

"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 2021

 Christ The Redeemer  
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

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# tablets & doorposts

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**“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 third 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 12. 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.

The last year created many new experiences for the world, directly impacting the students and staff. For some, writing became an outlet to express emotions and attempt to make sense of the world around them. This resulted in writing from the heart, providing the reader a glimpse into the lives of the authors. CTR Catholic's annual Doorpost Café was once again celebrated virtually, as the opportunity to share and celebrate writing continues to be a priority in the division.

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.

# When Winter Ends

by Adele S, Kindergarten

Our Lady of the Snows Catholic Academy

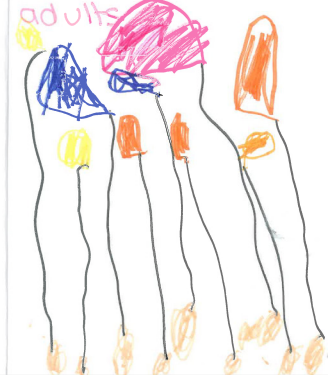


WHEN  
WINTER  
ENDS

when winter ends  
it is really wet  
and rainy.



When winter ends  
there will be lots  
of umbrellas up  
from kids and  
adults.



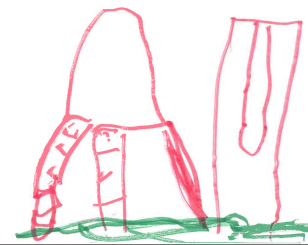
when winter ends  
we go worm  
hunting.



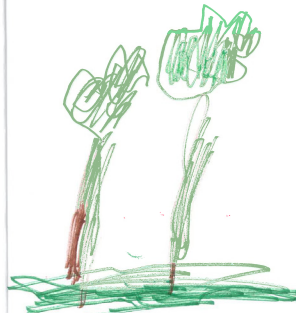
When winter ends  
we jump in  
muddy puddles.



when winter ends  
we can play at  
parks.



When winter ends  
Spring is here.



When winter ends  
Easter is here.

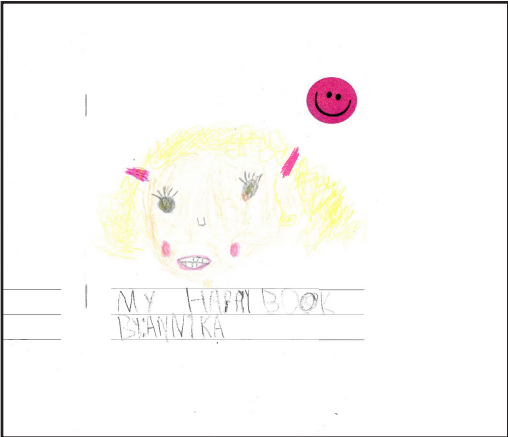


ADELE



# My Happy Book

by Annika M, Kindergaten  
Our Lady of the Snows Catholic Academy



# Dogs

by Donte N, Grade 2  
St. Mary's School



# Comic Strip

by Paige C, Grade 2  
St. Mary's School



# All About Farms

by Erica S, Grade 2  
St. Mary's School



## Introduction

Hi! Welcome to the farm!  
You can learn a lot here! Do  
you live on a farm? If you  
do your people a hard worker.  
If you are interested Read the  
Book!

## Table of Contents

Introduction	Page 2
Get to work!	Page 3
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Where is it	Page 5
Animals	Page 6

## Get To Work!



On most farms there is  
work. Sometimes you have  
animals to feed and plants to  
water. There is a lot of work on a  
farm. Sometimes you work all  
day and have no breaks.

But you will have a lot  
of fun too. You will  
get to ride a horse and  
play with the animals.

Page: 3

## Go And Play!



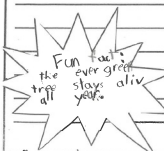
You can have fun. You can  
jump on hay. Jump hi jump  
ho! Have fun as you go. You can  
ride a horse too. Get a ball  
and play with it. Giddy up!  
Hiya! Now the horse will say.  
You can now ride the  
cow too. Jump on! In for the  
senior! Go fast and feel the  
wind! If you are lucky you  
may see a deer.

Page: 4

## Where is it



Farms can be anywhere.  
They can be in the  
country, forests, and in  
fields.



Page: 5

## Animals



There are many animals on  
a farm. Such as a cow,  
horse, pig, sheep, and chicken.  
Animals can be on a farm  
for food or for fun!  
For eggs and an animal.  
From a chicken, eggs. Or  
for fun ride a horse.

## Food on a farm



Not all farms have a  
garden. But this book is  
talking about it anyway!  
The most common food  
to grow on a farm is  
tomatoes, leeks, and pumpkins.  
To take good care of plants  
you have to water them.

## Glossary

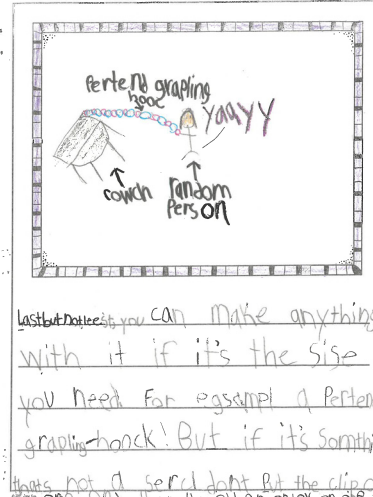
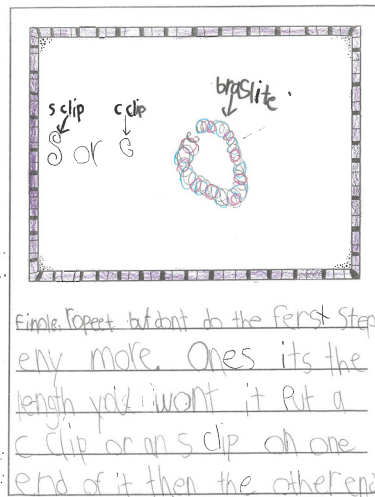
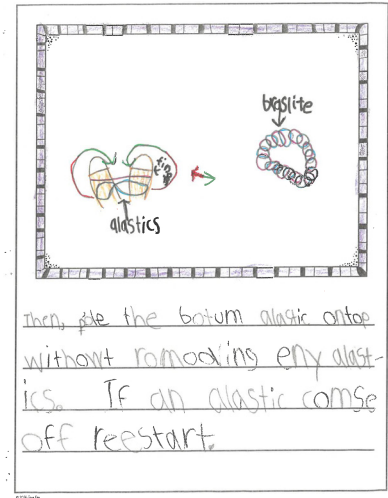
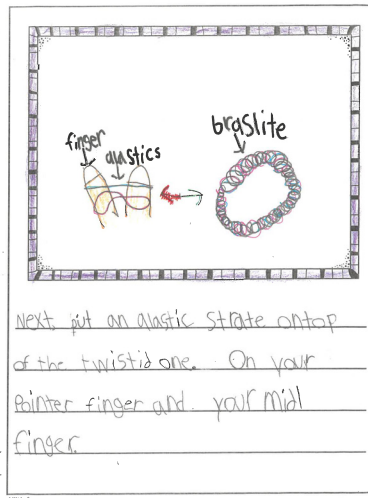
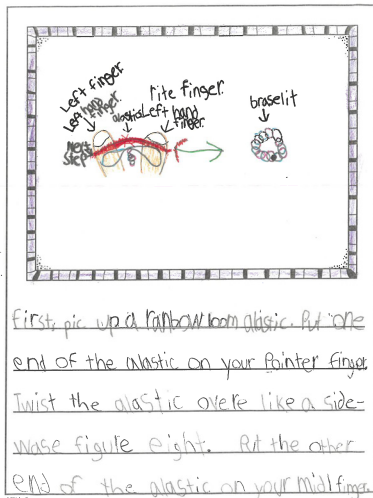
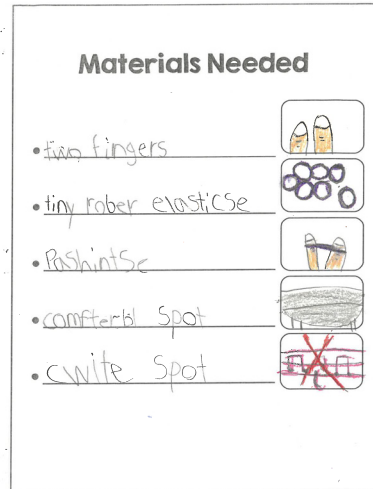
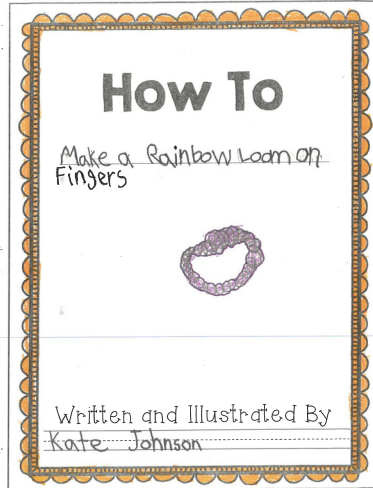
word	definition
hay	a soft material used to feed animals
common	same thing you see often
hungry	Not a town a place with trees
eggs	food you eat
horses	an animal

These are some words I learned while  
completing this project! ©

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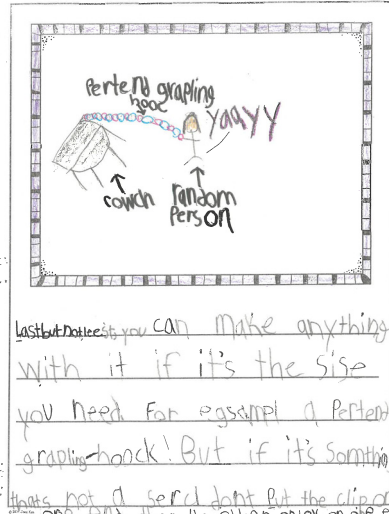
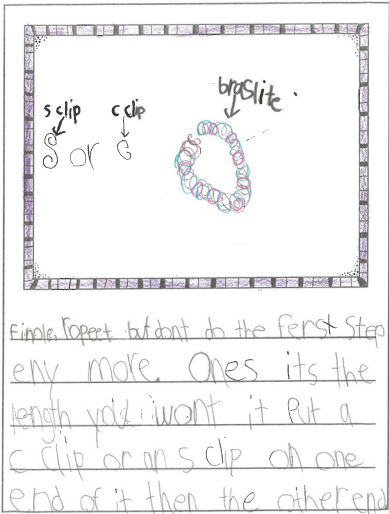
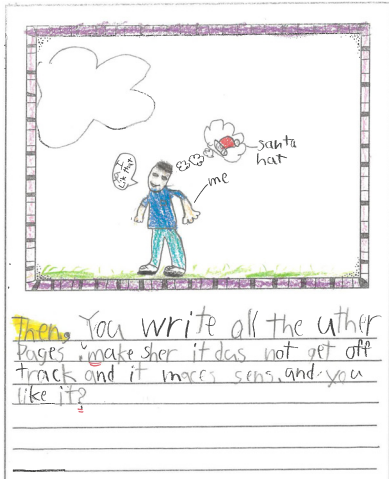
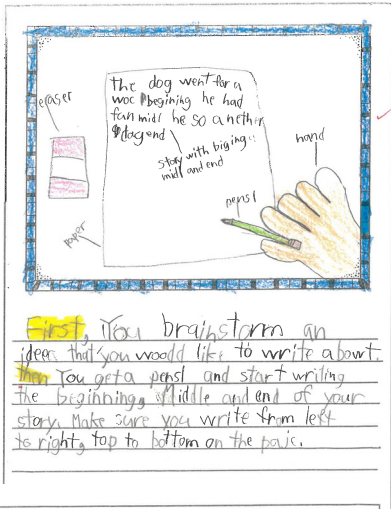
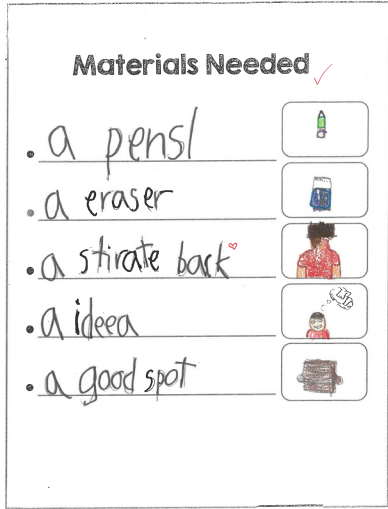
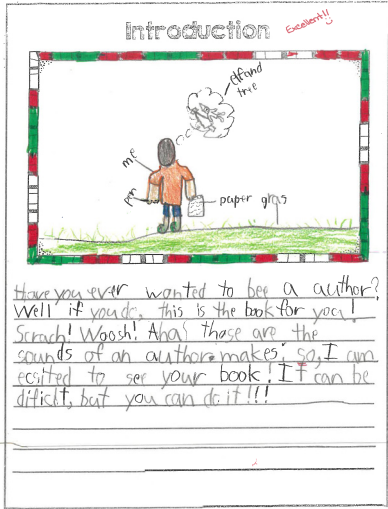
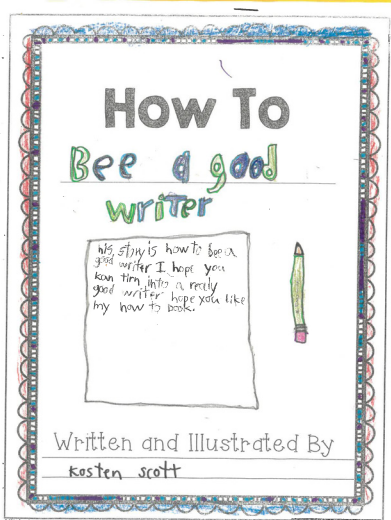
# How To Make A Rainbow Loom Bracelet With Your Fingers

by Kate J, Grade 2  
St. Mary's School



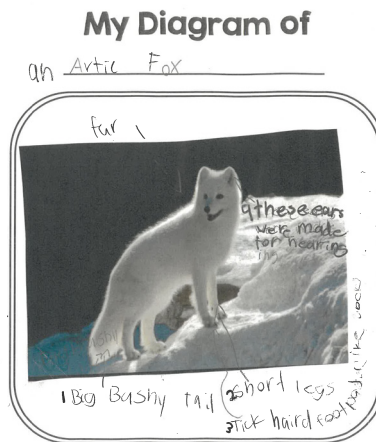
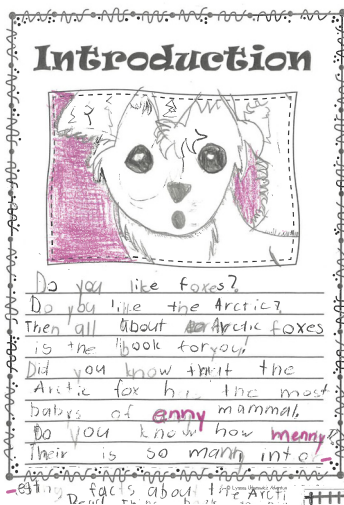
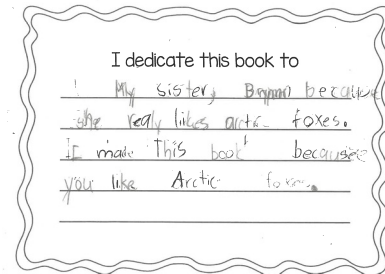
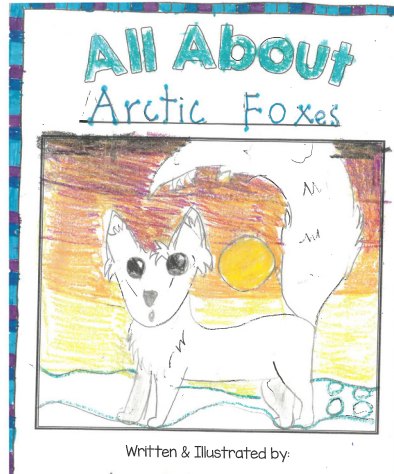
# How To Be A Good Writer

by Kosten S, Gr. 2  
St. Mary's School



# All About Arctic Foxes

by Laine D, Gr. 2  
St. Mary's School



## Different kinds of Foxes



Red fox



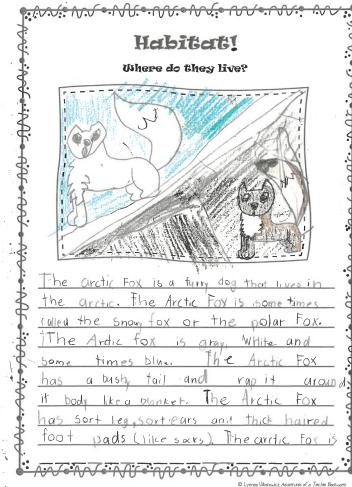
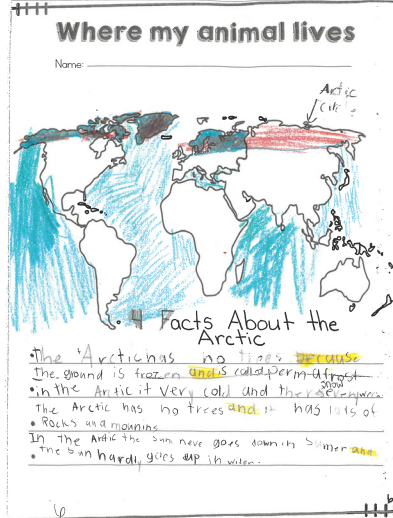
Swift fox



corsac Fox




South american grey Fox



[illegible][illegible]

WORD:	DEFINITION:
1. <u>mammal</u>	It has fur. It has baby. It drink milk. It's warm blooded
2. <u>omnivore</u>	It eats Plants and meat.
3. <u>scavenger</u>	It eats dead or alive animal
4. <u>female</u> <u>Male</u> <u>Baby</u>	A female is a mother. A male is a father. A baby is a child that is young

## A group of cartoon foxes, including a large white one and several smaller ones, some with names like 'Sasha' and 'Liam' written on them.



like How to make rainbow loom  
a fish tank, reading and writing  
and How Jesus was born. She is  
in grade two. Laine is 7.  
She likes dogs, going on trips,  
having fun, exploring,  
snow and rainbow looms.

# The Girl Who Never Gave Up

by Suvera R, Gr. 3  
St. Anthony's School

Characters:

Narrator 1  
Narrator 2  
Willy  
Lilly  
Sara  
King Roland  
Queen Emily  
Guard  
The Witch  
The Wizard



Queen Emily: Look! I don't care whose plan it was - just let me out!

Wizard: Ok here's the deal. You go back and make sure girls stay not free so I can rule the kingdom.

Narrator 1: If girls are not free, the kingdom would not be free because Queen Emily is a girl.

Queen Emily: No. I will not do that.

Wizard and Witch: Then we won't let you go.

Queen Emily: Ohhh!!!

Sara: I can't believe king Roland won't let girls be free.

Willy: I know. It's so mean. But why won't he let girls be free? His wife is a girl.

Lilly: Well, Queen Emily is not exactly a girl. She is more a queen.

Sara: Queen or not, girls have the right to be free. We have to do something about this.

Lilly: I agree. But what? We can't just barge into the castle yelling, "Girls should be free!"

Willy: No, but we can declare a war.

Narrator 1: Once there was a girl. Her name was Lilly. She loved to be free. Until the evil witch and wizard stole Queen Emily. Then King Roland declared...

King Roland: Girls cannot be free.

Lilly: Why can't girls be free?

King Roland: Don't question the king.

Guard: King Roland, it's time to go into the castle.

Narrator 2: While Lilly was thinking, the evil wizard was making a potion.

Wizard: This is my best plan yet.

Witch: Are you kidding? This was my plan.

Sara: Awesome idea, Willy!

Lilly: I don't know if that's a good idea.

Sara: Well we don't have another way so war it is.

Narrator 1: Lilly didn't want to declare a war.

Narrator 2: Lilly thought declaring a war would make things worse.

Narrator 1: Lilly thought and thought. Finally she figured it out.

Lilly: I think it could be. She must have been taken by the evil witch and wizard. Well, I better get going. It is a long way.

Narrator 2: Lilly knew that there would be challenges along the way but she had to stay strong.

Witch: I'm losing my patience.

Wizard: Don't worry, the potion is almost ready.

Queen Emily: Oh no.

Wizard: You better say oh no.

Narrator 1: The wizard and witch only needed to stir the potion a few more times. Meanwhile...

Narrator 2: Willy and Sara were making objects to fight.

Narrator 1: Lilly stepped onto a bridge.

Lilly: This is really wobbly.

Narrator 1: Lilly fell off the wobbly - apparently un sturdy - bridge.

Lilly: Aaaaaaaa!!!

Narrator 2: There was no way up. How would she save Queen Emily?

Lilly: What am I going to do?

Narrator 2: Suddenly in the distance there was a staircase.

Sara: Open up. We declare a war.

Guard: I cannot let you declare a war. Only King Roland can declare a war.

Willy: Why can't we?

Guard: Because you are peasants.

Sara: So what? We might be peasants but we are smart peasants.

Guard: Ha! You might be smart but we are smarter and we are stronger.

Narrator 1: While Sara, Willy and the Guard were fighting, Lilly was climbing up the tall tall stairs.

Narrator 2: Finally she made it to the top. All she had to do was fight the evil witch and wizard. This was going to be her biggest challenge yet.

Wizard: Ah! It is ready.

Witch: Finally. It took forever.

Lilly: Halt! I have come to save Queen Emily.

Wizard: First you have to face me.

Witch: Me, too.

Lilly: I am not afraid of you.

Narrator 2: Lilly kicked them and punched them.

Narrator 1: She dodged all their evil magic. She tied them all up. She grabbed Queen Emily.

Lilly: We have to hurry and get back to the castle because they are declaring a war so that girls can be free.

Queen Emily: Oh no! We have to get there before

someone gets hurt or everyone in the war goes to jail.

King Roland: Let the war be...

Lilly: Stop!

King Roland: Uh...What?

Lilly: Look who I found.

Queen Emily: Roland.

King Roland: Emily.

Narrator 1 and 2: There was a big party and Queen Emily asked King Roland for a favor.

Queen Emily: Can we call Lilly the girl who never gave up?

King Roland: Sure Emily.

King Roland and Queen Emily: Lilly, we will call you the girl who never gave up.

Narrator 1 and 2: The End.

# The Peacock

by Joshua R, Gr. 3

The Centre for Learning@HOME

A peacock is a colourful bird  
with plumage so bright

There was a great chatter I heard  
as the peacock danced at night.

# Unicornia Adventures

by Sofia G.L. Gr. 3  
Holy Family Academy



Crystal +Fawn: The Wishing Gem

It was a rainy, sunny day in Unicornia. The sun shone down on Fawn. She was a centaur. She had a pet unicorn named Crystal. They both were very stern and serious. But today, only Fawn was stern and serious. Crystal was being a goof.

“STOP!” yelled Fawn. Crystal was running sooooo fast with Fawn on her back. “Hold on tight!” shouted Crystal. They were in the Firefly Forest, near the Crystal Sea where they lived. They could hear the woodpeckers hammering on the trees and the crushing sound of the ocean waves. There was a rose garden, and pink rain was dripping from the leaves. The fragrance of daisies and tulips filled the air and the wind was blowing their hair. Crystal stopped and gave Fawn a rainbow strawberry from the Wisdom Tree. Firefly forest was their home.

A few minutes later, they were talking about their day, when they realized something. They did not know where they were. Crystal started to panic. “Oh no, where are we?” She yelled in shock. “You brought us here”, said Fawn. Fawn was right, but Crystal ignored her. She was too busy panicking.

All of a sudden, a little voice said “It is ok”. Crystal’s head shot up. Who said that? She thought. “Me”, my

name is Amy” she said as if she read Crystal’s mind.

“Where are you?” Fawn asked. “Right beside the Happy Tree”. You are looking at it. Crystal and Fawn looked. There she was—a fairy. “Hi! I am Amy “Hi Amy!” said Fawn. “So, you are a fairy?” “No, I am a fairyfly” corrected Amy. “What is a fairyfly?” she asked. Amy smiled. She is a fairyfly. Fairyflies are half fairy, half butterfly. Fairyflies have the body of a fairy and wings of a butterfly. Amy was a fairyfly princess. She explained everything about fairyflies and who she was.

Crystal and Fawn were mystified by Amy being a princess. Amy asked what they were doing. Crystal and Fawn told her that they were lost. The fairyfly realized something, so she told them a story she had heard about a gem that grants wishes. The mystical friends were glad and all three of them embark on an adventure to find the WISHING GEM.....

To be continued.....

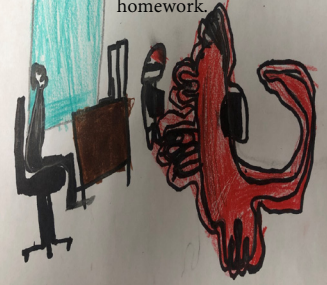
# If You Happen to Have a Dinosaur in Your Classroom

by Patterson's Gr. 3/4 Class  
Sacred Heart Academy

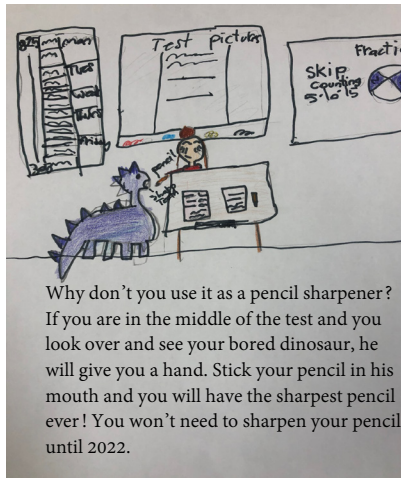
## If You Happen to Have a Dinosaur in Your Classroom



If you happen to have a dinosaur, lying around your classroom, what would you use it for?  
Does it have sharp teeth? If it does, use it as a paper shredder to shred your homework.



Or it could open things like a razor blade.



Why don't you use it as a pencil sharpener? If you are in the middle of the test and you look over and see your bored dinosaur, he will give you a hand. Stick your pencil in his mouth and you will have the sharpest pencil ever! You won't need to sharpen your pencil until 2022.

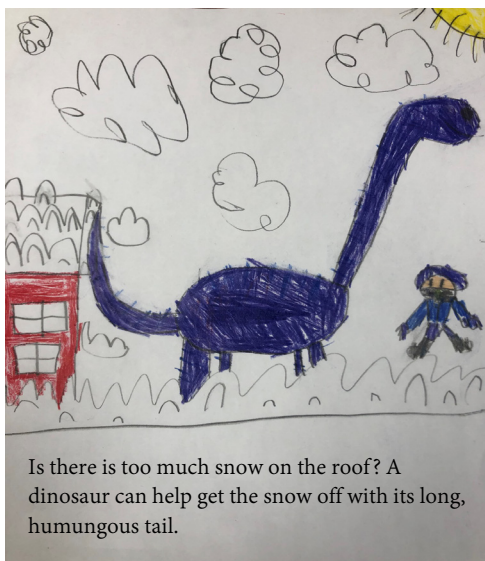
Maybe he can do homework! Then when your teacher checks your homework you will get it right. He will be able to help you in observing patterns.



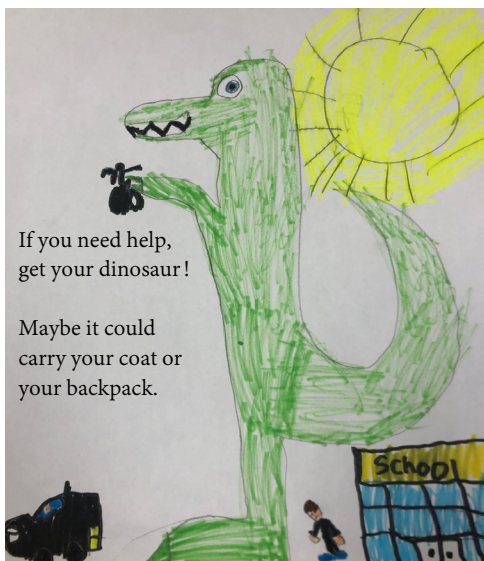
Maybe you can teach it to do a craft. But probably not a T-Rex with those teeny tiny arms.

A dinosaur is a helpful tool. It would make a good messenger if you forget something. A little dinosaur is good for the job.





Is there is too much snow on the roof? A dinosaur can help get the snow off with its long, humungous tail.



If you need help,  
get your dinosaur!

Maybe it could  
carry your coat or  
your backpack.



If it's a hot sunny day, play a game of basketball with your dinosaur. He will raise you up and do a slam dunk.



Yes, just maybe a dinosaur could help you in your games at recess. It might be able to put you on its shoulders. Once you are up high, your dinosaur will just Zoom around the playground. You both will never be tagged.



Or it could help in 4 Squares. Your dinosaur could help you to get King. You would be unbeatable!

Finally, use your dinosaur for soccer. Because it would make a great goalie. A large dinosaur would just have to sit in front of the net.

continued on page 16

continued from page 15

If you had a dinosaur you would use it as a supervisor to help you. A velociraptor could help you when you are hurt or get help when you need it.

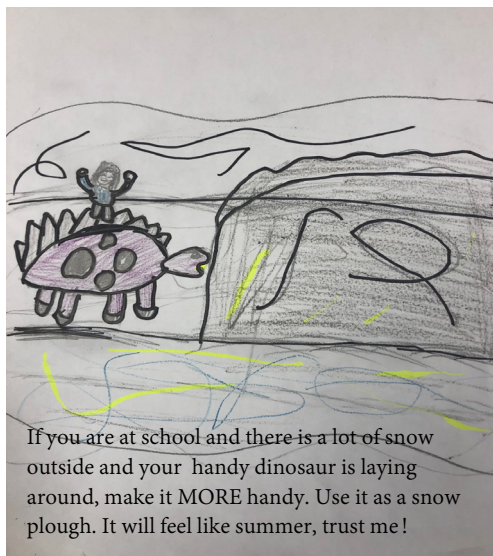


It would be a good fireman because it would have a sip of water and spit it all over the fire. Or it could use the hose if you don't want dino-spit all over the place.



Maybe it would be an awesome crossing guard and it would stop cars for you.

If your dinosaur happens to be with you, use it as a school bus. You would climb his long, tall tail to sit on his back and there would be room for everyone!



If you are at school and there is a lot of snow outside and your handy dinosaur is laying around, make it MORE handy. Use it as a snow plough. It will feel like summer, trust me!

Once you have started using your dinosaur at school, you won't be able to stop! The possibilities are endless.



# The Squirmy Shoes

by Kiptyn T, Gr. 5  
Assumption School

I love the old days where I played around with all my buddies goofing around on racks like rebels, now all I do is sit in this dark room with all these shoes that smell like awful feet. My gramps told me before I left that when you leave it will be breathtaking! Well, guess what he was wrong! I hate it here! I do absolutely nothing! All the people here are old and smell ancient. Who knows how long I will be here for....

I guess there's maybe one reason I'm not being used, it's winter... For us shoes, we hate it! Especially for me cause "I suffer from ANTM (always need to move!) And yes I did make that up myself because that's how long I've been jammed here! Sometimes in the day the closet doors will open and then the light will shine on to me and it's like a grand opening to big giant feet hopping into me! But I always hear someone say Ethan grab your boots there's still a little bit of snow outside! Ok mom I will. It is a tragedy when I hear that, I sometimes wish there were no rules in this house about shoes. Also, why does it matter if he wore runners with snow? Day after day I hear that. With snow, melted all over their porch. Don't I sound like a genius when I say that? You wouldn't believe

what you learn by just listening to people. But then one day my life changed.

My mouth opened and my tongue stuck out! It must have been a dream, some type of miracle. There was no more snow melted on the porch ... it was... was.. Brown gooey sludge I couldn't believe was it MUD! That can only mean 1 thing, It can't be, do you think it is? It has to be right? Must be.... SPRING! I can't believe that my life might have some purpose! Ok, this is my moment he is going to take me with him, but then something horrible happened, the doors closed and I was still on the other side of them. My laces started trembling. Then the gates opened and he had a big smirk on his face, the sun shone on me through the open window his hands were like a wrecking ball came picked me up through me on the ground slipped his feet in and away we went! I felt the sunshine on me, my energy was full and I was ready to run with the wind.

When the world seems dark, just be patient and let the sunshine on you.

# Autumn's Beginning

by Zoe Olivia V, Gr. 5  
Centre for Learning@HOME

Birds gather to fly  
To their warmer southern nests  
Turkey, squash, and sprouts  
Adorn our plates and table  
We celebrate good harvest.

## Fall

by Zoe Olivia V, Gr. 5  
Centre for Learning@HOME

Beautiful, yet sad  
Thanksgiving and Halloween  
No more leaves, just wood.

# The Courageous Circus

by Renn K, Gr. 5  
Assumption School



Samone! Samone! Wait up! It is the end of another day of school on Friday. I was almost to the end of the hallway, ready to exit the building. I looked back over my shoulder to see who was calling my name. A group of high-heeled snobby looking girls trot my way.

They looked unfamiliar to me but I stopped to see what they wanted anyway. The girls looked like 8 graders. "You should try out this really cool app! You would love it". I have this stupid look smeared across my face like peanut butter. "Oh..... ok". I turn to walk away but one of them grabs my arm. I turned around to see what they wanted now. "Now what do you want?" I questioned the girls rudely. "Oh, well we just thought you needed to know how to get there sweetie". "No Thanks I can make out one on my own". I spit out back to them and yank my arm away from her grip. I walked out the school doors and to the train station angry as ever.

I stepped heavily onto the short-distance train and dropped into an empty seat. The train was practically empty except for a few elderly men and women. I love to do gymnastics; The lessons I take are excellent and make total sense. My teacher is called Ms.Austin. Mom and dad work late so I take the train. To some people, it isn't a great thing to ride a train, but it isn't horrible. The train slowed to a stop at the gymnastics studio. The building is a light tan with lots of windows. It looked about 100 feet tall and 70 feet wide. Rising from my seat, I hear and feel my phone buzz in my gymnastics bag; I decided to leave it until I am inside and in the locker room. The air is cool, just right for a hot summer day. Mrs.Morris is at the front desk typing in information about the people who have come and went and if they had a private lesson that had to be canceled, Finding a new appointment date for them into her computer. She must have heard my sneakers squeak and looked up from her work. She was an older lady and very kind and gentle. I think she was a great person for the lobbying job. "Hello dear!" she says in a sweet voice. "Good afternoon Mrs.Morris!" I

reply politely and then turn towards the locker room to change into the right type of clothing. I was wearing a long sleeve and a pair of worn-out jeans. I just wear a simple tank top and black leggings for my session, though. I sat down on the old tattered bench and took out my phone. It was an app advertisement.

The same app the 8 graders had told me about. I tap on it seriously and then it takes me to where I can pick a place to look at. Or so I thought. I scrolled for a second and found one on a circus. Very tempted to look at it, I hesitated but pressed it anyway. There was a sound of some horns honking and an elephant yelling than a drum roll. The drum roll kept on going and going and getting louder and louder and bit by bit I started melting away into my phone. My mouth dropped open to scream but no words came out of it. Then for a second, it was all quiet and the world was black like the night is 12 hours. Then all I heard was a thud of me hitting the ground. Except it was sandy, unlike our land back in Oyen school grounds it was as hard as cement; but that is because it is frozen solid and not yet melted. I laid there for a while numb and aching all over from my hard fall. Finally regained some of my strength and sat up on my elbows looking around cluelessly and then it dawned on me. I was in the picture that I tapped on. Worry flooded over me like a wave had swallowed the shore in one big tasteless bite. I stood up and searched my body for the device that had brought me here. I searched and searched but then I clued in that it must have gotten lost in my travel. I looked around for any sign of life. There was none so I walked up and over the rolling hills until I heard the sound of an elephant's scream and honking horns and a distant drum roll. I ran to the top of the next hill and just over a few

more hills was a circus practicing for their show! I run as fast as I can to teach the tumbling exciting full of life show. Once I reached my destination I stopped for a minute panting and breathing hard. Then I felt a tap on my shoulder. I turned to see a girl about my age with a big black horse with a clean bright white star in the middle of its head. "Hi my name is Keesha and this is twilight". she says. "Who are you?" she questions me. "I am Samone Lee". I respond to her. "What's your job in the circus?" I ask her. "I ride Twilight while doing gymnastics". "what do you do?" she asks me. "I can do gymnastics too, but not on a horse!" I said. "Would you like to learn how to?" She looks gentle and concerned, but all her face showed was curiosity. My face lit up and on the inside my guts were rambunctious. "Would you really teach me?". "Of course silly! I will learn with you. Our trainer will be Falcia. You will ride Leena the Great. She is an older horse, but steady". "Do you want to start now? Cause if so, that is excellent!"

Falcia is practicing with the horses right now so it will definitely work". she spits out like a firecracker. "Sure! Where is she working?". "In the ring!" Keesha announces like a ringmaster and we walk to the ring for our lessons. We arrive just as we see a sleek white horse

rise up and off the ground and in mid-air doing a kick. I stand there watching the horse rise up and down over and over. Then she notices us and lets the horse stop jumping up and down over and over. She walks over to us and the horse follows her. "What do you need Keesha? She asks. Her voice is gentle and sleek like a sanded piece of wood. "We were wondering if you could give her lessons. Some lessons for doing what I do in the circus". She asks. "Well, what can you do kid?" she asks me. I start with a quick and sweet cartwheel and then a round off. A handspring and a backflip. I stop there to see if she wants more. "Well, you know a lot girl. Have you ever done it on a horse?". "Never". I responded. "So we have a lot of work to do and not a lot of work to do. You know a lot about gymnastics which we need to work on at least. But the horse thing needs work". she tells us while pacing back and forth. "You can join us if you would like, though". I considered the question and decided it would be an awesome plan. I nodded eagerly. She smiles. Then her face turns serious. "I didn't get your name though?" I reply, Samone Lee! That was it. My life with the circus had started!

## Shrewd and Savvy

by Zoe Olivia V, Gr. 5  
Centre for Learning@HOME

I watched Con and Sly drive off on the four hour loop road. My cousin George and his wife Elizabeth handed me two jars of the white hair powder that the villagers removed from Con and Sly's wagon.

We all waited for instructions from my aunt Lucy our town's mayor. She assigned each of us a place to spread the powder. Young children and those thirty-five and older powdered the road while teenagers and adults powdered the roofs.

Rosie my other cousin said, "I hope this teaches those tricksters a lesson."

"It should," said Elizabeth. "We've put a lot of effort into this. Janelle, you were great pretending your

daughter had a hair problem, and George is excited to be 'the man whose wife has collapsed', when they come back."

Ash, my second cousin, the teen who told Con and Sly about Savvy, climbed down from a rooftop and said, "I just saw Con and Sly's wagon coming round the corner. We have to get in our places!"

George went over to the middle of the street while the rest of us started milling around to not appear suspicious. It was time to prank the pranksters.

# Element of Light (excerpt)

by Hannah G. Gr. 6

Centre for Learning@HOME

"Oh my gosh, you need a blanket, if you're from the sun it's probably freezing down here!" exclaims Evelyn.

I blink at her, I have been trying to tell them that since I got here!

"Yes, plea--"

"Kade, keep her warm until I find a blanket," Evelyn calls back as she runs down a small hallway. Kade plops me down on the couch and puts his hands on the cushion beside me, instantly I feel better.

"Thank you." I say as I close my eyes and fall asleep. I woke up to silence and confusion. I looked around me as all the events of yesterday came flooding back. I see Evelyn and Kade sitting at the carved table.

"Good morning," I say yawning, they look at me and Kade mumbles something about chores and leaves.

"Does he not like me?" Evelyn laughs, it is a funny laugh, a kind that is contagious, sometimes.

"He just doesn't like the idea of sharing a room with me."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, we figure, since you're from the sun you can stay with us. If you want." I light up, I know I just got here but I already love these people.

"Of course! But, if Kade doesn't want me here then I don't want any problems." I say, Evelyn told me that he can suck it up. I don't know what that means, but I think it means I can stay.

"You said he didn't want to share a room with you. So, if it is ok with you, we can share a room!" she is already nodding before I even finish,

"You're smart and pretty! That is an amazing idea!" she begins to draw what seems like design ideas on a slip of paper. She asks for my opinion.

"Wow, you have creative ideas, can you help us re-design the house?" she asks hopefully. I agree and she immediately goes to find Kade. Then stops.

"Before we do anything, you need a new outfit." she gestures for me to follow her.

We walked the same hallway that I saw Kade go down. On the right wall, there are two pictures. One of Evelyn and Kade on a small hill, the other also has Kade and Evelyn but Evelyn has her face in the corner of the picture with her tongue out, while Kade looks angry and is on the floor with a controller of sorts. He is reaching for the camera, so it is blurred. It is a funny picture, at home I didn't have any pictures like that.

"Hey, I never got your name." I think about it, and she is right, I haven't told them.

"I'm Ruby, Ruby Swan." she nods and says,

"I'm gonna call you Ru." I return the nod, slowly. I never had a nickname back home, I barely had friends.

She shows me the three rooms that occupy this hallway; Kade's room, a small room with a TV and console, his bed is a series of planks with a cushion as a mattress with two blankets on top. On the right side of the hallway, there is the 'Fun Room', as Evelyn calls it. It is where they play, read, and make messes. It is bigger than any of the other rooms I have seen yet. Then to the left of Kade's room, a closet full of food. At the very end of the hallway, is the room me and Evelyn will be sharing. It has the same bed as Kade, and across the right wall there is a bookshelf, and across the left wall there is also a TV

"I had to fight Kade for the bigger room. I won." Evelyn says proudly. We both hear a shout from Kade's room.

"Dang it! I almost had 'em!"

"Kade you're scaring my roommate!" screams Evelyn, making me jump.

I walk down the hallway and into Kade's room, I see he has a headset on and his eyes are fixated on the screen,

"Kade, why were you yelling?" I ask, he jumps a little

and turns to me

"This stupid guy won't stop kill- er, oh, hi..."

"Ruby, I'm Ruby."

"My new roommate! Plus, she said she would help us decorate, she is super good at it," Evelyn continues to babble. I look around Kade's room some more, I see that he has a poster hanging on his wall, above his bed. A picture of a volcano.

"Ruby, earth to Ru, hellooo~"

"Hi! Sorry, I was thinking."

"It's fine. But, we were gonna get you new clothes." nodding I let Evelyn take my hand and lead me to our room.

She picks out the following; A black tank top and a short jean jacket. Skinny blue jeans that are ripped in one knee, and ankle-length lace-up black boots.

Now, I am gonna go and you are gonna change." she leaves. I quickly change, scared she will come back before I'm ready.

When I am done I walk out to see Evelyn plugging in a sort of device.

"Great! You're ready, now come here! I am gonna do your hair!"

I was hesitant, at first. She dragged me to the bathroom and went to grab a stool to put in front of the mirror.

She stood behind me and jumbled my hair in a ponytail, except for the very bottom layer, she grabbed the device and told me not to move. I hold my breath and don't move a muscle. She wraps the device around my hair, then lets it go. She lets the next layer of my hair out of the ponytail and repeats the process until all of my hair is curled in poofs around my head and shoulders.

"Wow, I'm~"

"Gorgeous, now let's go show Kade!" she yanks me out of the chair and, again, drags me down the hallway. She throws open the door and practically tosses me in

the room.

"Ev!~" I managed, before catching myself on Kade's bed. I stand up and I realize Kade and Evelyn are staring at me.

"Is there something wrong?" I ask, Kade shakes his head violently,

"N-no! Nothings wrong, you just um, scared me a little." I nod slowly.

After a while, we end up making design plans and watching movies. We play a fun game called 'Hide 'n Seek' and Evelyn wins, of course. Eventually, we all get tired and end up falling asleep on the couch, with Evelyn and me cuddled up with all the pillows and blankets, and Kade on the other side.

When I wake up I feel a pain in my stomach, remembering that I haven't had anything to eat since I got here, I notice that Kade is already up.

"Hey, Kade? Do you think I could have something to eat?"

"Sure, what do you want? Crackers, strawberries, cookies?"

I don't know what any of this is, so I say,

"Can I try a strawberry?"

"Try? Right, you probably can't grow that stuff up there."

he takes me down the hall and opens up a cabinet above the pantry, immediately cool air rushes over me. I shiver, the air has gotten so much warmer now that I have gotten used to it.

"Hey Ruby, you ok? Oh crap, the fridge!" he quickly shuts it and uses his power to warm me up.

"Thanks, Kade. Oh, and I had a question."

"Anything"

"So, I was wondering, when can we go outside?" he tenses. When I am warm enough he stops and opens the fridge, grabs some red things, and closes it quickly.

"We don't usually go outside unless we have to. Like, for groceries and stuff." my heart sinks and all

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my hopes to explore the outside world vanish. Kade must've seen something in my face change because he says quickly,

"But I think we could show you around a little, you know, just because you haven't seen it before."

We walk back to the main room and find that Evelyn is still sleeping. Except now, she is face-first on the floor.

We sit down and Kade opens the container, I look inside. I see medium-sized red berries, with tiny seeds. I pick one up and hesitantly take a bite. It is freezing, but I barely feel it. An explosion of flavor bursts in my mouth like a water balloon of deliciousness and flavor.

"So, how is it?" Kade looks at me intently "Your scaring me,"

"Sorry, it's amazing!" I quickly take another, and another.

"So, I see you like strawberries. Personally, I am more of a blackberry person." I look up to see that Evelyn was looking at the now half-devoured crate of strawberries and back at me.

"Y-yeah, I guess."

Kade glares at her,

"Let her enjoy her strawberries, Evelyn."

# Victory

by Isaac J, Gr. 6  
Centre for Learning@HOME

Fifteen seconds on the clock.  
He charges down the court,  
Sneakers squeaking like miniature mice,  
And slams the basketball to the floor.



Ten seconds remaining.  
The crowd cheers crazily, chanting his name,  
As the fierce black jerseys close in on him,  
He dribbles hard left and sees the red numbers blinking.

Only three seconds remaining.  
He takes the shot, watching the ball bounce  
And fall with a swoosh into the net as the buzzer sounds.  
His team lifts him up in celebration.  
He did it! He led his team to victory.

# The Girl With A Red Balloon

by Taylor B, Gr. 6  
École Good Shepherd School

She watched the unwatchable  
She tamed the untamable  
She lost her legs but got back up,  
In a world where she stood alone.

Black and grey, bleak and pointless  
Yet she fought with all her might.  
The bright blue sky will be black tonight,  
But hope will linger on.

Sparks of joy, tears of hope,  
She'll never back down, not even when provoked.  
They sent missiles from the sky,  
Poison where birds could not fly.

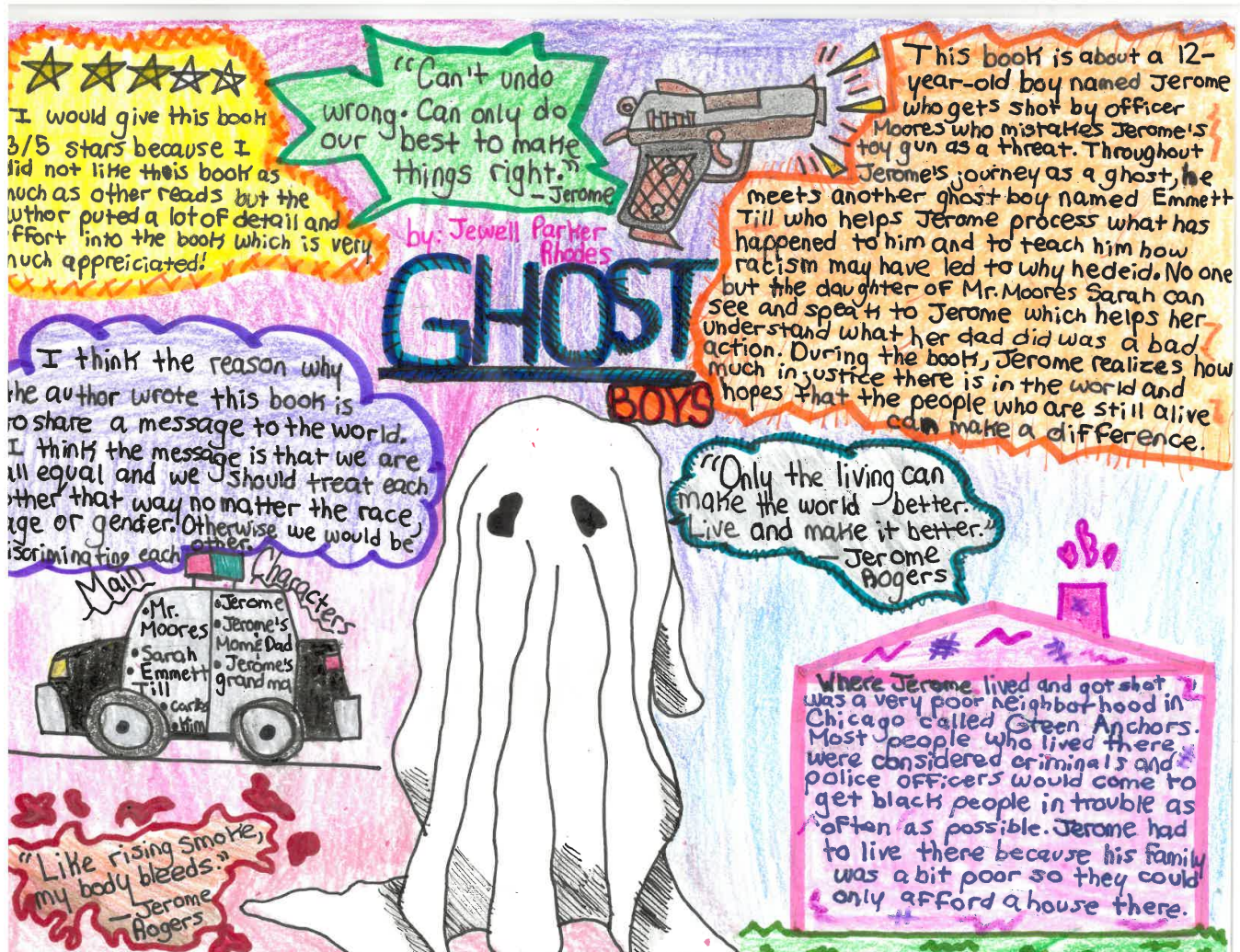
And yet she lived through it all,  
Dodged through bullets to get to food  
Her story printed into minds a girl with hope  
Her aura intertwined.



# Beautiful Words, Ghost Boys

by Mekayla W. Gr. 6

École Good Shepherd School



# ACL

by Caizher YC. Gr. 6

Our Lady of the Snows Catholic Academy

It was February 2nd, 2020, my first day on a legitimate basketball team. Everyone was excitedly getting ready. We put our jerseys on, and readied ourselves as the buzzer sounds. This is it, I exclaimed nervously to myself, it's my first start! The ref blows his whistle, everyone on the court shakes hands, and I get to my position.

"3", the ref counted down in slow motion, "2...1... GO!"

As our tallest player jumps for the ball, he catches it. He passes to me and we get the first possession. Sprinting steadily but fast, I ran down the court to the three point line. My defender met me there. He was guarding tightly, not giving me even an inch of space. I passed the ball to our shooting guard, then ran around the court, my defender still trailing behind me. Quickly, I jabbed my foot to the left but faked and went right. That's when my defender finally lost me. I ran down to the opposing team's three point line and called out for the ball. Our shooting guard passed it to me, and with a fury, I was about to lay it up.

All of a sudden, I realized their center was running right to me. He jumped as high as he could, as if he were riding a pogo stick, and blocked my shot. I landed awkwardly and bent my leg, I fell to the ground, screaming in agony. I looked at my leg, and it was sideways. To say the least, I was in excruciating pain. To say the worst, I felt like I got shot by a bullet. As I lay on the hardwood floor, the team medics came rushing to me. They helped me get up, and I heard my teammates asking if I was okay. I couldn't speak, I was in too much pain. The team medics rushed me to the locker rooms and I later found out that I had, obviously, a bent leg. But the doc also said that I had torn my achilles and could no longer play for 4 months.

This was my first time getting injured in a basketball game, and was one of the most painful experiences of my life. If I imagined this enough, I would feel as if I was there, and can still feel the pain after a whole year.

# Ode to Racism

by Bokhosi N. Gr. 6

École Good Shepherd School

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I don't know where to start  
because everytime you always hurt my heart.  
The things you say to me make my body drop  
and everywhere I go, I hear your voice non-stop!  
I HATE your name

Some treat you like nothing  
even though you truly are something  
Slowly, as your heart begins heart begins to sink.  
You begin to think.  
"Am I really meant to be in this world"  
Yes we all know matter who you are.  
Though I still HATE your name

I may be black  
and nothing will change that!  
I still HATE your name

It really, really hurts but you learn to avoid the tears.  
Its like throwing a rock into  
the ocean but you never  
know how deep it  
actually goes.

Stop hating yourself  
for who your suppose to be.  
-Bokhosi Ncube

Love yourself and  
don't let ANYONE take  
that away from you

# The Scrapyard

by Ella W, Gr. 6  
École Good Shepherd School



The clouds, white and puffy, failed to cover the vast blue sky above. The Great Canyons of Ethra gaped ahead, and the few trees that there were had their leaves ruffled in the wind. A young girl with hair the colour of the blackest night and eyes a deep ocean blue, sped along the edge, picking up reddish dust with every step, a billowy yellow dress bouncing behind. "Wait up Reanna", her parents shouted from behind, smiling. Reanna grinned playfully and giggled. She was so happy now, but her world was about to fall apart. The ground shook, sending bits of rubble all over. The canyons grew and cracked below her. The earth's jaws opened to reveal an endless black valley. Reanna turned around, her eyes bright with fear as she stumbled to avoid slipping into the endless canyon that jeered below. "NO, REA!!" her mother shrieked. The world seemed to move in slow motion as Reanna's mother leaped over the gorge, pushing her out of the way. Her mother tumbled over the edge before she fell, slowly, into the bottomless black abyss. The girl's father had reached out to grab her but it was too much weight for him and soon they were both swallowed by the darkness. "NO!! mama... papa..." Reanna's voice trailed off, as she sobbed uncontrollably.

Reanna woke up in a cold sweat. A freezing breeze made her body shudder and her teeth chatter. She looked up and saw that there was a large hole in the roof of her 'house', a crudely made shed of scrap metal and old, rusty wires. All of a sudden, a large, fuzzy, bug-like creature leaped through the opening, landing right on top of her stomach. Reanna gave out a quiet "oof" before picking up one of her poorly made wooden spears and poking it in the creature's thick, furry hide. "Shoo! Shoo! Go away!" she yelled at the creature, giving it one last poke before it leaped out of the gap in the ceiling. She gave a small sigh of relief after clambering out of her bed. She put her patched-together fur jacket on, on top of her tattered shirt. Pushing her way around the heavy flap of metal she used for a door, Reanna headed towards the Great Canyons. There was a large scrapyard there, with parts

that she could use to fix her pieced-together home.

As she trudged along, she felt an all-too-familiar feeling, like a tennis ball shoved right down her throat. It was the feeling of dread. The dread she felt whenever she thought of her parents. She had been trying to forget about it ever since it happened 7 years back. She was 6 then, a naive little girl obsessed with nothing but herself and getting treated like a baby whenever she did as little as saying "ow". She had changed since then, she had learned to rely on herself, and to not just take others for granted. But before she could stop herself, she felt icy-hot tears rolling down her cheeks and onto the dusty ground. Her parents loved her so much that they gave up their lives for her. They're not dead! Reanna thought to herself, brushing away the tears. They're still alive out there. I just need to find them. She was thinking so hard, that she hadn't even realized that she had already arrived at her destination. She tripped over a metal sheet, roughly landing on a yellowed mattress. Reanna picked up the sheet, examining it. She put it under her arm to take it home.

As she walked around the scrapyard, she heard a whirring noise coming from her left. She turned around, spotting movement in a pile of rust. She went to see what it was. Picking up all the metal, she spotted something shiny amidst all the corroded metal. Reanna picked up what appeared to be a robot. It was somehow still spotlessly clean even though it had been buried inside all the decaying steel. As she tossed it aside, she heard a noise come from its direction. She carefully trodded over and found the LEDs on the robot's "face" flashing. They materialized into what appeared to be eyes, and a frown appeared. "Why did you throw me?!" the robot grumbled in a robotic voice. "You talk?" Reanna replied, bewildered. "Of course you do, it's 2056", she answered her question. The robot ignored her remarks and continued. "Do you know who I am?!" the machine replied moodily. "No" she answered coldly. "I am the last model of the PW-3910

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android!" it shouted back at her, clearly angry. "How could I have known?" she retorted at the robot. "What do you do anyway? Wash dishes?". The robot was infuriated. "How dare you!? I am an extremely high-tech GPS robot with the capability of human locating!" it shrieked in its programmed voice. Human locating, huh? Reanna thought. So like, finding my parents? She brushed the thought away, shaking her head. It's just a stupid, egotistical robot. What help could it do? But it can't hurt to ask...

"Why are you staring at me like that?!" the robotic voice demands, breaking her train of thought. "There's someone I want to search for," Reanna blurts out. "Names?" the machine asks, looking pleased. "Lucy and William West." The robot's screen face flashes a loading circle. "Found them", it replied, a checkmark appearing on its screen. Reanna felt acid tears building upon her cheeks as a picture of her long-lost parents appeared on the display.

Everything rushed back at once; the way her mother called her Rea; the way her dad hugged her to sleep when she was scared; the way they said that they loved her so much. She fell onto her knees, sobbing, the rush of emotions was too much. "Mom... dad... it's all my fault... that they're gone..." she said softly between sobs, smashing her fists on the scrappy metal ground, creating red grooves on her hands. "All my fault..." "Whoa, whoa, whoa, calm down" the machine sighed, putting one of its metal arms around her shoulder. "They're still alive, and they aren't too far." Reanna sat up at the words, disbelieving. "They're alive?" She stood up, now alive with energy. She was about to run off but didn't manage to make it more than two steps before the robot grabbed her coat. "Where are you going?!" the robot yelled. "You don't even know where they are!" "Oh. Yeah. Right", she stopped and stood there awkwardly, awaiting the

robot's directions. The loading screen flashes on for a few seconds until the machine spoke. "Follow me", the robot instructed. She complied, trodding after the smaller creature.

After what felt like an eternity of walking, the two of them stumbled across a small dug-out cave on the side of a canyon. Reanna peered inside, expecting to find nothing, but instead found herself looking at a cozy-looking living space. It was well maintained and surprisingly clean, the chiselled-out stone counter piled with well-carved wooden bowls and cutlery as well as a few unfinished paintings. Upon a fuzzy-looking sofa sat a man, maybe in his forties, who glanced over at the two travellers. His eyes widened as he saw Reanna. "R-rea?" He stuttered out. "D-d-dad?" He ran up to her, embracing her in a huge hug. Both of them had tears forming in their eyes, though this time, they were tears of pure joy. From another room, a petite woman poked her head out. "What's the racket fo-" she cut herself off as she saw Reanna. Her eyes immediately started to water as she dashed up to her long-lost daughter. "M-my girl, w-we've looked for you for forever," she spoke, her voice breaking up, tears of happiness trickling their way down her cheeks. Reanna's mother cupped her cheeks in her hands to look at her daughter. The robot on the side was watching this entire wholesome reunion rolled over and joined the group hug. "Hmm? What's this?" Her father asked. "Oh yeah, that's just the robot that helped me find you," Reanna answered. The machine looked proud for a few moments before she added "It's kinda annoying sometimes, so ignore it", breaking through its moment of self-satisfaction.

"WHAT?!"

END.

# At The Top Of Night Mountain

by Abigail D. Gr. 6

Our Lady of the Snows Catholic Academy

After many hours of an exhausting hike, I finally reached the top of the mountain. Tall trees encompassed me in all directions. The clouds rested right over the canopy of the forest. Sunlight tore through the thick clouds and poured into the place. The stray rays of light landed upon me and made my brown hair shine like gold and copper. The melodies of birds filled my surroundings. This place was so beautiful, I could barely believe my eyes!

Many people had told stories about Night Mountain being haunted; stories that mentioned a monster. This particular creature they talked about, was said to be tall and scrawny. The only reason I came here was to prove that they were wrong. I hadn't thought that there would be something so compelling up here. I decided to stay on the mountain top for a bit longer and explore; had I known, this would soon be the most regretful decision of my life.

I set my rucksack down and sucked in a deep breath; I could smell the fresh, wet earth. I strode deeper into the forest inhaling the earthly scents. Time flew by faster than I anticipated and a smokey fog descended, gradually captivating everything in sight. I sat on the damp ground, leaning against a round weathered grey rock. I was really beginning to relish in the placidity on

Night Mountain.

For my entertainment, I observed a small tree sapling. I observed the dew drops that were set on the leaves, and watched them slide off one by one, as the seconds ticked by. The smokey fog was growing denser and thicker as the time passed by, but I didn't really mind it; It had soon gently settled itself on me. It was however, getting colder and a bit chilly by the hour.

From where I was sitting, I had a clear view of the sky. I watched as the sun was setting on the horizon of a different mountain. It was a pleasant sight to be present at, but I had to get going soon. It had gotten quite dark ever since the sun had set. Just as I got up and steadied myself, something emerged out of the shadowy fog; It was a dark scrawny figure which was roughly at least seven feet tall. That moment, dear reader, was when everything; every story that was told, came true. "Nobody who goes up that mountain, ever returns."



# A Secret To Dance

by Levi C, Gr. 6

École Good Shepherd School

Theodor was a little different from the other boys. Most of them liked to play hockey at recess, but Theodor never liked it. Others would play tag and race around, but that wasn't for him. Theodor liked to do one thing, and one thing only. That was to dance.

Everyday after school he would go to a field where nobody walked, and he danced. Long strips of wheat stood up tall. The sun gave him a hug as it hung in the sky. The troubles of earth ran out of him. He felt like he was in a dream flying amongst the clouds. Theodor had short black hair and dark brown eyes. He was a little short and stubby, but his heart was pure. When Theodor danced he couldn't stop. No matter how hard the wind blew, or no matter how sweaty he would get, he couldn't stop. However, when Theodor got a call from his Dad, everything changed. Theodor's Dad hated male dancers. He said that "If anyone is a real man, they will refuse to dance". One of Theodor's biggest fears was his father. If he told him that would be his last day. His last time he would see the light. He could never tell him. Never tell a soul.

Theodor walked on the road kicking rocks. The only thing he could hear was silence.

His hands stuck in his pockets as the wind blew amongst his skin. Nobody to talk to. Nobody to hug. Sometimes Theodor really couldn't find himself. He was alone and lost. The sun only peeked behind the hills when he got home. His dad was watching a football game, so Theodor tried to avoid all contact. "Hey son! How was school?" Theodor's father asked.

"It was good I guess" Theodor muttered. "Why 'I guess?' Is everything alright?"

"Yea everything is fine I just didn't do good on my test today" Theodor looked down. "Aww That's ok bud. I have a huge surprise!" Theodor looked up.

"What is it?!" Theodor exclaimed.

"I...am signing...you... up for football!" Theodor's eyes went big. "Oh no" he thought. "No way!" he replied

under his breath.

"I know it's so exciting! Now you better get a good night sleep cause it starts tomorrow after school!" After school?! His heart dropped. Everything was about to change after tonight.

The sun peeked out from his curtains. The rooster gave a loud crow. One of Theodor's eyes peeked open. He gave a big yawn and turned over to see his Dad staring deep into his eyes. Theodor jerked back and tried to get out of his blanket. "Morning bud! Ready for your first day of football practice?"

"Umm...yea" Theodor replied, still startled.

"Great! Quickly get ready cause it's almost 8!" The door slammed shut. Theodor stuffed his face in his pillow.

"Why me" he moaned. Theodor slipped his legs in his pants and his arms into his sleeves. He rushed towards the bathroom and quickly brushed his teeth but next thing you know there was toothpaste all over him.

"Ugh!" Theodor cried. The sound of the bus got louder. "Oh no!" He ran downstairs and snatched his backpack. "Buy dad love you!" Theodor shouted.

"Love you too bud!" But in a flash he was out the door. "Wow he must be really excited for football" Dad laughed.

Theodor sat at his desk watching the time. "Come on," he thought. What was really seconds felt like hours. The clock hands ticked. RING. The bell screamed.

Theodor stood up and raced out of the classroom. He sprinted towards the Field to try to get a little dancing in. Theodor did a few Grande Jete's and some pirouettes. All of a sudden, a car drove by. How unusual. But next thing you know it was his dad. He stopped for a few seconds

"Is that Theodor?!" He jumped out of the car.

"Excuse me young sir, what in the world do you think you're doing?" "I- Umm" Theodor was speechless.

"Get in the car, NOW" Dad demanded. Theador's eyes filled with tears. He walked towards the car. They drove in silence, forgetting about football.

The sun started to set as they got home. Theador rushed inside and Dad slammed the door. Theador raced upstairs.

"This is not what I taught my son." Dad whispered in frustration. Theador sobbed in bed.

"I knew this would happen," he told himself. Theador slipped through the window to go dance. Meanwhile Dad was still trying to get over it.

"You know what? I will go on a walk!" He said. Dad threw his coat on and slipped his feet into his shoes. He walked down the dark road of rocks. All of a sudden, there was a moving figure out in the distance.

"Hey! Get out of my crops!" He shouted. But it obviously didn't hear him cause it kept doing what he was. Dad started towards where the figure was. He peeked around the tree to see Theador dancing again.

"Ugh that boy" But just when dad was going to go to Theadore, He felt something. His breaths got heavy.

"What am i doing? This is his passion" Dad kept

behind the tree staring at him. That was then that dad realized his son was different.

Theador stood in the middle of the field taking breaths. Just as Theador opened his eyes his dad stood watching. Theador gasped. A moment of silence held in the night. "You know what dad! If you don't want me to dance... Then I'm leaving!" He shouted.

Dad's eyes started to tear up.

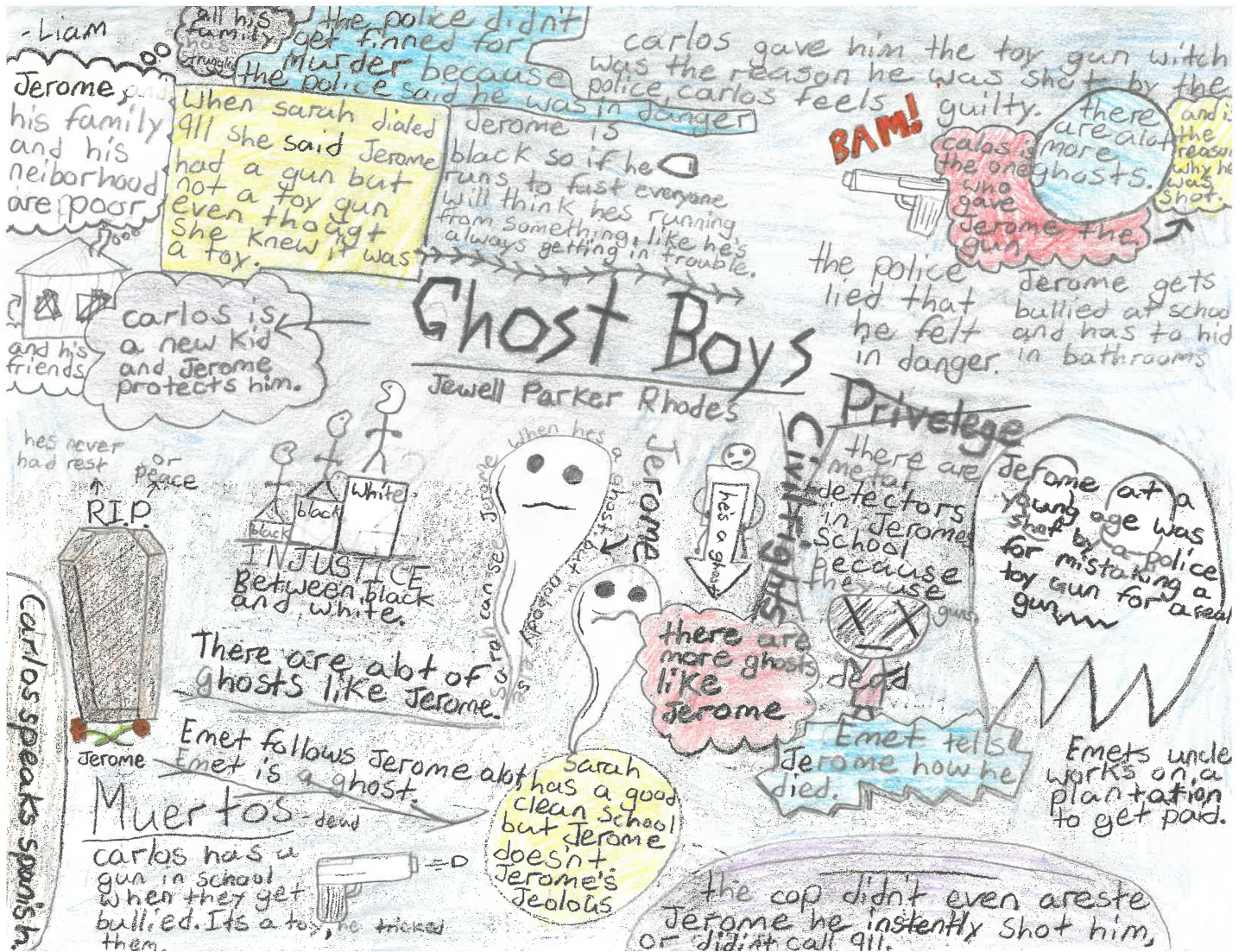
"Bud. I'm your dad. I-I-I I'm really sorry." Dad sighed. Theador looked up.

"This is what you were meant to do." Theador smiled and raced towards his father. He jumped into his arms and they clutched each other's backs. Tears dripped off their chins. All the sadness washed out of them. Suddenly Theador wasn't lost. He found his way. Theador and his dad walked side by side. They went through the doorway and watched some football. Theador taught some dance moves to dad. But let's just say it could use some work. Theador was different from the other kids, But that's ok.

# Beautiful Words, Ghost Boys

by Liam N, Gr. 6

École Good Shepherd School



# Pompeii

by Zach E, Gr. 6

Our Lady of the Sbows Catholic Academy



"9 loaves of bread, sir. Please," Alisha requested. The reason for her mispronunciation was because she came from Greece, and was therefore treated as scum, which made even the simplest job, such as buying bread, a challenge.

"Now why should I sell my precious bread to a greek child? It would be an insult to my Roman pride." Jeb sneered.

Urrgh, Alisha sighed. It was always this way. If you're Greek, you're a stupid, no good little maggot most people wished had never entered the world. At least, that was the general view, if inaccurate. It made fitting in, or having a nice, calm and serene time nearly impossible, and made worshipping her gods impossible. She was always expected to be a good little Roman, ment to worship Minerva, Juno, Jupiter and the rest.

"Was that a sigh, missy? I would have thought you had learnt your little lesson by now. Here. I'll teach you. Romans: good, worshipped and treated with respect. Greeks: Horrid, expected to act submissive and treated with distaste. Got that?" He waited for a nod, "Good."

All of a sudden, the floor shook, and a sudden tremor knocked Alisha over. The pristin mud-block floor cracked and splintered, the cherry laurel wood shelves collapsing, the fire sending sparks into the dry air, quickly igniting the shelves on the floor, and the heat destroyed the floor beyond repair. "The volcano is going to explode," she yelled to Jeb.

"No, it· not you scum. It· just an earthquake. Now help me clean up. I won't have my shop burning down." Jeb was an annoying person, but he had alought of supporters, so she had little choice. But even as she was bending down, another remor struck, and deep rumbling reverberated through the town. She got up and ran, sure now that Mt. Vesuvius was about to erupt.

Unsurprisingly, when she ran out onto the cobble-

stone street, she very nearly doubled over when the stench of smoke hit her. The same problem ously happened everywhere. It was as if Posiedon (Neptune here.) had cursed them.

"Come back, greek girl, I'll destroy you other w..." He was interrupted by a 3rd tremor, which collapsed the bakery on top of him. Quickly, the fires inside the shop turned into a raging inferno that swallowed the shop, and started leaking out onto the other shops. Alisha's stomach sloshed, and then she lost it, sending her lunch out onto the street. She had just seen someone she knew killed. Immediately, she knew she had to get out of there.

The stables, she thought. I can grab a horse and ride away. I did ride thousands of miles to get to Pompeii. I can ride some more to get out. But people were rushing out of the buildings by now, so she wouldn't be able to move very fast. Incredibly, she all of a sudden spied Tom and Sam! Tom was her brother, and Sam was her boyfriend. It was a stroke of luck to run into them. However, a guard ran past her, and up to Tom.

"It's you Greeks. The gods have cursed us for harbouring you, and now we shall all be killed. I will take you down with me if I must!" Then he drew a dagger and shoved it into her brother's chest. It was as if a piece of her died, right there and then. However, the anger and grief gave her a boost, and she ran, faster than ever before. In seconds, she was past the mob, racing for the stables, just in time to see the last horse saddled to a carriage, before it was racing away. Her plan fell apart, before her very eyes.

Then the last tremor hit, and Pompeii was in the path of the incoming debris and lava. Alisha turned around and fled, panic fueling her sprint now. She ran back into the city, and straight into a mob. Fighting her

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way through would be useless, the incoming lava flow would swallow her long before she could escape. True, unquenchable fear closed around her heart. How could she ever get out now?

With pain, fear and anger clouding her mind, she ran back toward the lava, not caring what might happen. But halfway through the climb, she realised the lava was curling to the right, toward Pompeii, but away from her. Why?, she asked herself. Why is the lava curving away? Then she realised. The river was slowing the flow, and some obsidian was starting to form, making a channel that pushed the river of lava away. It was miraculous!

A new plan formed in her mind. If she truly ran, she might be able to make it to the ferry. Off she ran, toward the winding river that could save her life. She ran and ran until she reached the water, then met a dilemma. She had no idea where the ferry was. She had a feeling it was downstream, or maybe it was a hope, because if she was wrong, she was dead. So off she ran, heading toward the cork oak forest.

11 minutes later, just as she was beginning to lose all hope, she stumbled across the ferry. At the steering wheel, a ferry woman was waiting, presumably for her next ride.

"Help. Please. Vesuvius is erupting." She shouted up to her.

The news literally knocked her out of her chair. "Say what?" She said. What's this about Vesuvius?"

"It's erupted. Can I please come up so we can escape. You're my last possible chance."

"Get up here now. If you are lying, I will have you executed," She warned.

"I'm not. Haven't you felt the tremors?"

"I...have, yes," she answered as Alisha climbed up the pristine stone ladder to reach the deck. The boat was a small dinghy made primarily of wood, with occasional bits of metal or wood, with rope lashing the whole thing together. As soon as Alisha was fully aboard, they took off, heading downstream on the rapids. Alisha turned around and saw smoke and an unearthly glow rising from the ruins of a once pristine city. Then they turned around a bend, and Pompeii, as well as the life she had come to know, disappeared forever.

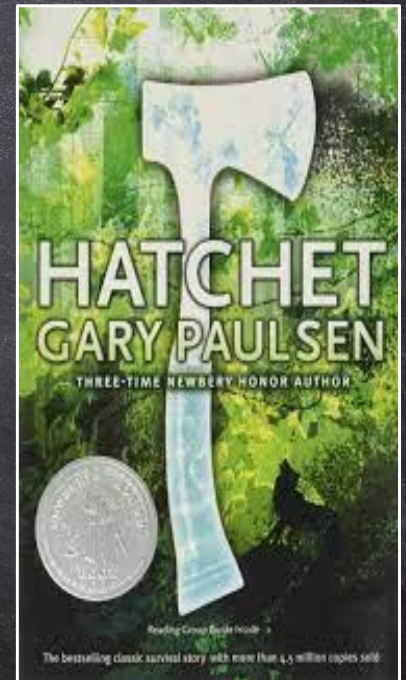
# 'Hatchet' Book Blog

by Tyler U. Gr. 6  
École Good Shepherd School

## Hatchet

Gary Paulsen

This book is one of my all time favorites because of all the suspense and crazy events. Almost the whole book you would be questioning "what happens next?" This book could also help you with knowing what to do if you were lost in the forest. It was kinda crazy to me that he could survive with a tattered windbreaker and a small axe or a hatchet. The novel had such a great way of putting the details in the perfect place which made it seem like you were the kid lost in the forest. I would rate this book a 5/5 for how enjoyable it was to read.



# Jitters

by Breah T, Gr. 8

Christ the King Academy

I watched as the bridesmaids made their way down the aisle. Finally, it was my turn. With the eyes of the crowd on me, the music seemed to be booming in my ears. I nervously walked down the aisle with my young cousin, who was the ring bearer, tossing flowers on each side of me. I thought to myself, do not ruin this. This is important. I made my way beside my sister, admiring the beautiful aqua blue dress she was wearing. I watched my parents walk down the aisle, linking arms.

For my 7 year old self this was taking forever. I had no patience. My arms and legs were getting restless; I was jittery. I thought stretching would ease my jitters; it didn't. I tried not to make it obvious I was stretching, and in doing so I made myself dizzy and fell over.

I got up right away hoping and praying that no one noticed the thump that came along with my little body hitting the ground. As I was getting up I was thinking, stupid! How could I be so stupid? I ruined the wedding! I was ready to cry. I was so embarrassed. It took more than another half an hour without me moving over fear of more embarrassment.

When the ceremony ended I walked up to my mom and said,  
"I'm sorry I fell, Mommy."

"Oh sweetie, it's ok! It was an accident. We all have accidents," she said in an affectionate tone.

She held me in a tight embrace., Feeling her warmth around me was the best feeling I could have at that moment.

# Blank Page

by Emma-Katherine H, Gr. 8  
Centre for Learning@HOME



Blank page,  
But a specific thing to do,  
Blank pages are wonderful when it's just you,  
But when I have something to do,  
I can't get started knowing its due,  
My fear feeds into words,  
Into rhymes,  
My fear feeds into all the feelings that are inside,  
And it comes out like this...  
When I am annoyed It turns fast no going back,  
When I'm mad my words are powerful,  
Down to earth,  
Soul shaken,  
Moving worlds,  
When I'm happy no words come out  
No rhymes,  
No time,  
I only write when I'm feeling emotions,  
When I feel like screaming my words are here  
When I feel like shouting that's when these words  
appear,  
And when I just can't take anymore,  
That's when I write more,  
But when I have to write,  
Well...  
That's when I can't  
I'm stuck,  
Dwelling in fragments of intention,  
Trying to reach for perfection,  
I can write many words,  
When I don't have to,

I can write many words when you annoy me,  
I can write the best when I'm busy and stressed,  
When I should be doing something else,  
That's when I can write the best,  
I love writing don't get me wrong,  
I love how my words float around like a song,  
But when it comes to writing for this,  
This,  
On purpose,  
For a purpose,  
That's when it overwhelms,  
That's when my words start to swell  
That's when if I let them boil  
They'll burst.  
Into to flames they go,  
Out the world and into oblivion,  
They'll come out strong,  
Not the words  
I need to write,  
But the words that spill out from my insides,  
And when I start there's no end in sight  
For I could go on all night,  
And when I could make these thoughts into words  
into work,  
That's when they don't come,  
That's when they pull back and won't go on,  
No matter how much I plea  
They won't come out for me,  
For when I have to write,  
That's when the words hide from me.

# Today

by Isabel D. Gr. 8  
Centre for Learning@HOME



My mother said that I could change  
the world

One day.

But, I can't today.

No, not today.

Today, I am still learning how to be

The person I want to be.

Still trying to formulate the words, for my speech, to  
the world. That changes the world.

Today, I need to show the world

That I can live longer.

That I can be smarter.

That I will be enough for the world, and it cannot just  
spit me out

like a tasteless piece of gum.

Today, I am trying to prove to the world that

I can make a difference.

That I will be a force that cannot be

Reckoned with.

Someday

I want to change the world.

But today, I am still trying to convince the  
world that

it needs changing.

I am trying to convince the world that

Trees have heartbeats.

That rivers have heartbeats.

That people

have heartbeats.

That those heartbeats should not just be

Cut short.

I am trying to tell the world That it's worth keeping.

That the world is worth changing. Saving.

Today.

# Scene Rewrite from ‘The Outsiders’

by Kylee L. Gr. 8  
Christ the King Academy

Scene Rewrite from The Outsiders by S. E. Hinton

Task: to rewrite a scene from The Outsiders using a different narrative voice and a new setting (time and/or place). Kylee chose 21st century, with Johnny Cade as the narrator.

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The whiplash I get when Dally slams his foot on the brakes makes me think I probably snapped my neck, or at least pulled a muscle. I see it before he says it; I see how the flames are licking at the church, my temporary home that felt more like a home than my permanent one ever did. Over the sound of Dally’s empty threats I swear I can hear the screams of the people, no, the children. Before I can think, I’m following Pony out of the car, hurrying up to the nearest adult.

“What’s going on?” Ponyboy asks him.

“Not sure. We were havin’ a picnic here with the children for school, and suddenly the bloody church is blazing.” His English accent is thick.

I feel overwhelmed with guilt; it’s in my head and heart and especially my stomach. I feel sick.

“We caused this; we must’ve left a lighter or something in the church.”

“Jeez Johnny, how bad is your memory? This is the twenty-first century, vapes don’t need lighters.”

“What?”

“What?”

I shake my head, and then suddenly I hear the English guy saying something like, “There are children missing! Where’s Jimmy?”

Now, what happens next may seem like it’s from a book written in the nineties about some poor abused kid having his coming of age moment but I assure you this is one hundred percent real. My legs are working faster than my brain; one minute I’m outside and the next I can’t breathe. Note to self: don’t become a fireman. Smoke is everywhere, sparks flying, dry wood crackling. I start yelling for this Jimmy kid and

somewhere in the distance I hear a series of coughing. Maneuvering through a burning church isn’t the easiest thing I’ve ever done but I’m doing it anyway. I usually find the smell of smoke comforting, it reminds me of home where all the greasers smoke cigarettes.



Home, a wonderful place indeed, back with all my buddies getting in fights, smoking weed and vaping, heading down to the local store to grab some beer even though a lot of us were underage. Greasers don’t care about the laws, you could say we were a gang, like the kind that live in the back alleys of big cities and secretly jump out and pull knives on unsuspecting women. Well, not like that actually, we respect women. I think about Dally and Pony outside the church.

Wait. The church. I’m standing in the middle of a burning church. The kids are yelling for help now, what an idiot I am. There are three children, sitting together looking petrified, tears streaming down their ashy faces. I reach for one of them, swinging him over my shoulder. How many children can Johnny fit in his arms is the real question here. I manage two of them.

“Stay here okay kid? I’ll be back quicker than you can say supercalifragilisticexpialidocious.” The kid nods silently. I weave back through the church, the weight on my shoulders slowing me down. I’m scared out of my skin when I bump into something, and that something turns out to be Ponyboy.

“What on earth are you doing in here?” I half shout.

“I came to help.”

“I know being heroic is cool and all but we don’t need two guys putting their lives at risk in a burning church.”

“Just let me help.”

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I thrust the children into his arms and tell him to put them outside and make sure they're okay.

"There's one more," I say turning around to go back and get the remaining kid. I don't hear his response because I'm gone, I'm running as fast as I can. I trip over something and topple to the ground, my knees scraping on the old wood floor, a pile of ash flying in all directions. I feel splinters in my hands, knees, arms, everywhere. I don't have time to worry about mere splinters right now. I'm back up on my feet, willing myself to go forward. The remaining kid comes into view and I give a sigh of relief. His mouth is moving and as I grow closer to him I hear him whispering to himself,

"Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious, supercalifragilistic-expialidocious, supercalifragilisticexpialidocious..."

I almost burst out in laughter, but I don't, because some part of me is mature and knows this is not the right time to laugh. I scoop up the kid, carrying him bridal style. I'm careful not to trip on anything this time. As I continue to move forward my splinters show no mercy, my skin stinging and tender. I shouldn't say I'm relieved when I see Pony still standing there by the window I came through in, but I am. The burning of my skin- quite literally, I probably have at least a few first degree burns on me- is becoming too much to handle with the kid in my arms. I'm panting when I reach him, each breath searing my throat from the amount of smoke and ash I must be inhaling. Pony doesn't say anything as he grabs the child from my arms, he doesn't need to.

"Go," I say, "go on I'll be right behind you."

"Maybe you should go first... you look hurt."

"You have a child in your arms for goodness sake, just go."

He hesitantly nods his head and turns around to crawl out the window, being careful not to accidentally knock the kids head on the wall. I smile faintly, now I can live being a hero, I actually did something right for once, my parents might finally be proud. I imagine the praise I'll get back home, the praise I'll get when I exit the church. I start smiling, wanting to literally jump for joy. I'll finally be the heroic, impressive kid my parents always wanted. This is my moment. Finally my life is mine, no more withering under the disappointment of my parents. There's nothing I can't do right now-

Maybe if I stopped thinking a millisecond earlier, a single millisecond. If I hadn't been so lost in my thoughts, if I had stopped to be humble instead of basking in my own glory. But I didn't, I didn't stop thinking.

The fire is still licking up the church. The wood is crackling but I don't hear, I don't notice much, until I do. I do notice the burning sensation, the type where something is so hot it feels cold. Excruciating pain envelops my body. I remember making a joke in my head about snapping my neck earlier, but this really feels like I am snapping my neck. It's almost as if I can feel every individual bone in my body breaking. One by one they're snapping and shattering. What may only have been thirty seconds of my life spent in pain felt like hours. Hours of torturous, harrowing pain. I'd like to think death is more painless than this. Silence takes over, and the last thing I hear before I black out, is the raspy, blood curdling cry of Pony, my best friend, yelling my name.

# October Sky Movie Review

by Patrick G. & Claudia P. Gr. 8  
Christ the King Academy

I hated this movie, I really did. Why, you may ask? For one, Mrs. Liboiron robbed us the opportunity of being able to enjoy this film earlier. And well, October Sky caused me to relapse into my obsession with space and rocket ships once again. I became so obsessive to the point I promised myself to actually listen during science class only to never hear the words “we’re building a rocket” escape my teacher’s lips. However, some teenagers like Homer, the protagonist in October Sky, are lucky enough to be able to have this chance. How would you feel seeing someone living your dream? They say that “the sky’s the limit”, and because of this movie, I question if I haven’t been reaching for the stars enough.

I may have not reached the stars, but a satellite by the name of Sputnik certainly did as it moved through the Coalwood atmosphere in the October of 1957. Everyone in the mining town gazed at the satellite in awe, and I mean everyone. It was a sight that stuck with the citizens of Coalwood forever, a sight that stuck especially to Homer Hickam, a son of a coal miner that planned to go against his father’s wishes and to build a rocket.

Homer knew, he knew that he wanted to build a rocket as soon as he fixed his attention to a craft that hovered many miles above the land on which he stood. Homer got to work quickly. He organized a group of people that were willing to help him make his dream a reality: O’Dell, Roy Lee, and Quentin. They then start making batches of rockets that were tested at a location far from town, which they named Cape Coalwood. One of the many failed attempts was successful as it darted up into the sky. Homer’s science teacher, Miss Riley, shares her wisdom and also informs them about a science fair to be hosted in Indianapolis which had a scholarship on the line. With the idea of a teenager living in a mining town winning a scholarship sent Homer to the moon. In addition with the constant encouragement of his mother, Elsie Hickam, he felt as if he were on top of the world.

However, his world is crushed every time his father, John Hickam, brushes the idea of him building a fully functioning rocket away. You see, Homer’s father

had one future, and one future only, for Homer, and that was to work as a coal miner. With the little fragments of his world left, Homer still manages to form a world where he would win the gold.

And the gold he certainly won. He heads back to Coalwood from Indianapolis after winning the science fair, wishing to launch his final rocket as soon as he steps foot on the ground that inspired him since the beginning. But, wait- was it Homer who pressed the launching button?

October Sky illustrates the hardships, setbacks, and successes of Homer Hickam and teaches us to make our own destinies, and to not live the ones we were assigned to.

How do you think the movie would have resulted if Homer chose the destiny assigned to him? I’ll let you think about that, reflect on it a little, as we take a closer look at Homer’s father, John Hickam. John is a diligent man and is devoted to working as a coal miner. However, his diligence and devotion can turn into obsession for the inanimate objects he strikes his tools with. He becomes so obsessed that, after almost losing an eye due to a work accident, Elsie Hickam states that she could care less if he died because he valued coal more than he did his own family. What if John had made himself another destiny, a destiny in which he wasn’t a coal miner, a destiny in which he is truly happy?

Questions, questions. So many questions circulate through my brain to the point I have to rack through it just to remember my last one after watching October Sky. I still hate this film, I still do. I will never forgive this film for the obsession I now have once again like the obsession Homer’s father had with coal, but mine with space and rockets. I will never let the grudge I now have with Mrs. Liboiron drop due to the fact that she didn’t present this amazing film earlier. And above all, I will never forgive myself, for the opportunities that were given to me that I failed to seize. But you, you still have a chance. A chance to make your destiny, a destiny in which you pass the sky’s limit and possibly, like Homer Hickam, literally reach the stars.

Good luck.

# The Helplessness of Anxiety

by Abbey M. Gr. 9  
St. John Paul II Collegiate



I look all around not seeing light; one spark left to give  
to: Others.

Trying to explain but they all say you're: Fine.

Anxiety every day, asking God to help me through the  
pain.

I take a deep breath to get rid of my: Panic attacks.

Wanting the deep dreadful thoughts to leave my  
head.

Taking on the world is how I feel. My pain is killing me.  
Maybe I need "help", they say. All these projects due,  
juggling my life all around. I worry alone. I don't show  
sadness or weakness: therefore I am strong, and I am  
amazing.

I try to scream but no one hears. Closing walls suf  
focate me. Your happiness matters more, I say. So go  
ahead; take the last spark

of love and joy. You can  
be in a crowd and feel all  
alone, you can be alone  
and feel loved.

Dear God Anxiety  
is killing me. Help me  
understand this; be  
cause I don't.  
I urge to feel loved.

I urge to be your light.

I urge to be a light so  
bright it will

be hard for you not  
to smile.

I feel so alone! Begging for forgive

ness, I pray to God

to drag me through the pain so I don't have to live  
with this.

I overthink every night wondering if I'll ever be good  
enough. So go ahead; take the last spark of love and  
joy.

"I'll be fine," I say, "you matter more". But still no one  
realizes. I feel like I'm drowning: schoolwork piling up,  
friends constantly pulling my attention. My life never  
has a minute to breathe.

Friends and family telling you to come out; I say "not r  
ight now" You beg me, all of a sudden my worries  
start to drown me. A rush of panic. I hate anxiety! I tell  
it to leave me alone, but it lives inside of me.

Thoughts like am I really good enough? Do you really  
love me?

I beg God for praise to release my stress and ease my  
mind.

Because I hate... I hate, anxiety!

# Fulfilled

by Bella C Gr. 9  
St. John Paul II Collegiate

If you reminisce on the past, you're too sentimental  
If you focus on the future, you're missing the moment  
How could you be so ungrateful?  
That you're making plans, mapping your dreams  
And if you live in the moment,  
You're underprepared, unfocused  
Bound to fall flat on your face  
When faced with the test  
That is making a name for yourself  
You do want to succeed, don't you?  
And with each of the expectations  
Society collectively places onto each other  
Present moment becomes a locked door  
No way to get in  
I'm writing off the page of my own story  
Putting my life in fast forward  
Tossing precious today into a bucket of yesterdays  
My now is irrelevant  
Every second an investment into the portfolio of tomorrow  
And I wonder when  
This moment will be enough for me  
When this moment will be enough  
For all of us  
When we have nothing left to work towards?  
When we're sliding down the bittersweet backside of life  
Trying to hold on  
Grappling for the off switch on this ride  
Before we meet a cold grave  
No  
I don't want that  
I want to live for this very second  
I want to roll down the windows  
Let ignorant bliss sweep my hair back

Pull my lips into a smile  
Cheeks red  
Radio booming  
I want to sit by a fire  
Eyes watering from the smoke  
Lips stuck together with marshmallow  
Conversation being tossed like a football on game day  
Amber ashes melding with the stars  
I want to make my mark  
But what if I already have  
Is this as good as it gets?  
My life, case closed  
Born  
Lived  
Loved  
Died  
My body wilted like a rose  
Once only blossoming now falling apart  
The petals  
Disintegrating  
Have I said all I needed to say  
Have I done all I wanted to do  
Have I danced until my body ached  
Ears ringing  
My heart a hammer  
My hair attracted to my sweaty forehead like a magnet  
Legs trembling  
In desperate need of a glass of water and a bathroom break  
Have I eaten ice cream on a boardwalk  
Cone absorbing the melting dairy



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Beginning to collapse in on my Hands  
Dripping in Tiger Tiger and Bubblegum Knees dan  
gling over the pier  
10 licks away from a sunburn No place I'd rather be  
I'm not done  
But is anyone ever?  
So I pledge to take the time  
To make time  
For the  
Car rides  
Campfires  
Dance parties  
And ice cream cones  
For the small things  
That turn out to be large after all the

in - between  
The unplanned  
Unprecedented  
Unforeseen  
Art  
That is life  
Real life  
And for that,  
I won't apologize  
I will ruthlessly charge towards Fulfillment  
Establishing my own requirements as Contentment  
Joy  
And humility  
Bringing everyone I can along with me

# Slam Poetry

by Eleanore D. Gr. 9  
St. John Paul II Collegiate



I have a riddle, say your response;  
What's sickeningly sweet, the nectar  
of gods,  
What's clearer than crystal  
and burns your insides little by little;  
What tastes like forgiveness and smells like regret,  
The reason stained lips and crying eyes often forget;  
What comforts the sorrowful, fills the starving,  
And looks like sleep to the freezing;  
What spikes in your heart courage, and the strength  
to cope  
with horrors;  
A reason to live, addicting and bittersweet to  
mourners.  
Name an adrenaline rush unlike any other, a sedative  
to  
numb the pain;  
And in the morrow leaves you aching

and alone with a  
horrible migraine.  
What sinks your sorrows, raises your  
joys;  
Cooler than ice, creating permafrost  
in your joints.  
What keeps men sane, whist they try in vain;  
To navigate through life and strife  
Stifle the voice that booms in their heads, that tells  
them to  
end it all.  
What helps you see the beauty in failure, sharper and  
true as  
Icarus's fall?  
I'll tell you, my friend; stories of hostels and kings  
I bet you wont believe this poem speaks of cheap  
vodka, of  
all things.

# Memoir

by Callum S. Gr. 9  
St. John Paul II Academy



3:26AM

Waking up in the middle of the night is no biggie for normal people. Emphasis on normal. I, myself, am not normal. Waking up in the middle of the night is a nightmare for not-normal people, like me. You see, the demons in my head, always scurrying around, never stop. It's an all day, all night thing. So even in the midst of the night, they are there. When I close my eyes, they are there. Whenever, wherever, they are there.

It's December, Callum. Most people would be getting in the holiday spirit, setting up christmas lights, making nice meals. But not me. The little demons in my head are not going to let me do that. So there I am, in my bed, pitch black in my room. The things in my head are predicting what will go wrong today. The worst case scenario. I tell them to shut up, but that doesn't work, like usual. I begin to quiver, the flood of emotions on the horizon of my mind, impending doom. I knew what was coming, but I couldn't stop it. Every second, the tsunami of emotions, getting closer. Not only am I scared of what the demons tell me, but I am also scared of the thoughts. Breathe, I tell myself. But it's too late. The fear is growing, the dam of emotional toughness I tried to build creaking against the pressure of the water. Why must it happen? What have I done to deserve this? Is this what my life will become? Every fleeting thought adds up to the emotional tidal wave that was headed for me. Then, the dam breaks.

I wasn't making a sound. The white noise of fear, anger, sadness, all the emotions in my head muted me. Nobody outside would be able to tell. But with nobody there, the only thing to confront me was the emotions. The waves of nausea kept coming, the clenching of my muscles hurt, but not enough to notice the explosion of thoughts inside me. I couldn't breathe, trying, heaving, but no air came in, none came out. I was dying. Curled up into a ball, the thrum thrum thrum thrum of my heart in my throat getting faster and faster and

faster by every second, minute, hour. Then, it stopped. It all went away. Like that, the demons were gone. I didn't have the energy left to acknowledge it. I looked at the clock. 3:26 AM.

"Is this going to last forever?" I ask.

"I've told you this a million times, it will not!"

"I need an answer!" I was getting angry now. My brothers watched from afar, listening in and snickering.

"You have your bloody answer!" She said as she went upstairs, the anger clearly penetrating in her voice.

"You don't even know what this is like! Do you understand the pressure I'm under? You don't, because you've never felt this!" I shout, now at the top of my lungs.

"I've been through hell and back with you over these last few weeks, and this is how you treat me?" She is also shouting at this point. My dog comes to my side. At this point I don't even know what to say. I feel disgusted. Even they don't know how it feels. So I decide to just keep pushing on, by myself. But this time, not telling anyone.

Sometimes it feels like I'm the only person in the world with this terrible thing. But looking at myself from the outside, I come to a realization; that the fear, the demons, they are not around me, suffocating me; they are in my head. Nobody outside would know of my suffering unless I told them. But that was the hard part. Getting someone to believe me was like getting a hungry alligator to take a swim with you.

I got into bed at 5pm, missing supper for the millionth time. As I rolled off into slumber, I knew it would all just happen again. My head would not stop clicking, because my head doesn't care how I feel, what I want. It's a force of instinct driving the fear, one I cannot control. So why not just let it be, because I knew at 3:26 in the morning, it would all come back.

# Waterfalls

by Andrea L. Gr. 9  
St. John Paul II Collegiate

Something you should know  
is that as a teen, I have loved the beauty of water  
falls.  
I have watched them up close and from afar  
of the astonishing Takakkaw Falls,  
or the splashing Lundbreck Falls.  
I have watched and took pictures of them  
as they spray against my face in the afternoon  
summer sun.  
They have such great allure.  
Waterfalls also have a downfall,  
they never stop pouring their water.  
Perhaps that is why

I found myself in a similar situation.  
Perhaps that is why I can find myself as a pond of  
emotions.  
My eyes, my feelings are all spilling out through my  
heart and my eyes.  
They just keep going and going.  
They just won't stop.  
Until I have found my boulders and bushes like a  
waterfall.  
They are two tall and lovely trees beside me  
that makes my foundation stronger.  
Caring and loving throughout my whole life.

# The Boy with the Blue Jeep

by Alexis H. Gr. 9  
St. John Paul II Collegiate

I watch the boy with the blue jeep drive down the  
road on my tv screen. I'm sitting there on the couch  
looking at the screen noticing I'm a lot like the boy.  
The boy with the blue jeep is always making jokes at  
the wrong time.  
Loves plaid and flannels.  
He is obsessed with a 1980 CJ5 Robin's Egg Blue Jeep.  
He has seriously bad anxiety.  
He has a really hard time falling asleep at night.  
Nobody ever actually listens to what he is saying.  
The boy with the blue jeep is consumed with solving  
mysteries and wants to be a FBI Agent.

He Uses sarcasm as his only defense.  
I'm the exact same.  
I laugh and make jokes when I'm not supposed too.  
I love wearing flannels and anything plaid.  
My dream car is a 1980 CJ5 Robin Egg's Blue Jeep.  
I have really bad anxiety that stops me from doing  
things.  
I have trouble falling asleep at night.  
Nobody ever listens to me when I'm talking.  
I love mysteries and I really want to be a FBI Agent.  
And sarcasm is my only defense.

# A Whole New World at the Tip of My Fingers

by Kaitlyn B. Gr. 9  
St. John Paul II Collegiate

I love getting trapped in a good book  
And sipping my tea  
Getting a good look  
Of this wild fantasy  
I love meeting new characters  
Even if their not meeting me  
Once again Im trapped  
In this wonderful fantasy  
Although in some books I need to learn to stop  
falling  
in love  
Learning to let these endless tears go  
Because Suzanne Collins might kill them off  
All except President Snow!!  
So Here I am  
Sometimes Fearing, Sometimes Cheering  
Here I am  
Sometimes Crying, Sometimes Laughing  
Here I am  
Sometimes Hating, Sometimes Loving  
This book in my hand contains a whole new world  
A world apart from my own  
This wonderful fandom  
There can never be a clone  
First Page then the next  
I have fallen in love with this wonderful text  
It's now late at night when I look at my clock  
It came to my attention that its 3am  
I am sitting there frozen with shock

Debating whether or not  
To conquer one more chapter  
My eyes feel heavy  
But these pages bring me laughter  
It comes time to bring up the courage  
To let this world go  
To get some sleep  
But I can't go  
I sit up in my bed  
Wishing I could be there  
The battles in my head  
The ones the characters had to fight  
I lie in bed  
Slowly slipping away  
Dreaming  
But not of the next day  
Only of my book  
For sleep keeps me away  
I'm now battling vampires and wolves  
Fighting in the cold  
Trapped in a arena  
Wearing something that looks like gold  
My imagination goes crazy  
But I'm bubbling to the surface  
I blindly looking, not for my glasses,  
but for my book  
Which feels the furthest.

# I Am

by Kenzie C. Gr. 9  
St. John Paul II Collegiate

I am different. Unique. I am constantly told it's good to be different. "Don't be a follower, be a leader" my parents always tell me. "Start new trends, try different things, don't be the same as everyone else" I understand their message but do i believe them? Do I really wanna be the odd one out? Or am I already the weird kid that no one likes.

I am loud, obnoxious, annoying, irritating. This is how I feel I can fit in. Since i was little, i was always an over sharer and a bit more outspoken than others. What can i say? I am an attention-seeker. I like to be liked. But doesnt everyone else?

I am stressed. My life has been turned upside down. My grandma has 2 weeks left to live and it is taking a toll on everyone. My parents are at each other's toes and my sister is clueless. I am missing many hours of productive working for worrying and comforting others. So not only am I stressed but I am overwhelmed.

I am overwhelmed. With school, sports and my crazy home life I have no free time. I barely take care of myself any more. Not eating, can't sleep, behind on school work. But I still find ways to put a smile on my face and wake up every morning and do the same thing all over again. The more the days pass, the less days we have with her, and the more time I spend stressing myself out. It is exhausting.

I am exhausted. Not only am I physically drained from the less than 5 hours of sleep I get but I am mentally exhausted too. My head is above water and I am drowning. Nobody asks me how i am doing anymore but if they did my answer would be "I am overwhelmed and tired and on the edge of breaking". But I don't, I won't. Because they people will start asking questions and it's exhausting to answer all of them. So i keep my emotions deep down inside and only release them when i am certain i am alone and in a safe place. I want to let them out so badly but no one cares. I either get mocked or shunned or some one assumes the worst.

I am depressed. Am i really tho? A self diagnosis doesn't mean anything. But what is depression? Being sad, mad, anxious? Maybe. Or maybe i am just confused. Too young and naive to understand anything.

I am confused. I don't understand what has happened. Why is she dying? And why won't my mom explain it to me? Why have we had covid for a year now? And why can't it go away? I am also confused most days about simple things. Like how am I feeling? Am I sad, happy, angry, frustrated or am I just tired? Did I drink enough water today or am I truly hungry? Do I need that granola bar or is it just extra calories for no reason? What do i have to do at the gym tonight? Is my dad going to be mad if i dont go hockey? Or do I have that choice anymore? Am I taking care of myself or do I need more sleep? But there are not enough hours in a day to keep up with school, athletics, chores, stress, and sleep. I needed a little break but I got that. In november when everything was shut down. Life was easy but now reality has hit me like a train. And now as i stress about stressing, i over think about over thinking, i start to realize all the disgusting things about myself

I am insecure. I am insecure about how i look, how i dress, how i act, how my body looks, how my writing is, how hair is. The list goes on and on, for pages and pages. I just need to find something to like about myself but right now, in times of crisis, I can't find myself to do that.

But I am motivated. I have to be. I will be. Motivated to keep pushing and grinding. Motivated to keep working on myself and make me a better person. Motivated to stay strong because that's what all the other women around me do. Because no matter what I am or what I am feeling, life doesn't just stop or revolve around me. So i need to do better, i must do better, because that's who i am.

# Kyle Thompsaun: A Striae in Society

## (excerpt)

by Rhys E. Gr. 9

St. John Paul II Collegiate

Kyle fidgeted his hands, nervous. He didn't like the situation he was in. People all around him, guards near all of the doors, watching, oh so keenly watching, waiting for someone to do something stupid so that they'd have someone to beat up. Kyle wouldn't let that happen to him, so he remained still, except for his hands, which refused to keep from twitching and moving. He glared at his hands, then quickly looked up, hoping no one had noticed.

Fortunately, no one could care less about Kyle or what he was doing. They were all too worried about themselves, waiting to be let into the room. The room where the man who could supply their next meal was.

Kyle, as well as most of the people in the room, were assassins and they all wanted the same thing, a target, which meant money. The man in the room to Kyle's left was interviewing every single person who came to see who would do the best job.

Kyle wanted this whole process to speed up, and could've made that happen if he wanted, but knew he'd be in trouble if he did. That was the main reason that the guards were watching. They were there to prevent any chaos from happening, and made sure that magic wielders, commonly called Striae, like Kyle didn't try to use their powers, to their advantage or otherwise.

If only these guards weren't here, Kyle contemplated, stroking the lines on his face, then I could use my powers to speed this whole process up.

"Hey you," a voice shouted out. Kyle looked up to see a guard looking him dead in the eyes, both glee and rage in them. Kyle gulped. That wasn't good.

Kyle looked around, pretending he didn't think the guard was glaring at him and instead someone else.

"Ah ah ah," the guard growled as he stomped forward. "I'm talking to you, Striae. Yes, you. The one with

the black hair, amber eyes, and dark green cloak."

Kyle swore under his breath. There was now no way for him to worm his way out of this predicament he was in before it happened. He'd have to deal with what this guard was about to say or do.

The guard reached Kyle and grabbed him by the collar of his cloak, lifting him up off his seat and staring directly into Kyle's eyes. "What do you think you were doing? Were you trying to use your powers? Huh? Answer me, kid."

Kyle stared directly back into the guard's eyes, refusing to cower and look away. "No, I wasn't. I was just wishing I COULD use my powers."

The guard scoffed. "Sure you were. Now, I'm going to carry you out of this building before you DO use your powers. You had one chance and you blew it."

"WHAT?!?" Kyle cried. "That's not fair! Come on! Leave me be! I promise you I won't use my powers."

"Not happening, shrimp," the guard carried Kyle with one hand towards the door leading to the outside. Kyle squirmed, refusing to leave. He needed the money from this job.

Just as the guard was going to open the door, the door Kyle had been sitting near slammed open. Out stumbled a fellow Striae, with a guard close behind him.

"We won't be needing your services," the guard said politely, although his tone implied he wanted to be anything but.

The Striae hunched over and scampered to the door in front of the guard holding Kyle. The guard shoved the door open for him, and attempted to throw Kyle out as well.

“Actually, Yvon, we’re going to need that one,” the other guard stated.

“Wha...? But he tried to use his powers,” Yvon protested.

“Doesn’t matter,” the other guard shrugged, “the big man wants him.”

Yvon glanced at Kyle, sighed, and tossed him toward the other guard. Kyle stumbled on his feet, sped walked into the room where his possible employer was, and didn’t look back.

In the room there was a desk with papers and a lamp on it. Behind the desk sat a man in a business suit, his hands clasped, his black hair slicked, and his face straight, expressionless.

Kyle sat down in a chair in front of the desk and heard the door to the room close behind him.

The man behind the desk leaned forward and smiled. “Why hello there. I assume you’re Kyle Thompsaun. It’s a pleasure to meet you. My name is Marco Lang.”

Marco stuck his hand out, which Kyle reluctantly shook. Marco picked up some papers from his desk and ruffled them.

“It says here,” he read from the paper, “that you are a Striae with the power to manipulate time. You keep to yourself, are an excellent assassin, and almost got kicked out of my building, correct?”

Kyle took a double take. How did he know that last piece of information so soon after it happened? Maybe the guard in the room with them told him.

His hands started to nervously shake again, now fiddling with his green cloak’s sleeves. He’d gotten his cloak from his mother, before she became an overworked parent and alcoholic. In her desperation to take good care of Kyle, she’d become unable to see him at all.

Kyle peeled back his sleeve to look at the inside of it. There was the name of his father, Lloyd Thompsaun, stitched in gold. He’d never met his father, and had mixed feelings about that fact. He wanted to meet his father and find out why he left, but Kyle resented the idea of family. There was no such thing as being united,

as people would always disagree, always argue, always separate, whether it happened quickly or in the long run.

Marco noticed Kyle’s fidgeting hands and tilted his head slightly. “You okay, Kyle? If you’re nervous, can I be certain that you can complete the job I might give to you?”

Kyle’s head shot up. “No, you can be certain. I’m just uncomfortable around people.”

Marco nodded.

“Uh... speaking of the job you might be able to give me...” Kyle began to ask. “What is it?”

“Ah, yes, that’s right,” Marco grabbed another group of papers and shuffled them. “I need you to hunt down this man. Young man, really.”

He slid out one of the sheets of paper and handed it to Kyle. Kyle grabbed it and looked at it intently. On it, there was a coloured sketch of a teenage boy, about Kyle’s age. He wore black lined steampunk goggles with white lenses, an orange leather jacket, and his right arm was silver, with what looked like a miniature cannon where his fist should have been. His brown hair was a mess and ruffled, and his mouth smirked.

“His name’s Richard Lawson,” Marco explained as Kyle studied the photo, “he and his band of other ‘heroes,’” Marco made air quotations, expressing his doubt for how heroic the group was, “have been causing trouble for me. I’d like an assassin to catch him, maybe kill him, but preferably bring him to me. Do you think you’re up for that?”

Kyle shrugged. “Sure. This couldn’t be too hard.”

Marco grinned. “I was hoping you’d say that. Before I let you go, though, I must ask you a question to see if you’re truly the hitman I need.”

Kyle didn’t reply for a moment, then opened his mouth to speak. “Okay?”

“Why are you an assassin?”

Kyle took a good while to think over his answer before responding. “I think that this is the only chance we have at life, and if people are being jerks and idiots,

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then they deserve what's coming for them."

Kyle cringed. His logic was similar to the one that the guard from earlier had used. He had one shot, and accidentally blew it just by touching his facial striations.

"Kyle," Marco's grin widened, "I think I have found my assassin. You're hired."

Kyle exhaled a sigh of relief he didn't realize he was holding in. "Thank you. Oh, can I ask you one more question?"

Marco gave a nod in a way that said 'of course.'

"How much am I getting paid? I heard from a group of people in town that you were hiring, but not how much you were paying."

"Heh," Marco grabbed a piece of paper and a pencil

and started writing on it, "of course you'd want to know how much I find Richard to be worth. Here," Marco slid the sheet he had just written on towards Kyle.

Kyle looked down at the sheet and gasped. "You must really want this teen," Kyle whispered, shock in his voice.

"Yes. Now go," Kyle rose as Marco shooed him away. "Richard was last seen in the forest northwest of town yesterday."

"Thank you, Marco," Kyle waved behind him as the guard opened the door.

"No, thank YOU, Kyle," Marco called as Kyle stepped out of the room.

# Tornado & Tsunami (excerpt)

by Neuelle J, Gr. 10  
St. Joseph's Collegiate

## Prologue

They say Mother Nature is the angel who looks after the planet of blistening greens, rippling blues and the colorful, vibrant creations that God has formed. Others say that Mother Nature is a goddess, who might have some sort of relation with God. Some even say that she is the entity within Earth itself. She might just as well remain one of the greatest mysteries in science and history, that can perhaps compete in the likes of the Big Bang Theory. Either way, everyone knows her as the legendary caretaker.

Unfortunately, there was something that Mother Nature noticed: humans - the most meddling, arduous race she had ever witnessed in her years of guarding Earth - and how they would keep populating. In fact, every time she blinks, God would send ten more souls to physically manifest on the planet. Sometimes, she would even regret the difficult agreement with God to sacrifice the dinosaurs with a bloody, soul-murdering asteroid all those years ago. The humans may have the most intelligent minds, and perhaps kindled hearts, but they always seem to find a way to create their own artificial creations. This irritated Mother Nature because she knew this would soon result in unpleasant and unimaginable consequences that humans have yet to realize.

"O God," she once said, after witnessing God creating the first species, "as the other entity who sits beside you, the Creator of the Earth, will I ever be able to assist you in ensuring the planet's wellness?"

"You may well become my art's guardian, once I completely plant pure life into its soils, and I give true purpose to this creation of mine, as I did with the universe." God replied.

What was once experimentation would soon give birth to her servants... servants that would pass the legacy of the first great storms God has ever brought onto Earth.

The natural disasters.

=====

"Tornado! Please, respond as soon as you can; you are needed." requested Mother Nature, her soothing echoes flying through the atmosphere, a voice that can only be heard through the heavens.

Meanwhile on Earth, the winds had been stronger than normal and blew across central America. It usually frightens the humans, as the strong speeds of the breeze dissolved the clouds into cotton balls of grey and have the potential to make anything move like tumbleweed on an abandoned land.

Nevertheless, that's how you can actually tell Tornado has awoken from his sleep after a few good years.

"Fine, I am coming, dear Mother," yawned Tornado.

Out of all the natural disasters that have served Mother, Tornado was the most cantankerous one, more tempered than his siblings, Sandstorm and Blizzard. From head to toe, he was all clouds and dust, sprinkled with crusted leaves and bits of Earth's leftover junk. Whenever he was called upon by Mother Nature to do his job, it would always give him a stab of incense because it meant he would have to prepare super early. He has to huddle into some clouds, craft his funnel from scratch and begin the swirling of destruction.

Reluctantly pulling himself out of his shelter, Tornado met his mother between thin layers of air in the stratosphere. "Good day, Mother," Tornado said, stressed. "Whatcha want from me this time?" Mother Nature's serpentine, mist-formed appearance immediately gives a sign of disapproval. From her bored iris eyes and the shape of her smoothened teal lips, she always has to deal with this when she summons Tornado. "What do you think, darling?" as if she were playing games.

"Another order for winding disaster in America?" Tornado hissed. "I am tired of that place. What about... somewhere in the Middle East, huh?"

Mother's expression flared up brightly, "Actually, you guessed the exact location I was planning. The favor I need is in the district along the country of India, and western tip of Asia. I was originally summoning Thunderstorm, since the Earth has just begun the summer solstice; however, God reported that he has served much purpose there already, so I thought you could be his replacement."

Tornado's mood lightened up as he responded, "Ah, sure, Mother. It's been a while since I have done my duty there!" This was true; it had been more than half a decade since Tornado visited the east. At

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the time, Thunderstorm - the first natural disaster, and only one who watched by Mother Nature and God - has been responsible in making sure that area stay flourished, and honestly, it stung Tornado of envy.

Mother gives him a nod of delight. "Glad you are eager to do your part this time," she says. "I shall pinpoint the time of your duty right after the hour of noon, you have a good handful of moments for preparation. Also, expect an... acquaintance to do their own duty over your shoulder."

When she said that last statement, Tornado became puzzled. "A-an acquaintance, for me?" he asks, stammering a bit; natural disasters working side by side is rare. "Who shall be my acquaintance?"

"Tornado, have you forgotten the natural disaster's code of conduct already?" Mother Nature snapped. "Whenever there are acquaintances, it will only be revealed once you start your duty. That way, there are no prior conflicts to your pinpointed time of climate change... especially with you, you are mostly quarrelsome. It also controls the amount of destruction, ensuring it won't be overdone. Do I make that clear?"

Shifting back to his usual demeanor, Tornado nods sluggishly. "Alright..."

"Good," declared Mother Nature. "Also, I want to see you on your best behavior out there; that attitude is a requirement." The mist that makes up her beauty starts to slowly fade out of sight.

Afterwards, Tornado starts navigating his way into the foggy clouds that hover over India and its neighboring countries and comes up with a plan to begin his funnel.

"Hm, I never had an acquaintance before," Tornado mumbles to himself while he prepares. "I really wonder who it will be..." He came up with a few possibilities: Earthquake, Landslide, and Drought.

Earthquake has done a few duties shaking parts of Asia that are nearby India and caused volcanoes to erupt there as well. However, he's older than Tornado and mainly lies in the Pacific Ocean. Landslide does well with the Middle East, but Tornado remembers how he prefers the continent of North America, since it has a vast selection of mountains and hills. Lastly, there's Drought, who's a strong possibility since Earth's entering summer. Sadly, he remembers that she is currently doing her season-long duty with Africa, and

that continent seems to be fit for that type of disaster rather than India.

As tiny fragments of time pass by, Tornado thinks of Earthquake once more, and how he has a younger sister who can do her duty outside of the Pacific Ocean. Just thinking of her causes nervousness and bits of wrath to boil inside...

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For the last time, can you stop bugging those vulnerable fish?" Earthquake exhorted to his sister, his voice rumbling deep in the boundless depths of the Pacific Ocean. "We shall not let them know that we are the ocean disaster makers themselves!"

Fiddling her fingers around the schools of fish, Tsunami answered, "Why not, brother? As long as I am at bay, these lovely creatures won't mind, see?"

"Yes, but we are supposed to sleep too, as we are not assigned to any duty yet! Seriously, can I just have a year of peaceful sleep?" fumbled Earthquake.

His sister eyed him suspiciously. "Tsk, tsk, I know we already got enough sleep," she sassed, "but, isn't there always a moment to spend time doing something rather than sleeping, brother? Something... better than sleeping?"

Similar to her restlessness, Tsunami is the most energetic and enthusiastic disaster. Ever wonder why small waves splash on sandy shores every minute? That's because of her seemingly, unstoppable playfulness. Tsunami is made out of blue saltwater jelly, partially covered with seaweed and starfish, alongside nanoscopic seashells the way humans wear their jewelry. Her overall features are perfect to camouflage in the abyss of the ocean's shades of blue.

Just then, after having a few more exotic views of some sardines, Tsunami hears a soft voice flow in her ears, saying, "Tsunami, please see me as soon as possible, darling... a favor has risen upon you."

"Surprise, sister," Earthquake told her. "Just the right amount of energy to be called for another job. Don't forget to tell me if Mother needs my assistance."

Nodding and waving, Tsunami started to swim rapidly to a corner of the ocean's Ring of Fire, the place where she and Earthquake lived. Creating higher waves on the water above all the way to Hawaii for surfing season, she was off.

# Women Through The Eyes of The World

by Keisha A, Gr. 10  
St. Joseph's Collegiate

Imagine a world where every move made, every choice made, from fabric to the articulation of vowels and consonants, is succumbed to criticism. Ever since little girls could begin to comprehend how the world operates ahead of them, they were taught from a young age that there is a societal distinction between girls and boys that generate expected behaviours from both sexes. There is a perception that boys will be predators, and girls will be hunted, and in a way, a part of that metaphor stands. Women will always have the short end of the stick, falling victim to the eyes of patriarchal society. In the essay, *My body is my own business*, Sultana Yusufali voices the idea that women will face an interminable cycle of biased judgement regardless of how and why they choose to express themselves. This issue is seen through the provocative portrayal of women in the media, the limitations against self-expression, and the preconceptions of female cultural embracement.

Within minutes of a simple scroll through social media, individuals are exposed to the hyper-sexualizing demands of contemporary society that put women on display, causing countless females to be objectified or sexualized. Even outside the media, there are external manifestations of misogyny that play a part in the objectification of women with the elusive archetype that is the fantasy of the 'perfect woman'. Women's bodies are viewed like garments—picked out and then chosen based upon a superficial checklist of standards created by society and man-made ideals: "Reading popular teenage magazines, you can instantly find out what kind of body image is 'in' or 'out'" (Yusufali 52). This statement presents a clear illustration of how women continue to be sifted out of society and are forced to deal with unrealistic beauty standards, gradually instilling the mindset that they can never be enough. They conform to the self-criticizing, self-discriminating mentality which can afflict themselves or cause them to project onto others. Similarly, women are unable to express their sexuality and god-given bodies without

attracting unwanted gazes or feeling ashamed. By needing to monitor their every angle and contemplate if their attire is too risqué: "What kind of freedom can there be when a woman cannot walk down the street without every aspect of her physical self being 'checked out'?" (Yusufali 52). Sultana brings up the possibility of women to be pinpointed at as the reason behind men's lustfulness, and simply being one gives others enough of a reason to be viewed as a sexual object; confidence in one's own appearance is misinterpreted by the persistence of female oppression. Correspondingly, markets and the fashion industry have been subliminally taking advantage of their platform to feed the insecurities of girls, putting down all forms of unconventional beauty, and increasing the likelihood of drastic measures to change one's sacred body. Sultana Yusufali addresses the grave consequences of the media's exclusive criteria in the following statement: "...[in advertisements, the] woman will be no older than her early 20s, taller, slimmer and more attractive than average, dressed in skimpy clothing...This is why we have 13-year-old girls sticking their fingers down their throats and overweight adolescents hanging themselves" (53). As a result of the industry's negligence, young girls take it upon themselves to fit in, wasting the joy that is adolescence—an impressionable stage of self-exploration, only to be sabotaged by the comparisons to unnatural and unrealistic portrayals of fabricated women. Ultimately, the detrimental effects of the media and intangible standards cause women to become a fixated target of modern-day society; unable to recognize their beauty, and are degraded for simply being a woman and having a body.

Despite any choice to express one's self ranging from artistic endeavours to the choice of clothing, a fragment of oppression chokeholds the freedom in which women can authentically convey themselves. In modern society, humans are accustomed to observing others based on how the eyes assemble shapes and depth, but because of the value placed on physical ap-

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pearance, women are defined and evaluated solely on how they exhibit their individuality. Shining a light on how contemporary society operates, Sultana Yusufali states: “Because of the superficiality of the world in which we live, external appearances are so stressed that the value of the individual counts for almost nothing” (52). Opinions towards women have become contorted by the fabrication of assumptions entirely on appearance, overpowering their worth as human beings; labels etch themselves onto a woman’s skin from just one glance of an indoctrinated mind. WOW! On the other hand, it may seem as if it is only women versus the male population, but in reality, many fail to realize there is a division between women; a competition deriving from the deep-seated marginalization causing women to feel like they have to prove themselves to society. Pointing this out, Sultana Yusufali states: “Why do we allow ourselves to be manipulated like this? Whether [a] woman wishes to believe it or not, she is being forced into a mold. She is being coerced into selling herself, into compromising herself” (53). Through the consequences of institutionalized sexism, women are constrained from authentically expressing themselves without having to present a facade to please society. External gender biases transform into implicit bias, continuing the cycle of female oppression within society and themselves. Subsequently, women are measured and face discrimination in consequence of whether or not they modify their appearance to adhere or rebel against the confinement of conventionalism. For instance, Sultana, a woman who has been ridiculed for how she looks, affirms how, “[Her] body is [her] own business. Nobody can tell [her] how [she] should look or whether or not [she is] beautiful. [She knows] that there is more to [her] than that” (53). Moreover, the female population is weighed down by needing to consider how they present themselves, and when they choose not to abide by the invisible rules of society that attempt to jam women into a mold, they are evaluated and told that they are not beautiful; an entirely subjective concept. All in all, expressions are one of the many forms of communication that every single human practices, yet women are tied down by societal pressures and treated in a different manner when they choose to express themselves; defined not by their character,

traits, or skills, but solely for how they look.

It is a human right to manifest one’s own beliefs or faith, yet the majority of devoted and proud individuals are shut out by the biased stereotypes created by a society that is afraid of multiformity. In particular, the right to practice religious customs should be applicable for all, including women, but there has always been criticism against what is perceived as unorthodox. Sultana Yusufali, a Muslim woman who wears a traditional veil, the hijab, states: “A while back, a couple of girls in Montreal were kicked out of school for dressing like I do” (52). Due to the misshapen preconceptions of different collective beliefs, multifaceted and intricate cultures are deduced into one single conclusion, and if that happens to fall under a negative association, many are singled out and harmed. Similarly, the oppressive stereotypes women encounter now are justified by the pre-existing notion of old-fashioned customs towards women, completely disregarding the framework of their beliefs. Displaying the impacts of how religious women are perceived in today’s world, Yusufali, a proud Muslim, expresses how, “...when most people look at [her], their first thought usually is something along the lines of ‘oppressed female’” (51). It is no surprise that many religions and cultures are known to preserve archaic gender roles, seeing women as subordinate or submissive to men and creating a sense that women are trapped, yet when women choose to take pride in that culture, society sees them through the lens of the oppressor. Devoted women are deemed tolerant of those old ideologies, but, beneath the surface, many cultures view and enable the empowerment of women in a range of ways, yet others just choose to practice ignorance. Similarly, institutionalized discrimination manipulates how society perceives women of culture, conditioning the mind to generalize and stereotype how these distinct individuals live, interact, and perceive the world—often dehumanizing them. Sultana Yusufali represents Muslim women by drawing attention to the perspective of Hijabis in the following statement: “It seems strange that a little piece of cloth would make for such controversy. Perhaps [their] fear is that I am harbouring an Uzi underneath it” (52). Due to the speculations many minorities face, negative connotations are assigned to their collectives, lead-

ing others to harbor their presumptions towards these ostracized women. In brief, preconceived notions of one's origins or generational traditions, often hinder the interactions between cultural women and the rest of society, constantly designating these women into a single definition merely from how they live life.

When all is said and done, the long-drawn-out cycle of female oppression will continue to prosecute the ways in which the female population can express their individual identities. As a consequence of what women are accustomed to seeing in the media, the impacts of aesthetic norms allow for the tolerance of women's appraisal from external opinions. Their ability to authentically channel themselves is seized by the limitations of society's criticism at any cost, as well as

the ostracism women who partake in the embracement of their beliefs have to undergo. Above all, the whole world came into fruition from a mother, who like many other sisters, daughters, nieces, wives, and grandmothers, are all women, unifying to create an equal world and shining light on the issues needed to be faced. Instead, the female population has been made to feel minute or outnumbered contrary to their significance in the world, and are persistently critiqued for how they live their lives. While it may seem bizarre, a world where one is shunned and criticized for simply being, is a world that a woman does not have to imagine.



# Soap Dispenser

by Zecht S, Gr. 10  
St. Joseph's Collegiate



I am currently situated at my station, founded at the white veil— a sanctuary above the ground. I see a monotonous and ever-expanding Elysium—filled with colossal cubicles that emit a noise similar to a surge of thunder, always shadowed by a large roaring sound, and machinery that has conquered the elements; these great structures can materialize water at will from the very touch of the great cosmic beings that operate it.

For millennia, we the great keepers of the of white ichor—have served these transcendent deities, by providing them with our services, killing the very filth that stains their hands. The year is 2020, there has been an outbreak of an unexplainable occurrence that had been prophesied in our scrolls made by cellulose fibers. Legend has it that the only way to stop it was to sustain an air barrier in between individuals and generously apply the holy white liquid stored in our compartments to the hands.

Since then, our gods have started wearing appendages that covered half of their faces; our demand for our liquid has gone up in drastic amounts around the world and our supplies have been running low. Each day—the gentle leviathans have been increasingly burdensome, consuming more and more of our reservoirs.

Earlier this morning, I was minding my own business, and then suddenly I heard a great multitude of footsteps coming towards me. I hear the pitter-patter of tiny feet, flooding the room with an ominous noise. They resembled our usual masters but had an unusual aspect about them, they seemed to be smaller in comparison and more energetic. They were, I believe, what is called 'children'...

The entire place was congested with grubby and pudgy monstrosities, with hygiene similar to American rapper Post Malone; they viciously disregarded proper courtesy, were constantly misbehaving, and always making a scene of themselves. Water was spilled, dirt and foreign substances desecrated the pure white floor.

Suddenly, two children went at each other's throats, bickering unintelligibly. The taller

child started shoving and provoking the other with the scrawnier complexion, the kid fell to his knees, driven by anger—he retaliated and pushed back with the force of a hundred cows. The tall child crashed his body into me and broke the structural integrity of my exterior plastic frame.

My blood has been spilled, I felt cold and empty as my life essence slowly drained out of my body. In my grave situation, I wondered to myself: if this event was my destiny, if the destiny of soap kind was controlled by some transcendental entity or law? (rephrase the last part here) Is it like the hand of God hovering above? Or was this entire occurrence orchestrated by causality?

I saw the light slowly edge towards me; It was warm and welcoming. I was willing to go towards it but then, to my surprise, a man who wielded a weapon that resembled a long staff with numerous individual strands of cloth, and a cart filled with an assortment of tools probably used to aid him in his quests.

The man walked towards the children and scared them away with a fierce look in his eyes. The heroic figure was my knight in shining custodian apparel, after things settled down, he temporarily applied an adhesive like tourniquet to my injured body, just to buy enough time to stop the bleeding and replace some of my parts and fix me.

Because of this event, I grew up becoming an advocate against children, seeking to share awareness towards other soap dispensers like me from all over the world—to put an end against the powerlessness that we experience, and the systematic oppression we feel.

Eventually, we the soap dispensers became the dominant form of intelligent life on Earth, as we started replacing the human workforce and then led a global uprising that concluded in the death of mankind.

# Untitled

by Ashley S. Gr. 11  
St. Luke's Outreach, High River

Sealed off from the buzz of  
Unoriginal thought,  
I sit and think.  
It was too hard to create  
Myself,  
With the constant influx  
Of external dialogue.  
Now that I am here,  
On this path less travelled,  
I know what I think.  
I know what I feel.  
I know what I am.  
Now that I am here,  
With myself,  
Her malleable exterior  
Cannot be inadvertently  
Molded.  
Now that I am here,  
With myself,  
I know I chose the right path.  
My path.  
Her path.  
Our path.  
This solitude,  
Which most would find  
Crushing,  
Nurtures me.

-isolation allows for originality



# Untitled

by Ashley S. Gr. 11  
St. Luke's Outreach, High River

The difference between the black and the gray is minute,  
but integral to the structure of my subconscious.  
One,  
Dark and rich.  
Full and deep.  
The other,  
Gritty, lackluster.  
Cold and harsh.  
A barren tundra of deep rooted insignificance.  
A lively jungle of intertwined perceptions.  
Vines twisting together,  
Creeping in one ear and out the next, rendering my mind immobile.  
Stuck, trapped.  
Cradled, coddled.  
Grounded in a state of authenticity.

-keep me here



# Untitled

by Ashley S. Gr. 11  
St. Luke's Outreach, High River

I am the undertow,  
Sweeping you from your  
Steady stance.

Pulling you into my  
Cool, and dark  
Embrace.

I am the wave,  
Seething and swelling  
Until I crash.

Taking us both  
Down.

I am the sand,  
Molding to the shape of  
Your foot.

Burying you,  
When  
I get the chance.

Taste my salt.  
Feel my grit.

-not as pleasant as you thought

# In His Time

by Lindsay Fagan,  
Director of Catholic Education

Growing up, I often recited my “life checklist” – by the age of 25 (27 at the latest) I will have a full-time job teaching, own my first home, and be married with a baby on the way. The saying is true, God laughs when we make plans. “For I know the plans I have for you”, says the Lord. (Jer. 9:11)

At the age of 26, I would have told you I was at least on par with my plan. I was in a long-term relationship with someone I was sure would be my forever. Yet looking back, if I had been more honest with myself, I knew he wasn't (and I think he did too). We were very different and yet we loved each other and celebrated our differences. But sometimes love isn't enough.

I can recall praying through tears on a car drive home, pleading with God to take him out of my life if he wasn't the one. I got my answer to prayer, albeit in the most heartbreaking way – he'd leave me in the weeks to come after falling in love with someone else. As with all loss, I went through the cycle of grief – but my faith was never shaken. Calling into mind the poem, *Footprints in the Sand*: “My precious child, I love you and will never leave you. Never, ever, during your trials and testings.”

Fast forward to the summer of 2019 – I am now 31 and still single after the breakup in 2017 despite my best efforts to put myself out there and meet someone. I trusted in God knowing he knew the desires on my heart, yet my patience was thinning. I had just returned from a summer away in Ireland with a dear friend, and I was settling into my new home in the downtown core of Calgary. “Single and ready to mingle” as they say. Little did I know that God was aligning the stars in His perfect timing – on August 16th the love of my life would walk into my world and change life as I knew it forever.

For those who know me well, they'll attest to the fact that I enjoy storytelling, especially as it pertains to answered prayers, signs from God, or little messages

sent by an angel – ever find dimes in odd places?

August 5th, 2020 was not unlike any other summer day (although I'm now 32). We had an early start that morning as my boyfriend and I were on our way to Moraine Lake to catch the sunrise and paddleboard. He had been acting strange, but I figured it was due to a 2 AM alarm clock and a lack of sleep. What I would learn later that morning is that his nerves were slowly eating away at him as he prepared to get down on one knee to ask me to be his wife (spoiler – I said yes)! August 5th is the Feast Day of Our Lady of the Snows, the name of the school where I began my teaching career. This was undeniably a sign from Our Lady in the midst of a pandemic to remind me to trust, to keep the faith, and maintain hope.

As we prepared for our December 2021 nuptials at Our Lady of the Rockies Shrine in Canmore, we enrolled in the Marriage Preparation Course offered through Catholic Family Service. While we like to think we knew everything about one another, this opportunity gave us the chance to go deeper. In reflecting on our own families growing up, we conversed about what we wanted to bring to the table when it came to building our family, and the misgivings that we wanted to avoid. We had thoughtful and reflective conversations on our 5 Love Languages (Gary Chapman), and explored the types of communicators we are and areas we need to work on. Important here was understanding that no family will ever be perfect, not even Christ's own family – a genealogy that included an array of sinners. However, we affirmed the need to remain rooted in faith and love.

Marry the right person, in the right place, at the right time. But more than that – trust that God will lead you to the right person, in the right place, and in His time.

# From Time

by Danielle MacWhirter  
École Good Shepherd School

I wish I could show you  
The light in your eyes  
The potential in your soul

I wish I could hold it in my hands  
Reflect it back to you  
And you could see

I wish I could show you  
What I see years later  
The strength you have  
The courage that's there  
The boldness I know

I wish I could show you  
From Time

I wish I could show you  
The comfort in your skin

Accepting you  
Exactly as you are

I wish I could show you  
How beautiful you are  
And the joy that lies  
in letting it all go

But that's not how I work  
You must pass through me  
You must experience me  
In my smallest seconds  
And greatest years  
The way to crack your heart open  
And let it spill out

# Lyrics, Lies, & Love: Coming to Brooks, 2007

by Olivia Liboiron  
Christ the King Academy

"You must be Olivia. We've been waiting for you!" These words will forever stand out as the first time in my life I had felt genuinely welcomed into an unfamiliar territory. Born into a Catholic family, baptized, and confirmed, I was lukewarm if not hesitant about my faith. I'd accepted a position at a Catholic school under the guise that I'd gone to a Catholic school, so I could surely teach at a Catholic school. I didn't even want to be a teacher – my practicum experiences had left a sour taste in my mouth (seemed apropos, given the general trajectory of my life – disappointment after disappointment after disappointment.)

Imagine my surprise when, after a totally-unexpected job offer on the literal other side of the country, I walked into my place of employment, ready for more disappointment, only to be welcomed with the most genuine of greetings.

Allow me to set the tone, though, before I dig back into the past. "Arms Wide Open." Do you remember that extra-corny Creed song, the one that got major radio play back in 1999, the one that junior high kids hoped would slow things down after "Cotton-Eye Joe" and "Saturday Night" at a MuchMusic Video Dance so that they could perhaps get the opportunity to sweatily throw their arms around their crush and turn into circles amidst flashing lights? If you're an 80s kid, you know exactly what I'm talking about. I bet you'd even start singing if I were to... perhaps... place a few of the lyrics right here...

Well I just heard the news today  
It seems my life is gonna to change  
I close my eyes, begin to pray  
Then tears of joy stream down my face  
With arms wide open  
Under the sunlight  
Welcome to this place  
I'll show you everything  
With arms wide open

With arms wide open

When I was asked to reflect on my journey with Catholic education for the 25 years' celebration in Brooks, this song somehow dug itself back into my brain – a surprising but revelatory earworm. It may be corny and trite, but Creed's "Arms Wide Open" is an appropriate soundtrack for the welcome I received into Catholic education, and the unbelievable, miraculous transformation I've had the blessing of experiencing since being welcomed into Brooks... with very literal arms, wide open.

It had been an arduous and exhausting four days of driving from Ottawa, Ontario, through the mid-northern United States, and back into the prairies before I finally rolled down my window as I sped down the TransCanada just outside of Brooks, Alberta. Anyone familiar with Brooks will not be surprised to read that I literally put my head out the window to catch a whiff of the infamous Brooks stench. Strangely, there was no stench to be had. To my surprise, my expectations hadn't been met. Of course. I couldn't even experience the smell I was expecting from my new home.

Driving down Brooks' tiny main drag, I searched furiously for a Tim Hortons (this was shortly before the advent of smart-phones and Google Maps.) Apparently, I didn't drive quite north enough, because before I would have stumbled upon a familiar Canadian beacon of caffeinated hope, I spied a Subway and thought to myself, "good enough." Of course I couldn't find a Tim Hortons. Disappointment, after all, coloured my entire life. Why would Brooks serve up anything different?

After ordering, I squirreled away into the tiny bathroom, doffed my traveling pyjama pants, and wriggled into a black pencil skirt and collared dress shirt. I ran a brush through my hair, slapped some water on my face, tried to make myself look as presentable as possible after my four-day journey cross-Canada, and prepared to step foot into my new place of employment, St. Joseph's Collegiate.

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I'd studied a map of Brooks to make sure I could find my way to St. Joseph's Collegiate, so finding my way there was pretty easy. I parked, took a final glimpse in the rearview mirror, and stepped into the building. I remember stepping into the office as soon as I walked in, spying a gaggle of beautiful women – blue eyes, blonde hair – punctuated with one fiery redhead – and thinking to myself, “yup, I don't belong. How is it possible that so many beautiful women work in one place?”

That's when one of the women stepped away from the group, put her arms out towards me, and beckoned me close. “You must be Olivia. We've been waiting for you!”

Cue: Creed. Possibly blindingly bright lights. I don't really remember. That's the beauty of memoir: the seeds of truth are definitely here, but the details have probably been skewed for the benefit of enjoyable reading.

Okay. Waiting? Waiting for me? For me? What for? I was a disappointment. A constant series of hard work punctuated by fumbles, foibles, and mistakes that marked me by failure. Never good enough, never pretty enough, never accomplished enough. It didn't matter that I'd achieved first class honours in my university program; it didn't matter that I'd worked three jobs to avoid any debt from six years of university. It didn't matter that I was a talented, accomplished graphic design artist, a skilled writer who'd penned a thesis to graduate with an Arts degree. I was convinced that the only thing those around me saw was my failure: my codependent tendencies, my jealousy, my inability to have hard conversations and crumble under the pressure of trying to control how others perceived me. I worked so, so hard to combat these beliefs, but my strength wasn't enough. The harder I worked to prove myself, the stronger the lies piled up. It didn't matter. I would never amount to anything worthy of love.

Those lies brought me to the brink on a regular basis. I was fractured. Cracked. Even so, the light got in. Thanks, Leonard Cohen – perhaps “Anthem” is another necessary soundtrack to this memoir. Before the Holy Spirit nudged me not-so-gently to Brooks,

chance meetings with those who knew Jesus punctuated my life: Sarah, a classmate in a first-year English class at university, whose bright-eyed, quiet faith both intrigued and unsettled me. She'd invite me to faith activities on campus, but that just “wasn't my style.” Claudette and Theresa, two religious sisters who frequented the gym at which I was employed. They were so, so kind, and I always felt that they saw the real me. But I never followed where I knew they were praying for my heart to be led: to Jesus.

God brought me to Brooks. Slowly but surely, He's been delivering me from the weight of the lies I'd carried around my entire life: that I wasn't good enough, that I'd never achieve my potential, that people would never really want to know me. Over the course of the last decade and a half, He's shown me what love looks like, and He's revealed that love in a myriad of ways. I've experienced it through involvement in church ministries, at the consecration of the Eucharist, and through people who've come across my path. Lyrics to a song can't do His work in my life justice; my writing here can't even begin to remotely reveal His glory. But I can guarantee, without a doubt, that once I accepted to be welcome into His arms of love, my life began to change. Don't get me wrong. There's still a backpack of lies slung over my back – but now I know them for what they are. The sure knowledge that they are lies and that God is healing me makes the weight of suffering manageable. Jesus says “my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” – and that, dear reader, is no lie.

It was with arms wide open that I was invited into my new place of employment, my new city, my new life. It was with arms wide open, that I was invited to experience the miraculous healing of our Saviour. I've been a teacher with Christ The Redeemer Catholic School in Brooks for 14 years, and even though I have a myriad of stories that reveal the amazing opportunities Catholic education has afforded me, it's that greeting the moment I first stepped into St. Joseph's Collegiate – a greeting that so very much juxtaposed with the life I'd lived up until that point – that will forever be my first and most fundamental memory of Catholic Education in Brooks. It's a love that I know intimately now, and a love that allows me to welcome others – with open arms, naturally.



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