



# A Way With Words





Thank You to Our Community Partners



“When an individual writes, they are not restricted to the physical elements of reality. They have the ability to create anything and everything with their words. From dragons to adventures... it’s endless.”

*Amy Lu, Cover Artist  
Grade 11, Burnaby South Secondary*

## A Message from the Burnaby Board of Education

The WORDS Writing Project is testimony to the fact that in Burnaby Schools, literacy is a priority. We know that literacy is the foundation for all learning and our teachers know this too. Our students are not only taught to read and write, they’re also encouraged to express themselves through the power of words.

Unique to Burnaby School District, the WORDS Writing Project has annually showcased the best in student work since 1985/86. The growth and continued success of this writing project is a direct reflection of the dedicated teachers who nurture the writing talents of their students, supportive parents who encourage their children to do their very best, and generous community sponsors who are committed to supporting youth and literacy.

We are proud to present to you the 2015/16 WORDS Anthology, “A Way With Words.” The poetry and prose within its pages will take you away to new places, take you on bold adventures, and touch your heart. These young writers will amaze you with their ability to put pure and honest ideas into words so eloquently.

Congratulations to the more than 100 students who were selected to be published in this year’s anthology. You certainly do have “a way with words.” We encourage you to nurture your writing talents as they will serve you well wherever you go.

You make us proud.



Ron  
Burton  
Chair



Harman  
Pandher  
Vice-Chair



Katrina  
Chen



Meiling  
Chia



Larry  
Hayes



Baljinder  
Narang

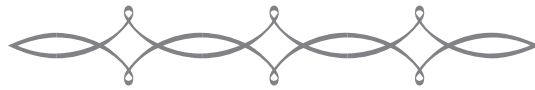


Gary  
Wong



[www.burnabyschools.ca](http://www.burnabyschools.ca)

# A Way With Words



## WORDS Writing Project 2015/16 Anthology



This is an anthology of selected works by students from Kindergarten to Grade 12.  
Please review content to ensure it is appropriate for your child.

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

While every effort is made to showcase student work as true to the original form as possible, variations may have occurred during the layout process.

### Candy Hills

**Emma Halko** *Clinton Elementary*

Driving in the bumpy hills of wavy cinnamon buns  
I see mountains of tall chocolate bars  
Sinking in the melting pudding  
Small hills slither towards the long cliffs of caramel.

### States of Matter

**Nysa Singhi** *Marlborough Elementary*

Solid, liquid, gas, three states of matter,  
Mix them together and you get a batter.

Matter is something that you can see,  
Touch, smell or taste,  
And all of these things take up space.

Solids are hard and by itself it can't move anywhere,  
Wow! Look around they are here, there, everywhere.

Liquid takes the shape, in which it is poured in,  
It's not like something firm, thick or thin.

Gas is free flowing like steam, helium and air,  
Something which can spread everywhere.

Bones as solid, blood as liquid, and air in your lungs  
as gas, is inside me and you,  
They are also inside animals, birds and bugs too.

Solid particles are very close like best friends,  
They are always together hands in hands.

Liquid particles are not so far and not so close,  
They are casual friends, I suppose.

Gas particles are far away as if they are having a fight,  
All throughout the day and night.

Solid, liquid, gas, solid, liquid, gas, three states of matter,  
Close friends, casual friends and far friends  
Are still friends, no matter.

### First Nations People

**Shaylen Bhushan**

*Buckingham Elementary*

Pray nature  
Good archer  
Hunt moose  
Eat meat  
Ride canoe  
Catch fish  
Love dance  
Play drums  
Music arts  
Make totem poles  
Tipi tent  
Before Greece  
Before Rome  
Made Canada  
Lovely home

### Bonjour l'hiver

**Anjie Chen**

*École Brantford Élémentaire*

Bonjour l'hiver  
Bonjour chocolats chauds  
Et glisser en traîneau  
Bonjour sculptures de glace  
Et glaçons brillants  
Au revoir arbres sans feuilles  
Et râpeaux qui travaillent  
Au revoir dîner de dinde  
Et feuilles colorées  
Au revoir l'automne







## The Snowman and the Frying Pan

**K. M.**

*Aubrey Elementary*

Once upon a time, there was a hungry snowman that lived in a small igloo. He wanted to make fried eggs to eat. So, he took his snow money and went to the snow store. He bought a small frying pan and some eggs. The snowman went back home and washed the frying pan. Then he put it on the stove and started to cook the eggs.

While the snowman was cooking, he felt his smile start to slide down from his face to his tummy, and his eyes were starting to fall down straight after it. He quickly put his smile back on his face, but on top of his eyebrows, and he put his eyes where his mouth was supposed to be. Now, the snowman's vision was extraordinarily different and he could not see properly. He realized that he had put himself back together the wrong way, and he

quickly rearranged his face. Then he looked down and noticed that one foot was gone! "Oh no!" the snowman cried. "I'm melting from between my toes to my big carrot nose!"

He was so frightened that he hopped outside on one foot to build another igloo and an ice machine to put inside of it. He turned on the ice machine and stood over top of it. After he grew his foot back, he decided to take his snow money to the snow store again to buy an air conditioner. Then he went back home. He turned on the air conditioner and went back into the kitchen to finish cooking. This adventure became a lesson for him to always turn on the air conditioner whenever he cooked fried eggs!

## Petit oiseau va dehors

**K. M.**

*École Aubrey Élémentaire*

Petit Oiseau se prepare pour aller dehors pendant l'hiver. Elle met son manteau, qui est fabriqué d'une feuille d'érable dorée. Puis, elle met ses bottes rouges et brillantes. Ensuite, elle met son bonnet, qui est décoré avec des vers de terre au lieu des rubans.

Petit Oiseau va dehors. Le ciel est bleu dan La Ville des Ailes, et la terre est toute blanche. C'est très froid. Elle commence à chercher le chocolat qu'elle a caché dans la neige. "Je ne peux pas trouver mon chocolat!" crie Petit Oiseau.

Elle cherche et elle cherche. Bientôt, elle trouve son amie Petit Canard. Petit Oiseau dit, "Bonjour, Petit Canard. Est-ce que tu as vu mon chocolat?" Petit Canard ouvre son aile et prend quelque chose de sa poche de plume. Elle demande, "Est-ce que c'est ça?" Petit Oiseau est contente. Elle frappe ses ailes. Elle s'exclame, "Oui, c'est ça! Maintenant, je peux mélanger mon chocolat avec de la neige pour faire du chocolat chaud!"



## Mon aventure de neige

**Claire Anderson**

*École Brantford Élémentaire*

Un bon matin ensoleillé j'ai regardé par ma fenêtre et j'ai vu des petits flocons de neige qui tombent comme une tempête faite par les fées. "Je veux aller dehors," j'ai dit à ma maman.

"Alors," dit maman, "mais habille-toi bien."

"J'ai demandé à mes amies si elles voulaient faire un bonhomme de neige mais tout le monde dit qu'elles doivent s'asseoir près du feu avec leur famille et boire du chocolat chaud. Je dois faire mon bonhomme toute seule."

Je ne sais pas comment faire un bonhomme de neige toute seule. Je vais demander à ma maman si elle sait comment faire un bonhomme de neige. Roule une grosse boule, une moyenne et une petite. Mets la petite sur la moyenne et la moyenne sur la grosse. Place un chapeau sur la tête. Une carotte pour le nez. Je place des branches pour les bras. Je place des mitaines pour les mains et je fais une bouche souriante, des yeux et des boutons. Maintenant j'ai un ami!

Le soleil arrive. J'avais trop chaud dans mes vêtements d'hiver. Le lendemain toute la neige a fondu. Sauf ... mon bonhomme de neige? Qu'est-ce qui s'est passé? Peut-être que mon bonhomme est ... magique?

"Bonjour," dit quelqu'un.

C'est qui ça? C'est mon bonhomme de neige! Il est magique! Quelle surprise! "Bonjour Monsieur Bonhomme de neige!"

On a joué au tag, grounders et beaucoup d'autres jeux. Finalement, c'était le temps d'aller au lit. Au milieu de la nuit, quelqu'un a frappé à ma porte. C'est mon bonhomme de neige! "Tu veux aller sur une aventure?"

"Alors suis-moi," dit mon bonhomme.

J'ai suivi mon bonhomme. Il a couru jusqu'à la forêt. Il volait aussi?

"Attends, bonhomme! Je vois la Tour Eiffel! On a volé au-dessus de l'Angleterre et j'ai vu le big Ben. On a volé partout dans le monde." Quand je suis rentrée à ma maison, j'étais si fatigué. C'était une aventure extraordinaire.

### J'ai toujours le choix

**Ryan Zhang**

*École Marlborough Élémentaire*

Je peux choisir  
d'être juste quand la vie ne l'est pas  
Je peux choisir  
d'aller plus loin quand je suis déjà à la limite  
Je peux choisir  
de prendre soin de moi-même quand les autres choses occupent mon temps  
Je peux choisir  
d'intervenir quand un tyran est méchant  
Je peux choisir  
de dire "oui" à mes parents au lieu de dire "non"  
Je peux choisir  
de sourire quand le malheur arrive  
Je peux choisir  
d'être optimiste car la négativité peut monter  
Je peux choisir  
de planter les arbres  
J'ai toujours le choix...

### How to be a Fry

**Angel Guo**

*Buckingham Elementary*

Live in a river  
Hide in the shade  
Begin to swim up and float  
Take a huge gulp of air  
Look out for predators  
Travel to the salt water  
Beware of hungry birds and fish  
Detect the trail  
Survive at last

### The Heart of the Solar System

**Ella Go**

*Suncrest Elementary*

You are the biggest one in your family  
Every member circles you slowly  
You are the hottest in your group  
Every planet is shined from your light  
You are with us every day and night  
Even though you seem to disappear on nightfall  
You rise up every morning and give us hope  
Even at dawn you're very beautiful  
You are our heart, you are our soul



### SCARED

**Christian Escobar**

*Morley Elementary*

Shaking in a corner in a dark room by myself,  
I see a **dark spooky face** with *bloody teeth*,  
My heart is beating 10X *fast*,  
I try to run but I can't move a single bit  
It comes closer and closer,  
I close my eyes...  
And everything goes dark.

### Snow

**Adora Huynh**

*Parkcrest Elementary*

The cold winter snow  
Frozen magic, crunchy slush  
Drips of chilling frost

### Fright in the Night

**Jewel Webb**

*Morley Elementary*

You're alone,  
By yourself,  
In the old abandoned house that's in the forest,  
A wolf howls in the distance,  
You hear growling in one of the rooms upstairs,  
A black widow crawls on the ceiling,  
You look out the broken window and shudder,  
As a misty white shape floats by and lets out a low groan,  
A creature with pale green skin limps in a room upstairs,  
A little doll sitting in a chair next to you turns and looks at you, then sings,  
"I'm going to get you."  
It puts on a creepy smile,  
You scream and race down the stairs to the front door,  
You jiggle the handle but it won't open,  
A red-eyed zombie wolf crawls toward you,  
It pounces on you,  
And you wake in your room with your puppy licking your face,  
Turns out it was just a dream!

### Red

**Jerico Martinez**

*Windsor Elementary*

Red is the colour of a  
Shiny apple with the  
Juices spilling out.  
Fireworks exploding  
With power only  
Hearing the echo in  
Its aftermath.

Red is the colour of a  
Warm fuzzy blanket  
Wrapping you with heat.  
The feeling of anger,  
Coming out of my body.

Red is the colour of a  
Spicy red pepper eating it  
And running with my  
Tongue out.  
A warm soft sunset,  
Too tired to stay up.

Red is the colour of a  
Solar eclipse, slowly  
Merging into shape.  
With cold autumn  
Leaves changed into  
A dark red.

### A Wish Per Page

**Tove Buhlmann**

*Suncrest Elementary*

A page has a power, a power to wish.  
A mark alone is a wish starting and expanding.  
A wish comes to life through its creator's own determination.  
A wish comes to life with the simplest things.  
One wish comes with a field ahead, of possibility.  
A wish is powerful and can change the world.  
A wish per page is what you get,  
and this page is mine.

### Ode to Mom's Coffee

**Samantha Garcea**

*Parkcrest Elementary*

Oh, ground, creamy morning drink.  
You unleash her taste buds in a calming whisper of flavour.  
Your silky, fresh drips make her happy and start her day with a  
smooth, relaxing, savoury taste.  
She pours you and takes a whiff of your elegant, dreamy scent.  
Without you, her days are grey and grumpy with dark clouds.  
Please be on the shelf with your mouth-watering aroma.  
Your prison of clay that we call a mug, fights through the  
Lipstick stains she makes as she takes a sip of your  
irresistible, calming liquid.  
Your small, pinches of cream and sugar only make you  
stronger and more welcome.  
The thing she loves most of all, except for us kids and our love.

### Pourquoi recycler?

**Adrian Chua**

*École Suncrest Élémentaire*

Si vous voulez que la terre garde son beau visage,  
Pratiquez le recyclage.

Vous verrez que si vous participez,  
Nous ferons du progrès,  
Et le monde sera meilleur  
Si nous travaillons de bon coeur.

Et grâce à ça, les arbres pousseront et l'air se rafraîchira.  
Tu verras que le soleil brillera et que la lune te sourira.  
Au lieu de gaspiller toutes ces ressources et tous ces produits,  
On ferait mieux de recycler jour et nuit.

Il n'y a rien de plus sage que le recyclage.  
La beauté du recyclage est qu'il peut se pratiquer à tout âge.

Quelle excuse avez-vous?  
Quels genres de gens sommes nous?  
Si je le pouvais, je dirais à tout le monde l'importance du recyclage.

### I am Not...

**Tiffany Chong**

*Buckingham Elementary*

I am not my family, relatives, or friends  
Neither am I really a fancy person  
I am not too slow and not too fast  
I am not the homework that my teacher assigns me  
Or the monsters hidden under my bed  
I am not too flat or expressive  
Neither am I a big fan of avocados  
I am not the best at cooking  
I am not my old piano  
Or an elastic band that has flexible time  
Am I or am I not?

### City Senses

**Afsheen Hossain**

*Buckingham Elementary*

Horns honking,  
Sirens screaming,  
Traffic zooming by.  
Shopping malls,  
Parking lots,  
Billboards up high.  
Apartment buildings,  
Office towers,  
Airplanes in the sky.  
Bus stops,  
Road signs,  
People rushing by.





## The Magic of Christmas

**Anisha Sharda**

*Suncrest Elementary*

### **Once upon a time there was a boy named Rollan.**

Rollan was a little boy with a big problem. He was always bored. Christmas was the only time he was a little bit excited. (Still a little bit). This Christmas, though, was going to be magical. He was going to have the best day of his life.

It was a moist, rainy day when it happened. It was Christmas Eve. Rollan was walking in the mall with his parents, thinking about all the gifts he was going to get the next day. Then he saw a big pile of stuffed bears and snapped out of his dreaming mode.

"Mom, can I go take a look at those stuffed bears, please?" Rollan asked. "No, honey, you're only 12," she replied. "But mom, I'm 12. I'm old enough to go alone. Just tell me where you'll be and I'll return after taking a look," Rollan said. "Okay fine, you can go," his mom said. "I'll be at the market area." "Thanks!" Rollan said, and he ran off towards the bears. He examined each and every one, sometimes snuggling into one and taking comfort in how soft they were. They all seemed to have some magic in them.

Then he saw it: a moving picture of Santa Claus! Rollan was shocked. He turned away from it and wondered if he has imagined it or if he had actually seen it. He turned toward it. It was still there! "Ho! Ho! Ho!" he heard. Then he was being pulled toward the wall, into the picture! "Ah! Help!" Rollan shouted. Suddenly, he was inside the picture! "Ho! Ho! Ho!" he heard again. "What is going on?!" Rollan shouted. "Hi Rollan!" Santa said. "My name is Santa!" Santa said. "Aaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!! Rollan screamed and he fainted.

When he woke up, he saw Santa again. This time he was in a dusty, gray room. There were lots of small

figures wrapping and making gifts. He was in the toy factory! "Yay!" all the small figures shouted. "We are Santa's elves!" "What is GOING ON?!" Rollan shouted. "I hope he doesn't faint again," Santa muttered. "Okay, Rollan, we need your help," Santa said. "This Christmas, aliens are attacking. They hate Christmas. We need your help delivering the presents while not getting attacked by aliens." "Okay, I'll help," Rollan said. "Okay then, let's get going!" Santa said. "Wait, don't we need to prepare with battle supplies and traps?" Rollan asked. "Of course!" the elves shouted. "You and Santa can prepare the reindeer while we get the supplies!"

The reindeer were prepared and the sleigh was packed. Santa, Rollan, the sack and the battle supplies, bows, nets and swords were in the sleigh. "Good luck!" the elves said. Santa and Rollan took off.

"The aliens!" Rollan shouted. "I see a spaceship!" "Oh my, me too!" Santa said. "Get prepared for a battle." Rollan put nets around the sleigh and got the swords and bows ready. When the aliens came near, they got trapped in the nets. Some aliens could go through the nets, so those were killed by a swing of a sword or a shoot of a bow.

The aliens that did get trapped in the net were thrown down. "Yay!" Santa said when all the aliens were gone. "I've always been falling out of my sleigh because of these aliens. You've helped me a lot. Now let me do some magic with you so you don't stay bored all the time." There was a cloud of silver sparkles and after a moment it was all gone. "Now I'll send you back. You certainly will get LOTS of presents because you helped me so much!" "Bye Santa!" said Rollan and with another cloud of sparkles, Rollan was back at the store with his mom.



## The Third Floor Bedroom

**Gabrielle McGowan**

*Chaffey-Burke Elementary*

Pat looked nervously out his car window at the towering mansion. It was three floors high with windows everywhere. It was a repulsive shade of brown paint. He figured the house was at least a billion years old. Or at least older than his parents. Surrounding the house was a misty forest with branches that looked like arms. “Creepy forest to go with the creepy house,” he thought.

Pat glanced at his twin sister, Margaret. Both of them had the same idea: they did not want to move here. “We’re finally here,” said his mother who was first to break the silence. “Isn’t this house beautiful?” No one answered.

As they entered the house, Pat flinched. It smelled musty. Margaret was making gagging sounds. Even Pat’s mom was holding her nose. “Well, kids,” her voice was muffled, “It’s a very big house. You can either help clean up or explore...” Before she finished her sentence, the two children were heading upstairs.

On the third floor, Pat soon realized that each room had unusual wallpaper. One room had orange wallpaper that looked like tiger’s fur. He came to a grey papered room that reminded him of mist. Pat liked the foggy coloured wallpaper. He decided this would be his room.

Margaret chose a room with crimson wallpaper that was covered in flying white birds. She opened the window wide to let in some air.

Satisfied, Margaret decided to find her mom. She found her mom reading a letter in the kitchen.

“Whatcha’ reading, Mum?”

Mom replied, “Just a list of house safety rules.” She read aloud: **DON’T LEAVE THE BEDROOM WINDOWS OPEN FOR LONG.** “Strange...” Mom whispered.

A short time later, Margaret ran upstairs to her room to write in her journal. Engrossed in writing, she heard an odd fluttering sound behind her. Margaret quickly ran out of her room to find Pat.

Meanwhile, Pat noticed a change in his room. The air felt heavy with moisture. A mist began to swirl around him.

Alarmed, Pat ran out of his room to the nearest door. It was the room with the tiger stripes. Relieved to escape the mist, he stepped in.

Something was breathing heavily on his neck. Pat turned and his heart skipped a beat. Towering over him was an enormous tiger. It bared its fangs and growled. Thinking this was the end, Pat felt a hand grab the collar of his shirt and pull him into the hall.

Margaret slammed the door shut.

“I heard growling,” said Margaret. “The wallpaper is coming to life!” they screamed simultaneously.

Margaret suddenly remembered the note Mom read in the kitchen. **DON’T LEAVE THE BEDROOM WINDOWS OPEN FOR LONG.** Running into her room, she lunged at the open window, slamming it shut.

## The Ice Cream Apple Pie

**Caitlin Craig**

*Stoney Creek Community School*

As the apple pie was being cut I had a smile on my face and I already knew this was going to be the best thing I ever ate. The steam was coming out of the pie like a kettle making hot water. "I've been waiting for this almost all my life," I thought to myself as I eyed the apple pie like a lion eyeing its prey. It was torture to me to wait this long to get just a piece of apple pie and some ice cream. My mouth was already watering. All I could see now was that pie. Finally the scrumptious, delicious, pie and vanilla ice cream was right in front of me. I could barely handle it; it was like it was shining on the table right where I was sitting. My piece of pie was singing to me, it was oozing with apples and it looked like it was going to explode. At last I took a bite and I was in a magical land of apple pie ice cream. My mouth wanted to dance because it was that good, it was better than good, it was extremely excellent. It was the best thing that ever touched my tongue. The mixture of the piping hot pie and the ice cold ice cream was an explosion of taste. Then the worst thing that could happen happened. It had disappeared into my mouth. "At least I got the piece I had wanted," I thought to myself as I had the exact same smile I had when I saw the ice cream apple pie.

## Chocolate

**Melissa Luces-Taje**

*Stoney Creek Community School*

I moved my tongue in and around every crack and crevice feeling every bump and hill until I found a crack that went deeper than the other smaller cracks. I dug my tongue furiously deeper hoping that I would eventually hit the centre. Then it felt like a nuclear bomb went off inside my mouth sending sharp waves of flavour all around. The new flavour was familiar . . . Cream! That was it, it filled me with joy as the chocolatey outer shell melted to nothing leaving only the inner cream. But it too soon disappeared away leaving only small traces of what it used to be, in the order it came it went away, Chocolate, cream, nothing, absolutely nothing, no traces, nothing.





## Minecraft

**Adrian Chua**

*Suncrest Elementary*

I Love Minecraft, but my parents always hide my iPad, and do not allow me to play it. Even if I finish my homework, sometimes I still don't get to play it. I really want to play Minecraft, but I need to convince my parents that Minecraft is not a mindless game. That it is actually a very challenging game that stimulates the imaginations of our young minds.

For parents who are not familiar with Minecraft, allow me to give you some idea about it. Minecraft is an electronic game where kids can become builders and engineers. Minecraft has several playing modes. Since my favourite is the Creative mode, I will only talk about the Creative mode. In this mode, you can build almost anything in 3D form. You can even add elaborate security systems to your virtual creations. I truly believe that this game is not only fun but also educational and may even help with my future career – I want to be an engineer when I grow up.

Minecraft's Creative mode can improve math and logical thinking. It is a good place to turn your ideas into "reality." The Creative mode even has an electronics feature that introduces basics of electronics to kids. It also has unlimited energy which uses a substance called red-stone that generates and conducts endless Minecraft electricity. It might become the future source of electricity. We can do real cool stuff with red-stone in Minecraft.

In my opinion, the most important thing about Minecraft is that it allows us kids to imagine. This happens when we build structures and try to modify and improve them. We, as human beings, need imagination to improve our lives and our environment. With improved imagination, it may even help me find a good job someday. I truly believe that it helps children to imagine. A lot of times when I have design problems in Minecraft, I would think about them in my spare time even when I am not playing it. And that is usually the moment that I find solutions to the problems.

I would like to make a deal with my parents that if I finished my homework and practiced my instruments, I should be allowed to play Minecraft for one hour daily. And I promise to stay within the time limit.

### Poverty

**Shanin Khaled**

*Nelson Elementary*

She sits on the floor  
Nothing but dust and tears  
Nothing but the wind lingering through the door  
This is what she calls 'home'  
There is never enough food to eat  
They can't even afford to pay the heat  
The parents leave her alone, too busy working two jobs to stay home  
They are hopeful for the best  
Counting on God to handle the rest  
Wishing not to end up like the others, dead

### Unwanted

**Janice Chan**

*Nelson Elementary*

An icy chill, a starless night  
A sea of memories that don't seem right  
I scream, I shout, but no one hears  
My cries for help, my misery and tears  
They look right past me, like I'm not there  
As I drown in my own despair  
Unreal, unwanted, exhausted, forgotten  
An icy chill, a starless night

### Fire

**Muhan Sun**

*Chaffey-Burke Elementary*

A trapped creature in a cage,  
forced to provide light and heat  
until its death.

It strikes back  
burning its cage to the ground,  
cloning and spreading itself everywhere,  
turning something majestic into a pile of ruins,  
rejoicing its freedom.

It prowls around its cage  
consuming the final pieces of timber,  
its energy is fading,  
extinction draws near.

The creature is agitated,  
it radiates fear in waves,  
its strength is unstoppable  
it was time for revenge.

Humans beware  
the creature that brings  
life yet death.

### Winter Haiku

**Deeya Thind**

*Buckingham Elementary*

Frosty the snowman  
Drinking some hot chocolate  
Bad combination

### Le premier jour du printemps

**Ella Kqiku**

*École Seaforth Élémentaire*

Je marche devant la porte avec mon  
Imperméable et des bottes,  
J'ouvre mon parapluie et je vois une  
Flaque d'eau.  
J'arrête et j'entends les gouttes de pluie  
Tombant sur mon parapluie.  
Toc  
Toc  
Toc  
Je saute dans une flaque d'eau  
Sploush!  
La pluie cesse  
Je ferme mon parapluie  
Je lève mes yeux vers le ciel.  
Je vois des nuages qui s'éloignent  
Doucelement  
Le soleil est sorti! C'est le premier  
Jour du printemps!

I am From **Emily Ma** *Brentwood Park Elementary*

i am from silver forks and ivory chopsticks. . .

**\*\*prologue\*\***

i come from the mold in which others shape me.

**i COME FROM LASAGNA AND FROZEN PIZZA ON LATE NIGHTS  
FROM ha gao AND zhu chang fen (DIM SUM) ON SPECIAL WEEKENDS AND BIRTHDAYS  
EATING PROCESSED HOT DOGS AND HAMBURGERS FROM SUPERSTORE FOR QUICK MEALS  
AND THE jiozi AND baozi i USED TO HELP MAKE  
i COME FROM SILVER FORKS  
AND BLUNT KNIVES  
AND IVORY CHOPSTICKS  
THAT SIT AWKWARDLY IN MY HANDS**

i come from questions met with black stares  
people asking them

in Chinese  
from counting my fingers behind my back  
whenever someone asks how old i am  
in Chinese  
only, there aren't enough fingers to count now.

i come from the question "where are you from?"  
and the answer "I'm from Canada."  
"no, where are you really from?"  
i come from my tongue tripping over  
my dad's Mandarin  
and my mom's Cantonese  
and understanding only half of what they say

**i COME FROM STEREOTYPES  
BAD CHINESE DRIVERS  
THE INTROVERTED ASIAN  
LACK OF ATHLETIC ABILITY  
AND i COME FROM TRYING TO ESCAPE EMBRACE DISMANTLE THEM**

i am from the Chinese labourers  
that built the Canadian Pacific Railway  
how many died to unite this country  
my great-great-grandfather, one among many  
who received, in thanks for his hard work

**THE "CHINESE IMMIGRATION ACT"**



i come from China, memories buried forgotten  
 from “What did it look like?”s  
 and “How did we live?”s  
 trying to paint a picture for myself with words  
 wanting to devour every book  
 to soak in the experiences  
 that i can never have  
 access to the language  
 (that i never really wanted to learn anyway)  
 somehow managing to be both too Chinese  
 but not Chinese enough

**i AM FROM A GRANDMA  
 WHO MIXES BETWEEN “AIYA!”S AND ACCENTED “OH NO!”S AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY  
 WORRYING THAT i’LL BE TOO COLD WHEN IT’S 25 DEGREES OUT  
 “your hands feel cold! do you need to wear a heavier sweater?”  
 i COME FROM POLITICIANS DELETING TWEETS ABOUT PRAISING  
 UNACCENTED ENGLISH  
 WHAT IS UNACCENTED ENGLISH, ANYWAY?  
 AND FROM CHINESE ACCENTS THAT SOUND HARSH, AWKWARD, UGLY  
 THAT i WISH SOUNDED SOFTER, MORE MELODIOUS  
 BECAUSE IF YOU’RE GOING TO HAVE AN ACCENT, WHY CAN’T IT SOUND NICE  
 WHY AM i ASHAMED OF MY  
 CHINESENESS**

i am from gawks and wide eyes  
 and questions that leave me flushed  
 and angry retorts  
 haven’t you ever heard of a Chinese Muslim?  
 a non-practicing Chinese Muslim  
 who doesn’t know anything  
 about Islam – Allahu (. . . who?) akbar? God is great?  
 swinging back and forth  
 between embarrassment that i am Muslim  
 and embarrassment that i am ignorant of being Muslim  
 i am from swinging on the monkey bars on the playground after school  
 laughing as i fall and get back up  
 and then when i fall too hard  
 i then come from expectations  
 that sometimes leave me in tears  
 quiet drops of potent agony  
 absorbed in the blanket of stars, moon and sky  
 the roost of night soothing me with her dark wings

I am From *Cont'd*

i AM FROM IMAGINATIONS THAT SOAR LIKE BLACKBIRDS SPREADING THEIR WINGS IN THE NIGHT SKY  
 GATEWAYS AND PARALLEL VERSIONS OF REALITY  
 THE NEW-BOOK SMELL – FRESHLY PRINTED INK AND CRISP PAGES  
 BURYING MY NOSE AND MY SOUL IN THE ESCAPE FROM EXPECTATIONS  
 BEING KNOWLEDGE-ABLE  
 CONNECTING TO THE CHARACTERS  
 THAT HAUNT THE PAGES  
 FROM “SALAAM ALAIKUM”  
 AND “NI HAO”  
 THE WAY TREES ARE GROUNDED BY THEIR ROOTS  
 i AM GROUNDED BY SIMPLE WORDS  
 THAT CONNECT ME TO MY ROOTS.

**\*\*epilogue\*\***

I ~~come~~ am from myself.

## Click Here

**Emily Ma**

*Brentwood Park Elementary*

Have you ever wished you could be rich?

**Click Here**

Have you ever wished you could be famous?

**Click Here**

Have you ever wished you could be important?

**Click Here**

Wishes are irrelevant-but-

I wish. . .

But I wouldn't **Click Here**

**Clicking Here** could mean so much

Meaning so little

Immunity to life

All the power you want

Whatever you want

But choosing something not so wise. . .

This world that we think revolves around us  
**WE** revolve around **IT**.

We do what **IT** wants us to

Not what **WE** want to do

Because **IT** is the world

And **WE** are **IT**.

**Click Here**, and you'll be rich

**IT** taunts

**Click Here**, and you'll be famous

**IT** smiles

**Click Here**, and you'll always be important

**IT** mocks

When WE do **Click Here**

**WE** are

No more rich

No more famous

No more important

Than before **WE**

**Clicked HERE**

And before I go, I'll warn you again:

**DO NOT Click Here**

## In a Soldier's Boots

**Anika Nielsen**

*Nelson Elementary*

Think, remember, marvel and consider  
What it felt like to be in war  
Pitted against the enemy  
Forever in combat  
A bloody memory rewound in the back of your mind  
To see only death and experience tragedy everyday  
Looking around at piles of the deceased  
Meditating on the fact that any one of those corpses could be you  
It transforms you, you come back altered  
If you come back at all  
Feeling betrayed, rebellious and crestfallen  
Wishing you were anywhere, but here  
Pondering if you'll ever see loved ones again  
Desiring to tell them that you love them  
Hoping  
Testing grit and foul auburn air  
As you run off to die for your country  
Adrenaline races through your veins  
Sprinting to the slaughter  
It's not human  
You shall be awakened in the middle of the night  
Haunted by screams, cries, and guns  
Smelling the stench of death in your dreams  
Ears ringing, mouth dry  
Restless sleep  
Gazing into a wounded comrade's eyes  
Seeing the hopelessness in his face  
His chest rises his last breath  
You must battle for him, your family,  
Your country's freedom

## Shattered Dreams

**Aaliyah Mohamedani**

*Chaffey-Burke Elementary*

As fragile as glass,  
all my confidence  
gathered up,  
years to build,  
seconds to break.  
You who shattered  
my dreams.  
My safe place,  
my escape from  
all the evils in the world.  
Something to give me hope,  
what I work hard  
and live for,  
turned to dust  
within moments.  
You who shattered  
my dreams.  
A dream to motivate me,  
a dream to push me forward  
and keep me going.  
I dream to escape reality,  
but I have not escaped  
you at all,  
You may have brought me down,  
but you have not  
seen the last of me.  
For you are the one  
who shattered my dreams.

PerspeCTIVE **Thea Ulsamer** Brentwood Park Elementary*i see her standing there. . .**black hair**dark eyes**yellow skin**lonely**looking so small**staring**standing under a clouded grey sky**i see her standing there. . .**blonde hair**light eyes**milky white skin**laughing**staring**at me**she's looking at me**who does she think she is?**Staring**like she knows who i am**she doesn't know me**and i don't know her**i'm looking at her**she knows**i'm looking at her**i'm staring at her**wishing**to be her**but**she doesn't know me**and i don't know her**she looks so lowly**she looks so beautiful**she's new here**holes in her shoes**and a rip on her bag**holding a faded blue umbrella**no sense of style**ugh**i hate those kind of girls**she looks like she owns the world**confident**radiant**new shoes**a cool handbag**the latest smartphone**i hate those kind of girls**she's surrounded by no one**what a loser**a quivering lip**shivering in her old yellow sweater**doesn't she know that she looks**imperfect?**she's surrounded by everyone**smiles**laughter**compliments on her new purple sweater**she knows that she looks**perfect**she needs to go back home**to her country**but she doesn't know it.**she's home**this is her country**and she knows it**she's not wanted here.**i'm not wanted here*



ugh  
 i wish she would just  
 stop  
 staring  
 at  
 me  
 she clutches her textbooks to her chest like  
 they're her shield  
 like  
 they're her protection  
 from what, i don't know.  
 aren't her kind already leaching everything  
 from my country?  
 my country  
 that my family has lived in for the past

two  
 generations  
 she looks so happy  
 so carefree  
 i clutch my textbooks to my chest  
 hoping to shield myself  
 from the onslaught  
 of her  
 judgement  
 she doesn't know that i've lived  
 here  
 for the past  
 eleven  
 years  
 that my family has lived  
 here  
 for the past  
 four  
 generations  
 so she thinks she's better than me?

maybe

we

are . . .

maybe. . .  
 maybe we're the same.  
 i don't know her story.  
 she doesn't know mine  
 i don't know her story.  
 she doesn't know mine  
 maybe we are the same.

\* \* \*

Hi, I'm Thalia.\* What's your name?

\*def. blossoming

Lavada.\*\*

\*\* def. friendship

### Tenses

**Alison Lu**

*Parkcrest Elementary*

I am the actions you have yet to forget  
the chorus of voices in your head  
the mocking of a desolate mind  
a figure in the shadows of time  
I am the Past

I am a decision yet to be made  
a labourer waiting to be paid  
a pastry in the making  
an action in the waking  
I am the Present

I am a piece of uncharted territory  
a feared unwritten story  
a yarn yet to be unraveled  
a land where no man has travelled  
I am the Future

### The Waters

**Samantha Lawrence**

*Cameron Elementary*

Clear waters  
Of the lakes,  
Rivers,  
And the ocean.

Shallow bay,  
Flowing creek,  
Glistening in the sunlight.

Will the waters still be here? Give the waters kindness.

Beautiful ocean,  
Dancing waves,  
Tides lapping,  
At the sandy shore.

Huge crabs,  
Gorgeous shells,  
Stringing the clean white beach.

Will the seashores still be here? Take care of the beaches.

Beautiful things,  
Under sea world,  
Oolichan, salmon,  
School of herring.  
Pod of humpbacks,  
Leaping dolphins,

Dancing, splashing orca.

Will these creatures still be here? Treat them with respect.

To Aboriginals,  
The earth is sacred.  
From a trickling stream,  
To the wide open ocean.

Each part is precious.

Will we listen to these people? Acknowledge their requests.

For we are part of the earth and the earth is part of us.

## Because I Am a Girl

**Pavita Sidhu**

*Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

I wake up,  
Body aching,  
I dread the tasks I must do at the strike of dawn.

I am a girl.  
Being a girl is a burden here,  
Heavy chains dragging me down,  
Slow and steady I walk long hours to do simple chores,  
Ripping me from my right to the education I deserve.

Never being able to follow my dreams,  
They crumble like sand between my fingertips.

I am a girl.  
By the age of 14, I will be a newlywed,  
To a vindictive stranger.  
He is much older, but it does not matter,  
My opinion is useless, my words a mere gust of wind,  
To be ignored and forgotten in the horizon.

17 will be the year I will have a 2 year old daughter,  
And be expecting another.  
I am uneducated, with the father never around,  
I fend for the life of my daughter,  
The only light in the sea of darkness that has become my life.

I am tired, sullen, in want of a new life,  
I look at the sweet, innocent face that sleeps in the corner,  
Yearning for the day that someone will take her away from me.

I pray for her that she leaves to lead a better life elsewhere,  
Away from this prison;  
The prison that has locked me behind bars for eternity,  
As I will never be able to escape,  
Despite my wishes, I know she will not get the dream that is so far away from us.

We are treated unequal,  
Unable to rise to our full potential,  
To be left in the dust forever;  
Shadows in our own home.

I jolt awake from my daydream,  
Body aching,  
Dreading the unchangeable destiny that is my own,  
Because I am a girl.

## Unfinished

**Sophie Liu***Burnaby South Secondary*

Pretty dresses with nowhere to go  
In the express lane driving slow  
Exquisite instruments without reeds  
Stunning roses that cannot bear seeds

Beautiful faces without emotion  
Odysseus drowning in unforgiving ocean  
Feathers clipped on her lover's wing  
Bird of paradise who cannot sing

Melting hearts turned to ice  
Bonds severed in a single slice  
Will you jump into the dark unknown  
Or stay in this false illusion of home?

## Retake

**Sophie Liu***Burnaby South Secondary*

I could see myself *reflected* in your eyes  
Conflicting currents, untold lies  
Clashing seas, stormy skies

Your colours *refracted* in my soul  
Waves of blue, streaks of gold  
Hazel of warmth, ice of cold

My heart *recreated* in your name  
Loved and lost, went and came  
One and only, just the same

Your thoughts *replaced* me unknowingly  
Unsure why I thought that *you'd* see  
Just how much you meant to me

## La Haine

**Emma Soothill***École Alpha Secondaire*

Dans les rues  
Où nous étions les explorateurs,  
Dans les trottoirs occupés  
Je veux oublier ton nom.

Dans le sable  
Où nous marchions,  
Dans l'océan clairement bleu  
Je veux oublier ton nom.

Dans le parc  
Où nous avions les piques-niques,  
Dans la joie du soleil  
Je veux oublier ton nom.

Dans les couchers de soleil  
Où nous avions regardé l'autre,  
Ville tournait jusqu'à la nuit  
Je veux oublier ton nom.

Je suis né pour te connaître  
Pour te nommer  
Haine.



## Quotidienne

**Hannah Cui***Burnaby North Secondary*

Wake up. Study. Eat. Practice. Repeat.  
They say  
Study hard now and you will be happy in the future  
robotic movements, standard routine  
soulless bodies stumble blindly  
reaching desperately for something out of reach  
They say  
be perfect  
perfect grades, perfect attitude, perfectly poised  
plastered smiles hide the empty hollow feeling inside  
frantic scribbling, pencil scratches as the clock ticks  
eyelids shut as the early morning light peeks above the horizon  
They say  
the more you achieve, the happier you'll be  
phone lies untouched on the desk, friends have stopped contacting  
crumpled report card, rush to dark, empty stall  
the reflection in the mirror  
is it so bad to  
want to be happy now?  
Wake up. Study. Eat. Practice. Repeat.

## The Rose

**Miriam Jang***Alpha Secondary*

She stands alone,  
A solitary veteran soldier.  
She has witnessed horror,  
Sharpening every threatening thorn.  
She cannot heal,  
Her wounds will not close.  
And with each fatal gash,  
She weakens.  
The water which nourishes her  
Will turn murky  
As each precious petal falls.



## The Heart of Home

**Isabela Moise** *Alpha Secondary*

*My brother and I laughed giddily, as we raced alongside each other through the bramble, and the tall willowy grass which swayed alongside the pathway. Our hands were almost bruised with blackberry juice, and our hair flew wildly behind us, as if dancing upon the waves of our laughter.*

I faltered in my recollection and stride, as I came upon an aged and weathered gate door. The white paint had chipped beyond repair, and the entryway itself hung on to nothing but an elderly hinge, which wailed in protest with every arrival.

Tentatively, I shuffled down the walkway, marveling at the sight of my destination.

The cabin stood before me, like an old friend moments before a heartfelt embrace. Jovially, I strode towards it, opening the cabin door cheerfully. I reveled in the familiarity of the air, as the memories of my youth swept over me. As I entered the dining room, I gave out a hearty laugh, as I spotted the unusually large porridge stain that clung on to the velvet curtains.

*"I don't like porridge!" My brother exclaimed, slamming his plump little fists onto the table.*

*"Now Gregory, you must not be so rude. Eat your porridge like the rest of your family." Mother advised condescendingly.*

*"Oh, he won't eat it mummy," I began tauntingly, "he's too much of a baaaby!" I cackled.*

*Absolutely indignant, my brother flung his porridge bowl into my direction. Giggling, I smoothly ducked out of the way, making the curtains behind me the victim of Gregory's rage.*

*"Gregory, Eliza!" Is all my mother said, her countenance full of both utter shock, and grave disapproval.*

I chuckled at the memory, recalling the shared glance between my brother and I, as we conveyed our understanding of both childish fear, and guilt, as our mother stared down upon us.

Warmheartedly, I promenaded throughout the little cabin, absorbing myself in each memory. For hours, I traipsed along, visiting, and re-visiting rooms, all the while revelling in my recollections of the past, sharing roars of laughter, snickers, and even tears with the now empty chambers.

Fondly, I once again regarded the cabin with a newfound sense of marvel, and gratitude. Softly closing the weathered oak door, I reflected upon all the memories and events that partook in the creation of who I have come to be. And yet, I retained a small yearning to remain there, in the past, forever young, and at home.

*"Home is not a physical destination, but a mindset. Home is furnished not through frames, chambers, or furniture, but through instilled morals, memories, and passions. With this, regardless of your journey, your home will forever be in your mind, and, more importantly, your heart." My mother's voice chided me, lovingly.*

Smiling, and nodding in recognition, a tear fell down upon my cheek, slowly making its descent. Raising my head, nobly, and surely, I forevermore remained proud of my beginnings, mindful of the present and forever looking towards the future.



## L'expédition des méchants loups!

**Austin Ma** *École Moscrop Secondaire*

Il était une fois, dans la Forêt Mystique, un groupe de treize loups dominants. Dans cette troupe, il y avait un chef qui s'appelait Alpha et douze autres loups: six loups avec des mauvaises qualités, six autres avec des bonnes qualités. Alpha se fâchait facilement et ne pouvait pas contrôler sa colère.

Un jour, un des loups, le Loup Égoïste, qui n'aimait pas partager, s'est rendu compte que leur nourriture avait disparu! Alors, le Loup Intelligent et le Loup Logique ont mené une enquête. Ils ont découvert que sept singes du royaume des singes de la Jungle Magique sont venus à leur repaire et on tout volé. Tout le monde était furieux, surtout Alpha: il avait soif de vengeance.

"J'ai besoin de six loups pour venir avec moi. Qui, vous six, venez avec moi immédiatement!" a dit Alpha.

Cependant Alpha ne réalisait pas leur destin de mauvais augure, car il avait choisi les six loups avec mauvaises personnalités.

La troupe de sept loups devait se diriger vers la jungle. Après deux jours, ils ont atteint une falaise extrêmement rude. Le Loup Imprudent, qui était vraiment ridicule, a vu une pile de feuilles qui semblait très touffue mais il n'y avait que quelques feuilles. Sans penser à ce qu'il faisait, il a sauté à sa mort. Donc, la troupe de loups a été forcée de prendre un détour.

Après quelques jours, les six loups ont atteint le désert. Dans le Désert Désolé, il n'y aucune source d'eau. Alors, inévitablement, les loups

ont commencé à se disputer pour l'eau. Après le mensonge du Loup Malhonnête qui disait qu'il avait le plus besoin de l'eau (car il n'avait pas bu l'eau depuis une semaine), le Loup Violent a déclenché sa colère et les deux loup sont morts en se disputant.

Une autre semaine passa, et finalement, ils ont vu de l'eau ... beaucoup d'eau: c'était le Fleuve Tumultueux. Les vagues étaient comme des monstres qui mangeaient leurs victimes et l'eau était très froide et troublée. Comment allaient-ils traverser? Après des jours de travail, ils ont construit deux bateaux; un pour Alpha et l'autre pour les trois autres loups. Ils ont commencé leur voyage risqué sur le fleuve. Mais, il y avait des problèmes dans le bateau des trois loups. Le Loup Paresseux ne voulait pas aider à ramer, le Loup Arrogant vantait qu'il était le meilleur des loups et pouvait tuer chaque singe d'un seul coup et le Loup Égoïste ne voulait pas être dans un bateau avec deux autres loups agaçants. Sans aucun doute, cette combinaison de personnalités causait les conflits. Le Loup Égoïste ne pouvait plus tolérer tout ça. Il a poussé les deux autres loups dans la rivière, et le bateau s'est renversé, causant la mort de ces trois loups.

Bouleversé par la mort de tous ses compagnons, mais en même temps extrêmement fâché contre eux, le visage rouge comme une pomme, Alpha a fracassé son bateau en pièces et il est mort dans le Fleuve Tumultueux.

## David, le cheval d'Arthur

**Ken Usubiaga** *École Moscrop Secondaire*

Il était une fois à l'époque médiévale, moi, Arthur, le roi merveilleux et spectaculaire d'un royaume lointain. Mon peuple me respectait et m'adorait. Mais cela n'était pas le cas pour mon cheval, David. Il était tellement laid que personne ne pouvait le regarder sans faire des grimaces. Les gens pensaient que j'étais fou pour l'avoir choisi comme partenaire. Cependant, je n'avais pas de soucis. David était extrêmement loyal et toujours à mon côté. Il était aussi incroyablement intelligent, car il comprenait l'anglais. Avec le premier tournoi des champions à venir, j'étais assuré ma victoire avec mon cheval, David.

Il y avait un jour avant le tournoi, que je voulais voir mes concurrents et leurs chevaux. J'ai monté David et il savait exactement quoi faire. Sans commande, il s'approchait à chaque concurrent. Ils ressemblaient tous aux combattants merveilleux, mais ils ne pouvaient même pas se comparer à David et moi. Nous étions bien au-dessus de leur niveau. Quand nous nous passions, ils faisaient chacun une grimace quand ils voyaient David, mais David ne pouvait pas comprendre les expressions sur leurs visages.

Quand nous sommes retournés au château, j'étais salué par mon conseiller.

*– Votre Majesté, nous devons parler à propos de quelque chose... sans le cheval.*

Il a dit.

Dans un instant, j'ai crié.

*– Il a un nom, monsieur, et c'est DAVID! Et je veux savoir pourquoi David doit quitter.*

*– Car c'est quelque chose personnelle qui est au sujet de... um... David et je sais qu'il peut comprendre ce qu'on dit. Il a répondu d'un ton surpris.*

*– David, attend dehors, je lui ai commandé.*

*Cependant, il était déjà dehors.*

*– Je vais garder cette discussion courte et à point.*

*David doit partir. Il a dit sérieusement.*

*J'étais dans un état de colère et confusion.*

*– QUOI!?! J'ai crié d'une voix confuse et fâchée.*

*Il est mon partenaire! Je ne l'abandonnerais jamais!*

*– Mais, David va nuire à ta réputation! Je ne peux pas te laisser participer au tournoi avec David!*

Je me suis pressé jusqu'au château et j'ai essayé de trouver David, mais il est déjà parti! Il a entendu notre discussion et il a couru dans la forêt.

*– DAVID! DAVID! J'ai crié.*

Mais il n'a pas entendu mes cris. Personne ne pouvait remplacer David. J'ai pleuré.

"Henii"

Quand j'ai levé ma tête, David était directement devant mon visage.

J'ai monté David et nous avons couru au centre du royaume où le tournoi avait lieu. Quand nous sommes arrivés, tout le monde dans le stade portait les grimaces. Cependant, nous avons battu les concurrents. Nous avons gagné dans une seule seconde avec un seul coup dans chaque bataille. Je voulais dire que c'était à cause de moi, mais c'était vraiment David, et le public le savait. Pour la première fois dans sa vie, tout le monde le respectait et l'adorait. Dans un instant, David s'est transformé. Il avait les cheveux longs et lisses. Sa peau brillait comme le soleil. Tous les yeux étaient sur David.



## Anxiety

**Ella White** *Burnaby North Secondary*

We think anxiety is a feeling of worry. But it is my disease. It is the constant fear of fear itself; it is when your mind wants you to believe that you are in danger. Anxiety can keep us locked away because we are scared. Anxiety can make us avoid things we want to do.

Dear Anxiety, I am writing this because I am fighting back.

I am three years old, when I first meet you. I find the joy in the other kids completely exhilarating but you don't let me feel it for myself. I am a metaphor, I am trying to be everything, all at once, but I am nothing. I become something I am not. I do not speak.

I used to think you were doing it to protect me. I used to think you were keeping me from the bad in the world.

But when I speak for the first time, when you let me go just a little, I find hope.

You make me a semicolon, force me to believe I am tying myself to greater things, when the only thing I am tying to myself is you. I choose to continue, I choose to place a semicolon after the first half of my sentence when I could have just stopped you. *I didn't know.*

You take me slowly, you try to pull me back and own me. By the time it is grade seven, your whispers are audible again.

You are stronger this time, always a pace behind. You are the black shadow inside my gut that dared to sail in my insides.

I am a simile. I compare and compare. I am told I am funny, but I don't believe it. I am told I am pretty, but I refuse, and I push. And I lose what I want; what I still want when I wake up every morning. I lost because of you.

Now you have me hunched over on the floor as the people grab at me, you have your fist squeezing my heart so hard it might burst, you have your legs kicking at my lungs and denting holes in them while I fight for air. *It will pass, it will pass.* Maybe it will, but it doesn't change the fact that this time, you have won.

The people. Teachers, students, friends, family. They're trying to help me fight off the storm inside me: You.

You are the dull scream inside my insides that grows louder as I lose, and I'm letting you go, but you refuse to leave. I'm giving you directions out, but perhaps they are too complicated because you are the butterflies in my stomach, the hurt in my chest, the block in my lungs.

You cannot have me. You will not have me.

Tomorrow, is a list of things I am fighting for. Tomorrow, is a new start that I am longing for.

I am fighting for what I deserve. I am fighting in this war for things I want.

I am insecure, I am scared, but I know one thing. I am not a metaphor, a semicolon, a simile. I will not be defined into something.

I am someone.

## How to Love **Chloe Huang** *Burnaby North Secondary*

What is love? How do you love? I know it's something beyond hugs and kisses and encouraging words. What if you don't know how to love? I don't. Well, I do, and I want to, but I don't know how to. That doesn't make any sense, does it?

How do you express your feelings for your family when all you want is to hide your face and keep your head down while saying, "I love you," because you're embarrassed? How do you make it so friends and family know you care about them when you don't know what to do in certain situations? How do you distance yourself from people without them getting hurt? Tell me how, because I don't know how. I want to know and I need to know to make everything better.

Make the bruises fade away. Stick a band-aid on the scratches. Heal the cuts and slices. But cuts can turn to scars, and scars don't disappear. No matter how hard you try, they are always there. Faded, maybe, and faint, but an imprint is forever there to remind you of your past. Can you get rid of them? Is that possible? It's not. I can answer that myself. Memories are like scars. Even if you think you've forgotten, one small thing can make you remember. One small glance at it. You can't ever run away.

There are things I don't want to remember, things that I don't want other people to remember. But memories are there for a reason, right? Wrong. Everyone says that. I don't want to be like everyone. I don't even think *I can* be like everyone. Everyone can love. I can't. I don't know how. I don't know how to let go, let everything out. People keep telling me to change. To be more like other people.

"Be more like that girl next door. She's so cheerful and friendly. She isn't afraid to approach new people and be social. Why can't you be more like her?" they would say.

"Why do you hole up in your room all day? Help around the house, go outside and play sports, there are so many things you could do. Why can't you be more like them?"

Being outgoing won't help, it will just give me friends I don't know how to love. Stop telling me to change. Stop comparing me to other people. It doesn't make me see their good side and want to be like them. It makes me doubt myself. Am I inferior to them? Am I not a good enough version of me? I pause every time I want to do a deed for someone. Should I do this? Will they appreciate it if I do this? Will they even notice I was the one who did it, or will they think that it was someone else?

You can't change me. I am who I am and I won't be anybody else. No matter how many times you tell me to be like someone, thinking that you're *helping me improve*, I won't be like them. If I were to change, who would be me? The fully complete me wouldn't exist anymore. I'd be a complicated mess, only bits and pieces of everyone else.

It's simple, though, I just want to know how to love.

## Life in One Year **Timothy Mok** *Burnaby North Secondary*

I was born with a thousand brothers and sisters in an egg. We all left our birthplace to seek a new home. Finding a perfect tree in a field with trees here and there, I decided to make my home. On a bright sunny day, I worked and worked making the best home. Between another tree was a stream where I saw many frogs catching flies. How delicious it must be! The juiciness and crunchiness of a fresh caught fly. In one day, I made a home, light and sticky, but strong and steady.

As a few months passed; the days grew warmer. I remember when I first stepped out, the temperature was near freezing. I looked around and saw a small group of flies caught in my home. With my speedy eight legs, I worked my way up my home and approached the flies. They were struggling to be free, crying out loud. Taking my two legs, I rubbed them together with delight. I tightly wrapped them up and one by one I devoured them.

Before summer arrived came a nasty storm, trying to rip my home apart. The sky turned pitch black, and a flash filled the sky. The wind was raging like an erupting volcano. Leaves were flying everywhere as trees fell on their knees. A loud boom as loud as a missile kept me from sleeping. Every second mattered, for I was holding on for dear life.

When day broke, the place was a disaster. Many trees had been knocked out. I looked at my home. It had torn away. Quickly, I spun another home, this time with a design of lightning.

Three more months passed. As the hot air continued to rise, I realized that my time had come. I crawled up a tree, making sure it was a secure place. It took hours and hours before I had laid an egg. Spinning it tight to the tree, I climbed down, too exhausted to crawl much longer. Returning home, I rested and rested. Many days had passed. I had not moved a single millimetre.

## Couloir Double Extreme **Tony Guo** *Burnaby North Secondary*

Wet snow slapped my face as I quickly ripped around the moguls on Sunburn, a run in the 7th Heaven area of Whistler Blackcomb. As soon as I finished the run, I dashed through the singles line and got a spot on the chairlift. I shuddered as smoke puffed out of my mouth each breath I took.

After I got myself settled in on the chairlift, I glared down at the majestic 7th Heaven runs below me and marvelled at the beauty of them. They were covered in the champagne powder that Whistler Blackcomb had just received last night. It was truly a godsend. Out of my peripheral vision I caught the sight of a skier gliding down Upper Cloud Nine backwards effortlessly, faster than any

skier going forwards.

I have, in my years as a skier, accomplished numerous feats like this. Honestly, going down backwards is not that difficult, but the feeling of it is scary and intense. All of a sudden, an idea was brewing in my mind – the idea that I should go down Couloir Extreme, a double-black run, backwards. *Impossible*, I thought.

As soon as the ski lift arrived at the top, I pushed my way through the narrow path leading to the infamous Couloir Extreme. “No way am I going backwards down that,” I mumbled to myself, glancing down the steep slope.

## Couloir Double Extreme *Cont'd*

I continued to stare down the slope. It seemed as if the slope was inviting me to go down backwards. The urge to do so became irresistible. Going down backwards would be a new frontier and experience for me. I would be able to tell all my skiing buddies about my feat. It would make me feel proud.

Despite all those reasons for going down backwards, the safe part of my mind still battled with this idea. *What if I get hurt?* I might not ever get to ski again.

I looked around at the beautiful white mountains surrounding me, their snow-covered peaks reaching for the heavens against the clear blue sky. Instantly, I felt the need to make the most of being here at Whistler. My mind was telling me to go backwards.

My heart was taunting me to do it. My soul wanted to do it...

With a single powerful forward thrust with my poles, I was sent speeding down the run. Immediately, I made a wonderful 180 and landed backwards gloriously. I just totally annihilated the slope, ripping down it carelessly and worry free. It was absolutely beautiful, just the feeling of it. My heart filled with pride, a pride I had never felt before in my life. It was as if I had been in heaven. In all my years of skiing, perhaps even my whole life, this was my best minute.

Whenever I look back on this occasion, it feels kind of ironic, all I had to do to achieve that feat, that feeling, that pride, and that glory... was to face my fears.

## The Tainted, the Wrinkled, and the Written

**Elita Chan** *Burnaby North Secondary*

The bright nothingness of the page glared back at me; the untouched blue lines stretching from one side to another, silent and waiting. I gripped my pencil in my hand, my mind void like the piece of paper that laid before me.

My mind yearned for an idea, a thought, one that may inspire me to create a world – a tale, one quite like no other. I scribbled a single word on my paper – *perfect*. The small pitiful word stood isolated, illuminated by the vacancy of the page.

I sighed, the word looked unpleasant, the letters uneven and twiggy. An ominous stain on the once so untouched page. Many times, I pondered about how authors create their ideas. *Where does inspiration start? Does it start with one miserable word? The root of the story, that grows from a small meed seed to a flourishing tree of letters?*

Annoyance surged into my body as I started again, erasing the single word. After a few more times of scribbling and erasing, the page became

wrinkled, smudged with pencil scratches. A deep frustration welled inside of me as I picked up the ruined piece of paper and scrunched it up, eraser crumbs spilling from the abnormal lump.

Suddenly, music reverberated through the air. A familiar song from the radio. The tune was light yet – so inspirational. The music swept in and out, a rhythm of ideas – the root of the tree, the beginnings of a new tale.

Thousands of thoughts dawned onto me. I smoothed out the crumpled paper and began. One word at a time, I didn't look down, I kept writing as the song flowed into my mind. The music... was just so enlivened, its inanimate life had so much meaning to me in that moment. The song had transformed from nothing more than a few lyrics into the spark of utter change.

As I set my pencil down, the once so disappointing piece of paper had transformed into something so much more – a whole new world.

### The Lone Piano

**Troy Chong**

*Burnaby North Secondary*

The upright piano sits quietly in the home  
Sighing while remembering its youthful days  
When its flawless, pristine exterior  
Gleamed in the glorious sunlight.

Reminiscing the joyful hours  
When its lustrous keys of black and white  
Were caressed with endless love  
As nimble fingers tinkered melodious tunes.

The days of past when the piano felt needed  
As practice sessions went into full swing  
With the sound of the metronome  
Keeping time with each rhythmic beat.

But, now those days forever gone  
With fragments of the past  
The lone piano sits in layers of dust  
With cluttered ornaments and papers untouched.

The once spotless ivory keys  
Have turned shades of aging yellow  
For never seeing the light of day  
Now forced into a deep, dark solitude.

The piano rests undisturbed  
Until abruptly awakened from its aching slumber  
With a jolt of the fallboard opened  
By the tiny hands of a child.

The piano cringes in mortified sorrow  
To hear its badly tuned keys  
Yet yearns to feel alive once more  
To be needed and so loved again.

With a new generation eager to explore  
The piano releases a pensive grin  
To be rejuvenated and surely  
To be heard once again.

### Take Off

**Troy Chong**

*Burnaby North Secondary*

Boarding the jumbo jet airliner  
My heartbeat erupts from my chest  
With fumbling, sweaty hands  
I hear the reassuring click of metal  
Of my fastened, shiny seat belt.

Impatient passengers groan in the aisle  
Waiting for the oblivious ones who hold up the line  
To stuff their overweight carry-ons  
Into cramped overhead bins.

A large, stocky man in blue suspenders  
Slowly shuffles as he checks his seat number  
With a glancing smile and confirmative nod  
He squeezes to sit in the seat beside me.

Flight attendants emerge in their crisp attire  
Make a final check at each row  
Before giving the dreaded emergency instructions  
Which only intensify my anxiety.

The rumbling engines escalate  
As the aircraft maneuvers  
Down the runway at accelerating speeds  
While my frantic hands clutch the arm rests.

Charging ahead, faster, faster  
Tilting, lifting, higher and higher  
Widespread wings like a bird in flight  
Airborne into the billowing clouds.

Now as I breathe a sign of relief  
I have nothing to worry about  
Except in the next three hours  
I brace for...  
Landing.



## "The Girl"

**Morgan Bottomley**

*Byrne Creek Community School*

there is a girl that lives under our table  
that lives in the recesses and crevices of our home  
with curly hair and a slight figure

the shadows cannot hide pale limbs,  
but i was scolded when  
i mentioned this to my mother

weeks pass

now, i cannot talk about how there  
are two different types of handwriting  
in my school books  
but when ms. becker asks me in front of the class  
i say it was my younger brother  
(who is not even old enough to write)

when my mother stops preparing extra rations during meal times  
and i am allowed to look underneath the table  
and i no longer have to lie in the face of my teacher  
and the floorboards do not creak at night,  
the girl with the curly hair and the slight figure  
is gone

## My Silent World

**Vanessa Clough**

*Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

Most could never understand the tranquility of my silent world,  
The missing sounds are replaced with new vibrations  
That others would assume meaningless, but they are my whole world.  
Hearing is a given gift,  
Though for me, it is out of reach.  
The neglect and exclusion I have continued to experience,  
I no longer have to endure,  
I can now accept my silent world.

## Flight

**Victor Yin**

*Alpha Secondary*

What if  
instead  
of metal shrapnel  
That buries  
through layers  
of hard work  
biological.  
What if  
instead  
of capitalizing over chemicals  
Combustioning bonds  
shredding and infecting  
lasting  
effects.  
What if  
instead  
of planting darkness  
Unknown seeds  
that always sprout  
into something breathtaking  
What if  
instead  
we use  
soft pulses  
of ethereal  
dopamine and serotonin  
subdue  
allies in disguise  
into momentary  
Bliss.

## Views on Socials Class

**Shane Atienza***Burnaby Central Secondary*

For some, it is the enterprise of pain felt  
by the First Nations of the North West  
hovering over the underwhelming supplies  
that the government sent them to farm  
unsatisfied,  
and thinking to themselves:  
What the hell?

For some, the classroom clock counts down the time  
before Louis Riel's hanging  
takes place in Regina,  
Riel nervously pacing back and forth in his cell,  
wondering whether or not  
the Métis could fight on without him.

For some, the homework pages turn vigorously,  
catching a prevailing wind  
as Simon Fraser grates the belly of his *canot du nord*  
against the jagged rocks of the rapids of the Rockies,  
seemingly stranded.

And for some, Social Studies 10 is the accomplishment  
PM Macdonald feels as he looks over his Dominion,  
the country united by his wonderful railway,  
his problems solved with his newly-minted police force,  
thinking to himself:  
What we have here is great.

## Workout

**Emily Lukas***Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

The smell of labour flooded  
my fragile nose.  
Gasps and heaves, tongue-tied lips  
caught in the weave of  
rubber machines.  
“We all struggle at first.”  
As he twists his brawny wrists,  
ready to gawk and gag at  
my novice attempt.  
Regretful and anxious  
I step, slowly, slowly  
...weary of the weights thumping loud  
hearing the sound of steps on and on  
never to cease as night turns to dawn...  
Smooth soles hit blunted belts  
shallow breaths then heavy pants.  
Pushing speed,  
lento, faster, faster, allegro, presto!  
Pulsing red into beats past time  
foot after foot, into the climb  
until fatigue exceeds the brim.  
Painfully, I leave the gym,  
drenched in mediocrity.

## Je viens du passé

**Matthew Liu***École Burnaby North Secondaire*

Je viens du passé  
de la maison que j'habitais,  
du cerisier qui prospérait,  
de mes vieux amis qui vivaient à proximité,  
où je vois encore les joies que j'avais,  
où j'entends encore les rires de mon bonheur,

Je viens des jouets que j'aimais,  
des dessins animés que je regardais,  
des jeux vidéo que je jouais,  
Je viens des sentiments de joie que j'avais,  
où je veux vivre mes miracles du passé,  
le domaine de mon enfance,  
ma belle jeunesse,

Je viens de la cours,  
de la terre que je déterrais,  
des insectes que j'attrapais,  
de l'arbre que je grimpais,  
en haut et en bas,  
respirant la rosée du matin frais,  
jumelée avec la chaleur du soleil,

Je viens du vieux temps de ma famille,  
des bons dîners avec mes parents,  
des moments ludiques avec ma soeur,  
Maintenant, je viens de ma chaise,  
où je m'assieds et réfléchis,  
et rêve d'aller vers le passé.

## Armée de jeunesse

**Raha Namdari***École Alpha Secondaire*

Petit garçon, petit garçon,  
vient jouer à la guerre.  
C'est juste un jeu pas sérieux,  
prends tes armes et tue les pères.

Violence, violence,  
c'est d'accord si c'est pour t'amuser.  
Le monde est un endroit dangereux,  
il faut te préparer.

Tirer, tirer,  
tiens prend ce pistolet.  
Ne les regarder pas dans les yeux,  
si tu te sens nauséeux.

Viser, viser,  
pour la précision arrêter de respirer.  
Présentez arme, en jouet, feu!  
Reprendre ton souffle.

Cacher, cacher,  
prier qu'ils ne t'aient pas trouver.  
Calme toi, ne tremble pas,  
sois prêt pour les missiles.

Courir, courir,  
esquiver les tirs,  
La guerre ce n'est pas comme tu l'avais imaginé,  
c'est trop tard pour retourner.

### The “Disabled” Kid

**Priscilla Tam**

*Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

I knew I was different.  
 I sat and watched them every day.  
 They made jokes and played games,  
 But I couldn't talk, I couldn't laugh, I couldn't play.  
 I sat in a larger, separate desk,  
 Where I just complained and cried,  
 They smiled at me and comforted me,  
 But I never had any idea why.  
 I took “special” classes,  
 Where they taught me the alphabet.  
 I had memorized the dictionary,  
 Yet they still treated me like a pet.  
 Everyone told me they loved me,  
 But I couldn't find a single clue.  
 They gave me their best attitude,  
 But I wish they weren't forced to.  
 They gave me hugs and toys  
 To fill up what it looked like to be empty  
 They thought I felt loved,  
 But all I felt was lonely.  
 If one day I was one of them,  
 They'd set me free from my misery,  
 They'd watch me play by myself,  
 Because they weren't forced to anymore.

### Nevermind: A reverse poem

**Selena Cui**

*Burnaby North Secondary*

I have no future.  
 My parents and teachers tell me  
 never again will  
 I reach my goals and aspirations;  
 There will come a day that  
 I finally gave up  
 I will never say,  
 after I am defeated,  
 I have the courage to keep trying  
 because  
 my fire has died long ago  
 I *refuse* to believe  
 there is hope  
 “you can be anything you want to be!”  
 “you must be kidding me.” No.  
 My want to remain in stagnant contentment  
 usurps  
 my craving for progress  
 still, a hundred times a day  
 I am belittled  
 I am always wrong  
 just when I think I cannot go on farther  
 I stop trying.  
 Never will  
 I triumph in my achievements.  
 What didn't kill me made me stronger  
 that is wrong, the truth is  
 I am a failure.  
 (now read backwards)

## Monsters

**Lilin Xu** *Cariboo Hill Secondary*

A platitudinous saying  
“monsters live under your bed”  
engulfed children with terror  
But not to worry  
for loving mothers suppressed the fear  
with gentle strokes on their small heads  
her hands soft as silk  
ultimately  
the saying becomes nothing more  
but just a silly delusion  
However, as they mature  
a handful will succumb to merciless mentalities  
Carving vicious art  
into fragile wrists  
which expressed all your shame  
Empty stomachs  
endeavouring to fulfill  
a broken society’s expectations  
unforeseen and immeasurable suspense  
as intense as being hung over a tank  
full of famished sharks  
Unforeseen and immeasurable suspense  
caused by what others may label as  
“normal scenarios of everyday life”  
The roaring voices ringing in your head  
on dark and lonely nights  
triggering the thought of dozing off  
and then dream for an eternity  
A gentle stroke of your mother’s hand  
could no longer be a remedy  
for the fear  
the sadness  
nor the pain  
This time  
it was no silly fairy tale  
For monsters were never under your bed  
They were inside your head.





## The Song of the Artist's Heart

**Isabelle Quon** *Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

To lose yourself in ink and canvas-  
the sensation of nimble quill  
lightly sweeping  
soft prints on snow plains  
Treading boldly,  
yet liltingly

The sway  
of ballpoint needle  
quilting row upon row  
of bleak darkness  
hovering  
above a blank expanse

The network of  
incandescent strings  
lacing over and over  
under and  
over  
Channels of black  
horizons aglow

A slim glass of ink  
Held  
by weary fingers,  
Tender, worried,  
like her heart

Crescendoing darkness,  
the sweet echo of my thoughts  
resounding in  
Two,  
three,  
four lines, who  
sigh,  
exhaling fears and worries

An instrument so simple  
but able to release burdens  
into a cascade  
of ebony tides  
thrashing,  
drifting  
amongst the white shores

The quell of the pen  
shall too be my end,  
for the swell of life I feel  
when that pen quivers in my hand-  
like a lark's  
shivering song  
like a billowing  
freedom flag

A feeling  
I cannot quite describe  
Forever mellifluous,  
forever mine –  
this  
is the song of the artist's heart.

## Untitled

Chris Tan

*Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

Though warnings were broadcasted, we disregarded it as a false warning, moving on with our day.

Foolishly, we inadvertently awaited our

Much like a strike in baseball, we were well informed, yet failed to be ready. *demise.*

Out of all the times we've followed the precautions

for the warning, the one time we ignored it, the one time

we ignored it, we paid with our lives. Fate was not on our side, but

it was not to blame. It was foolish to ignore the *warning*

No matter how annoying the precautions

were, it would have paid

off in the end, because it had not

*ended* our existence

as we knew it.

Sadly

we

didn't

act

as if

it

was

the

last

day that

we had on the planet.

The tornado tore through the house like

a hot knife slicing through butter. Even when we saw it

approaching, advancing towards the town archway. Even with debris soaring across

the sky, the atmosphere seemed awfully calm. The last moments we saw were pretty ugly, everything that wasn't hiding behind the horizon was ruined. We regret what we did or rather, what we didn't do.

## Coming to Terms

**Victor Yin** *Alpha Secondary*

"Sir, you don't understand! It was just one credit card bill, you see?" Chris waved his statement in the air frantically like that could change anything. "Besides, I paid it off already! I just forgot, okay?"

"The only thing I understand right now is that one minute late is still late. There are policies, there are laws, and unfortunately you are showing signs of rampant deterioration," the man in a crisp blue uniform enunciated as he checked off multiple boxes on his clipboard.

"Isn't there a warning or a fee I can pay, or something instead?" Chris pleaded.

"No. This is the Perfect Society. We got rid of all that decades ago after The Improvement," the man rolled his eyes with precision. Every thought, movement, and decibel was calculated to an exact precision. He snapped his fingers, and suddenly a stream of uniformed men marched into the house, picking up furniture with their spotless white gloves.

"Wait, what are you doing?"

"We are confiscating your possessions."

"You can't do that! Those are mine!" Chris squeaked.

"Yes, but you entered a legally binding agreement when you signed up for this government-issued credit card. Would you like to review the terms? Section A1-13," the man said. He clicked open his briefcase and pulled out a slim booklet in which he swiftly opened.

"Hold up! How in the world are they even going to get *that* out of the house?!" Chris suddenly yelled as he gestured to the men lifting the grand piano. As if on cue, the wall, which had

been wiped clean, was suddenly detached with a sickening crunch and lifted away by an overhead crane. Chris' jaw dropped as bright sunlight flowed into the house, momentarily blinding him.

"T-That's not legal! You can't do that!"

"You have not paid off your mortgage, so yes, we can," the man said, uninterested, as he flicked off a speck of dust from his sleeve.

"I'm calling my lawyer," Chris stated as he pulled out his phone, but it was immediately snatched away by the man.

"You have not paid off your twenty-four-month contract, so we own this as well."

"Well you can't take away my laptop, which I paid for in full!" Chris protested angrily.

"Your software is actually under a revocable license," the man sighed, before producing another pile of papers.

"What about my car?"

"Unfulfilled lease."

"My funds in the bank?"

"Mere claims on cash that were seized," the man dismissed as he deposited another bundle of papers on the now non-existent kitchen table. Just then, there was another ear-splitting noise as the rest of the house was lifted from its supports, leaving the two men in an empty, dusty lot.

"Please! I'm begging you. Is there anything I actually own? Do I even own my own life?"

There was a beat of silence, before the man pulled out a single folded paper from his back pocket.

"Let's just say you should've read the terms and conditions more carefully."

## The Recipe Box **Saije Rusimovici** *Burnaby Central Secondary*

“How does this look Nonna?”

I took a step back from the counter and wiped a thin sheen of sweat from my brow with the sleeve of my shirt. My arms were beginning to ache from all the rolling, but there was no way I would start complaining now.

My grandmother, a cupcake of a woman with clothes that smelled like olive oil and basil, placed a hand on my shoulder and pulled me back even further. She squinted through her decades old glasses and leaned over the counter, which was covered in a snow-white blanket of flour, to assess my hail-Mary attempt at a piecrust.

“Let’s me check, Anna.”

Nonna Simonetta was a plump woman with rosy cheeks and short, curly brown hair. I was in awe of her precision as she took the wooden rolling pin in her large but gentle hands and methodically began to roll the dough, sprinkling more flour as she went. I bit my lip, desperately hoping for her approval.

“Now’s you try,” she said.

I took the rolling pin back into my grasp, the handles warm from her touch. The task that she made look so easy was to me both daunting and challenging. I attempted to imitate her quick yet effective movements as I passed the rolling pin back and forth over the dough, doing my best to match her grace and posture as I worked the pastry into a semi-thin circle. Even though I could not see her face, I could feel my grandmother’s eyes on me, watching my hands.

After a moment, she said, “Basta. Stop. It’s done.”

We finished making the pies and put them to bake in the oven. After cleaning up the kitchen for about an hour (Nonna was very firm when it came to cleanliness), I took the Italian cards from the drawer by the fridge and began setting up our usual game on the kitchen table.

But Nonna didn’t sit down. Instead, she stood in the middle of the kitchen, wringing her hands

together, twisting the wedding band that my now-deceased grandfather had given her nearly fifty years ago, and stared at the ceiling. Before I could ask her what was wrong, she let out a deep sigh, almost a breath of relief. In one swift motion she undid the knot behind her back and removed her faded blue apron from her wide hips. Nonna never took off her apron.

Then she met my eyes. They were a kind, softened brown, milk chocolate, much like my own. “I have something for you.”

My grandmother turned and squatted down next to the narrow cupboard by the stove. Hidden strategically behind an old tin canister full of birthday candles was her recipe box. She brought it out slowly, carefully, as if it were filled with something so delicate it could only be handled with the utmost of care.

It was nothing fancy, a little rectangular box in a faded, plum purple color. Nonna placed it in front of me and removed the lid, which depicted two haloed angels. Inside the box were thin slips of paper, worn with stains and time.

“I remember when you were just a little girl,” she shook her head smiling. “Always jumping around my kitchen saying, ‘Nonna, Nonna, let’s me help you!’”

A surge of warmth flooded over me as I was hit all at once with memories of the countless afternoons I spent with her as a child, begging her to let me stir the pasta sauce or layer the Christmas lasagna. She’d just give me a gentle, knowing smile. “Not yet, bella,” she’d say, “Not yet.”

Now, she pushed her little box of magic towards me, and I gently rested my hand on it with careful fingers. Nonna covered my hand with hers.

“My Nonna give this a one to me, now I give a to you. You can do now, too. You can do when I can’t do no more. You understand?”

I nodded, swallowing back tears. “Yes Nonna, I understand.”

## A Winter Song

**Maya Bhardwaj** *Burnaby North Secondary*

Reaching my cold hands into my coat pocket,  
I walk through mountains of snow to get home.  
From the outside, through the frosty windows,  
I can see Christmas tree lights flickering. A lump  
in my throat grows, as I'm reminded that this is  
the first Christmas without my Grandma.

I walk through the front door, "Winter Song"  
by Sarah McLachlan is playing throughout the  
house. My mom is sobbing as she rolls out dough  
for sugar cookies. I clear my throat so my mom  
knows she's not alone. "Hi Mom, are you ok?"  
I fiddle with my hands and bite my tongue so I  
won't start crying too. "One day I'll listen to this  
song and not think of your Grandma and cry," my  
mom sighs.

I creep downstairs, plop myself on my bed, scoop  
up my dog Phoebe and burrow my head into her  
soft black fur. Hot tears are falling from my eyes,  
*Christmas will never be the same.* As I wipe black  
mascara from under my eyes, I'm distracted by  
my Grandma's old ring that she gave me a couple  
Christmases ago. Closing my eyes I remember  
the feeling of my Grandma giving me her ring,  
ripping open the sparkly paper to find a tiny  
emerald flower with a diamond in the middle.  
So beautiful, "thank you" I yell embracing her in  
a hug. My Grandma's voice cracked a little as she  
said, "Maya, my mother gave me this ring when  
I was a young girl, now I want to give it to you."  
A month later, my Grandma told us she had  
pancreatic cancer, then on July 24th she passed  
away.

I'm wakened by the wind and snow outside my  
window. I hold my hands together, close my eyes  
and whisper, "Grandma - as you may know it's  
Christmas soon and we really miss you, especially  
my mom. I want you to know that I'm sorry for  
not spending more time with you when I had the  
chance, I just thought you'd be here a lot longer.  
Every time I think of you I cry, please show us  
that you're still with us."

We drive to my grandpa's house through the  
blizzard barely able to see five feet in front of  
us. The road is covered with black ice and cars  
are in the ditch everywhere. We finally arrive  
at my Grandpa's, the storm has passed and a  
warm wind blows around us. I look toward the  
sky and see the strangest thing, a rainbow?? I've  
never seen one before in winter, my heart beats  
quickly...*could it be?* The day of my Grandma's  
funeral a beautiful rainbow also appeared in the  
sky. I feel my Grandma is here in spirit, and that's  
how I was going to get through this Christmas.  
I feel a warm joy build up inside me and sense  
we're all going to be okay. Now when "Winter  
Song" plays, my mom smiles remembering all the  
wonderful times that she had with her mom.



## Flocks of Sheep

**Belinda Chu** *Moscrop Secondary*

Six  
Crappy  
Hours  
Of  
Our  
Lives

School. A six letter word. How can such a short word bring such misery to someone's life? The cause of many sleepless nights, worry, anxiety and frustration. Separate each letter by itself, they hold no meaning, just individual letters in the English alphabet. But align these six letters into this specific order, and you have just made a teenager's worst nightmare a reality. Worse than any epidemic, worse than any Frankenstein monster. Nothing compares to the real terror... School.

I stare mournfully at the clock. Tick, tock, tick, tock. School had started at 8:30, five hours too early in my opinion. Kids should not be obligated to wake up at such an ungodly hour. Seconds drag by like hours, and minutes like days. After what I deem to be around half an hour, I look back. I feel my eyes widen comically and my jaw go slack. NO. WAY. I madly swivel my head around and take a peek at my watch. The luminous digits glow an ominous yellow-green, illuminating the foreboding truth. The screen slowly but surely blinks the numbers 8:35. I reluctantly tear my eyes away from the

mesmerizing ticks and tocks of the mocking clock just to be met with the piercing grey eyes of my teacher.

"Now, Liam, please enlighten us and tell me what's the answer to the question on the board?" Mrs Witherton asks me in an almost gleeful tone, knowing that pigs will sooner fly than I will answer the question correctly.

With a slight pout on my face from the realization that school has been in session for a mere five minutes, I reply in a bored tone,

"Um... 19."

With a pencil twirling in my hand, I don't even bother to look up at the question.

"Well, Liam sweetheart," she begins in a sickly sweet tone that I absolutely despise.

"Are you aware that you are in English class and not math class?"

"Eh... School's school. Not much difference," I mumble. "Got much better things to do than being in this dumb ol' classroom with you." With this, I look up at her and smirk.

Her face turns into multiple shades of red in a scant second. Then finally settles to an ugly shade of puce.

"Does anyone know the answer?"

A bushy haired girl in the front row waves her hand back and forth, nearly jumping up and down in her seat in excitement.

Mrs. Witherton smiles slightly and says, “Yes, Minerva?”

With a smug smile on her face, she stands up and recites the entire year’s syllabus.

“The poem you wrote on the board is a type of poem called haiku. It originated from Japan where the Japanese first used them to describe the beauty of nature.” With a satisfied look, she sits down again.

From the entire speech, I manage to pick up one word. Nature. I stare absentmindedly through the window to the outside world. With its fresh clean air, soft green grass, and giant oak trees, outside seems like paradise. But alas, school has made a hell of heaven. Here I am stuck inside with hours that seem like decades until my ticket to heaven arrives – the ring of the bell. With nothing else to do, my mind starts to wander. The ring of a bell. Ha ha, like flocks of sheep. Being controlled by collies and herded with the rings of bells. With a frown, I realize, we are being treated like sheep! Letting the ring of a bell dictate our lives, controlling our freedom! Just as I am about to take a stand against the injustice, I am brought out of my reverie by the ringing of the bell. Letting a smile grace my features, I hurriedly rush out of class. But with freedom just half a step away, the annoying and persistent voice of Mrs. Witherton calls out,

“Liam, could you stay after for just a minute.”

I have to restrain myself from bolting out the door, and turn around. When she sees that she has my attention, she continues,

“Liam, it seems that you are on the borderline of failing this course. If this continues, I’m afraid you will have to attend summer school.”

I shudder with horror. Summer school? As if nine months of school isn’t enough?

“Unless that is how you want to spend your summer,” she began with a twisted smile, “you can write me two pages on what you have learned in English so far.”

With a sigh, I plop down in a chair and grab a piece of paper and a pencil. After contemplating for a few minutes, I begin. Let’s start with something poetic shall we? How about... Ah! I got it.

*Six  
Crappy  
Hours  
Of  
Our  
Lives*

*School, A six letter word. How can such a short word bring such misery to someone’s life?*

I beam down at my paper. Maybe this won’t be as bad as I had thought.

## L'Anxiété

**Tavin Roe**

*École Cariboo Hill Secondaire*

C'est 18h45 et la première bombe est arrivée. Les coups de feu au-dessus de nous sont comme une tempête de grêle de mort. Nous savions que cela arriverait, c'était partout dans les nouvelles. Ma mère est en train de pleurer et crier. Mes jeunes soeurs et frères sont à Beverly, une ville au nord. Je ne suis pas allé avec eux parce que j'ai dix-neuf ans; trop vieux pour y aller.

Ma mère est de l'autre côté de moi dans notre abri, elle chuchote, "j'ai besoin de toi" rapidement et silencieusement. Elle ne parle pas de moi, mais de mon père. Mon père est en train de se combattre en France. Il a été envoyé il y a sept mois. Il y a sept mois, quand le facteur est arrivé à notre maison, il avait seulement une lettre, une lettre jaune.

"Je suis désolé" a dit le facteur, puis il est parti. Ma mère était une cascade de larmes cette nuit. Elle a supplié mon père de ne pas y aller.

"Il faut que j'y aille, quand je suis choisi, je suis choisi, il n'y a pas de retour", disait mon père.

On recevait des enveloppes jaunes avec les lettres de lui toutes les deux semaines, cependant nous n'avons pas reçu une lettre de lui depuis quatre semaines. Ma mère s'inquiète beaucoup, pas seulement pour la santé de mon père, mais pour ses enfants, car ils n'auront pas un père et une figure paternelle pour les guider dans la vie. Je ne peux pas être leur "père", j'ai seulement dix-neuf ans.

Ça ce n'est pas le premier bombardement, c'est le quarante-sixième et je ne crois pas que les Allemands arrêteront si tôt. Je me demande ce que les citoyens allemands pensent de cette guerre: est-ce qu'ils pensent qu'ils sont les bons gars? Probablement, car qui voulait être une personne méchante? Ce n'est pas comme toute l'Allemagne est comme Hitler, même si c'est quelque chose que beaucoup de gens croient.

Le bombardement a fini et pour l'instant et il y a du soleil dehors. Je crois qu'aujourd'hui sera une bonne journée par rapport à hier. Je regarde le temps: c'est 10h23. J'entends quelqu'un qui frappe à la porte, c'est probablement le facteur. Il vient à environ cette heure. J'entends ma mère et le facteur que parlent. Puis la porte ferme, un peu plus fort que normalement. Je m'habille et je vais voir le courrier, mais ma mère n'est pas là. "Maman? Maman?" je crie. Elle lit toujours les lettres après qu'elles sont livrées, mais pas aujourd'hui. Il y a une pile de lettres sur la table: j'y marche pour les regarder et je m'arrête. Je vois quelque chose de jaune dans le coin de mon oeil. Je tourne et c'est une lettre jaune.

"Mon père? Il nous a écrit?" Je ramasse la lettre mais je ne vois pas le nom de mon père, mais le mien.

## Prenez la fuite

Christy Ho

*École Burnaby North Secondaire*

Vous êtes une ballerine en porcelaine,  
 piégé dans une sphère en verre.  
 Vous devez être parfaite.  
 Vous tournez continuellement.  
 Vous êtes restreinte avec vos limites.

Vous voulez explorer le monde extérieur,  
 mais vous avez peur de l'inconnu.  
 Vous avez peur de l'abîme,  
 mais faites-moi confiance,  
 le monde extérieur est vraiment incroyable.

Le petit domaine dans vos frontières est ennuyeux.  
 Tous les jours, c'est le même.  
 Il est gris à tout jamais.  
 Il est aussi sombre que l'orage.

Mais je vous dis,  
 ne soyez pas effrayé.  
 Échappez de vos limites.  
 Prenez la fuite.

## Controlled

Janelle Hui

*Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

The voices confine me  
 Mother and Father pushing me  
 Study more, live less  
 Their caring words piercing me  
 Cutting through my skin  
 Their voices control me

The voices confine me  
 Friends asking favours from me  
 Just once, never again  
 Throwing all their burdens on me  
 Demanding more from me  
 Their voices control me

The voices confine me  
 Society determining my worth and judging me  
 That's wrong, this is right  
 Enticing me and tempting me  
 Slowly transforming my thoughts  
 Their voices control me

But I let them

## The Final Act

**Caitlin Chan**

*Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

The lights are dimmed, the stage is set.  
A tale to tell, none could forget.  
And so when those curtains rise,  
Let the story unfold before your eyes.

The masked actor that you see,  
Are they really who they seem to be?  
Is the silence that befalls the room  
An ominous prologue to their doom?

The spotlight shines on the stage,  
Cues the puppeteer to turn the page  
Is that mask covering their eyes  
Nothing but a simple disguise?

And watching from the audience,  
Observing this elaborate performance.  
You, the one who could end it all  
Before the curtain is allowed to fall.

So if they stood on that stage for you to see,  
And asked you now; “do you trust me?”  
A simple request, yet I ask,  
Can you trust the one behind that mask?

## Coffee

**Maria Michouris**

*Burnaby Mountain Secodary*

You, like a cup of coffee.  
Bitter, yet sweet,  
A dark and decadent flavour,  
That moves me forward,  
As long as I continue to consume.

You, like a cup of coffee.  
A comforting aroma,  
That brings me pleasure,  
and peace,  
With each time I inhale its sweet scent.

You, like a cup of coffee.  
Can be selectively sweetened,  
or lightened with cream,  
cooled with ice.

But no matter how sweet you are,  
the bitter residue at the bottom remains,  
Putrid and impossible to consume.  
Wasted,  
Unfinished.

My love for you is like a cup of coffee:  
Bitter, wasted, and forgotten.



**Blank Page** **Melissa Roffel** *Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

I used to find nothing more terrifying,  
Than a blank page.  
Because it is pure and fresh and clean,  
And one single mark,  
Will take all that away.  
Everything I write,  
And everything I draw,  
Seems wrong.

There was so much pressure in the first word, the first stroke.  
As I touched my pencil to the page I could almost hear the gasps of a crowd,  
And feel a million eyes watching me.  
I feared my work would never be worthy of a blank page.

I stared at my work,  
Finished and full of creativity,  
Full of personality and full of life.  
But I wished to go back to the pure white page,  
Untouched, unmoved, unchanged.  
Incapable of failure and incapable of expression.  
I was certain that my work was not worth more than a blank page.

To the trash!  
I threw away what I saw as a waste of a perfectly good blank page,  
Ruined by the outputs of my mind.  
And I found myself feeling,  
Not relieved or satisfied,  
But exactly like a blank page.  
Not pure and fresh and clean,  
Rather, empty, sad and hollow.

Blank pages are deceitful.  
Convincing us that nothing is better than something.  
Causing us to toss out work with the belief it will never be as good as the emptiness from which it came.

Blank pages no longer terrify me.  
They excite me and fill up my mind with a million possibilities.  
For I have learned that something is always better than nothing,  
And trying is always better than not trying, even if you fail.  
For truly, when it comes to expression, there is no right or wrong.  
There is just you, and a blank page.  
And it is not a question about how well you fill it,  
It is simply a question of whether you have the courage to fill it at all.

## Deadlier than Corrected Grammar

**Kate Olivares**

*Cariboo Hill Secondary*

Whatever you do  
I don't care who  
Never let a writer  
Fall in love with you

Unless, of course, you wish  
To have every crevice of yourself  
Pressed like a flower  
Onto a crisp, blank page

Unless you want drunken confessions  
Twirled and twisted  
Into a pretty pink bow atop a red box  
For everyone to praise

Because once that bow  
Starts to unravel,  
Once the box gets exposed,  
Layer by layer  
The package loses its value

The writer is only as good  
As the smoke smothering her stanzas

Rip the wrapping paper,  
Tear open the lid,  
Take away the mystery of the feeling,  
And that's all that's left:  
A feeling.

A tree is just a tree.  
Blue is just a colour.  
The loneliness loses its glamour.

The hypothetical "you"  
Isn't so hypothetical anymore.

## Travellers

**Chris Wang**

*Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

Engines roaring, shaking the vessel  
Endless space stretching into darkness  
Accelerating, the lights flash  
Casting red upon the cockpit  
Above on the walls, time ticks  
Counting down the eternal wait

The long days pass  
Months, years go by  
Silence slowly fuels the madness  
The time still ticks away  
Its hands move ever so slowly  
Mocking the escaping life taken away

Aged, worn hands grab the handles  
The leather seat stretched and torn  
The engines once white-hot  
Now cold outside the metal prison  
Drifting through the vast empty night  
The hands move on, ticking

Through the scratched and worn glass  
A world of life appears  
Covered in a lush green, seen clearly above  
The engines blast back to life  
Gauges flash as the metal pod slows  
The time of hand has come

Parachutes deploy  
Jets of bright energy shoot down  
The descent comes to a halt  
Gases hiss as the hatch opens  
Heard from within, the hands of time  
Still ticks by

### Your Heart

**Emma Karlsen**

*Burnaby North Secondary*

your heart is a heart worth holding on to.  
your bones are bones worth carrying through the dust.  
although they seem feeble,  
plant your timid toes in the sand  
and stand tall  
because your skin is skin that needs to feel the air.

your eyes are eyes worth looking out from.  
open them and watch the stars fall and the nights fade.  
scream and sing and speak  
and wake up your weary vocal chords,  
because your voice is a voice that needs to be heard.

your days are days worth finishing.  
your nights are nights worth waking up from.  
let your lungs fill  
to the brim with oxygen  
because your life is a life worth seeing through.

so I will hold onto your heart  
and carry your bones  
until your timid toes are strong enough  
to stay planted in the sand on their own.

### Hanging On

**Jessica Hurworth**

*Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

Yes  
Indeed,  
Hanging on  
is difficult.  
Sitting on the edge  
of the world is very  
intimidating to some  
but not to me. The decision  
to jump into the unknown is made.  
For to hang on the ledge is to succumb  
to the fear of what you do not know.  
Which is judging a book by its  
cover or disliking a  
food you have not tasted.  
So jump I will now.  
Do not catch me.  
I will be  
better  
off.

## His Age Had Caught Up to Him

**Deena Fazeli** *Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

A work of art,  
shaded with the exotics of secondary colours.  
Lively eyes,  
painted with the ink of a Visconti pen.  
His flaws had fit in such sync,  
having imprints on his gentle skin fit into its own frame.

We were from two separate chapters,  
filling our broken chapters to complete our own novel.  
I found familiarity in education,  
but he, he found it in the way puddles suffused from a raindrop.

Sunrises began rising from dark clouds,  
the day he entered the large world that used to make sense to me.  
But he engulfed my mind with the simplicity of difficulty,  
and I desperately loved the challenge.

The world closed up with opportunity the day he entered my life  
and I began to feel uncomfortable with abstract possibilities.  
But in this,  
a day came where I had noticed.  
The smile he once held,  
grew wrinkles around his cracked lips  
and his eyes were now dull.

I watched as a fire of darkness seemed to itch against his interior,  
pulsating cyanide as each breath he took  
tinted his lungs darker.  
His age had caught up to him,  
and I was left standing over the puddle that once made no sense to me.

I was left pondering infinities of what could have been,  
but was relieved as I could now escape the cold winter that shaded over the universe.  
I would be lying if I said I did not think much about him,  
but that was before the world was big.

The aspects of art that suffused this figure was meaningless,  
it was the paint that ran down the walls of his interior  
that left cracks and holes in architecture.  
He was degenerating, and I was the only one who seemed to notice.



## Lettre à ma fille

**Mila Vancic***École Moscrop Secondaire*

À ma fille, mon nouveau-né, bienvenue au monde  
Tue es fraîche, minuscule, et pure  
Tes petits yeux ouvriront bientôt  
Comme une fleuraison de fleurs  
Tout en admirant la belle vie devant toi

À ma fille de dix ans, active et animée  
La réalité du monde devient concrète  
Mais tes problèmes ne sont pas encore arrivés  
Savoure ces années avec émerveillement  
Où tu aimerais un jour revenir  
À ma fille de seize ans, pleine d'anxiété  
Ce n'est pas la fin du monde  
La vie continue, et tu continues aussi  
Sois exceptionnelle et inclassable  
Compte tes bénédictions, car c'est maintenant qu'on apprend à vivre

À ma fille de trente-deux ans, sérieuse et réfléchie  
Stabilise-toi, et pense au futur qui approche  
La vague de responsabilités est ici  
Prends la vie par les cornes  
Sans détacher les yeux

À ma fille de cinquante ans, sage et prudente  
Ton temps vient de se détendre  
Libère-toi des enfants, et fais quelque chose pour toi  
La crise de la quarantaine est finie  
Amuse-toi un peu

À ma fille, qui n'est plus ma fille, mais une femme  
Puissante, transcendante, et alléchante  
Prête l'oreille aux sons gracieux du monde  
Et réjouis-toi de ton Cœur qui t'apportera une joie impensable  
Penses-y bien, car c'est à toi maintenant de prendre la plume et d'écrire

À ta fille.

## Lament for a Treehouse

**Ansel Hait***Burnaby Central Secondary*

Where is the finest of all homes,  
whose weathered bones did cling to timber?

Whose planks did not speak,  
but creaked when walked upon?  
A castle for kings, a hideout for bandits.

But now it sits, a simple shack,  
amongst the branches, of the tree outback.

Where is the home, rarely slept in alone,  
whose shingled roof guarded my tired head?

Where is the home that stood alert,  
whose trap door stifled fear,  
and kept all secrets it was told?

Whose balcony gazed upon the stars,  
hosting a child's dream of blasting to Mars?

Where is that home that was built for me,  
enchancing, like an old growth tree?

Whose branches stretched toward the sky,  
growing stronger with each day gone by?

Whose sturdy limbs supporting climbs  
that made the very best of times.

Whose pulleys heaved to bring up treasure,  
the joy from which one cannot measure?

Where is the home that waited,  
alone on rainy days,

abandoned when it snowed?

The one I left when I grew old,  
only because the place was sold.

And now my children have their own  
but that treehouse was my gemstone.

## Risks to Take

**Natalie Tang***Burnaby South Secondary*

Struggles,  
To reach a bar  
Set so high from the start

A delusion,  
I can do everything  
I can be anything

Pressure,  
Expectations,  
Never any downs unresolved

A safe haven  
Who would want to leave?  
The attraction is too strong

She pulls me back  
Away from responsibilities

I'd let her take me  
away from reality  
back into my sugary fantasy

But  
Will that help me grow  
tall enough  
to reach that bar?



## L'automne

**Jia Yue He***École Moscrop Secondaire*

D'abord, vous remarquez le ciel  
mollement bleu,  
comme il est fatigué d'avoir tenu  
son teint pour toute l'année –  
contrairement à l'été,  
qui semble rougir furieusement  
sous le regard chaleureux du soleil.

La peau, raclée contre les vents âpres,  
saigne librement, pleurant  
les lames écarlates qui correspondent parfaitement  
aux feuilles d'érable qui tombent.  
Je me souviens du vert tendre de leurs bourgeons  
quand elles étaient nouvelles  
et je pleure avec les arbres...

Les fleurs qui restent frissonnent,  
déracinées de leur refuge chaud,  
le soliflore d'été  
C'est rare que le vent sert à déchirer  
ses pétales de ces martyrs mous  
tenaces et tendres, tissés de soie  
Les arbres se déguisent, une explosion de ferveur  
et de couleur  
Mais je peux voir que la terre meurt.

La glace chante dans les nuages.  
Les lacs s'étouffent, tous emprisonnés  
sous un panneau de verre congelé,  
De géants yeux bleus, terrifiés –  
le doux Zéphyr exilé  
par Boreas, qui hurle, qui hurle d'angoisse  
qu'il seul peut comprendre  
Et dans l'appel désolé du huard solitaire,  
je peux entendre la mort de la terre.

Les plumes de givre sont déjà épais d'un pouce  
étincelants sur l'herbe – belles plumes  
aussi froides et pales que la lune.

Ne mésestimez pas  
Ces plumes fragiles –  
elles peuvent crevasser  
une terre cicatrisée, chroniquement affligée  
par une fièvre paradoxale

Je peux sentir la mort de la terre,  
et  
elle  
est  
ravissante.

## i am not a shooting star

**Sue Gee Hwang***Burnaby North Secondary*

i am not a shooting star  
not one who  
simply  
crashes into unspace and burns  
bright, brighter, and brighter  
in a single instant  
then gone  
i am the darkness of the abyss  
i am the hidden empty that surrounds being  
i slowly smoulder a black inferno that will  
one day  
unfurl  
the infinity of things  
i am not a shooting star  
i am the universe.

## People

**Aeden Taylor***Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

People made my backpack,  
And people made my shoes,  
People wrote their music,  
And then they sang the blues.  
People built up houses,  
And then they tore it down,  
People started genocides,  
In misery they drowned.  
People made our crops,  
And people let them die,  
People then went hungry,  
To heaven they did cry.  
People killed each other,  
People fought for pride,  
People went in debt,  
So many people died.  
People built up barriers,  
Looked not over the edge,  
Walking into blindness,  
To them they had no ledge.  
And then the people fell,  
They were given quite a fright,  
So they looked on up above them,  
Their ignorance in spite.  
People yelled to God,  
Angry and confused,  
People asked why the world,  
Was so bitterly misused.  
And God looked down upon them,  
With a frown upon his face,  
For he knew all the people,  
And was horribly disgraced.

For people started wars,  
And people chose greed,  
It was people, who created,  
This materialistic need.  
So to his men, he said not a word,  
Not a single one,  
For he was going to ask the people,  
What their own hands had done.

## Innocence

**Inara Mawji***Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

In my world of blissful ignorance,  
The sun is always shining,  
And the grass ever so green.  
Tales and stories never grow old,  
And excitement can never be contained  
on Christmas Eve.  
When a surprise is the highlight of the day,  
And when a cut needs to be kissed better.  
  
As I gracefully dance in the pouring rain,  
Without a single care in this world,  
I am oblivious to the pain and sorrow  
that surround me.  
  
Oh how I wish I could rewind the clock,  
Preserve my blissful ignorance,  
And relive my innocent days.  
Without a single care in this world,  
As I gracefully dance in the pouring rain.

## Family

**Suzanna Brenton**

*Burnaby Mountain Secondary*

Tantalizing aromas spill from the pots and pans on the stove,  
Banda music is lifted and carried all throughout the house,  
While aunts, uncles, and cousins prance through the door that is never locked,  
Everyone is welcome.

Abuela hums to herself as she mixes, churns and whisks her signature dishes,  
Dancing breaks out in the living room and everyone moves with the music,  
She is surrounded by the laughter and joy that is her family,  
Everyone is delighted.

The children race around the kitchen, trying to get the first bite of the delectable dinner,  
They skip, hop and run with glee from their mothers and their slapping wooden spoons;  
The familia invades the kitchen with full stomachs and happy hearts,  
Everyone is eager.

Chairs are pulled from every space as people cram to fit at the dinner table,  
Stories are shared that spark laughter in us all,  
The food is colourful, fiery, and fresh,  
Everyone is at ease.

Abuela looks around the table and smiles,  
This is our family.

## Moon Cake for Grandma **Ceci Deng** *Burnaby North Secondary*

*She has seen her mother cry before, but has never seen her hold a stare filled with such empty pain. The tears just won't fall out.*

Today is the 15th day of the eighth month on the Chinese Han calendar, and there was a time when such grief wasn't part of the date.

The Mid-Autumn festival is a time to reunite with family to share laughs and memories... But what if your loved ones are across the Pacific Ocean? What is left, when your mother is slowly dying and you can do nothing but stare at the full moon, wondering if she is looking upon it too, and thinking of you?

A few months ago, doctors discovered cancer in my Grandmother's mouth. At first, we weren't quite as worried; call us naïve or idealistic, but we believed that my Grandmother would crush the cancer's last breath with her strength. As the parasites grew at a disturbing speed, we realized the fight had nothing to do with the resilience or spirit which my Grandma had, but merely luck. And it couldn't be on her side.

Airplanes forced my mother to face a cruel dilemma; would she be able to risk my brother, still in her belly, to see her *own* mother one last time? Or would she rather *be* a mother for a baby whom she hasn't even met yet?

Tonight, as we sit on the porch, trying to eat moon cake that tastes flavourless in my mouth,

I hope she isn't regretting her decision. The moonlight illuminates her one hand on her belly, and the other one, gripping my hand. Although I don't see her face clearly in the darkness, I feel her silent agony when she stares upon the moon. The tears in her eyes, refuse to fall out and glimmer brighter, more powerful than the stars.

As I'm chewing, I remember the sickening, ironic twist; my Grandma, dedicated to treating her diabetes, sacrificed eating everything she liked, and as a replacement, she religiously consumed diabetic pills. Her body weakened and became susceptible to cancer. I don't know how much time she has left, but I know she isn't able to have any sweets anymore. And she loved moon cakes. So I'm eating this moon cake for Grandma, even if it's stale for me, I hope it's delightful for her.

The gleam in my mother's eyes remains, and I just wish the tears would fall, ridding her of the misery. "You know," I start, "this is Grandma's love. She can't be with you anymore, so she sends a baby down to be with you, and to comfort you. He isn't supposed to cause pain, he's helping you ease it. Grandma wants you to be happy. So eat the moon cake."

*She has seen her mother cry before, but never quite like this. As her shaking hands squeeze the two people she loves most, one is left behind, and that empty void is bordering unbearable.*

**Eli Hazhir Goodarznia** *Moscrop Secondary*

"Daddy, wait for me!" little Eli said, stumbling towards her father, Arash. He hastily took Eli's hand, passing the flames that danced to the tune of the crisp twilight breeze.

"The flames are big, aren't they!" Arash asked, as Eli nodded. The yearly festival, called "Chaharshanbe Suri," occurred the Wednesday before the Iranian new year in March. People would hurdle over large fires and sing traditional songs.

Eli burnt herself out jumping over fires, so they went home. Upon arriving, the hearth's aroma reminded them of the laughs they shared earlier over dinner. Arash sat in front of the fireplace, anticipating Eli's request. Resting her head in her father's lap, she exclaimed:

"Daddy, tell me the story about the little boy and girl!" Thus, Arash began.

"It started with a knock on the door. A young boy opened it to a little girl your age wearing a vibrant peacock mask, just like yours!" Arash continued, despite feeling oddly remorseful.

"Salam!" She blurted. 'I'm here collecting treats!' When I was your age, around six, children would go trick-or-treating at night, wearing masks, like Halloween. We'd give them mixed nuts and berries, called 'Ajeel.'"

"Yummy!" Eli gleefully interjected, her mouth watering.

"Tasty, eh?" Arash grinned. "After getting her Ajeel, she asked: 'I'm by myself and wanted to ask you if you'd like to join me!'" Said Arash, playing with Eli's hair.

"What'd he do, daddy?" Eli loved this part as it sounded like her – inviting and sociable.

"The boy hesitated, but his parents agreed and he happily put on his lion mask and headed out." Feeling momentarily dreary, Arash continued:

"They talked and joked, coming back empty-handed as they were so distracted talking." Arash chuckled.

Eli walked to the table behind them, all-ears on the narrative.

"The two became best friends that night and did the same thing every year." Arash paused, looking to his right through the starry window.

"Years later, the pair grew up, going to middle school, then high school together." He looked down at Eli.

"They graduated and got excellent grades, just like you!" Arash's voice slightly tapered. "Unfortunately, they went to different universities. They were sad to see each other less, but remained friends. Every year, their families spent Chaharshanbe Suri together."

"Then what, Daddy?" Eli anxiously wanted to hear the ending.

Her father chuckled: "After graduating, they decided they liked each other so much, they bought a house – in the same neighbourhood, on the same street as their childhood homes."

"Aww! Did they get married?" Eli pretended to forget.

"Yes, even having a baby!" Arash noticed a tissue box beside him that Eli brought as she rested her head back into his lap.

"What was its name?" Asking delicately, Eli nervously looked up, her father's jaw quivering, hardly keeping it still enough to respond.

"Eli."

Arash looked ahead at a charred picture of a happy couple, dressed for their wedding, their gazes locked into each other's eyes. Lips trembling, he said:

"That... is how I met your mother."

## Hollow

**Emma Karlsen** *Burnaby North Secondary*

From the small table in her kitchen, Maggie Edwards watches her young sons play. She wrings her tired hands, cracked from the hours of working her machine in the factory, and wishes her husband home. She counts the days, 427 now, since he has been gone. 427 days George has spent somewhere across the ocean, fighting a war that is not his to fight.

Maggie pulls the pins from her long black hair and sets them on the table. She lets her eyes shut, taking a few brief moments of rest, as she knows that her sons will soon be hungry and she will need to make their dinner. It will be scarce, like most meals have been since the war began, but she will fill her sons' plates before she puts any food on her own. Until she was married, Maggie never had enough food to eat and had grown used to the hollow feeling hunger leaves behind. She swore her children never would. She did not work before the war, but as soon as her husband was sent across the sea, she got a job in a factory to provide for her boys that stayed with her.

Maggie works in Mr. Alexander's ammunitions factory everyday except Sunday from seven in the morning until six at night. There, she makes bullets and shells and hopes the women across the world doing the same make a few less than she did that day. On her way home, she picks up her boys from Mrs. Jenkins' across the street, whose sons were killed, right at the start in Ypres. Mrs. Jenkins takes care of Maggie's boys everyday. She says that Maggie's sons are just like her own were when they were young.

Maggie knows that she is lucky. She has had a job since the beginning, and she only has three mouths to feed, not six or seven like many of the families in her neighbourhood have. Her sons were too young to be taken in the war like Mrs. Jenkins', and, for now, George is still alive.

Maggie opens her eyes as she hears her older son, Charlie, yell from the sitting room. "Bang, bang! You're dead, Frank!" he calls at his brother, holding his finger handgun proudly.

Frank's eyes well with tears, as he runs over to Maggie. "Mama," he whimpers, "Why Charlie kill me? Why he try shoot me like the Germany men try shoot Daddy?"

"He didn't, baby," Maggie smiles and whispers back, "Charlie was just pretending. No one's going to hurt you, and no one's going to hurt Daddy either."

Frank dries his eyes and runs back to play with his brother. As he turns away, Maggie's smile fades. She should be angry at Charlie for bringing war games into their home when there is a real war happening outside the door, or she should wonder how her two year old son knows about the Germans, but with 427 days without her husband, Maggie Edwards just feels empty. She has not yet grown used to the hollow feeling the war has left behind.



## 6 Months

**Celine Kim** *Burnaby North Secondary*

9 months ago, he was just a friend of a friend.

The people around us seemed rather startled by the sudden eruption of laughter. I muffled my giggles in my scarf and quickly shuffled away to a different exhibit. Still riding out the tailwind of his happiness, he made his way to me.

“Are tortoises really that funny to you?” I asked, still a bit red from the incident. He never really did have an ‘inside voice.’ But that’s what drew people in. He never holds back. He’s always sincere.

“Of course! Did you see that thing go? He was zooming.” Shaking my head at his reply, I pat him on the shoulder.

6 months ago, he was just my best friend.

He flashed a grin at me before pointing straight at the ceiling. My eyes followed his finger as he kept watch of my expression.

There were jellyfish, albeit plastic ones, glowing in swarms above us. Soft blues, purples, and pinks lit up in seemingly random order. They were almost like raindrops. A small gasp escaped my lips as I watched the display of jellyfish in child-like wonder. A warm hand slipping into mine brought me back.

We stood still for what seemed like hours, just gazing up at the jellyfish while the crowd moved around us. Surrounded by moving bodies, it almost felt as if we had switched places with the jellyfish. In that moment, we became the exhibit and the jellyfish were the ones watching us from above.

Despite the loud buzz of conversations all around, it was a rather silent moment between us. When my eyes finally strayed back down to his, he gave my hand a gentle squeeze.

“Ready to go?”

He could have meant anything, but I didn’t care. I squeezed his hand back and smiled.

Today, we are in love.

## Drifting Back

**Alisha Savet** *Burnaby North Secondary*

The sweet aroma of my sister's signature lilac candle lingers as I toss and turn aimlessly. The sound of heavy rain should put me to rest, but not tonight.

"Ate,"\* are you ready to go back to Vancouver?" my sister, Jaeda, whispers.

"I'm never prepared for goodbyes," I reply. It feels like it was yesterday that I arrived in Calgary, and now it's time to go. Giving up on sleep, I reach for my notebook and write, 'Things I Did in Calgary,' on a fresh page as I reminisce on this past week. That's all it takes for me to drift back.

We were sitting in Dad's sleek, black, pick-up truck as hot wind blew in through my opened window. My hair danced in the wind, tangling and untangling; much like my life as I struggled to accept my Dad's absence. I laughed as I watched Jaeda and Dad sing-a-long to some tacky love song, leaving all the pain of yesterday behind.

I continue to stare out the truck's window. The soft pitter-patter of rain bringing me back to reality. My fingers touch the cool glass, no longer providing the comfort I once felt. 'Calgary International Airport, NEXT EXIT,' the sign reads, and my heart sinks in my chest.

"Well," Dad clears his throat, "I guess this is goodbye for now," he says, his voice strong and collected, like I'm trying hard to be.

"Thanks for everything, Dad," I smile as I struggle to hold back tears.

"I'm your Dad, it's my job even if I'm not around as much as we'd like."

"Flight 289 to Vancouver departs in 15 minutes," the airport intercom interjects, and I know it's time to go. Jaeda hugs me and soon after, he engulfs us both into his arms. I breathe in his familiar scent one more time and then I leave them behind. I'm entering the room when I hear Dad approach. I turn around and am back in his arms, his body shaking as he sobs into my shoulder.

"I'm gonna miss you so much, Alisha," he cries and I fall apart.

"I'll miss you too," my voice cracks mid-cry, but it's time for me to go. I take one last look back and walk away, leaving a trail of the pieces of me behind.

It's 3 AM and I can't sleep. I reach for my phone and call the voice I crave to hear.

"Hello?" he answers groggily.

"I already miss you, Dad," I whisper, tears rolling silently down my cheeks.

He sighs, "I miss you too, but you need to stay strong for me."

"I'm tired of being strong," I whimper.

"I know," he says. "But we'll see each other again. Remember, life challenges the strongest people. Don't count the days you endure without me, count down the days till we see each other again."

I hang up, my eyes drift as my consciousness fades, and I fall asleep to the smell of lilacs still fresh in my mind.

\*Ate: Big Sister in Tagalog

## Comment allez-vous aujourd'hui?

**Alyssa Huang** *École Moscrop Secondaire*

Elle est morte.

“Les résultats de votre teste sont ici. Vous avez choisi les catégories suivantes: la tristesse, le désespoir, et le bonheur. Le nombre d'*émo* ici mesure l'intensité d'émotion. Indiquez s'il vous plaît combien d'*émos* de chaque émotion que vous voulez vendre.”

*La tristesse: 11 émos*

*Le désespoir: 9 émos*

*Le bonheur: 1 émo*

“La tristesse 11 *émos* et le désespoir 9 *émos*.”

“Vous êtes certain? La peine est quelquefois nécessaire pour faire les bonnes décisions.”

“Oui. Je ne la veux plus. J'ai eu assez de répondre “*Bien, merci,*” aux gens qui me demandent “*Comment êtes-vous?*” “Je ne suis pas bien, mais la société s'attend à ce que je le dise.”

Il a haussé les épaules. “C'est votre choix. Je vous donnerai six milles. C'est acceptable?”

“Je ne veux pas d'argent. En retour, je veux du bonheur. L'intensité la plus forte” il a rit fort.

“Ça ne marche pas comme ça! C'est 10 émo. Ça coûtera 50 milles. Tout le monde veut le bonheur après-tout. Le bonheur est cher, n'est-ce pas?”

J'ai poussé un soupire. “Oui, tu as raison, je vous donne 44 milles.”

“Vous avez 44 mille dollars!?” Il m'a regardé, époustoufflé. “Bien, paie ici.”

*Empreintes digitales d'Antoine Leblanc et Jean Prévost sont vérifiées.*

“Donne 44 milles points de monerix à Prévost.”

*La longueur des ondes de voix de Leblanc est vérifiée. En train de transférer 44 milles dollars. Transfert complet.*

“Suivez-moi.”

Nous sommes arrivés dans une grande salle. Il

y avait une chaise au milieu et les rangées des boccas, remplies de liquide. Leurs couleurs variaient d'orange néon au noir bitume.

Le chaos des couleurs. C'était magnifique.

Il m'a dirigé vers la chaise et a mis un casque sur ma tête.

“Je commence maintenant le transfert de vos émotions.”

Il a connecté trois cables aux liquids noir, bleu, et rouge. Il a appuyé sur un bouton et je me suis évanoui.

Tout à coup, j'ai vu le cadavre de ma femme dans un cercueil devant moi. C'était son funéraille.

Elle est morte. Je me suis réveillé avec les joues mouillées et puis je suis rentré chez moi.

“Papa? Est-ce que c'est toi? Où êtes-tu? C'est presque minuit!”

Ma fille a marché à l'entrée. J'ai ricané. Elle était si mignone avec ses cheveux partout.

Elle est devenue toute pale. “Non... Ne me dit pas...”

Elle s'est mise à pleurer. Pourquoi pleurait-elle? J'ai commencé à rire et rire. Elle m'a regardé, terrifiée. “Pourquoi?”

Le monde est si beau. Qui a dit qu'on ne peut pas acheter le bonheur? C'est 50 milles. J'étais finalement heureux.

Alors pourquoi pleurait-elle?

“*Elle* ne voudrait pas cela,” elle a crié.

Elle? Qui est elle?

Dites-moi, je suis heureux n'est ce pas?

Un homme est venu. “Ça va?”

J'ai regardé ma fille qui pleurait dans l'entré.

Ensuite, j'ai remarqué qu'elle serrait une photo d'une femme. Enfin, je me suis tourné vers l'homme et je lui ai donné un grand sourire.

“Tout va bien, merci.”

## Reflection

**Alisha Savet** *Burnaby North Secondary*

I'm walking down the hall as the bell rings, herds of people pushing and shoving their way out. I lower my head as laughter fills my ears. *What if they're laughing at me?* I open my locker, my heart pounding fiercely in my chest as I take deep breaths.

I wait till the crowd thins before hurrying into the nearest restroom, ducking my head as I pass the mirror. I lock myself inside a stall and close my eyes. My mind's demons lurk in the shadows, tearing me apart with their vicious words. *You're pathetic. You're a joke.* I feel tears trickle down my cheeks. *Typical, always feeling sorry for herself. Do you realize how worthless you are?* "I do," my voice cracks as my sobs break through. "I do, I do, I do, I do," I whimper and I pray that nobody hears my cry.

I'm sitting on my bedroom floor, staring at the back of my mirror. Some people fear spiders and others fear heights. Me? I fear my reflection. I fear my face, my blotchy skin, everything. But, the thing is, I can't remember when this all began. It feels like a minute ago I was twirling in front of that mirror in my princess costume. Now the mere sight of myself disgusts me.

"Alisha," Mom calls. "Dinner time."

"I'm not hungry," I reply.

"What's wrong?" She says, entering the room. "Are you feeling okay?"

"I'm just not hungry," I lie. It's quiet for a few moments, and I'd almost forgotten she was here.

"Why is your mirror facing the wall?"

How could I explain that to her? Thoughts run through my mind, as I search for an explanation. "I-I just," I stammer, my bottom lip trembling as I struggle to hold back tears.

"Honey, you know you can tell me anything," Mom says, her warm eyes searching mine.

"I-I-I'm j-just," and I fall apart. Tears start to cascade down my cheeks while my sobs shake my body. "I'm just trying so hard to make you and Dad proud, but waking up e-every day has become a struggle. Things that used to be so s-simple, like walking down the hall, now terrify me. I'm scared of what people t-t-think when they see my face and nobody understands h-how much it hurts," I sob into her shoulder. "I can't even look at the mirror without feeling repulsed by my own reflection."

"Oh, Alisha," Mom says, wrapping me in her arms. "Handling insecurities is a part of growing up. When you're young, you feel invincible. But when you grow older, everything changes. This is just a transition from being my adorable little girl into a strong woman. You're evolving into a whole new person. You just have to be smart enough to hold on, yet brave enough to let go."

Before I go to bed, I sit across from my mirror. I pick it up and turn it around, my reflection welcoming me back. I lift my fingers to touch the cool glass, tracing the outline of my lips. One day I'll conquer my fears and maybe along the way I could learn to love myself a little more.

## A Conversation

**Angela Tian** *Burnaby South Secondary*

“Hello.”

Lounging on the bench in the park, I begrudgingly glanced up from my sketchbook into the eagerly smiling face of a child. Seldom do children willingly approach me in public but before I knew it, she plopped down next to me on the bench, which creaked from our combined weight.

For a while, neither of us spoke. The only sounds were the animated conversations of lingering passers-by and the occasional cry of seagulls soaring above. It was so calming that I almost forgot the presence fidgeting next to me until I heard a purposeful cough.

“So... what do you want, kid?”

Before I even had time to react she had flipped through the pages of my sketchbook, and after ten minutes of insisting I draw her, I try to ask where her parents were. When she pointed toward an elderly woman sitting alone on the swings and asked me why I was looking at her like that. I shook my head, grabbed my pencil and asked her how she'd like to pose. I wondered how many tries it would take to capture her smile on paper.

It was late when I finally stood up to leave, but she clumsily grabbed my arm and I was taken aback when she asked, “Will you come again?”

Sometimes when I visited the park after that, she would be there sitting alone on the bench. I'd encourage her to play but she always seemed more content watching me draw. Eventually I stopped visiting. It was only while walking past the park some time later that I hesitated at the gates, glimpsing the familiar figure on the bench.

“Hello.”

Whipping around, her smile broadens. There is no one in the park at this time of day and I only meant to stop by for a moment, but she suddenly grabs my arm and I'm halted by the look in her eyes.

“Please don't go.” I stare at her for a moment, and then plop down next to her on the bench as she grips my arm tighter.

“Hey,” I begin awkwardly. “I'm here for you if you need anything.” There's a pause and she takes from her pockets crumpled drawing after drawing while whispering something incoherently. It takes a moment to realize what she said.

“I don't want to be alone.”

We sit there in silence for a while and when I reach for her hesitantly, I hate myself because I'm blanking out on what to do. How could I, someone who was long used to the loneliness, comfort someone who was still so frightened of it?

She left after a while, as I continued ruminating on the bench. When I heard a voice shout out moments later I glanced up startled, and it was her, glowing in the fading light of the sun while waving furiously. As I weakly waved back at her, she hollered to me.

“I can't wait to see you again!”

Alone on the bench, I smiled softly.

“Yeah. Me too.”

## Bittersweet Patience

**Grace Yang** *Burnaby North Secondary*

“You can have that one now or get two later.”

This was the hardest decision I had to make as a six year old. Despite the numerous times I’ve had to choose, I was still repeatedly caught between satisfying the present or awaiting a more rewarding future.

At the end of every week, Ma made the most exquisite Chinese pancakes my youthful self had ever had – so exquisite that waiting for them all to cook was always the most impossible task. My petite hands wrapped around my stomach in hopes of silencing the low growl that started to churn within me. It didn’t matter though. Ma could always read me inside out; even without any physical indication, she’d be able to sense my undeniable craving. The sound of my belly merely reinforced her intuition.

“But Mama, I don’t want to wait,” I frowned, “but I also want two.”

Before the next few words escaped my mother’s mouth, I already recited them in my head.

“Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet,” Ma exclaimed, quoting Aristotle.

I deliberately heaved an over-dramatic sigh as I slumped down in my chair. Even though I was hungry and frustrated, I still enjoyed watching Ma work in the kitchen. She was always extremely focused, moving diligently from corner to corner, knowing exactly where every item is placed and adding the precise amount of each ingredient without needing to measure. It was just like watching a veteran artist at work on a masterpiece. Actually, if pancake-making was an art form, Ma would most definitely be the best artist.

She always started by forming the dough, easily making it the perfect consistency both in the texture and tenderness. While the dough set, a sweet, aromatic fragrance would slowly overflow every crevice of the house as various spices were blended together. I used to be convinced that the nearby birds and squirrels came to visit our backyard because of the savoury scent drifting through the neighbourhood. In absolutely no time, raw Chinese pancakes accumulated one by one on a silver platter.

Ma consistently made sure to cook one before the others, leaving it to rest on the table. For whatever reason, I never knew. I assumed it was there to cool so everyone could devour it as soon as dinner began, but at the back of my mind, I couldn’t help but think it was there just to tempt me.

After a painstakingly long wait, dinner would finally be ready and I’d be rewarded with my well-deserved, not one, but two golden pancakes. The wait was most definitely bitter but not at all comparable to the satisfying taste in my mouth, signifying my sweet, sweet victory.

Nowadays, I help Ma in the kitchen whenever time allows me. She isn’t as swift on her feet anymore, but undoubtedly still an expert.

My sister dances into the kitchen one day and, pointing to the pancake, asks, “I’m hungry, can I have that?”

I finally understood why that lone pancake was always waiting patiently at the dinner table and knowingly, I reply,

“You can have that one now or get two later.”



## Heroes

**Tiana Wang** *Burnaby North Secondary*

It is typically easier to find motivation in life with a hero. Someone to look up to; someone to strive to be. Some idolize pop sensations, or mathematicians. Well my hero, is my father. Superman, if you may. With broad shoulders, and a big build, he was an impeccable description of a hero. I remember how strong he was; it seemed as if he were 10 feet tall and bullet-proof. But perhaps I was being silly.

"Again! Again! That was not good enough! Do you think that gong-show is going to win Nationals?" my cheerleading coach barked at us with a hint of asperity in her voice.

We were two practices away from the biggest competition of the season and although our team was the best of the best, stress levels were still running higher than ever. Our practice was interrupted by the gym owner calling me to the front desk. With sweaty palms, I grasped the phone she handed my way.

On the other side I heard my mother's shaky voice whispering, "Your dad... his heart stopped beating."

In that moment, it felt as if mine stopped as well. My racing heart came to a screeching halt with the thought of my father, my hero, my Superman, gone?

The next hour was filled with hyperventilation, tears and a car ride, fuzzy in my memory. All of which eventually led me to "Waiting Room 7" at Burnaby General Hospital.

I looked down, and twiddled my fingers. Memories of the time where my dad had to pry

my head out from between rungs of a playground ladder submerged my thoughts. Sweat beading down my neck. And the times he lifted me onto his shoulders to watch the Festival of Lights. Time ticking slower than ever. And when he would throw me up in the air with his strong grip. Only to safely catch me and toss me up again. Laughter and squeals of, "One more time! One more time!" came along with those reminiscences.

My thoughts were interrupted by a nurse calling my family into my father's room. I stood up with weak knees and followed the nurse down the hall. Sensations of alcohol tingled my inner nostrils, the squeaks of the nurse's shoes filled my ears. The ever so slight breeze of the air conditioning grazed over my moist back, sending chills down my spine. My hands were clammy, covered in nervous, cold sweat.

As I entered the room in which my father rested, I took notice of the busy atmosphere. Needles were jabbed, here and there. Tubes were inserted, here and there. Machines were whirling.

Everywhere.

I reached for his folded hands. They were not the strong ones that I remembered. The ones that were invincible, kept me safe, and always made things better. No. These hands in mine, were soft. And feeble. And just as vulnerable as my own. Perhaps I *was* being silly. Perhaps heroes really *don't* exist.

And then he let go.

## Blank

**Kathy Xu** Burnaby North Secondary

The melodious bursts of laughter that recess always brings fill my ears. I stare at the other children, observing the way they scramble on the monkey bars, in awe at the way they fall into their routine games so easily. Sitting alone, I trace patterns of smiley faces in the dirt beneath my sneakers, counting the seconds until I have to go back to that foreign place. A classroom, yes, that's what they'd called it. Yet another unfamiliar word that isolates me further away from everyone else. Before loneliness can envelope me again, I snap my gaze back to the playground. Curiously, I watch a girl from my class. She shouts rapid orders in that alien tongue before racing off, followed by a herd of the other second-graders. Watching her, I'm suddenly pulled back to another time.

*"我从这边走 · 你们跟在我后边!"\* I direct these orders to my troop of dedicated soldiers. We dash through the primary playground outside my kindergarten, our tiny selves slipping through crevices and corners. All the while, I'm grinning happily, satisfied with how our mission is going. Being the leader of the pack, it was my job to lead our team to success.*

"Hey you." I look up, cutting my reminiscing short. A group of tall girls from my class, all with stringy brown curls, speak to me hurriedly.

"Can you...our toys...while..." Streams of words tumble from her lips as I try desperately to decipher their meaning. They hold out their toys to me and suddenly I realize, maybe they're inviting me to play too. I smile widely and accept the ball they've handed me.

"Thank you, what do I do with this?" They erupt into laughter, appalled at my broken English. Chattering excitedly amongst themselves, they shoot me mocking glances, bathing in my humiliation. I clamp my jaw tight, round my fists, and look down. The girls giggle endlessly while clutching their stomachs, as if laughing too hard will make them fall over. They stand right atop my drawing in the dirt, their obnoxious sneakers destroying each feature savagely. I feel tears welling up in my eyes, and mutter to myself repeatedly, do not cry, do not cry. Finally, after what feels like seven years, they start walking away, carrying with them their scornful snickers. I raise my head up again. The tears are still in pools at the corners of my eyes. Blinking quickly, I force them to disappear. *I will not cry because of them*, I say to myself.

Shrieks of laughter pierce through me. I shiver at the hidden cruelty that echoes from those cackles. A wave of distaste washes over me as I see the other children playing like unruly animals in the distance.

Looking down, I realize I still have the girls' toys. It takes me a second before I fling their ball onto the ground, and walk away.

\*Translation: "I'll go this way, you guys follow behind me!"



## The Colourful Gray

**Lara Smith** *Burnaby Community & Continuing Education*

In the silence of the noise, I am sitting alone with the crowd of unfamiliar shades of people whom I know. Listening to the wind whispering to the summer green leaves, I am watching the birds gossiping to the wind. Following the creek which is watering the birds, I wish I had two soaring wings to fly and flee from the daily routine and spectacular scenery of a rose-filled garden. Here, energetic boys are playing the same game, and there, girls are swimming in the same pool. Moms are making the usual tea, and dads are chatting over the normal political arguments. The repetitive colourfulness of every weekend is interminably characterless to me.

Even if, all of a sudden, the boy's volleyball hits into the tea tray, the clamour of the people is the same anytime something like that happens. I hear the same sounds and the same shapes, the same colours ... , but not this time. The colour of the creek is red as if it has been injured. Following again the poor little brook, I discover the source of the dark redness of the blood. The clamour of the people this time is different since something has changed with the creek. The different reaction of the same people is darkening the atmosphere, and I cannot breathe, the same breath as I always have. The paleness of the body laying on the ground defines the redness of the new creek. At last, a sacrifice relieves people from the boring repetition. Now, they are free to choose excitement. It is the only incident that has changed our normal peaceful, boring day. Who is the victim? Does it really matter if this excitement of variety is, selfishly, all I want? Actually, now it depends; however, I would not have thought like that before.

Everything looks different from my perspective. I attempt to move, but it is not possible since I feel lighter, yet I do not care about the corpse bleeding into a red brook. Surprisingly, the body seems familiar to me. Her hairstyle, clothes, and even moles on her face are the same as mine. Shockingly, it is "I" who is converting the blue repetitive routine of happiness to a gray new exciting terror. I am the loser who is missing everything, the most generous, lovely, and trustworthy person, my sister. Now, the ambulance is singing the lament of the agony of death, my death though I am still here with my sister who cannot see me any more. The ball is forgotten, the tea has gone cold, the pool has gotten calm, and political problems are left alone without any solution, and unfortunately, I have two wings to fly from the excitement of variety.



[www.burnabyschools.ca](http://www.burnabyschools.ca)

# Rotary Club of Burnaby

The Rotary Club of Burnaby, would like to congratulate all those who participated in Burnaby School District's WORDS Writing Project. Improving literacy is an important goal of Rotary. The club has been a proud supporter of this project since 1995.

The Rotary Club of Burnaby works towards making a difference in the lives of those in its community. In this endeavour, the club supports a number of local initiatives that include:

- Bursaries for each of Burnaby School District's secondary schools
- Lunch programs for children
- Rotary Youth Leadership Award
- Adventure programs in citizenship, film, forestry & environment, technology and tourism
- Rotary Organized Adolescent Retreat (ROAR) that provides leadership development to a student from each of Burnaby's elementary schools
- And much more...

## You too can make a difference. Come join us!

**Come out to one of our Friday luncheon meetings.**

**For more Information:  
[www.RotaryBurnaby.org](http://www.RotaryBurnaby.org)**