

"Write them on the tablets of your heart;
write them on the doorposts of your house."

Proverbs 7:3 ~ Deuteronomy 6:9



tablets & doorposts

A JAMBOREE OF WRITING

ANTHOLOGY 2023

 Christ The Redeemer
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

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tablets & doorposts

A JAMBOREE OF WRITING

**“Write them on the tablets of your heart;
write them on the doorposts of your house.”**

Proverbs 7:3 ~ Deuteronomy 6:9

Welcome to the fifth edition of CTR Catholic's Tablets and Doorposts Writing Anthology. In these pages you will experience narrative, poetry, and non-fiction written by students from Kindergarten through Grade 9. Regardless of age, experience or skill, these writers have creatively shared their voice through the craft of writing. Individual writing was selected to receive additional recognition indicated by a Top 20 or Honorable Mention ribbon in the Anthology. Enjoy!

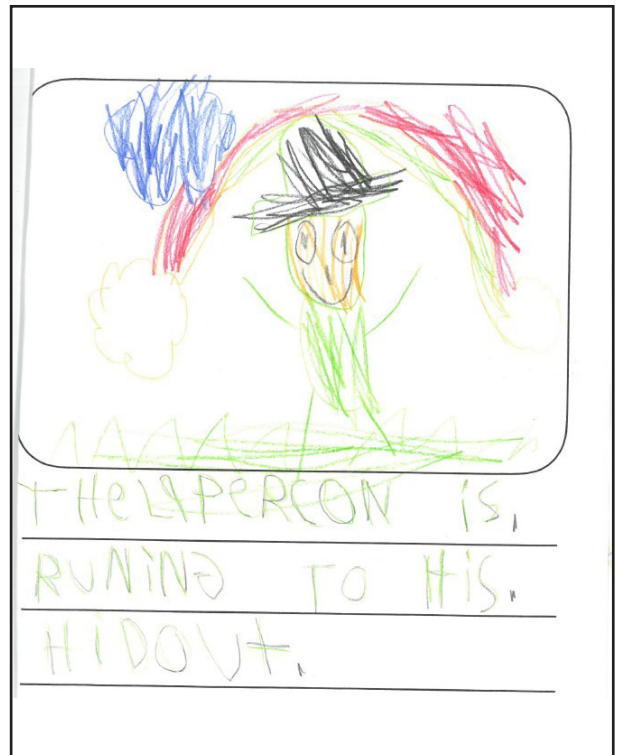
Writing is a process that allows writers to reflect and capture moments in time. Writing is personal and requires the writer to be vulnerable and take risks. When we share writing we gain insights, perspective and empathy into the lives and experiences of others. Writing celebrates humanity and its infinite possibilities. At CTR Catholic, we recognize the power of writing and how essential it is to the learning and lives of our students. This Anthology is one of the many ways we promote and celebrate our students' abilities and the stories they choose to share.

Once again, the Tablets and Doorpost Anthology reflects the experiences, imagination, and creativity of CTR Catholic students. Skillful writing requires intentional choices in vocabulary, structure, and genre to convey a message or entertain. The writing in this Anthology represents the dedication of students and teachers to share beautiful words. This year the Doorpost Café was celebrated in-person where the audience was treated to the authors sharing their writing.

The theme for Tablets and Doorposts is scriptural. Throughout the ages, words have communicated our love of God, our joys, and our human struggles. What's YOUR story? Write it on the tablet of your heart! Write it on the doorpost of your house! Tell it, share it, shout it – just don't keep it inside. Everyone has a story to tell.

The Leprechaun

by Ethan K. Kindergarten
Assumption School

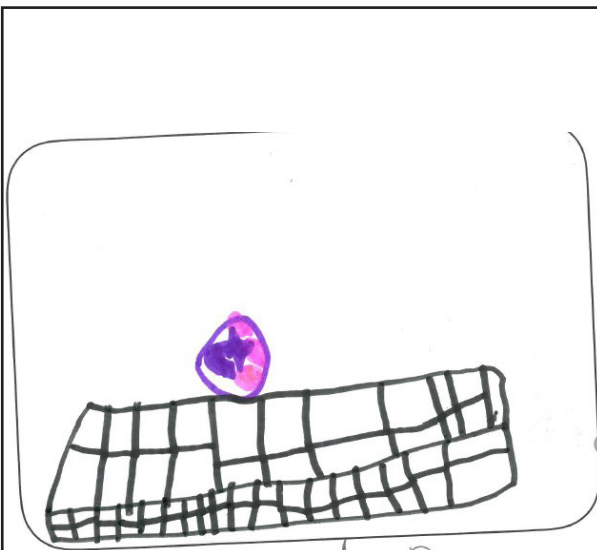


This is...

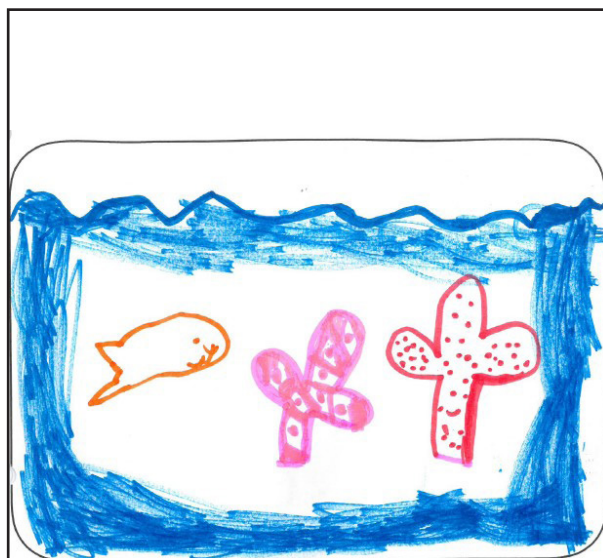
by Eva S. Kindergarten
Assumption School



This is a mufma.



This is a shel.



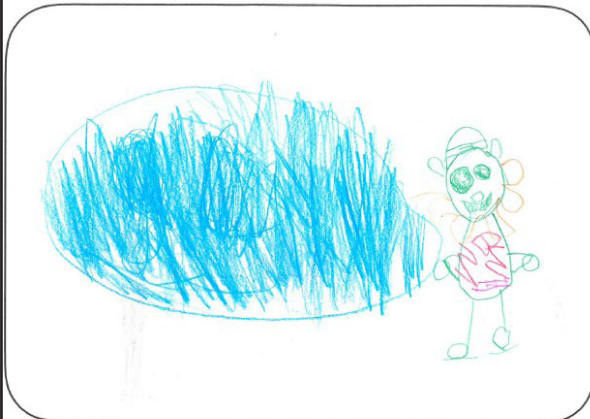
This is a fish.

Pearl the Leprechaun

by Isobel H. Kindergarten
Assumption School



this is a LEPRCON



I Go to the Pool



AND the LEPRCON
LIVD hADUKEEV
Afr.

All About Spring

by Kamryn T. Grade 1
Sacred Heart Academy



DIVISION
1

All about Spring!



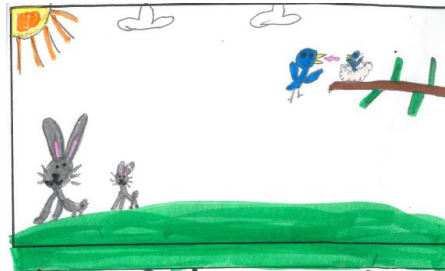
Hello My name
is Kamryn I
live in Canada
in Spring it
rains I like it
When it rains
Because I get
to jump in puddles.



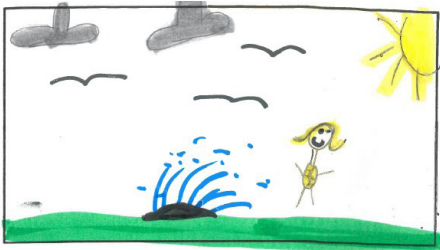
In spring I
wear shorts
a t-shirt and
runners. Some
times I wear
a raincoat rain boots
and a rain hat.



Flowers need air
food and water
and sun light.
I love Spring!



In Spring animals
have babies the
babies like to play
and hop.



In spring I like to
play in sprinklers.
It is fun!
I also like to
jump in puddles.



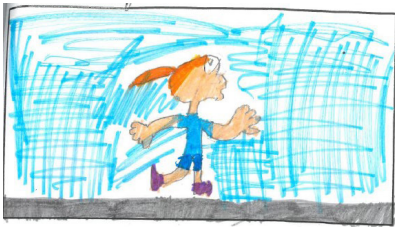
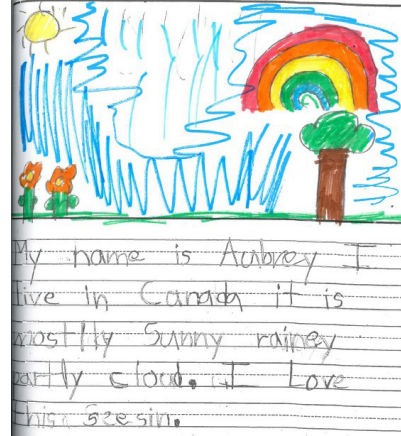
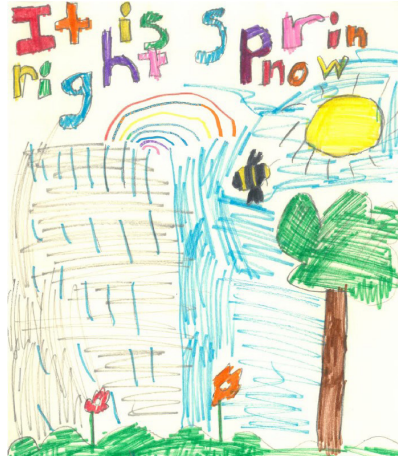
In spring my
favorite holidays
are Easter and
Earth day I love
to celebrate them.

GRADE 1

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It is Spring Right Now

by Aubrey S. Grade 1
Sacred Heart Academy



In Spring I will wear shorts and runners and a t-shirt.



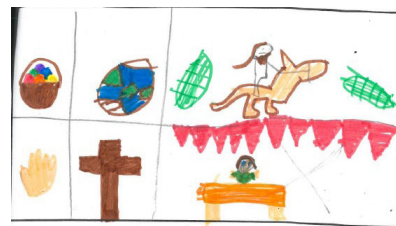
In the Spring plants need are and food and sapling or we won't have machin.



In Spring animals get out of hibernation some animals have babies.



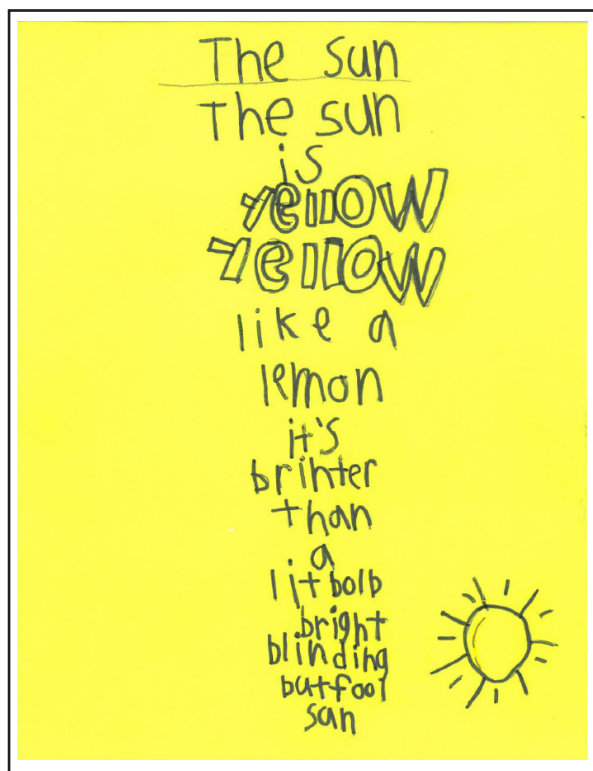
In Spring Sunday I want a hover board and ride a bike.



In Spring there are sun holidays there are Easter and Holy Thursday and good Friday and Earth day and sun birthdays and palm Sunday.

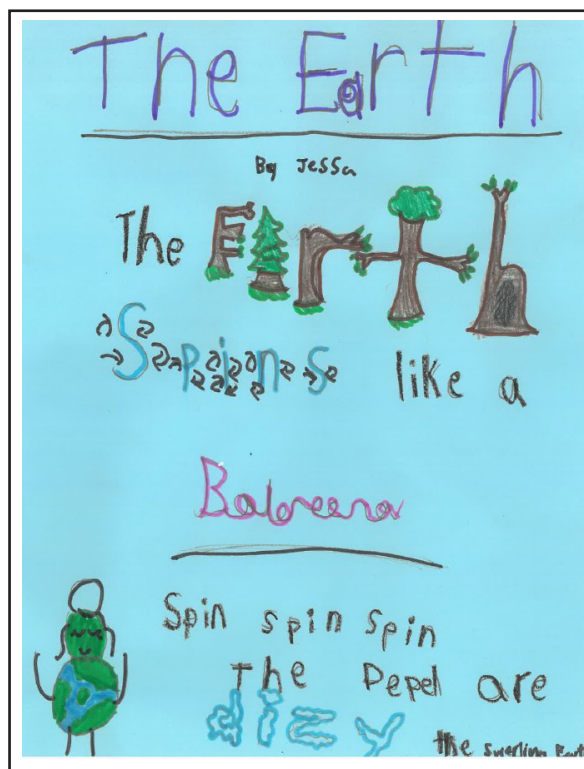
The Sun

by Harper M. Grade 2
St. Mary's School



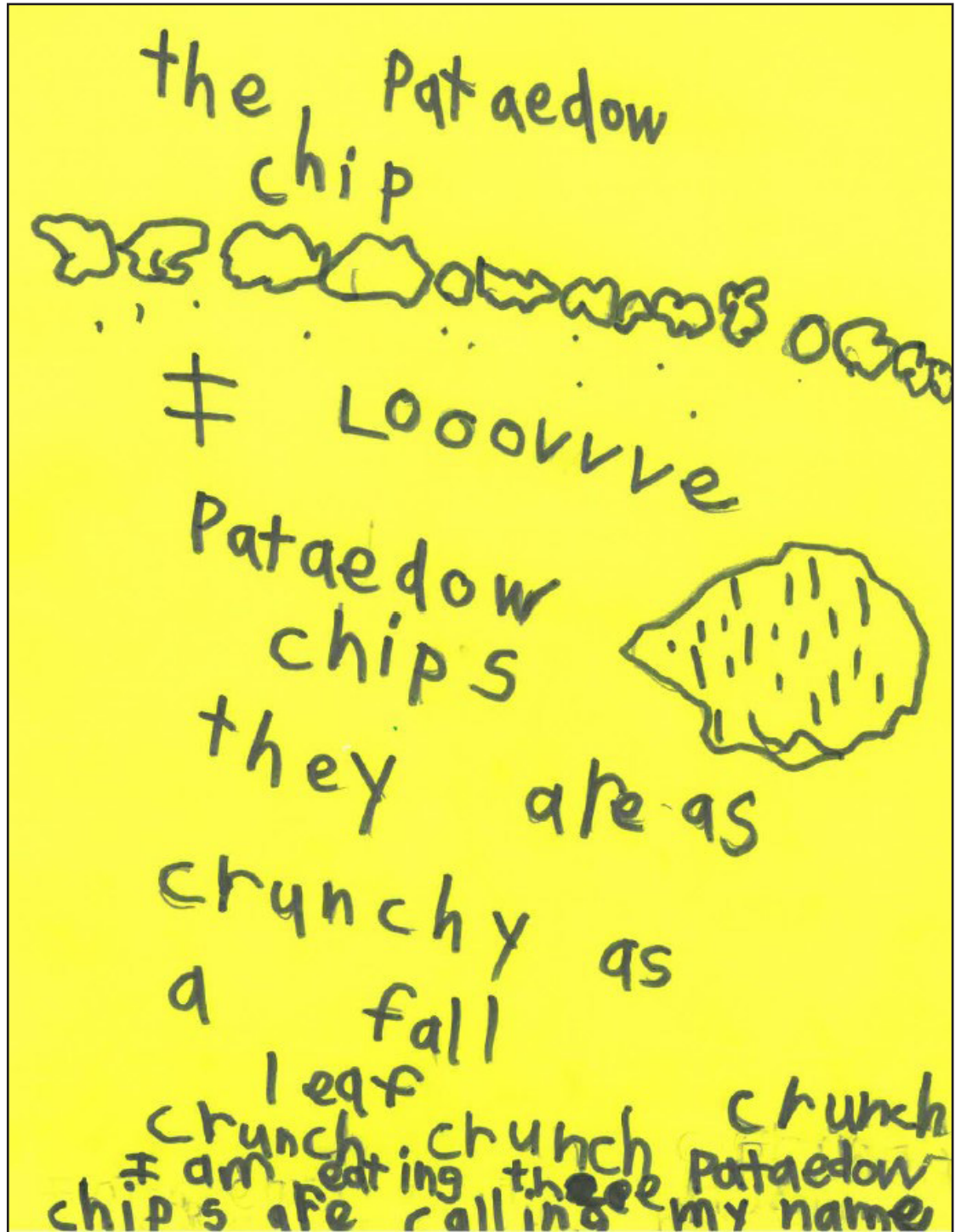
The Earth

by Jessa M. Grade 2
St. Mary's School



The Potato Chip

by Jonas W. Grade 2
St. Mary's School

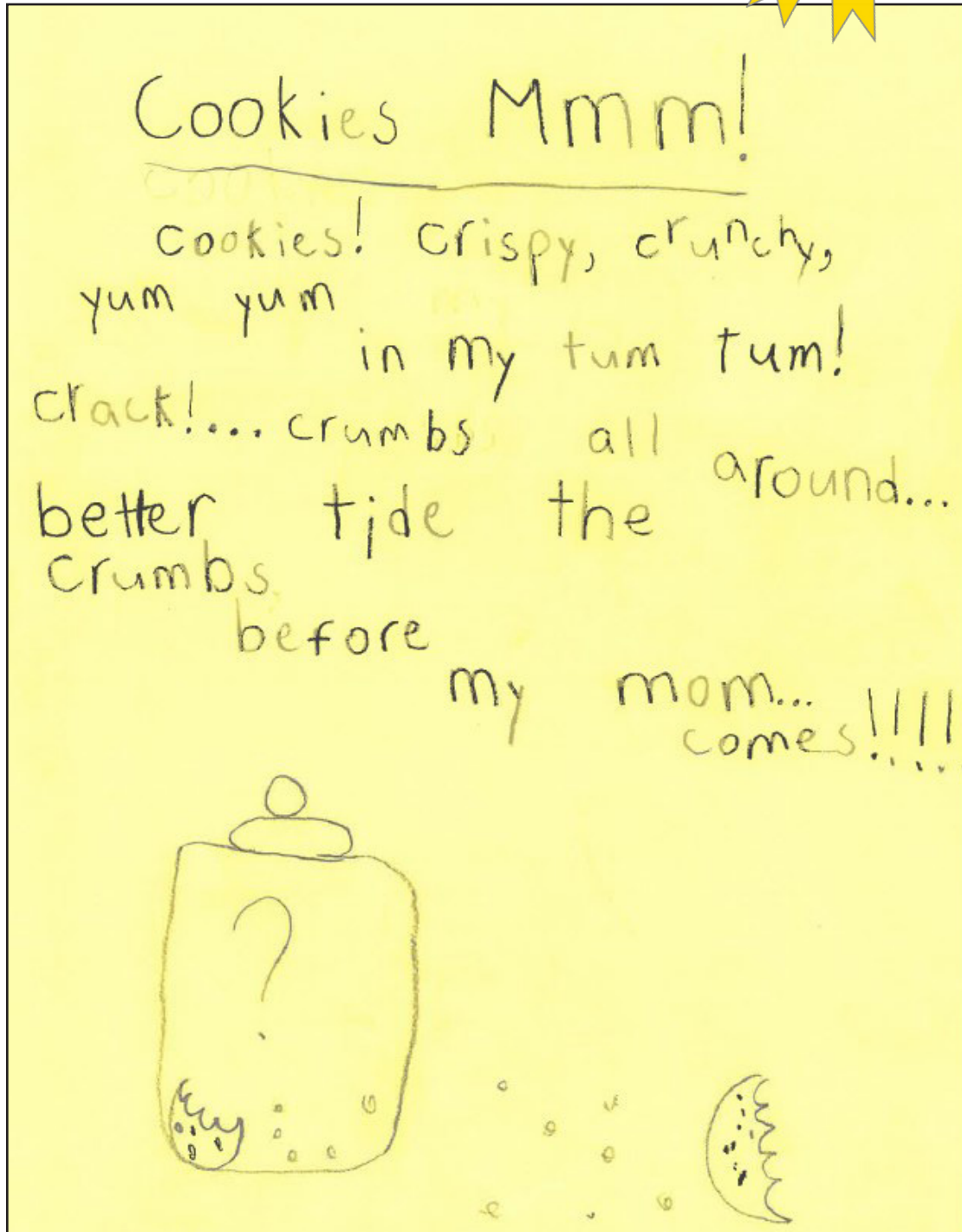


Cookies Mmm!

by Cohen G. Grade 2
St. Mary's School

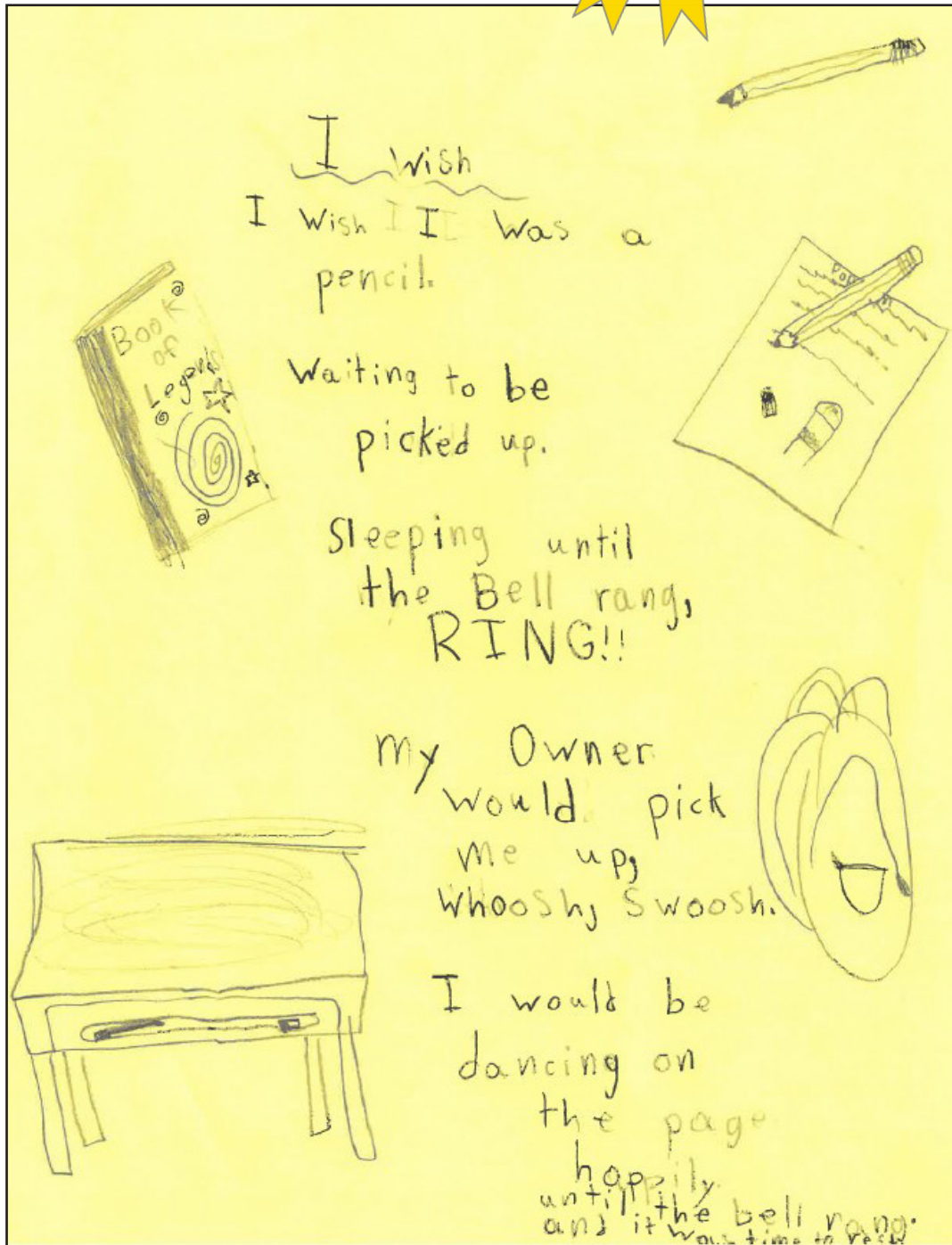


DIVISION
1



I Wish...

by Alexa T. Grade 2
St. Mary's School



Spring is Here

by Chloe P. Grade 3
Assumption School

Plants are a sign that spring is here. When you're planting seeds you don't want the seeds too low, or too high in the soil. Remember to not over water. Every day whether it is spring or summer, make sure to pull the weeds! Do this or else dandelions and sage will take over your garden! You can grow many

plants like pumpkins, sunflowers, cactus, and more if you make sure you follow the directions. Pumpkins are my favorite plant to grow because they can grow very big and are bright orange. I love the beautiful plant that begin to grow in the spring.

The Best Winter Activity

by Kenzie H.W. Grade 3
St. Mary's School

Ringett is the best winter sport ever! I think this because you shoot rings, Play with your frends and you have a party after! It is so fun.

One grate thing about ringett you shoot rings insted of pucks you also shoot rings far allong the ice when you shoot allong the ice you also shoot at the allsome, super gollie but you might soore a goal on the allsome, super gollie wich is me.

continued on pg 12

Friends are the Best and you get to do all of that stuff with your friends or should I say all some friends I have the Best friends ever they are so kind and everyone loves there B.F.F's we just love are friends also do all some things for you friends are also really happy when you play with them.

Because you won a game your team might want to have a glitery party and lots of cakes and the stuff you usually have for a party and with the parents the kids the coaches and have the crisily fun activities a balloon party face paint is so much fun!

And that's why ringette is the Best winter activity because you shoot rings, play with friends, and you have a party after!

My Ugly Christmas Sweater

by Jorge S. Grade 3
St. Mary's School

I have the best Christmas sweater ever, just you wait and see! My sweater is totally the best because it has a ginger bread man, pom-poms and fuzzy fur. I think it is the best because it is punny and funny.

I like the toasty brown ginger bread man because it gives you treats, he makes you laugh and he is nice to every one.

The pom-poms are nice because some of them are shiny blue. There fluffy and squishy.

Next is the grass green fuzzy fur, it is cozy it's my 2nd

favorite color and it has green velvet.

My Christmas sweater is the best because its pom-poms are shiny blue and the toasty brown ginger bread man is always happy and the fuzzy fur keeps me warm.

Eileen's Haunted House

by Eileen G. Grade 3
St. Mary's School



Eileen's Haunted House

This haunted house has a deadly green skinned witch! That likes to give guests lots of scares! She has evil red eyes and has a dog named Frankendog. He has green fur and base electric pins that can kill you! He zooms around and barks. The witch also has a cat named Evil. Evil has fun prancing around she hisses at people she has deadly claws and black fur to blend into the night! The witch has a bat as well the bat will screech at any trespassers his big black wings blend into the night he has big deadly fangs that can suck out all of your blood yikes! All the cobwebs are covered in cobwebs and all cobwebs have at least one black widow in it. The witch lives with all her

evil little animals and they can jump up any
minute and kill you! They live deep in the
wood's of Canada so if you ever see a little house
in the middle of the wood's RUN!!! Toxic smoke
comes out of the chimney so if you breathe it in
all of your blood gets drained out of you and
you will die! If you get cat by the paws
sticking out of the ground they will cut
you and you would never stop bleeding!
And all the slime is from Frank's dog
who zoom's around and sometime's drools.
Every year on Halloween the witch sends
out the mist haunter if anybody sees
it the mist haunter might kill that

person or haunt that person forever!!!

The Super Power Field Guide to a Peregrine Falcon

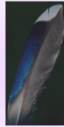
by Laney H-B, Grade 3
St. Mary's School

This is a peregrine falcon.

Just an ordinary peregrine falcon.

But even ordinary peregrine falcons are amazing, in fact ordinary peregrine falcon are. .

.SUPERHEROES!!!



I can just here you say "aren't peregrine falcons just feathery critters with hooked beaks and tiny bodys"?

Well in fact all of those things are awesome. Impossible you say? Well... I say you don't know peregrine falcons, **but you will.**



Hi I am Tornado the peregrine falcon

Superpower #1

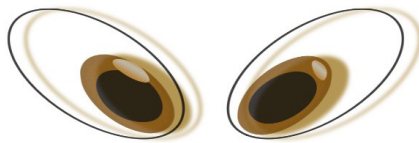
Peregrine falcons most cool known fact is their speed. What people don't know is that is their maximum speed is (drumroll please 🥁) **390 km/per hour !!!!!**

That's faster than a golden eagle and a cheetah **WOW!!** That's amazing! But they can only reach that speed when diving with there pointed wings. They also get lots of vacations, they fly to other countries. *Lucky!*



Superpower #2

Another really cool fact about my friend Tornado the peregrine falcon is that she is a thief! These incredible creatures steal food from other raptors. The thing is they **don't** eat the raptor. If they can catch their prey without their amazing speed when they get close enough they will use their hooked beaks to rip their prey for food



Superpower #3

Did you know that Tornado's eyes are just like eagle eyes!?! Well they are! Their eyes have amazing spotting powers because their eyes are telescopic 🔭. Their eyes help them focus so that they can **knock knock** their prey out of the sky. Their **claws** look like a pirate hook and are very sharp!



The Super Power Field Guide to Lions

by Enrique A. Grade 3
St. Mary's School



This is a lion.

Just an ordinary lion. But even ordinary lions are extraordinary. In fact even ordinary lions are superheroes. I know what your thinking, aren't lions just overgrown cats with fuzzy fur and large claws? You are right. But do you know they are big as a refrigerator! You say "don't be ridiculous!" but I say "you don't know lions. But you will!"



Super Power #1 Colossal fur.

Do you know about fur? That brown hairy fur? Then you know about the movie lion king that baby simba looks like a light brownish color. That means he's young right? How about when those lions are

kinda blackish brown color then you say "are they still young?" No. Some people say "are they 31?"

Yeah! So how can you tell if there female or male? So a male lions fur is called a mane. "how about woman" you say "a mane?" No. It's called a lioness.

So how long does a mane grow to?

About 16 cm. That explains

why its big! And then finally you know that mane?

Yeah? why do they have it? So

it covers its neck. Why? To protect it! So what

about the lioness? The male protects them.



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GRADE 3

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Super Power #2 Eater of mammals

Of course they have to hunt to eat so who are prey? 2 Animals are prey. THEN WHO? The names are... Zebras and Antelopes. Fun fact [Not really] Lionesses hunt more than male. Well that's done NEXT!



Super Power #3 Enormous roar

The roar of the lion or Rana goes HECK far! How far? 3 miles! That explains why I can HEAR THEM NOW! Also that shows how strong is the lion is. Now i'm SCARED! It's also the loudest roar in the world! And to communicate. But are there other ones to communicate? Yes is scratching trees, oh thats done bye!



Qui Suis-je?

by Jager N. Grade 4
École Good Shepherd School



DIVISION 2

Jager

Qui suis-je?

C'est Noël! J'ai réveillé comme j'ai juste mangé 20gr de sucre! J'ai sauté en haut et en bas le plus vite que possible. De plus, j'ai couru dans les cercles comme un chien qui chase sa queue. Ma maman a dit de me calmer. «Tu vas avoir tes cadeaux très bientôt!» Mais j'ai zéro patience. J'ai couru la plus vite de la famille en bas de les escaliers. Père Noël est venu! J'ai déchiré le cadeau tellement vite! C'est le plus bon cadeau dans la monde.

Qui suis-je?



Qui Suis-je?

by Sienna P. Grade 4

École Good Shepherd School

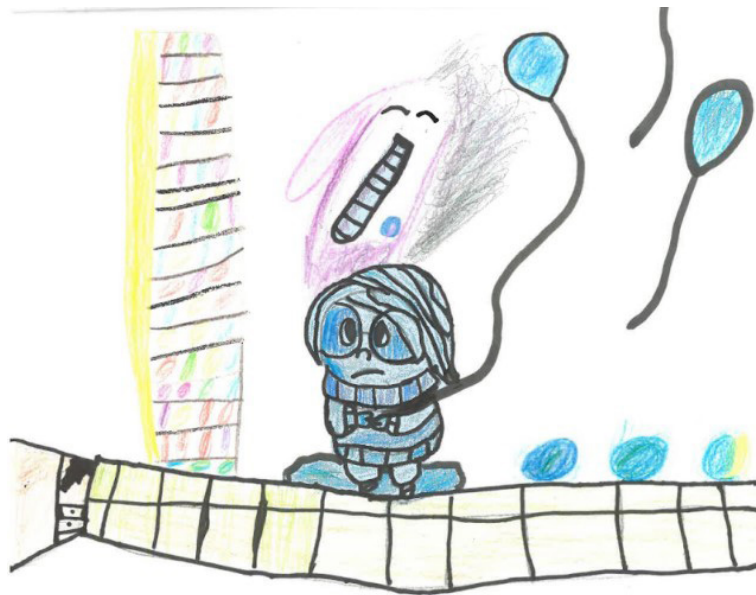
Qui suis-je?

Premièrement, je parle lentement
et mes pieds tourne vers le centre.
Plutôt mes épaules effondrées,
je marche sans lever mes pieds.
Aussi ma voix est grave et doux et
je lis les guides pour les mémoires.
De plus, toujours, je suis fatigué.



Ensuite, je parle
silencieusement. Je n'ai pas de
l'espoir. Puis j'aide des personnes
être une meilleure personne.
Dernièrement, je pleure et
mes cheveux sont bleus.

Qui suis-je?



The High Dive

by Ruth T. Grade 5
Assumption School

Have you ever been so scared that your feet seem glued to the spot but you feel as though you have to get up and do it? That's how I felt when my cousin pressed me to jump off the high dive. And you know what? After I did it it wasn't so bad.

I was standing at the end of the high diving board staring down at the glistening water below. It seemed to me as though it was beckoning me to jump, to jump and fall into the watery depths of the cool, glass looking liquid. ~The more I stared, the more I felt as though I was going to die if I eventually did jump.

"Come on! We don't have all day!" My cousin yelled from inside what looked from my point of view like a watery death trap.

After that (incredibly rude) comment, I squeezed my eyes shut and ran nervously towards the end of

the plank. Then I jumped. Time seemed to slow down as I fell silently towards the ever closer pool below. It seemed like forever 'till I hit the water, but eventually I did.

As I slid under the cool, calm waters, I opened my eyes and peered out through my blue tinted goggles at the blue swirling illusion surrounding me. I could see everyone on that side of the pool's legs and I could see what they were doing. And for a minute there I thought I would stay under there forever. Or at least until I ran out of air.

Suddenly, I started kicking and sliding slowly towards the surface. When I broke through the layer of water, hair clinging to my wet cheeks. I looked happily at my cousin, with a goofy grin on my face, and said to him...

"I'm going again!"

12 Lines

by Rayne P. Grade 5
Assumption School

For every problem there is a solution

For every pie there is a crust

For every shoe there are laces

For every leaf there is a branch

For every story there is a beginning

For every king there is a crown

For every romance there is a proposal

For every baby there is a mom

For every teacher there is a school

For every horse there are many flies

For every quiet there is a loud

Everyday we face our friend and enemy

When School's Out

by Saoirse M. Grade 6
Our Lady of the Snows Catholic Academy

When there's no school at OLS, you'd think the kids would have a rest, but no that's oh so very bogus. That's wrong, I think you need to focus. "There is no school today," the kids said, so hurry up and get out of bed. The children joined an online call, rubbing their eyes not awake at all. "What's our plan?" Asked little Frank, we're gonna pull a little prank. "We are going to dress in camouflage, we must be sneaky, I mean it, no flaws."

They're all heading out at twelve, I hope they don't go to harsh themselves. "The teachers you see," a student yawned, "We're gonna spray paint on their lawns." Oh boy, it's time! Twelve the clocks chimed. Okay, we

ready yall, come on let's go, they all left crashing through the white snow.

Oh boy, they arrived it's time to hide. They were all prepared, tied back their hair, started sneaking around all quiet and scared. They should be scared, the teachers don't care, so please don't prank teachers. They are always ready for plans under the bleachers.

Nature

by Emma T. Grade 6
Our Lady of the Snows Catholic Academy



The leaves that flutter through the air.
The color that fills the atmosphere.
It brings joy to my heart, Inspiration in my art.
The wind flies through my hair.
It reaches under my chin and tickles me like an old friend.
The cold rush of the water fills me like a bucket of sand.
I reach into the mud with my boots, with a satisfying
squelch it releases it.
Nature is my muse.

The Final Stand

by Greta D. Grade 6

Our Lady of the Snows Catholic Academy

"Bang!" More bombs echo in the distance. Paint chips sprayed on Kendra's head, she winced. Kendra turned to the teacher trying to ignore the fact that they could be bombed at any second. But she couldn't focus on the boring fraction lesson. Her stomach plummeted as she heard a low rumble from outside. Kendra's heart pounded so hard that she was confident the whole world could hear it.

She took a breath of relief when the "go home" bell rang. She ran out, "hey!" Shouted a familiar voice.

Kendra turned around to find Ashton, her best friend, calling her over. Warily she walked over to him.

"You wanna study at the park?" He asked, his voice as high as usual.

Just as Kendra was about to answer an overwhelming pain hit her. Blood poured from her shoulder coating her new white shirt in a splash of color. In the mess of red she could make out a shiny silver bullet. Kendra had gotten shot.

She wanted to run or scream but she knew better, as the soldiers emerged from the fire. Every muscle in her body froze in terror. Kendra looked to Ashton, he wore the same the terrified face, the kind of face that says 'we are gonna die now.'

A surge of adrenaline took over. Before she knew it she was sprinting for the woods, Ashton dragging behind her.

"Clack, clack!" A soldier's boots clanked behind them.

"Slow down!" Ashton puffed from behind.

Kendra shook her head violently. She was determined to get to the woods and be rid of soldiers, war, death and most importantly fear.

"Please!" He begged.

He tripped over and landed face first into the burnt pebbles and ash. "Owwwwwwwww!" Ashton yelped.

"Can you walk?" Kendra hoped.

But the only answer she got was more sniffles. She

looked around the terrain and at least twenty soldiers approached.

"Go on without me!" He managed to get out with fresh sobs.

"No!" Kendra cried as the soldiers closed in.

Tears stung her eyes. "Please I can't leave you!" She sobbed.

"Go!" His eyes met hers, "please Kenzie," he looked to the soldiers,

"They are coming!"

The soldiers were now at arms length.

"I can't leave you! Please!" Kendra begged as she hugged him.

"I will be fine. Now go!"

"I will come back for you, I promise." She whispered and turned.

The soldiers grabbed her wrists, forcing her to watch them drag Ashton away as he screamed in pain. Kendra didn't think as she punched the soldiers. The anger boiled inside her like a volcano ready to explode.

They pulled away, giving her a chance to run. She ran, not looking back, not wanting to face the pain again. She didn't stop until she reached the last forest on Earth.

...

Kendra could taste the sweet tart flavor of apples as she strolled along the Okanagan farm, the dew from the grass sparkled on the ground.

She smiled as the sun's warmth washed over her cheeks. A perfect day she thought.

"Brush!" The wind blew through the leaves of a nearby tree, relaxing Kendra's worries, as big as they were. Kendra sat down at the tree and pulled out her book as birds sang their usual morning song.

Kendra dove into her book, consuming four chapters when she heard sniffles from the house. Confused,

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GRADE 6

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she walked over to see her mom and dad crying over the kitchen table as their neighbor, Ms. Henderson, attempted to comfort them.

"It's okay," her usual sing song voice now dull and quiet.

"Mom, dad, what's going on?" Kendra questioned.

Her mom jumped not noticing she was there.

"Kendra, sweetie." Her mom started.

"We're joining the army." Kendra's dad blurted out and then began to sniffle into his hands.

Kendra was overwhelmed with emotions, not knowing which one to feel. Tears stung her eyes, before she knew it she was a waterfall.

News headlines echoed through her head like warning bells. 'Global Warming Being Ignored', 'World Wide Famine, Nations Prepare for War'

Kendra crumbled to her knees with feelings of despair. All of this could have been avoided, but no one listened. She felt a gentle hand stroke her back, as her mom wiped the tears off her cheek.

"The People's Army is recruiting. Space, food and clean air are limited right now and they need our help. Other countries are on the verge of war so we will need to be prepared. We are going to leave you here with Ms. Henderson."

"This could have been avoided." Kendra muttered.

"I know, but you know how humans are, they take and take and don't give anything back. So now we have to deal with the consequences."

Nature had shown us signs Kendra thought, the wildfires on the farm, the polluted air, the bad growing seasons and the limited clean, fresh land.

"Please don't go." Kendra sobbed, crying into her mom's arm.

"Go search for the girl," a deep voice called, snapping Kendra back to reality.

She woke up to find cold tears slipping across her cheeks. She tugged on a tree's leaves imagining the spiky, pine leaves to be the warmth of her blankets. She fell asleep again, wishing for things to be normal, but knowing life would never be the same again.

Remembrance

by Harper C. Grade 6
Assumption School



DIVISION
2

I remember . . .
collecting wild berries
and making mud pies and building block farms
and guiding the cart down the supermarket aisle
Picking apples and washing dishes
Baking muffins and cutting paper
Watching the sunset end
Playing and eating mashed potatoes
Taking our time on the stairs
You never told me you were dying
I wanted the chance to say goodbye



They Are There For Me

by Amara B. Grade 7
St. Francis of Assisi Academy

I know I'm not the only one who has more than one family.

The school is a family, my pets are my family, my friends are my family.

I know this because they love me.

They care what happens to me and are there for me.

Like the sun,

I know that it is there even when the clouds hide it from my eyes.

I still know it's there.

God's love is like this.

God made us to love each other and to be there, he made us so we could tell good from bad, smart or not smart,

kind or not kind,

what to do and what not to do.

He did not stop there.

He gave us a gift to say what we want to say.

He wants us to say "I'm sorry",

"I forgive you" and

"I will always be there for you in the good times and in the bad times."

When we think we are all by ourselves,

our families are there for us and they always will be no matter what.

God will also be there for you.

God loves you more than the sun,

more than the moon,

more than you know.

I can tell you that God loves you very, very, very, very much.

I know that because he is always there because God is love.

I know that the people that are there for me, always,

are the ones that love me no matter what.

That makes a true family.

The Hospital Ward

by Ryah S. Grade 8
St. Anthony's School



The young nurse walked briskly through the hospital halls. Her new shoes shone, and every fold on her uniform was starched crisply. Every strand of hair on her head was perfectly placed in a severe bun that prominently showed her sharp features. Her hands were tough and strong underneath her sterile latex gloves.

She terrified most of her patients, who cowered pitifully in their beds whenever they heard the click of her heels coming towards their rooms. The nurse found their fear despicable. She had no time for weakness.

After suffering through a seven-hour shift, exhaustion attacked her, making her more eager than ever to get through the last patient and finally be free of the dismal, depressing building of death.

She entered her final room, pausing for a moment as her eyes took in her surroundings. As much as she hated the other rooms of the hospital, she despised this space the most.

The unused room had been vacant since the last occupant had died and had fallen into disrepair. The floor, desperately in need of scrubbing, was marked with grimy footprints, and there were several stains that looked horribly like dried blood. The white ceiling, the only thing in the room that could be called white, was characterized by a large fissure gaping across the entire length of the room.

It was this scar that the man occupying the room was studying intensely. He was obviously a dying man. Every one of his ribs were visible to anyone that looked at him in the paper-thin hospital gown, and every puncture where a needle had gone in was portrayed by huge bruises of brilliant colors. His worn wrists bore the look of one chafed by the indomitable plastic of the hospital bracelets.

His face was sharp, angled, and his cheeks were hollowed by the suffering he had endured. But it was the smooth baldness of his head that marked him by all as a patient of the deadly, insurmountable disease called cancer.

Unfazed by his cadaverous appearance, the nurse stepped into his room,

quickly performing her basic duties so she could go home as quickly as possible.

She didn't glance up at him until she was nearly done with her mission.

Then, she made the mistake of peering into his eyes. They were captivating. His eyes were a sea of the deepest blue, and they twinkled as if every star in the sky had been placed there.

She must have stared for too long, because after a minute, he shifted uncomfortably on the bed and smiled awkwardly at her intense glare. Gathering her tools up, she fled the room, unable to face his amiable glow and extremely eager to escape the man on the bed, and the odd, warm intrusive feeling she had never felt before.

She had to visit his room regularly, and every time she walked in, she ignored the fierce pounding of her heart when they made eye contact, and hoped he couldn't feel her hands trembling every time she touched him.

He was so different from the other patients. He talked to her, despite her efforts to appear formidable and uninterested. His gorgeous smile made her melt inside. It gave her a feeling of belonging, one that she hadn't felt in an eternity.

As months went by, his health soared. Soon, besides her usual schedule, she was visiting him in her free time. She tried to convince herself that she just pitied him for having no other connections to other people, but she couldn't deny that he made her feel something else.

The doctors eventually allowed her to take him out of the dreary, formal hospital for short walks on the hospital grounds, to allow him to breathe fresh air and take in the scenery. As they grew closer, talking, he was even able to make her laugh, a quiet, tinkling sound none of the workers at the hospital had ever heard her make.

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Over the months, his health had improved immensely. The doctors eventually told her that she could take him on short walks to let him get a little fresh air, on the beautiful paths around the hospital. They grew closer and closer, and he was even able to make her laugh sometimes, a quiet, tinkling sound no one at the hospital had ever heard her make.

She eventually found herself being nicer to her other patients, gently helping that old man into his wheelchair, or amiably chatting with the new doctors that attempted to make conversation with her.

Through the changes, the biggest difference in her life was the love she felt for Jack. She was unused to being loved, but he was perfect. He was enchanting to be with, ugly as he looked, and she loved spending every minute she could with him.

Eventually she found herself visiting even after her shifts had ended. They would make sure the nurses knew where they were, and they would walk together. Sometimes, she would wheel his chair over to the banks of the river on the property, and they would look out at the rushing waters, and she would fantasize about how they would run away together, someday, when he was healed.

One day, by their spot along the river, they were sitting together. She was spread on the ground, and he was in his chair, placed far away from the perilous river bank. She looked over at her patient, watching him staring off into the distance. Jack seemed to ponder for a moment, and then turned to her and said,

"I want to ask you a question. I know, I've known you for a few months now, but you still haven't told me your first name."

She paused, frozen for a moment, pondering his question, and then, without warning, she burst into torrents of tears.

She felt the numbness welling up in her, the emotions that she had forbidden herself from feeling, ever since the day she had realized no one loved her.

Jack blanched, and immediately reddened. He reached a frail hand up to scratch the back of his neck, awkwardly looking anywhere but at the sobbing woman on the ground.

She slowed the shaking of her shoulders, pushing the air deep down, and only letting it out when she

desperately needed breath.

After almost five minutes, she remembered she had an audience. When she looked up, still quivering slightly, he slowly met her eyes, relieved it was over.

She wiped away the water droplets surrounding her eyes, which made the dry skin underneath itch.

"I'm sorry," she croaked.

Feeling like she owed him an explanation, she hiccuped, "I've always hated my name. I've tried so hard to get rid of it."

She knew he wouldn't care. He would scoff at her pain, the emotion she had kept hidden from the monsters in the world for years. But, to her immense surprise, he did none of those things. He was actually waiting for her to continue, his gaze soft, smiling faintly.

Stupidly, she blundered on. The words came flowing out without her needing to focus on what she was saying.

"When I was thirteen, I thought my family was pretty good, right? There were a few problems, but I figured it was normal. But my world fell apart by the time I turned fourteen. It turned out that my mom was cheating with a man who lived just down the street from us. My parents tried to make it work, they tried to get us to be a family again, broken as we were, but it never worked. Their fights terrified me. By the time I was fifteen, my dad had had enough with my mom and me, enough of their catastrophic marriage. He had had enough with life. So he ended it.

"After that, my mother just fell apart. She started drinking, she went to bars and didn't come back until late at night. And she had an awful temper. She would hit me with whatever she had in her hands at the time or throw it at me." Her hand traveled automatically to the scar hidden beneath her uniform, the scar that caused her devastating limp.

"She was terrible. I could never tell anyone about anything she did to me, because she would threaten to lock me in our basement for a week with no food. I was terrified of that basement.

"When she was mad, she screamed the most awful things at me. Something about how I was the one who caused my father to take his own life. That nobody

loved me, I was a mistake, a trial for her to endure.

“It was three years before I could escape the prison, she called a home. But I still remember what she used to tell me. I know I am a problem. I know that I don’t deserve to have a name. I was the cause of her suffering. Her life could have been so much better without me in it. It would have been perfect.

“My name brings up the worst memories for me. The one word my parents would scream at each other. The word my mother would scream at me while she was hurling objects at me, the word she would whisper through the door of the basement after I had spent a night in there.”

Jack tried to apologize for his prying, but she shook her head, “My name is Angelina. If anyone must know it, I want it to be you. I trust you. After I escaped from my mother’s house, I started wanting to commit suicide. I had even planned it out. And then... I met you.”

She smiled, an action she was almost incapable of doing before his pathetic, gaunt face entered her life.

Jack stared out over the river before turning to her.

“I’m so sorry.”

She felt as if a huge burden had been lifted from her weary shoulders. Jack was the only person on the planet she trusted.

She loved him.

Angelina returned early the next morning for her shift, happier than anyone working there had ever seen her. She was wearing new scrubs, not nearly as stiff as any she had previously worn. She actually bounced around, beaming, and politely apologizing when she bumped into someone by accident.

She was kind to each and every one of her patients, and made sure they were well cared for. She made her rounds much more slowly than usual, and by the time she got to Jack’s room, which was the last room for her shift, she was eager to see his face.

As she reached his door, it slowly opened, and out came another nurse, rolling Jack’s IV stand along behind her. She immediately recognized her as the woman who was constantly with Jack, and her face drained of blood. She stammered for a second, before finally finding her voice and saying what she needed

to say.

“Jack...Well, he... Last night, after you left.. He departed from this world. He’s gone, Nurse Greene.”

Angelina stopped. Even before her brain had time to process the information, she had torn away from the unfortunate woman delivering the news, had shoved open the doors, which slammed behind her, and she was running across the paths, the paths they had taken so often together. There! The spot where he had first told her that he was in love with her... The path they had walked on so often, had so many discussions on...

Angelina doubled over, her body racking from the pain. She fell to the ground, shaking, unable to overcome her grief and rise. She never thought losing someone could hurt this bad. She stayed like that for a minute, before finally getting up and running, running like she had never ran before, over the memorized paths, to the river, their beautiful, magic spot, where they had spent so many meaningful moments together. He was all that had mattered in her life.

She stopped, panting, looking out, and began tearing her uniform off with icy fingers. She stumbled blindly through her tears, down the riverbank, towards the frigid water. She hesitated

for a fraction of a second, then slowly waded in, noticing the November chill she had not felt before.

Angelina wondered if this was what her father had felt like, a decade before, when he had done this exact thing, she was about to do.

She reached a point in the river where the water was deep enough to cover her neck. She took a second, to remember her life, remembering what it had been with him, before plunging her head in deep. The cold made her head swim and made everything feel less realistic than it already did.

How long has it been? She wondered, her lungs straining pitifully for air. One minute? Two?

Finally, she couldn’t hold her breath anymore. Losing her determination, in her lightheadedness, to take her own life, she pushed up to the surface of the bleak water and sloshed over to the dirt bank, where, trembling, she collapsed, and she knew no more.

Angelina woke up, in a bed that wasn’t hers, knowing

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absolutely nothing other than her name and the fact that the one man she loved, out of everyone in the world, was gone forever.

She stifled a cry, rolling over to stuff her face into the stiff, unyielding hospital pillow to hide the torrents of tears rushing down her face. Finally, feeling barely able to face the blinding light streaming through the open shades on the window, she turned, once more, to look at the ceiling.

Illuminated by the bright light of the day, the ceiling had a large crack running through it, an effect of the extremely old building structure. It was the exact ceiling she had walked in on Jack staring at, so many times. Times that had seemed meaningless, that only Jack's loss would prove to make beautiful.

Angelina attempted to raise her head and look around the room. There, the exact stain on the wall right next to the bed, that looked like a permanent bloodstain. The layers of grime had been cleaned away, but it was unmistakably Jack's room. This was the room that Jack's cold body had been removed from, not even twenty-four hours prior.

She looked, once more, at the ceiling's deformity, which Jack had loved to stare at. It fascinated him because it was broken. Broken like her.

Although she was the nurse, and he was the patient, she knew that somehow, it was he who had healed her. She had been broken, and now, because of him, she was whole.

Butterflies

by Kamryn H. Grade 8
St. Anthony's School

I get this feeling a feeling don't know if anyone else gets
and only get this feeling when I see your charming face,
this feeling is butterflies that swirl around in my stomach
until I feel the need to vomit,
I feel like they are trying to embarrass me in front of you
but I don't know how to not embarrass myself.
All I what to do is just talk to you
I just want to tell you how handsome you are,
but the butterflies stop me
I don't know if I like them or not
but what if you could just see how you make me feel inside
All I want is for you to see my butterflies

Formal Letter

by Adriel P. Grade 8
Christ the King Academy

Dear Charlie Baker:

As a long time fan and supporter of the NCAA, I have noticed unfairness between the men's weight room and the women's weight room provided at the March Madness facilities. The men's weight room has more equipment while the women's weight room is only a stack of dumbbells. Ignoring the weight room for the female athletes will not only initiate massive backlash from the public, but the athleticism of the female athletes will be compromised without proper equipment.

Having a proper weight room for the female athletes will have amazing benefits for the athletes and would halt the negative backlash from the public. The weight room would help the athletes condition themselves for certain situations on the court since they have specific roles that require them to develop distinct strengths. For example, the point guard needs to develop speed for specific plays used inside a game, while the center has to develop their core so they can dominate inside the paint and have the ability to fight for rebounds for second-chance points. Those strengths are improved and honed with special machines and exercises that depend upon proper equipment. Athletes are less prone to injuries when proper workouts or exercises are performed to prevent injuries and strengthen muscles in the body.

Weights and machines last a long time. Seeing as how the NCAA posted online that money was not an issue, investing this kind of equipment could last many female athletes for years, maybe even decades. The benefits would have an amazing impact on many female athletes because of how often the equipment would be used for proper training and development in various different athletes training for tournaments like March Madness.

As seen in the TikTok video made by Sedona Price, the reaction from her can cause the public to be furious and demand a change. If a proper weight room is built for the female athletes, the positive effect may not be instant, but if those female athletes were to post something on social media, it would be a post about gratitude because you listened to their requests and made a change. Negative remarks, posts, and videos would be halted and the NCAA's reputation can be rebuilt again for the better. Athletes as well as the public will begin to trust the NCAA again and positive feedback could boost the reputation and popularity of the NCAA.

I wish to thank you for reading my letter. I believe building a proper weight room for the women could change and help both the female athletes and the NCAA. I hope to see a change for the future. If you want to discuss this topic further, you can reach me at 565-334-6687 or email me at RP953324@gmail.com

Sincerely,



Anxiety

by Rebecca P. Grade 8
St. Francis of Assisi Academy



Day after day anxiety is there,
Waiting and watching for the worst moments to
attack.

It holds you in its clutch like you are its hostage, its
next victim.

It's thick like tar, near impossible to escape.

Its chaotic and tiring,

All at once it will beat you until you're past your
breaking point.

It's too loud to hear your thoughts,

The voice echoes through your head,

But to others it's no more than a near imperfection
on the outside.

No one would even be able to tell that it is
consuming your mind.

No one can tell that you are stuck in this eternity of
uneasiness,

No one would know you're in a constant battle
within yourself, stuck in a never ending war.

No one would know unless you told them, but it's
like anxiety has gagged you with a rag.

The dread of waking up, knowing it's there watching
and waiting at your side, ignoring the
phenomenon of personal space.

In a way it can be comforting knowing that you can
have a blanket of protection from the world.

Only you miss out on life because you are
swallowing pills with the hope of silencing the voice.
You get into a horrible habit of snapping an elastic
against your wrist to feel something other than
your mind.

Habit to bottle up your feelings to let others know
that you are not hurting even though you are,

The habit of crying to your pillow and the monster
under your bed instead of your family and
friends, the people who care about you.

So the next time that you hear someone say the
word anxiety, know this,

Anxiety is the crippling monster inside.

Formal Letter

by Makayla C. Grade 8
Christ the King Academy

Dear NCAA:

My name is Makayla Cosgrove and I am a Grade eight student at Christ the King Academy. I am writing to you because I believe that the NCAA needs to make everything like the weight room issue and the inequity for men and women equal and fair for everyone. I am not a woman that plays basketball, but I speak on behalf of every female basketball player when I say that women need more equality. I believe that if you make things fair by giving women the space they need as well as the men, such as instead of twenty pound dumbbells give the women squat machines, weight racks, everything that the men have, it will benefit you as well as female basketball players.

I have noticed that the men's weight room is significantly different then the women's weight room. Ignoring the fact that the women's weight room is significantly different than the men's weight room will not only cause you major backlash but anger. It diminishes female athletes by showing they do not deserve a weight room like the men's and that they are not worthy. How are players supposed to train but have different equipment? The men have a whole gym which includes many bench presses, pull up bars, while women have twenty pound dumbbells, women also have every right to have the same weight room as the men; women did not fight for their rights to play sports for nothing. To be able to train your calves, with twenty pound dumbbells do you really think that is possible? The NCAA said that there was not enough space for the women, but Sedona Price showed in her TikTok that there was plenty of space that you could have used for them.

Taking advantage of this space by establishing a better weight room for the women will make the public's perception of the NCAA much better. It would make the other female athletes feel as if they do not matter to sports, not only female athletes but people who want to watch the female athletes succeed and gain progress. Females also need to train their bodies to become stronger and healthier. Females are normally described as fragile, weak, and slow in sports; by only giving them dumbbells, the NCAA is showing that it thinks this too. Adding a better weight room will make the media and public admire that you do care for the female athletes, not only the men.

If you would like to discuss this issue further, please feel free to contact me at
MC798325@isidore.redeemer.ab.ca or 403-793-2245.

Thank you for taking your time to read this letter, I hope I get to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,



Formal Letter

by Brooks C. Grade 8
Christ the King Academy



Dear Lisa Patton:

As a new patron of the Brooks Public Library who visits the library once a month with my class, I recently noticed during a visit to the library that there was a lack of literature relating to transportation, specifically about vehicles, ocean liners, aeroplanes and locomotives. My name is Brooks Canonigo, and I would like to make a proposal regarding this observation.

The library is a place of social reading where many enthusiasts, adults and young adolescents look forward to reading literature. I am an ocean liner enthusiast who imagined that there was a section relating to ocean liners and other forms of transportation. I eventually found the section but to my surprise, there was a lack of literature based on ocean liners. Although there is literature based on transportation, it is more of a general topic instead of a specific part of transportation. As an ocean liner expert, I am irritated to know that the only book that is about ocean liners is the famous story of the Titanic. I have nothing against the famous Edwardian ship, but more selection on famous ships other than the Titanic is greatly appreciated. While looking more into topics of transportation in the section of the library, I have discovered that ships and ocean liners were not the only topic lacking literature. I have discovered that other forms of transportation like mentioned had no more detailed information other than its own general topic. For example, while looking in the locomotives section, discovered that its main topic was only based on the Canadian railway network. I am sure that locomotive enthusiasts would like to learn more about locomotives than the limited section allows. I do understand if there are budget constraints but I am addressing a library regarding a topic that should have been addressed at the installation of literature of the Brooks Public Library, which is somewhat ironic. There is technology like computers, laptops, smartpads, and smartphones. But some groups of people would rather read a book than a harmful bright screen. Technology is revolutionary but it's harmful to our physical and mental health. Adolescents are consumed mostly by technology which inhibits them from their daily activities like walking, reading, and engaging in conversation with friends in the real world. Sadly it is the opposite: most adolescents spend their time online and would rather start conversations with friends online than talking face to face.

Technology is important but a return to reading in the form of physical literature is better for us adolescents. We would be more engaged if we explored more topics of literature. For me, that topic is transportation. If you have questions or any concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me by email at BC976368@isidore.redeemer.ab.ca. Thank you for taking your time reading this letter regarding my concerns.

Sincerely,

If You Look Closely

by Sophia B. Grade 9
St. John Paul II Collegiate



The earth is flat.
You may be already thinking
Oh, here comes another idiot,
to which I would say
stop reading and leave.
this poem is only for
those who argue about the shape of the world.

From the beginning of time,
we were created on our earth
that was shaped like a dish
and we the contents
that forks and knives would cut.

Of course, there are many non-believers
Who foolishly refuse
And have been fooled
By the government.

How idiotic.
How stupid.

They refuse to see the truth
Even if we prove it
And they are nothing but blind and deaf
And so we are superior.

Are you entertained?
Are you laughing, calling names,
insulting, and feeling so
Superior?

Flat-earthers believe the earth is flat
So that they can feel superior,
To feel like they know better.

Round Earthers ridicule flat-earthers
So that they can feel superior,
To feel like they know better,
Hidden by the comfort of the 'majority'.

I really don't care
If the earth is round, flat, or square.
I want you to be aware
That the answer doesn't
Matter.
Before searching the universe,
Knowing the form of the world,
Search for the vines of hate
Stretching across everyone's hearts.
Before pointing at pictures
To determine the shape of the planet,
Look closely and see
The cracks forming
In our world.

The Backup Friend

by Sara S. Grade 9

St. John Paul II Collegiate

I am the backup friend,
The friend that no one would notice if disappeared.
The friend who opens their mouth to repeat
themselves once again,
But instead, I hold my breath.
Why bother,
They say they care but do they really?
Do they?
I question that, I question all the I love yous.
I question if I was really invited because I am
wanted there,
Or maybe just for pity.
The slight stutter at the beginning of the question,
I question.
I question if the people gathered by my locker
would stay,
Just for me.
If it's even for me.
Nothing lasts forever.
I know that,
The memories flicker through my eyelids,
Re-living the moments in my dreams.
It's all just a dream,

Because it will never go back to the way it
used to be.
It just always surprises me how much
it hurts at the end.
A giant dumbbell weighs down on my chest,
Yet the betrayal seems to suffocate me more.
It just sucks because I still like you,
Even though I know to you
I am just another friend you think is alright.
Another friend to enlarge the friend group,
Another friend you can splurge out
your problems onto,
But when it comes to me you'll pretend.
You'll pretend you care,
But I can see it in your eyes the whole half an hour
I spent pouring my heart onto you,
All you could think of was you.
I am not perfect,
And I don't expect you to,
But I just wish you could recognize me too.

The End of Us (excerpt)

by Oliver H. Grade 9
Centre for Learning@HOME



Prologue: The Beginning of The End

To be fair, the bees warned me before it all came crashing down, but I didn't listen. I told them they were being paranoid; they usually are when they make such a claim, but then things got worse and worse, until the rhinoceroses began complaining as well. They don't often, so when the ice caps melted faster and faster, I knew things were going downstream –except the salmon, of course– and someone had to pull the trigger before the humans destroyed themselves.

Things had been out of control for quite some time, and many of my observers had taken up to voicing their concerns and suggesting solutions to fix everything. But I told them to wait, the humans would sort it out, just like they had before. “Mother,” they pleaded, “please, help us. We are desperate. All will be gone before long, unless we do something.”

“We will do nothing,” I answered, foolishly, “it is not our mess to clean up. They made their beds, and now they will face the consequences of lying in them.” I was more confident than I should've been, and everyone knew it but me.

Then came word that the humans had gone meddling in places they shouldn't have, and wound up infecting half the population with a virus. The trees suggested that I just let it play out, after all, maybe they'll get rid of themselves and fix their own problems. But they had survived epidemics and pandemics before, and after a few years it didn't seem like the human race would be wiped out anytime soon, all things considered. It was time to end things permanently; it had been a long time coming.

So began the end.

Part I: The Drought

It was the summer before grade 10 the last time it rained. Ophelia had spent June in India with her relatives, like always, and the rest of the summer in Canada. Her mother said that excessive heat was not uncommon during July and August, but by October, people started questioning. There was a girl in Ophelia's

class who swore that it was the government stealing all our rain in order to get us to pay more taxes. When Ophelia asked why they would do that, and how that would even work, the girl just gave her a funny look, like she was stupid.

One Tuesday morning, Ophelia was sitting in her biology class. The teacher was late, yet again. When the teacher finally arrived, she made a big deal of sighing and crumpling the attendance sheet into a ball instead of beginning the lesson.

“As of November 5th, 2024,” her voice came out clear and strong as though she had been rehearsing all morning, “all students will be spending the rest of the semester learning from home online due to the current water shortage of the world. It is becoming a health code violation, and until the rivers start flowing again, you must all stay home. This change will be effective immediately and permanent until further notice.”

Some students gasped, others pulled out their phones and started texting immediately, and some even whooped. Ophelia just sat in silence. Not again, was all she could think.

The teacher cleared her throat. “You have until noon to pack your things and get a ride home. Buses will arrive in an hour or so,” Some students sighed with relief, as if this was the big thing they had been worrying about. Ophelia considered calling her mother, but she knew she'd be working the morning shift at the clinic until this afternoon, at least. So she decided she'd walk home– it was only 15 minutes or so, anyways.

When she left the classroom, students squished into the hallways, all eager to empty their lockers and get out of school early. Ophelia was in pure shock, unable to move or continue on with the tasks of the day.

“Hey, Lia! Did you hear the news?” a familiar arm crept around her shoulders. Ophelia opened her mouth to answer her friend, but no words came out. “We've got a history exam on Friday! I know, short no-

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tice, but I think I've got this one in the bag," Dante said, unperturbed. She stared at him, shock now turned to confusion. He stared back.

"What's wrong? I know you're not a big fan of history, but you can borrow my notes--"

"They're sending us home from school again!" Some girl yelled at her friend from across the school hallway. "No shit!" her friend yelled back, emptying her locker all over the hallway.

Dante looked to Ophelia for reassurance. He mouthed the word, what?, in a similar state of bafflement.

"Because of the whole water thing," she said, not making much sense of it herself. Dante was quiet for a few moments. Ophelia noticed his language arts notebook in his arm, realizing he probably never made it to first period.

"I have to find Myles," he said with certainty, and for the first time that morning, Ophelia thought of her sisters. She thought of her younger sister, Bea, in grade 5, who would be taking up a leader position amongst the 11 year-olds, probably already finding her way home to safety. She thought of her older sister, Isis, who might still be at work, depending on whether or not they sent her home, too. No matter what, she decided, everyone in her family would make their way home at some point today. To be sure, she sent her mother and Isis a text, saying she was heading home soon and hoped to meet them there.

Now with a plan in place, Ophelia pushed through the crowd to her locker, and began shoving papers, pencils, binders, paperclips, markers, books, two pairs of broken glasses, one pair of shoes, and an odd amount of candy into her backpack. As she squished her way through the hive of students, she had a brief thought that she may never see the hallways of her highschool again. Nonsense, she assured herself, the world doesn't just run out of water.

By the time Ophelia got home, it was a little past 10am. There was no car in the garage and the apartment door was locked, just how she left it that morning. She fumbled for her keys, hidden underneath the contents of her locker in her school bag, and went inside. She turned on the tap to get a drink, but nothing came out. Her cat, Twiggy, jumped up onto the counter and nuzzled her face, begging for treats. She gave him a little pat on the head instead.

Ophelia checked the landline's voicemail in hope of a message from anyone she knew. There was a message her mother must have left earlier that day, "Hi, girls. I think I'll be running a little late today-- they want me to pick up another shift. I know, I know. How does pizza sound for dinner? Love you!" and a reminder from the landlord that their water bill was due soon, which Ophelia couldn't help but laugh at.

She took out her school supplies and threw out the trash, organized the important papers in a pile on her bed, and left the candy at the bottom of her bag along with the loose paper clips. She turned on the TV, ignoring the news reporters shouting at her through the screen about how this was the end as we knew it, and found an old episode of Supernatural to watch.

When the monsters got boring, Ophelia picked up the phone and called Bea's elementary school to ask whether or not Bea had left yet, but no one picked up. She called again, and left a voicemail. What if she didn't make it home safely, amidst all the traffic and craziness outside?, she worried. As her thoughts grew darker, she tried reassuring herself that if anyone could survive a societal plummet, it would be her younger sister. No one would dare take down the little feisty thing; they'd be too scared to. No matter, Ophelia couldn't sit still any longer. She began pacing about the room until she was reminded of the test on Friday. Of course, that should've been the least of her concerns, but it took her mind off whatever was going on in the world.

When Does it Stop

by Natalie B. Grade 9
St. John Paul II Collegiate

No matter what we do we will always be criticized
You look pale
So we pinch and pound and poke until our skin is a
color roses are jealous of
You're to fat
So we squeeze and suck until we fit into the mold
they created
You're to skinny
So we lift and lunge and ingest until the numbers
add up to the scale we created

When does it stop
Even if we spend sleepless nights researching the
perfect way to shape our body's into the lifeless
victoria secret template
No matter how much money we spend we will
never live up to societies everchanging standards
And instead of gaining satisfaction of self fulfilling
love
We lose ourselves to the endless whirlpool of
worthlessness

Sit up straight
How can I sit up straight when the rubble of the op
pressed suffocated my ability to plant myself
Cross your legs
We cross them like they crossed the lines of our
ancestors poisoning the roots of our saplings
Don't speak listen
How am I supposed to sit here in silence while the
toxin metastasis onto future branches

When does it stop
From the moment we are born we are taught to
absorbed in silence
Take in everything in for as it is and never have a
opinion or it will lead to violence
So instead of breaking free of the chokehold we suc
cumb to it
We let its pollutants leak into the minds of youth
guiding them to continue the cycle

You were asking for it
Why would I asked for your talons to sink onto the
fruit of my youth stripping away the
walls my family has worked so hard for to sustain
What were you wearing
Why should I have to apologize for men could keep
their eyes off my bear thighs and
cellulite
Boys will be boys
Just because you give them a excuse for receiving a
Y does not mean I said Yes

When does it stop
Did you know that we had the right to vote before
we were even considered human beings
You say that we've come far
That we've made progress
But no matter how many day of the year you
"dedicate" to "recognize the struggle"
IT DOESN'T CHANGE ANYTHING
Little girls are still going to be abducted from the

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arms of their childhood
 Then only to be welcomed to the empty dark
 abyss of teenage years
 Never going a moment feeling safe in anyone's
 outstretched arms
 Always checking and watching only to walk home
 in the end causing them harm
 WHEN DOES IT STOP

It doest matter how old you get your still going to
 be
 Catcalled
 Sexualized
 Silenced
 Shamed for WHO WE ARE
 Cause who are you to tell us WHAT WE ARE
it doesn't stop

Weeping Chords

by Moira C. Grade 9
 St. John Paul II Collegiate

Notes race down my pale face.
 There is no chaos like mine.
 I have been crying music.

The endless streams lead me down the street,
 the electronic torches casually blinking at the
 monstrosity.
 Bystanders record and gawk at the
 ridiculous sight.
 Whispers swarm me like fruit flies to an orange.

After a while,
 the notes lessen their production,
 leaving me defenseless to the statements.
 Each squabber tears my skin,
 like paper challenging scissors to a duel.

Fortunately the praises cover the seeping scars,
 yet they share the same quality as



tattered bandages.
 Pouring from my wounds were more lyrics,
 obeying each command given to them
 by the crowd.

They do not understand.
 While I sit still,
 listening to the beautiful pandemonium.
 They guffaw.

I am a new woman.
 I lay still,
 so that I don't brush away the growing moss.
 My breathing low,
 to not interfere with the harmony.

A Blitz Act of Heroism

by Louis Y. Grade 9
Centre for Learning@HOME



My name is Luke Hill, a 31-year-old British steam engine driver. I have a friend named John, who is an engine fireman. We are the crew of a London, Midland, and Scottish Railway Stanier Mogul tender engine named Harry, since he was built approximately seven years ago. The three of us were very close, and we made a lot of friends, but one thing worried us.

About a year ago, the war started, and everyone has been living quite uneasily. We feared Hitler would attack Britain, as he did with the rest of the continent. Our fears worsened as some cities were bombed last summer, even though they were defended by our brave Royal Air Force. Manchester, where we live, was unscathed, but that was all about to change quite a bit.

September 7, 1940

Harry did not need to work early, so John and I stayed home with our wives and little children. At 3:10 in the afternoon, we drove to Harry's shed in Trafford Park, where the other Manchester engines live. We oiled his wheels, polished his black paintwork, and started his fire until he made steam. He was going to take our families on a day out with him, and he boasted to the other engines.

"I'm a role model to the little lads," he rambled in his Scottish accent. "They see me as the fastest engine and the pride of the line."

"Rubbish!" retorted Tim, an LMS Fowler tank engine. "We are ALL role models! You're just lucky the Nazis haven't attacked this city and destroyed your paintwork!"

"That's not true!" argued Harry. "Those Germans fear me, which makes this city intact!"

"That's enough, you two," I laughed. "Don't bicker in front of my children on our way to London. Just enjoy the countryside while it lasts. Maybe that will get your mind off the war."

It was 3:40 when the two engines arrived at Piccadilly Station and coupled up to their coaches (eight each for them). They were arranged by the station

pilot, a London and North Eastern Railway N5 tank engine named Dominic. There were only three engines in the station, but more people spilled in, making it the most crowded sight I have ever seen. Looking at the tiny schedule I carried around with me, another engine was due to arrive here with an empty train in five minutes. It was 3:55 right now. After that, I tried counting the people while standing on top of Harry's cab, when it happened.

The wailing of the sirens shattered the busy chatter of the passengers, who started to panic. It startled me so much that I tumbled off of Harry and flopped onto the platform like a wet rag.

"What's happening?" Harry yelled, his proud face white as a ghost.

"It's the Luftwaffe!" Tim shouted shakily.

I was dazed from my fall, my ears ringing from the sirens and the screams. I forced myself to get up and looked around wildly. The passengers were buzzing about like bees, either rushing out to the nearest shelter or cramming inside the coaches. I helped my family into a coach, and John did the same to his. Then we and Tim's crew ran up and down, helping people onto both trains.

After the coaches were secured, Dominic rolled up behind Harry. I saw his terrified look, so I coupled him up with a shunter's pole; then dived back into Harry's cab. I pulled the throttle, John gripped his shovel, and we dashed out of there, just as the first bombs landed around the station. The other engine was beginning to pass us. We yelled persistently for him to reverse, but he couldn't stop in time. We didn't dare look back as we heard the wretched sounds of a bomb and wrenching metal.

We raced through the countryside, puffing at speeds we never reached before. The bombs made Earth jump like someone getting an electric shock. The explosions deafened us, but the dreaded Luftwaffe birds only motivated the engines to carry on.

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Harry coughed from the debris the bombs crafted, while Tim's face was dirty, but full of determination.

"Three o'clock!" John pointed wearily, then went back to shoveling coal for dear life. I looked right, but the coal dust blinded me. I squinted and saw a Luftwaffe plane spitting machine gun fire at us. Harry screamed in pain as the bullets bounced off his wheels and boiler, suddenly pulling me out of my state of paralyzed fear. I grabbed the shunter's pole and clambered outside, desperately gripping one of the cab windows with my left hand.

"Driver! Hurry up already!" Harry whimpered as his paintwork began to get scratched.

I stared at the ground running below me as he rocketed on, but I had no time to gaze around. I had to save my engine. I rounded up my strength and threw the pole at the propellers as the plane came closer for a better shot. I saw sparks flying and heard the unbearable sound of grinding metal as the plane went down, with its pilot staring flabbergasted at me.

As we rocketed through what appeared to be an empty station, we heard Dominic pant, "they're still behind us!" Well, he didn't need to tell us twice, so we went at full steam.

At last, Harry began to run low on coal, so Dominic started to push the train, but the fighters and bombers started to gain on us like a shadow.

"No! We can't give up now!" I yelled, thinking about my poor family.

"Alas, it has all come to this now," Harry sighed sadly. "Goodbye, my friends. It has been a—"

He had hardly finished his sentence when some extraordinary sounds occurred above us.

"Can it be?" John asked me, his eyes lighting up with hope.

I looked up and saw our RAF Spitfires clashing with the Luftwaffe! I am quite sure they were there to protect us, but we were not yet safe from the shot-down aircraft that were falling like acid rain. Harry, Tim, and Dominic puffed as fast as their wheels could carry them, but they acted like they had found new strength.

We entered London, which was almost in ruins, so we took cover in a tube station and screeched to a halt, finally safe. John and I realized we were aching all over, and our faces were completely black with coal dust. Tim's and Dominic's crews were in the same condition. As for the three engines themselves, they were filthy as well and red in the face from exhaustion, but they were very relieved.

"I told you your paintwork would get damaged," Tim chuckled dryly, looking at Harry's scratched boiler.

"Ah, well," he sighed, trying to think of a comeback. "We may be battered and weary, but we are not beaten. Dominic, how are you?"

"I'm...fine...but did you...really have to let me...do the work at the end?"

John and I were glad to see our families were all right, but they complained about being bounced around like peas in a frying pan! Just then, the passengers crowded around us and praised us, and we discovered that journalists were among them. They asked to take our pictures, to increase the morale for the British war effort. They took a photo of us, the engines and their crews.

Later, Harry, Tim, and Dominic would help in the war effort on the home front as well, by transporting supplies and soldiers; and helping rebuild the rails. We also pitched in in clearing the rubble of the bombings, and helped survivors escape the rubble. As for the bombings, I am quite certain you all know which side won.



My Angel In Disguise

by Jaime B. Grade 9
St. John Paul II Collegiate

Horse riding

is a sport in which a person
rides a 2000 pound beast
using nothing but their legs
And a slight bit of rein.

When my eyes first captured the
beauty of these magnificent creatures
I couldn't turn away.
Their majesty so perfect that they could
Only have been created by a God,
A God so powerful and divine.
Their bodies intricately crafted with
Delicate, chiseled, powerful legs and
Noble faces, with
Deep kind eyes that stare far beyond the
Surface of any human being.

Angels in disguise.
Invisible wings and
Holy hearts, molded out of gold
Harvested from the streets of heaven.
Sent by God to save souls who are drowning
In the oceans of this world.
Angels ready to rescue people from
the rubble the tsunami left behind.

Their splendor and the ability of their rider
Put to the test.
Judged by people who don't understand
Their true story.

Hours and hours of training
Mud, sweat and tears.
Mind and body equally fit.
Mucking and sweeping,
simultaneously lifting at the gym.
All for our horses.
Our best friends.
The only ones who truly accept us
for who we are.

"You're a horse girl?"
"It's so easy!"
"The horse does all the work!"
"It's not a real sport!"

Have you ever worked so hard to make it
look like you're doing nothing?
Have you ever danced with someone who
Doesn't speak your language?
You play football?
That's cute.
I ride an animal, so powerful,
they could kill me with their body!
I've been thrown.
I've been kicked.
I've been bitten.
I've been stepped on.

My horse may break my bones,
but he could never break me down

the way that you do.
When you call me stupid,
My horse calls me leader.
When you ignore me,
My horse listens without interruptions.
When you mock me,
my horse accepts me for all that I am.
He is my most faithful friend,
Because every secret that leaves my lips, will NEVER
Leave his.
He is my best friend.
the only one who truly accepts me
for who I am.

So yes.....
I am that Christian horse girl,
And you have mocked,
And you have made me feel like I don't matter.....
Like I'm nothing.
And you continue to do so.....
But when God saw me hurting,
He sent an angel to save me.

Roses of Friendship

by Hannah S. Grade 9
Centre for Learning@HOME

Yellow roses fear the day
That all their dreams run away;
The day all seams come undone,
And friendships hide beyond the sun.
For while others see an open glade,
A place of joy; a place they made,
Yellow roses see a forest all alone,
With no one there,
And no one home.

The Last Cast

by Hally P. Grade 9
Centre for Learning@HOME

It was sweltering. We had been out there for eight hours. Straight. Not much shade at a boat launch. Our campsite was a two-minute walk from the launch, and yet, we were determined not to go back until my dad came. Dad came about six hours in. We kept fishing. We had not caught much. Only one little fish, a pike, barely the size of a shoe. We woke up at seven, went out, and fished until 3. A twelve and thirteen year old. Owen caught the little fish. I was desperate for one. And even though I had gone through seven hours and thirty minutes of casting, reeling, waiting, and sunburning, only two bites and two lost lures were to show for my perseverance. When you fish for this long in the heat, without sunscreen, and with the sun reflecting off the water into your eyes, and no fish to show, you tend to get tired of it. However, for me, never. Until about three o'clock, when my shoulders could feel nothing more than heat, and my glasses slid down my nose in a river of sweat.

"Hey guys, we'd better go," Dad sent one more cast into the lake, off his glorified ocean fishing rod. This rod has never actually been to the ocean or caught anything bigger than a trout. He brought it home a while ago, and promptly named it "Big White."

"Fine, a few more casts, maybe?" I responded. I was skunked. Defeated. Fishless. I hated to leave the dock without anything to show.

"Kay," Owen had already caught something, but we were both looking for more. "Wanna see who can cast further out?" He looked at me.

"Sure, why not, to end the day," I shrugged. We both headed over to the end of the dock with our rods. I had my little pink rod. It was about four feet tall, eight years old, and glittering. He had a brand-new rod, six or seven feet tall, that cast like there was no tomorrow. I had my work cut out for me. We flipped the reels, held the strings, counted to 3, and then let go, flinging as hard as we could. Surprisingly enough, my little rod seemed to keep up with his, and we agreed on a tie. We reeled in, and Owen, along with my dad, sat on a rock packing up the tackle. Me, refusing to give up

however, sent one more cast out into the lake.

Since we were at a boat launch, often our fishing got interrupted by boaters. And with boaters, also comes park officers. One was walking around the dock as we fished, checking boats, and fishing licenses. There was occasionally a couple walking around the dock, and, even more often, our siblings biking down to see us, bringing food, nets to catch crayfish, and noise. The rocks around the launch served as a nice cove for the fish, while a long, skinny dock separated the two launch pads. We would either stand on the dock, the rocks, the launch pads, or even the rocks surrounding the dock to fish. We had tried every spot we could think of. And yet, I still came out empty handed.

I took a deep breath. I stood at the end of the dock, clutching my rod. This was my last chance to catch a fish. Would I catch one? Unlikely. One cast left. I flipped the reel, held the string down with my finger, and twisted around to hurl my red and white spoon out into the waves. The funny thing was, I had just found that lure the night before. I was climbing on the rocks, and about a meter away from me it was sitting on a rock, glinting in the water. I jumped in, swam over, and grabbed it. I did not buy it. Someone lost it, and I found it. Funny how things happen like that.

I flung the lure out into the water. Gave it a second to sink and started reeling. Suddenly, I felt a tug on my rod. The possibilities flashed through my mind. Weed? No, too much motion. Other line? No, no other lines in. Rock? No, wrong tug. Fish... What if? The rod tugged again. I knew and smiled. I turned the reel once around and pulled back. More pushing. The lure was stuck in. "Fish!" I screamed.

"What? No way!" Dad jumped up, put down his tackle, grabbed the plyers, and ran down the dock to me. Owen ran over to the dock with the net. It was a tiny net. Probably a foot wide, and a little more than a foot long. But soon it proved itself to be enough for a fish.

I pulled my rod back and reeled more. It was so close to me! As I twisted my rod back, I thought about

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earlier today. A man had walked up to Owen and I fishing at about 8 in the morning.

“Catch anything?” He walked over to us.

“Well,” I started, thinking about the fish we had just caught, “We caught one,” suddenly, the line I was reeling in tugged. I pulled, “How about one on now?” I smiled. I reeled in, and then the line gave away, leaving a fishless, lure less line in the water. My heart dropped. I lost it. However, if I threw my line in quickly, I might catch the same fish again. I threw on another lure, tied on my last “Five of Diamonds” lure, and cast. Seconds later, miraculously, another bite! “Fish!” I yelled again. Owen hopped over to me. I pulled, reeled, and tugged, and then the line snapped. Again. Another lure, gone. Another fish, gone. I was defeated. Hopeless. Empty handed.

A quick tug brought me back to the present. The sun beat down on my sunburned shoulders. My headband rubbed against my hair; my head sweaty. Adrenaline pumped through my veins. I smiled. “I see it!” Dad yelled out. He knelt to grab the line. I reeled more. The fish fought. Hard. He twisted and turned. Struggled. However, the lure kept firmly in his mouth. Three meters from the dock. I pulled the rod into me, as it bent. Two meters. I reeled in. One meter. I reeled and pulled. My little pink rod hung in there. Dad grabbed the line, dragging the fish toward him. He was just about to lift it out of the water when he yelled.

I was jumping up and down, and my rod was bouncing with it. “Stop moving! Don’t pull!” He panicked. I stopped. But it was too late. The fish took a final twist and spit out the hook. It was all gone. No fish, no picture, still skunked. I was stunned. A second went by. What I didn’t realize though, was Owen. Time went by, each second feeling like a minute. I had lost the fish.

Lost the fish. Owen was kneeling next to my dad, the net in his hand. I had lost the fish. I had lost the fish. He plunged the net down into the lake. I had lost the fish. I had lost the fish. I was still holding the rod, watching this happen. Dad gasped. I had lost the fish. Time warped back to reality. Dad brought the line back onto the deck. I was defeated. Then, out of the corner of my eye, I watched a quick yank and a tug.

Owen grasped the net with his hands and smiled. My beloved pike swam into the tiny net to “escape.” Scales glinted in the sunlight. The long two-foot body tossed and turned on the dock beneath our feet. Dad picked up the net and carried it to the end of the dock, a huge pike stuck inside. I ran over, beaming. I had not lost the fish! Owen said he would take a picture. I fumbled with my phone and handed it to him. I knelt to pick up the fish. The problem with that? It was just too big. With all my efforts, it just flipped out of my hands.

As I was struggling over the fish, a park ranger stopped by. She commented on my nice fish, and then bent down. She shoved her thumb and fingers into each side of the fish’s gills, and then grabbed the belly of it with her other hand. “Here, do it like this,” She smiled.

“Thanks!” I grinned. I bent down and copied her movements. Soon, the fish was sitting in my arms. I couldn’t stop smiling.

The next few minutes went by in a blur. Owen snapped a couple pictures, and I walked down the launch to let the fish go. He wiggled in the water, and then I let go of him. All I saw was a blur. Then he was gone. That fish might have been in and out of my life in a blur, but the memories of it will last forever.

Gentle Hands

by Ethan B. Grade 9
St. John Paul II Collegiate



As I sauntered into the hospital room, shoulders rolled, eyes following the pattern of the floor, my heart and my lungs were fighting for space in my chest. I was not ready to face the devastating reality that a man who once brought me such strength and comfort was dying in a hospital bed. I was used to seeing him sick, I only ever knew him imprisoned by the bendy mucus filled tubes that attached him to his oxygen tank. His breath was a constant struggle that clanked through the air reminiscent of Darth Vader, his wrinkly kind hands that shook like an off-balanced fan. Today was different though...

My reality tricked me because I was used to visiting my Papa by being greeted with the sweet aroma of my GG's heartfull baking; but today I was greeted with the pungent and abrasive scent of chemicals and cleaner. Suddenly a jovial voice cut through my thoughts and I pulled my gaze up from the industrial floor and met the sparkling and comforting cyan blue eyes of my Papa.

He had been laying there mostly motionless fighting for each breath for days. Papa was always very sedentary, over the last ten years I had spent days with him

watching The Price is Right and Lets make a deal, however the stillness of his body was always overshadowed by the grandness of his spirit. Even from a creaky ripped leather chair he was the most loved person in the room but today he smelled like old sweat and decay.

My Nona took my hand and we boldly went searching for some soap, a face cloth and hot water. As we collected all the items we brought my Papa to a glassy lustrous tub, we laid him down onto his rickety unstable back and poured fresh water onto his body. I steadily brushed the heated comforting cloth over his stubble face as I saw his tears of joyfulness and bashfulness descend off into the ocean of tears and sweat. I smiled a reassuring smile expressing that everything is going to be okay, even though I knew he wasn't going to make it.

To me grief is finding astray memories buried inside the bottom of your stomach waiting to be released back into your everyday thoughts. Sometimes you're not ready and they just pull you down into the abyss, or you embrace the memories and turn them into a gift.

X Equals

by Cadence S. Grade 9
St. John Paul II Collegiate

School, the building built to prepare us.

The place meant to allow you to learn how to live
life under a microscope, so we can't mess up.

The place that hammers useless knowledge into our
heads, meanwhile drowning us in the never ending
ocean of stress.

Burying us in an early grave of frustration and
humiliation.

Each classmate has a different story and personality.
One of the benefits is supposed to be friends,
but what about those who aren't friends?
There's all these people we feel obligated to impress,
because if you don't you're the one their laughing at.

Everytime I know an answer I bite my tongue,
drag down my arm as though there's a 100 pound
weight yanking it down,
because if I'm wrong I'm stupid,
if I'm right I'm a nerd, or a try hard.

At school there's no safe zone,
You're either everyone's perfect vision,

or everyone elses stomping grounds,
waiting to get trampled over.

Every tear I shed over school when I was little was
pointless,
as all it taught me was to fight my stress and worry
alone.
Each night I've laid awake in bed wondering what x
equals,
but for what? When will I ever require to know the
value of x?

Soon I will be 16. Once I'm 16 I can own a vehicle.
I will need to know how to pay for car insurances,
I will need to know how much gas costs,
and how much I need to be making for income so I
can pay for these things.
Instead I learn what x equals, and how to feel out of
place.

School, the building built to prepare us.
Instead the building that breaks, and fails us.

For Her Family

by Amanda D. Grade 9
St. John Paul II Collegiate

To my mom who gave me life

Who gave my feet a chance to touch the ground

Feel the breath of the earth

Here's to my mom

Here's to my mom who left her family

To work In another country

Walking away from her family

While crying like a newborn baby

Here's to my mom who shed tears silently

But smiles like nothing happens in front of her family

Here's to my mom who sacrifices a lot

Almost working the whole day

Doesn't care if her hand will be rough as a rock.

Here's to my mom who almost gave up while giving birth to me

She accepted and kept me despite of who i am

Here's to my mom who never tells us what the problem is

Despite of how tough life is

Here's to my mom who always has our back

Even she has a pile of work waiting for her

Here's to my mom whose life has been a roller coaster

Who's brave to face every challenges that were given to her

Here's to my mom who gave me chance to continue my dream

Who will do everything so i could be on top of the world

Every "You Got this" from her helps me to take a step forward

She wants nothing but her children's success and happiness.

Here's to my mom, thank you for giving me a chance to live.



Doubled

by Clare D. Grade 9
St. John Paul II Collegiate



There's two buildings now,
Two homes,
Two beds to lie awake in
Straining my eyes with my phone
As I scroll through my socials
seeing kin photos
From the influencers, or the distant relatives
Or the families my friends obtain,
Can't help but wonder why mine caused so much
pain.

There's two living rooms today,
Two couches,
One's leather,
One's fabric,
Neither have the unchanging remembrances as
before
Because now
Sitting on them feels more,
Like a chore.

Maybe I was excessively engaged in
Being a child
Running,
Laugh,
Dancing,
Or crying,
To notice how they were acting
They hid it,

Yes,
or maybe that what my intellect narrates me to
trust,
I don't want to trust that we have fallen apart
Because it wasn't constantly like this.

There was specific house,
One home,
One bed to lie alone,
One living room,
One couch,
Two parents to call if i needed any help.
It was healthy to the blind eye,
To the children's eyes
Because protecting can cover it all,
Those smiles they controlled in our family photos
The talent they present on holidays
Seemed so real.

But now I will sit,
and tune in
To what the one has to mention about the other
because while its took place 4 years ago
They can never allow it a rest,
So i will wait dropping more tears
While my allies remain with their family
That sticks together so effortlessly.
While mine just creased.

Originality

by Claire M. Grade 9
St. Francis of Assisi Academy

Don't talk to them, it's not a good look for you. What are you wearing? I can't believe you think that's fun... These are just a few examples of how the minute you are different, you are alone. But is that really so bad?

Originality in a world of conformity. This is a topic not often talked about despite its growing relevance. Everyone has experienced that tightness in their chest and the overwhelming sense of aloneness that comes with realizing you don't belong. Anyone who finds themselves standing against the tide of trends and popularity is often treated as an outcast. This fear of being rejected can cause unhealthy mental stress. Despite the many challenges that initially come with being original, such as losing friends or constantly being judged, the pros far outweigh the cons. No one who accepted their limits has ever changed the world.

To start, I would like to break down the definition of originality and of conformity. Originality is the ability to think independently and creatively. This means that to be original the thoughts and opinions you have must be purely what you believe in and value, not what others are pressuring you to think. The flip side of this is conformity. The definition that I find describes this the best, is from the website verywellmind.com. "Conformity is a social influence that involves behaving in a particular way in order to be perceived as "normal" by the group. Essentially, conformity involves giving in to group pressure."

Many people feel the need to follow popular trends, opinions, or styles in order to be accepted. Because of this, we are constantly participating in the internal battle of conformity vs. originality. Naturally, as humans, we want to belong to a group. On its own, wanting to "fit in" or belong, is not always a bad thing.

Problems arise when people change their personalities or values in order to keep the group happy. If you are not being yourself, you are constantly trying to uphold an image of who you think you should be. This

can be exhausting. Not only can it leave you socially drained, but it can cause harmful mental struggles such as anxiety, stress, emotional outbursts, and even depression. Out of fear, many people, 32% of teens, will hide these internal struggles which in turn can also cause them to hide other aspects of their original mind to protect themselves from rejection. This masking of emotions can leave no safe place for people to express their true selves.

Everyone has dealt with societal pressures sometime in their life. For me, it has been a definite work in progress to be as comfortable with my differences as I am now. Especially as a young teenager, I started noticing what made people "cool" and struggled with my confidence. Now I look back and it does make me sad to realize just how many characteristics such as creativity, confidence, and human dignity are not valued. Even attempting to be kind to the wrong people can cause you to be shunned by many of your peers. This is why being confident with your originality and not being afraid to voice your opinions is crucial.

Something many people forget is how important challenging social norms can be. Our entire modern world was built off of people who went above and beyond what was acceptable, in order to do amazing things. Just think about it, many important aspects of today must be attributed to someone who went against what was normal at their time.

There are many examples of this in history. Take Marie Curry, maybe you don't know who she is, but her discovery of the element radium affected healthcare everywhere. It led to the use of X-rays and helped create a treatment for cancer. Science in her time was reserved for men, so her active involvement in the medical and scientific world was radical. Think of how if she hadn't condemned conformity, we may have never made these technological advances. Another example is Martin Luther King jr. He stood up for black rights at a time when this community was treated less

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than human. Even though we are still working towards equality, society wouldn't be where it is now without his initial step toward change.

We have room to grow and improve in so many aspects of our lives, but without creative, original thought, that all goes out the window. Our minds are in a constant loop of trying to impress and fit in with the normal or expected behaviours that we forget about how important our own ideas are. Imagine if the world stayed exactly how it is right now. If we don't break out of this box, we may never see a world with new and amazing discoveries that change our mindset and lifestyle.

Original and courageous individuals helped us to develop society as we know it, but this generation still has more to contribute. The final step in unlocking your originality is to express yourself. This could be as small

as letting go of others' opinions or as big as writing a speech about it. Another great way to find yourself is to be creative. Drawing, writing, painting, and finding other unique ways to express yourself can expand your mind. This teaches you to be original and is one of the first steps to standing out in this world of conformity.

In conclusion, our world is one of expectations and pressures, but with the right motivation, everyone can be original. Your value in life is determined by how you impact the world, no one can do this if we are all the same. Don't let your fear of making a mistake or being wrong stop you from voicing your opinions and values. Remember, only the ones who are brave enough to stand out when others fit in will change history. I challenge everyone to take a step out of our social box and find out just how far your originality will take you.

The Beauty of Life – Spoken Word

by Autumn L. Grade 9
Centre for Learning@HOME

The sun rises, its rays of fake happiness illuminating the world. The day was silent, with the exception of the birds. Everyone hears delightful chirping, but the birds chirps are a muffled cry for help. There are no clouds in sight, that's just because they are well hidden; no clouds, means no rain and we can't take that risk. Everyone looking out sees a day, perhaps it's a little quieter, or a little demanding, but everyone sees the day as it is. The day can't rain, or else that means something is wrong, the day can't falter, or speak. But when the day lays down, and no one can see it, the tears can come, not too big, or they'll be heard on the roof top, not too loud, or the children will be scared. Just a drizzle, elevating the pressure of the day, or days, or thoughts. The pillow it lays its head on is filled with theories of the past, not one quite decided. Don't scream into the pillow, or the sound will become jagged shards ripping your sanity apart. Each panic attack is suffocated by a blanket of smiles.

You wake up to a new day, but as soon as you see the sun, the memories of when it wasn't there fills your head. You get out of bed, and go to the kitchen the pot of coffee, already filled, you stare at it hoping that this will open your eyes wide enough to see your desired answers, but instead you come to the realization that there's not enough coffee in the world to open your eyes wide enough to see all the beauty in it.

Even if you push that impossibility aside, everyone will still put on their selective sunglasses, and only see what they want to see.

Why do sirens not go off when you open your front door? Hollering that danger lays outside the doors, yet everyone takes the risk, and exceeds past the door. A grenade could be walking down the street, a missile could be coming down the road, unable to stop.

People say that life is a roller coaster, but that's wrong, because with roller coasters you can start over, and you can ride them again.

No, life is like a puzzle. When you manage to put that last piece down, and the world seems to make sense, it starts crumbling at your feet.

After that you can treat life like a sledding hill, you can either let life steer you in whichever direction, or you can put your hand out and try to persuade life to go your way.

You see a building; it's being built by a construction crew. People look at that building and say, "I wonder what it will become," or "I wonder what greatness is being made inside right now." But after they are done building your self-esteem up, they get a wrecking ball, and smash you down, so you start at the beginning, trying to piece your life together.

People think of sass as bad or unacceptable but in reality, it's the unspoken truth that no one wants to hear.

Stay inside, and in case yourself in fear, and regret, no duster can sweep off the years spent hiding. Sure, make a life on the computer, but in life, the computer doesn't exist.

There's no backspace, there's no undo button, there's no exclamation mark, in the midst of sadness.

No emojis to hide your real emotions. There are no commas, letting you breathe or take a break.

There's no such thing as a paragraph, or periods, ending the idea. Oh, but there's flashbacks, and foreshadowing. Yet there are no written pages where you can spoil the ending, or so you can look ahead and try to make the right decisions. You can't turn on or off your camera, sure your voice may buffer, but you can't mute, you can't re-take or rewind. There are no scissors or stressed hands ready to tear the past apart.

Nothing's set in stone, but what about the pain set on your heart, that no nights of rest, or deep breaths



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can make into nothingness.

Thank your enemies, because they've shaped you, but don't thank them too much. Thank the potter for molding you. Thank the clay for being you. Don't work the clay too much, or else it will collapse.

People say not to dwell on the past, but how can you finish a sentence without thinking about the words previously said? How can you reflect on your work? How can you better yourself?

There's no such thing as the present as it quickly becomes your past.

Furter will never exist

A tree, living, in green, and dying in beauty.

Nothing is ever good in your eyes, but to the people closest to you, it's the air we breathe.

Imagine a book, being opened on the first page, it's laced with music, just enough to grab you and lug the rest of the way. In books you can turn the page, you can zoom past a conflict, or you can simply put it down, you can take a break from it. That's not to say that you can close your life and put it on a shelf, sure you can do that with people, but other people are just other open books. Some are thicker than others, the bigger the conflict, the bigger the book. People don't ask for an exposition, but they are fine with getting right into the resolution. Why care about someone else's pages, that can never be opened again, only a distant memory, that only the typewriter itself can recall.

You wash your hands, rubbing hope into all the crevasses. Bubbles form at the bottom at the sink, they all

pop, none of the dreams rise. And when the devastation of water comes and washes it all away, it carries the hope with it, all down the drain.

Even if you dive in, the fear that you will open your mouth, and water will seep into your body is to frighten. The thought that as you are drowning there is no one there above you to save you. You are left with a chest full of hurt, and no one there to reel you out.

Nothing you say out loud will have a lawyer to back it up. With the movement of a vocal cord a crowd could erupt in flames.

Each time we're asked the anonymous question "How are you" and you respond, with "Good" your nose should grow, but the lies will never be thick enough to help you balance all the struggles of life.

The funny thing is, life keeps going, time is just a silent knife in the dark.

We're all fighting the same battle just at different places in our heads.

Whatever language you're speaking to me right now is foreign because I'll never be able to see or understand your exact thoughts.

There's no such thing as practice makes perfect, but if you practice enough, you might get something you're proud of.

But this, this is life, and this, this is just a poem. Just a piece of paper, that I'm sure will be crammed between other pieces of paper, just another thought or distant memory. Never to be visited again.

Untitled (excerpt)

by Dennise A. Grade 9
St. Joseph's Collegiate

Damp carpeted floors coloured in the most ugly shade of puce and yellow made a creak underneath me as I tried to softly move past dozens of doors painted in a flaking eggshell white. I winced at the screeching sound and prayed to whoever was listening above to help me as I froze stock-still in the middle of the hallway.

Hearing no sounds emerge from the quiet doors, I breathed out a sigh of relief and continued my way, quieter and more wary this time. I was almost there, almost to the stairs when I heard, "Layla?"

Amused and mischievous eyes met my own and I instantly drew mine to the floor, wishing and hoping that he wouldn't do what I knew he would.

"Layla's awake!" He laughed joyously, "She's awake! She's awake!"

Instantly I felt the tremor beneath me and closed my eyes tight, fists clenched to my sides as all the doors opened and laughter and jeering shouts emerged from everywhere around me.

"Mikey..." I attempted to say in vain as the curly haired boy bounced past me, shoulder bumping against me harshly as he made his way down the stairs. I don't know if he expected to be able to topple me, but he had not. The one advantage to being tall and broad, I thought to myself as Mikey 'sneakily' looked back at me only to be disappointed at my uncollapsed form.

I couldn't blame his surprise that I was still standing, no matter how obvious it was that I would, he had just -surprisingly- never tried it on me before, causing him to overestimate how little of effort he would use to send me down.

He wouldn't make the same estimation twice unfortunately.

Twelve year olds are just vicious. I don't remember being that vicious at twelve. To be fair, I could never really recall much of anything at age twelve, everything was the same as it was now. And when I was even younger than twelve I was definitely more than



vicious. I should stop thinking of that, after all I was sixteen now and already an adult, they were all just kids. There was no use in getting upset when they shoved me or made fun. It was teasing, they'd grow out of it. Like I did.

With another sigh I went on my way through the pushing crowd. Taking my time, dreading the inevitable.

I arrived shortly despite walking at a snails' pace, there wasn't really much you could do to further prolong anything when there were only eleven steps to go down from. Everyone was already seated; Mrs. Reelee, the matron of the orphanage sat at the head of the table, Mikey sitting to the slight right of her looking like a smug peacock flaring out his feathers with pride.

It was nothing new, this was home after all, and I wasn't expecting a welcome when I was obviously late for breakfast, I wasn't even expecting a welcome if I was early either.

"Miss Greene." Mrs. Reelee said curtly in lieu of a greeting, "You're late."

Heat rushed up into my cheeks, I knew it made me look ruddy, and I knew in thinking that, I would only turn more red.

"I-I'm sorry ma'am." I apologize, embarrassed but resigned to the daily exchange.

Mrs. Reelee was never much of a forgiving matron, at least not from what I remember. My earliest memory in fact, was a memory of her throwing away the bundle of little white dandelions I collected when I was three. That day, Mrs. Reelee sat me on her lap and scolded me for hours. Then she slapped my hands with the end of a measuring stick and sent me to bed with nothing more than a snack for dinner.

The woman was not very fond of me, not at all, where all the other children were cute, obedient and

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diligent, I was the reckless girl who never listened. I would track mud all over the carpets, and sing loudly into the day while dancing nights away. My grades were horrendous and I never so much as thanked Mrs. Reelee for her kindness and patience when dealing with me.

Perhaps it was given, for me to be punished.

On my tenth birthday, right in the middle of June, I was disciplined by my teachers for talking out of turn; they sent me back to the orphanage early.

I was glad to leave and skipped happily home to the orphanage, ready to ignore Mrs. Reelee and continue on my way after her regular lecture.

But when I arrived she let me in without prompt and ignored me.

In frustration I poked at her, bothering her to notice me. She did not.

The next day, the others took notice of Mrs. Reelee's behavior. They ignored me too. Whenever I came to talk or play with them, they shunned me.

That was the day little Mikey Turnn arrived, he was a meek, tiny boy with an annoyingly squeaky voice. He followed my words like law, and believed whatever I told him.

Little Mikey was frighteningly scared and naive, and he must've thought something better of me, because he never questioned a word out of my mouth. Looking at me in awe and wonder as I spun tales of untrue words.

One night, I told him monsters lived under his bed. I shook him around and hit him lightly with pillows and teasing remarks. I found his face funny. He cried for his parents for half an hour, so scared and terrified as I laughed at him loudly. He looked at me betrayed as his cries grew louder and louder and I only laughed. Little Mikey was only overreacting in my eyes, after all.

Everyone knew monsters did not exist and little Mikey was a baby for being afraid.

Mrs. Reelee burst into the room and looked around, her eyes landing on me before settling on Mikey.

She was furious.

I had never seen her so mad before. I took a step back from her.

Her glare pierced through me and she looked so resentful, I wanted to flee.

Gathering little Mikey in her arms for a hug, she told me to leave.

Not knowing what else to do, I began to. But I caught Mikey's eyes before then, and got my first clear look at his face. Snot was running down his nose, his eyes were big and watery, his cheeks red and covered in baby fat. I saw him and for the first time I realized how small he really was. Not small in a way that made him fun to tease, but small in a way that made me see.

Little Mikey was only six.

And I made him cry.

That revelation shocked me to my core.

As I thought of this, I felt all the more disgusted with myself because I had known Mikey was scared and I had known he had just lost his parents, but I targeted him anyway because he had all the attention no one had been giving to me for a month. He had everyone's attention but I had his. Following me around like a lost scared duck as he asked me questions with bright clear eyes. Annoying me.

The next day I apologized, confident that he would forgive me and I would take him under my wing again. He did not. Instead he ignored me just like everyone else, but with fear in his eyes.

the fear turned to anger and soon into hostile glee.

He surrounded himself with dozens of people and made fun of me everyday, no longer ignoring me. He hated me but never physically hurt me.

I hated him too. I still do. I resent him.

It was an ugly, awful feeling deep in me.

He was perfect. Quiet when he needed to be, happy when he needed to be, talked when he should and asked all the right questions. He had perfect grades and was so unnervingly good. He never made a mistake. And Mrs. Reelee loved him. Because he was everything I was not. I was chaos and destruction. He was good.

I hated Mikey and I still do.

But I hate myself more.

"Sit. Don't stand." Mrs. Reelee ordered, and I followed quickly. Sitting in my spot. A different table than Mrs.

Reele and Mikey.

Penny –the girl who sat beside– giggled as a boy kicked my leg under the table. I kept quiet.

Listening to the soft, snickering, whispers of those all around me. I don't know why they even bothered whispering when they knew and wanted me to hear.

There was no point in getting mad, I told myself, you already grew out of your anger.

I quickly ate my meal and pretended not to hear Penny mumbling under her breath in disgust.

“Pig.”

A burst of laughter wove through the table. And my

ears turned red as I kept my head down.

Then Mrs. Reece rang the little bell she kept beside her during mealtimes to signal that it was ending.

I waited for at least ten kids to sit up before I did, and hid within the crowds as we marched out the doors. The caretakers saying their goodbyes as everyone shoved at each other trying to get on forward.

It was hard to hide when I was as long-legged and towering as I was. But I learned to become smaller by slouching as much as I could.

I made it out alive.

Fears

by Seanna B. Grade 9
Centre for Learning@HOME

The dark makes you feel alone and afraid
Wasps make you want to run away
Clowns don't need a reason
And halloween is the spookiest season

As real as these may be
Other fears are worse
Like the fear of irrationality
Or someone stealing your purse

What about the fear of being alone
No one to reach out to on the phone
No one to hug when you are sad
No one to humour when you feel they've gone mad

Big kids aren't scared of the dark
This is what we've felt from the start
Our fake fearlessness doesn't last
Even after the night has passed.

Adventure (excerpt)

by Isaac N. Grade 9
St. Joseph's Collegiate



I hate being adventurous. It's the worst thing that I could do. I like my life to be exactly how it always is. My boy, Kyle, gets up every day at precisely 7:18 a.m. and takes me with him. "Come on, Max. You have to go poopies." He brings me out of our room and into the long hallway, brightly lit by the rising sun. blinking as I go through the door of our dark room, sniffing the dry morning air. Kyle rubs his eyes, "Too bright," he grumbles sleepily as he is bringing me to the back door of our house. Kyle unlocks it to let me out. Being a lot more awake, Kyle loudly says, "Max go poopies? Max go poopies?" Strangely, he has always said it like a very exciting question, even though he hates that I have to go outside all the time. He always has, and he always will. That's my favourite part about Kyle. He never changes, I think as I find a spot to go poopies. Curious to see what Kyle is doing, I look into the window as I squat down on my spot. His brown hair is all frizzed from a good night's sleep. He's looking down, making some of that horrid brown drink that he makes every morning. I think it's called Coughfy. I tried it once, and it really did make me cough. It was the worst thing I'd ever tasted. It was so bad that I didn't sleep for three days after that. Kyle was really mad.

Woof! I use my most muscular bark to tell him I want to go inside. Opening the door, he steps out onto the warm brown pile of poopies I had laid on the porch earlier. Once he realised what he had stepped on, he said something that kind of sounded like sit, so I sat. "Inside," he demanded. I waddle in, my tail wagging, whipping up dust behind me. I give him my you can't be mad at me; I'm too cute, face. I jump up on my back legs and give him a hug and a big, moist, sloppy kiss, right on his lips. He falls back, his butt hitting the wall. "OOF!" He exclaims as he hits the wall. Regaining his breath, he says, "You're too big for this; good thing you're so damn cute. I'll let it slide this time, but if you do that again, there will be consequences." Looking at me in my cute, little eyes, he changes his mind: "Who am I kidding? That's the

same thing I said last time. I can't be mad at you for small things like this." He takes off his white sock,

the bottom of which is now stained brown, and we go inside to have breakfast.

Tuesday, I think, staring at Kyle. What do we have on Tuesday? Kyle must have thought that I was asking him for food because my thinking face is similar to my begging face. It's also similar to my happy face, sad face, mad face, hungry face, sleepy face, and almost all my other faces.

"No Max. No waffles with ham and cheese for you," hHe says it sternly. We both know that he won't keep this up for very long. He always gives in. Always. All I need to do is turn the charm on; he will be practically begging me to eat the waffles.

The first waffle comes out looking perfect. The second smells perfect. The third waffle was the most perfect thing I had ever seen or smelled. I put on one of my only faces that are different from my thinking face: my I need some, face. My eyes grow wide, my lip begins to curl, and I even let out a little whimper to show that I really want the waffle. Towering down over me, he sighs, "Fine, you can have some." He rips it in half and hands it to me. I take it graciously, wagging my large golden tail to show my appreciation and as a symbol of the great victory that has happened here today. It is the same victory that happens every Tuesday morning: the victory of waffles. Waffles are my favorite. Tuesdays are my favorite.

Quickly, Kyle finishes off the last of his delicious waffles. When I say "quickly," I'm not joking. This man ate two and a half waffles in just over a minute. That's fast, even by my standards. Every Tuesday, I have been trying to train myself to eat waffles faster than him, but that is the only thing that he can eat faster than me. No matter how hard I try, I just can't beat him.

"I'm off to work!" Kyle yells from the front door after he got changed into his nice work clothes. I sprint to the door as fast as I can to do our goodbye ritual. Simultaneously, we both throw our front legs into the air and spin around in a circle. Once we come to face each other again, we wiggle our tails. Well, I wiggle my tail, and he just wiggles his rear end like he has a tail. Leaping over to him, I give him a very wet embrace, trying to lick every inch of his face. Inside his nose, mouth, and ears are now extremely moist and cleared of all desirable bits. "Stop," he says, but there's no force behind it, so I don't stop. "You know I don't like that."

I stop licking him for a second and think. Does he like this? Trying to smell his feelings, I sniff the air. While I'm doing this, he looks into my eyes. There is so much joy in there and so much pride in having trained me to be such a good dog. He does like this. His eyes tell a story that his smell doesn't. A feeling of pride runs through my entire body. From my nose down

to the tip of my tail and out through my claws. Pride. Pride in being a good boy. A great boy. The very best boy.

"You're such a good boy." Kyle has a way of saying things that makes me feel like he can't lie. Every time he says something good, I really do feel it, and feel that it's true. Turning to the door, just like always, Kyle says, "Bye, Max! Don't do anything bad a bad dog would do, unless you get more than five bucks!" as he exits through the white wooden door. I hear a familiar squeak as it closes. The level of happiness drops for both of us. Both because he has to go to work. Is this what society has become? I think to myself, making people abandon their families every day to go and make money for them. You only get so much time with everybody,; we need to get the most out of it. This is what I always think as I walk longingly away from the door as I go to lie down on the couch for my nap.

Solidarity

by Andrea McGeachie,
St. John Paul II Collegiate

The ancient tree
Is a stark island
Separated from the living forest
By clear lake waters.
It's naked branches
Reaching for companionship.

It is only when the water
Is calm
And the light
Is just right
That the Elder sees another
And once again feels
The companionship of
A forest.
Branches touching
Limbs entwined;
Solidarity
In its reflection.

Herald of Spring

by Angela Jusseaume,
St. Anthony's School

Crocus, oh herald of Spring!

From days of dismal grey and azure drifts of snow
your blooms of optimism push forth at first thaw

Eager eyes search you out—could it be?

Sun's rays bless the plains, snow bids farewell—
and there you are! Unassuming yet unwavering

Pushing through dry grass tufts,

greeting the sky with your lavender splendor
Other blossoms become victims of their fragility

Wind-winnowed, frost-furbished, you continue to proclaim
accolades of Spring! But lo—your time is brief.

Like a spirit you dissolve, and lay in wait...



Selection Committee ~ Teachers



This year we were given the opportunity to participate in the selection of winners for our Anthology. It was a privilege and a pleasure to read the outstanding work throughout the division. Although the students have been challenged over the past few years during Covid, their talent, passion, and voice in their writing is stronger than ever. Students are taking risks, honing their craft, and sharing who they are through their words. There is strength in language and our students are powerful. It takes courage to put those words on a page, and even more courage to have them published. We would like to thank the students for their vulnerability and for sharing their incredible talents with us.

~ Nadine Dash and Meaghan Zolpis



Submit to next year's Tablets & Doorposts!
Email jnickerson@redeemer.ab.ca