

Bonnie Branch Middle School

Our Voice ~ 2018

New Girl

Since the dawn of the great species smart enough to conquer an entire planet, information has been spread through teaching from generation to generation. One would think they would get good at it after many millennia. So, in the words of Skylar Stephens, why does middle school suck so much?

Skylar is a new student at Colchester Middle School, in Colchester, Vermont and, according to Skylar, is one of the worst places in the world. She was about to experience her first day, in the middle of the school year.

“Why are we here, exactly?” she said to her mother, with contempt dripping from her voice.

“I’m here to drop you off, just like every other day for the rest of the school year.” Mrs. Stephens had no more patience for Skylar’s complaining. She had gone through this transition with two other kids before her, but Skylar was altogether sometimes plainly annoying.

“Now, get out of the car and go learn,” Mrs. Stephens said. “We’re already late.” With a largely dramatic sigh Skylar got out of the silver sedan and slammed the door. Looking at the large, expensive torture device that everyone but Skylar called a “school”, she felt sick. She was almost tempted to throw her mom out of the car and drive her way home.

“Get on with it, then,” Mrs. Stephens shouted. Skylar sulkily walked towards her school. The building was incredibly dull, with unlively tan bricks shaping the school, and a short wall surrounding all but one area: the entrance. The words ‘Colchester Middle School’ were displayed on the top of the door that led to the inside of the school, with a banner below it saying “Cougar Pride.” Skylar could not think it possible to see a more bland school than the one she saw almost daily in Indiana, but here she was. Very few students were still streaming into the school at this time.

“I really must be late,” Skylar muttered only to herself, but it was picked up by another girl right next to her.

“Hello,” the girl said, in what seemed like an unintentionally dull voice. “Where are you from?” The girl had brown skin and long, black hair. She had a lanky physique, but she looked friendly enough to Skylar.

“Um... I’m from Fort Wayne, Indiana.” Skylar said nervously. “I should get going now. I’m already late.”

“Okay,” the girl said. “But first, let me introduce myself. My name is Caroline. What’s your name?”

“Skylar. I’m gonna go now.” Skylar began walking through the door, then realized she had no idea where she was going. “Actually, um,” she turned back to face Caroline. “Can you show me where Room 37 is?”

As predicted, the school was as boring as staring at a blank wall for seven hours. Luckily, nobody cared that Skylar was new, or that she was as socially adept as a plant. At least she had Caroline show her around the school, which helped. Even still, the school sucked. Nothing exciting happened, and cliques that had formed at the beginning of the school year. She was alone, but that was okay, because that was the way she preferred it. But she would also have liked to sit with at least one person, like Caroline, but that didn’t happen. At the end of the day, Skylar decided that this school was still awful, but not as unbearable as she thought it would be. As she walked to the parking lot to meet her mother, Skylar began thinking of a way to make the rest of the school year more bearable, to no avail.

“Hi, Mom.” Skylar said, opening the door to the passenger seat of the sedan and sitting down.” Mrs. Stephens stared at her, waiting for her to say something. “You can start driving now.” Skylar said.

“So, how was it?” Mrs. Stephens finally inquired.

“Great! I met tons of new people, and all my teachers are nice!” Skylar said, including incredible amounts of sarcasm into her voice. Her mother glared at her.

“So I take it that you didn’t enjoy your first day?” she asked.

“No, I did not.” Skylar replied. “Now can we please go home? It may be my first day but I still have homework.”

The next day, the same routine occurred for Skylar as the previous one: she would arrive at school, get ready for her classes, and then proceed to go through seven hours of boringness until she got home to do her homework. This was actually her schedule for almost every day, up to today, three weeks after. Skylar sat alone, as usual, on her favorite lunch table. A generic sandwich lay in front of her, just like every day of school since her first day, due to the fact that she was too lazy to pack anything other than a sandwich. As she was taking a bite, Caroline approached her.

“Hello, Skylar!” she exclaimed.

“Hi.” Skylar said softly, stunned that Caroline still remembered her name.

“Why are you sitting by yourself? You should come sit with us.”

“Um, no thank you. I’d rather-” Skylar began, but Caroline took the sandwich and basically dragged her to a different lunch table. Once seated, Caroline did Skylar the favor of introducing her to all three people that now sat around her.

“This is Thomas,” she said, pointing to a light-skinned boy with short, blonde hair. He waved at Skylar “This is Paige,” Caroline said, gesturing towards a girl with dyed red hair and a tall stature. “And this is Lauren,” she said pointing to a girl with brown skin, auburn hair, and a wide smile.

“Nice to meet you!” said Lauren.

“Girls, this is Skylar.” Caroline said to the girls. She’s new here, and doesn’t have many friends. So let’s fix that.” Skylar didn’t really know what to say. Her face was flushed

“Don’t worry.” Paige said, spotting her look of confusion, and looking her straight in the eye. “I know it is hard being new, and that can be a burden.”

“Yeah,” said Thomas. “We may not know each other, but we all share similar experiences.” All of a sudden, Skylar felt overwhelmed with gratitude and thankfulness. She started to cry.

“Th-than you.” she choked out the words between her sobs. She did not know how much she needed something like this.

Throughout the rest of the day, Skylar felt more elated than she had ever been before. She had finally found out how to make school much more bearable. She didn’t know why Caroline and her group of friends did what they did, but she was grateful. She started looking forward to school, because staying with her group of friends created a much better environment for her. The educational part of school still wasn’t the best, but still, Skylar knew, greatness awaited.

As My Time Slips Away

Tick, Tock.
Someone, please stop the clock!
This time running out
Exists only to mock.

My ocean of infinity,
Now a shallow pool of seconds.
“At last, I’ve finished!”
The next task beckons.

I’d say I’m falling apart,
But there’s no time to break.
No more hours in the day,
So I spend my nights awake.

My elders all tell me
It gets harder from here.
Is that truly possible?
The thought fills me with fear.

Say I’m overreacting,
But would you believe me?
Would you think I spoke truth,
If only you could see me?

See moment after moment,
Disappearing before my eyes?
See the pain in our hearts,
In the youth’s anguished cries?

This generation will try,
Try to do well for you.
So that you will be cared for...
That thought pulls us through.

Please fix this system,
Which is of your design.
For I don’t even know
If I will finish this li

Mackenzie Cooper
Grade 8

America's Ailing Academics

For what reason do grades decide the futures of youth
If they don't depict what is retained in truth
Is it perhaps that deadlines are triggers
For scholars to study with significant vigor
But what is the use of all of this effort
To retain the knowledge that professors so treasure
Only 1/20th of the info is what they've retained
The grade of the person who, with ease, got an A
If just a few months later, they test again
But this time, without preparation
They would react to their grade with much consternation

So one may dismiss my substantial strife
But it's plain that what's learned disappears throughout life
So why does a score from grade nine or ten
Decide whether or not they appertain
To the academy that shall decide their future
And if an examination stance
Has truly no significance
Why do we fall into a tormenting distress
Struggling to be so studious?
For what reason should a scholar
Suffer from this immense labor

And so I cease
With a single proposition
To fit the nation
America's system of education
Should be changed with rigor
The practicalities that we are still taught
Are only what the industrial revolution sought
But nowadays, creativity must bloom
So, with this information, I conclude
Education must be innovated

Gavin Gleeson
Grade 8

What's Going On?

New Year, New Personality, we promise to change
But within weeks, we give in, give up, and stay the same

The government buys new cannons and missiles for war
But don't care to feed the hungry or save the poor

Relentlessly, doctors try to cure cancer and help the blind
Yet the efforts are in vain, for diseases are at an all time high

People care too much for their own lives, so they take the lives of others
Killing the young, the old, their sisters and brothers

Poverty and death increase at an alarming rate
Don't get me started on the mess known as America's political state

This is just the real world, not the Internet
Where we all blast each other's opinions without breaking a sweat

Where celebrities brainwash children, but the parents don't watch it
They just give them an account as they plug the laptop into the socket

Where racism and feminism are just casual jokes
Where people pretend to be depressed and broke

Where delinquents and bullies are glorified and rise to fame
Annoying everybody, thinking it's just a game

Some will say I'm focusing on dark rather than light
That I'm just looking at the bad side of life

But the world needs a giant wake-up call
Before our selfishness and misunderstanding destroys us all

Let us not boast about what we've done, but what we can accomplish
Before our heads blow up and our future is demolished

In other words, I think we all need to stop
Think about what's going on, so we can be on top

Folajinmi Awofeso

Grade 8

My Situation

She's gone.

There is nothing I could possibly do to bring her back.

Her laugh

Her smile

Everything about her is still stuck here.

Yet she isn't.

The one person who loved me the most is not here to give me the love that I needed the most.

What am I going to do?

This whole experience is hard to wrap your head around

The loss of a loved one

But the love she gave

and the love that was returned was not an *ordinary* love.

Without hesitation

She put our family first in any situation

And everyone else

I've never met anyone in the world who could have that much love for me

And I probably never will.

But I'll be waiting for it

although I know it will never come.

But as I wait

What am I going to do?

This life has simply lost its meaning

At least for me it has

For the person who gave me 600 weeks of love

More or less for my brothers

I had to watch get put in a box

And get buried 6 feet under.

Why would *life* do this to me.

How dare *life* take her away from me.

How dare *you* take *her* away from *me*.

What am I going to do?

What really **angers** *me* is the fact that we all could've seen it coming

But nobody did anything.

Photos of her from years ago and photos of her before she died just didn't look the same.

It wasn't aging.

It wasn't stress.

It was sickness.

We saw it

I saw it

But absolutely no one did anything.

What could we possibly do?

July 31

That date is almost permanently burned into my mind now.

I should've helped

But I didn't.

It was right across the street, and wouldn't have been a bother

But leaving would make her worry

So I watched my cousin and my brother.

What was I going to do?

For one whole hour I sat

With a whining baby and an extremely energetic brother

They behaved.

But I couldn't have felt worse.

I let her leave

I let her go

I couldn't have been any more stupid than how I acted in that situation.

What could I possibly do?

She came back

Skin as yellow as the sun

Sweat dripping from every body part.

Suffering from the inside without showing it.

Cause she was a trooper

Always was

Still will be.

Was there anything she couldn't do?

But now it seemed like that trooper was gone.

And it looked like she just wanted to give in.

But she didn't

At least not until we left that day

As we enjoyed the company of our family

She slowly suffered in this situation we had allowed to be placed upon her.

Was there nothing left to do?

6 o'clock

Sunday

afternoon

The phone rings

She's in the hospital

Once again

This isn't a visit where you just leave after a couple days

These are months of visits

refreshers of memory

Constant back and forth

Several visits a week

We thought she could pull through

like the countless other times she had

But she didn't survive it

Not as long as we had hoped for
But at the same time, she had.

When *we* needed *her*, *she* was there
Now that she needed *us*, we were there almost **every day**
Phone bills raised
Tires burned to the rims
Thousands of miles of gas
Thousands of dollars spent
Was there anything else we should've done?

Even in her final days
She stayed strong
If it were me I would've given up a long time ago
But she wasn't gonna leave until she *felt* like it
No doctor or nurse could tell her otherwise
That's why you're my role model
Love you Grandma

Judah Williams

Grade 7

Why?

With myself and my thoughts
Is where I feel at home.
No asking why I got that grade
Or why I do the things I do.
No hounding me about my future
Or where I want to go.

Not that it's bad, their wondering
But why is there so much
Its everyday, and every night
And whenever they're around.
When I say hello all they say is
Why?

I can tolerate solitude
I don't crave many friends.
But there are also people
That don't ask about my life.
That don't care about what I do
And never ask me why.
I feel most alone with the people
who don't wonder if I'm alright.

So I guess I must admit
After all of my complaint
Being interviewed every second of the day
Is more comforting
Than being alone.

Luci Denmeade
Grade 8

Is Your Eyeball Alive?

One day I noticed my sister's eye was crimson, as red as can be.

I thought about it for a bit, and an idea then came to me.

"If her eye is red", I thought to myself, "that means there's blood within.

And blood leads to organs and muscles, all flowing beneath the skin.

Blood contains the oxygen my body needs to survive,

But eyeballs don't need oxygen because they're not alive."

I asked my sister about it, and she responded, "Well,

Of course your eyeballs are alive because they're made of cells."

I stated, "Just because there are cells within your bloodshot eye

Does not mean that your eye's alive, to me that's just a lie."

So on and on our quarreling went. My sister began to sleuth

Around on the Internet using her phone, just searching for the truth.

A biologist said on a source she found that my statement was untrue,

The truth was that your eye's alive, something I never knew.

I didn't want to admit to myself that the statement was correct.

I went to my science teacher one day, and with her I checked.

Apparently, my sister was right, your eyeball is alive,

And also your lungs and your heart and your tongue and each of your fingers, all five.

My teacher stated your whole body is technically alive.

Every part relies on another so they can all survive.

And so, although my sister saw the problems with my claim,

And my teacher and my sister's answers were practically the same,

I know that eyes are not alive in and of themselves.

It's just a part of the living body, not live like yourself.

Michael Duffy
Grade 7

Decisions

Two Friends
One's in pain
The other's been mean
How to stop the fight
Yet stay in between

Integrity or Loyalty?
How to decide

Do what's right
That's what they say
I know it's mean,
But I stay in between

It's now or never but why?
Why do I
Have to decide

Because
They say
So
I close my eyes
I take a deep breath
And then, I decide

Yildiz Malik
Grade 7

thoughts

thought swirling around me,
binding and breaking one another.
gathering into one place,
As if they were going into a state of torpor.

as I lay dormant ascending into a jaded haze,
my brain runs rampant as would a stampede of cattle,
on a boulevard of broken dreams.
Confined to an endless solitude of reflection.

some may say it's crazy,
some may say it's absurd,
yet a mecca of imagination wild in nature,
fuming on a haven and a sheol.

I see the light fading.
the spark that was there is now gone,
for how the brief the fire existed,
I now feel so wrong.

a flutter of light ajar to my own,
the presence I yearn for desperately.
yet I do not move,
body as motionless as a sturdy mountain against a gust of wind.

confused and petrified,
thoughts again to guide.
a vicious circle so unholy.
one committed,
to every folly.
for a godspeed, dystopian mind.

a magnitude of emotions, fear, and trauma,
that makes us all human.
but at the end of the day a thought,
is only just a thought.
the power to think is put upon the thinker.

Gavin Smith
Grade 8

Dead

My heart feels heavy
My spirit's dead
I can't recover
From what has been said

I hear your nasty whispers
And see your repulsing glance
You hate me with a passion
Not even giving me a chance

My heart feels heavy
My spirit's dead
How come they're all happy
Is this all in my head?

It seems everything I say is bad
Everything I do is wrong
You'll find another thing to laugh at
Another fault before long

My heart feels heavy
My spirit's dead
Because of you
My tears have shed

How can I live like this
Or grow close to someone
What is happiness
In my life, there is none

My heart feels heavy
My spirit's dead
You're the reason
My cuts have bled

My heart feels heavy
My spirit's dead
And so was I
The day we met

Tia Yu
Grade 8

Breathe

Tap.

Tap.

Breathe.

Four miles in, I want to stop,
but I know that I just simply cannot.
A deep inhale, only a little more to go,
dry like a desert, I need water, I know.

Drip.

Drip.

Breathe.

I wipe sweat away with the back of my hand,
I feel my hair loosening from the rubber band.
My hands churn, back and forth, up and down,
A thumping in my chest, all ears hear the sound.

Whoosh.

Whoosh.

Breathe.

I close my eyes and feel the air pass by.
If I go fast enough, do you think I could fly?
I hear the claps and people screaming my name,
if I let them down, will they all be ashamed?

Tick.

Tock.

Breathe.

Clearing my mind, I hear footsteps behind,
but there are some in front, too, my mind reminds.
I see the end, a ribbon and a line,
just a little further and the prize will be mine.

Nimrit Ahuja

Grade 8

Anxiety

They told me not to worry,
About what I can't control,
To focus on the positive,
And forget my unease.

But the worry stayed with me,
Latching on like a tick,
In the frenzied search for blood,
They were afraid to.

They stayed, even when I cried and begged for them not to.
I was told to ignore,
To forget and relax,
not worry so much.

I tried to run,
Escape from the fear that controlled my life
But you can't run from yourself,
The mind, a prison to the insane.

Sometimes I struggled to think of other things,
To make myself breath,
The choking, endlessness,
That consumed me, without a hope for air.

I wanted to give up,
Just to hide from the demons within.
To run,
With no end destination.

Nowhere felt safe,
There were few to be trusted,
The pit was too deep,
The crawl was too daunting.

Maddie Coleman
Grade 8

Enchantment

Knowledge
is magic

Read
read
and read some more

Concoct a potion of words,
Cast a spell
on your enemies

Enchant them
with your whispers,
Stun them
with your wisdom

But be careful
because magic is dangerous
so don't let the
potions
and the spells
overwhelm you

Victoria Lee
Grade 8

Toilets

A lift and place a tender touch a chilling crisp delight

A soft compression a gentle force intensing but a slight

A rumbling ambition purging waste in a discoided like motion

A jolt and hasten as all the debris journeys to the ocean

Emily Greenwald
Grade 7

I, Who Exist Eternally

An Analogy of Death, by Death

I, who exist eternally, have always been thought to blame for many a distress and disarray. I have been sworn upon as they who do friends part, though I only take not what I want but what I am given. Many claim to have eluded my jaws, without knowing it was I who refused them. Others stand before my glorious facade, either cowering at fear of entrance or begging to be let inside. And as the Pallas Raven quoth, I am eternally bound to my post with no leisure or leave. Most prefer my brother who while being beautified in the eyes of humanity, is only a short comfort in the shadowed promise of me. It is mere prejudice that gives me such a reputation. I have never lied or broken a promise to stay at bay. It was my brother who gives false hope and plays the tragic game. And yet still I am left to pick up pieces and take the blame. Constantly I am thought to be the crime, the antagonist of a perfect life.

But under my wing lay the broken and whole, evil and good, for I cannot judge who deserves to take shelter and rest under my tree. And so, let the troubadour nightingale have his melody, the paternal ghost urge revenge upon his brethren, I shall adopt the slumbering populace, never to wake. For if not, I have no purpose and thus no existence.

Ruby Gifford
Grade 7

Memories

A smile and a sentence, barely heard.
A warm blanket and a kind word.
A hug and a kiss goodnight,
A toy to hold tight.

A last hello,
A last goodbye,
A last tomorrow,
A last cry.

A whispered "I love you"
A little brother's coo.
A loudly sung song,
A family that sings along.

I memorize each second,
Each face, each word.
I memorize every song
From every bird.

Because one day,
These will be all I have,
The happy and the sad
Memories.

Claire Madachy
Grade 8

My Demons

I put away my bag of death
I climb my way to a prison of black
I arrange my escape, painful and dreaded
I rest my head on a floating cell

I see a light, It won't go away
"Be gone" I said "let me be"
It stays a moment and then it's out
I sigh relief
I wasn't found

I hear the noises they're all around
They're howling, yelling at me
Scratching
wanting to get to me
"Go away!" I want to scream
no noise comes out of me

The noises, they go away
They've given up
At least for today

In the silence I feel a pain
It eats at me
I feel it strong
Why me? I wonder
Cold and heat
Repeat repeat
No one to tell
No one to help

It's stuck with me
For now?
Forever?

For centuries it stays with me
Forever later it leaves me be
I start to fade
Wait, who's there?
It's a buzzing
from the other cell
Fade away I scream inside
Leave me to my own demise

They go away
The whole world stops

I start to fade
I start to drop
My burden lifted
Gone away

Forever passes in a moment
Soon I hear a screaming
Something calling me
I'm dragged down the metal
"Let go of me" I beg
"I'll be good"

The screaming stops
I fade again
Moments later it's back for me
I'm dragged away
I broke my promise

Liquid fire rains on me
I feel it burning all around
A sudden relief rains on me
I feel it soothing and soft
Soon the rain washes it away again
It leaves me for another day

I wander through the winding way
Gloom and horror hanging over me
Soon I escape the prison walls
I find a light
Big and strong

As I wait
I sit
I stare
I see other prisoners scared
It's come to get me
Loud and mean

Off to torture here I go
We wait and wait, then we go
The evil is radiating off the wall
I hate the demons
I hate their souls

Slowly slowly as I go
Avoiding obstacles in my way
Soon I get there
Must I go on?

A striking fear, a misery
Slowly creeping up on me
My insides stretched and stuffed and sewn
I feel it coming
Not now!
Too soon

I want to scream
I want to run
But I stay
I hold it in

Pushed and pulled
Tumbled and ripped
Repeat repeat it never ends
Soon a break
A rest
I'm free
But the misery is stronger in me

Again again
I do it again
Soon it's over
I survived it all
I leave
I run and run and run and leave

I see the trap
I want to leave
What would happen?
What would they do to me?

I go inside
I hesitate
My silence is broken
They hear me come

Into my cell
Down to the floor
The bag deathly watching me
It watches
Waiting for me to pick it up

Hours and hours
I escape my cell
I'm hungry
Im thirsty

Tired as well

Up and down
Left and right
Pain and pain
It's getting worse
No don't stop
That's all I hear

I get a moment
A second
Soon i'm back
Up and down again

I see a light
It buzzes and screams
Light has never been so beautiful

Back in my cell
My demons still follow
I find my light
I hide it well

Soon i'm called
I dare not wait
Soon my rest is far behind me

I smell it all
I refuse I won't

Soon I prepare for black
Into the metal
Up and away
My demons follow
Now I do it all over again

Chloe Meakin
Grade 7

My Seven O'Clock Alarm

That seven o'clock alarm
It's waking me up Nudging my arm
Making me get up
And set up for school
My seven o'clock alarm

It's now Seven AM
My day will soon begin
With papers and homework and more
When I open this bedroom door
My seven o'clock alarm

I wish to go back to sleep
But I hear that clock go beep
That horrible sound
Now I'm school bound
My seven o'clock alarm

It feels like I'm in hell
When I hear that little bell
Telling me to go to wake up
To make up my bed
My Seven O'clock Alarm

This Seven O'clock alarm disturbs me in my sleep
I want to press snooze
If only I could choose
Not to go to school
It'd be miniscule
To let me stay home just for one day
To sleep my worries away
My seven o'clock alarm

Ashley Bui
Grade 7

Pure, Bonafide Laziness

A poem

I didn't know what to write
For this poem.
Any answers people?
'Cuz I don't know 'em

...

Okay, okay, that wasn't the best rhyme
But this isn't the time or place
I'm not in the right space

Of mind
To think...
um...
I'm thirsty, I need a drink

Okay, I'm back
To write the poem
But first, a snack
That'll get creative juices flowing

It's a day later
Submissions will be due
Woo-hoo!
I don't even know what to do

Due dates can be
Renewed dates,
Right?

I'm not ready for any fight
To make a poem just right,
Just for the possibility
Of no anonymity
Late, due to lack of responsibility

My pencil on paper,
"Skтч, skтч"
A few minutes later,
"Scratch, scratch"

Okay, it's a bit in the spot
But here's what I got

This poem
Will show 'em
And blow 'em away!
So here's what I have to say.

ahem

“[Insert political figure here] sucks!
He smells like a dump truck,
And looks like he's covered in muck!”

Ha ha ha!
Ha...hah...
heh...

This poem's sad
And the writing's so, so, so, so very bad.
So with chips and candy I'll fill a cup.
I turn on the tv, and officially give up.

...wait, this isn't in itself a poem,
Right?
sigh
I shake my head at my self-induced plight
All I can say is
Just...like...I don't know...
Goodnight.

Anjola Awofeso
Grade 7

Ghost

Alone. In this world, there is no one who understands,
No one who gets why I stay where I am,
I like it, I like living in the shadows.

I see you. I see all of you no matter how alone you feel.
I understand you, I look to you and hope you go far,
I wish to someday be as strong as all of you,
The ones who wish to be in the spotlight, to be popular,
But instead go everyday, to school, knowing they aren't.

No one is alone.
You have me, the ghost in the shadows.

I understand it must be hard,
When you wish your life was just a little better,
But the truth is you and your life are wonderful,
You are not alone, you are alive, with people who love you.
So, don't do something you will regret for the rest of your life,
Because, believe it or not, your life has meaning.

You will go far, because those who only value popularity,
They won't become strong, independent, and successful people, like you.
You are loved,
Even on the darkest days, where it seems as if there isn't a light at the end of the tunnel,
You are loved and not alone.

No one is alone.
You have me, the ghost in the shadows.

Ella Werdell
Grade 7

Real vs Fake

How do we distinguish what's real and not.
We go through life without batting an eye
but how do we know our life is not a lie
That everything we have done up until this point was simply an illusion
That all we do is only what we choose to envision
You can't be sure that the world we occupy is all but a dream
All we see and all we do is just a scheme
Can you be sure that our actions are truth
Is it really all an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth
Is what we do a choice of our own
Or is our destiny set, and our fates already known

Can anyone be sure that this world is more than our imagination
Sometimes the talk of real or fake may cause frustration
But you have to remember that if it is fake, it could be worse
Of course we no where near perfection in this universe
But the world we live in is full of joy and laughter
Just take a step back and really look after
All the world is for good and for bad
For real or for fake

And think of the good that surrounds us in what we know as life
And liberate this world either real or fake of it strife
As we come back into our previous thoughts
Just remember to love the life you've got
It may not always be easy and fair
But it sure is exiting and the opposite of bare

Erin Maynard
Grade 8

Rewrite the Stars

I close my eyes,
and dream of a prize.
I can no longer wonder.
But I can hear the thunder *inside*.
It grows.
Louder now.
The voice inside my head controls me.
Without it, all the things I could be...
all I can think is the galaxy I long for.
It would be with me evermore.
Bigger and louder, it grows again.
The moon.
The sun.
The *stars*.
The stars would fill my heart,
If I were there, my eyes will be filled with true art
The sound is unbearable.
I try to stop,
try to stop dreaming.
But I keep beaming.
I wish I could rewrite the stars.
I wish everything was different.
Maybe if the stars could be rewritten...
I could too.
But no one can rewrite the stars.

Anika Amin
Grade 8

Water: Is it Wet?

The globule slapping the pond
Drip after drop, adding to the pond
Gathering and squeezing all in one small potwhole
Spilling over into the streets
Is it Wet?

Drizzle, Splash, Plop bouncing of the broolly
Boots soaked filling up with precip
Dripping and muggy with each step
My shirt drowned in H₂O
Is it Wet?

Swish Swish Swish Swish
Go window washers go, go, go!
As fast as they can, whipping, thrashing
A race to clear the tears
Finally after fifteen minutes the race is complete
Is it Wet?

Boom Boom Splash as I cannonball
In the pool ready to swim "Ready Go!" says my coach
I swim as fast as I can down to the other side
Done. I hop out in need of a towel
Is it Wet or are YOU Wet?

Cypress Booker
Grade 7

The End of All Things

Frankie wasn't proud of most of his traits. He was too short, too scrawny, and too pretty. His lucky break had been the one thing he could say about himself without feeling the twist of embarrassment in his stomach. He was fearless. Of course, not completely, but Frankie hesitated to say there was anyone who was entirely lacking the core human emotion that is fear. So he guesses he'd identify more with the term "fear resistant." He's not impenetrable, but not easily frightened. Despite his above average resistance to fear, right now, Frankie was so terrified he could feel his legs shaking. The baseline of this fear was the fact that he didn't know where he was. He looked around attempting to get a handle on his surroundings.

It was nighttime and from the looks of it he was located somewhere in the middle of the desert, standing in the middle of a road that seemed to go on for infinity in either direction. He walked off to the side of the road, peering into the sand, jerking back as soon as he realized that he wasn't staring at sand, but at a swarm of small tan bugs. He took a unsteady step back, tripping and falling onto his rear, too afraid and awestruck to get up again. He stared, dazed, as all at once every single insect took flight, turning the sky a filthy tan color. After a moment he managed to gain enough control over his limbs to stand a stumble back to the edge of the road, nearly throwing up when he saw what had replaced the swarms.

It was nothing, absolutely nothing. No, scratch that. It was negative something, a vacuum, a hole, and the tugging sensation threatened to make him lose his lunch. Finally, it became too much and he began to puke, only to realize that he wasn't, he was just going through the motions. It must have been too long since he'd eaten last, he decided.

When was the last time he had eaten? He couldn't remember, and thinking about it now, he couldn't remember anything, but his first name. His breathing started to get dangerously fast and he could feel the distress building in his stomach, when suddenly a deep voice cut through his panic.

He looked up to see a darkly handsome young man staring down at him, dressed in an old fashion suit. He was slight with dark brown hair and dimples, and something in Frankie ached with familiarity. The man held out a hand and Frankie took it, and he pulled him to his feet. When he spoke Frankie felt like a part of him had been completed, soothed, healed.

“My name is Dylan, and it's a pleasure to see you again.”

Kaylee Beimel
Grade 7

The Doppelganger

September in Chicago, 1972. I was sitting alone in a stuffy train compartment and peering out of the window. The evening landscape outside was monotonous: at least nothing new had happened there since I departed from Rockwell station. I was heading to Chicago from the small town of Rockwell, where I had lived for almost 30 years. All I carried with me was a rusty suitcase packed with my stuff, and a blank lottery ticket which I bought on a station before boarding the train—not that I believed in luck. It was a momentary intention, and to tell the truth, I was a bit ashamed to buy that ticket: it felt like I was desperate and hoped to attain the attainable.

I looked at my translucent reflection in the window glass. A middle-aged white man with a thin nose and deep-set, prickly eyes; a man seeking for a new life and new opportunities, someone who had left his past behind but didn't yet have a clear idea of his future. What I knew was that I was starting over: nothing else mattered.

In half an hour, the train made a short stop at some small no-name station, and I had an odd feeling come over me; I spent a couple of minutes trying to figure out what it was before it dawned on me. I had traveled in this direction for the last 10 years, but trains never stopped on their way to Chicago or from it. Actually, I couldn't remember that I had ever seen that station—and I knew the landscape outside in detail. The reason why I had to go to Chicago was easy to explain—I had to bring my manuscripts to the publishing house, in person. Don't ask me the details.

The stop didn't take long, and in five minutes the train rolled on again. I was about to return to my slumber, but my compartment door flashed open, and I saw a stranger standing in the doorway. He was wearing a long black coat and a broad-brim hat; his outfit reminded me of gangster movies of the early 40s. The stranger's face was

hidden by a deep shade from his hat, so I couldn't figure out how he looked exactly; I could feel his sharp glance at me. The man stood there for several seconds, and then I heard his voice: "May I take a seat?"

"Yes, sure," I answered, and the stranger settled himself in front of me. *I must have met him somewhere*, I thought to myself. His voice seemed familiar. *At the publishing office, perhaps?*

"Going to Chicago?" he asked me without much interest.

"Yes, I've got relatives there."

I lied. I don't know why I did that: the words just flew off my tongue. Weird question, I thought. As if this train goes somewhere besides Chicago.

We sat silent for a bit. Apparently, he must have noticed the lottery ticket stub sticking out of my shirt pocket, because I heard a sound as if he grunted ironically.

"You believe in luck?" he asked me while pointing his finger at the ticket.

"Not really. I don't know why I did it—I mean, why I bought this ticket," I laughed.

He grunted again.

"Well, luck is all about that: you can never know when you run into milk and honey, and when life gives you a kick in the butt."

I liked his manner of speech. It reminded me of some characters in my novels: confident, ironic, and sane. Sometimes I tried to speak in that manner myself.

"So, are you going to fill it in?" the stranger wondered.

"I don't know, maybe. And maybe not. Why?"

“As I said, you never know when you run into Lady Luck.” I felt that he was hesitating to say something important. “I would advise you to bet on numbers 6, 29, 11, 7, 81, 77, and 10,” he blurted out all of a sudden.

“What’s so special about those numbers?” I asked him. “Is it some kind of a system?”

“No, I just have a feeling that they’ll win. You can call it intuition. You said you didn’t care, so I thought you wouldn’t mind my advice.”

In a couple of minutes he apologized, saying that he had to leave me for a while. No need to say that I never met him again.

When I got off the train in Chicago, my first thought was to throw the ticket away. *Why would I need it*, I asked myself. But then a crazy idea hit my head, and I filled the ticket exactly with the numbers dictated to me by the stranger. Then I did my business at the publishing house, received my honorarium for my last novel, and returned home.

In a week, I checked the lottery ticket. Numbers 6, 29, 11, 7, 81, 77, and 10 were a complete match. I won the jackpot: \$150,000.

I never told anyone about the stranger in that train: neither my wife, nor kids, or friends. In a month or so, I suddenly remembered where I met that guy: in one of my novels.

Harshil Agarwal
Grade 7

Rose With Thorns

I walked very slowly through the brilliant and vivid garden. The sky was an infinite pool of grey. A couple of crystal raindrops fell from the sky.

I had my stainless white umbrella. I wore a yellow sundress, black 2-inch heels, and a shiny Red Rose necklace. I carried a baby pink purse over my shoulder. I was happy.

The garden seemed endless with rows of Red Roses. It was the size of a football field.

Despite the gloomy sky, the flowers in front of me beamed with light. Sprinkles of water rested on each smooth petal of the Red Roses. It was as if they were glowing.

My stride became slower and I halted.

I came upon a single White Rose.

It was now that I realized that most of the other Red Roses had very few thorns.

But this White Rose, it was more beautiful than all the others. It had an alarming amount of thorns on its stem. They were as sharp as a slick knife's tip.

I cautiously held the flower with my right hand. I examined the unique flower.

Why was it so bright?

I let go of the flower and reached into my baby pink purse. I blindly searched for sky blue scissors. I quickly pulled it out and cut the strange White Rose. Because I was holding the scissors with my right hand, and the umbrella with my left hand, the flower couldn't land anywhere else besides the cold wooden sidewalk. I put the scissors back in my purse and reached out towards the White Rose.

Something was off.

The flower... lost some of its illuminations.

My eyebrows furrowed in slight confusion. The White Rose slowly became dull as the sky. My onyx eyes widened in shock.

As I held the flower, it became murky. It turned into the same black color as my eyes.

I watched in terror and the flower melted in the warmth of my pale hands. Its thorns lengthened and gradually cut its way into my palms.

I dropped it.

Tears welled up in my ebony eyes. I closed them and the river of tears streamed down my cheek.

What happened?

I opened my eyes once more. They wandered throughout my surroundings. Everything was the same.

The sky still a blank gray canvas above. The flowers still as red as an ocean of blood.

I wondered.

Should that have gone better if it never happened?

It was an enchanting White Rose with thorns.

Yerlyn Del Cid Hernandez

Grade 8

7th Grade School Field Trip

It was the Spring of 2018, and our “7th Grade Class” decided it would be fun to take a week-long retreat. I was very excited to go, since it would mean lots of quality time for me and my friends. It was categorized by 6th period, so me and my friends Aaron, Jade, and Eli sat together on the bus there. My friends Elaina, Molly, Reagan, and Mia also were close by, so I jumped back and forth between conversations. When we stopped, our ELA Teacher, Mrs. Nanni, stood up and addressed the class.

“Attention!” She yelled, trying to get everyone to calm down, “I have some very important information!”

Once everyone calmed down, she continued.

“We have arrived,” A cheer arose from the bus, but Mrs. Nanni quieted them right back down.

“Now, we must file into two different lines. Boys and girls. Be as quick as you can. The quicker we get there and unpack, the faster we can have fun!”

I filed into a line with Jade, Elaina, and Molly. In front of us, were Reagan, Sydney, Josephine, Ariel, and Olivia, cheerfully chattering about who knows what.

“Are you excited?” I asked, turning to Jade, “I’m mostly nervous.”

“I’m really excited,” She replied, smiling, “What do you think we’re going to do?”

“I don’t know, But this place reminds me of North Bay, so I bet it’s going to be awesome.”

I looked up at the high mosaic ceiling that was dimly lit. I noticed all the intricate stained glass patterns. It was so cool.

“Yeah.”

We all joined in with other girls. We saw that there was a sign posted on the wall that said who was staying in each of the rooms. I looked for my name, and found it.

'Room 4: Reagan Aydin, Jade Boutros, Harper Bui, Autumn Churchill, Lily Drasin, Piper Gifford, Molly Gleeson, Mia DeGiulio, Ivy Huang, Lauren Kim, Everly Martin, Lydia Meakin, Anne Mueller, Delilah Nguyen, Scarlett Sanjeevkumar, Elaina Werdell, Riley Williams, Liliana Wilson'

'Oh my gosh,' I thought, smiling, *'All of my friends are with me in my cabin! This is the best.'*

I looked over at my friend's faces to see them light up as well. I just knew this was going to be fun. We all found our room, and went inside. There were 9 pairs of bunk beds. Four on each side, and the one on the far side of the room. I went, and got the top of the third from the door on the left side. Lydia got under me, and Delilah took the top on my left, the farthest from the door, and Lily took the top bunk on my right, the second closest to the door.

"This room is so awesome!" I heard Scarlett squeal, "It's so big!"

I looked around, and saw everyone happy. That made me happy.

"Let's go!" I heard Mrs. Koslowski yell, shooing students outside, "It's time for our first activity!"

Everyone jumped up in excitement. We all ran out the door, and walked outside. We looked around, and saw hundreds of picnic tables. I saw Aaron and Eli sitting alone at one of the benches, so Jade and I decided to go sit with them.

"Did they say what we're doing?" Jade asked, jumping into her seat, "Did they say?"

"Not yet," Aaron replied scratching his head.

“I think they must have said it,” Eli said, leaning on his left elbow, “But, it’s so loud here. There’s no way we could have heard it.”

“True,” I said, putting my crossed arms on the table, “What do you think we’re going to do?”

“I don’t know. But I hope it’s awesome.”

“Attention, Bonnie Branch 7th Grade!” Mr. Nobis yelled, holding a megaphone, “We now are ready to carry out our first activity!”

The teachers and camp staff started moving around, carrying loaded trays. Hearing the preceding table’s groans, it was quite obvious it wasn’t good. When a staff member reached our table, they dropped off a opaque grey bin. Jade ripped it open, and groaned.

“Seriously?” She exclaimed thumping back down in her seat, “This is the *best* they could do?”

“What is it?” I asked standing up. When I looked inside the bin, I only saw rubber bands duct tape, and popsicle sticks. I was shocked, ‘*Are we seriously building popsicle stick houses!*’

As if to read my mind, Mr. Nobis yelled, “We are making popsicle stick houses!”

“Oh, come on!” I heard Harper grumble.

“Well,” I said, trying to smile, “This could actually be fun.”

We worked for about an hour, before Eli finally just slumped backwards. However, there was no back to the seat, and he fell flat on his back onto the ground. Jade, Aaron, and I all cracked up. Eli managed to sit himself up, and he leaned on his right elbow, as if to think.

“Ooh!” Jade squealed, “We should build one big one together!”

“That’s an awesome idea!” I said, grinning, “I wonder how tall we can make it.”

We kept stacking our popsicle sticks until we didn't have any more. Aaron was standing on the table, about to put the final stick on the top, when Damian came running up behind him. He stomped his foot, and Aaron jumped, causing him to lose balance. He wobbled, then once he regained his balance, the entire tower toppled over.

"Damian!" We all groaned.

"Sorry!" He said, then skipped away.

"That was so cool, though," Eli said, sitting back in his seat, *"Aaron practically had to jump if he was ever going to reach that."*

"Yeah." I sighed. I slumped back down into my spot on the bench.

Jade started pacing. She was clearly anxious to get on to the next activity.

"Attention, 7th Grade!" Mr. Nobis yelled, making everybody jump, *"We are now ready to move onto our next activity! We are assigned by bedroom to our new activity! Get into your groups now!"*

I quickly filed into line with my friends. Mrs. Nanni led us into a movie theatre-like lounge room. We each took our seats. Once I sat down, I realised that Mrs. Nanni had pulled Piper and Elaina aside. I was watching them, when I was handed a virtual reality headset. It had all these extra sensors, so I tried it on. It was surprisingly lightweight, and really comfy. Mrs. Nanni pressed a red button on the wall, which opened a secret door. We all filed inside, and there were 18 large tubes inside a blindingly white room. Each tube was about 20 feet in diameter. When I looked closer, I realised that each had a name tag.

"All right!" Mrs. Nanni said cheerfully, *"Find the one that's yours, and we shall begin!"*

I walked around the room for about 45 seconds until I found my “tube” I stepped inside, and waited for instructions.

“You are just going to shut the door, and put the headset on,” I heard Mrs. Nanni say, “You just need to wait for the game to load.”

After about 5 minutes, I was suddenly in a jungle. I looked around, and saw a town. I ran over to the town. When I got there, I realised that all of my friends were there. I was super excited, because I had no idea what was going on, and I was excited to explore.

“Hey Autumn!” I heard Delilah yell, “Isn’t this super exciting?”

“Yeah,” I replied, “Do you know what we might be doing in here.”

“There’s a track over there. Maybe we’re running laps!”

“You have a skewed sense of the word ‘fun’.”

We laughed and talked all the way to the ‘Town Center’ Where I saw everyone else from my room. Before I could say ‘hi’, the ground shook violently. I walked to the edge of the island, and realised we were flying. We walked back to the center of the island. As the island sped up, Delilah and I grabbed onto the bike rack. This was all very bizarre. A platform rose out of the fountain. I saw Piper manning a steering wheel.

“Piper, slow down!” I screamed, “You’re moving *way* too fast!”

But she only picked up speed. Pretty soon, me and Delilah were completely parallel with the ground. I was looking around, when I started to hear screaming. I looked around, when all of the sudden, Harper flew by me. She grabbed onto my ankles, hanging there for dear life.

“Piper, slow down!” I heard Anne yell, “You are moving really fast. I don’t think this is safe!”

“Fine,” Piper grumbled. She slowed down, and I hit the ground, landing on my stomach, “You happy now?”

“Yes! Very!” Harper screamed, trying to be audible.

“Why don’t you lower us onto the river?” Everly suggested, looking at a poster of the edge of the island, “Then we could cruise without the fear of flying off the island.”

“That actually sounds like good idea.” Piper said, smiling. She lowered us onto the river with a loud ‘*splash!*’, and walked off the platform.

“Let’s explore some stores!” Delilah said, clapping her hands.

“This is going to be fun!” I replied.

We walked around for a while before we found this small cottage. On it, there was a sign that read, ‘*Madame Mysterio’s Lair: Enter If You Wish To Seek Your Fortune*’.

“Sounds like fun!” Delilah squealed. We walked inside.

The small room was crammed full of cupboards holding jars. They contained anything and everything from eyeballs to black mush.

“Enter!” A voice cried, making Delilah and I jump, “What are you here to see?”

“We came to see our fortunes!” I said, trying to sound confident. In reality, I was terrified.

“Then your fortunes, you shall receive!” A puff of pink smoke went off in the doorway.

From the fog, a young woman stepped out. She was heavily dressed in a pink and orange sari, and a giant matching turban that added at least a foot to her height. Her arms were covered in bangles, and she had two huge hoop earrings on, with a skull and crossbones in her second piercing. She looked very familiar.

“*Elaina?*” I asked incredulously, taking a step forward, “Is that you?”

“Of course it’s me!” Elaina replied impatiently, “Who else would it be?”

“Anybody.”

“Just give me a moment, and I shall tell you your fortune.” She got down on an overstuffed cushion.

She crossed her legs, and started humming. She looked like she was meditating, but the way she was humming indicated otherwise.

“I’ve got it!” She cried. She jumped up, “I have your fortunes! Delilah, you will marry your 6th Grade crush, and you’ll live happily ever after! Autumn, you’ll marry one of your crushes, and live happily ever after!”

“It’s so magical!” Delilah squealed, jumping up and down, “She didn’t even know I had a crush last year!”

I sighed, and turned to Elaina, “Do you want to come with us?”

“Yes,” Elaina replied, unwrapping the turban, “These clothes are starting to get itchy.”

She pulled her dress off to reveal her normal clothes. She took all the bangles off, and removed the hoop earrings. We all walked out of the cottage, and returned to the 'Town Center'.

Once we got there, I noticed people were just starting to get comfortable in this new environment.

“Free gymnastics lessons!” Lydia yelled, looking around the center, “Get your free gymnastic lessons here!”

“I’ll do it,” I replied, “Where are these lessons?”

“In the library!”

“Is that safe?”

“Sure it is!” She grabbed my arm, and dragged me to the library.

The library was very small. The mahogany walls matched the shelves touching the ceiling, and there was another door on the other side of the room.

“Come on!” Lydia said, excitedly.

She started to do a cartwheel. She landed perfectly, but she kicked a bookshelf on her way back upright. The shelves started toppling over each other. They fell like dominoes, but thankfully never touched us in the center of the room.

“Are you okay, Lydia?” I asked worriedly.

“Are you kidding me?” She replied, “That was awesome! Let's go see where that other door leads to!”

We climbed over the top of the bookcase ruins, and managed to open the door. We walked inside. It was very similar to the one we just accidentally destroyed. However, it was a lot bigger, and the walls were higher. In the corner of the room was a large lit fireplace. In front of the fireplace, was a high back, overstuffed lounge chair. Me and Lydia stepped closer.

“Is anyone there?” I called out.

“What do you want?” I heard a voice reply. This was a boy's voice. I was very rattled, for I thought only girls were on this island. I watched as a figure got up out of the lounge chair. He turned around.

“*Cameron?*” I asked. He was wearing a white t-shirt and sweatpants, what he usually wears to school. But he had glasses on the bridge of his nose, so he looked like an old man trying to read, “What are *you* doing here?”

“Reading. Samuel was beginning to be a little too crazy.” He turned and sat back down.

Me and Lydia walked out of the library, and we returned to the 'Town Center' again. Everyone was just lounging around.

Suddenly, a large alarm sounded, and I heard someone say, "*Please remove your headsets. This attraction is now over.*"

I pulled off my headset, and I was back in the white room. Everyone was giggling. I climbed out.

"How was that for a first day, huh?" Mrs. Nanni asked, smiling, "That was pretty fun , right?"

"That was awesome!" I heard Scarlett yell.

"I wonder what we're doing tomorrow!" Jade said, excitedly.

"I bet it's exciting, just like it was today!" Lauren said, smiling.

We all got in our pajamas, and got ready for bed. That night, I could barely sleep, because I was thinking about how much fun I had today, and how much fun I know the rest of the week would be.

The End

Sarah Churchill
Grade 7

At times I need to Find balance
Between the newfound self awareness
Of the incomprehensible, dynamic, yet tediously still universe,
Cohesive with my birds-eye view
Of our delusional species
And a constant groundedness
To us humans' microscopic connections
Which root within our souls.
For it is this balance that is the root of all health;
I then see all species as siblings
Simultaneously existing alongside us
Despite the broad expanse of time working against the odds.
I then more clearly perceive my strengths, as I embrace my weaknesses.
I dedicate gratitude for my mere existence.
I find ways to flourish in any circumstances
Because I realize my capabilities to control my life
Through the alignment of my actions and my manifestations.
At times I need to find balance.

-Words Acquired Whilst Thinking in the Forest

Natalie McCourt
Grade 8