

# SCHOLAR VOICES

Spring 2019



People find it funny that I find comfort in my cat, but to me, he is an unspoken friend. I appreciate his mischievous motives that keep me on my toes. Here I caught him off guard right after he finished a drink of water and was able to make his face the central focus of the photo ...just like the part he plays in my life.

By Kayla T.  
Arts High School, Grade 10

## INTRODUCTION

**Judith Berry Griffin, President, Pathways to College**

Welcome to the 2019 issue of *Scholar Voices*, the literary magazine of Pathways to College.

We are so very pleased to share the creativity of our Scholars. Because their words and images are striking and affecting in so many ways, selecting those to highlight was, as always, a joy as well as a stimulating challenge. This year, for example, Wendy M. (East Side) wrote about decision-making and taking risks, in her poem, "Which Way Should I Go? "

*"I am going to step outside the person I am and take a chance...  
I could go the left when nothing is right or go to the right where  
nothing is left..."*

Alexandra M. (Arts) contributed a rap: "U Got It."

*"No more wishing for stars to fall,  
you got to go and catch them, take them all..."*

*You got it, yeah  
You got it, you know you got it.  
You got it, yeah."*

We know that expressing ideas is not always easy - even if the ideas are important and eagerly communicated. But we continue to say that self-expression of all kinds is well worth the effort! Writers and artists through the centuries have shared their thoughts and passed their ideas and stories on to people they would never meet but to whom they have given invaluable gifts of knowledge, inspiration, insight and enjoyment. All of these gifts came to life in the same way - with an idea and the urge to keep it alive by sharing it with others. *Scholar Voices* is our way to offer the gift of our Scholars' stories and ideas to many others, both within and beyond the Pathways to College family.

And to our Scholars: continue to tell your stories in writing, speaking and in art of all kinds. In whatever form you choose to share them, your ideas are more important than you will ever know.

We are your cheerleaders! Keep sharing!

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## WINNER - POETRY

### *He Always Said "Tomorrow Might Not Come"*

Vashu P., West Side Campus, Grade 11

In the flowing breeze,  
He was like an escalating kite,  
Glided with ease,  
And others, couldn't reach that height,  
He always said "Tomorrow might not come."

Under the flaming sun,  
He was like an awning,  
Protected us from everyone,  
And always had a calm morning,  
He always said "Tomorrow might not come."

In a boundless desert,  
He was like an oasis,  
Gave hope to everybody's heart,  
And put smiles on our faces,  
He always said "Tomorrow might not come."

But deep in the jungle,  
He was like a jackal,  
Smoked and drank, despite being humble,  
And still liked to battle,  
He always said "Tomorrow might not come."

In the seventy-seventh room at the hospital,  
He was like the oldest lion,  
Diagnosed with cancer, but was still invincible,  
And with a smile, his last words before the end of his trial,  
Were "Enjoy your today. Tomorrow might not come."

## WINNER - ESSAY

### *Left My Sister, Came to America*

Daïssa D., Arts High School, Grade 11

I remember the day when I came to America. I was happy and sad. It was March 12, 2012. I remember leaving my oldest sister in Haiti. I tried not to cry. I tried to hold my feelings in but I couldn't. I could see the sadness in her eyes. I wanted her to come with me but she couldn't. I miss her. I miss how she would let me take her money and didn't get mad at me when I did something wrong to her. She would always hug me and say "I love you" with a big smile. When we were leaving she dressed me and put makeup on my face. I was wearing blue jeans with a pink shirt and a jean jacket.

I remembered feeling nervous, happy, and sad. All the emotions you can feel at once. When I arrived to America, everything was different. The language was different, the food was different, and the people were different. I arrived at New York City. I had never seen so many tall buildings. It was night when I arrived to America so all the lights were shining and it looked so beautiful. I'm just turning and looking around and everything just feels different. There were so many people walking and crossing the streets. I was mostly scared about not being able to speak the language. I only knew a few words in English and those words were not really helpful. Then, my family and I went to my aunt's from my grandpa's side and stayed there for a couple of hours. My grandpa drove us to Pennsylvania where we were going to stay with my Aunt Nestlé and her husband Benjamin. When I met my three cousins, they were really nice. My favorite was Evey. It was funny when I tried to speak Creole to them.

The moment that I didn't want to come, came. The moment I was trying to avoid. The moment I've been trying to get out of my mind. My sister called. I was so scared to talk to her. I felt so sad. I felt like crying. I had to hold myself together. I said "Ahlo." She responds with this happy energy and said "koukou kijah ou ye?" which means "how are you?" in English. As I began to speak, I could hear my voice

cracking and fading. I didn't think I was going to be this emotional, but I was. I talked to her and laughed with her on the phone, but I still felt sad.

Right now she is still not with us. I believe one day she will be here, laughing and being a family again. Coming to America has changed my life, my mind, my point of view and plenty more. I am grateful for being able to come to America. Mostly, I thank God for bringing me to this country. Everything happens for a reason. Maybe my sister was left in Haiti because God had greater plans.

## **WINNER - MEMOIR**

### ***Rooms of My Heart***

Samantha S., East Side High School, Grade 11

"Go left, Go right" my soccer trainer told me, but I was so tired I couldn't move anymore. As I was going home after practice, my eyelids started to close. Even though I knew I should stay awake, I closed my eyes for a second. I heard my mother say, "Samantha wake up. We're home." I woke up and went inside to finish my homework. I felt drowsy and my sub-conscience told me to rest and do my homework in the morning. I knew that if I postponed it, I would not wake up in time, so I kept working. Time flew by and I realized it was already midnight. My mouth was letting out yawns and sleep was the only thing on my mind.

I tried to keep my eyes open, but every so often they closed. Soon enough I was sound asleep. When I woke up I felt like I hit my head against the wall, but I was wide awake and was in my room. I saw bloody red strings that look like veins on the walls. And felt a soft rag that felt like my carpet. Every second I heard a loud thump that sounded like thunder. I felt someone touch my shoulder. I turned around and found a familiar older woman. She was very pretty with brown eyes and hair and a pleasant expression.

She said, "Welcome to your Heart, Samantha. I will be your tour guide."

I asked, "My heart?" I was speechless. My mind wasn't processing what I just heard. She kept on speaking. While walking me to my door I realized that it was my old friend Samantha. Upon coming to the first door, my tour guide scanned it open with her thumb. She said, "This is the room of your heart that holds an important family member." As I entered the room I find myself with my Grandma that I love and admire. I see that we are back to when she was in the hospital. It smelled like red roses.

As I remember, I hear my Grandma say something that almost made me cry, even though I didn't want to. She says, "Samantha I want you to promise me that you will always be here for me no matter

what happens" and, of course, I said, "Yes, I will be here for you Grandma." As I am crying from happiness, the memory started to fade away and all I remembered were the times my Grandma made me laugh and smile.

I felt like I was being pushed and I see Samantha. She said, "Through this door you will see a special person that has impacted your life." As she scanned her finger, a bright light shone through the door. I enter and see myself in my sixth grade classroom. My teacher, Ms. País, was helping me write an essay. I see that I was having a hard time when Ms. Pais came to me and helped me with what I was struggling. I overheard Ms. Pais saying, "Samantha if you are having a hard time, you can stay after school so I can help you."

The memory started to fade away and I felt that push that I felt in the first room. I see Samantha again and she directed me to the last room. As I see the bright light again I said, "I am back home." I smell gum and jelly beans that sit on my desk. The cold breeze drifting through the window, welcoming me back. I turned on the bright lamp. As I looked for the door to get something to drink, it was nowhere to be found.

The only thing I saw was a bright light shining on my desk on a paper and pencil. I started to write, but felt sleepy and tired. I felt that drowsiness I felt when I first fell asleep doing my homework. Soon enough I fall asleep. "Samantha, do you know what time is it?" As my Mom was calling me to wake up to go to school, my eyes open slowly, and I found myself drooling on my desk.

As I get ready for school, I think about the dream (or was it a dream?) and I remember all the time I spent with Grandma and seeing my teacher. I thought maybe all this was just to show how each person has impacted my life.

## WINNER - STORY

### *Her Cape*

Hulamatou D., Arts High School, Grade 12

"Hey, hey you."

She stopped in her tracks to make sure she was hearing correctly.

"Yeah you, bighead!"

Now she was certain she was hearing a voice.

A very unfamiliar one.

"Up here."

She looked and found nothing so, she continued to walk.

"It's a bit windy out here today don't you think? You should wrap me a little tighter."

She stopped once again, wondering to herself, "Could it really be?"

The girl reached for the pin that kept it in place and prodded some more until she was certain it wouldn't go anywhere.

"Ouch!" the voice screamed out when the sharp point reached it.

"I should have just kept my mouth shut. I could've been one with the wind like the time at Six Flags."

It nudged at the girl, "Good times am I right?"

The girl rolled her eyes and laughed a little to herself after hearing that.

When she got home she removed it and threw it on to the side of her hamper.

Once again it opened its mouth.

"You know, I'm no regular cotton, I'm premium cotton, you shouldn't leave me hanging here like this."

The girl walked over and carefully pushed it into the hamper with all the others;

The finest jersey and greatest chiffon.

The rest of her night went uneventfully and so did the morning.

As she got dressed, she carefully picked a new one and placed it on her head, smoothing out any wrinkles during the process.

They both were quiet as she pinned it meticulously in place.

And once more she smoothed it out, glancing once more in the mirror before walking away.

It was basically a superhero cape; it kept her safe and grounded.

The girl and her hijab became one and walked out the door, ready to conquer the day.

## HONORABLE MENTION - POETRY

### *Gone for 42 Days*

Massada C., Arts High School, Grade 10

5,850 days

These were the days you were present in my life

The days when I was able to see you everyday

Hold you everyday

Talk to you every day

5,850 days

Oh, the days I'm going to miss

You were my everything

The person who taught me what's right

What's wrong

My right from my wrongs

Now all I can think about is that you're no longer with me

All I can think about is the 42 days you've been gone

My own mother, my world, my everything

## HONORABLE MENTION - ESSAY

### *Choir Boy - A Review*

Nyla Simone E., Arts High School, Grade 10

The play *Choir Boy*, written by Tarell Alvin McCraney, depicted the life of African American teenage men at a prestigious boarding school. It shows the struggles of brotherhood within the black community and the personal struggles growing black men face spiritually, sexually, and socially.

All the characters played pivotal roles in pushing the plot forward. Throughout the play, I paid close attention to Bobby and Headmaster Marrow. On the surface, Bobby was the antagonist of the play, the guy that showed nothing but aggression, exuded nothing but arrogance. Yet that is the furthest thing from the truth. Bobby is the male that is in deep need of a hug, a long heartfelt hug. J. Quinton Johnson did a stunning job at portraying Bobby's character because he symbolized the common black man that covers the need to be vulnerable and grieve with toxic hyper masculinity. Creating Bobby's character as the antagonist was a genius idea because society often turns a blind eye to men that are verbally aggressive and deem them angry- JUST angry. That's why the scene where the cast performs "Sometimes I Just Feel like a Motherless Child" is so moving. It's the first REAL time Bobby allows himself to talk about his feelings and be vulnerable. If you notice, the boys in the locker room sort of have their backs to Bobby, but David softly approaches him and sings the words that he's dying to say. This was the literal resolution to society's problem, instead of isolating the "angry black man," the man that tantrums instead of vocalizing his pain, HELP HIM SPEAK!

As stated previously, Headmaster Marrow, played by Chuck Cooper, caught my eye because he was not the father of the play, but the uncle. He was the plan C. He was the plan that you run to when Plan A (Mother) and Plan B (Father) fails and now you're at your wit's end. Most of the characters came to him when things were in turmoil. The beginning of the play includes Pharus and Headmaster speaking and Pharus talks about never snitching on a brother. At first, Headmaster seemed pleased with that saying, as if that rule brought the boys a

closer bond. However, as the plot thickens the audience can gather that Headmaster starts to despise that quote because it prevented offenses from being handled.

The writing and choreography was stellar. Before watching the play, I believed that the theme would be "Trust and Obey," but after watching, I think the theme is "You must be vulnerable to trust and obey." The stepping, the harmony, the lights, the messages all spoke so loud to the audience that there was absolutely no way that anyone could close their eyes during the show. It was truly magnificent.

## HONORABLE MENTION - STORY

### *One in a Million*

Andrew S., East Side High School, Grade 9

They've been friends for years, since college. Both would take a bullet for one another but today is when that all changes. Today Tom and Dave buy a lottery ticket worth ten million dollars. It's 6:27 pm, and they're just about to announce winning lottery numbers and Dave sprints on home. Tom tries but gets tired and calls an Uber. Tom finally makes it home surprised to find David glued to the television. "Hey man, how'd you get here first?" David quickly turns to Tom completely ignoring his question and says "DIBS." "Dude, what are talking about, dibs?" David shoves the ticket in my face and points to the TV revealing the winning numbers. Tom's excitement for a moment then turns to disbelief. "Did you just call dibs on the ten million dollar ticket that we bought together?" David, a man of honor, responds with "You're damn right I called dibs. Do you know what you can do with ten million? I can buy a pony. No, wait, two ponies." Tom, trying to stay calm, says "Let me get this straight - we win the lottery, you call dibs on it and your reason why it should be yours is that you can buy a PONY!" David takes the ticket from Tom's hand getting ready to leave and screams, "It's TWO PONIES." Tom wasn't going to let David leave with his money, so he tackles him to the ground and they both wrestle for the ticket. Unfortunately for David, he's tired from running but fortunately Tom's track record for fighting consists of a girl from six grade punching him right in the *special place*. The two struggle for a while until a delivery guy with the pizza they had ordered prior to coming home walks in. This must be a psychic or something because he immediately knew they had the ticket and jumped in the battle. So now it's a free for all, but Tom and David decided to double team the new guy. David and Tom came at pizza guy, but apparently he was the karate kid and knocked David out in one kick and beat Tom silly. Now they're both on the floor watching as the pizza guy robs them of their wealth, but as he reaches the door he turns back and says, "This isn't the winning ticket. It's just a \$1 dollar coupon for a burrito at Taco Bell." And it was at this moment David and Tom realized they were drunk.

## HONORABLE MENTION - POETRY

### *Untitled*

Justinian R., West Side Campus, Grade 11

My body is weak  
I feel like I can't move  
Soul and mind begin to fade away from my body  
The ground pulls me down unable to get back up  
Everything turns black, unable to see  
Then a red beam of light shines from below  
As I go down, I feel the sins of everyone on my back  
Regretting what they have done.

My body is weak  
The red light begins to get brighter and brighter  
As I go closer, I see the souls of many others  
Unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sorcerers, liars  
They clutch to my body with cold and lifeless hands

My body is weak  
It begins to get hot and hot  
I hear the screams of them all  
After moments, they're gone  
It was my turn to enter the flames  
Fear and regret fills my eyes  
There was no way out

My soul is weak  
And then, nothing but silence  
And no one was there to remember me

## HONORABLE MENTION - MEMOIR

### *The Aching Heart*

DomonyQuk A., Arts High School, Grade 11

The aching pain was increasing and it became worse every time there was a sudden movement. Panic increased but I tried so hard not to breathe heavily. I thought I had lost my life. Maybe I had been chosen to leave this earth sooner than I thought.

I was in the sixth grade and I had been experiencing chest pains. They had begun the summer before middle school. I was visiting family in Florida and had been jumping on the trampoline, and there, it hit me. I grasped a hand to my chest. My jumping slowed and my heart was racing. I thought in my head, "Please God, don't take me. Is this my last time that I have with my family?"

The children echoed around me, "Why aren't you jumping? Come on, jump!" I felt as if I was going to faint. I tried reaching for the edge of the trampoline but I couldn't reach it. There was so much jumping that I couldn't refrain from bouncing. After the kids had their fun, I made it to the beautiful brown sand which felt so nice to my feet. I relaxed on the ground, laying the palms of my hands on my chest, slowing down the rate of my beating heart.

My mother, brothers, uncles, aunts, grandmother and I returned home. When we reached our location, Newark, New Jersey we departed from grandma's house. At home I told my mother that my chest had been hurting. She looked me in the face with the most worried look. She asked, "Where has it been hurting?" "Right here, Mommy," as I pointed to the location of my heart.

She got dressed in her sweats and favorite jacket. She rushed me to the hospital and when we arrived I heard my mother tell the doctor that I had a "heart murmur." At my age, I didn't know what that was. So I asked, "Mommy, what is a heart murmur?" and she replied hesitantly, "It is only a small hole in the heart, and the doctors said that it will go away as you get older." Questions rushed through my head which was raging with anger and fear. "Why didn't you tell me this earlier?" I asked. Although I couldn't blame my mother because I knew that she just didn't want me to live with fear, fear of death.

As we drove home, I was so worried, but she told me that there was nothing to be worried about. We stopped by Walgreens and she went in by herself. As she closed the car door, I sat thinking so hard about how my life had changed instantly. As I kept thinking, a tear fell from my eye, falling upon my cheek. I wiped it away, as soon as my mother came out of the store. I went to bed that night in sadness.

Every now and then, I feel an ache of pain in my chest. I panic and stiffen my body, trying to my best ability to decrease the pain. I sit and think, and prevent myself from engaging in any physical activity. Sometimes I feel as if I let my pessimistic personality take away the fun in my life. But I do know that I will not let the hole in my heart control my destiny.

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### HONORABLE MENTION - PHOTOGRAPHY

#### *Life*

Crismeldy J., Arts High School, Grade 12



Just like flowers, we were not born to die, we were born to bloom.

## HONORABLE MENTION - STORY

*Red*

Kayla J., East Side High School, Grade 10

*Knock knock.*

"This is stupid," Damon mutters in disbelief. Hanging out with his brother led to returning to their childhood home.

"What do you mean it's stupid, Dame, we wanted to return back here ever since we moved!" Colin says, giving the front door another knock.

"That was when we were kids! Different time. Different mindsets," Damon gazes over towards their childhood tree swing.

"Oh please, can't you have some fun?" Colin vexes, peeking through a crack in the door.

Damon checks his phone. "Ugh, it's 2 a.m., why are we doing this? Who lives here anyway? Could be axe murderers!"

Colin, lost in his own musings, recalls their old neighbors. "Hey, remember Miss Rosabel who used to live in the yellow house over there?" Colin points. "She made the best cookies. You remember, right? Dame?"

He looks over to find Damon still muttering to himself. "...ridiculous. If anyone *does* still live here, I doubt they're awake."

"Damon *please* don't be such a downer," Colin says, "I'm trying to have a little fun."

"What fun is this? Waiting for someone to open a door?" Damon crosses his arms.

"That's when the real fun begins! Just because we're older doesn't mean we can't have some fun," Colin replies, with a pleading look in his eye.

Damon opens his mouth to say something, when he hears a *creek*. They turn to find an unhinged door, darkness lurking on the other side.

Colin manages to get out a pathetic "H-Hello?" No one responds.

"Great... I knew it was axe murderers," Damon says quietly. He takes out his pocket knife and pokes his head through the open door. Colin stumbles over Damon, pushing them both into the house. Desperate to break his fall, Colin instinctively reaches for the doorknob behind them. The door slams shut.

Damon groans in pain, but gets a hold of himself and whispers, "*What is wrong with you?! We could've been killed!*"

"Well, we're still alive," Colin says, dusting himself off.

"Not for long if we just sit here," Damon says. He twists the doorknob; the door doesn't budge. "Fantastic," Damon says, his voice shaking. Wielding only his pocket knife and bare fists, he flings open each successive door. Colin stares in bewilderment.

"Um, shouldn't we find another way out?" Colin asks, but Damon doesn't respond.

Colin sighs and attempts to pick a lock with his fingernail but gives up after a few minutes and a broken nail later. He grabs a heavy book from a bookshelf and flings it at a window. It bounces off with a small *poof* of dust. Befuddled by the unexpected strength of the window, he picks up the book and examines it. Eight hundred and fifty-seven pages - a pretty hefty book. Why didn't it break the window?

The cover reads Rosdale Mysteries. Interested, he skims through and notices a page with the top-right corner ripped. The section reads: "The White Widow."

Chortling to himself at the absurdity of the situation, he reads a snippet. "The White Widow is said to be the ghost of a widowed woman. Cause of death is unknown," he skims a bit further. "Notable features of this spirit include long white hair, pale skin, a white dress. The most unique feature are glowing red eyes. Sightings of her have been seen..."

Colin's reading was interrupted by Damon's voice. He rushed over to his brother, who was peeping into a keyhole. "Col... I hope that I'm just being paranoid right now but..." he pauses to clear his throat. "I think I see something."

"What?" Colin says, a sudden chill rushing up his spine.

"It's like a... figure or something? It's huddling in the corner of the room. I'm not sure, though. Maybe I'm seeing things."

"A figure? What color is it?" Colin runs his hands through his hair.

"I think it's... white."

Hearing the word "white" was enough for Colin's skin color to drain. He debated whether or not to tell his brother what he read. But what were the chances this was real anyway?

"I might need to have a look, Damon," Colin said sternly.

Colin looks into the keyhole, and sees nothing but darkness. A wave of anger takes over as he realizes his brother must have been playing a prank on him and he, like a fool, believed it.

Then, when he does see it, his anger abruptly subsides. The keyhole had started to glow.... a bright, fluorescent red.

## HONORABLE MENTION - PHOTOGRAPHY

### *Big City Dreaming*

Mandy R., Arts High School, Grade 11



From brick city to big city...look through the rusted bars and you see potential. Over the green trees and over the tops of buildings, look into the horizon and we are reminded that as young people, we can make it **big**.

*Untitled*

Anthony C., Arts High School, Grade 12

Just shut up and don't say it  
You dare deny what i say  
Go to the corner and sit  
Let them pass by, all the day

It closes my mouth shut  
But who is to blame  
It creates a deep cut  
It's an everlasting game

Go ahead, they will laugh at you  
Here goes another failure in the books  
It's only going to make you feel blue  
Everyone is already giving you those dirty looks

I grow tired of these voices  
That restrict my joy  
I have other choices  
I have to let go and just enjoy

I bend my mindsight, set it straight  
No longer negative thoughts  
It has shifted, my mental state

With the help of friends and family  
I have hope  
There is no more agony  
It's a lot easier to cope

## ***The Bourgeoisie***

Nayibi A., East Side High School, Grade 11

Who are the bourgeoisie? The bourgeoisie is a class of people who are primarily concerned with property values. In society, the bourgeoisie are people of high status who have influence, power, and wealth. The bourgeoisie have been given more opportunities than other people in society, leading many people to seek change or to change themselves into bourgeoisie. People are agitating for change in the bourgeoisie in order to have an even playing field. Society has created favoritism for the bourgeoisie due to their wealth and power. Some characters in the books decided to change themselves into bourgeoisie in order to be accepted by society. The books that display the bourgeoisie and the people seeking help are *The Great Gatsby*, *The Iceman Cometh*, and *Maggie: A Girl on the Streets*.

In the book, *The Great Gatsby*, the bourgeoisie have influence and wealth. The characters in the book that are considered to be bourgeoisie are Gatsby, Nick, Daisy, and Tom. Characters that aren't bourgeoisie are Myrtle and Wilson. In the book, Gatsby has a conversation with Nick, revealing his past. Gatsby reveals to Nick that he was born in North Dakota to an impoverished farmer, not in San Francisco to a wealthy family as he had told others. There were rumors about Gatsby and how he acquired his money in an unsavory way. Gatsby tells Nick that he is a bootlegger and has connections with the mafia. Compared to other people in East Egg that acquired their wealth through their families, Gatsby did get his wealth through unsavory ways. Gatsby didn't want to change the bourgeoisie, he wanted to be part of the bourgeoisie. He wanted to be accepted by the bourgeoisie so that no one could say "no" to him.

In *The Iceman Cometh*, we are introduced to many characters. The characters that have displayed qualities of the bourgeoisie are Hope and Hickey. Jimmy, Larry, and Rocky aren't bourgeoisie. Hickey has a conversation with people at the bar. He wants them to stop being latched onto their pipe dreams. Hickey is trying to save them. If they stay in the bar drinking, they are never going to get ahead in life. They are only going to regret what they could have done. Hickey doesn't want them to drink their problems away. He wants them to fight. Hickey

himself is agitating for change in the people so that they can work themselves to comfort.

In *Maggie: A Girl on the Streets*, we are not directly introduced to the bourgeoisie, but we can tell that they are the people who are giving Maggie alcohol. Maggie is agitating for change in the bourgeoisie power and economic structure. She lives in a toxic family where she is abused by her parents. Her mother or father would be drunk and take it out on her or her brother by hitting them. Maggie grew tired of it and wanted change and went out on the street to look for it. In doing so she became a prostitute and she was tricked into believing that she would be given these things. Being blind since a child she never had anything. She accepted and got lost in the path. She was compensated with "things", but in the end she didn't get real change. Maggie wanted change for herself, but didn't get it.

In conclusion, the characters in the books that wanted change eventually changed into bourgeoisie. Instead of wanting change for everyone else they just wanted change for themselves. They changed themselves to try to become bourgeoisie. In doing so they take action so that they could be given opportunities. They believe that in becoming bourgeoisie they will have an even playing field and be accepted by others.

The people agitating for change to the bourgeoisie power want social justice. They want to be equal and have an even playing field. For example, *Gatsby* changed himself in order to be accepted by the bourgeoisie. He became wealthy by bootlegging which gave him power so that people would always say yes to him. *Gatsby* became part of the bourgeoisie meaning that he got social justice for himself. In becoming part of the bourgeoisie, he hoped for more opportunities that were not given to him since he came from poor farmers. Many people around the world seek social justice since they are being denied opportunities that the bourgeoisie have. They don't want favoritism because of their class or status, they want everybody to be treated equally.

## *My Flame*

Nyla Simone E., Arts High School, Grade 10

Blazing through the roof,  
I screamed, "I'm a warrior!"  
Soul so powerful you can see my fire's smoke winding away.  
So sweet the sound of assertiveness  
Sparks a flame inside of someone who thought their fire died  
And all it took was for you to speak.

Vocalize the thoughts you so often suppress in fear of being isolated or  
backstabbed,  
Talked about or laughed at,  
Losing connections you once thought sparked that flame.

That flame that burns the strain you feel having to listen to your  
teacher pressure orders onto  
you.

That flame that makes you wisely choose what to burn because you  
know there's colder spirits in  
the mist,  
A person with a tighter fist.  
Ah, that flame!

That flame that so flawlessly exudes from your dark skin.  
Cleanses the pores once filled with unseen toxins.  
Pumps your heart and moves your feet,  
Thank God for the burning beam  
Because I know what it feels like to not have it.

The unforgettable longing,  
The constant confusion...  
In all honesty, I pity the person that feels their flame has died  
Due to wicked days, dark times.  
Not knowing that the test is almost over-  
Please know the test is almost over.  
With an addict eager to light the bud you claim is too little to spark.

Piping dreams frozen because of ridicule.

Droopy eyed because I'm not amused.  
Interest gone and I can't remember the last time I've smiled because  
of wishful thinking.  
Where's that flame?  
I don't feel that flame!  
Cunning ghost stared me down.  
Cold soul watered my ground.  
My flames...

Addict, light the bud winter extinguished  
Because without my flame, I feel how cold the world is.  
Without my flame, I know how dead these souls are.  
Without my flame, I'm exposed,  
Naked and I'm scared not knowing what's there laying ahead in the  
coldest winter.  
Such a cold winter.

Light my flame so I know that the test is over.  
Ignite my engine so I get over this boulder.  
Because without my flame I'm nothing.  
And I didn't even know it until I almost died without it.  
Ah, that flame...

---

### ***Drip***

Jennifer C., Arts High School, Grade 12

Fury floods through me, my cheeks flushing red with heat.  
Dragon's fire building up at the bottom of my belly, squeezing at my  
heart and tightening my chest. *Why?* I feel my subconscious scream,  
forcing me to exhale ragged breaths. *Why does this always happen to  
me?* It was always something, something small, something large,  
something, everything, anything. A bubble of graying gas polluting my  
brain, encouraging darkness, clouding any instance of self. Acceptance  
seeps in. *It will never change. This is my life. A distinct line between  
good and bad in which I am placed directly at the bottom.* There it was  
in all its glory. The pad of my sock submerged slightly in a puddle of  
water. Sighing, the cold gripping at the cotton lessens as I gently lift  
my foot from the liquid evil. Drip. Drip. Drip.

*Sunny Skies from Here on Out*  
Kaila K., Arts High School, Grade 11

He told me his shades were his reality  
The darkness fills in the light, like the blood filling my lungs  
My slashed wrist gushing out the **cement** that is my downfall  
"Cement, don't you mean blood?" I asked  
He said that blood can be regenerated but cement is frozen like me,  
I'm **stuck** bleeding the blood of a guilty man  
I looked at his wrist, his cuts were all parallel  
Like a Pretty Picture Painted with Precise strokes, gentle but sharp  
I told him they were beautiful, that those were battle scars. . .  
trophies awarding the title of a survivor  
He told me criminals don't have battle scars, they have wounds,  
piercing with guilt, traced with satisfaction

"What crime did you commit?" I asked  
The worst kind of all. . . happiness  
The joy I gain from my skin breaking from my arm, the high I feel when  
I smoke away the pain, the wish to stay sleep. . . Resting peacefully. . .  
like the **dead**  
The feeling of not being scared of dying but afraid of living  
He asked me "Did you know that the wind blows hard in Kansas?"  
I was confused but said nothing  
I wish I lived in Kansas he said  
So I could be blown away into another land like Dorothy  
A land opposite from my reality. . . the upside down, where I let all the  
blood rush to my head hoping that the lack of circulation will help me  
feel numb to my depression that is somehow now the foundation of my  
bones. . . the very parts that allow me to stand or cause me to fall  
He looked down at the floor for a long while  
My gaze never broke away from him. . . all I could see was a *broken*  
*ornament*, looking at his **cracked** lines and **sharp** edges, lying out in the  
open like the star on a Christmas tree placed there for show.  
He told me he was pulling the rope he was hanging from, strangling away  
the only living part left

"So stop" I told him

I can't I'm addicted like an alcoholic is obsessed with his liquid that baptizes away his pain

My cuts are like *holy water*, washing away my agony. "You have to tell," he told me

I need saving. I've been slipping through the cracks so long that I'm at the center of the earth where it's **scorching hot** lava. . . it feels like **hell**. . . ashes are intertwined with my eyelashes. . . every time I blink I see my death. . . I can't hold on much longer,

If there was a God he must view me invisible.....

maybe because my **shades** don't see light, I can't see him . . . and if I can't see him then maybe he can't see me crying from beneath him otherwise I don't see why he would make me feel like this....

"I-I need you to tell," he whispered . . . His image fading away.

"Come back!" I yelled but it was only darkness left. I thought maybe his shades were contagious... that it was altering my vision, blocking the light.

I feel a bump, and wake up, feeling numb from such an intense dream. . . .but my mind was clear, and a decision formed.

Tomorrow I would tell my teacher about his cuts...

I rolled down the car window, and took off my **shades** so they wouldn't block out the light...and I saw him in the skies of the promising future, beaming down *rays of light*. . . and I said to him

"It'll be sunny skies from here on out."

---

### **My Battle**

Wendy M., East Side High School, Grade 11

My worst battle is between what I know and what I feel. The hardest decisions I have made are when to stay put or try harder or when to take my memories and just move on. At times I have to step outside of the person I have been and remember the person I am meant to be, the one person I'm capable of being and the person I truly am.

## **I AM**

By: Daïssa D., Arts High School, Grade 11

I am weird.  
I am crazy,  
And determined.  
Period.  
They don't realize  
That I am smart  
And that's where  
They go wrong.  
They think because  
I am weird that I'm  
Different. And that's  
Where they go wrong.  
Society has made it known  
That because I'm black  
I will not be successful  
Because I am black. And  
That's where they go wrong.  
I can and I will be successful.  
I have a plan. And my plan will  
Help me find my purpose and  
Meaning.  
They don't realize that I want to help  
Them. They think that I'm trying to hurt  
Them. The truth is I don't care.  
Let me tell you a little secret, if I see it  
And I want it. Then I will get it.

### *Untitled*

Julian R., West Side Campus, Grade 11

You are my favorite place to be  
Your arms are like a warm blanket  
Your eyes feel the gazing sun beaming down on me  
The future I see is with you  
Your love makes me feel like I'm the only person in the world  
You are my favorite place to be  
Your voice makes chills run down my body  
Your body makes the world upside down  
The future I see is with you  
You encourage my personality  
You are my favorite place to be  
When the moon is out the sun comes up cause you are with me  
I don't know how I was able to live with my life before I met you  
The future I see is with you  
I get hotter and hotter when I am around you  
You are my favorite place to be

---

### *Life*

Soffiyat L., West Side Campus, Grade 11

Life is short  
Life is happy  
Life is sadness  
Life is corruption  
Life is insecurity  
Life is competition  
The important part is you have to learn from it,  
learn from the insecurity and choose to be secured,  
learn from the sadness and choose to be happy,  
learn from the happiness and choose to be happy again,  
learn from the competition and compete with yourself,  
because life is short and you have the key to making the best of it,  
making it something someone else would want,  
make it what you want to look back at,  
make it beautiful but most of all make it you.

### ***Which Way Should I Go?***

Wendy M., East Side High School, Grade 11

Should I go to the left or should I go to the right?

Why is it so hard to just do what I feel instead of just doing what I know?

Daydreams are just what they are, nothing but dreams.

I am going to step outside the person I am and take a chance.

I could go to the left when nothing is right or go to the right where nothing is left...

---

### ***Here***

Yasmeline R., Arts High School, Grade 9

The stars shone in the sky, they reminded him of her eyes.

Deep brown shining orbs that entranced anyone who looked from afar.

The stars were beautiful but everything about her was stunning, it left him speechless.

"What do you think would happen if stars fell from the sky and came crashing down to earth?"

She spoke curiously, staring at him from the corner of her right eye.

"They already have" he spoke softly, fresh night air and the chirps of crickets greeted them as the

night sky glowed above them.

"What do you mean?" The girl spoke out once again, fully giving the boy she adored her

attention.

She swung her feet slowly as they sat in front of the cabin. He turned and his ocean eyes

brightened.

"You're here aren't you?"

***A Keeper's Verge - Words For Actions***  
Ashantea H., West Side Campus, Grade 12

"My dear James, it has been ages my son, by this time you must be the strong and fearless warrior your mother hoped you would become. There is no doubt in my mind that you have made me proud. But there is only one reason you would be reading this letter which I have left in the care of Nina Razz.

My son, there is so much I need to tell you and much you need to hear. With so little time, I can only reveal so little. If you don't already know, the words you're about to receive are life changing in so many ways. This will rob you of your innocence, it will tear the life that you know into pieces and replace the cracks with revenge and grief. Unfortunately what I am about to confess are all true words written by your father. Do not stray away from your path.

One day I will be gone; I will be taken, and, if all goes well, I might make it out alive. I know what you must be thinking, but I can only imagine what life Nina has given you, but there is no doubt that she gave you a pleasant home and a loving family. Nina is a close family friend; she can be trusted. She can protect you, and she will. She cares deeply for you, almost as much as I do, which is why this is so difficult to say, even if it's only on a piece of paper. I did something very bad. I decided to divulge to your mother. She did not take it well. She was betrayed and deceived by my actions and became filled with rage. For days she tried to suppress her anger, but she eventually gave in. She will try to contact you. She will feed you lies and deceits, but be careful my son. I have faith in you, but she has a significant amount of power. There is an entire world out there that you don't know about. The powers and capabilities you hold will shock you, but do not let that be your end. Evil strides and lurks in the shadows and temptations in the corners, but you are a protector, a fighter and warrior. There is nothing you can't accomplish with family. And all protectors are family. Find your lineage. - S. Kane"

## *The Hue Goes Quick*

Kayla T., Arts High School, Grade 10

Late April, early May. The weather was just finally succumbing to the late spring warmth. To me, it was the beginning of my hell. I suffer from serious allergies and it makes me irritable and makes it hard for me to concentrate. My eyes itch and puff up. Ripe and red, and I assume, it looks like I just finished having a breakdown in the bathroom. My cheeks and nasal cavity ache like there is no tomorrow.

I'm sorry. We aren't here to talk about my allergies, I know. We're here to talk about my dead girlfriend. This almost seems obsolete, though. Nothing is going to bring her back. I'll never see color again. I'll never be able to look into my children's eyes and detect any pigment of color. I'll never see the blush on their cheeks or the highlights in their hair when they play in the sun. I mean, I should be grateful to even see at all, you know. It's kinda hard to be grateful when you know your soulmate is dead and she took color with her when she died.

I still remember the first time I saw her. She was bewitching with her unimpeachable personality. Her features were...fetching...if anyone even says that anymore. She had a pointed nose that almost reminded me of a sparrow. Her voice matched the profile of the bird for she had a pipe that chirped. She had freckles that scattered across her round face. If I was a child, I would have tried to play connect the dots. Her lips were light and plush. Her eyes were black, but they still lustered.

Shades of grey, black, and white were the only colors I'd seen my whole life up to that point. So, when I stumbled backwards because I finally saw what would remain my favorite colors for eternity, I realized I just met the person who I would want to spend the rest of my life with. Oranges, teals, mints, vermillion all spewed from each corner of my eyes. I clasped my hand over my mouth to suppress my oncoming sobs. She was kneeling next to me, snakingly holding my hands. A sob rang through her body as I saw her shiver. She was experiencing the very same euphoria and shock as I was. I was holding onto her like I've known her for years, but I didn't even know her name.

My aunt always told me everyone was born seeing black and white; only when they find their soulmate will they finally get to experience the beauty that is color. You get to experience that with the person you will love forever. She never told me the heartbreak that comes with finding someone whose hand fits perfectly into yours, who wakes up at 3:00 AM to ask a stupid question about fish, who always understands you when no one else does. She never told me I would lose the very things I loved most in life.

After a year together, my heart finally learned to slow down its pace when I saw her. Her name was Eliza. Her lips were strawberry ice and plush. Her eyes were a golden topaz that still lustered. It was late April, early May when I was at home, cleaning my bookshelf, when something didn't feel right. I was looking at a book as blue as the cosmos during daylight. It shifted into the monochrome color of gray that I grew to despise. I dropped the book out of fear and utter shock. Why?

What's going on? Is the same thing happening to Eliza? Is Eliza okay? These questions flooded my mind, unexpected and harsh. About an hour and a half later, after many failed attempts to call Eliza's phone, I received a phone call, only to pick up and have a person tell me she had been shot. All because a person saw Eliza and me hold hands as we walked the streets. All because a person didn't agree with our "lifestyle." I stood with a blank expression sprawled across my face, letting those words sing wounds into my skin. At that point, that would have been preferable to finding out your soulmate was dead.

I dropped to my knees and bawled. Screaming was futile. But that's why I screamed more.

I wondered how much hatred somebody has to have to hate soulmates for loving each other.

You only get one soulmate though.

***"We Live With The Scars We Choose"***

Oscar P., East Side High School, Grade 11

This is my favorite quote because every time you have done something crazy and get hurt there will always be a scar. That scar is a memory from that time you have fallen trying to do something but were able to get back up. It's like when I was learning how to ride a skateboard on my own and I kept falling then tripped over a crack which left me with a big scar on my right knee and right elbow. I will never forget that because of my scars.

---

***Oh Sweet Mother!***

Karla G., Arts High School, Grade 11

Oh Sweet Mother!

You cook, dance, live and laugh yet  
the world is dark around you.

Oh Sweet Mother!

Why do your eyes shine less when he  
comes around? Your smile shifts a bit  
and your hand slowly rests on my head.

Oh Sweet Mother!

Is the world no longer in your favor?  
The color of your skin has gone pale and  
your hand is no longer on my head

Oh Sweet Mother!

Where have you gone?

Oh Sweet Mother!

Hope you are doing well.

***Acceptance is a Small Quiet Room***  
Kamirah O., Arts High School, Grade 12

Thinking of you now all I see is red.  
I flinch at the sound of your name, my ears ringing from the trauma  
and the pain  
But yet I feel nothing  
When the words left my mouth and my fingers clicked the keys to tell  
you it was over  
As your message flashed across my screen no tears came  
They came long before, your words cut me like a knife and before that  
I never knew words could hurt me before  
I remember crying in my best friend's car in her arms, wishing you  
would just take it all away  
I wanted to forget you  
I became numb  
And each time you said "I love you" did you ever really mean it?  
I tried to look past all the things you kept hidden inside of you,  
I opened my mind to connect to yours but the connection became lost  
as it slipped through my fingers each time I looked into your eyes  
Forgiveness  
Is it a feeling?  
Acceptance is a small quiet room  
Mine is dark and loud  
With the screaming of your lies  
I can see the end of the tunnel with my lungs caving in.  
As my anxiety tortures me  
My dark and loud room becomes louder and darker  
Acceptance is a small quiet room but the door is locked  
And my heart holds the key.

## ***U Got It***

Alexandra M., Arts High School, Grade 12

I know these days aren't easy,  
You sit and wait for the storm to go away.  
I know you may not believe me,  
But even flowers need a little rain.

You're climbing mountains,  
At times you fall.  
They're gonna doubt you but you know, you'll get through it all.

You're high enough, so don't look down.  
If you keep your head up, you could hit the ground.  
Promise me, you'll stay right here.  
And fight to face your fears.

Thinking you won't get it right, but you got it yeah.  
Nothing's holding you back now, cause you got it yeah.  
Even if it takes a lifetime or more, you got to know it's all yours, cause  
you got it yeah.  
You got it, you know you got it.  
You got it yeah.

You're walking through this road called life,  
That you're still trying to find the purpose of.  
Sometimes you stray away in the night but I'll bring you back.  
No more wishing for stars to fall, you got to go and catch them, take  
them all.

You're high enough, so don't look down.  
If you keep your head up, you could hit the ground.  
Promise me, you'll stay right here.  
And fight to face your fears.

Thinking you won't get it right, but you got it yeah.  
Nothing's holding you back now, cause you got it yeah.

Even if it takes a lifetime or more, you got to know it's all yours, cause  
you got it yeah.  
You got it, you know you got it.  
You got it yeah.

All the pressures around you pushing you to the ground,  
But don't worry because you could be unstoppable.  
So just take my hand you'll be safe and sound because, I got you.  
I got you.

You got it yeah.  
You got it, you know you got it.  
You got it yeah.

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***The Most Beautiful Time of the Day***  
Karla G., Arts High School, Grade 11



Water droplets slowly roll down my window and the sun soon follows.  
Pastel colors light up the sky and our day soon ends.

*Haiku Poem*

Amy T., Arts High School, Grade 11

Crowded halls,  
Art projects pinned up on the walls  
People singing from afar and instruments playing along

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*Alone*

Valerie V., Art's High School, 11th grade

It's to have no else.  
It's to be on one's own.  
Hundreds of faces surround us and yet, we don't see.  
Sure, people come and go and best friends aren't permanent  
but that doesn't mean we're alone.

Our struggles aren't in stone and we are so afraid to trust,  
because people have let us down.  
And though we may feel lost and afraid,  
We aren't alone.

A-l-o-n-e.

We force ourselves to believe that no one will  
ever understand.  
That it's easier to isolate the world, then face the truth.  
We are terrified to admit it but here goes nothing,  
We don't want to be alone.

Because in this poem, the "we" is really me.  
And I don't want to be alone anymore.

## ***Peregrinus***

Brian J., East Side High School, Grade 9

Dark and black, like ebony from trees, and like the reincarnation of nothingness itself. So pitch-black in fact that she couldn't tell the difference between opening and closing her eyes. The gloomy room is complemented by an automatic door that opens with a loud "creak." It is too hard to see in the dark and light finally fills the room. This wasn't unusual though since this is when she is fed. Although not only one figure was at the door like usually, there were at least three living things that she can piece together with her worn out vision. A sudden hand grabs onto her followed with a dozen more. They carry her by force as she instinctively resists which is ignored by the creatures as they rush her out the door. The girl wakes up to find herself in the same dark room. She feels weaker, yet stronger at the same time. As the girl gets on her feet she senses an object fall from her lap - a long thin object that is rough to the touch, torn a bit but is still new. The girl was engrossed in the object, for it was the only thing she's ever really been able to see. She lets out a noise of some sort and the figures take her again. The girl wakes up to unthinkable pain, but has no memory of what happened, no memory of the object. Outside of the room she could hear a faint voice, "...sp... is... we..." is what she makes of it. The girl tries to mimic it but is interrupted by a "boom." Screams and panic fill the halls as she stares at the burning walls, an escape is barely made. With some hesitation her curiosity was her drive, seeing the open world didn't stop her from running. The girl trips on a branch and looks back, the burning building was the only thing that wasn't brown and white. The sign reads: Year 3023 Extraterrestrial Lab.

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## ***LoVe Yourself***

Mi-Shea D., Arts High School, Grade 11

You mean everything. Don't give up.

## *The Amulet of Shades*

Shah M., East Side High School, Grade 12

29 March, 1915. Robin Raizada was rocking back and forth in his chair. It was Friday and he was resting after a busy day of helping catch a jewelry thief. Robin Raizada, a 19 year old from a small town called Shadesville, is known for solving his first mystery at the age of 15.

While resting in his rocking chair, Robin began to feel dizzy. Being a detective, he always tried to explain everything with logic. He thought his dizziness was caused by exhaustion. Suddenly Robin heard footsteps and stairs creaking. He knew he was the only one in the house. Robin thought someone must have broken into the house. He told himself, "I made enemies while solving cases and I dealt with it. I can handle this."

Robin got up from his chair and opened the door. He walked down the dark hallway and checked his parents' room. He found nothing out of place. He went downstairs and checked every possible hiding place; nothing. Robin thought maybe the sounds came from outside. However, the sound of footsteps were still ringing in his ears.

Coming back to his room, Robin saw a shadowy figure run from his room to his parents' room. He searched it again. Surprisingly, he didn't find anyone and didn't have an explanation for how that figure disappeared. He thought maybe the exhaustion was causing hallucinations.

Robin went back to his room and noticed the "Amulet of Shades" lying on his bed. Yesterday, Robin was investigating the house of a jewel thief. While he was searching the thief's room, he saw a star-shaped Amulet under the bed. Robin should have given it to the police but he had never seen this type of Amulet and wanted to learn about it.

Earlier he went to the library and researched the Amulet. It is called "Amulet of Shades" and was a family heirloom. It is said it is cursed. Heirs had died horrible and unexpected deaths, but Robin didn't believe the story. He had forgotten about the Amulet until he saw it on his bed. Someone must have taken it out of his bag. Robin broke out in a sweat and went to the bathroom to wash his face. He felt he was being watched. He looked at the mirror and saw his

reflection smiling the creepiest smile he had ever seen. He felt a shiver go down his spine. He blinked and everything became normal again.

At that moment, he heard a noise downstairs in the kitchen and ran to check. Robin was determined to find out what it was. He saw a guy running towards the door and ran after him. Robin took a punch, but successfully caught him. As he tied the man with rope, he heard a knock at the front door. He opened the door to two police officers. "We believe there is a thief in your house," said one of the officers. "Yes, and I already tied him up," replied Robin. "How did you know he was in my house?" The other replied, "He fled from the police station and we saw him running towards here." Robin asked, "When did he flee from the police station?" The officer responded, "He fled a minute ago and we followed him here. We don't believe he was in your house for a long time."

Robin accompanied the police officers to the station. On his way back home, Robin asked himself, *Why did I feel someone was in my house if that thief entered just a minute before? How did that Amulet change its place? Have I been hallucinating?* He was looking at the ground, while thinking of reasonable answers for these questions. As he approached the door, he saw something he wasn't ready for. He felt that same cold shiver down his spine. He saw himself standing by the door with that same creepy smile he saw in the mirror. The difference was the Doppelganger was wearing the "Amulet of Shades" around his neck. Robin couldn't believe his eyes. He asked, "Who are you? Why are you here?" The Doppelganger didn't answer. Robin asked again and the Doppelganger was silent. Finally, he opened his mouth and said, "You shouldn't have brought the Amulet home." The Doppelganger started moving backwards and disappeared into darkness. The door started to close slowly while making a screeching sound. Robin told himself, "Humans aren't the only creation of God."

## ***We***

Jennifer C., Arts High School, Grade 12

The tiniest of crevices and lines  
Littered throughout our skin  
The softest of details

Expunge every bump and color  
Freckles upon it  
White, blue, brown, yellow, green

Mountains and rivers, nature among us  
Within us  
Paint colors upon us  
Stay and leave

Gliding sharpness across  
Destroying the growth  
For beauty

Leaving behind remnants of hesitancy  
Remnants of me  
Of us  
We

---

## ***Severed Bonds***

Yasmeline R., Arts High School, Grade 9



Would you hold my hands, even if my judgement tears you apart limb by limb,  
Or would you finally walk away, finally stop caring, finally stop  
showing up, finally give into our already severed bonds. "  
I love you, Pa" "...Hmm" "... "I love you, too."

## ***Too Much***

A'Lysai R., Arts High School, Grade 11

I am too much for you  
The way I talk  
The way I act  
The way I present myself  
Me being confident is too much for you  
So I hide away but that it is too much for me  
My mind goes crazy at every living second every breathing moment  
every word that has to come out of my mouth that I have to  
contemplate if it is correct  
Oh please stop too much  
My confidence is overbearing  
But my shyness grows when I am in front of you  
Why am I too much for you?  
But then again I am too much for myself  
Stop, Breath, Think, Go  
Stop, Breath, Think, Go  
These are the conflict in my head  
When I am in the situation which I do not know  
A situation that is too much  
What is too much what does too much mean?  
This is too much  
I say I am sorry  
For things I have no control over because it is too much to explain who  
I am  
I'd rather stop because this is becoming too much

## **INSATIABLE**

Samson A., West Side Campus, Grade 11

I am an unstoppable force  
No matter what i will still pursue that course  
Even though i'm still riding my prideful horse  
Do not expect me to stop and endorse

Neither the angels in Heaven above  
Nor the demons down under the sea  
Can stop me from fleeing like a bee  
Nor can they ever deter my soul  
From my ultimate goal

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## **Me**

Sumwen O., Arts High School, Grade 11

People call me a narcissist but I don't care  
Because I love the way  
I look and it's not for me to share

In order for you to understand my logic you must walk  
In my shoes but please realize and comprehend  
That I make my own rules.

I'm me and that is a fact.  
Stop trying to make my life  
Fall apart and keep yours intact

Narcissism can be mistaken for me being conceited  
But last time I checked  
I say what I say and mean it.

### ***One. Last. Time.***

Ifeoluwa A., Arts High School, Grade 11

Ever since I started high school, I've never fit in. My appearance was different from everyone else. I tried to follow any new trends that came up, but I ended up failing. Those failures led to mockery from my peers. They would laugh at what I wore and how I looked. I was called all sorts of names. I was basically an outcast. As I entered my junior year of high school, things got a little bit better. Instead of trying to fit in with the fashion trends, I created my own. It was unique and different from everyone else. I was even called the best dressed in school. Although I was complimented on my outfits, I still received hate on how I looked. I tried so many things on my face thinking it would make me unique, but I still failed. I couldn't take it anymore. I would cry in my room and blame my mum and dad for making an ugly child like me. One morning before school, I sat on my bed in deep thought. It is time things change for good. If I do this, maybe people won't talk about me anymore. "It's for the best," I wondered. I went into the bathroom, gripped the marble sink with my left hand and tried to steady my other hand, which was in the air. "One last time," I whispered to myself. "They won't talk so much about or care about me anymore." I brought down my right hand toward my eye and applied a little bit of eyeshadow from my James Charles Palette. Following that, I applied mascara and some lipstick. This would be the last time I try a different option to make me feel better about myself. *One. Last. Time.* I repeated those three words in my head. This is the last time I worry about my looks. *One. Last. Time.*

## Dichotomy

Troye [Lara] F., Arts High School, Grade 10

di·chot·o·my

/dīˈkädəmə/

noun

1. a division or contrast between two things that are or are represented as being opposed or entirely different.
2. "a rigid **dichotomy between** science and mysticism"

As far as I know, no one can predict the outcome of the world and how time passes. The qualities of the person I became, became a hysteria among the council that is my mind. I'd never reckon to ever fathom the idea of blooming into the person I inevitably turned into. However, to say the least, it never crossed my mind that "it" would happen to me.

The person I once knew double-crossed my vision and led me into a spiral of emotional pretense, commonly confused for teenage angst. I can admittedly say that in regards to the person I once knew, all came to a screeching halt when I revealed my own identity. I found myself confounded by the basis of my nature. *How can someone believe to be the opposite gender?* Questions I wish I could answer. How is it possible to willingly become the counterpart to my own sex? These inquiries would have been prayers; however, God's inbox is full at the moment. I'd always go online and research what I was feeling. I found many videos explaining the root of the predicament that had devoured my life and left me bewildered.

Denial was the foundation of what I perceived to be a coping mechanism for the time being. Even so, I never would have thought "this" would happen to me. Even pondering on the circumstances of my dire situation would I ever come to know the fate of the person that I once knew? I was fading ever so slightly into the horizon of what my mind perceives to be my former self-saluting and leaving (including but not limited to the dramatization of my mind).

My father, on the other hand, is a stiff conservative, a man who is devoured by his own morals or what he perceives to be "right" in his own mind. Not to mention, he's a zealot for Spain and anything to do

with the country. How is it there's a side to my dad that's only exclusive to me?. He acts supercilious and snide, not to mention the racist remarks he spews into my brain every five seconds. It's repetitive and disgusting to hear such things now. I do have to accommodate for someone born in a different era than me, at a different time period where being racist was "socially acceptable."

Whenever we walk together, I feel it's by design that he'll say something out of place or reveal something about himself that I never wanted to know. Although my dad has his faults, I love him, but there's a wall that's actively being built between us. The newfound relationship between my body and brain has formed this gaping cavity in the "father/daughter" exchange I once had or maybe never existed. I've been also suspicious about my dad's shoddy record and found his personality or "facade" to be spurious in regards to his relationship to me. There were things occurring that, to my knowledge, was never there. I so happened to think that my dad was reneging on his commitment of being a father. Despite his pejorative language and manner, I still wanted a father no matter the circumstance. Skimming through the very people that walk the halls of my school; to my pragmatic-self, it was imperative that I had a father that was actively in my life. As a result I've found many of my friends have a "deadbeat dad" or a father that is not even present. I consulted myself and speculated that I was indeed taking things for granted.

My mother was a basket case after the death of my grandmother and aunt; she couldn't go back to Spain anymore. In that sense, I can empathize with her because truthfully it hasn't been the same. She couldn't put words together that were colloquial. Nothing came out of her and nothing came out of me. It was a moment away from the normal cacophonous business day and a step into the reality that takes place now. My mother knows about me being transgender and is very non-biased after the many non-forgivable therapy sessions that took place the first few months of coming out.

### ***Free Tonight***

Alexandra T., Arts High School, Grade 12

It was raining and you were crying.  
I'm sorry for all the losses.  
The people downstairs were fighting for life.  
The man was on a bed, just shot in his leg  
But his leg did not hurt; it was his heart that was wounded.  
The man was your dad, and he was the only person left.  
That you could run to  
And tell all those secrets that you hide  
Your right eye takes a peek,  
At the man that had just lost his knee,  
For a reason that does not need to be  
Why can't we just be free  
We're always fighting for our life  
You and me together,  
We will get through this fight  
I'm sorry for all the losses  
But we will not lose tonight.

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### ***Romeo & Juliet***

Nayibi A., East Side High School, Grade 11

The foolish mistake of making the gods angry  
The children made foolish mistake for love  
Once a mistake is made it can't be undone.  
Mistakes could have been avoided if they just have listened.  
Hurting someone and having too much pride  
Blinded with anger and grief  
Making the mistake of keeping a secret that would  
change someone's life.  
Mistakes are made in everyday basics  
You can make mistakes, but learn from them, don't make the same  
mistake over and over again.  
Always remember once a mistake is made it can't be undone.

## *Grades*

Lauren P., East Side High School, Grade 10

Where do I get my drive to get perfect grades?  
Why do I even want perfect grades?  
Is it to make others happy?  
Or to fill in this mold on how the exemplary student should be?  
Currently stuck pondering this question my mind draws a blank.  
Getting good grades is only one path towards success.  
But why are we so drawn towards getting straight A's?  
Just to fill this capitalistic cycle that goes on forever?  
Get good grades, get a good job, make good money, raise a family, then what?  
Wait for our children to change the world when we can do very much that, if not more?  
Maybe it's because getting straight A's across your transcript is the most tangible way to success. Is that it?  
Are we just scared to risk it all? Creativity is slowing dying off; soon no one will remember its name.  
Break the cycle before it breaks you.

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## *Growing Older*

Shukurat A., West Side Campus, Grade 11

Being, growing, going, painting;  
Joining, saying, screaming, loving;  
This is the life, I want to live in;  
Being always connected, I have created an image;  
I know what i am doing today;  
To its own i make a mistake;  
But i keep going;  
Grow old because they stop pursuing dreams;  
And live life to the fullest.

## ***Caution!!! - A Short Story***

Shadae H., West Side Campus, Grade 11

People cried, yelled and screamed for their loved ones. Hundreds of people running, covering their eyes and noses. Mothers huddling with their infants and fathers their wives and kids.

I heard loud distant firing of guns and the clanging of metal cans as they hit the street, spraying a foul scented green colored fog.

It's been about 30 minutes since I have been separated from my mother and father. I have lived here all my life, but now it's all so alien to me.

Large trees that lined our driveway seemed to have shrunk and lost whatever was about them that made our home much more beautiful than it actually was.

I miss those trees, and I miss our tacky house.

I remember how I flinched. A tall pale man dressed in a green baggy uniform, U.S. Army was knitted above his name tag. I didn't even make an effort to read his name because my eyes were truly focused on the large gun he held across his chest.

He glared at me expressionless.

It was that moment that I knew nothing was the same. My life as I knew it was over.

"What's your name, girl?" I jumped. It wasn't because of the deepness of the voice .

"Answer me." It was because of how he demanded I answer him.

I twirled around, afraid of being yelled at even more. I held my head down, squinting at my blue and white sneakers, hardly recognizable in the green fog.

As nervous as I was, I was also curious to whom the deep voice belonged.

My eyes wandered to his thick black boots and up to his baggy pants. I only stopped when I saw the gun. He held it loosely but with caution. My eyes quickly flew back down to my feet.

Before that day I had never seen a real gun, only in movies. I remembered thinking how heavy it must have been.

"Anya, sir," I said, shyly, yet politely. Mom taught me that someone's behaviour tells a lot about them. Maybe this man would see I

was just a scared kid, innocent and clueless along with hundreds of the scared running people that used to be my neighbors.

They just got lost in the war between two politicians.

This all happened because of one stupid mistake.

Why was I even surprised. My dad always said that politicians would be the death of us.

"What number are you?" The army man said.

I was so confused, I just shrugged and said nothing. He grasped my wrist and yanked it toward his face.

Why was he so hostile? I was just a little girl. What threat could I have been to him?

He grunted and released my wrist. Another second later, before I knew it, he pointed in the direction we faced.

So confused, I did nothing.

He held onto my arm and pulled me with such force in that direction.

What was happening? I was so scared. Who was this man? Why was he treating me as if I had no feelings?

I turned and looked behind me, wondering where my parents were, wishing they were ok and that they would find me. They always found me.

But not that time. Never again.

They hadn't found me, and I haven't seen their faces again since that day.

It's been 21 years and life since that day has never been the same.

To the way we ate and the way we walked on the street, considering we got to go outside.

But that is my life now, that is all our lives now.

My name is Anya Michaels and this is the story of how my life changed because of one stupid mistake. Well, this is just the beginning.

*Coming, Going, Gone.*

Catarina M., Arts High School, Grade 12

Waking up to the kiss of warmth from the sun,  
One shows gratitude for another day.  
However, calendars are meaningless and no fun,  
When your hair begins to fade to gray.

Stealing, time is a thief.  
It takes away everything you once were.  
Memories being erased and disappearing into fog,  
Like they never even happened before.

As one begins to realize that their time is coming to an end,  
They grow angry and upset.  
But not at the ticking clock, no  
Tis' the loss of function instead.

The gift that keeps taking away.  
Losing strength, feeling alone,  
Looking at old photos of oneself  
Where the wrinkles had not yet shown.

The beauty begins to diminish,  
However, wisdom and knowledge carry forth.  
Loved ones feeling the deep pain of losing someone,  
As memories are the last thing to remember them by henceforth.

By Sumwen O.

Arts High School, Grade 11



I smile because I'm blessed.  
I smile because I'm happy.  
I smile because I am a living testimony.



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