Toys?

by Piper Kachman

*Third Place Winner*

*A five-year old girl  
choked to death  
on the smoke of a car fire,  
reports our stony-faced  
news anchor.*  
I want to know:  
Did she look like my sister-  
blond hair,  
blue eyes?  
What was her favorite cartoon?  
How many toys  
did she leave on the floor?  
Could she say  
the alphabet perfectly,  
or did she stumble  
over L-M-N-O-P?  
The color of the pick-up truck  
just really doesn't matter.

# Poetry

Grades 11 & 12



*Our Own  
Expressions*



## **In the Interest of Time**

by Benjamin Roidl-Ward

*First Place Winner*

In the interest of time, I won't stop to think I will reply immediately, as expected I will have my answer ready at all times, just in case someone asks. In the interest of time, I won't tell you that I broke my mother's favorite teacup this morning while unloading the dishwasher I won't tell you that my apple at lunch today was grainy and unenjoyable Or that I didn't have time to shower this morning and have felt uncomfortable ever since. In the interest of time, I will set aside grammatical idealism. I will forget my personal codes of integrity. I will conform. In the interest of time, When you ask me how I'm doing, I'll smile. And say: "I'm good."



# Building Ships

by Darlee Hart

*Second Place Winner*

Down in New Orleans, down by the levy  
The hammers are knocking, the bricks are piling  
The wheelbarrows are rolling, the cement is pouring,  
The drills are buzzing, and the paint is drying  
Walls go up as the waters go down.

In the sun, rain, sleet, and heat  
We're building, drilling, stacking, sawing, nailing,  
Painting, lifting, measuring, digging, carrying...building  
A house appears...slowly...as if emerging from a mist  
Walls, foundation, roof, doors, windows

However that's not what we're building  
For we build ships, big and small, grand and poor  
All lasting longer than any structure would  
In the ships we build, people sail from the island  
Where they've been trapped for so long  
They sail home, with songs of joy, in the ships we build.

But the best ships of all, no one will ever see or sail  
We build houses with hammers and nails  
And in the silence between the blows the friendships are built  
It's everything but the act of building that truly builds the ships.



# The Wannabe

by Rachel Brewster

*Third Place Winner*

It's that girl or guy  
Just trying to get by  
Trying to live life  
Regretful, with a sigh.  
The things she could've done  
The games he could've won  
The second chances tossed  
All the friends they lost  
Lives filled with all they can't see  
Moping around in their own misery  
This, my friend, is the wannabe.

Ridiculed for their clothes and style  
Peers pass by with half a smile  
But they've all forgotten unconsciously  
Still wandering as if it's all worthwhile.  
All he cares is how to fit in  
She's misplaced what could've been  
It's been lost in all the debris  
To quickly reach maturity  
Where went, "when I grow up, I wanna be?"

## Grades 7 & 8



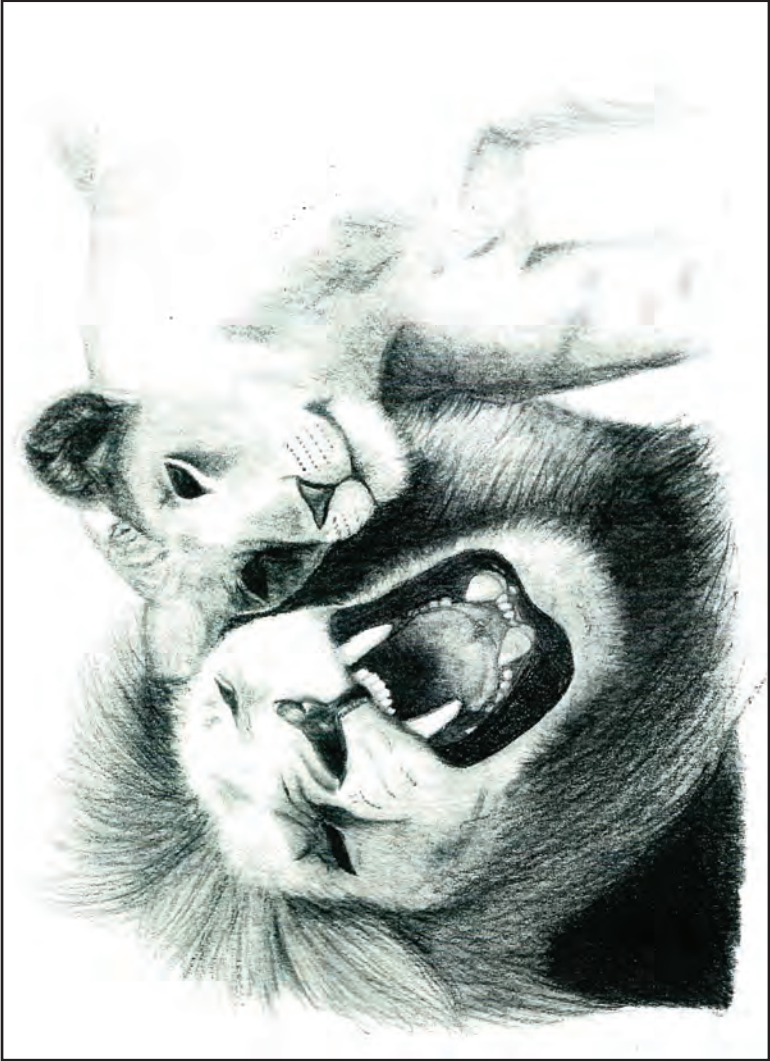
# Our Own Expressions

|||||

# Lions

by Lauren Sullivan

*First Place Winner*





|||||

# Girl on Balcony

by Sarah Mernaugh

*Second Place Winner*





# Losing Total Feeling

by Lexy Hobson

*Third Place Winner*



## Grades 9 & 10



# Our Own Expressions



## Native Figure

by Jesse MacKinnon

*First Place Winner*



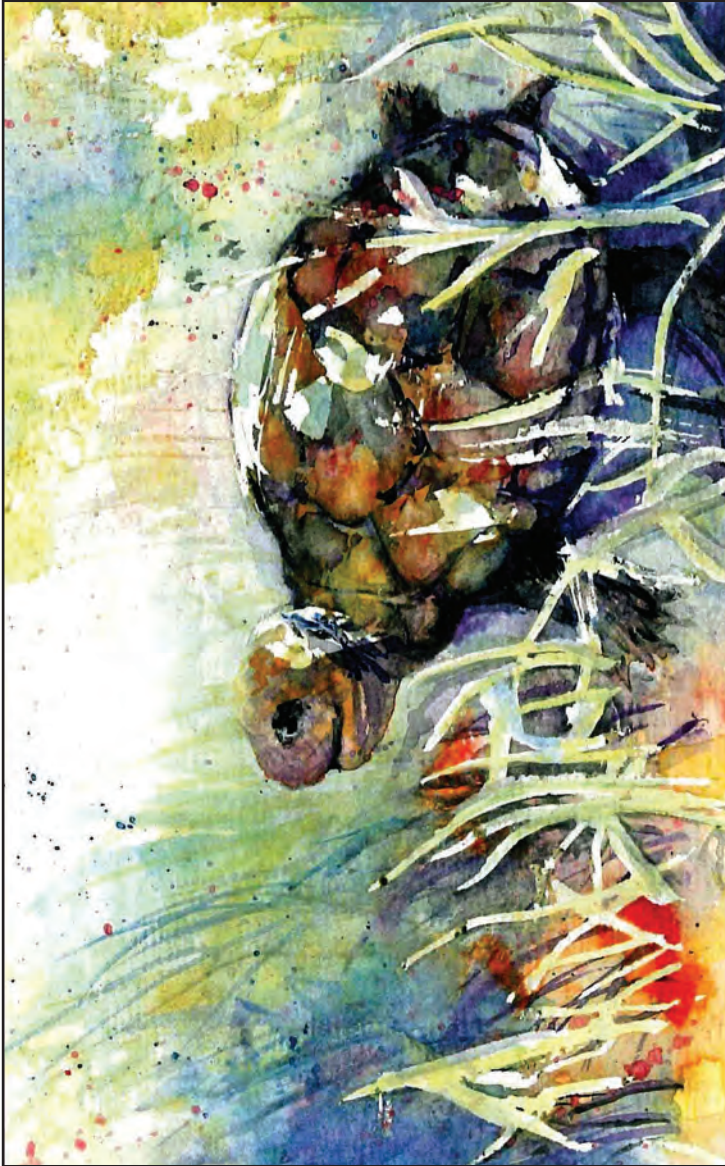


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## Turtle Watercolor

by Molly MacKinnon

*Second Place Winner*



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## Owl in Sepia

by Bailey Coates

*Third Place Winner*



## Grades 11 & 12



# Our Own Expressions



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# Shanty Town Watercolor

by Yujin Lee

*First Place Winner*



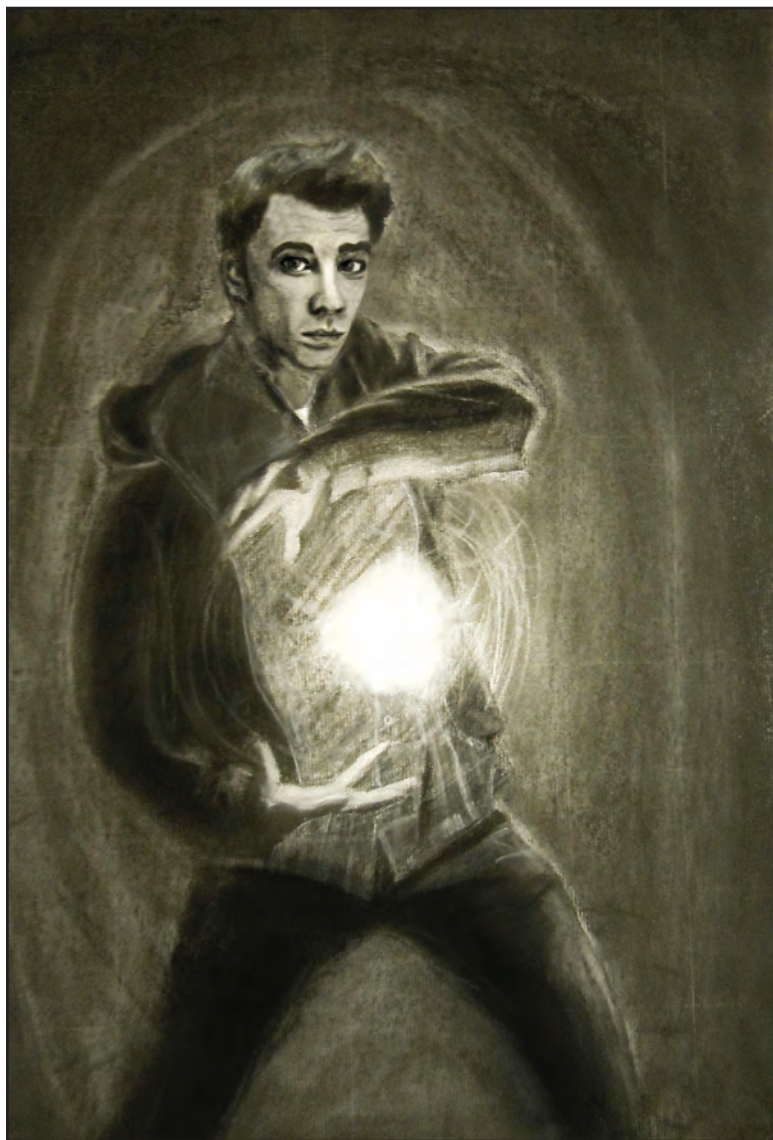


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# Jay Baruchel: Sorcerer's Apprentice

by Rachel Brewster

*Second Place Winner*



|||||

# Isolation

by Kayla Wyatt

*Third Place Winner*



## Grades 7 & 8



# Our Own Expressions



# Hide from Yourself

by Amy Craig

*First Place Winner*





|||||

## Mini Mouse Meal

by Jodi Miculinich

*Second Place Winner*



|||||

# Imagine

by Hayley King

*Third Place Winner*



## Grades 9 & 10



# Our Own Expressions

|||||

## Mirror Reflection x2

by Brianna Bogart

*First Place Winner*





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# Expanded

by Caitlin Martin

*Second Place Winner*

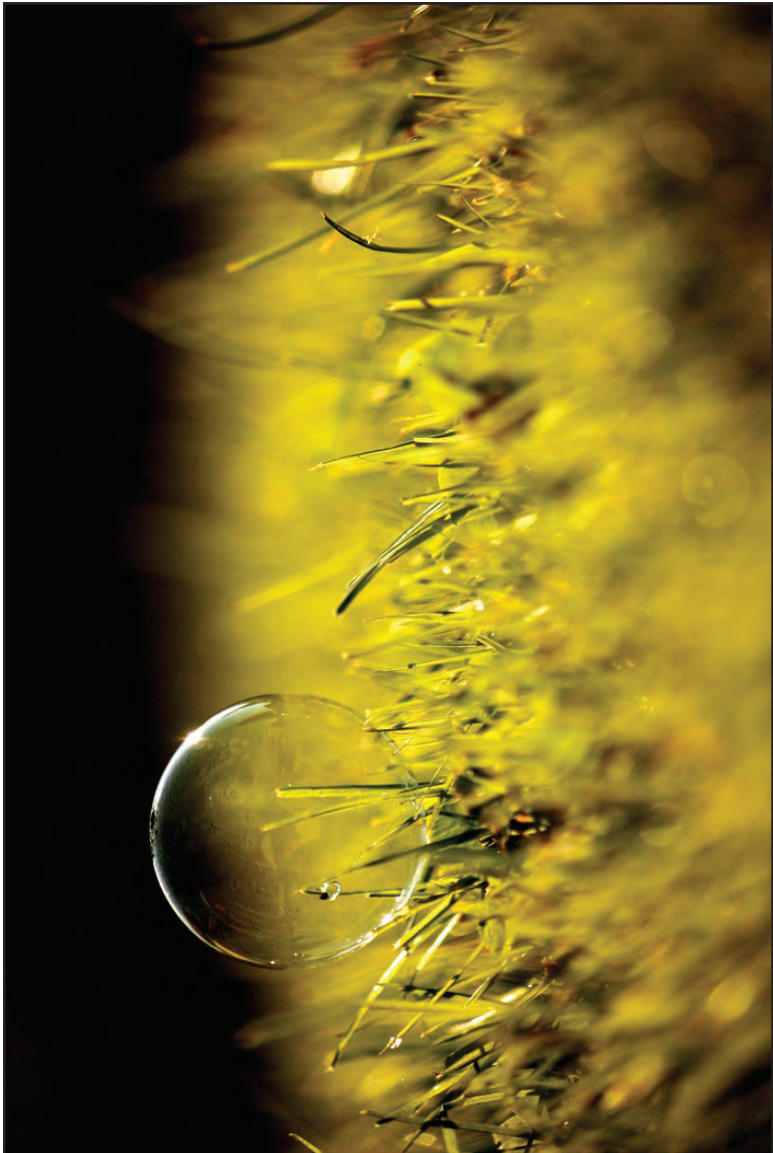




# Grass With Bubble

by Emma Morem

*Third Place Winner*



## Grades 11 & 12



# Our Own Expressions

Life is Better with Art in it

by Danielle Hadaway

*First Place Winner*



|||||

# Life is Better with Art in it

by Alexandria Wagner

*Second Place Winner*







# Firebird Rising

by Jaquie Miller

*Third Place Winner*



# Short Story

Grades 7 & 8



*Our Own  
Expressions*

|||||

## About Antoinette

by Jessi Pitts

*First Place Winner*

I grabbed a small smooth grey stone and tossed it in the air, catching it swiftly. I grinned and slid the rock into my pocket. Maybe I'd toss it at Antoinette, or I'd let Robbie do the honors of a curve-ball. Robbie, my seven year old kid brother was trailing behind me, chatting my ear off. I had long since tuned his voice out and focused on my own thoughts. "Wait, so you know how to get to Internet's house, right, Lewis?" He obliterated the invisible barrier, tugging on my favorite football jersey I'd bought at a Ram's game my dad had brought me too once. Without giving him the honors of my glance, I answered him back, "Of course I do, Robbie. No, I'm just wandering around aimlessly, hoping I'll bump into the new French girl. And her name's Antoinette, not Internet, doofus." He let go of my shirt sleeve and was quiet for a moment. But he wouldn't stay silent for more than five seconds. "Well, you COULD run into her in town, Lewis," He suggested. "It would be like Fate helped you, right? Mommy was telling me that Daddy and her met by Fate. Antoinette and you could like, meet in the city and with Fate's help you'd get married! Who is Fate, anyways, Lewie?" He asked, bubbling with questions. I felt my face grow warm and I turned around angrily to Robbie. "Just shut up Robbie! You make it sound like I like Antoinette!" Weather my red face or my angry words, Robbie's eyes got wide and he wrung his hands in front of him, not daring to look at me again. "Well, it's just that... I thought Antoinette was your girlfriend. If you don't like her then how come you're always talking about her?" He asked, looking back up to me, with glowing eyes full of curiosity. It was my turn to look away shamefully. I just whipped back around and grumbled under my breath to shut up and mind his own business. I began walking briskly again, but the big mouth caught up easily. "Lewis, why don't you like Antoinette then?" I had to think considerably hard before I answered Robbie. "Well, she's



weird. Like.... she's got this freaky accent. Her family's from France or something. And she's..... she's just weird," I said choppily. "Well, that's stupid," He scoffed. "I think you're just looking for attention. That's what my teacher says when Steven kept pulling Julie's hair. You know Steven, he's the fat one with the green backpack." "You're just being immature, you wouldn't understand why I'm out to get her goat anyways," I mumbled. Truthfully, did I know either? "Whatever you say, Lewie. Hey, look! Is that her?" He suddenly jumped up, tugging once again on my jersey and pointing frantically ahead. I looked up and there she stood, not a block away from our location. My heart started to thud, and I convinced myself that it was just the thrill of possibly getting caught. I grabbed Robbie and leaped behind the bushes next to her fence. "Shh, we have to be quiet now, Robbie. We don't want her to catch us, do we?" I whispered to my kid brother. His eyes got ridiculously big. "What happens if she catches us?" He asked. I had to resist the urge to slug him for talking back to me, especially since I really had no answer. "Terrible stuff, Rob. Terrible, French stuff," I said as solemnly as I could. He gasped and put his hand over his mouth in shock. I turned around and rolled my eyes at how easily impressed he could be. I was worried that Antoinette would see us, but she looked preoccupied. What are you up to? I thought. Antoinette had her long black hair down, and it wafted in the tiniest way in the slight breeze. She had a light green sundress on, with a black shawl dressed with so many holes in it that I questioned in my mind the purpose of it. She was wearing one white sock, and a dust colored one. Were they a matching pair, but only one was truly clean? Before I could think over the question, she shifted her head, and from her dark hair was revealed a tear stricken face, morbid and with a far-off gaze. I was taken by surprise, and momentarily forgot why I hated Antoinette. I wanted to go to her, comfort her. But I couldn't do that, not in front of Robbie. He would start ranting and raving again like some kind of priest who just screams "HALLELUJAH!" in your face the whole church service. Suddenly, a shabby, worn down looking car pulled up into her driveway from the now-empty streets. Antoinette wasn't paying attention though, and I began to think of all those

horrible stories where someone gets run over by a car because they weren't looking. Of course, it's not like I care. I felt like I needed to warn her, scream. But the car honked in a lengthy and impatient way, and the girl jumped nearly a foot in the air. She rested her hand over her heart and sidestepped to let the car pass up the driveway. The driver's door opened, and out stepped an angry looking man. He had the same dark hair as Antoinette, but his face was red with fury, unlike her pale features. He slammed the door closed after retrieving a book bag from his car. I felt Robbie flinch beside me as the door shut with such force. He stomped his way up to Antoinette and without warning began to scream at her. Robbie was digging his claws of fingernails into the skin of my arm. "Père, it's not my fault!" I heard Antoinette cry out. "Curtis had forgotten-" She had begun tearfully, but the angry man cut her off with another blast of words, in some other language I couldn't understand. I closely watched Antoinette's facial expressions and anger began to devour the tears. It was Antoinette's turn to begin screaming and yelling in the odd language. I assumed it was French, I mean, she was from France, wasn't she? Out of nowhere, the man slapped Antoinette across her cheek. Robbie screamed. My hand raced to cover his mouth, but the two had not heard us because Antoinette had cried out as well. I myself almost made a noise, but I was too in shock to utter a thing. Antoinette fell to the ground on her knees, not making another noise, but occasionally the sucking up of breath and sputtering. The man yelled at the girl, piled up on the carpet of grass. Then he proceeded to stomp inside Antoinette's house, slamming the door behind him. "Lewis?" I heard Robbie whisper. "Are we still going to hit her with rocks?" I turned to my little brother, but didn't insult him or tell him to shut up. I didn't really know what to do. "No. Let's..... let's just go home, Robbie." "But-" "I don't know what to do, Robbie. Let's just go home."



# Delayed

by Tony Shelton

*Second Place Winner*

My grandma signed us up for sailing lessons. Actually they weren't lessons, it was a racing course. All three of us were signed up, but my teenage brothers quit. That left me, the ten year old, by myself.

Grandpa drove me to the yacht club in his Mercedes. He liked to stick around and chat with the instructors. I headed down the trail to the meeting ground. It wasn't foggy where I was standing, but I couldn't see the land across the bay. I buckled my life vest and headed to the dock. The wharf rocked with my steps and water splashed up through the spacing of the planks. The shore silently disappeared, but I continued to set up my boat. Other kids clomped onto the docks and I heard the clink and the whiz of the cables hoisting the sails. We planned on racing to the Fox Island Bridge.

The instructor had shown us a map, and I remember his telling us to go west. I had no idea where west was, but figured I could find it by following everyone else.

The boat I chose was a laser. It was a flat, one man boat six inches above the water with a tremendous sail. Lasers catch even the lightest breeze. We all launched and headed for the middle of the bay. Both shores vanished in a white murk. I could see the other boats around me. No one was talking, but I could hear the clank of their rigging and rudders and the swish of the water slipping along my own hull. We moved into open water. The fog closed in and I was alone.

My sails were set and I continued on my tack across the wind. It was like sitting and staring at a white wall with a fan blowing across my face. Only the splashes onto the deck and the quivering of my sail kept me company. Behind me stretched a faint wake into the gray nothingness.

Two hours went by. No boats. No shore. No bridge. Just a kid in a life vest and a willing sailboat drove through ice cold ripples into a blinding, white wasteland. I listened for voices or the tell tale wiffle of a fluttering sail. Nothing. I started thinking about sharks. My bottom was only six inches above the water. Sharks can lunge half their body length.

Worrying grew — not that I didn't know where I was, but that I wouldn't make it back in time. Then a huge shape loomed above me out of the fog. I followed the arch to the shore. Not knowing if this was the right bridge or not, I circled the beach on both sides hollering, "Hello!"

No one answered. There weren't any other boats. I hung around for a few minutes in the emptiness, then assumed that it was the wrong bridge. I turned around and headed back the way I had come.

Now I was traveling with the wind. The boat lifted with a quicker slap- slap- slap. My rudder gurgled behind my hand. We galloped homeward through the whiteness.

Somehow I found the head of the bay and made my way back to the dock. All of the other boats were tied up. I was the last one in. I thought I was dead meat.

Expecting to be harpooned, I walked up the trail to see everyone waiting in a circle. I stood there awaiting my execution.

The head instructor walked up to me. I grimaced and sucked in my breath. I was about to be killed in front of everyone. To my shock, everyone clapped. My instructor held out his hand and said "Congratulations!"

I wasn't sure if he was being sarcastic. I asked, "What for?"

They told me that I was the only one who made it to the bridge and back. They had a spotter on the bridge the whole time.

"So does this mean I am in trouble?" I queried, still not quite grasping the picture.

“No, Man. You won!” he exclaimed as he gave me a smack on the back. Relief surged over me. I hadn’t become shark food and I wasn’t in trouble for being late. That was all I cared about.

At the end of the season, I was awarded a medal of honor for winning the race. Then it was good.



# Home

by Mikaela Gray

*Third Place Winner*

The girl. Blue eyes, like the ocean. Pale skin, white, like paper. Blonde hair, to her waist. As she walks the sky turns dark. The trees sway. As the fierce wind lashes out, the girl wraps a dark purple cloak around herself. She shivers, but not from cold. Everything looks different in the dark. The girl, she is now bent over against the brutal weather. Her skin is now even paler with cold. Her fingers are numb. It is now dark. No moon. No stars. No light. A twig snaps. The girl's eyes are alert. It is nothing. As she turns a corner, a light flickers. A fire. A cottage. She runs. Faster. A sprint. The door creaks open. A woman, blonde hair, She smiles. The man, he grins. The man and the woman grasp the girl in their arms. The girl, she is home.

# Short Story

**Grades 9 & 10**



*Our Own  
Expressions*



# Dream Play

by Madelynne Lumsden

*First Place Winner*

Her favorite time of day was not actually day at all. It was when the sun had set, and ebony shadows reached their long wispy fingers out to brush across the earth, trying to hide in the corners and alleys of the cities and under the beds of little children. It was her absolute favorite part of the day, because she had a secret.

Grabbing her coat, she stepped outside into the now-deserted street. She glanced around furtively, yet all that she could see was a small tabby cat rummaging in the nearest trash can. Nodding, she set off briskly down the street.

In a short time, she had left the city walls, heading for the copse of trees fifty yards away. The closer she came, the faster she walked. If someone had been around to see the small figure glide across the ground like a wraith, they would have seen a broad grin stretching under the wide deep hood.

Reaching the shelter of the trees, she paused, resting her hand on the trunk of the nearest oak. Feeling the familiar energy race up her arm, tingling, she gasped softly. Her eyes closed languidly, and she stood there a moment, her neck arched, baring her throat to the white light of the thin, crescent moon.

Suddenly, her eyes snapped open, pupils wide and dilated, and she strode forward eagerly, stumbling over her feet in her hurry.

There, in a small clearing, lay a glassy lake, the reflection of the moon glittering on its surface. The gentle sound of water lightly lapping the shore filled the air. Without pausing, she strode forward, and, fully clothed, dove into the depths of the translucent water. She swam down to the rocky bottom, pushing aside a fairly large boulder to reveal a small hole. Slightly frenzied now, she darted forward through the



opening, coming to the surface moments later in a small cave. Climbing out of the water completely dry, the ground around her feet began to glow, the light spreading throughout the whole cave, until it was light enough to see by.

She walked towards the tall fountain illuminated in the center of the cave, feeling the ground gently pulse beneath her feet. An immense calm washed over her, and she breathed deeply, taking in the heady scent of fresh soil and something rather like a rich hazelnut. Nothing could bother her here.

Reaching the fountain, she smiled mischievously at the large bubble sitting in the bowl where the water would normally sit. She held out her hands, cupping them and gently pushing them through the bubble's skin. Her hands appeared to vanish, but after a moment she pulled them back out. A small, clear orb was hovering in her palms.

The surface of the orb seemed to be moving, and there was something curled up inside. She looked closer. The thing inside was the sleeping form of a person. He turned in his sleep, and she recognized him as the superstitious baker. The surface of the orb was covered in images, flashing in quick succession.

When she had first discovered this cave, she had been perplexed by these pictures, but now she knew – they were dreams. And she knew the power she wielded over them.

She watched the dream for a while, amused. In it, the baker was getting ready to take out a magnificent, risen loaf of bread. As he opened the oven door, she gently touched the outside of the orb with a long, pale finger, concentrating. She watched expectantly, and when he pulled out the bread, it was crawling with maggots and oozing with slime. She laughed delightedly as the dreaming baker gave a shout, and the orb burst as he woke up in a fright. Almost immediately she reached back into the bubble, her laughter still echoing off the softly glowing walls.

The next orb held the dream of a middle-aged woman. The girl glanced at it, then frowned.

“Not her,” she groaned, tossing the orb over her shoulder. As it distantly shattered on the floor, greed caused her to reach back towards the bubble for another orb.

“I would advise you to stop.”

She froze. Had someone followed her here? Why hadn't she heard them get out of the water?

In front of her, a small boy stepped out of the shadows. He did it so quickly, it seemed to her that he simply detached from the rock wall itself. She stared, hands still stretched out in front of her.

“Don't do that.”

She backed up in surprise, staring at the boy. The voice had definitely fit the body, but his mouth had never moved. He gazed at her intently, with wide, colorless eyes. Composing herself, she returned his look defiantly.

“How did you get here?”

“I am always here.”

She laughed, hearty and amused. “Uh, then why haven't I seen you before? I come here....” she hesitated, suddenly reluctant to tell him any details. “...often.”

The boy just looked at her, without blinking. She swallowed. It was disconcerting, to say the least. She shook herself mentally, then walked towards him.

“Now let's go, we've got to get you home.”

“I AM home.”

She paused, mulling over his words, then forced a smile. “Enough games, now, come on.” She reached for his arm, but suddenly, he wasn't there anymore. She spun around wildly, and saw him sitting

cross-legged on top of the bubble.

“Hey! Get down from there! That’s mine!” She hurried forward. When she was a few feet away, the child raised a hand, and she was thrown back against the wall. She pushed herself up, groaning, as the boy’s voice rang powerfully through the cave.

“No, it’s not. And that is your third mistake.”

She chuckled despite the pain. “Mistake? What mistake?”

The child observed her unfalteringly, his eyes cold.

“One: you dared to come here, and then continued to do so. I waited for you to realize your stupidity, and stop coming to the Chamber. But you didn’t, which brings us to Two: you hurt people with your foolish and thoughtless actions.” He pointed to the shattered orb on the floor. “A woman died because of that, and as Guardian of the Fountain, this cannot be tolerated.” Anger filled his voice.

She stared, trying to comprehend. Where did that glass come from? Suddenly, realization dawned on her, and she screamed in horror. Falling to her knees, she scrambled forward, and tried frantically to put the pieces back together, sobbing hysterically. She choked out one word, the weight of it falling on her shoulders.

“Mom!”

The child watched angrily. “Yes. By your rash actions, Onedine, you have killed your mother.”

As his growing shadow fell over Onedine on the floor, she stared in wide-eyed fright and shock, tears still streaming from her eyes. Her mother was dead, and now she was at the mercy of the furious, terrible Guardian.

He lunged, and she screamed....



## Bread

by Mariah Bellamoroso

*Second Place Winner*

*She lays him down, trying not to see the bones stretching his skin, the collapsed hole between hips and ribs, sunken eye sockets, legs no more than sticks, and his tiny bald head. Her lips press briefly on his cheek. His hand still clutches the shell necklace on her chest, fingers stiff. Gently, she closes his eyes and releases him. On shaky legs, she stands up and moves on.*

Screams rend the air as horns honk and voices rise into the stagnant heat. People shove and punch, driving towards their common goal. Glass smashes. Bodies move as a single wave, and a collective roar rises to the heavens--incoherent, yet overpowering. Someone stumbles and is immediately trampled under hundreds of bare feet. Hungry hands reach through bars and broken shards of the store's window, grabbing, straining. A single loaf of bread rips into pieces, is borne aloft, and then is lost in the chaos.

*Fiddling with a dried piece of grass, she crouches in the partial shade of a leafless tree. For an instant, she is tempted to shove the parched blade into her mouth. Up the slope, the mud has dried into ridges, solidifying a herd of cows' last footsteps. Insects form clouds in the hazy sky, incessant humming mingling with the dull noise of the cars somewhere ahead, muffled by the crest of the hill. She wipes her brow, hand resting briefly on her huge, rounded stomach. Standing up, she trudges up the hill towards the city.*

A car explodes and bright flames streak towards the dirty sky. Bodies flow past the burning vehicle, turning as one down another street. Thin arms wave wildly with the breath of the crowd. A gun shot echoes. Someone screams, voice drowned out by the roar. A bottle smashes on the wall showering the mob with flecks of sparkling glass. They are wilder now. Hungrier. Another shot rings out but they are too many.

Too desperate. A shop door crashes inward and people shove from behind, crushing against the frame as grain spills onto the concrete.

*The line snakes in serpentine coils away from the relief shelter. She absently draws a circle in the orange dust with one foot as the sun moves higher, beams of red-orange light piercing gaps between the buildings. Somewhere down the long line in front of her, a baby squalls.*

*Turning her head to shade her eyes, she wills the gnawing emptiness in her stomach to settle. It's been hours and will be many more if the bread line continues to move as slowly as it has been. People are still arriving from outside the city, quietly finding their places at the end of the line, faces drawn and tired.*

They advance in a solid line, machine guns awkward behind plexiglass shields. Another bottle smashes, thrown by a boy no older than the one holding the gun. They duck a little but do not stop. Acrid black smoke rises in the air around them. Another store front goes in, shopkeeper dragged out and thrown bodily to the ground, forgotten.

*Her head hurts. She musters energy to put a hand up, shielding her scalp from the heat of the sun. It's been hours since she last moved. At the edge of her vision she can see the people at the front of the line leaving, arms wrapped protectively around loaves of bread. Her mouth waters.*

*The air is full of gasoline fumes and car alarms. The crowd is getting bigger and as she watches, more people begin to appear from around the corner. Their arms are empty. A shout goes up, "They closed the other line!" and all down her line they begin to murmur and stir, clothing rustling angrily as the newcomers try to join her line. Someone's arm reaches out and shoves one away, but they keep coming. Angry shouts spread.*

*The screeching clank of the metal grate at the front of the line slamming down silences them all. She sees the last people served dart away into the alley. There is no more bread, no more food. The crowd begins to writhe, to shove. She sees a young woman ahead of her carried away on the first wave.*

A loudspeaker orders them to disperse; it is drowned by the rising voices. Sugar hisses as a bag is taken from the store and ripped apart, exploding through the air as people open their mouths to catch it. It falls as rain onto the silver hair of an old woman leaning, eyes closed, against the graffiti-smeared plaster wall behind her back.

*Bodies press into hers and pressure mounts. She can't breathe, can't tell which way is up, and which way leads only back into the chaos. Someone's arm slams into her mouth and she throws a hand out to catch herself, feeling the force of the current bearing her along. From every side they press on her until she feels a wall at her back. They will crush her and her unborn child. Frantically, she strikes out, fiercely seeking to stay afloat in the sea of bodies bearing down on her.*

*An elbow presses into her stomach and, instinctively, she doubles over. Then an anonymous arm grabs her, pulls her to the safety of an overturned stall. Still clutching her stomach, she turns her head to catch a glimpse of her savior's thin face, his long-fingered hand clutching the dirty canvas. Then, he is gone, swept away.*

Another hiss fills the air. Choking, gasping, people begin to stumble. But the roar continues, their momentum propelling them forward. A machine gun opens fire, echoing through the narrow alleyways. A grenade explodes. More bodies collapse; the surge falters.

*She lies among the smoldering remains, forgotten between bodies and trash littering the dirty street. The prison trucks are gone. In the distance, an occasional shout or brief explosion disturbs the silence, but they are sporadic. It is over. One leg is twisted awkwardly under her body, her brightly colored skirt dirty and torn. The sky spins above her as the first stars appear. A piece of something—trash, fabric, a plastic bottle—skitters past, caught up in a tiny breeze. Though her eyes water from the pain, she pulls herself up to a sitting position, staring at the dusky shadows of the street around her. A body lies at her feet, covered in burns and scattered pieces of broken glass. Clutched in his hand is a piece of bread.*

*Reaching forward, she cries out in pain and falls backwards. Gritting her teeth, she tries again. Her fingers brush the crust as blackness begins to crowd out her vision. Then she has it, shoves it in her mouth. Chews. Swallows. Settling back down, she feels a familiar flutter. With a small smile, she lays her hands on her stomach. Then, breathing heavily, she struggles to her feet.*



# Bound

by Erin Haas

*Third Place Winner*

They had found me.

The broadcaster's voice carried to my seat at the mahogany kitchen table. "Today, local police have mounted a search for a convict that escaped from prison yesterday. With almost no leads on the person of interest, the police are asking for the public's help in finding this man. If you have any information on this case, please call the number on the screen."

"You're going to be caught. They're going to catch you. They know it's you."

"You worthless piece of trash. You haven't left your house in two weeks and you're so lazy. So lazy. You can't even cover evidence," asserted an emotionless voice.

"They're talking about you," warned another.

Voices rose around me and separated me from normality. Normality was silence. In my life, silence was nonexistent. Each voice wanted to be heard which resulted in a cacophony of unpleasant noises.

"Stop it! Shut up!" Grabbing my head in my hands, I stumbled towards my medication. Tripping over various objects in my path, I reached my pills.

Years before, I arrived at the doctor's office because of the constant nagging of my only sister, Annie. At the time, Annie was the only trustworthy person in my world. The doctor was not to be trusted, a gray-haired man in his late 50s. He prescribed the round orange tablets for my disorder. At first, I took the daily dose and my family ceased to worry about my mental state. Then, I skipped a couple days.



The people in my head began stating that the tablets were unsafe. I stopped my normal diet of pills and my family grew worried.

"They aren't to be trusted. They only mean to hurt you. To change you."

I live alone now; Annie and my parents long forgotten. They never had my best interests in mind. If not for the relentless headaches that torment me, I would have thrown the tablets in the trash a long time ago.

"Don't take those. I wouldn't do that if I were you."

"It's poison. Fatal. Don't take those."

It was decided as I reared away from my wooden pill cabinet. I crossed the threadbare rug and marched over to the refrigerator. Inside the old machine lay rotten vegetables and ready-to-eat TV dinners with long-past expiration dates.

"Eating is bad. No eating. You're not hungry," a voice strictly commanded.

My shaky hand stretched inside the refrigerator and pulled out an old strawberry yogurt container. As soon as my hands made contact with the cold, condensation-covered plastic, a migraine took hold. I lunged for something to grab onto as my vision became suddenly fuzzy. The yogurt carton slipped from my hand, hitting the floor with a dull thud. Pink-colored ooze dribbled down the surrounding drawers and partially covered the cluttered tile floor. The globs of yogurt began to bubble as I stared at the mess, taking on various shapes. Materializing out of the glob of yogurt was the letter "L" and gradually more letters appeared until the message "LOSER" was clearly spelled out.

Clutching my head, I hurriedly backtracked away from the untidiness, stumbling over a lone tennis ball. My stomach rumbled and the migraine still threatened my head's comfort. Sleepless nights made my lids heavy and the voices whispered with a newfound

intensity. Staying in the house was an impossibility. After two weeks of postponing a trip to the world beyond my hospitable dwelling, I had to leave my secure life behind in order to avoid being taken captive.

“You’re not safe. Catch you. They will catch you. You will be bound fast,” a deeply rich voice contributed to the inside conversation. “They will hurt you. Harm you. Damage you. *Change* you. You’re not safe.”

I racked my brain to remember where I had hidden the emergency cash.

“Grab the money! Not enough time.”

Recalling the money’s location, I raced to the living room to retrieve a substantial amount for my getaway. The faded blue bag that I had packed years ago in case of a crisis was haphazardly tucked underneath the basement stairs. I snatched the bag with my cold hands and retreated upstairs to gather the other necessities.

The doorbell pierced the silence multiple times.

“Don’t answer the door. They’re coming for you.”

Walking tentatively towards the front entry, the voices rose in pitch and enthusiasm. I abruptly halted by the window to yank the black velvet curtains in order to ascertain the person who was feverishly ringing the doorbell. A UPS man stood on my front steps holding a large black box and a clipboard.

“He knows it’s you. They’re coming for you. Don’t let him share. Don’t let him tell the others.”

I had hoped to flee without any interference. My feet moved to the rhythm of the sounds in my head. The world seemed to freeze as I methodically worked on the various locks. I frantically punched in my five-digit security code and listened for the satisfying beep it made when disabled. My eyes shakily slipped down to the next security device as my fingers twisted the mortise lock in a counter-clockwise motion. Trembling hands interfered as I rotated the deadbolt into its unlocked position. Gradually, I worked my way to the last fastener. Unlatching the metal chain out of its holder, it made a single strident

clink as it fell against the wood. The sound reverberated in my ears, a simple reminder of what I was about to do. Squaring my shoulders, I fixed a pleasant expression on my face. The man abruptly looked up when I pulled the door open.

“Hello. I have a package for a Mr. Christoph Lockwell?”

The voices ceased their yelling. Taking a deep breath, I answered. “Yes, I am Mr. Lockwell. Could you perhaps come inside my house for a few minutes to pick up a sizeable package I want to ship?”

Trust plainly written on his face, he stepped inside.



# Short Story

**Grades 11 & 12**



*Our Own  
Expressions*



# Nightwalk

by Benjamin Roidl-Ward

*First Place Winner*

He should've brought a hat. Really, he should have. It's freezing. But it's too late now. He's sitting on the sidewalk staring back at the house. There is no sound, just the electrical silence of the snow that makes everything bright. He's never heard his breath this clearly before. It's all he can hear. There's a little rattle in it, and he's afraid it could be lung cancer because he smoked a cigarette the other day, out behind the Safeway with Blake. It's strange, looking at the house from outside. All day long it seems so warm and noisy, but not now. It's just a house, not even his house, really. There is no sign of life, even the porchlight seems bright merely out of defiance. Nobody could tell from the outside whether he's in bed or not. Within the house, it matters. But here, in the snow, in the smooth quietness of the night, it doesn't make a difference. He's surprised that more people aren't out here. It would be better if they were. Then they could all make lots of noise and wake up everyone else. He makes a snowball, a nice one—big and round and wet. He thinks about throwing it at his parent's window: maybe it would break. Then everyone would wake up, the whole neighborhood would see him. He has some kind of huge power right there. He could bring the whole world, all this stillness, crashing down if he wanted. Easy. Finally, it seems like it's time to move on. This whole world is his for only a couple more hours. He walks up the block and turns the corner onto 8th street. It's funny, even when there are no cars to be seen the traffic lights still change the same. Stop. Go. Stop. It's like a late-night light show for some forgotten hero. He walks to the middle of the intersection and looks around at the empty lanes, senseless, pointless. He needs to pee, so he drops his pants all the way, grinning at the icy wind. He turns around and around in a circle, like a sprinkler. When he's done, he keeps walking up 8th, towards the Safeway. It's open 24 hours. He's a little hungry, but he doesn't have any money.

One time he and Blake stole two packs of gum, just walked right out. Blake wanted to steal a bottle of wine too, but they decided against it. Right after, they smoked a cigarette behind the store. Blake had taken it from his mom's purse. He was lucky for having resources like that. But now they probably both had lung cancer. He keeps walking, leaving the misplaced luminescence of the Safeway just in time to catch the traffic light on 8th and Sycamore as it turns green. He moves in the center of the road, running and sliding on the slick snow. As he approaches 10th he sees a shape. It doesn't move, but a thin whisp of smoke rises lazily above it, twisting defiantly in the steady stream of fat snowflakes. He gets closer and sees that it's a person, holding a lit cigarette and staring off into space. He is somewhere between annoyed and excited at the invasion of his fresh-fallen world, and he can't decide whether or not he'd like to be noticed (he stops about 10 yards away). The figure turns, "Hey man." Quiet, resigned, and free. "Hey," he offers in return, wondering if his neglect of the "man" will be a problem. "Whatcha doin' out all late like this?" It's an older guy, probably from Grove High School. He's got some stubble and wears his hood over a grey Yankees hat, like Eminem. "Idunno, I'm just walkin' around I guess." He feels silly—shouldn't there be some greater reason for his silent rebellion? Shouldn't he be running from something? Deep down, he doesn't want to go back home but he's not sure why. "Yeah, me too, got tired of walking though. I like sitting better. Want a drag?" The lit cigarette is held up and out, in a gesture of both invitation and accusation. "No," he says, "thanks though. I quit." He can't decide if it's a lie or not, but it seems like a bad idea to tell the truth. Lung cancer or no, the orange circle of burning tobacco is like a little gap in the world, a peephole into the next dimension. "Well come sit down, man, the world's a lot nicer from down here." He does. There's a little rumbling in the distance, an unexpected interruption of the still blanket lying all around. They look over to see two approaching headlights, and watch in silence as a white SYSCO truck makes its way messily, lethargically through the snow. When it has finally passed the older kid sighs. "That's what's wrong with this world, man. We've built all this crap that doesn't matter, but we love it. We

can't live without it anymore and we just won't shut it down." "Yeah," he replies. It seems to be the only appropriate response. "Dyou think I could get a drag after all?" "I thought you quit." "Me too." The kid laughs and hands over the cigarette. He takes a deep puff and lets it out slowly, leaning his head back so the smoke rises like a tired ghost from his mouth. As it drifts and dances among the soft silent flakes, he wonders if his parents have woken up yet, if Blake's mom might buy them a bottle of wine if they asked, and how long he can sit there, head tilted back and mouth open, before the next truck comes and runs him over.





# The Clear Air

by Mackenzie Adix

*Second Place Winner*

The first thing I do when we get to the new house is climb as high as I can into the huge old oak tree in the backyard. I huddle close to the trunk, letting the branches conceal me from the unfamiliar world outside.

I tell myself I should be used to this by now; me, the daughter of an Air Force pilot. It should be no big deal...

But it is.

The actual *moving* of our belongings and ourselves happened just like it did last time. The movers arrived and packed up all our worldly possessions in a big orange semi. Then my parents, my little brother and I set off in our minivan. My fifth pilgrimage across the nation in only sixteen years of living on this planet.

Leaving our house was the easy part. Leaving our town was even easier. The hard part was saying goodbye.

My family lived there for four years, the longest stay we had ever had anywhere. My whole teenage life. I had friends there. Good friends I did not want to let go of, not so soon.

Before I left, my friends vowed they would stay in touch with me via email. They were all so enthusiastic about it, but even as we talked and planned, I could not help remembering all the broken promises from little girlfriends past. All the cutesy, fluff-filled notes that were written so faithfully for a while, eventually coming less frequently, and finally stopping altogether. I truly hope that will not happen again, but as I sit in my tree listening to the wind, I am not so sure.

I peek out through the branches at the gray sky. Supposedly the northwest is like this most of the time. Gloomy, brooding sky and plenty of rain. I take a deep breath. At least the air always smells fresh after a downpour — and even sweeter thirty feet off the ground, filtered through the boughs of a tree.

That is one thing about me. I am not afraid of heights. In fact, I like them. Having a father who flies at thirty-thousand feet on a regular basis probably has something to do with it. He always says the air seems clearer the higher he gets, and I agree. I think better when I am up high. For me, clear air equals a clear head. I should have been born with wings. They would have saved me a lot of climbing.

I force my eyes away from the sky and gaze down at the small Craftsman my parents chose on their house-hunting expedition. It is newly remodeled with new roof, new carpet, and new appliances... Or so my parents say. The outside of the house looks fairly decent, but even from up in my tree, I can see that the mushroom-colored siding needs a new coat of paint.

My job on summer break.

At least I will have my own room this time. Our last house was tiny and I shared a room with my brother, Reilly. As far as little brothers go, I really cannot ask for better — Riles is a great kid. Still, our room was pretty cramped and cluttered with our bulky old set of bunk beds shoved up against the wall, the floor littered with action figures and comic books. Looking forward to having my own space is the only bright spot I can see in the move right now.

I glance at the street where the moving company's semi is parked. Our furniture only took up about half of the trailer and I blame *that* on my Mom. No matter how big a truck we hire, she always loads up our minivan with so many boxes and loose pieces of junk that there is barely enough room for us humans anymore. She says she does not want the movers to break her keepsakes. Even when Dad rented a U-haul and drove it himself on move number three, Mom refused to trust him with her wedding dress, her grandmother's crystal, and Reilly's and mine first baby clothes. I can understand the century-old crystal ware, but how exactly do you break *clothes*?

My parents are standing on the front lawn, overseeing the brawny movers. Dad is gesturing at the house, pointing out all the "charm" and "potential" the place has. Mom nods and smiles, trying to keep up her enthusiastic exterior. At least, I think it is an exterior. How could it

not be after all we have been through these last few weeks? I bite my lip. All I can say is, if her cheery countenance is *not* a façade, I wish I could be more like that woman.

I hear rustling at the base of my tree and look down. Reilly is there, discreetly munching on a candy bar. Little Riles is not supposed to have too much sugar. It tends to feed his overactive imagination. How he managed to smuggle the treat past Mom, I have no idea. One thing I *do* know though, is that having a bird's eye view certainly has its spying advantages. I grin wryly. At least now I have some blackmailable material to hit him with if he pesters me to play action figure wars with him later. I am distracted for a moment, thinking about famous past battles where Stormtroopers and green army men shot at each other with lasers and bullets until a man-eating teddy bear arrived to finish the conflict.

*Yes, those were the days,* I think wistfully.

I am drawn back to the present by the sound of the semi pulling away from the curb. I have been up in the oak for longer than I realized. I glance guiltily at my family. They have finally started to unpack the van. I know I should go help them, but I do not want to leave my tree. I wish I could just float away into the dusk sky and forget the move, my friends, the world...everything.

I sigh and tell myself I cannot do that. Physically *or* mentally. Deep down I know I have to face things for what they are, or risk losing myself to the nothingness of longing for something I can never have.

It is time to come back down to earth.

I take one more deep breath. Then I descend the tree and step onto the damp ground below.

As my sneakers hit the dirt, a realization hits me. I know that no matter where we go, no matter where we move, I will always have my family. I can always talk to them and they will always listen, and I *am* truly grateful for that. Still, there are some times when I do not want to talk – when my emotions are too raw and talking about them will only make me miserable.

In our last house, there was nowhere to go if I wanted privacy.

This time, it is different.

If things ever get too complicated, I can come out here and climb my tree. Climb high to get away from things for a while. Climb to be alone, just to think... And pray... And hope...

And breathe the clear air.

## Chapter 8

by Aeron Lloyd

*Third Place Winner*

After a week of nights spent coughing miserably into the early hours of the morning, the sudden switch back to his normal school wake-up schedule made Jude almost want to be sick again, if only so he could sleep in.

"I like the zombie look you've got going on," his friend Lorelei said brightly once he'd dragged himself down to the bus stop. "It really works for you."

"It's too early for sarcasm," he replied blearily, rubbing his eyes. "Just tell me what I missed last week in class."

She shrugged and quirked one penciled eyebrow. "Not much. Nothing new, no tests..."

"Oh, good—"

"Wait," Lorelei backtracked. "You have Rigby for English, right? 'Cause Rigby's class had a test. On some book?"

Realization dawned. The illumination was not a joyful one. "Oh... yeah. He assigned us a book a while ago. I, um, didn't read it." Nor did he remember where he'd left his copy. Or what the title had been. "And Rigby only allows you a day's chance to make up what you miss when you're absent."

"At least he's letting you make it up. I think that's nice."

"I envy your ignorance," he said with a grimace. "He's evil."

"Well, I certainly don't envy you," she said sweetly.

He sighed. "As always, I treasure your sympathy."

"Postmodernism!" Mr. Rigby paced back and forth along the front row of desks, apparently attempting for an intimidating effect but only really succeeding in creating a bit of an indoor breeze. "*The Page Before You* is a prime example of it. It highlights out the illusion of fiction..."

"Hey." Jude tapped the shoulder of the guy sitting in front of him. "Can I see your book real quick?"

Wordlessly, he passed it back over his shoulder. Jude opened it and began flipping through the pages. The text was in tiny print, and scattered with semicolons and dashes. Because apparently that made the story make more sense. There didn't seem to be any plot. If anything it was a bunch of meandering trains of thought revolving around the name Eleanor, who was apparently the main character.

Meanwhile, Rigby seemed to have noticed no one was paying attention to him and was now snarling into the faces of everyone sitting in the front row. "You find this tough? You find this boring? Be thankful I didn't assign *Ulysses*! Jude?"

He nearly dropped the book. "Um?"

Rigby bared his teeth in a contorted expression that somehow managed to not resemble a smile in any way. "Give us an example of the symbolism you found in chapter eight."

"Um—" Jude flipped forward to chapter eight.

He kept going from seven to nine, before finally realizing that there was no chapter eight. Maybe it was one of those books intentionally printed without a chapter of a certain number? He'd seen it before. "Um...not much?"

Rigby crossed his arms over his chest. "Excuse me?"

Jude swallowed. Or not.

The bell rang. And here he thought that kind of luck only happened in fiction. "Thanks," he said, handing the book back to its owner. "But you know chapter eight of your book is missing right?"

"Really?" the guy said, puzzled, and Jude left him flipping through the pages and headed over to Rigby's desk."

"About that test I missed—"

"Right. I've got a meeting after school today, but swing by during lunch and you can make it up then." Rigby waved him away irritably. "Right now I've got another class to prepare for. Now shoo."

Great. That gave him two more class periods to find a complete copy of the book, read it, and somehow understand the content before

the test. Jude shuffled off in a daze, which a tap on the shoulder quickly shifted him out of.

"Hey." It was the guy he'd borrowed the book from. "I don't know what you meant when you said that chapter was missing. It's there, so..." The guy gave him a look that couldn't quite seem to decide if it was annoyed or pitying and walked off down the hall to class. Jude, not sure what to make of this, headed in the opposite direction.

What he did know was that he needed a copy of that book. He'd ask around in his next class. Someone had to have it.

"I swear, I left it here somewhere..."

"It's in my locker."

"Must've left it at home."

After several of these sort of responses, Jude gave up. "If this is the amount of attention everybody's paying this book, we must all be failing," Jude complained to Lorelei after asking around in Chemistry class. "Seriously, you'd think the book is trying to avoid me or something."

Lorelei glanced over her shoulder at Mrs. Nadine, and satisfied she wasn't watching, took out her phone. After some clicking, she handed it over. "You are lucky there is an ebook."

Jude took it from her gratefully. "I love you. I love you, and technology." He awkwardly manipulated the touch screen, selecting chapter eight.

And the screen went black.

"Um," he said.

She took the phone back and pressed the power button, once, twice, three times. She tugged ponderously at a glossily dark lock of her hair and frowned. "It's dead. I don't get it, I charged it just last night—" She glared murderously at him. "You killed my phone."

He backed away, hands raised in surrender. "I don't--"

"You *killed*. My *phone*..."

He showed up in Rigby's room completely prepared to fail. So when Rigby offered him a chance to take a look at the book before he

tested on it, he was quite shocked and had to restrain himself from laughing into an enthusiastic but off key rendition of the Hallelujah chorus.

“Um, thanks. Sure,” he said instead and accepted Rigby’s teachers’ copy.

“No problem,” Rigby replied with an uncharacteristic niceness that Jude decided not to worry about.

Maybe this was a sign his luck was turning. Maybe at lunch he’d run into Lorelei and her phone would suddenly work and she suddenly wouldn’t want to kill him. Either way, he was going to take back everything back he’d ever said about Mr. Rigby and defend him next time someone called him a fascist creeper man. Maybe.

Chapter eight had been so elusive he was actually pretty curious as to what exactly it was about. He flipped straight to the page and began to read...

### *Chapter Eight*

*As Jude started the chapter, his eyes went wide with shock and disbelief; the book fell from his hands and—*

*Across the room, Eleanor did not quite smile.*



