

Words to Share

2012/13 ANTHOLOGY



"I wanted my idea to portray the variety of experiences, stories and poetry in the anthology... notice the colours used to set the mood and tone."

~ Cover art by Caitlyn Mar
Grade 12, Moscrop Secondary

A Message from the Board of Education

Literacy is the foundation for all learning. Unique to Burnaby, the WORDS Writing Project is testimony to the fact that in Burnaby Schools, literacy is a priority.

For 27 years, the WORDS Writing Project has encouraged district students, from kindergarten to grade 12, to pick up their pen - or sit at their computer - and put their words to paper. This year we were pleased to receive submissions from adult learners from the District's Literacy Foundations program. Including these students as part of this project represents the scope of learning that takes place in the district and our emphasis on the importance of literacy at any age or any level.

The growth and continued success of this writing project is a direct reflection of the dedicated teachers who nurture the writing talents of their students, supportive parents who encourage their child to do their very best, and generous community sponsors who are committed to supporting youth and literacy.

We are proud to present you with "Words to Share," this year's limited edition anthology of poetry and prose. It features a collection of 93 selected works by the most articulate student writers in the district. And as the title of the anthology suggests, we hope that you will share their words with others – whether you read some selections together as a family, or put the anthology out on a coffee table at home or at the office.

The words of our students are indeed worth sharing – and represent yet another reason to be proud of Burnaby Schools.



Baljinder
Narang
Chair



Ron
Burton
Vice-Chair



Meiling
Chia



Larry
Hayes



Harman
Pandher



James
Wang



Gary
Wong



www.burnabyschools.ca

WORDS WRITING PROJECT 2012/13 ANTHOLOGY

Words to Share

This is an anthology of selected works written by students from K-12 and adults.
Please review content to ensure it is appropriate for your child.

Every effort is made to showcase student work as true to their original form
as possible. However, variations may have occurred during the layout of this anthology.

To ensure students and the Burnaby School District do not contravene legal or copyright
considerations, students published in this anthology and their parents/guardians have
signed letters of authenticity confirming that they are the actual author of the
piece that they have submitted.

WORDS WRITING PROJECT

2012/13 ANTHOLOGY - Words to Share

Burnaby School District's **WORDS WRITING PROJECT** provides students from kindergarten to grade 12 – and new this year, adult learners from the District's Literacy Foundations program - an opportunity to become published authors. We are pleased to recognize the following students whose submissions were selected for publication in the **2012/13 Anthology - Words to Share**.

Ages 5-7

Poetry

Christina Lu	Marlborough Elementary	Uncherished
Nathan Sullivan	Armstrong Elementary	Winter

Prose

Takeo Harvey	Clinton Elementary	If You Give An Eagle A Fish
Ellen King	Aubrey Elementary	L'automne
Katherine Mezei	Seaforth Elementary	How My Dog Chestnut Makes Me Feel

Ages 8-10

Poetry

Simran Garcha	Clinton Elementary	Unforgettable
Madison Isaac	Brentwood Park Elementary	Stay Strong
Alisa Katsuno	Chaffey-Burke Elementary	Cold Winter Nights
Shenae Meerkerk	Clinton Elementary	Aliens
Sunny Qin	Taylor Park Elementary	My Name Sunny
Sarah Svetic	Brentwood Park Elementary	Selfish is Purple
Samuel Vespalec	Taylor Park Elementary	The Misty Rain
Hailey Wispinski	Nelson Elementary	Peace Is

Prose

David Choo	Lakeview Elementary	Pyroraptor Olympius
Sophia Lee	Marlborough Elementary	Dinomania!!!
Alana Leung	Gilmore Community	I Cry
Erin Lum	Seaforth Elementary	If I Were A Snowflake
Jacquie MacLean	Sperling Elementary	Je suis une colombe
Yiyun Evian Tang	Marlborough Elementary	Pourquoi les poissons vivent dans l'eau?
Freya Zhu	Marlborough Elementary	Pourquoi les oiseaux chantent

Ages 11 +

Poetry

Maya Delzer	Marlborough Elementary	The Flame
Ariyana Dina	Seaforth Elementary	J'adore cuire
Julia Han	Seaforth Elementary	My Family is a Bakery
Rachel Leong	Cascade Heights	Night Born
Maxine Neumann	Aubrey Elementary	Our Future
Maria Preoteasa	Marlborough Elementary	Thestral, the phantom's ride
Cylene Reid	Stride Avenue Community	I am a Young Girl who Cries

Ages 11 + (continued)

Natasha Smirnova
Rocky Su
Stephanie Wu
Mahon Yousefi
Carol Zhang

Marlborough Elementary
Cameron Elementary
Seaforth Elementary
Aubrey Elementary
Maywood Community

Sur la Mer
I Am From
Life is a Circle
I Wonder
Dance of the Puppet's Master

Prose

Paul Hinta
Goldin Joghataie
Gabriella Principe
Aadim Rajan
Jennifer Shen
Tania Varajic
Ashley Wong
Ricky Yin

Seaforth Elementary
Marlborough Elementary
Brentwood Park Elementary
Armstrong Elementary
Windsor Elementary
Brentwood Park Elementary
Sperling Elementary
Aubrey Elementary

Si je pouvais changer une chose
Swimming in the Sea of Time
Dinner Time
The Tree and Me
No
All For One and One For All
Shark Attack
i ernd 5k in a wk u can 2!!
clk here now!

Grade 8

Poetry

Avital Boutorov
Laura Choo
Sarah Derasp
Melissa Fong
Harir Goodarznia
Anthony Maag

Burnaby Central Secondary
Burnaby Central Secondary
Cariboo Hill Secondaire
Alpha Secondary
Moscrop Secondary
Burnaby Central Secondary

The Phoenix
Because of the Golden Slipper
L'appel de la pluie
Cancer
Le meurtrier muet
Teacup

Prose

Megan Chan
Lilyan Jia
Celine Kim
Qi Qi
Alisha Savet
Kathy Xu
Grace Yang

Burnaby North Secondary
Burnaby North Secondary
Burnaby North Secondary
Burnaby North Secondary
Burnaby North Secondary
Burnaby North Secondary
Burnaby North Secondary

The Darkness
Drip Drop
In Her Shadow
Goodbye, Goodnight
Liam
Pitter Patter
Endless Blue

Grades 9-10

Poetry

Alona Besan
Breyden Chong
Kurtis Dunbar
Sarah Hardjowasito
Kevin Kang
Emma Karlsen
Kaya Kurz
Kaya Kurz
Rachel Loo
Kevin Moon
Sylvia Nam

Burnaby South Secondary
Burnaby North Secondary
Cariboo Hill Secondary
Burnaby Mountain Secondary
Burnaby Mountain Secondary
Burnaby North Secondary
Alpha Secondary
Alpha Secondary
Burnaby Mountain Secondary
Burnaby Mountain Secondary
Burnaby Mountain Secondary

A Hardship
For Richer, For Poorer
Who I Really Am
Mr. Moon
Justify the Means
Red Wagon
Liquid Amber
Raindrop Galleries
Counting Crows
Chin Up
A Plain Old Green Streetlight

Grades 9-10 (continued)

Pardis Roshanzamir
Becky Tu
Gillian Xu

Cariboo Hill Secondary
Cariboo Hill Secondary
Burnaby South Secondary

Outside vs. Inside
let's stay in neverland
The Book of Everlasting Dreams
and Wonder

Prose

Kathryn Choi
Andrea Figueroa
Lara Mercier-Jung

Burnaby Mountain Secondary
Burnaby Mountain Secondary
Burnaby Mountain Secondary

Inner Fear
A Home Among Houses
Amberly

Grades 11-12

Poetry

Erika Aguilar
Lauren Badiong
Emma Croft
Destiny Hsu
Jane Kim
Canny Kwok
Canny Kwok
Joy Lim
Sarah Savić Kallesøe
Damian Spence
Sarah Wong
Elizabeth Wristen
Sammi Wu
Jennifer Yang

Burnaby Mountain Secondary
Burnaby Central Secondary
Moscrop Secondary
Cariboo Hill Secondaire
Burnaby Mountain Secondary
Alpha Secondary
Alpha Secondary
Burnaby North Secondary
Byrne Creek Community
Alpha Secondary
Cariboo Hill Secondary
Cariboo Hill Secondary
Burnaby North Secondary
Moscrop Secondary

That One Autumn Night
Forgotten Brittle Strings
La nostalgie à la plage
Les marrées
Enticement
Depression
Ode to Painting
Sestina
Last One Standing
Winter
Grandma
Vicariously
Stellar
La solitude

Prose

Judy Ban
Caitlin Chan
Destiny Hsu
Coco Lau
Amna Liaqat
Chris Wang
Si Jia Wen

Burnaby North Secondary
Burnaby North Secondary
Cariboo Hill Secondary
Burnaby South Secondary
Burnaby Mountain Secondary
Burnaby North Secondary
Moscrop Secondary

The Colourful Sweater
Sweetness
Dust
The Perfect Dandelion
Mixing Pot
Summer's Shade
Deception of Perfection

Adult Learners – Literacy Foundations

Poetry

Thomas Endicott

Brentwood Continuing Education Centre

Faces

Prose

Mingsu Sue Wei

Burnaby South Adult Education Centre

The Last Chance

Contents

1	Winter <i>Nathan Sullivan</i>	8	Pourquoi les poissons vivent dans l'eau <i>Yiyun Evian Tang</i>
1	Uncherished <i>Christina Lu</i>	9	Dinomania!!! <i>Sophia Lee</i>
1	How My Dog Chestnut Makes Me Feel <i>Katherine Mezei</i>	9	Our Future <i>Maxine Neumann</i>
2	L'automne <i>Ellen King</i>	9	Sur la Mer <i>Natasha Smirnova</i>
2	If You Give An Eagle A Fish <i>Takeo Harvey</i>	10	Life is a Circle <i>Stephanie Wu</i>
2	The Misty Rain <i>Samuel Vespalec</i>	10	I Wonder <i>Mahon Yousefi</i>
2	Aliens <i>Shenae Meerkerc</i>	11	Dance of the Puppet's Master <i>Carol Zhang</i>
3	Unforgettable <i>Simran Garcha</i>	11	I am from <i>Rocky Su</i>
3	Selfish is Purple <i>Sarah Svetic</i>	12	The Flame <i>Maya Delzer</i>
3	Stay Strong <i>Madison Isaac</i>	12	J'adore cuire <i>Ariyana Dina</i>
3	My Name Sunny <i>Sunny Qin</i>	13	Night Born <i>Rachel Leong</i>
4	Cold Winter Nights <i>Alisa Katsuno</i>	13	My Family is a Bakery <i>Julia Han</i>
4	Peace is <i>Hailey Wispinski</i>	14	Thestral, the phantom's ride <i>Maria Preoteasa</i>
4	If I Were a Snowflake <i>Erin Lum</i>	14	I am a Young Girl who Cries <i>Cylene Reid</i>
5	Je suis une colombe <i>Jacquie MacLean</i>	15	All For One and One For All <i>Tania Varajic</i>
5	Pyroraptor Olympius <i>David Choo</i>	16	Dinner Time <i>Gabriella Principe</i>
6	Pourquoi les Oiseaux Chantent <i>Freya Zhu</i>	17	Swimming in the Sea of Time <i>Goldin Joghataie</i>
7	I Cry <i>Alana Leung</i>	18	No <i>Jennifer Shen</i>

WORDS WRITING PROJECT

19	The Tree and Me <i>Aadim Rajan</i>	34	A Plain Old Green Streetlight <i>Sylvia Nam</i>
19	i ernd 5k in a wk u can 2!! clk here now! <i>Ricky Yin</i>	35	For Richer, For Poorer <i>Breyden Chong</i>
20	Si je pouvais changer une chose ... <i>Paul Hinta</i>	36	Justify the Means <i>Kevin Kang</i>
21	Shark Attack <i>Ashley Wong</i>	37	Raindrop Galleries <i>Kaya Kurz</i>
22	Teacup <i>Anthony Maag</i>	37	A Hardship <i>Alona Besan</i>
22	The Phoenix <i>Avital Boutorov</i>	38	Counting Crows <i>Rachel Loo</i>
22	Because of the Golden Slipper <i>Laura Choo</i>	38	Chin Up <i>Kevin Moon</i>
23	Cancer <i>Melissa Fong</i>	38	Red Wagon <i>Emma Karlsen</i>
23	L'appel de la pluie <i>Sarah Derasp</i>	39	Liquid Amber <i>Kaya Kurz</i>
24	Le meurtrier muet <i>Harir Goodarznia</i>	39	Outside vs. Inside <i>Pardis Roshanzamir</i>
25	Pitter Patter <i>Kathy Xu</i>	39	Mr. Moon <i>Sarah Hardjowasito</i>
26	Liam <i>Alisha Savet</i>	40	Inner Fear <i>Kathryn Choi</i>
27	Drip Drop <i>Lilyan Jia</i>	41	Amberly <i>Lara Mercier-Jung</i>
28	In Her Shadow <i>Celine Kim</i>	42	A Home Among Houses <i>Andrea Figueroa</i>
29	Goodbye, Goodnight <i>Qi Qi</i>	43	Last One Standing <i>Sarah Savić Kallesøe</i>
30	The Darkness <i>Megan Chan</i>	43	Grandma <i>Sarah Wong</i>
31	Endless Blue <i>Grace Yang</i>	44	Stellar <i>Sammi Wu</i>
32	Who I Really Am <i>Kurtis Dunbar</i>	44	Ode to Painting <i>Canny Kwok</i>
33	The Book of Everlasting Dreams and Wonder <i>Gillian Xu</i>	45	Forgotten Brittle Strings <i>Lauren Badiong</i>
34	let's stay in neverland <i>Becky Tu</i>	46	That One Autumn Night <i>Erika Aguilar</i>

WORDS WRITING PROJECT

- 46 Vicariously
Elizabeth Wristen
- 47 Depression
Canny Kwok
- 47 Enticement
Jane Kim
- 47 La solitude
Jennifer Yang
- 48 Les marrées
Destiny Hsu
- 48 Winter
Damian Spence
- 49 Sestina
Joy Lim
- 49 La nostalgie à la plage
Emma Croft
- 50 Sweetness
Caitlin Chan
- 51 The Colorful Sweater
Judy Ban
- 52 Mixing Pot
Amna Liaqat
- 53 Deception of Perfection
Si Jia Wen
- 54 Dust
Destiny Hsu
- 55 Summer's Shade
Chris Wang
- 56 The Perfect Dandelion
Coco Lau
- 58 Faces
Thomas Endicott
- 59 The Last Chance
Mingsu Sue Wei

2012/13 ANTHOLOGY

Words to Share

Ages 5-7

Winter

*Nathan Sullivan
Armstrong Elementary*

Winter is coming. I feel it inside me.
It makes me happy.
No one enjoys it more than me.
Tobogganing is fun at school.
Everyone is very excited
about the snow racing.
A toboggan is fun.

Uncherished

*Christina Lu
Marlborough Elementary*

The little things in life. . . .
The things that people
don't seem to appreciate. . . .
Small, yet it leaves an impact,
Those things. . . .
Are the things
That should mean the most to us.

How My Dog Chestnut Makes Me Feel

Katherine Mezei, Seaforth Elementary

A dog isn't just some cute animal. It's a big responsibility, but it's worth it. I love having a puppy. My beagle, Chestnut, makes me feel different every day with every action.

Sometimes she makes me feel happy and I want to cuddle her. She is always soft and cuddly. When we got her she could fit in my lap, but now I can't carry her because she's so big. She is so big that she knocks me over when she climbs into my lap. She is really cute, so cute and cuddly that I can't resist her! Sometimes she goes to the mat by the door and rolls around and plays by herself. She plays with her snout and rolls over on her back. I rub her belly and she licks my hand a lot because she loves me. Normally I'll go sit with her and think funny thoughts because she makes me want to laugh! Really! When she's sleepy, I'll go with her to her bed and stay with her for a while and I feel rested. I love to touch her cold, wet nose and feel really sleepy.

If she's really energetic, I feel happy, energetic, and playful because maybe my dad will want to go for a bike ride with Chestnut and me. When she runs down a hill, her paws go faster than you can imagine! Her white legs go so fast they are a blur and it looks like she's made a snow-angel in the snow! It makes me feel really excited and I want to pedal faster. When I just come home from school or when she comes to pick me up with my mom or uncle, she gets really excited. I feel happy to see her, but when she's howling a lot, I feel funny, scared and sometimes embarrassed.

I love Chestnut. Having a dog is wonderful because it makes you smile.

L'automne

Ellen King, Aubrey Elementary

Je sais que c'est l'automne parce qu'il fait plus froid maintenant. Tu dois porter un manteau. Le ciel est tout gris. Il pleut de plus en plus. Il y a un petit peu de soleil. Les arbres s'endorment. Les feuilles tombent. Les fleurs sont fanées. Les écureuils ramassent des fruits et des noix pour l'hiver. Tous les animaux rentrent dans l'étable. Les couleurs de l'automne sont le rouge, le jaune, le brun, le gris, le bleu, le vert et le violet. J'aime l'automne parce qu'il y a beaucoup de couleurs.

If You Give An Eagle A Fish

Takeo Harvey, Clinton Elementary

If you give an eagle a fish he will like some french fries to go with it. When you give him the french fries he will remember the time when he stole french fries from someone at the beach. He will ask you if you could take him to the beach. He will want to make a moat. He will want to put a clam in the moat and he will dive for the clam. He will want you to get your phone and take a video of him. He will see a shell and he will want to sit on a log where the shell is. The log will remind him of french fries and chances are if you give him some french fries, he will want some fish to go with it.

Ages 8-10

The Misty Rain

Samuel Vespalec

Taylor Park Elementary

The rain drops upon the leaves,
Seeing its target as it trickles down,
The water talks to me with its rumbling
sound as it goes down, down, down.
It calls its brothers and sisters
to come freefall with him.
The raindrops softly stop, they are thirsty,
The sun appears to take their place
which they take a lovely drink
from the dark clouds.

Aliens

Shenae Meerkerk

Clinton Elementary

Can aliens fly?
Maybe they soar really high
Can they tap dance in the sky?
Maybe they eat apple pie
Can they sing on the fly?
Can aliens lie?
Maybe they can't say why
Without getting shocked in the eye?
Must I sigh?
Because I am wondering why
Maybe I should ask a guy!

Unforgettable

Simran Garcha
Clinton Elementary

I am prey
Hiding in the long thin grass
Waiting for the worst to happen
Silence heard from miles and miles of land
My heartbeat was the only noise
Pumping faster and faster each time
A cry of a helpless creature was a warning of
the predator
It was coming
Panicking in fear I ran through
the rough thin grass
Exhausted, trying to cling on to life
I ran
The predator had energy unlike me
Jaws grabbing my leg with might
Couldn't get free
Claws made gashes on me
Till my last breath I wasn't dead
Lying there helpless a voice came
Shots fired
The predator ran away in fear
Two men came rushing to me
Picking me up they ran
When released, they left
Never able to forget they saved me
Till my last moment
Till my last breath
They're unforgettable

Selfish is Purple

Sarah Svetic
Brentwood Park Elementary

It smells like guilty and charred.
It tastes like a jalapeño pepper
that never stops burning.
It looks like a tear from your face in shame.
It feels like you have to apologize
for being selfish.

Stay Strong

Madison Isaac
Brentwood Park Elementary

Some people talk about love and hate,
but nobody takes a stand until it's too late.
People think this subject is too mature,
but me, I just want to find a cure.
Making a video of you in pain
is very brave of you.
I just hope nobody feels
what you went through.
Looking in the mirror and asking yourself
"am I good enough" is insane.
Tears form as I watch you in pain.
My mom did not want me to watch your video,
but I did so behind her back.
It was so hard for me to digest
all those disgusting facts.
Harsh words affect everyone
even stars, such as Demi Lovato,
She tattooed herself "stay strong"
and that is her motto.
Bullies are making people consider suicide,
But I would like you to know there is always
someone by your side.

R.I.P. Amanda Todd 1996-2012

My Name Sunny

Sunny Qin
Taylor Park Elementary

My name is unique to me.
It is like a fresh orchid flower
ready to be a picked necklace.
My name is warm.
It fills my heart with joy and happiness.
It is different than others.
It is rare, like finding an emerald
right in front of you.
I am proud that I have my name.
My name is a music note traveling across the
keys of a piano making a beautiful song.
My name is not good, it is wonderful!

Cold Winter Nights

Alisa Katsuno, Chaffey-Burke Elementary

Burr I'm freezing
I hear echoes in the village
As I talk to my friend leaving me
Snowflakes drift like powdered sugar
I feel like I'm walking
Through a blizzard
Oh how much I want to go home
Snow is white as crystals
The village is empty

People are inside
Feeling the warmth of the fireplace
I'm alone
Like an iceberg
Still as stone
Soon as time goes by
Snow dances faster and faster
I feel a blizzard coming.

Peace is

Hailey Wispinski, Nelson Elementary

Peace is doves flying through the air sweeping down
As if a fresh breeze is passing by
Peace is silence
Peace is classical music floating in my ear
Peace is big smiles on everyone's faces
Peace is flowers drifting through the wind
Peace is big plump plums hanging on my tree
Peace is laughing all around
Peace is children working out their problems and not fighting and screaming
Peace is all these things but not only these things

If I Were a Snowflake

Erin Lum, Seaforth Elementary

If I were a snowflake, I'd drift through the wind, imagining the life ahead of me. Maybe my small and unique web-like body would land on top of a lamp post in the streets of London, watching shoppers bustle by with massive bags overloaded with gifts and beautifully wrapped packages. If I'm lucky, I might even get to smell some of those delectable treats the bakery next door is making. Mmmm! Or maybe I'd land on an emperor penguin's back. The adorable, chubby penguin would glide across the pearly white snow, and the warmth of its glossy black and white body would cause my delicate snowflake edges to melt slowly. It'll be sad to melt a little bit, but that can't stop me. I'll be swept away to a different place where a snowman's gigantic head is in the middle of a children's play area. I would see children in fur coats and woolly toques playing in the powdery snow. Using their mega mittens, they would create round, icy snowballs and playfully throw them at each other. After I watch the restless children for three long hours, the warm sun would melt me right into the snowman's fat head. Just thinking about the end of a snowflake journey makes me sad. I just can't wait to be swept away with the cool breeze and go to a variety of new places! I could see Rome, New York, and many other amazing sites! So next time you play in your snowy backyard, look for me!!

Je suis une colombe

Jacque MacLean, Sperling Elementary

Je suis une colombe, je vole par-dessus le monde de paix. Je vois les gratte-ciels, les coquelicots, les autres sortes de fleurs et beaucoup de villes. Aussi je vois beaucoup de nature comme les arbres, les montagnes, les buissons et les grandes prairies. Dans les grandes villes, j'ai vu les écoles et les parcs. A l'école, j'ai vu les autobus qui prennent les enfants quelque part. Au parc, les enfants jouent les jeux sur le terrain de jeu. C'était une très belle journée. Tous les parents étaient sortis de la maison pendant que les enfants sont à l'école. C'étais une bonne journée de voler autour du monde.

Pyroraptor Olympius

David Choo, Lakeview Elementary

Imagine Patagonia, eighty million years ago. The land is plagued by giants, massive Titanosaurs, Tarascosaurs, and Iguanodonts. And darting through the feet of the titans is Pyraptor Olympius, the dromaeosaurid of South America. At only about one-hundred and fifty pounds among seven tonne bruisers, life is a challenge. From birth to death they are hounded by the vicious dog-eat-dog dinosaur ecosystem. This is the life of one such being, who endured this vicious cycle of existence. Surviving is hard enough when you're one of the smallest species of your time, but when you're a mere hatchling it's nearly impossible. One who has endured is Slash, a juvenile pyraptor son of the pack leader. Viewing his habitat, Slash saw the lagoon where he could drink fresh water, a grove of trees for shelter and camouflage, and open meadows for the grazing herbivores. Believing an early morning tremor was caused by a passing titanosaur herd, Slash was unprepared for the ensuing tectonic assault. The earthquake caused massive distress in all species and a stampede for safety began. Some took refuge from the mob on a deserted beach. Separated from his pack, Slash stalked the beach calling for his family. Hearing a loud roar, he turned his head just in time to see a large wave, a tsunami, rise over him. He cried out in defiance but fell into blackness and was swept away. He awoke on a new landmass, groggy but unhurt. He nourished himself on the sea-swept carcass of an iguanodont, and then set off to explore this new land. His environment included some trees recognizable today, such as cycads and palms, while on the ground ferns and horsetails grew. Grasses and most other flowers would not appear for millions of years, nearer to the time when mammals would flourish. Slash screeched in frustration over his disorientation and was surprised to hear a response from another pyraptor. Cautiously creeping forward in the direction of the new voice, he saw a small herd of his own species foraging in a carpet of ferns. The pack leader displayed his plumage at full height and screeched aggressively. Staying low to show respect, Slash quietly joined the others and became an accepted member of their party. Over time, Slash gained rank among this group, and led them safely through many Cretaceous challenges. The fossil and life story of this magnificent creature would be discovered ninety-five million years later by palaeontologists in what is now South America. Clues about climate change and evolution would be revealed, increasing knowledge about the past and future of this brilliant orb of blue or green, Earth.

Pourquoi les Oiseaux Chantent

Freya Zhu, Marlborough Elementary

Long temps passé, dans une forêt tropicale, vivait un petit perroquet qui s'appelait Thasi. Thasi aimait chanter, mais elle n'avait pas une belle voix. Elle pouvait seulement coasser toute la journée. Le son était terriblement agaçant, c'était si désagréable que les autres animaux tous disaient qu'elle ne venait pas de ce monde. Surtout Koyah, le méchant corbeau qui la taquinait toujours. Un jour, Thasi jouait avec quelques unes de ses amis quand Koyah est venu poser sur une branche. Koyah a dit : « Viens chanter une chanson pour moi! » Thasi n'était pas très sûre, après tout, Koyah n'était pas un corbeau très gentil. « Viens, viens! » a crié Koyah, « J'ai besoin de musique pour me calmer! Tu es la meilleure chanteuse que je connais. » Thasi n'était encore pas très sûre, mais elle n'aimait pas voir quelqu'un si triste, même Koyah. Alors elle s'est posée sur la branche et s'est préparé à chanter.

Thasi s'est mise à chanter et quand elle a terminé, Koyah a commencé à rire, il riait si fort, qu'on pouvait l'entendre à l'autre bout de la forêt. Et bientôt, les autres animaux ricanèrent aussi. Thasi pensait que son cœur allait briser en morceaux. Elle a déployé ses ailes, elle battait ses ailes de tout ses forces jusqu'à ce qu'elle est finalement arrivé au lieu familiale. Thasi n'a pas remarqué que Koyah l'a suivi, il a posé sur une branche juste au dessus d'elle. « Tu penses à tes ancêtres Thasi? » a demandé Koyah. Cette fois, Thasi n'était pas triste, elle était fâchée! Vraiment fâchée! Koyah, tu regretteras tes actions! » elle a exclamé. Thasi chassait Koyah autour de la forêt tropicale, puis soudainement, elle a eu une idée géniale. Elle s'est arrêté et s'est mis à chanter, le son était trop fort pour Koyah, et il a volé dans l'autre direction le plus vite que possible en criant « A l'aide! Au secours! » Thasi avait un grand sourire sur son visage. « Youppie! » a hurlé Thasi. « Bon travail Thasi! » a dit une voix douce. Thasi s'est retourné rapidement et a vu Chiixal, l'esprit tropical. « Bonjour Chiixal! » a crié Thasi. « Pourquoi es-tu ici? » « Oh je pensais que tu as besoin d'aide », a répondu Chiixal, « Mais je vois que tu as résous le problème toi-même. » Alors, maintenant je veux que tu pense à un vœu qui va te donner une meilleure vie.

Thasi s'est demandé pourquoi, mais Chiixal était l'esprit tropical, elle fait tout pour une bonne raison. Alors, Thasi a souhaité d'avoir une voix mélodieuse pour chanter. Puis, elle a senti quelque chose d'étrange dans sa gorge. Chiixal a demandé : « Chante une chanson pour moi! » Thasi a pris une grande respiration, et quand elle chantait, sa voix était belle et douce.

Le lendemain, Koyah lui a dit « Je t'ai entendu chanter. Maintenant tu as la plus belle voix de la forêt tropicale. » « Je m'excuse de t'avoir taquiné, est-ce qu'on peut être des amis? » a demandé Koyah. « Oui, on peut, » a répondu Thasi. À partir de ce jour là, on pouvait même voir Thasi chanter et Koyah danser en dessus de la grande lune scintillante. Et ça est descendu dans la famille des oiseaux pour toujours. Les autres animaux adoraient leurs chansons!

Et ça c'est pourquoi les oiseaux chantent!!!

I Cry

Alana Leung, Gilmore Community School

You know that moment, when you feel lost or empty, you can't find your way, you're upset, and just can't help it? I feel that way now. I can't believe what I'm hearing from my neighbours and police officers. I'm stunned. I'm lost in a hurricane of thoughts flooding into my head quicker and quicker. I feel the slight sting from tears running down my cheek. My heart sinks and I swear I hear it stop beating for a moment. My world's spinning. I choke on my words as I try to speak. Salty tears fall into my mouth and fall to the ground. Everything's gone mute. My jaw chatters and quivers. People are trying to tell me it's okay and what's going to happen next but I can't hear them over my own thoughts. How would they feel if they were in my position? I can't hold still anymore. I turn around and start walking to my parent's bedroom. My walk turns into a sprint and before I know it, I'm running to my mom's nightstand and taking the picture of her and my dad's wedding. My cries turn into wails. I can't believe they're actually gone. Why did they have to die? Why does anyone have to die? No one deserves it! My tears drop onto the photo. My neighbours come into the room moments later to see what was happening and they saw. Dorine, my neighbour, sits down next to me and strokes my back. That can't comfort me enough. I'm an orphan now, how could I not cry? I sniffle and wipe away my tears.

"What will happen to me?" I ask with a shaky voice.

"To be honest, hun, I don't know," Dorine replied.

I sniffle some more and try speaking again but I have too many hiccups in my voice for her to understand.

"I know this must be very tough for you, but, you'll need to stay strong. You may need to go to court and have a judge decide whose care you'll be put into. It might be your aunt or uncle, you never know,"

I can't imagine living with them.

"It's a different thought, but it might be the future." I take a deep breath. My tears have stopped.

- One Year Later -

It's been a year now since my parents died in the car accident. Losing them was probably one of the hardest things that have ever happened to me. It changed me indescribably. I'm living with my grandmother now. After my grandmother passes, I'll be with my aunt. Dorine visits often. Things are looking up for me now. I still cry every now and then but it's better to let it out than keep it all in. I keep to myself a little more and I don't really want to learn how to drive but I'll try it anyway. Thank you God for the life you've given me. I won't take anything for granted anymore.

Pourquoi les poissons vivent dans l'eau

Yiyun Evian Tang, Marlborough Elementary

Il y a très longtemps, dans le désert, il vivait un poisson nommait Meraak, qui marchait sur la terre. Meraak avait un grand problème; elle ne pouvait pas trouver de l'eau. Elle avait très soif et elle était fatiguée, mais elle était désespérée pour trouver de l'eau. Aussi, Meraak pensait : « Qui pourrait vivre dans le désert sans de l'eau? » Alors, elle cherchait et cherchait, pendant la journée et la nuit. Meraak a pris une pause seulement quant elle était si fatiguée qu'elle ne pouvait plus bouger. Les journées passés, et encore Meraak ne pouvait pas trouver de l'eau. Chaque fois, elle a vu de l'eau, c'était toujours un mirage. Maintenant, Meraak a commencé à se sentir déçu. « Quand est-ce que je trouverai de l'eau à cette vitesse? » se demandait-elle.

Une nuit, une tortue mystérieuse est venue chez Meraak. « Bonjour, je m'appelle Tokik, » a dit la tortue. Meraak était très surprise, « Oh! Bonjour! » a-t-elle répondu. Tokik a expliqué « Je suis ici pour t'aider à trouver de l'eau, » « Comment est-ce que tu sais que j'ai besoin d'eau? » a demandé Meraak. Tokik n'a pas répondu, mais il a donné Meraak un clin d'œil, et un petit sourire. Ensuite, il a expliqué une route pour trouver de l'eau. Aussi, Tokik a dessiné des plantes de la route sur le sable pour qu'elle n'oublie pas la route et qu'elle ne se perd pas. Après, Tokik est parti. Meraak a eu de la confiance encore et elle est prête pour sa mission de trouver de l'eau.

Sur le dessin de Tokik, il y avait des images de cactus et de plantes originales. Peu de temps après, Meraak est arrivé à coté d'un lac plein d'eau fraîche. « Est-ce que ça c'est vraiment de l'eau? » a-t-elle demandé étonné. « Oouuii!! C'est de l'eau! J'ai finalement trouvé de l'eau! » Meraak a crié. Elle était si folle, qu'elle a plongé dans le lac. « Sploosh! » Mais, Meraak ne pouvait pas nager! Comment est-ce qu'elle allait se sauver? Soudainement, Tokik a plongé aussi dans le lac mais il est monté sans Meraak. Il était déjà trop tard pour sauver Meraak. Alors, Tokik a pensé un peu. « Je sais! » il a exclamé. Ensuite, Tokik a demandé aux dieux : « Donne Meraak une autre vie dans ce lac, s'il vous plait, « Les dieux pensaient que c'était une bonne idée, ils ont donné le pouvoir à Meraak de vivre dans son petit lac. Tous les autres poissons trouvaient ça intéressant et ils ont tous demandé aux dieux pour qu'ils pouvaient aussi vivre dans l'eau.

Ils ont tous réussi, et **ça c'est pourquoi les poissons vivent dans l'eau.**

Dinomania!!!

Sophia Lee, Marlborough Elementary

Je reve tout sort de chose. Mais hier, j'ai revé d'une chose extraordinaire. J'ai revé que j'étais avec les dinosaurs, amis avec eu. Je traversait le désert sur le dos d'un Camarasaurus. Des petits Tricératops venait et me donnait des petits pièces de plantes des temps du Jurassique. Les jeunes reptiles venait pour me donner les feuilles avec quelques grandes fleurs. J'adorais ces petits services...jusqu'à ce qu'un Tyrannosaure a venu et attaquer mes amis. Le obedient Camarasaurus a devenue folle et m'a renversé sur le sable. Mes autre Dino-amis avait couru de different directions, peur que le Tyrannosaure allait les manger. Le Tyrannosaure me regardait avec ses yeux jaunes froids, comme s'il voulait que je sois un crème glacée. Il a ouvrit ses gueules géant, la salive courant autour de ses dent jaunes. Dix secondes et il m'en mangerait. Neuf secondes, huit, sept, six, cinq secondes, il était si proche je pouvais sentir son haleine de chaussettes puent, quatre, trois, deux secondes, j'ai roulé a la droite, le T-rex ouvrait son bouche géant..... et il m'a parler. «Lève-toi!! Lève-toi!!! ». J'ai lever brusquement d'un autre bruit étrange, « GRRRRROOOOAARR!!! » Mes yeux sont mis à cligner. Une chose verte, non, attende.....vert, jaune et un peu de rouge était devant mon lit!! Quand mes yeux sont concentré forte, c'était, c'était.... «AHHHHHH!!!! » J'ai hurler. C'était un vrai Tyrannosaure.

Ages 11+

Our Future

*Maxine Neumann
Aubrey Elementary*

Light will shine in the darkest hour
From every seed buds a flower
The fire of hope will ignite
Now it burns bright throughout the night
the fight is over; war has ceased
We can do all that we please
but will it persist, this calm without fright?
Or will we have a constant light?
Lay down your weapons, make friends of foes
Set aside your fears, away with your woes
I say negotiate, not that dreadful sight
Of people fighting for power, for might
So on this day, do just one thing;
Be peaceful; be merry, laugh, then sing
Just peace, no war, no wounds
And for no young soldiers there will be tombs.

Sur la Mer

*Natasha Smirnova
Marlborough Elementary*

Il n'y a personne là
Pas un piéton pas une voiture
Pas sur le rues ni sur les places
Aucun cri aucun bruit
Aucun signe de la vie
Sauf le vent dans les arbres
Qui souffle doucement
Sauf la mer calme
Qui bouge au loin
Sauf le sable granuleux
Qui reste sur la mer
C'est silent
La mer

Life is a Circle

Stephanie Wu, Seaforth Elementary

Life is a circle
Looping round and round
We are all connected
What's lost can soon be found
Plants, green and tender
Grow from where others have died
Water in the earth
Has fallen from the sky
One creature's death is another's life
The hunter and the prey
Sun and moon take shifts
Throughout the night and day
Everything's in working order
A well oiled machine
Everything was balanced
The harmony pristine
The earth is our provider
Our mother and our home
We're born onto this planet
And nurtured, loved, we've grown
But man's a naughty child
Always wanting more
"Circles are so boring!
Let's see what more is in store."
So man rips up the forests
That poor creature's home
And with these wooden corpses they build
Castles of their own
They seize the earth's bounty
And make it grow in rows
They take their creature brothers
And keep them caged, enclosed
From the earth's embrace they tear
Metals of every kind
Fuels that don't go with the circles
Rise straight to the sky
Man will strip sweet Earth's splendour
Until she's cold and bare
With their blind eye and hearts of steel
Man neither knows nor cares

What man takes from the Earth
Won't be returned in time
When her gifts are all used up
There'll be none left to find
Man twists the fragile circle
Into alien shapes
Man thinks he's high and mighty
And likes to mess with Fate
Life is a circle
Man cannot comprehend
That when the circle breaks
Life on earth will end.

I Wonder

*Mahon Yousefi
Aubrey Elementary*

I wonder
Can we dream
From a-top a mountain
Or the bottom of a stream
Can we capture
The flight of a song
Like the beauty of a simple flower
Or a hope that must belong
I wonder
Can we waken
To the whiskers
mistaken
We should not have forsaken
Can we smile
Against the tears
Against the cold
Of our fears
I wonder
Can we love
Against the odds
Or even at all?

Dance of the Puppet's Master

Carol Zhang, Maywood Community School

Can you see that skinny string tied to my wrists?
Maybe not, but you know it's there
My feet dance even when there's no music
Arms crazily fling, I can't control them
My face smiles, void of any emotion
Call me 'Master', you said
Ever wonder what it's like?
Well now the tables are turned, and it's me controlling you
I shall enjoy this, yes, I shall
Your feet will tap to the absent melody
Live the centuries of nothing
Now you will be the mindless and controlled
I remember, so long ago
I had many dreams and hopes
The sky was filled with so many stars
That I could pick them off, one by one
Now the night is cold, empty, and vast
My arms are bound with your invisible string
Days turned into years, and into centuries...
Vengeance is a powerful thing, you know?
So now dance, my master, dance
Let's see how you feel after a thousand years have passed
Dance, my master, dance
I was merely a puppet, someone you toyed with and controlled
But who am I now?
The one who shall make you dance, Master.

I am from

Rocky Su, Cameron Elementary

I am from a mini Chinese house,
Remotely it is placed.
I am from a very thin balcony,
Where my toy cars raced.
I am from my mom's big dumplings,
Good like fresh-caught game.
I am from my dad's small pancakes,
Tasty all the same.
I am from that old science lab,
Where my mother worked.
I am from that chemistry section,
There I often lurked.

I am from the small corner store,
Abby's is its name.
I am from the green Keswick Park,
Well known for its fame.
I am from "Be nice to people!"
"Don't just be the last"
I am from mom's "Wash your dishes!"
And dad's "Don't eat too fast!"
I am from some really nice people,
When I started school.
I am from a very good teacher,
Helps keep myself cool.
That's where I'm from. . .

The Flame

Maya Delzer

Marlborough Elementary

You sit around the bonfire
As its warmth wraps you
in a comfort like home
The roaring flames dance in the night
As the sparks climb up
into the star-scattered sky
It's golden and scarlet aura
lights up your face
All is silent as you look at one another
No one says a word
But you smile
Yes, you smile
And that's all you need
For the site to be filled with conversation
I close my eyes
Sighing
And then I open my eyes
Staring into
The Flame

J'adore cuire

Ariyana Dina

Seaforth Elementary

J'adore cuire les brownies,
les pâtes et les gâteaux.
Je peux les cuire tous petits ou gros
comme un château!
Je peux les manger par tout,
dans ma chambre ou sur un bateau.

J'adore cuire les muffins dans le four,
Je les cuits avec beaucoup d'amour!
Je préfère mes muffins doux pas dur.

J'adore cuire les gâteaux avec le glaçage,
Et du fondant; quel délicieux léchage!
Et quand j'ai fini je vais pour un massage!
Les saveurs: la vanille, le chocolat et les fraises,
Je peux cuire douze biscuits peut-être treize!

Toutes mes recettes sont magnifiques,
fantastiques et délicieuses.
Un jour, mes recettes pour les muffins
seront fameuses!

Night Born

*Rachel Leong
Cascade Heights Elementary*

The lights of the stray fireflies flicker on and off,
depicting the many tales of the
silent but brilliant moon.

Eerie sounds linger in the frosty air, waiting for the perfect moment
to blow past your window, arousing nightmares and reams in your mind.

Eyes jerk open at the faintest rustling in the darkened bushes,
thinking of all those stories untold of the darkness.

The tree branches cracking against your windows,
conjuring the monsters in your mind.

A rustle in the bushes, a faint howl in the distance.

The night is peaceful, quiet, and still, but completely alive.

Wind blowing past your windows, whispering indecipherable stories.

Millions of stars dotting the black canvas of the sky.

The clock strikes midnight, and the moon is at its fullest state.

Few cars and even fewer people are out and about at this time.

But little does anyone hear the creeping nocturnal melody
that sways through the air

The melodic song that can only be heard by that born from the night.

My Family is a Bakery

Julia Han, Seaforth Elementary

My family is a bakery, welcoming visitors with sweet aromas and delightful sights.

My mother is a red velvet cake, rich with heavenly sensations, sometimes with a kick of zest,

My father is an apple pie with straightforward intentions to please the taste buds,
with a genuine taste that brings back memories and laughter,

My sister is a crème brûlée, sweet at first with a caramelized top layer,
but even more delectable with a rich custard cream base,
filling your mouth with divine sensations that taste splendid as a union of flavours.

I am a cupcake, the smallest delicacy and very common, but with good intentions
to satisfy the mouth and make them crave more.

Thestral, the phantom's ride

Maria Preoteasa

Marlborough Elementary

Bony and black
flies through the night
a thin shadow is cast
by the moon's light
A horse of burnt skeleton
sits patiently
the phantom Pegasus
trotting quietly
Stereotyped to be an omen of death
as if this gentle being
would be the cause of your
last breath

I am a Young Girl who Cries

Cylene Reid

Stride Avenue Community School

I am a young girl, who cries,
I wonder if I will ever meet someone who has had the same life as me,
I hear children's laughter and smile to myself,
I see hundreds of people pointing and laughing at me,
I want to be honest and proud,
I am a young girl, who cries.
I pretend I don't cry on the inside every day,
I feel like I'm being pushed down, being pushed down by my shoulders,
I touch my face to wipe away a tear,
I worry that someone might see me upset and know why,
I cry when I think about growing up without my dad
and know that a lot of children go through worse,
I am a young girl, who cries.
I understand how people feel when they share their feelings,
I say get right back up, dust myself off and smile,
I dream that I will have a perfect life,
I try my best to stay strong,
I hope I can one day say everything, to someone,
I am a young girl, who cries.

All For One and One For All

Tania Varajic, Brentwood Park Elementary

CLUNK!

This was not the first time that I had experienced the feeling of a sure concussion and the possibility of becoming deaf. After the treacherous journey, the ground exploding every second like a geyser, that shot us up with it. I could rest neatly aligned on a never ending slab, floating in mid air against a wall. The material was smooth and polished but there were nicks in certain spots beneath me. Suddenly, a loud, piercing noise split the air in half like a dagger.

DING DING!

After that, two creatures with pole-like limbs sticking out of their bodies entered moving toward me in a repetitive motion. Their lower limbs alternated, reaching forward. With every movement they appeared to come closer. When they had finally reached us, the aroma of fragrant flowers filled the air and I could now see that one was taller than the other, practically looming in height, but level to where we were suspended. Suddenly I was lifted into space by ten little tentacles; I thought about struggling but realized that we would all fall into unbearable pain, and besides, we had to work together to endure. To think that being lifted into space was petrifying, I was wrong. The creatures that seemed to have power over us opened me carefully as to not damage my delicate leather-like exterior. Slowly, carefully, they turned my comrades with their tentacles. That moved as freely as they wished. Finally, after what seemed like it would never end they put me down with a sharp slap contradictory to how they first approached me.

I could still feel the stinging after the peculiar creatures had walked us over to another block of material, much bigger, which was casting a shadow over the floor. Unexpectedly, we were placed on the layer of material that now appeared to be harder and stained to match the brightest snow. The unbearable tang of mild citrus and dust had overpowered my taste buds. I couldn't take it much longer. There I waited with my comrades lined up behind me, unprepared for what would happen in the following minutes. The creature above me passed forward a rectangular object rounded at the angles and sliced perfectly to a scrawny thickness. Another creature had just appeared on the other side of the counter with its long strands that were the color of the darkest burn clumped together on the top of the sphere attached to the cylinder below it. It snatched the rectangular object mindlessly and blandly sliced it through block with bumps coming up from the surface as if the object had bubbles. The bubbles were then pushed down by the creature behind the counter to produce a high pitched and short, **BEEP!**

Then the creature removed the rectangular object and handed it back to the creatures that brought my comrades and I to the counter. Lifted us up and dropped us effortlessly into a dark cave, filled with objects that were beyond my knowledge. The cave was still for only a few moments, when suddenly, we were thrashed up and down, side to side and hit in all places imaginable. Somehow, we survived, as a team, and were lifted out of the dark cave and into the creature's hands once again. Like before it gently lifted me careful to not damage or crease me or my comrades. As I was opened, my comrades were exposed and the creature started gazing at them carefully admiring the ink symbols and repeating with more and more of my comrades. Suddenly a high feminine voice loudly spoke out in urgency,

'HONEY, DINNER!'

Shortly, after the creature that we were in the tentacles of hanging on for dear life replied,
“COMING, MOM!”

Before the creature left, it closed me once again with an abrupt whack, and allowed me to once again enclose my comrades and wait the return of our reader.

Dinner Time

Gabriella Principe

Brentwood Park Elementary

It happened again. They always come back, the beasts. The bigger they are the more it hurts. They push me, shove me, ram their toes into me, but they only think about themselves. They tore my family apart and placed us around this circular object. They treat our kind without respect or care. They make us wear these disgusting, sticky slipper-like things on the bottom of our legs. Sometimes as the beasts squish us the little one starts to kick. This is torture. I only get to see my friends when the beasts have their giant gatherings. It sickens me. My cousin told me that The Big Kahuna is the one you got to watch out for. She said that he can squish me like he squashes bugs.

Here they come. Their nightly feast has begun. How I wish they had better manners. Every night the little one always spills something on me. You would think that one of the older beasts would tell him to stop, but they don't. This is what I live for apparently. My legs ache from the pain. I'm surprised they haven't finished their nightly feast yet. My dad told me that you have to watch the beasts who torture us. He said if too many of the big beasts torture us, we could end up on the ground in pieces. He said that's how Uncle Jim left.

Finally, they have gone into their resting chambers. This means silence for us. I wish I could have some of that cold stuff that the beasts put in their liquids they like to drink. How my legs would love and adore it. During the dark hours, my family and I try to have the best time we can, but, it's hard, with this stupid saucer they placed in the middle of all of us. Now all I see is the tops of my family member's heads.

The dark hours have ended and the beasts have joined us once again for their morning feast. Their savage-like eating is gross. I would hate to be the food on their tiny saucers. My legs are in more pain than ever. If the day continues like this, I could end up on the floor in pieces! Let's hope that I serve a little beast at dinner tonight and not The Big Kahuna. This makes me worry. What will they do to me if I do break? Will they kick me to the curb like Uncle Jim? Will they cut me up into more pieces to make something new? What will they do?

The nightly feast has arrived once again. I see The Big Kahuna eyeing me down. I would be drenched in sweat if I had sweat glands. He is scaring me again. The beasts are almost finished making their concoctions for their feast. They are just about to take their usual torturing places when The Big Kahuna suggests that everyone tortures someone they haven't tortured yet. This means that I get The Big Kahuna. Just as he starts to torture me I feel my legs give out and next thing I know I'm on the floor in pieces. Looks like I'm off to the curb. I just hope The Big Kahuna doesn't break the next chair he plunks himself in.

Swimming in the Sea of Time

Goldin Joghataie

Marlborough Elementary

I was slowly walking around the track, thinking. I have been trying to think of an idea. The creative drawing contest was in about four days and I still haven't sketched my idea yet. I would really like to win the contest.

"You have too many desires." My friend says. I agree. I do dream big. But it is impossible to reach all of them. I have wanted to write a novel but it did not work out. I mean I have the idea and everything I could buy for it. However, I am still missing something. Something I cannot buy with money.

I am missing time.

Though, they say "Time is gold", I think no doubt, time is much more valuable than gold. You can buy gold with some time. However, you cannot buy the wasted minutes of your life with gold. At first, I thought it was only me. I thought only I wanted to do everything. I thought I was the only one who dreamed big, but no. I was wrong. So many people had dreams but now they have grown old and tired and they did not get to their dreams. I fear I will have the same ending.

It's so quiet. You can only hear the wings of the swans flapping through the orange sky of dawn. I change my path from the dry and rigid track to the small fresh and live pond near the old willow tree. I sit down next to the pond and slowly take my sketching notebook out of my small brown handmade bag. Before I draw anything, I make my hand dance in the water with the music of the wind. That is when I think back to a movie my father and I had watched a month or so ago. It showed how hard Leonardo Da Vinci had worked on a model airplane and at the end; he was unsuccessful to make it fly. All that time wasted on model airplanes? All those tests and experiments? All the dreams? All was a waste of his life and his time? But then again, I thought if Da Vinci didn't dare to make those models and test them we wouldn't even think of making an airplane. At least after Da Vinci's models, the Wright brothers knew what mistakes not to make. I then realised I was not, we were not wasting time! We are living a life full of experiments that we have to do! We have to swim in the sea of time, not just wait and drown!

And that is what I drew for the contest: The Sea of Time; with different people, swimming in their own speed and way.

After that day, I looked at life in a different way. Time was not a worry anymore. I just tried to do my best and still dream big.

And guess what? I won the drawing contest.

No

*Jennifer Shen
Windsor Elementary*

I packed my things as I walked out of my office. I had goose bumps all over because it was freezing on December 1, 1955 in Tuskegee. I was walking towards the bus station, as I saw signs that read "Whites only." Everywhere whites were considered superior, but I didn't think so. My family didn't think so, and our preacher Dr. King didn't think so.

All that walking made me thirsty. Luckily there was a water fountain up ahead. When I finally reached it, "Whites only" was on it so I breathed a breath of fury. I was tired of this segregation nonsense, so I drank anyways. As I lifted up my head, I saw whites staring at me with disgust and someone who wanted to drink walked away instead. But I didn't feel any regret.

When I finally reached the bus station, I entered through the front and paid my bus fare, then got off and re-entered through the back like always. I sat in the multicoloured section, the last seat. I was looking out the window at the beautiful frosted day and the irritating "Whites only" sign.

At my third stop, many passengers boarded. The bus driver came to the 11th row and told the others and myself to move. This was the multicoloured section, but blacks were forced to move anyways. We had to clear the row just for one white. I was tired, not tired that I couldn't stand or move, but tired of segregation.

I refused.

Did I really say no? Everyone was shocked. I even felt shocked myself. Then finally the bus driver spoke up, he said he was going to call the police. I refused to move. There was a loud silence, as my thoughts raced through my mind and my heartbeat ran fast. I was scared, but that fear made me strong.

I remembered something that made me more determined. One day, in 1943, I paid my bus fare, and as usual got off. Although I never got back on because the bus had drove away, forcing me to walk through the rain. This was the same driver.

Though my feet wanted to move, my heart would never let me leave my spot. Segregation already went too far, and we all hoped it would stop. Hope is like a firework, before anything happens, it just sits there. After it has been lighted, beautiful results come out. Right now, I'm trying to spark others hopes.

Suddenly, the front doors of the bus swung open. My heart almost popped out of my chest from the adrenaline I was feeling. Sweat ran down my head, it felt like a waterfall.

Yet, I still sat.

My legs shook rapidly, but my body felt paralyzed. The police yelled at me and looked at me with repulsion. Soon I was off the bus, handcuffed. I didn't know what would happen next but no matter what it took, I knew I would not stop.

Something will change.

The Tree and Me

Aadim Rajan, Armstrong Elementary

It all started out on a scorching hot summer's evening in Windsor, Nova Scotia. I had just arrived all the way from Vancouver to enjoy the summer break with my grandfather. I sat down on my deceased grandmother's brown, rustic rocking chair beside my grandfather who was sitting right beside me. I saw him gazing out at the maple tree and I asked: "Why does that tree mean so much to you?" He responded: "You will learn something grandson. As you get older, you will face many hardships and will learn to respect people who may never respect you. After all, we are all humans. We make mistakes. I guess what I am saying is, respect those who may never respect you. Forgive those who make mistakes and move on. Life is always changing and if you hold grudges, you will not really live life to the fullest. The year I was born, my parents planted that cherry tree. Every year, I sat out and saw it blossom and die and blossom and die, and soon, I was just as old as the tree! I never did understand the reason they planted it, but I can see it stands tall and majestically in the spring and in the winter see it stand slumped over. But, soon the tree will lose all its leaves and that may be, the last of the tree." I said nothing and sat there in silence. I knew he was probably thinking and so I said: "Why don't we go inside to get a bit to eat?" He said, "Sure, it is getting cold." Little did I know a week later, my grandfather would pass away silently. After that day I always try and fulfill his dream. I try to forgive everyone who makes mistakes and I try to correct those made by me. I probably bet he's smiling down on me from heaven saying, "Good job!" Perhaps, in the future I will see him and sit with him, just like old times.

i ernd 5k in a wk u can 2!! clk here now!

Ricky Yin, Aubrey Elementary

Is your pocket only filled with dust bunnies and lint balls? Is your wallet always barren and empty? Has your bank account even been in the double-digits since the year 2000? Have no fear! i made 5k in a wk u can 2! This is NOT a scam!! Follow these tips and learn how you, yes YOU, can get rich quick, easy as 123! Earn a fortune right at home! I have devised a series of quick, easy ways to scoop up some moolah back where it belongs: your pocket! Start your completely free trial today for 14 day!

The easiest way would be to beg your family, relatives, or total strangers for money! Even easier, find it yourself! Money has a silly habit of turning up in silly places; try looking under your couch, in your refrigerator, or in your vacuum cleaner!

Another way is by inheritance. You can instantly inherit a fortune! This tactic includes being very nice to the person you hope to get your money from. You'll be able to enjoy the fruits of your labour after waiting all those years. In the meantime, you can dream about how to spend that fortune.

Have lots of junk and unwanted items? Sell everything and anything possible on eBay or host a garage sale! That old television on the street can score you 5 bucks, presto! Even better, that painting hanging in the living room collecting dust can get you a nice amount of moolah. Don't worry! No one will notice if it disappears, and if it does, everyone thought it was ugly but wouldn't admit it.

Know some juicy secrets about others, such as your health teacher snacking on chocolate? Resort to blackmailing! First step: threaten. Second step: collect earnings. It's a simple and easy way to collect a few pennies! Same with ransoming! Your sister's private diary can turn into some useful dough! Can you do magic tricks, juggle pomegranates or yodel? Perform in front of people! Step one: Charge outrageous admission. Step two: rake in the cash!! Or, if you're feeling lucky, enter a draw! Money opportunities are everywhere! Of course, the tried and true method is the old-fashioned chores. (Lame, right?)

Now that you've gone out and made your fortune, it's time! Time for what? Time to waste your money irresponsibly and uselessly! Why not try spending 50 dollars attempting to grab that adorable pink, plushy kitten in that claw machine but failing miserably? Or buying that video game for the Wii when you have an Xbox! The possibilities are endless!

Now that you have a complete arsenal of tactics, go out there and make your fortune! As your tiny fee after your free trial period after you're rich, all I charge is a very small, teensy-weensy little commission! It's only 100/10 + (4x25) % commission!! What a bargain deal! A steal!! So go out there and make your fortune, because I earned 5k in a wk so you can 2! Thx 4 clicking!

Si je pouvais changer une chose ...

Paul Hinta, Seaforth Elementary

C'est la nuit. Vous êtes affamé. Vous êtes fatigué. Vous êtes blessé. Toute la journée vous avez voyagé à pied, tout partout dans la savane. Vous avez besoin de vous reposer. Mais vous ne pouvez pas. Vous ne pouvez pas vous endormir, car vous savez que si vous vous endormez, vous risquez d'être enlevé. Enlevé et devenir soldat. Pensez-vous que c'est juste de vivre avec cette peur? Car en Uganda, en Afrique, ceci sont les conditions dans laquelle les enfants des âges de huit ans à dix-huit ans vivent. Les enfants sont enlevés durant la nuit par l'Armée de Résistance de l'Afrique, qui veut contrôler le pays. Les enfants enlevés par l'Armée deviennent des soldats qui bataillent et tuent leurs propres parents et les personnes dans leur communauté. Ça, ce n'est pas juste et ça doit être arrêté.

Alors, comment pouvons-nous arrêter cette injustice? Ça commence avec le chef de l'armée de Résistance de l'Afrique ... Joseph Kony. Depuis 2006, il est le criminel le plus chassé dans le monde. Personne ne sait s'il est mort, mais même s'il est mort, il y a encore un chef de l'armée, car l'armée n'a pas été arrêtée, et les enfants continuent à être enlevés. On doit dire au président ou au chef de l'armée américaine d'envoyer des soldats en Uganda pour arrêter le chef de l'Armée de Résistance de l'Afrique. Mais le président ne va pas écouter une seule personne. Donc on doit avertir des autres avant que c'est trop tard. Le président ne va pas écouter une seule voix, mais il va peut-être prendre action si une de nombreuses personnes protestent cette injustice.

C'est une belle journée. Vous avez assez mangé. Vous marchez à l'école. Vous parlez avec vos amis en riant et vous vous sentez en toute sécurité. Ceci sont les conditions dans lesquelles un enfant devrait vivre. S'il vous plaît, aidez à réaliser ces conditions pour les enfants de l'Uganda. Prenons actions ensemble.

Shark Attack

Ashley Wong
Sperling Elementary

I am currently underwater, completely alone. I can't see anything but the waves and ripples on the surface of the water and underwater plants swaying and dancing, because of the reflection of light from the sunset. I can't move, not only because I'm tired but also because scuba diving equipment on my back is caught on a large rock and I've been struggling to escape for quite some time, at least 2 hours. I am like a dog on a leash tied to a bike rack. I try as hard as possible to run away but it's impossible. At least dogs are eventually released and freed. As for me, I could be stuck forever.

I see a shape charging towards me, could it be someone coming to rescue me? What could it be? Who could it be? The anonymous shape gets clearer and I can clearly see a smooth grey tail slithering through the graceful waves. Then I see two eyes, a fin and over a hundred teeth as sharp as sewing needles, coming towards me faster than the speed of light. It's a shark. I have absolutely no time to think, and my first instinct is to run. But I can't, I'm underwater and even worse, I'm trapped. SNAP! I hear the shark's jaw snap and I'm no longer attached to the giant rock. I swim, faster than I have ever swum in my life. Help, help, help! I swim towards the faint sunlight as the sun sets, and the shark continues to chase me until the water became too shallow to swim. The swift shark slithered in the shallow sea.

I ran across the shallow water so fast it was as if I was flying. The shark continued to slither like a vicious, ferocious snake. The shark was so ferocious that an angry wolf would have seemed calm and not intimidating. Then I realized that I was safe on land, on the beach where sharks couldn't reach. I turned around to see that the shark had given up and slowly edged his tail back into the depths of the ocean. I fell to my knees onto the ground where I noticed the red-purple sky, the golden sand and the graceful swaying palm trees. I can't believe I had just escaped a near death experience, I feel tired, shocked and relieved all at once. I laid down onto the sand to rest. I wonder if my next adventure could ever be as thrilling.

Grade 8

Teacup

Anthony Maag

Burnaby Central Secondary

My neighbour is a warm teacup.
Delicate porcelain, smooth and flawless,
always clean and perfectly placed,
never to be scratched or chipped.

Warm to the touch yet never
hot enough to burn.

An herbal tea,
the spirit lifting aroma permeates
through the crisp, cold air
waking you from the
trance of a daydream.

The steam that floats up in swirls
forms an airy pattern.

My neighbour is a teacup.

The Phoenix

Avital Boutorov

Burnaby Central Secondary

As I scour a mythical book,
my toes transform into razor sharp talons,
and my whole body trembles and shakes
like bottled anger.

Plumage composed of flaring fire
encases my back.

And feathers of crimson, deep yellow,
and dark embedding orange,
form what appears to be a flaming tail.

I stand poised on my toe like talons,
a half foot tall.

Enjoying a view of the world,
before disintegrating into the flaming fire
I call my own nightmare.

Because of the Golden Slipper

Laura Choo

Burnaby Central Secondary

The stepsisters have feet like sardine crates
that do not fit the golden slipper.

"Bring out your third daughter," commands
the silk clad prince.

Cinderella's foot fits perfectly.

Prince grasps Cinderella's
slight but worn hands.

"You will be my bride."

Cinderella slaps egotistic boy
across egotistic cheek.

Exits cottage:

"I hate men who make decisions for me."

Sweet-talks the footman,
and mounts prince's head ebony stallion.

Single girl spurs steed into sunset,
streaming capable, liberated,
golden curls behind her.

Prince turns to eldest stepsister:

"So, Do *you* like caviar?"

Cancer

*Melissa Fong
Alpha Secondary*

The autumn leaves danced in the wind
The river shone like silver
The winding road never seemed to end
but we walked side by side together
Your beauty seemed to illuminate
as my world fell into sorrow
In the beginning, life was normal
as new notes invaded the fridge
As time went on you fought and fought
to see another tomorrow
My silly teenage problems separated us
My notes showed no emotion
We switched roles
as the guardian to tend to your needs
I tried to show my devotion
Chemicals swirled in your veins
as we tried to cure the cancer
You told me not to fear, you told me not to cry,
but I couldn't help but wonder about the future
The autumn leaves started to fall
The river currents became colder
Your body started to shrink
I knew I had to be stronger
You started to fade away
You had no hope of life
I stayed with dad for a while
I could tell he missed his wife
When you were gone
I fell to the ground yelling at the world
A river of tears swam down my cheeks
My stomach began to twirl
My body turned frigid
As I noticed there was no note
from you on the fridge
I miss the times when you and I
walked along the flowing river
I know I must let go,
but your memory will live on
forever.

L'appel de la pluie

*Sarah Derasp
Cariboo Hill Secondary*

J'aimerais aller dehors
Pour jouer dans la pluie
Mais, mes profs ne pensent pas
Que c'est une bonne idée
D'aller la ressentir

Je sais qu'ils n'aiment pas du tout
Quand nous entrons tous mouillés
Avec les craquements de nos souliers
L'eau qui tombe goutte par goutte
De nos cheveux et au bout de notre nez
Car nos devoirs
Et leurs salles
Ne sont pas faits pour l'eau

Ils ne veulent pas
Que nous attrapons un rhume
Mais la pluie nous appelle
Avec ses flaques d'eau partout
Grandes et petites
Avec beaucoup de boue
Et la boue veut dire l'amusement pour tous

Les concierges détestent les jours où il pleut
Avec l'eau et la boue partout
Mais combien d'occasions
Y-a-t-il dans nos vies
Où nous pouvons nous faire fi
De toutes leurs attentes?

Et est-ce qu'il y a quelque chose
si amusante dans le monde
Qu'à danser dans la pluie?

Le meurtrier muet

Harir Goodarznia

Moscrop Secondary

À travers toutes les épreuves
L'intimidation, et les temps difficiles
Tu étais mon seul ami

La mort était loin.

Et puis tes cellules ont multipliées
Elles sont répandues à travers ton corps
Tu sentais faible

La mort était une pensée.

Tu as pris des pilules
De toutes formes, couleurs, et tailles
Tu as vécu la chimiothérapie

La mort était considérée.

Ton peau est devenue jaune
Tes cheveux sont tombés
Tu as perdu quelques poids

La mort était une possibilité.

Tu étais étourdi et fatigué
Tu es devenu dangereusement mince
Tu étais trop faible pour combattre

La mort était proche.

Ton corps était trop fatigué pour prendre un dernier coup d'œil
Un dernier souffle
Un dernier battement de cœur

Tu as été victime de la maladie
Tu n'étais même pas un adolescent
Tu n'as même pas un adolescent
Tu n'as même pas eu la chance de vivre ta vie

L'électrocardiogramme affiché une simple ligne
Ta tête est roulée d'un côté
Ton corps mou
Ton visage pâle et inexpressif

Je me sentais engourdie.

Parce que quand tu es mort,
Une partie de moi est morte avec toi.

-inspiré par l'expérience de mon ami

Pitter Patter

Kathy Xu, Burnaby North Secondary

The rain splatters onto the window in my darkly lit room violently. I tremble slightly under the warm blankets. The continuous pitter patter of the rain is never ending, smashing against the glass as if jeering at my sweaty palms and shaking legs gleefully. It's the first night I've spent without the presence of Mama beside me. The absence of her familiar warmth and reassuring words is strange and scary. Mama told me all kids at six years old slept in their own rooms, all six year olds were brave. Then I am not brave.

I pull the cover of my quilt up to my nose and my eyes wander to the window. The blinds are drawn up and I see the raindrops clearly. Each one drips down slowly, then hurries down the smooth glass, it's mesmerizing to watch and soon I forget about the darkness and I follow the simply rhythm of the rain.

A flash of lightning penetrates through my window boastfully. The brilliant light illuminates my room for a few seconds and fear stirs inside me again. But strangely, the light also struck me as radiant, mysterious, as if an unknown being is showing me something that no one else has ever seen. Suddenly, a clap of thunder rings through my ears. I yelp and quickly hide under the covers. I'm shuddering and I'm tempted to call for Mama, but her snores stop me. Sweat trickles down my forehead, my cheek, to my chin and I wipe it away with the tip of my finger. I take a deep breath then calmly step down from my bed and walk to the window. I perch my elbows on the ledge and look outside. The thunder was brief, the rain has already diminished to a light drizzle. As I watch the rain, I realize, the rain wasn't meant to be intimidating, it never was. Instead, it's more like a humble dance, tapping lithely, washing away all the mistakes of the day. I look carefully into the night again. A smile creeps up to the corner of my mouth. The night has completely taken over, mastering the universe in its domain. It is unlike the day, busy, hurried, rushed. I lift my finger to the shining glass and follow a sliding raindrop, moments like these are so rare, so easy to miss.

My eyelids are heavy. I step back into bed and rub my hands together, they're so cold from pressing against the window. I lie down and peek outside, the moon is shining. It has stopped playing hide and seek and has finally stepped out from the murky grey clouds. Today the moon is round. A jolly face grinning down at me, giving me courage, singing me a silent lullaby. I shut my eyes and smile. The night is magnificent. Tomorrow I will sleep by myself again, without Mama. The night is not dark, it is a bright silence waiting to be heard.

Liam

Alisha Savet

Burnaby North Secondary

I sat silently still on the couch with my hands fidgeting nervously. Today was the day. I could feel my heart thumping wildly in my chest as if it were about to explode. The eerie night's silence made the wait that much more suspenseful. I finally willed myself up and started across the lonely room and sat by the windowsill. It was dark, and all I could see was the freshly crisp frost covering everything it could lay its delicate crystal like structure upon. My breath started to fog up the window, just like the steam on a bathroom mirror after a long hot shower. Just then I was blinded by the intensity of lights and surrounded by the familiar purr of my mom's car engine. The lights flickered off freeing me from the sudden blast of light as I prepared myself for the moment I'd known was coming. I heard my mom's comforting yet worn out voice become clearer as she neared and the jangling of keys being searched. I turned away from the window and stared at the wooden door awaiting their arrival. The door creaked open and I saw my mom's warm smile welcome me. I attempted to smile back in return but I'm pretty sure it turned into a grimace. Just then, my mom stepped clear of the doorway and there he was in a baby blue and hazel brown patterned car seat. My new baby brother. I let out a slight gasp but then quickly recovered. Mom looked at me with soft eyes as she placed the car seat in front of me. I cautiously kneeled down in front of the car seat and stared at his unusual figure that was wrapped snugly in a blue blanket. He let out a gentle sigh and he resumed his peaceful slumber. I examined his fresh face and contemplated for a while on who he looked like more, but then decided his face was too brand new to tell. I carefully brought up my hand and slowly touched his cheek. His skin felt paper thin; his smooth flawless cheeks were as delicate as a butterfly's wings. Just then his eyes snapped open; I backed my hand away instantly in surprise. Ah, he has my mom's eyes, OUR mom's eyes I corrected myself. He has warm chocolate brown eyes framed with surprisingly thick eyelashes. He looked around the room taking in his newly found surroundings. He already had a full head of luscious midnight black hair that was completely tangle free. I then heard a sharp cry that snapped me out of my thoughts. As his cries became louder his skin turned into a darker shade of red. I picked up his fragile body and rocked him at a steady pace. His sharp cries turned into a gentle whimper then went silent all together. I stared at his fragile sleeping figure and brushed my lips softly against his forehead. I felt my heart swell in my chest. It was like something was tugging unusually at my heart when I looked at him. He then let out a silky yawn and relaxed into my arms. At that very moment I knew what was causing my heart to swell, what was creating the flutters in my tummy, what was causing my view of the entire world to change - it was love.

Drip Drop

Lilyan Jia, Burnaby North Secondary

I walk slowly on the ledge of the school's dull driveway, holding my arms out for balance, looking down at my bright, yellow, rain boots. The vibrant colour against the boring, lifeless pavement.

I hear whispers in the distance. I am alone; all the other kids are huddling under the protective roof of the undercover area, hiding from the chilly weather. I'm confused. Why isn't anyone playing? Playing is way more fun than sitting.

The ground is hard and damp, making me look at the greyish-blue sky, checking for rain. Dark clouds are drifting, covering almost the entire sky. I don't want to get wet, but the leaves dancing playfully in the breeze are tempting me to go out, into the wind, instead of going to my friends.

The bell is going to ring. But, before I know it, gravel is grinding beneath my thinly soled rain boots. Slowing down to an amble when I reach the dry grass field, I feel a gust of wind at my back, pushing me to go faster. I sprint, then stumble into a big pile of intensely coloured fall leaves. I hear the crunch of the autumn leaves under me, see the sharp fall colours that remind me of freezing, cold mornings and smell the earthy scent of rich soil. I gaze at the gloomy, murky sky and see the first droplet of rain fall from right above me. A perfect, silver raindrop tumbles, then, hits my forehead. I cringe. The rain is icy and leaves me feeling cold and alone. I guess that's why people hide under umbrellas when it's raining. When the rain starts falling harder, I still don't move. A bell rings faintly. I close my eyes and wait. It seems like hours before my eyes flutter open. The sound of rain is almost comforting now. The rain doesn't feel uncomfortable and harsh any more, instead it feels calm, refreshing and serene. There's something about the way a place looks when it's raining. The clear water reflects all colours, and amplifies it, making the place look beautiful and lively. I finally stand up, my clothes soaked, leaves stuck in my hair. I breathe in deeply. The air is crisp and airy. I can see my breath when I exhale. The world looks different, almost like the place was renewed. Now, the fall colours look warm and inviting, instead of sharp and piercing. I watch the rain create ripples in the giant puddle at my feet. I jump into the puddle without a second thought, making the water muddy, and my boots fill up with water. I smile, then I realize not everything has only one side. Like, fire. It's dangerous, severe, but bright and welcoming. And so is rain. Harsh, cold, but crisp, and refreshing. When the rain stops, I start trudging back to school. Feeling the sun come out behind, I glance back at the field. A rainbow has now appeared, the place glowing with life.

In Her Shadow

Celine Kim, Burnaby North Secondary

My whole life was lived within someone's shadow; there was always someone who was better than me wherever I went. Over time, I fought my way out of many of those shadows, but there has always been one shadow I could never overcome: my cousin's. She was quiet, smart, pretty and talented. I was constantly being compared to her.

"Why can't you be like your cousin?" People would ask in disappointment, as if I was inferior to her by choice, just to spite them. I would argue that everyone was different, but they'd interrupt, saying that my cousin never talked back.

"Celine, look at your cousin. Why can't you play the piano like her?" my grandmother asked me once during one of my cousin's piano practices.

I frowned. "But I can play just as well as she can!" I didn't understand. Why was my cousin always better than me? I practiced just as hard as her for everything, maybe even more. I couldn't see a difference in our skill levels. Although it wasn't the first time I was compared to her, it was the first time I felt truly insignificant.

That was the day I started giving up. After years of being beaten down and forced to believe that I was worthless, I changed, becoming self conscious and introverted. Fading into the background, I stopped vying for attention and accepted the fact that I would always come second. What made it worse was that I loved my cousin, more than I loved myself.

How could I resent her? Even if she was the cause of my misery, I couldn't bring myself to think negatively of her.

And so I grew up, cowering in the shadow of my cousin while she marched on, paving the path for me. By then, I was a mere shell of the person I used to be. I was shy and timid, mindlessly living my life the way people told me to.

The only thing that remained constant with me was my love for drawing. It was the one thing my cousin couldn't do that I could. The one thing I could be proud about. Drawing gave me another world, another reality to immerse myself in. The endless possibilities gave me hope in those dark and lonely times.

Slowly but surely, my true self returned. What started off as hope became a resolve. I stepped out of the shadow of my cousin and stood up for myself. I started trying my best at everything again, and I was garnering respect.

Eventually, the comparisons ceased, and I was satisfied and proud. I regained respect from others and also myself.

If you saw me now, you wouldn't be able to tell that I was at some point, the person I described. Although I still can't outshine my cousin, I no longer feel insignificant or inferior to her. My advice for everyone struggling with the same problem: just try your best and things will work out in the end.

Goodbye, Goodnight

Qi Qi, Burnaby North Secondary

I pushed the door open and stepped outside. It was dusk, the air cool and moist against my skin, the shadows waving languidly. I took a deep breath and pressed the cold stiff body closer to my chest. The sun was setting, the sky dyed a bloody red. I paused unconsciously for the “mmeeeeow!” and four white paws to dig into my jeans, then looked down and realized I would never hear and feel it again. My Mew is gone, and she will not come back.

I tumbled my way to the backyard, my legs numb and weak from disuse. The garden looked beautiful, the sinking sun shrouding everything in a red-golden light. I wondered briefly if the marvel of heaven could beat this little place, then sighed and shook my head.

Mew’s body was tiny in her grave, tiny and thin. I sprinkled petals over her still form, broke off a branch and carefully placed it between her paws. She seemed peaceful as an angel. I bit my lip and bound her a silent farewell.

I finished the rest of the work quickly. I brushed petals and twigs over the black ugly scar, wiping away all traces of her. Mew had always loved this place, now she shall rest here forever.

I took a step back. Through my blurred vision, I saw a small white figure lying on the ground, curled into a ball. I blinked and it was gone.

“Sleep well, Mew.” The memories pained me so much. I sat down beside the little grave. Would Mew feel lonely on her way to heaven? Tired and alone like I am?

I closed my eyes and pictured Mew, lying in my arms, snuggling against my chest. I saw her rubbing her forehead against my shoulder, purring, and me running my fingers through the fur on her forehead, as if tousling the hair of a beloved. Like always. But none of it seemed right. Everything was fuzzy, Mew’s purrs were strange and unreal. The memories became frozen the moment Mew’s body ceased radiating heat, and soon they will be gone completely. How sad it is, that we always want to dwell on the past.

It was dark now. The sky was pitch black save the unusually bright moon. I felt myself smile. Mew can’t be lost, with such a beautiful light illuminating her path. Would Mew miss me, living in a place of beauty and life, with endless balls of yarn to play with?

“Miaow.” My breath caught in my throat at the sound. I turned around quickly. The kitten. My features softened as I hugged him onto my lap. I didn’t even have time to name him. He’s so similar to Mew yet so unlike her.

“You can be Lethe*.” I whispered. And I smiled, knowing it’s a good name and it fit him well. Mew is gone but Lethe would be here. I’m exhausted but not alone. I felt him squirm in my lap, soft fur brushing against my skin. I sighed and closed my eyes, deeply and contentedly.

*Lethe: (Greek mythology) The river of forgetfulness. The souls of the dead were required to drink from it to forget everything in their past.

The Darkness

Megan Chan, Burnaby North Secondary

Phone calls, slamming doors and garage doors. On such a quiet, dark, subtle morning, these were the things that woke me up. I always slept with my bedroom door closed to block morning alarms and awakenings. Yet this time, something felt wrong. I lay in bed, yearning for more clues to be heard but nothing came. As I rested more, I decided I could no longer sleep and opened my sketchbook to my nearest entry: an unfinished shading of a dark sky, with black dusted clouds, a stream of light coming down, unwelcomed by the ashes. The border read *"Sometimes the light just can't break into the darkness."*

As I got ready for school that day, I heard my mother on the phone in the hallway. She frowned as she hung up and said my aunt would be driving me to school because my father had to use the car to go to the hospital. She started walking away as if this was a typical answer. "Why?" I asked, stepping forward. She slowly turned around with deep, hardened eyes. "Your grandfather just passed away."

My mother kept talking but I couldn't hear her. I felt as if the air around me had disappeared and my head turned into a bust. A million things ran through my head at once and I slid into a tight ball. A heart attack, was I having one? No. But that's what he had. That's what I later learned. My chest heaved in pain with a sharp pulling at my heart. Hard enough to pull it out. How could this happen? I just saw him last week. What...how...but...why?

Flesh-eating disease. My grandfather seemed so pale and thin. Yet he was still fully there. Alive, moving, breathing, talking and attentive. Sure, he was weak, but he was still fully there. How can someone just end like that???

By the time I calmed down, my aunt's car was stalled across the street. I caught her glance through the window and she tossed me a sympathetic nod. My cousin, seated in the back seat, knew me well enough to know I would take loss hard. She squeezed my hand and whispered, "I'm sorry." To me this sounded insanely bizarre. Sorry?? Sorry about what? She did nothing to hurt him.

Outside, people carried on with normal life as if no one was gone or silenced. Their blank expressions tore my heart and gave me an urge to smack them. But then, they don't know, they're clueless and I can't expect them to sympathize with me anyways. A dark window in my heart opened up and I shook as tears welled. The shock was gone and replaced with a scarring pain.

The bell rang as I tuned out my classmate's gossiping and carved black lead into my sketchbook. Being left-handed, my hands were soon dyed with a black sheen. I excused myself to wash it off. My mind blanked as I watched a black, bubbly mixture wash down the drain.

My sketch was complete, having dark, slick clouds and the casted light accentuated.

"Sometimes the light just can't break into the darkness."

Endless Blue

Grace Yang, Burnaby North Secondary

I cringe as I dip my toe in the glimmering water of the pool. The familiar scent of chlorine fills my lungs and you can hear laughing and splashing everywhere. Maybe it's just me, but today the water feels colder than before. I slowly lower myself centimetre by centimetre causing more and more shivers to rush up my spine. I can see my dad, on the bench, watching me with intense, dark eyes. I've always had my mind set that I had to make him proud.

It's the first time he's here to watch me swim. Suddenly, anxiety struck me. I was never afraid of the water before but today the usual bright, blue water was distorted. The blue was too bright and hurt my eyes. I look down and see that the water below me seems endless and would drag me down. The swimmers beside me swam as if they were mocking me saying, "We know how to swim better than you! Go on, embarrass yourself!" What if I drown? Or fail the course? My dad would see everything and I would never forgive myself that I wasn't able to please him.

By now I'm fully submerged in the water. It didn't feel that cold anymore but I'm still frozen, like I'm paralyzed. My instructor's probably telling me to start swimming but my mind's too mixed up to process the words. Everything around me is just a blur. Everyone else has already started swimming but I'm still standing here dumbfounded, at the verge of tears. I don't know how much time passed by but before I could stop myself, my vision became blurry and tears are streaming down my face then falling into the pool one by one making tiny ripples. They come faster and faster. I feel like screaming but there's a huge lump in my throat that restrains me.

Then, through my tears I see my dad watching me. It might've been my imagination but I think I saw a glint of disappointment that slowly turned to hope. It's as if he's cheering me on silently. Like he knew that tiny action would be all the encouragement I need to get going. I regain control of all my muscles and push off the wall with all the strength I had. I swim like I've never swam before. I'm kicking as hard as I can and reaching my arms forward as if there's something that I'm desperate to grab. The water that surrounds me feels so relaxing and I remember the reason why I love swimming. My heart's racing but I'm almost there. I take my last strokes and burst out of the water gasping for air. Pride is coursing through me and I know that I'm wearing the biggest smile on my face. I glance over at my dad, his eyes are bursting with joy and I knew at that moment, that I'd won, that I was able to make him feel proud of me.

Grade 9-10

Who I Really Am

Kurtis Dunbar, Cariboo Hill Secondary

I am from a small house, brown bricks, green door.
I am from nothing but chaos where destruction is
unavoidable and fighting back seems mandatory.
In this place only the oldest rules.

I am from "I hate you" and "don't touch my stuff,"
which between the six of us is a lot.
I am from running around to get out the door,
always being busy and "get it yourself."

His place seems to be a mess.
Yet somehow through all of that I am really from
a chaotic peace. "Yes please," and "sure, go ahead"
are not too far away when you search for them.

The occasional peace does not last long but when
it is there, everyone where I am from seems content.
Lastly I am from "you're grounded" and "go to your room."
At this point the peace is gone.

Now it is back to the chaos and destruction we have
grown accustom to. This is where I am from,
but only for half of my time. I am truly from week on and
week off, two homes, two families.

I am from a divorce separating my life in two.
Both homes completely different from the other and still
somehow they seem so similar. I am also from a second
house, red stairs, blue exterior and lots of windows.

Even here chaos roams, yet this chaos is different, a
beautiful chaos. Teamwork is required to take on any
problem. I am from babies crying and "watch the kid."
This place is an arena for battle and I feel like the pawn.

The only retreat is to my small, quiet, yellow room
which takes me far away from real life.
Once I leave that sanctuary I am from
"help now" and "hurry!"

Just like that, without warning, back into the never ending
battle. Both homes with their own kinds of chaos, both
homes with different beauties.
Each week life is the same.

The Book of Everlasting Dreams and Wonder

Gillian Xu, Burnaby South Secondary

A tale,
That was all it took,
With a composition shorter than a children's book,
It carried within its embroidered pages mesmerisation,
One lone female strode throughout the streets of Earth,
Embodying a head of delicate cascading auburn waves,
Dressed in subtle attire with a pale pastel skirt,
Billowing in the gentle breaths of tender wind,
In her hands she grasped this book,
And travelled from city to city, sharing its story.

A tale,
That when unearthed to the minds of humanity,
Could bring tears of despair to one's pair of eyes,
And yet,
Only one page afterwards,
A brilliant smile captured the features of her attentive listeners,
Bending emotions and masking clarity,
These words of wisdom and fidelity delivered empowerment,
For the minds of mankind that will retell the tale again and again, eternally.

A tale,
With the ability to persuade curious individuals to peek,
Within these pages of secrecy and brilliance,
Just to witness the wonder,
If only a glimpse, hint or peek,
But nothing lies within,
Not a single word,
A book filled only with blank sheets of parchment.

A tale,
Retold from the mouth of the girl,
Was simple enough for the listeners to fall into a universe of reminiscent history,
Their past filled with terrifying regrets,
Intertwined with the captivating leaps of joy awaiting in their future,
An impossible tale,
The words tumbling from the female's lungs one by one,
Composed an exquisite entanglement of beauty,
But did she really tell a thousand contrasting tales?
No, it was one and only one,
Eloquently crafted to suit the taste of all,
A true masterpiece, nothing less and nothing more.

let's stay in neverland

Becky Tu

Cariboo Hill Secondary

we were five, playing in the sandbox
 building castles and digging moats
 shaping a whole new world
 to call our own, and together we
 were the kings and the queens
 until it was time for lunch
 we were ten, learning new words
 on the playground we played grounders
 it was perfectly fine to invite others
 to fly with us wherever our wings take us
 it didn't matter where we came from
 under the bright sky, we're all the same
 we were thirteen, feeling self-conscious
 for the first time we're noticing
 just how different we all are, and
 how much we want to be seen
 we were trying to grow up too soon
 and it's lonely when you can't read
 your favourite comics with me
 when you're too cool for school
 we were fifteen, believing their words
 while pretending we still ruled the world
 trying to figure everything out at once
 starting to realize reality isn't as
 beautiful as our imagination can be, and
 control was hard to grasp especially
 when you're still insecure about your heart
 we were seventeen, wanting different things
 wandering wild and lost, desperately trying
 to make the good times last
 they said it's the time of our lives
 and we should be glad to step
 into the "real world"
 but we wanted more than this
 forgetting those things we dreamed
 lying next to each other with our eyes wide
 and hands clasped, hoping tomorrow
 will bring new surprises and happinesses
 when did we lose that carefree innocence
 why did we ever want to grow up so fast?

A Plain Old Green Streetlight

Sylvia Nam

Burnaby Mountain Secondary

The sun,
 majestic and proud
 rises from the east at dawn;
 marking a beginning of another day.
 Shining its light
 so glorious and bright,
 king of the sky brings life
 to seeds waiting to become buds,
 to buds waiting to bloom into
 flowers, that ornament
 the city with their sweet aromas.

Hours pass by
 the sky grows darker and darker
 as the sun disappears;
 and the moon illuminates the sky;
 capturing a moment of love
 of couples who cuddle
 against the windowsill.
 Meanwhile, thousands of stars
 dot the pitch-dark background,
 filling the night sky with their
 glistening sparks.

Then there it stands,
 a plain old green streetlight,
 rusted, with its paint chipped off.
 Although, not as blazing as the sun's glare,
 or as brilliant as stars' sparkles,
 it stands tall and straight
 Confidently, with a sole purpose.
 It may not be as significant as others,
 but it carries equal amounts of importance.
 Knowing, it shines its light
 when the moon is overcast
 by a blanket of clouds,
 and on corners that the moon overlooked.
 It comforts the night runners with their dogs,
 and the lonely ones by the bus stops.
 For the rest of the night,
 its light still remains bright,
 until the sun comes back,
 then finally it rests.

For Richer, For Poorer

Breyden Chong

Burnaby North Secondary

The man with the top hat,
with a flawless and unblemished face,
gazes at the warming sun.
Wearing his silk, checkered tie and
Italian Prada shoes,
that still retain the new leather scent.
His sophisticated hairstyle
stays slicked back,
without any evidence of imperfection.

The man at the street corner,
lays huddled in tattered blankets,
soiled with flaky dirt and grime.
His weathered complexion
and shattered teeth,
reveal the many years of stress and fatigue.
People walk by,
shaking their heads with disgust.
Others pity the man,
tossing a loose coin or two.

The man with the top hat,
rushes into his sliver Lamborghini,
always on the move.
His black suitcase
with a lustrous brass clasp,
resting on the passenger seat.

The man at the street corner,
drags his shopping cart,
with a missing back left wheel.
He scavenges the nearby trash bin,
finding a couple of aluminum cans,
and a half-eaten bagel.

The man with the top hat,
walks into a room of people and
delivers a thoughtful speech
with his mastery of words.
He smiles graciously as the
room breaks out in
a heart-warming applause.

The man at the street corner,
takes his usual seat at a fast food joint.
He orders the typical
cheeseburger and drink,
with a small handful of quarters and dimes,
and sits isolated from the other customers.
Eyes wander towards his area,
as people quickly shuffle away to eat.

The man with the top hat,
signals the waiter to order.
Shiny silverware is aligned on his place mat,
beside fresh flowers and a burning candle.
Soon delivered with trays of fine cuisine,
each having a distinctive aroma and taste.

The man at the street corner,
saunters slowly to his home on concrete.
He rubs his sagging eyes,
and positions himself under the blanket,
to endure yet another cold night.

It is under the same moon in which
the man takes off his top hat,
and struggles beneath
the layers of feathered covers.
In a warm, heated mansion,
he rests on a king-sized bed,
without much worry about tomorrow.

Justify the Means

Kevin Kang, Burnaby Mountain Secondary

The silence is broken with a howling wind
Blowing dust where smoke before,
Flew perpetually upwards
A production of ambition
Tendrils of chaos over a broken world
And now a dust bowl resides here
That tells a story of puzzling start
And predictable end

Weaponry that should have been banished rose
Aiding countries waged in war
Freedom and liberty challenged
A stage for the future
Avidity for power consumed the calm
And trails of smoke concealed the sky
The world was in panic, mayhem
And then silence

A catalyst for peace was brought unto Earth
The viruses of lies bore deep
Froze amity, froze choices
A bounded selection
The erratic choice was chosen
The harmony sought for, gained
Long lost peace was achieved
Falsely brought on

All those standout Summer Sundays
Spent with siblings in the park
Laughing nonchalantly
A carefree date
Golden stretches in time
But no one is here to remember
Compromised, those moments, gone
And the peace, thought for them
Now just guaranteed

The departed conflicts forgotten by all
The gains of those both good and bad
Now disregarded, cast aside
A grayed out globe
Roams the stars with no purpose
Inhabitants are retired and future is lost
The past forgotten and forlorn pallor
The price of nuclear war
Now peace

Raindrop Galleries

Kaya Kurz

Alpha Secondary

I like to think
that life is chaos-
a series of events
strung together
like popcorn on a Christmas tree.

These events collect as raindrops
rippling through an ocean
in which everyone
concocts their own gallery.

On this journey,
others will float past you
with their own archive of rain
their ripples overlapping yours
concentric rings
colliding

All the while, new memories
will fall in,
ripple out,
and change the patterns left
only moments before
And life continues on this way-
until the day
we stop floating,

Remaining only as a raindrop
in someone else's gallery

A Hardship

Alona Besan

Burnaby South Secondary

Friendship is taking down the Berlin wall
with your own two hands
Slowly chiselling away at the stubborn,
solid rock

You feel around the edged outline,
wedge your fingers at the creases,
and pull.

You aim all your effort
through the muscles tight in your hands,
begging them to wind, twist, and knot
around the brick
and PULL

The material comes loose.

But

just as your lips form a sigh of relief
an arm

reaches out to you
through the ghost of a brick,
an arm

ties itself to the collar of your shirt,
an arm

pulls you forward and through the opening,
an arm

leads you to the other side.

Your task is done.

But

now you stand perplexed;
have you been welcomed in
or

have you fallen out?

You turn and see
the stubborn solid, brick staring back at you.

You begin to pick at the rock.

Friendship is taking down the Berlin wall.

Counting Crows

Rachel Loo

Burnaby Mountain Secondary

Endless mobs of charred lace
Glittering colourless; Perched in their electric
lines of victory,
They are watching.
A flock of crows is called a Murder.
They are *always* watching.
Sweet Apollo, call back Corvus,
Let him rest on the low boughs of the Alder.
His kin, they wheeze so heinous
Parched for a cup of water.
A Murder will kill its own,
Like Hitchcock knew, their cacophonous cries
Will be goodbye.
Their loyalty, warped into their very name,
what they are known.
But they are more than this, this crime,
A Murder will pause at a death.
Sombre silence as they pause,
stilled in their lines,
That allegiance kept until each final breath.
A flock of crows is called a Murder,
One that will always remember your face,
With each dart of the eye, and every murmur,
They are always watching.

Chin Up

Kevin Moon

Burnaby Mountain Secondary

He wears his sweater;
it's three sizes too small
He may be poor
but he smiles like a billionaire.
He may be short but he feels seven feet tall
He may look dull but his heart is full of flare.
He has dreams he knows he can't fulfill, yet
He's still looking up, living life on a wing.
He's shining, glowing because when
He looks in the mirror, he sees a king.

Red Wagon

Emma Karlsen

Burnaby North Secondary

Everyday she played
With her small red wagon
The shiny paint made her smile
As she pulled her dolls along
Everyday she wandered
Around with her red wagon
Looking for a place
That could be just her own
Then one day she hurt
More than she had before
And her small red wagon
Wasn't enough to hide her pain
Then one day she left
Behind her small red wagon
When she was running 'way
From all her memories and fears
Everyday she hoped
Someone would remind her
The direction that she came from
So that she could go back
Now everyday she waits
For her small red wagon
Hoping that one day
She can find her way back home

He has all the right reasons to give up
He can stop existing at any time.
He's living a life on constant pay cut,
But he knows
Every moment alive is his prime.
He's running.
Not running FROM anything,
He's running
Because he's eager
To find the future that awaits him.

Liquid Amber

Kaya Kurz, Alpha Secondary

I watch you:
 taking swigs from a bottle
 of liquid amber,
 I watch it
 freeze your insides
 with every swallow,
 I watch the way
 your fingers slip,
 I watch the way
 your eyes glaze,
 I watch the way
 your hands twitch
 with the slurring of your speech.
 I watch the way
 you watch me.
 But I watch you right back.
 And I watch the bottle,
 and I wonder:
 which one will be empty first?

Outside vs. Inside

*Pardis Roshanzamir
 Cariboo Hill Secondary*

On the outside,
 She may be gorgeous
 She may be smiling
 She may have many friends
 She may be athletic
 She may be intelligent
 She may have talent
 She may seem flawless.
 But on the inside,
 She is struggling
 She is crying
 She is begging for help
 She is searching for a way out
 She is constantly in conflict with herself.
 Yet, she hides it.

Mr. Moon

*Sarah Hardjowasito
 Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

He came in his cloak.
 Blotched and tattered though it was,
 it fit the space nicely,
 Hissing and steaming a cloudy purple
 now and then whenever it brushed the light.
 His wispy beard and eyebrows
 near concealed his face,
 A pale, glowing face, drained of blood.
 Instead, the blood pooled down his face
 in quicksilver drops,
 Accumulating in a shimmering puddle below.
 I resisted the urge to jump in it.
 He could not bring himself to look at me fully,
 Nor I him,
 And the cold and the dark
 filled the silence instead.
 His face wasn't cheese, but a jigsaw puzzle.
 The pieces had been cut roughly with a knife,
 and then sewn back together again
 Painstakingly, with frostbitten fingers.
 I saw him mounting a few words,
 but no song came out.
 His dead lips fumbled rawly, incoherently.
 I couldn't look up anymore.
 I couldn't see the stars.

Inner Fear

Kathryn Choi

Burnaby Mountain Secondary

You take a step forward – towards the bright blue waves crashing against your flip-flops, barely keeping balance on the multitudinous jagged gray rocks. You inhale the coastal air; it's refreshing and clean, much different than the heavily polluted city air. A salty, but crisp breeze enters you. From a distance, you hear birds calling out. They swoop down low and glide against the bare surface of the ocean. Behind you, you see some kids full of youth, happily giggling unaware of their surroundings.

You take another step forward, this time, entering the green-blue translucent water. You cringe at the cold, the wash of the ocean splashing against your ankles. You notice the tiny bubbles that the waves left behind, it tickles.

You continue to advance. Far off into the distance, you see a clear straight line connecting the sky to the sea. You note that it forms a beautiful gradient pattern, mashing the light peacock blue of the sky with the ultramarine of the water. They naturally blend together. You decide to go further, until you find yourself above knee-deep in the paint of opaque navy.

You stop moving. You suddenly realize the unimaginable depths of the ocean. It slightly intimidates you. You can no longer hear the chatty voices of whose children are chuckling, or the remote calling of the birds. Panic slowly rises up within and you decide to turn back.

You retrace your steps and eventually you can see your tiny toes in the now light royal blue shade of translucence. You slowly stride out of the ankle-deep shore, leading up to the sandy beach. Grains of sticky sand attach themselves onto and beneath your flip-flops and gently scratch the bottoms of your feet. You take one last look at the ocean. What once seemed like a peaceful, calm place to be will now forever remain as an appalling, dreadful situation.

Amberly

Lara Mercier-Jung

Burnaby Mountain Secondary

A bumpy bus ride on Route 42 stops and lets me off on Eighth Avenue, battered, hemp and cloth bags in hand. It's springtime, a chill morning with the bright, crisp scent of honeysuckle in bloom. People are congregating near the gate, men and smiling wives with young children on the hip. Mr. Carson comes, waves at the gathered folk and plucks a set of keys from his belt to unlock the gate. The farmer's market is open and alive. And so am I.

A few shaky strides through the gate and she's seated on a stool, the wood creaking from her girth, stripping cornstalks of their stems with practiced, fleshy fingers. A conveniently placed garden trellis conceals my gaze for now. I watch her offer a sugar cookie to Little Jonny Benton who shyly slides it from her outstretched palm. Pale, murky eyes beam at him as he stands on tiptoe to kiss her. Cheeks dangling past her chin like a basset hound's ears spread into a smile as Benton's tiny, puckered lips are engulfed in flesh. *Dear goodness, she's beautiful.*

I slowly saunter down the market path towards her faded stall, spurs rattling with each step. "Morning, Amberly," I tip the brim of my ten gallon. Thin lips reward me with an infinitesimal smile while sunburnt eyelids remain fixated on her work. I suppose I'll come back.

Blonde Betty Lou is milking her Daddy's cow and tapping her bare heels to an inaudible rhythm. I ruffle her blonde locks in passing. Next, Mrs. Brantley's gentle smile and acclimatized hands tempt a slice of sour-cherry pie and a plastic fork into mine. Then potatoes and fresh eggs await me at Matthew's produce stall. His eyes are hidden by a brim and as always, a wheat stalk is perched between his moustache and lower lip. Matthew waves off my \$5.00 bill. No one has ever seen him accept so much as a dime, except last spring when Mayor Bramlett paid a visit and was charged \$6.00 for an apple. My steps are slow and people click irritated tongues before passing me - consequences of an otherwise occupied mind. *Come now, Bill. Tell her.*

I take my time around the corner, having to push away low tree branches that protrude into my path. Leroy calls to me while hanging out the door of his trailer in ripped jeans and an unbuttoned flannel shirt. "Good luck, buddy" he calls. I manage to aim a sharp jut of my head in his direction, weak lips and dry mouth rendered useless by nerves. My arms tense and my biceps swell in my sleeves. She's still seated on her stool, hands resting on her bulging stomach. A breeze plays into her auburn tresses as she closes her eyes and tilts her head toward the sun ... *Maybe she's an angel.*

I hear my spurs rattling yet I'm not able to remember wanting to move. I was stunned. But I'm approaching her stall. Soon I'm close and those murky, sapphire eyes are blinking at me. I take her plump hand in both of mine. Her peeling eyelids seem to be contemplating our interlocking fingers. "Amberly, look at me, darlin'." I squeeze her fingers. She simply peers up at me with the most exquisite expression, a gorgeous vulnerability. "I adore you." *I adore you.*

A Home Among Houses

Andrea Figueroa

Burnaby Mountain Secondary

The city was made up of pristine, identical houses. All white and clean, each with a small door and no windows. One home in the middle was not like the rest. It was like a patchwork quilt, made of all different materials: concrete, wood, brick, glass and metal. It had no sense of organization and was all thrown together, unsystematically and seemingly at random. The city's other inhabitants always wondered why the family that lived in the home did not renovate it, since they undoubtedly had the means to do so. Like all the men in the city, the man who owned the home had a stable, well-paying job. The people were irritated; they felt the home ruined the perfection and uniformity of the city. They often asked the family to alter their home more to the rest of the people's liking, but they unheeded all the requests.

One day, a freak windstorm hit the city. But all the houses being relatively new and made with the finest technology, were unaffected. The dilapidated home in the middle however, did not make it through the storm unscathed. Other than the concrete and brick foundation, the whole place was torn apart; the different supplies the home was made out of were dispersed all over the city. The other inhabitants presumed the family would now take this opportunity to build a new house just like theirs. Instead, the family combed throughout the area to find all the missing fragments of their home, and proceeded to build it exactly the way it was.

The people were shocked. "What a peculiar thing to do!" They would think. "How impractical!" They began to look down on the family, regarding them as odd and stupid, and belittling and mocking them behind their backs.

The windstorm did not go away. Every year, at around the same time, it would return, and the broken-down home would be torn to bits again. Every year, the family would dutifully and cheerfully rebuild it.

Eventually, the people became fed up with this house right in the middle of their city, tarnishing their scenery. They decided to resolve the problem, once and for all. They all gathered money together for a wrecking ball.

They had heard that the family was going on vacation for a couple of weeks. The night they were supposed to leave, they brought the wrecking ball to the home. All the city's inhabitants came to watch; pleased to see the ruin of the lone thing they deemed to be wrong with their city. The huge mass of metal collided with the home and easily tore the top of it off. Despite all the clatter, everyone observing heard a feeble cry from inside the home. One man yelled at the driver of the wrecking ball to stop. Stunned, most people just stood there, paralyzed. Two men looked through the debris. Fifteen minutes later, they had brought all the mangled bodies of the family out and rested them on the immaculate street.

Grades 11-12

Last One Standing

*Sarah Savić Kallesøe
Byrne Creek Secondary*

Postcard memories of clear, blue skies,
of the marine and evergreen,
and of the white pearls shining,
between a pair of sun kissed lips.

The ocean's history and pride,
right before your fingertips.
Breathes with the depth of seas,
and the smell of sand and surf

. . . are rudely interrupted
by a rancid stench.

Deep breathes become shallow,
and shallow becomes hoarse.
It's hard to gasp,
in this heaviness of smoke.

Smiles turn down,
and gasps turn to shreds,
and that cloud of suffocation,
it simply
s p r e a d s.

There's nothing to stop it,
not anymore.

Every tree has dropped,
every birch, pine, and sycamore.

Yet one little sapling, still hangs limp,
and he quakes and quivers with fear.
Repugnant monsters with axe and saw,
creep and slither near.

These barbarians have executed,
every tree of every forest,
to feed their bottomless needs.

This little tree, he stands alone,
and those sweaty palms grab hold.
He tries to grasp, but the soil is dry.

His pale sepia leaves rattle and shake,
His thin, parched, bark peels away,
and his thirsty roots give way.
He takes one last gulp,
and up he is jerked,

then off he is sent,
to be the monument,
of the very last tree,
on dying Mother Earth.

Grandma

*Sarah Wong
Cariboo Hill Secondary*

I was raised by a
Noodle-making
Dumpling-eating
Coffee-drinking
Woman

A traditional
Chinese-talking
Family pot-luck gathering
Tae-chi doing
Woman

A sympathetic
Kiss-smothering
Nagging-arguing
Grand-kid spoiling
Woman

A wedding-going
Chinese soap opera watching
Avid reading
Mahjong playing
Woman

I was raised by
My grandma.

Stellar

Sammi Wu

Burnaby North Secondary

A Star shines in solidarity,
Contently above the lake.
Undisturbed, the glass surface
Mirrors the astral sheen
With pleasant silence.

But,
At the corner of the evergreens,
A shadow lives, swiftly darting among
The sore bark and whimpering branches.
It scurries, chasing something
Just out of view.
The air twirls lightly.

Then the shadow sits at the water's mouth.
Its soft black curls lick the pristine surface,
And its eyes pierce the silvery mask.
The star stares and
the shadow glances back.
The wind sings.

Peace breaks.
The reflection ruptures and
The forest dances,
a thousand times over.

Ode to Painting

Canny Kwok

Alpha Secondary

The canvas stares blankly
at me
as I pick up my companion
a simple yet complicated
tool
with a wooden handle
and brown hair
as smooth as a groomed horse
it comes to life
as it swashes
smudges
splatters
the canvas with acrylics
and paints

A scenery
in the wilderness
of a young horse
who stops to rest
I become the creature
as pine trees come alive
around me
as I taste the fresh flowing river
hear swishing sounds of
the brush
stare at the artist
as she makes
final touches
to the breathtaking blue sky

I sigh
admiring my work
and realizing that the canvas
is the beginning of life
and
the paintbrush fills it up

Forgotten Brittle Strings

Lauren Badiong
Burnaby Central Secondary

I am the old and rusty guitar
you once played during those
long-lost summer afternoons.
You would turn my tuning pegs,
and I would swiftly sway to the
invitation of your gentle grasp.
The first time you sent my
strings into motion,
my heart raced and pounded
against my wooden chest.
You graced your way through my frets
danced the path of my neck
tapped the beat on my soundboard
and when all became lonesome,
sang to the tune of my
delicate acoustic harmony.
When you strummed your first song
on the surface of my emotions,
I sensed my sharp contours and
six nerves vibrating.
I was captivated by the scent of your skin.
And now I lay here,
left and forgotten
on your bedroom floor,
wood against wood.
I still long for your amorous touch,
for your warm fingertips to cure
my frozen and brittle strings.
Come and embrace me once more,
that I may accompany your velvet voice
with my melodic piece.

That One Autumn Night

Erika Aguilar, Burnaby Mountain Secondary

The crisp autumn air fills my lungs with a never ending sense of melancholy.
 I can't recall a time when this season didn't bring anything but nostalgia,
 a yearning for something that isn't there anymore.
 The forest greens changing into crimson reds,
 that was always your favourite part of this season.
 The sparkle in your eyes as we would go on our silly adventures,
 They are what warmed my heart on those chilly nights.
 The smell of mamas lavender ointment is what radiated off my clothes and bare skin,
 yet you never seemed to get tired of it.
 Those young nights that we stayed up watching the stars,
 I can remember it as though it was just yesterday.
 You're not here anymore,
 and all those things that I looked forward to leave nothing but a sentimental feeling.
 I wish I had persuaded you not to go on the hayride that night.
 Red and blue lights flashing across the fields,
 and just like that, you were carried away forever.
 I've never seen the stars shine so bright like they did that night.
 The crisp autumn air is what keeps me up tonight.

Vicariously

Elizabeth Wristen, Cariboo Hill Secondary

I have crossed over
 the mountains of Alegaesia
 in the dead of winter
 with my injured brother
 on my back

I have hidden in
 a secret 'room'
 made in a
 pile of garbage
 from Hitler's wrath

I have flown above
 the forests of Russia
 in a genetically-altered
 whale that breathed hydrogen
 disguised as a boy

I have run from
 a slave drivers clutches
 with naught but
 the clothes on my back
 and found love

I have piloted a
 state of the art warship
 with none of its crew
 through time and space
 and saved the Universe

I have dressed in
 my sister's clothes
 watched my friend die
 and hidden under beds
 because of war

I've done so much
 I've been so far
 I've seen so many sights
 I've lived so long

And all I did was read.

Depression

Canny Kwok, Alpha Secondary

It hurts
like the stab
of a knife
through the heart

She sits
in isolation
surrounded by a solid
wall of ice

Cloudy eyes
that stare into the past
locked doors
impossible to open

I step
into her world
revealing a new door
slowly
the ice wall
begins
to melt

Enticement

*Jane Kim
Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

A lonely soul, at the café
Seduced by the scent of caffeine
Sits there longing at the display
His prominent lust foreseen

Revealed skin through the wrapped silver
Her red hair on white ablaze;
It can't be helped, his lips quiver
At her sight through the bare glaze

In knowing how his wife would dread
His attractive friend or foe
His mouth shut are the words yet unsaid
The loner sighs out his woe

But satisfaction defeats regret
As he strides to cause heartache
His hands touch the brunette
The desired red velvet cupcake

La solitude

*Jennifer Yang
Moscrop Secondary*

Je regarde le mouvement fluide des nuages
légers et floconneux
comme de la barbe à papa.

J'entends de la musique,
chaque brin de gazon danse
avec le murmure doux
du va-et-vient des vagues.

Les grains de sable, si raffinés,
s'échappent entre mes doigts,
libres à retomber à leur gré.

La salinité de la mer
m'enveloppe comme une couverture
chaude et accueillante.
Je me laisse perdre dans
sa caresse affectueuse.

Ici je suis seule,
moi et mes pensées.
Je prends refuge
dans le confort de la familiarité
de mes sens.

Les marrées

Destiny Hsu
Cariboo Hill Secondary

À marée basse,
 Chassons les vagues,
 Les coquilles s'épandent sur
 le long de la plage
 Pour ceux que cherchent les trésors de la mer
 À marée basse,
 L'eau ensoleillée
 Chatouille les orteils coquins
 avec ses droits insolents
 Et fruit en riant, ses adieux
 des promesses à revenir
 À marée basse.

Entre les marrées,
 Décidons la route,
 Les empreintes à demi faites dans les sables
 Où allons-nous sur le chemin à venir
 Entre les marrées,
 L'eau ensoleillée
 Nous appelle, nous repousse,
 nous taquine avec
 Des promesses à l'avenir, sur l'horizon là-bas
 Entre les marrées.

À marée haute,
 Repoussons les vagues,
 Les créatures attendent sous le bord de la mer
 Cachées dans l'obscurité
 des vagues ondulantes
 À marée haute,
 L'eau ensoleillée
 Jette ses étincelles sur les secrets noyés
 De ses promesses trahis, faites dans le passé
 À marée haute.

Winter

Damian Spence
Alpha Secondary

The cold breeze
 spiraling through an open window,
 down,
 dragging distinct snowflakes,
 melting as they brush by
 mellow flowing curtains.
 The elusive sky,
 shrouded by cotton candy;
 swollen clouds piled high.
 Moon pushing
 through clouds yielding,
 igniting fire in prowling eyes,
 the moon conquered,
 howls swept by the blowing breeze
 through the open window.
 Trees bare,
 boughs like grasping hands,
 frozen in time.
 Soft ice slipping, dripping,
 icicles.
 Under layers of frozen icing,
 there is no song,
 the birds gone,
 squirrels hidden with their cache.
 Now the sun sleeps,
 the world recuperates, peacefully,
 silent.

Sestina

Joy Lim, Burnaby North Secondary

I, as a young child
 Loved food with an excess of spices.
 Perhaps it made me feel alive?
 My cheeks would burn, and my bottom lip,
 Dripping with Tabasco, hot,
 Like lava, helped my stomach feel less empty.

My mind, though was never empty;
 Always full, I was the child
 With the fresh-out-of-the-oven, piping hot
 Ideas, creative and new, varied as the spices
 In my pantry; words would flow
 from crevices of the lip
 Letting poems and stories come alive.

But as I grew, my awareness
 of what was dead and alive
 Bore a hole in my heart,
 leaving a space empty,
 Sadness dried my speech and chapped my lip,
 No longer outspoken the way
 as is tolerated for a child
 No longer convinced that any amount of spices
 Could take this bitter taste from hot-

Headedness and anger; Hot
 Furnaces of rage, upset that to be alive
 Meant so little in the grand scheme of things,
 that spices
 Were simply spices and words were so empty
 And the innocence of a child
 Could never last. My quivering lip

Stopped writing. No longer the same lip
 That made those
 fresh-out-of-the-oven, piping hot
 Ideas, no longer the creative and
 new sort of child
 Who thought that everything was alive,
 That made doodles and verses in the empty
 Lined-paper margins of notebooks,
 that ate spices

So she might breathe fire.
 Trying to pile on more spices
 Than I could handle. Too much. My lip
 Is charred, my bowl is empty,
 My cheeks no longer hot.
 I wonder if I'm still alive
 Or just pretending.
 Pretending to pretend like a child.

Why is it that spices no longer taste hot
 And my lip no longer feels alive
 And my words are more empty
 than when I was a child?

La nostalgie à la plage

Emma Croft, Moscrop Secondary

La nostalgie des journées estivales m'entoure,
 L'océan immobile est alentour,
 De ma maison mignonne qui reste silencieuse,
 Sur le bord de l'océan précieux.

L'air pur me revigore comme un effleurage
 Je me sens calme au milieu de la plage,
 C'est mon havre de paix,
 Un endroit à moi où réfléchir.

Le vent porte la chanson d'un million d'oiseaux,
 Je me souviens des jours que
 j'ai passés à la plage.

Les vagues dansent autour de mes jambes,
 Douces, détendues, sereines.

L'odeur du sel remplit mon nez,
 L'odeur est calmante comme un massage.
 Le goût de l'océan est sur mes lèvres,
 Le goût du sel glisse dans ma gorge.

La nostalgie des journées estivales m'entoure,
 Comme c'est souvent le cas,
 Sur cette calme plage.

Je manque mes souvenirs des jours d'été.

Sweetness

Caitlin Chan, Burnaby North Secondary

She stood in the middle of the silent funeral hall. Watching the mourners dress in black walk step by step to the open casket, she fiddled with the bright red bow on her dress. She stood out like a unicorn in a sea of horses, decked out in her most festive clothing, as her mother told her she was too young for black, that this was a celebration for the dead. All she could do was stand awkwardly, watching the scene take place, being lost and confused. Tears streamed down her face, mirroring the people around her, although not actually knowing why she was crying.

"He was a great man," her father said. "I remember how we used to go down to the corner store, the one with the old neon sign. Your Great Grandfather would buy me and all of your aunts and uncles penny candy. I can still smell the pure scent of sugar wafting through my nose, a most heavenly scent indeed."

Her father took a breath, his breathing deep and heavy. He turned towards her, the little girl bobbing her head up and down, unaware of her father's grief and desperate clutch for nostalgia. He took her nodding for acknowledgement and continued on.

"The shopkeeper, a pot bellied Italian man with the finest moustache I have ever seen, was a close friend of your Great Grandpa. He would greet us with open arms, then let us kids go wild in his shop. He would then stand in the corner of the store with your Great Grandfather and discuss politics. They would chit chat in the corner until all of your aunts and uncles and I had filled up our clear plastic bags of candies, in which Great Grandfather would pay for it all. Of course the shopkeeper protested, but it was to no avail. Your Great Grandpa always won."

Her father paused, looking at her drowning eyes. He then pulled out a small bag of candy from his suit pocket. He pulled out a lemon-raspberry sour key and wedged it between his tight, thin lips. He then pulled out another candy, this time a Swedish fish, giving it to his weeping daughter.

"Now, now," her father said, as he put the zip lock bag back in his suit pocket. "Don't cry. When we would come home from the shop, your Great Grandmother would immediately smell the sugar in our breath, shoving down greens as compensation. Of course, at the sight of veggies, we would all burst into tears. But your Great Grandfather always made sure to counter those vegetables with even more candy."

His voice trailed off as he collapsed into his hands in an all out sob, grabbing his salt and pepper eyebrows. He sat down on the closest bench, his thin limbs shaking violently.

She looked up at her father, the greatest and strongest daddy in the world, wandering over towards him. She then proceeded to give him the biggest hug she could muster, him quickly returning the favour. After a minute, he pulled away and grabbed a ziplock bag full of gummy worms out of his pocket.

"Here," he said handing her the bag of candy. "Put this in your Great Grandpa's casket. Gummy worms were always his favourite."

She nodded, her tears replaced with her most determined expression, as she hugged her father once more. Looking forward, she marched towards the casket. Like Moses, she parted the sea to get to the polished oak casket. She slipped the bag of candies in his semi-curved, wrinkled, dead hand. She smiled at the thought of making him happy, then walked away.

The Colorful Sweater

Judy Ban, Burnaby North Secondary

Glossy and luxuriant, not a single unkemptness to be seen of the honey-blond river flowing smoothly down to her shoulders. The river's edge softly caresses the heart-shaped contour of her face, accentuating the twinkle that forever remains in the windows to her soul, as if they cast off stardust while glancing at the heavens above. Her breathtaking smile gently diffused across the luscious red lips, spreading like the sun on the horizon. As if she was wrapped upside down in a half opened rose bud, her dark red dress embroidered with dew drops of diamonds, swirling around her slender, yet shapely body.

I fell in love with her at the first glance. She was perfect, standing behind the sparkling clean glass shelf almost every weekend in the Chinese equivalent of Toys R' us. She was everything I wanted for Christmas.

That year I was nine.

My parents were settling down in Canada before they decided to bring me there. My grandpa had passed away two years before. I had been living alone with my 75 year old grandma ever since. My grandma was a household woman, down to earth. She was a compassionate lady who has a heart like a block of heated butter, beloved by all the neighbors. Yet, the lovely lady she was, seemed to play hide-and-seek every time she receives a call from my Mom.

"Your father and I had been making ends meet with what we had," she snapped at the phone in Mandarin, "I've been doing fine for the past two years; I don't see any problems here."

I listened mindlessly while doodling with a crayon stump. For the second time this week; they had the same topic. After a few moments of silence, she retorted hoarsely, "I told you my retirement pension is enough for the both of us!"

"I am an independent woman and I don't need your money!" Followed by a loud clank, I knew the conversation was over.

My grandma deliberately stomped towards the leather couch. Her receding figure had a relatively small frame for women her age, she hunched uneasily as she gently lowered herself down onto the couch. Her hands picked up the half knitted sweater. I quietly strolled over to her side and took a seat beside her.

Most marvelous thing for me was the wicked skills my grandma's hands could perform, as if they were part of her daily routine. Her hands were truly magical. I was genuinely fond of her naturally tapered nails attached each long, slender finger that ends at a petite palm covered in lines like the map of their life, gnarled like the limbs of an ancient oak, twisted from the trials they have faced, skeletal, veins rising as if fighting for life. I watched attentively as she began to work on the colorful sweater. Her hands were racing on its own command: looping, knotting, turning, and weaving. Her fingers moved gracefully in harmony with each other, each playing its own note with its own rhythm, and together they create a beautiful masterpiece.

Weeks later, I found my grandma and myself sitting on a bench under the shady vine gazebo in the local park with many colorful sweaters and a large, hand drawn "For Sale" sign beside the bench. It was our first time selling anything. I did not remember if I was perplexed or thoughtless. However, it did occur to me that a lady examined the sweaters for a while and finally bought three of them. Delicately, my grandma stretched my short arm towards the lady and spreads open my palm as she places a few bills into my sweaty palm.

After the lady left, my grandma spoke softly under her breath, "Independence is the key to life."

On the way home, we were supposed to pass by the toy store again. To my surprise, unlike the other times that I lusted for that doll from the display window outside, this time she took my small hands in hers as we marched into the brightly lit magic kingdom. She glanced at my hands tightly holding onto the money and smiled. The doll appeared dull and lifeless compared to my grandma's compassion. Her smile was warm like the first breath of spring after a cold winter, bright like a summer sun, permanently etched onto her gentle visage that reads like a road map of time. Her eyes softened, yet there still remained strength and wisdom in her brown eyes that twinkled like a shooting star on a midnight sky.

Mixing Pot

Amna Liaqat, Burnaby Mountain Secondary

Back home, desserts are reserved solely for special occasions. They take hours to make and under the burning sun, the air clogged with dry, suffocating dust and the shouts of hundreds of hawkers, not many have the temperament to stand over a boiling pot for the better part of the day. It's a cause of great excitement when these desserts are made. Generous portions are distributed to neighbours, relatives and anyone you happen to encounter on the street. The entire family of aunts, uncles, cousins and squalling babies gather together for this joyous occasion. Amid the clutter of spoons, laughter and many different conversations intersecting one another, it is impossible to tell when exactly the dessert finishes.

Naturally, when our mothers came to Canada, they carried on this tradition. In the air conditioned homes in secluded and silent forests, dessert making became a fairly simple task. Casual visits from friends and family on weekends was enough of a reason to celebrate. The more common dessert our mothers made was called *kheer*. Rice pudding laced with dried dates, cardamom, saffron and many other spices with unpronounceable names. *Kheer* was the leading cause of obesity in the South Asian community.

There was one problem, however, with the *kheer*. Us first generation children, we hated it. The strange texture of the dates, the sharp sting of cardamom and the foreign spices did not appeal to our western sensibilities. Mothers and aunties would implore us to come to dessert. We would come hesitantly and in the whiny, pretentious protests so common to today's youth, we rejected the *kheer*. We demanded the processed ice cream and store bought cake we were more familiar with. Our mothers, in their infinite affection, never pushed us to eat. We left the kitchen chattering in our rapid English that held little meaning for the adults. Our mothers and aunts would be forced to take extra of the dessert and back home where the concept of leftovers did not exist; our mothers struggled to finish what they had made. Never did we look back on that circle of women eating and sharing stories of a distant land, a place rooted more in fairy tale than reality.

As I grew older, when I looked at a plate of *kheer*, I realized it was more than a dessert. I saw my grandmother, and my great-grand mother and all my ancestors back to before the time of Genghis Khan, sitting by the stove, stirring the *kheer*. And in that *kheer*, they mixed their stories, their culture, their way of life. I lamented for all us first generation children who would never eat this *kheer*, who would never hear the stories of our desert land, of the simple farmers who were our forefathers, of the colour and richness of life that defines us as a people. While other children still refuse the dessert, when an auntie asks me, I always reply with a "Yes, Please". And the truth is, *kheer* tastes pretty good.

Deception of Perfection

Si Jia Wen, Moscrop Secondary

My clenched palms sweat profusely as the nurse guides me into the operating chair. The bright lights glare from every angle and the strong smell of bleach makes my nose twitch. The last thing I see before I succumb under the spell of anesthesia is the prick of the needle entering my skin.

A couple weeks ago, I had arrived home from school when my mom had stuck a pamphlet in my face. "Experimental facial restoration procedure," it said in large block letters. "The reconstruction of deformed faces for young adults." Inside, there were strips of 'before and after' photos, displaying the faces of people turning attractive afterwards.

Being labeled as 'plastic' or 'fake' is a small sacrifice to make to be perfect. I've already become a professional at concealing my feelings after endless disdainful stares and cruel comments from people I know. Even my own mother can't stand to look at me, let alone 'discuss my problems at school.' She was fortunate enough to be born with delicate Grecian features and a lean slender body. I was born an atrocity, a disappointment. People couldn't believe that someone as beautiful as her could have given birth to someone as ugly as me. Unlike my mother, I have a large nose that is as flat as a wall with the most horrid bump on the bridge. My thin cracked lips make even my dog hide from my kisses. Four years of non-stop acne have permanently marked my face with battle scars. I hate to admit it; I'm a disgrace to my family.

While growing up, my mom tried unsuccessfully to make me more appealing to the human eye. For my birthdays, I was always given boxes of makeup. Every Christmas, heaps of clothes were piled underneath the tree. Monthly trips to the hair salon and spa barely made a difference. I tried, I really tried, but nothing worked. I wanted nothing more than to please my mother. I wanted her to love me, not act like I was a stranger she never met. I didn't want her to be embarrassed by me. That's why that brochure was probably a dream come true for her. A chance to finally live with a daughter she fantasized of having. And reluctantly, I had to agree with her. This was my chance to give her what she always wished for... what I always wished for.

It is only moments later that I awaken. The beaming lights illuminate the face of the doctor. He is talking to me, but I barely listen as the anxiety over the outcome of the operation floods over my senses. A kind nurse steps up and holds a mirror up to my face. Barely breathing, I gaze into it. I see a girl with wide frightened eyes, a symmetrical face, and smooth unblemished skin. Her features look flawless, like prized marble sculpture that had taken decades to finish. Her face is angular, smooth, and nothing like the face I had owned hours before. I let out a choked scream as the nurse recoils, clearly startled. My vision clouds with mounting tears that I don't even attempt to hold back. The girl in the mirror was perfect, attractive, and everything I've always wanted to be.

I should be pleased to see that my scars are gone. That my mother's anguish, her burden, has finally disappeared. The procedure was supposed to erase every trace of my past existence, to give me a new chance to live life the way it should be lived.

But that girl in the mirror isn't me. That isn't my face. She isn't me.

Who am I?

Dust

Destiny Hsu, Cariboo Hill Secondary

Let me tell you about dust. I've never known anyone to write about dust. I wonder why.

Perhaps that is simply because dust is dust. It is what it is. It does not lie. Well, it *does* lie, all around. Even now, everywhere I look; dust. But it doesn't pretend. Dust does not hide behind a mask, nor lead you on with words and promises that evaporate like the droplets of blood on pavement stained red, nor tell beautiful tales of a glorious new future while climbing higher and higher up the mountain of bodies towards hell with the thousands and millions of fingers and hands and eyes grasping and pulling at its feet for it to look down, look down, oh God please look at us.

It's dust.

What sort of protagonist would dust be in a story? Would any readers sympathize with it? How could they? It doesn't feel. It has no heart that can be squeezed, abused and torn into miniscule fragments yet still persist its beat-beat-beating. It can't have that heart torn out, stamped over, the cold-running blood staining hand, head, body and soul and then continue on walking in life, a dead shell of a thing destined for the worms and the flies and other things that will munch and munch away until the flesh is gone and the bones whiten and crumble into nothingness.

It's dust.

I realize now that no one would be interested in reading about dust. What can it do? It cannot entertain. It can't steal, nor cheat, nor kill. Alright, I may be wrong again, but it does not kill for money or power or carnal pleasures, and I have never heard of dust killing other dust. Wouldn't that be something to see? Can you picture it? Dust, desperately clawing and beating others down to reach their goals, and more dust sneering at the wretched dreamers while dangling their wishes just out of their grasp and laughing and laughing until their playthings wither and die, arms outstretched and last breaths still struggling and reaching and choking each other for the last scraps of hope until the lot of them lie, cold and buried under yet more dust. Ah, wouldn't that be a magnificent sight to see! What a wonderful scene!

Alas, it cannot do any of these things. It's dust. It is what it is. Just dust.

So let me tell you about dust. It's everywhere now. It's all there is now. Everywhere, everyone, and everything; it's all so silent. So still.

In the end, over everything, burying it all from history forever, like a blanket wrapped around the world to tuck it into bed and whisper good-night with a soft, endearing kiss, there it is.

Dust.

Summer's Shade

Chris Wang, Burnaby North Secondary

"Yanjia! If you open it now, all our efforts would be wasted.

I tensed up suddenly, freezing my entire body to keep from committing the unspeakable act. I have done it once before, but due to the constant growling of my stomach ever since I awoke, my mind was forced to forget.

"Is that your stomach growling again, Yanjia? A few more minutes. Have patience."

It is a mystery how my grandma always knows my thoughts and feelings despite the lack of physical indication. Indeed, the growl of my stomach is inaudible due to a relentless musician: nature. With cicadas on electric guitar, crickets on cymbals and canaries on flute, nature provided dynamic background music throughout an honest, summer day.

Summer in Beijing is similar to an oasis-filled desert; the sun scorches all it sees, but is clueless of the hiding spots of shade. Grandma's house provided a hiding spot. As doors and windows stay open throughout the day, dragonflies would glide into the living room and finches would perch along the windowsill as if they yearned for a taste of grandma's cooking, especially on the day she makes dumplings.

Grandma has dumpling-making down to an art. She starts off by making the filling, which undoubtedly always has the perfect ratio of vegetables to meat, the most balanced flavouring, and creates a sweet, warm, and soothing aroma that overflows the house and spreads through the neighbourhood for kilometres on end. As the meat and vegetables mix and mingle, grandma wastes no time and begins to mend her dough. Her hands become automatic as her eyes seem to comprehend everything around her. As one hand softens the dough, the other hand splashes flour onto the dough to keep it from sticking, followed by rhythmic tosses of salt, yeast, and various powdered peppers. Her frail arms move smoothly as her wrinkled hands work through the stubborn medium with no effort. She wraps the meat and vegetables with thin, oval-shaped dough; each dumpling has its own intricate ripples on top of its moon-inspired shape. The technique of her hands is unfathomable, for her hands seem to disappear into the background as the dumplings assemble themselves. As she begins to cook them, steam roars from the kitchen and adds harmony to the cicada's song. Amidst the noise and chaos, her elderly heart remains a constant pace of beat and her very presence, sitting in the middle of her kitchen making dumplings, exuberates calmness despite the commotion around her- not a single bead of sweat escapes from her pores. Mind-boggled, I watch this miraculous act unfold before me; stacks of dumplings are repeatedly created, as if appearing out of thin air.

"It's almost time for you to step in, Yanjia. Remember, calm is what you need to be and patience is what you need to achieve it," grandma lectured.

I was six years old at the time, and no matter how hard I tried, I only ended up slowing grandma down when I attempted to help. She offered me the most crucial job in the dumpling-making process, in hopes of lifting my spirit: opening the lid when the dumplings are ready. This is a mild conundrum since the dumplings would deflate and lose all of its' precious aroma if the lid is opened prematurely, but would harden if left to overcook.

"Is now a good time to open it, Nainai?" I asked.
 "Now is the *perfect* time," she answered with a smile.

Eventually, the house amidst the tall grass and the cicada-infested trees faded into a memory along with grandma working away in her kitchen. A thousand life-times away, I found myself living between skyscrapers, and the musicians created sounds not by rubbing wings together, but by burning fuel with their engines. I pursued education and was stuck in my studies while I conversed with people through emotionless technology. Day after day in this new life, I slowly began to realize that calm is what I needed to be, and patience is how I will become it.

"Can I open it already, Gege?" pleaded my little sister.
 "Natalie, if you open it now, all our efforts would be wasted."

Yanjia – My Chinese name Nainai – "grandma" in Mandarin Gege – "brother" in Mandarin

The Perfect Dandelion

Coco Lau, Burnaby South Secondary

"Flowers!"

My daughter. *I can't believe it.* When I wanted a daughter, I always pictured her a beauty. This? I never imagined.

"Flowers!" She swung my arm wildly, skipping.

"Flowers." I mumbled back. She grinned, showing her deformed dimples. *Ugh.* My dimples.

I took her to a park with swings and a playground. Engrossed with the thought of keeping her occupied, I walked faster and she skipped faster.

"Flowers!" Seeing the field of daisies, her walking quickly caused unnecessary stumbling.

I never regretted anything more than this.

"Flowers!" She screeched and tumbled.

I headed towards a nearby bench when I heard, "Dada?"

"I'll just be right there, Avia." I pointed. She nodded and fell again, laughing to herself manically.

Ugh.

She had a demented laugh.

Janey even remembered the name I wanted for our future daughter. But I didn't anticipate *this*.

Avia rolled, oblivious to the mud clumps and grass clinging to her clothes. Would I feel differently if Janey told me? Maybe Avia wouldn't have turned out like this.

Another laugh. This time, I stiffened, not recognizing it. A girl of maybe seventeen years was offering a daisy to Avia.

My eyes narrowed. Who would play with my daughter? She was a disgrace.

I started towards them.

The girl was sitting by Avia, talking and laughing. She stood, noticing me coming.

"Dada!" Avia noticed too.

"Something I can help you with?"

"No, sir." She stuck her hand out, "You must be her father. I'm Essie. I'm just here to play."

"Why? Don't you have anything better to do?"

"Well, yes. But I find a walk really clears the head." She smiled.

"Oh." I immediately felt guilty.

"And it's because I want to." Did this girl ever stop smiling? She crouched, but looked up again, "I-Is that okay?"

"Oh, um, yes." Essie beamed.

"Dada!" Avia pulled my pant leg.

I sat down.

After a while of Avia plucking by the handful, "You're so lucky to have her, sir." Essie said, "She's great."

I couldn't help the next words, "But why? She's..."

Avia jumped suddenly to play pretend airplane and spewed a concerning amount of saliva. Essie laughed, "That's why."

I watched, trying to understand. She fell, rolled around some more, spun around and started the cycle all over again. My frustration grew.

"The thing about daisies is that they're all so busy being normal and perfect, they challenge the challenging." She held a frail crown, woven by daisies, but she was pointing.

Very abruptly, Avia screamed yet she was staring at a lone dandelion in a field of daisies. Essie went over and plucked it out. Intrigued, Avia watched intensely as Essie delicately laced it through her crown. Avia giggled as Essie placed it on her head.

Avia sprinted but stopped right in front of me, flashing me the biggest grin but the most questioning eyes. I glanced at Essie and she gave me the same smile. Avia was patient enough to wait for permission and she deserved a chance. I touched the dandelion in her hair and allowed Avia to crash into my chest as I embraced her.

Luck was for the daisies of the world anyways.

Adult Learners - Literacy Foundations

Faces

Thomas Endicott

Brentwood Continuing Education Centre

I see faces
Faces that have seen many different places
Places I would never wish to see, places where races
And nationalities just don't seem to matter
Not by cultural advancement, it's just the bovine fecal platter
That each of these people has to eat day in and day out
Having rights violated that they aren't even aware about
Because the government that claims to care about them
Really doesn't even seem to notice them.

I see faces.
Faces dirty and streaked with tears
Tears, because at night it's hard to sleep for the fears
That maybe they won't see the coming morning
Or maybe that they will see it

I see faces.
Faces expressing wasted patience
Because nothing ever really changes
In a nation that simply demands complacency
Where you see people, I see the faces

The Last Chance

Mingsu Sue Wei, South Burnaby Adult Education Centre

There are many patients in the world waiting for the last chance to survive by replacing their organs, but only a few donors out there. Have you ever contemplated donating your organs to them after you pass away? Many years ago, I followed traditional thinking, that a dead person should be buried with an intact body, so I refused to be a donor. However, one event changed my mind and made me make a significant decision that I will donate my organs to give those desperate patients hope and a future.

When I was working in a hospital in China, there was a benevolent doctor, whose nine year-old daughter, Mary, had been a serious patient with chronic renal failure for three years, and had been kept alive by dialysis. The pathetic girl, whose physical condition got worse and worse, had been waiting for a new kidney to survive. Nevertheless, there were trials and tribulations to the girl seeking out a suitable kidney since she was so young that she couldn't receive an adult or senior's kidney; the only way for her was getting it from a child, who just passed away and had a similar age with her. During the past three years, those parents, whose children were just sadly deceased, were reluctant to donate their kidneys, for they had the same traditional mind as me. Virtually, the doctor knew her daughter's disease progression, and told us that she only had three months to live if she didn't do the transplant yet. Just as we had given up hope, a miracle happened.

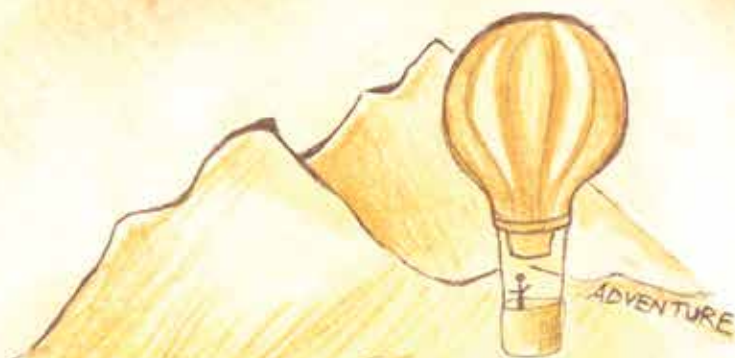
It was a sunny day in spring. While we were celebrating Mary's birthday, which was probably the last party in her life, the phone from another doctor started ringing constantly. He told us that there was a boy, who was the same age as her, who had just passed away, and also asked us to take Mary to the hospital promptly and try to communicate with the boy's parents, due to the fact that this was Mary's last chance. On rushing to the hospital, we saw the boy's mother crying loudly and almost losing her self-control outside the operating room; she was inconsolable after being informed that her child had already passed away. She couldn't accept this reality, for she said her boy had just hit his head while sliding down the stairs, and she believed the boy was still alive. Consequently, we assumed that she would refuse to donate her son's kidney, just like the other parents before. However, the boy's father appeared at that moment, and our hope was lit up again.

On hearing this sorrowful news, the boy's father couldn't say a word and seemed stunned. I endeavoured to comfort him with a soft voice; meanwhile I clasped his hands in mine, feeling the trembling of his body. After awhile, I couldn't help praying for him – and asking for his son's kidney with sincere, hopeful and fearful eyes. The father unexpectedly scolded us and regarded us as unsympathetic people. In fact, I clearly knew that it was an inappropriate time and place to make this cruel request, yet we had no option since this was the last chance for Mary. On seeing this scene, Mary's parents gave up the last hope, utterly, for they knew there would be no chance regarding their prior experiences. Finally, they decided to go back home, nonetheless, as they were walking along the dark gallery of the hospital with leaden feet, the boy's father stopped them at the end of the gallery. Suddenly, the gloomy corridor was illuminated by lights.

The boy's father told us that he agreed to donate his child's kidney on account of compassion, and also he expected that Mary's life could get an extension. What a great man! While Mary was taking the transplant operation, the boy's father said to us, "Actually, I was in a dilemma on whether or not to donate at first because it was very difficult to decide for me as the just deceased child's father, whereas my rationality finally defeated my sensibility after I pondered. Even though my wife didn't agree with it, I tried my best to persuade her..." his voice choked. He covered his face and started to weep; I didn't know what I should say to make him feel better at that moment, and I thought the best way was to keep silent since I know that my words couldn't comfort him.

Over five hours elapsed; the operation was finished successfully. The new kidney started working in Mary's body. Several months later, Mary recovered and became as lively and lovely as before. For a period of time, we didn't refer to that boy and his kind parents, yet we knew that we deeply appreciated them in our hearts.

After about one year, Mary and her parents went to the home of the boy's parents to express their gratitude. Once Mary entered the house, she called the boy's parents "Mum and Dad", loudly. I was sure that they must burst into tears and embrace each other at that time. This event deeply impacted me and made me change the traditional mind. Now, I have decided to be a donor after passing away. The boy already passed away, yet another person was getting the last chance to survive due to this compassionate act. Would you do the same thing to save a life?



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