2016
International Torrance Legacy Creativity Awards
2016
International
Torrance Legacy
Creativity Awards

Creative Writing  •  Visual Arts  •  Music Composition  •  Inventions
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Creative Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Creative Writing – Ages 8-10 Winners List</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The Assigned Classwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Guided by the Light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Thanatos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Garg, Supercat, and Silly Clock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Number Four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The Dragon and the Knight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>A Goddess Walks Into A Diner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Our Little Tornado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>The Mysterious Forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>A Hero’s Journey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Eddie and His New Shoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Creative Writing – Ages 11-12 Winners List</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>From Their Boat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Impetus: Knowledge vs. Imagination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Where I’m From</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Recollections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Ode to an Ant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>One Candle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>The Chicken Poem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>The Angry Bird</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>My Best Friend?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Metamorphosis: The Tale of the Unwanted by Lucy Ming Yi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Gears by Dora Ivkovich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>A Congregation of Stars by Cai Hui Lien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>They Will Acknowledge My Awesomeness Tonight by Kiri Peterson McMann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>A Heart for a Life; a Life for a Heart by Clarissa Wern Ting Wong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Roses of Revenge by Emily Cecilia Boyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Light Across the Mediterranean by Jeffery J. Huang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>The Water Droplet Story by Johannes Vilhelm Molle Storbjörk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Fearless Liam by Isaac Leon Marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Untitled by Isabelle Miriam Gawedzki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Uncharted Waters by Alesha Johannes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>My Laugh by Si Young Kim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>My Fearful Experience by Sydney Therese Frederick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Run by Joel Kai-En Hoe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Dove Wing by Nathalie C. Mitchell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Boys Will Be Boys by Naia Ishita Nathan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Dangerous Blue by Haemaru Chung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>It Was A Terrible Night by Todd Robert Redman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>God, America by Cindy Wang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Ever the Lucky One by Elena Grace Woodburn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Creative Writing – Ages 16-18 Winners List</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>Tips and Service by Lisa Zou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>Ill-fated by Vidya Lakshmi D/O Singanathan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>The Red String of Fate by Phaedra N. DeJarnette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>The Hunter Had Become the Hunted by Joseph Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>Still Beating by Calista Chong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>The Things They Lost by Julia Haein Mun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>Visual Arts – Ages 8-9 Winners List</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>Next Step Forward by Shinun Oh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>Sea Sunrise by JuSeong Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>Blockbusters by Christopher Jin Chang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>Royal Family Breakfast by Seoin Kim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>Hobo Grandma Potato by Singyee Liu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>Self-Portrait by Muhammad Alaa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>Happy Cupcake by William C. Kush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>Spaceship by Taehun Lee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Creative Writing

Visual Arts – Ages 10-11
Winners List
85 Chasing Your Dreams
by Rachael Run-xin Huang
86 Peacock
by Emma Mason
87 Butterfly World
by Nada Mikati
88 A New Sunrise
by Cecilia Nicoli

Visual Arts – Ages 12-13
Winners List
89 A Universe Without Climate Change
by Pang Hsien T
92 Undiscovered Treasure
by Sally Seulgi Park
93 Blossoms of the Geisha
by Greta Renee Franke
94 The Meeting Hearts
by Da Eun Lee
96 Elephants in the Morning Mist
by Alyssa Kelly Schulz
97 Peacock of Life
by Sanjna Ganjam

Visual Arts – Ages 14-15
Winners List
98 Lucky Bird
by Haemaru Chung
99 Japanese Geisha
by Tuyet-Nhi T. Nguyen
101 Reach
by Shea Margaret Frawley
102 Are Black Holes Gateway to a New Universe?
by Uttaran Das

Visual Arts – Ages 16-18
Winners List
103 Duet
by Emily Yanlei Chu
104 Birds of Paradise: Greeting and Farewell
by Morgan Amber Baladinelli
105 A Reluctant Adventure
by Alex Garnica
107 Star Sign
by Brandon Heebner

Photography – Ages 8-12
Winners List
112 A Heart Full of Petals
by Frances Mun Dinh
113 To the Top
by William J. Ee
115 In the Midst of Hot Smoke
by Pia Janaea Tica
116 From a Leaf Cutter’s Perspective: Tiny Ants
by Callum Wyer

Photography – Ages 13-16
Winners List
118 In the Midst of the Stars
by Samantha Caasi Tica
120 Journey to Forever
by Hadiya Yousuf

Music Composition
Winners List
123 Inventions

Toys and Games Winners List
130 BUILD IT! A S.T.E.M. Challenge Game
by Callum Wyer
134 TRADE TROTTERS
by Dora Ivkovich
136 Biome Sweet Biome
by Cassidy Kao
138 Infrared Remote Control Car
by Varun Jha
139 Salvation the Sphere
by S. Pon Balaji
140 Inverted World
by Jinhang Xie
142 Fearing to Wet Their Paws
by Esther-J Yoong

Arts and Leisure

French Fry Artist
by Kylie Luk
Stresscuber
by Olivia Jane Pixton
The Game Exchange Box
by Claire Goodowens and Liam Goodowens
Cap Catcher
by Natalie Peterson

Science and Engineering
Winners List
Alcofreeze
by Siddhima Varyambat
Hat-Based Hands-Free Navigational Aid (H-NAV)
by Shiloh S. Curtis
Wet Chemical Fire Suppression System for Apartment Kitchens
by Triple T (team): Haemaru Chung, Sadi Gulcelik, Donovan Shin, Owen Hefferren-Harkless, Tyler Masuyama, Alexander Sheen, Andrew Ting, Umar Ali
MilkBot
by Akshobh S. Kulkarni
Modular Bicycle Water Pump
by Tristan Ross Myers
Self-Heating Canned Food
by Richeal Shola Makinde

Inverted World
by Jinghan Xie
Fearing to Wet Their Paws
by Esther-J Yoong

Inventions

MilkBot
by Akshobh S. Kulkarni
Modular Bicycle Water Pump
by Tristan Ross Myers
Self-Heating Canned Food
by Richeal Shola Makinde

Music Composition

Inventions

Index

About the Midwest Torrance Center for Creativity/The Center for Gifted

2017 Torrance Awards Application Information
Widely regarded as “the father of creativity” in this country, E. Paul Torrance was an eloquent speaker and prolific author, contributing many books, articles and monographs in the field and developing his now widely recognized tests of creative thinking. Today, his ground-breaking ideas, programs, and models continue to tap the creative potential of individuals in all sectors of society and in many countries.

The International Torrance Legacy Creativity Awards competition honors the legacy of this great pioneer. The magazine you hold in your hands includes creative submissions of students between the ages of eight and eighteen in four major categories: Creative Writing, Visual Arts, Music Composition, and Inventions.

Writing was the first award competition in 2009. Hundreds of children from across the country and around the world submitted their poems and short stories. In subsequent years, visual art, musical composition, and, in 2014, inventions were added to the annual International Torrance Legacy Creativity Awards. Students sent entries from the United States, Canada, England, Australia, New Zealand, Poland, China, Singapore, South Korea, Kingdom of Bahrain, Turkey, India, and parts of Africa.

Each year, the enthusiasm of children and young people has continued to expand as more teachers encourage them to submit their most imaginative work to the competition. Every November, the Midwest Torrance Center for Creativity publishes a magazine with the prize-winning poems, stories, visual art pieces, musical scores, and invention designs. It has become a heartening sign for teachers and parents that, despite standardized testing and a narrowing curriculum in many schools, creativity is alive and well among so many children and young people.

Over the past eight years, the International Torrance Legacy Awards competition evaluates student entries at four age levels: 8-10; 11-12; 13-15; and 16-18. The themes for 2016 submissions included

- The Honor and The Glory
- A Grateful Heart
- What A Mystery!
- Couldn’t Help Laughing
- Journey to Forever
- A Reluctant Adventure
- Who Would’ve Thought, and
- Exploring a New Universe.

All four categories of creative expression and composition continue to ignite a wide range of individual responses. The well-known statement of E. Paul Torrance, “creativity is the highest form of mental functioning,” pervades our student submissions. Enjoy!

Sponsors for 2016 included the following: The National Association for Gifted Children, the Torrance Center for Creativity and Talent Development, the NAGC Creativity Network, Future Problem Solving International, and the Center for Gifted/Midwest Torrance Center for Creativity.

Joan Franklin Smutny
Director of International Torrance Legacy Creativity Awards
Talented young writers were invited to submit their most creative compositions in recognition of the legacy of creativity pioneer E. Paul Torrance. Over the past eight years, the International Torrance Legacy Creative Writing Awards competition has attracted hundreds of young writers who took part in two major categories: poetry and short story. In this year of judging submissions, we were pleased to see evidence of student maturity and growth in writing, in composition as well as in depth of feeling and insight.

Student participation represented ages 8-18. Poems and stories were assessed in four age-level categories: ages 8-10; 11-12; 13-15; and 16-18. The themes elicited a wide range of creative compositions—some strikingly original and imaginative. Entries also reflected a rich diversity of ideas and talents expressed by students throughout the United States and other countries, including Canada, Israel, New Zealand, Poland, Singapore, and South Korea.

A panel of four judges, comprised of teachers, authors, and editors in the Chicago area, evaluated the quality of student poems and stories. They were Janet Bartell, Chair; Nancy Messman, Co-Chair; Dorothy Massalski; and Sarah von Fremd. Each used rubrics to critique the poetry and stories, focusing for stories on such criteria as organization, character and plot development, and for poetry, linguistic expressiveness, imagery, originality, and depth. All four judges commended the maturity and creativity evident in student writing.

Joan Franklin Smutny  
Director of International Torrance Legacy Creativity Awards and Coordinator of Creative Writing  
Director of the Center for Gifted/Midwest Torrance Center for Creativity, Glenview, Illinois

Clara Freeman  
Manuscript Preparation
Creative Writing ~ Ages 8 – 10

POETRY

First Place
Tanmay Kulkarni
Age 8
Redmond, Washington
“The Assigned Classwork”
Emily Xiao
Age 10
St. Louis, Missouri
“Guided by the Light”

Second Place
Codou Ndao Brumblay
Age 9
Kalamazoo, Michigan
“Thanatos”
Callum Wyer
Age 9
Houston, Texas
“Garg, Supercat, and Silly Clock”
(Inspired by the poem “Jabberwocky” written by Lewis Carroll)

Third Place
Ella Day Guzman
Age 10
Norwood, New Jersey
“Number Four”

STORIES

First Place
Elliot Michael Marks
Age 10
Naperville, Illinois and Jaffa, Israel
“The Dragon and the Knight”
Clara Roberts
Age 10
White Plains, New York
“A Goddess Walks Into a Diner”

Second Place
Nusaybah Aisha Ali
Age 10
Glendale Heights, Illinois
“Our Little Tornado”
Kotono Oshimbe
Age 9
Wroclaw, Poland
“The Mysterious Forest”

Third Place
Ella Day Guzman
Norwood, New Jersey
Age 10
“A Hero’s Journey”
Hamza Hasan
Naperville, Illinois
Age 9
“Eddie and His New Shoes”
**Guided by the Light**

*By Emily Xiao*

**St. Louis, Missouri**

*First Place Tie*

Wondering,  
Feeling lost and hopeless  
Watching through windows,  
What would it be like  
To be someone else?  
Someone who explores  
Beyond those walls.  
Someone who sets out  
To change the world.  
And does.

Wandering,  
Lost, hopeless.  
Looking for direction.  
Waiting for someone to lead you,  
To set you back on the right road,  
To make you useful,  
Worth something,  
To help you help the world.  
Finding nothing.

Far away,  
Light glows.  
At the end of the tunnel,  
Across the bridge.  
It’s far,  
But reachable.  
After all,  
“The journey of a thousand miles  
Begins with one step.”

You find her.  
Your inspiration,  
Your road map,  
Your guide.  
She sets you back on the right road,  
And says  
“You,  
Your true self,  
Will be the change  
That this world needs.”

Just like that,  
The walls,  
Enclosing me in,  
Are flooded  
By beams of light,  
Opening the door  
Of opportunity.

---

**The Assigned Classwork**

*By Tanmay Kulkarni*

**Redmond, Washington**

*First Place Tie*

A vile monster of literature,  
A very great and horrible creature.  
It has words that gleam and fangs that bare;  
Its bloodshot eyes have a deadly glare.  
With rhyming horns made of flames,  
Its claws give emotional pain.  
Metaphorical scales covered in scum;  
This monster, a poem, is gruesome.
Thanatos

By Codou Ndao Brumblay
Kalamazoo, Michigan
Second Place Tie

His life disappeared before my eyes,
Like the beautiful bird that sadly flies,
Through the mourning night sky;
But I know I will not cry.

Death is natural, but his was wrong;
It was the opposite of too long.

My broken heart is bleeding with grief.
It can’t take in such a belief.

The summer breeze becomes cold;
Knowing that he will never grow old.

My companion, my friend,
Sharing memories until the end.

The end was tragic, sad, and dull.
It was the worst memory of all.

Garg, Supercat, and Silly Clock
(Inspired by the poem “Jabberwocky”
written by Lewis Carroll)

By Callum Wyer
Houston, Texas
Second Place Tie

A Windowashingargoyle makes his pick.
An Energeticlock jumps on top of a stick.
A Supersonicat flies through the blazing winds,
the clock makes new friends.
ZOW! PAP! WHAM! The cat knocks down some trees,
which knocks the clock to its knees!
The gargoyle says, “What is going on?”
The cat says, “Oh, you can go back to window washing. We were just having some fun.”
The gargoyle replies, “I want to join you too.”
“Well then,” the cat says, “Come on you!”
“17 words,” the gargoyle says. “Oh my goodness, can I have some birds?”
It was a mess out there I tell you, trash and trees everywhere.
It was such a mess, everyone just stared.
Finally the gargoyle spoke. “Where are my birds?” he yelled.
“Look over there,” the cat exclaimed. “I think I see some birds.”
The birds heard him and sensed that he was the one that knocked down their trees.
“Oh my!” said the cat, “Here they come. Flee! Flee! Flee!”
The cat was too slow and they got to him.
But when they were right at the cat’s rim, a hawk got him!
The hawk brought the cat to a beast,
and they had a feast,
of fried cat and herbs.

The End
Number Four

By Ella Day Guzman
Norwood, New Jersey
Third Place

There was once a number four.
Number four was always greedy.
Whenever he got something,
He’d always roar for more!

He was as wild as a boar,
Would never do a chore,
Or hold the door.
He was as savage as a dinosaur.

But one day, he met zero,
Who was always neutral.
He would not start a war,
Or insult people in the store.
He looked neutral, but...
Empty.

Zero never felt whole,
Until zero met two.
Two had less than four,
But a bit more than zero.
Now zero had a friend too!

It just so happens that two was even,
Which meant he could be neatly divided
Into two equal parts.
So, together, two and zero formed two ones!
Oh, what fun they would have together!

They told jokes,
Put on magic cloaks,
And played cards
In their front yards.

Now four felt ashamed and left out.
He noticed all their fun
And frolicking about.
He felt he should attempt to make friends.
It was time to make amends.
So one day, he approached them.

Four was surprised when they welcomed him with care.
Four was used to cruelty, and had thought the world unfair,
But now...
Four said yes, and for the first time he shared,
And learned that six among three is a happy affair.
The Dragon and the Knight

By Elliot Michael Marks
Naperville, Illinois and Tel-Aviv, Israel
First Place Tie

Once upon a time, there was a knight named Harold. Not only was he brave and courageous, he was also very kind and caring.

One day, the King sent all his knights out to fight a group of intruders. Harold’s fighting style was to fight until his opponents surrendered, but never to kill. The other knights were not the same. They were vicious and mean. The battle went on and on for days. Finally, the battle came to an end with a victory for the knights. Harold looked around him. He witnessed all those who had died that day in battle. He started to cry.

All the other knights saw him and started screaming out names at him: wimp, coward, and crybaby. Two knights grabbed him and took him to the King. They explained the story.

“If you do this one more time,” threatened the King, “You will lose the privilege of being one of knights. Do you understand?”

“Yes, your majesty,” said Harold.

“Then you may be released,” replied the King. Then he went to hand out bravery medals to all the other knights who fought that day.

Harold walked out into the forest feeling sad. He walked and walked, listening to all the noises of nature and not looking where he was going. Suddenly, he heard a big ROAR. He looked up and saw a ginormous dragon. He started shaking with fear. Then he noticed that the dragon was limping. He looked down and noticed that the dragon only had three legs. Automatically his kindness overpowered his fear. He asked the dragon what was wrong.

The dragon explained that dragons can lose a limb when they become terribly frightened, but that they can replace it as long as it is found and treated with a special potion.

“After I lost my leg, I hobbled over here into this area of the forest, but everybody is too scared of me to offer help. I have not seen a human in 23 years. It is a shame that no one has realized that despite the fact that most dragons are fierce, some dragons like me are kind and would never hurt a human. All I need to do is find my leg and put it in the right place, and it will grow back together. But I am not strong enough to get it,” said the dragon.

Despite his fear, Harold asked, “Where is it?”

“If you walk straight until the end of the forest and then turn left, you will see a huge tree and my leg at the bottom,” said the dragon.

Harold started walking. Ten minutes passed by and he started to get discouraged. Then finally, he saw a clearing. He walked to the end and noticed that there was a great view of the kingdom. He started admiring the view, but then he remembered his job. He headed left and almost immediately saw the tallest tree in the forest. Sure enough, at the bottom of the tree was a huge dragon leg.

Harold picked it up and surprisingly it was very light. He carried it all the way to the dragon. He put it in the original place. The dragon gave him the potion and he poured it all over the leg. All of a sudden, fog appeared and covered the entire dragon leg. It swirled around and when it dissipated, the leg was totally healed. The dragon was so happy that he started to cry. He put Harold on his back and started flying.

“WHERE ARE WE GOING?” shouted Harold over the noise of the dragon’s wings.

“TO MY FAMILY,” he shouted back. Fire billowed up into the sky. The dragon landed. The mother dragon flew up to him.

“Where have you been all this time?” she asked eagerly. He told her the story. Then they walked away, happily talking about their experiences.

They talked for a while and then finally came back to Harold. “We have decided something,” said the mother dragon, speaking to Harold for the first time. “As an honor for being so kind, we would like to come with you and protect your kingdom.”

With that, she threw him onto her back and started flying towards the kingdom. Harold sat on her back and enjoyed the feel of the wind on his face. They landed in the courtyard, right in front of the King. Harold jumped off the dragon.

“What are you doing here?” stuttered the King.

The dragon said, “This brave knight rescued me from years of solitude and sadness by being kind and brave enough to help me in my time of need. Although he was afraid, he was able to see past his fear and realize that even though I look fierce, I am really kind and gentle. Because of his strength and kindness, I am indebted to you and your kingdom. I am prepared to provide protection for your kingdom.

The King went inside. “Come with me,” he said. Harold followed. They went into the room where all the knights lived. As soon as they entered, everyone started talking to each other. “SILENCE!” screamed the King. “This man may seem to you like a coward or a wimp, but truly he is kind, caring, and also very brave. Today, this warrior stumbled into a dragon with a missing leg, and even though he was very afraid, his kindness took over and he saved this dragon many years of sadness. I think he deserves an apology from every single one of you for calling him names when he is truly a very kind man.”

After that, all of the knights lined up and gave him a rightful apology. The last person went and the King entered the room again. “Not only does this brave knight deserve an apology,” said the King, “I think he also deserves this.” He took a badge out of his pocket and held it up. “This is a badge of great bravery and kindness, embroidered with the image of a dragon,” said the King. “I think this knight has rightfully earned it.”

With that being said, Harold pinned the badge to his shirt and everyone applauded. The dragon and his family protected the kingdom well with the help of all the knights, and everyone lived happily ever after.

The End
A Goddess Walks Into a Diner

By Clara Roberts
White Plains, New York
First Place Tie

“Sorry I’m late,” Artemis said breathlessly, as she slid into the red vinyl booth. “It was Wolf Ambassador Day at the conservation center. Our program ran over and traffic was a mess.”

Hera sniffed loudly and looked across the chipped, plastic table at the son she despaired. Hephaestus looked down at his lap.

“I can’t believe you guys still eat that garbage,” said Demeter. “All that gluten and dairy. Ugh.” She shuddered. Ever since Demeter had been diagnosed with Celiac disease, she had been on everyone’s case to give up eating wheat entirely.

“All the celebrities these days are gluten free,” offered Aphrodite helpfully, as she flipped through People magazine.

Demeter nodded vigorously in agreement. “Gluten free eating is sooo much healthier. And it really does wonders for helping to lose those stubborn extra pounds.” She looked meaningfully at Apollo’s bulging waistline. Apollo pretended not to hear her. He began to doodle little pictures of sheep on his napkin.

Athena stared at Aphrodite. “Are you actually reading that, or do you just look at the pictures?”

“I think the pictures are pretty,” replied Aphrodite, completely missing the insult.

“Mortals really love that magazine,” Hermes interjected. “You wouldn’t believe how many I have to deliver every week.”

Artemis noticed that he was wearing his brown FedEx uniform. “Are you going to work after this?”

He grinned at her. “Technically, I am at work. The truck’s parked outside.” Artemis smiled back. She knew Hermes was so incredibly quick that he would finish his shift in twenty minutes.

“Haven’t you used that excuse before?”

“Probably.”

She pushed aside a strand of long, dark hair, which had fallen over her pale, amber eyes. “Mom just called me.”

He looked up and turned his full attention to his wife. “What did you tell her?”

“That you wouldn’t let me leave.”

They both laughed. Cerberus twitched in his sleep.

The End
Our Little Tornado

By Nusaybah Aisha Ali
Glendale Heights, Illinois
Second Place Tie

Anticipation

"Mom, do we have to go to school tomorrow?"
"Yes, Nusaybah, there is no reason to stay home."
"But my brother is being born!" I said. "I shouldn't go! I really shouldn't! Oh, mom! Please can we not go to school?" Okay, wow! I don't think I have ever been this desperate before! I really haven't. "Well, I will just ditch school," I mumble.

Finally, my dad chimes in saying we can go half-day and my grandparents could pick us up. "I mean, it's their baby brother. They should see him," he said.

"I don't want to go to school at all! I have a test," my elder sister, who is thirteen protests.
"Okay, I guess they could come home early, but," my mom grins, "under one condition. You guys have to go to sleep early!"
"But mom!"
"No buts, or you'll be going to school for a full day!"
As I went to bed, a thought struck me. What if mom went to the hospital in the middle of the night and had the baby while I was asleep! I thought about this long and hard, but the idea refused to leave.

Baby Is Almost Here!

"Nusaybah, wake up! Wake up! You're going to be late," my mom said.
"What! I have to go to school today?" I whined. "You said we didn't!"
"No, I said you could go half-day," she said.

But if I come home sick, meaning my stomach was hurting and I was throwing up? I wouldn't have to go to school for days. I mean, I have done that before. "Okay, fine, I'll go." I evilly smirked.

I slowly changed my clothes, dragged myself downstairs. I searched for my backpack and finally found it. Suddenly, my eyes caught the clock and finally found it. "Let's go!" I protested. "We don't have all day!" We shuffled into the car and drove off.

At school, all morning, I thought about my new baby brother and if he had arrived. I started to panic. What if they forget to pick me up? My face began to scrunch as I thought about it. I started to doodle flowers. Suddenly, my gut told me that someone was looking over at me. I slowly lifted my head to see who was behind me: it was my teacher! Oh no! Someone is in trouble!

"Your grandpa and grandma are here to get you. Go get your bag, okay?"
"Okay!" I said, relieved. I quickly packed my bags and went to the office. My grandparents were waiting. I was happy, jumpy. I couldn't believe it! I had a new sibling!

Hello Handsome

When we pulled up into the parking lot, I couldn't wait. We got out of the car and I ran into the hospital. We asked for my mom's room and they told us. I quickly rushed towards it.

"Don't run!" I heard grandpa.
"The nurses are going to yell!"

When I finally found the room, I gently knocked. I heard a soft voice say, "Come in." We walked in and saw this small baby in a clear, plastic container that certainly didn't seem comfortable. He was all bundled up in a blanket.

Suddenly, a loud cry startled me! I jumped. I tried to plug my ears. My brother threw a tantrum for what seemed like almost a gazillion years. The room finally was silent. I was thinking
about asking my mom if I could hold him, but I couldn’t do it. His crying had scared me. I kept telling myself to do it. Finally, I asked, “Mom, can I hold him?” I hoped she’d say yes.

“Sure,” she said.

She sounded tired. My dad held him and gently put him on my lap. The baby was really small.

Will I drop him? Will he spit up on me? Will I get yelled at because I am not holding him right? All these thoughts flooded my brain as I gazed at him. His face was squishy and adorable. I really wanted to pinch his cheeks, but I knew that he would throw a tantrum for another bazillion years. I tried to resist the urge, and somehow I couldn’t defeat it. Instead, I just slowly stroked his face, which was really soft. When it was time to leave the hospital, I didn’t want to.

Coming Home!

Three days later, it was time to bring mom home. When I got back from school, I dashed upstairs and got ready to leave, only to find out that we kids were not going to the hospital to get her.


“Because mom is coming home in a few hours,” my grandfather says.

“What if I call dad and ask him if we could go with him to bring mama back?” I asked with a grin on my face.

“Okay, call him,” said my grandfather.

He seemed like he was very confident about this. I called my dad and I got the answer that I wanted! I jumped up and down. He said that we could come and get my mom from the hospital!

When we got to the hospital, I remembered my mom’s room number. Without even telling the receptionist where I was going, I ran through the long hallways of the building. I found my mom’s room. I pecked in and saw her. She saw me through the crack and gestured me to come in. There was my baby brother, still cuddled up in a blanket with feet printed on it. We all sat down. We tried not to make noise, but I could hear a loud voice in me screaming with happiness.

Our Little Tornado

Well, you might think that there are bad things that happen when you get a younger brother. Like, waking up to a loud cry that you know won’t stop. There are more chores to do. He gets all the attention. There are still some good things about having a baby brother, though. The parents don’t really pay attention to what you are doing, and so you never get caught. Secondly, you get to hold the small, cute baby most of the time.

Looking back on this day, I remember how small Isa was. I look at him now and I think, Wow, he has grown a lot! He is now two, and it seems like time has flown by really fast. When he first turned two, I didn’t know what to expect, but now I do. He can cause disasters when he wants to, and he can be good when he decides to be. Basically, he gets what he wants. He throws blocks at the wall, trying to break it. He still knows how to throw a tantrum, like the day he was born.

He hits and slaps you! But what I hate is that it is easy to adore him. After that, you can’t stay furious with him. I also realized that he will get even more annoying as he gets older, and I should get mad at him when he does something that really gets me. While I may get mad at him, every single day when I come home from school there is a big surprise waiting there for me. When I open the door, he comes running to give me a big hug. When I look at newborns, I remember when he was small, and sometimes I wish Isa just never grew.
The Mysterious Forest

By Kotono Oshimbe

Wroclaw, Poland
Second Place Tie

“La, la, la, la! Come on, Bob! Let’s dance!”

“No thanks, Zak!”

“Okay then. See you.”

Now, I must introduce myself. My name is Bob Kumata and we were having a New Year anniversary party. There was happiness all around the place. My friend, Zak, asked me to dance, but I refused because I was nervous. After all, raccoons like myself are not great dancers!

Suddenly, as I tried to leave, a strict old lady came in and told everyone to stop the party. Everyone wondered why. All the raccoons were surprised – even my best friend, Zak. The old lady spoke, “It is not the time for us to have a celebration!”

“Why, Miss?” I asked.

“Because near the edge of the forest, humans have just started a construction.”

“What?” Everyone gasped.

“If we stay here without doing anything, we will likely suffer. We will need to transform ourselves and we have to be trained.”

“But, how?” one of the raccoons asked.

Listen! According to Japanese legend, foxes and raccoons can transform into different objects or living creatures!”

Everyone exclaimed, “That’s AWESOME!”

Our training soon started. The first training session was to go through fire by transforming into water. We practiced day and night. There were many injuries at first, but at last every single one of us was able to do it. By the end of the year, we could turn into anything we wanted. We could turn into humans and different objects, but there was one problem. How could we stop the humans from destroying our habitat?

Everyone began to think about what we could do to stop the humans. Shaking nervously, I stood up and suggested that we could scare the creatures by turning into scary monsters. The crowd began to talk about this, and in the end the raccoons proclaimed the idea to the greatest living raccoon in the area. The great raccoon called me, and as I stepped up, I knew that a house of pain was coming to me, but hoped that I wouldn’t be in too much trouble. As I bowed low, the greatest living raccoon thanked me for giving him such a great idea.

The next day, my idea started to take place. We raccoons waited and waited for the three most powerful raccoons to arrive. After three days, they finally did and brought many other raccoons with them, including my friend Sam, who was very tired after his long journey. Everyone was happy and cheered as they arrived. Now the hard work really began, as the three raccoons started training us. Some of my friends were in the bigger group, and it began to be more complicated, as if even one raccoon lost concentration, the whole thing could be destroyed.

After a few weeks, the monster plan was finished. We were excited, although some of us were concerned that the plan might not work. Zak, however, was positive it would work. One hundred and thirty raccoons were soon marching towards the end of the forest.

Of course, every raccoon was involved – even the three most powerful raccoons. As we approached the humans, we all began to be afraid, but one of the great raccoons said the word and we all transformed into terrifying creatures. I was turned into a man with no face. The Japanese people call this monster, “Fujimi.” Even if I was shot by one hundred bullets I would still be alive! When the construction people saw us, some of them froze with fear, while others ran for their lives. Soon, the forest was quiet and peaceful.

Once we transformed back into our normal selves, we headed home. We were all exhausted. I invited some of my friends to a barbeque at my house. Of course, Zak and Sam came with all my family and neighbors. That night was fabulous and great fun!

The next day, the story was on the television news and we all jumped happily, knowing that we had saved animals’ lives. However, we also heard that some people got hurt falling off a cliff, so we quieted down a little bit and I felt quite sorry for the people who were in the hospital. The head of the construction company was interviewed on the television and said that they were going to stop the construction because it seemed that a nature spirit was angry because its habitat was not being respected. Then, some men from the company came and took their things away.

“Let’s have a celebration!”

“Du, du! La, la!” The music was ready. A raccoon spoke into a microphone, “A one, a two, a one, two, three, four!”

“Let’s go, Bob!” persuaded Zak.

“Well, I supposed it’s our celebration for keeping our habitat safe from humans. Perhaps I can give it a go!”

“Yeah! You haven’t danced for a long time! Come on!”

“Ready, raccoons?!” shouted the conductor.

“Ready!” we yelled back, waving our tails in the air. Soon, most of the raccoons were dancing, including me. Actually, it was fun!

We still have the celebration every year, and as time passes by, we watch as the forest slowly recovers.
A Hero’s Journey

By Ella Day Guzman
Norwood, New Jersey
Third Place Tie

Ivy looked at her best friend, Abbey. They were going to be the youngest team to ever climb Mount Everest! They had been training ever since they could remember. Even though Ivy was born with only one hand, that wouldn’t stop her. And it wouldn’t stop Abbey from helping her along.

They gazed up the mountain. A mist of clouds obscured the top. They thought about their ski poles firmly in the ground and heaved themselves up to the next step over and over. That evening, they set up their neon orange tent and opened up two soup cans.

“It’s so cold!” Abbey complained while spooning the broth in her mouth.

“At least we have something to eat,” Ivy replied.

After eating, they took off their big, spiky climbing boots, their ski goggles, and their helmets. Ivy pulled plaster gray sleeping bags out from their overstuffed backpacks and spread them out over the ground while Abbey cleaned the mess from their meal. Ivy slid right into hers and, slowly, her eyelids drooped as her vision began to fade away into an endless black darkness.

“Good morning.” A man in a wool coat with a thick accent and deep voice appeared. “My name is Sudip. I will guide you from this point on since I am a native here and know this mountain well.”

“Sounds good,” Abbey replied cheerfully.

The man nodded his head and beckoned them to follow. The girls trailed Sudip’s footprints in the freezing snow. After a while, Sudip stopped climbing so suddenly that Ivy almost bumped into him. “This,” Sudip announced while pointing to a massive area made entirely of snow, “will cause an avalanche if you step anywhere near here.”

“Okay,” Abbey replied, eyeing the area nervously. “We’ll make sure we don’t go anywhere near there.”

A while later, multiple brown tents came into view. “This,” Sudip announced, “is where my family is camped. Come rest after your long day.”

A small boy with a missing tooth bounced around outside a tent. When he saw Sudip, he exploded with joy and streaked across the rocky terrain shouting, “Papa!”

Sudip smiled and heaved the boy up to his shoulders. “Come meet the rest of my family,” Sudip invited.

“Sure!” the girls replied eagerly.

The moment Ivy stepped into a tent, a woman with dark brown hair whirled around with fury and fear burning in her eyes. When Sudip stepped into the tent, her piercing gaze instantly softened as she realized they were not intruders.

“I am sorry if I scared you,” the woman apologized. “We don’t get a lot of visitors around here.”

“This is my wife, Bianca,” Sudip proclaimed. As Bianca moved aside, she revealed a girl around Samir’s age looking up, eyes gleaming with curiosity. “This is Samir’s twin sister, Karuna,” Sudip added.

Ivy was picking up a piece of bread when she heard Karuna call, “Uncle!” Karuna flashed over to a tall man with big clunking boots who stepped into the ten with a large sack loaded with goods. The man smiled warmly as Karuna and Samir jumped in their uncle’s arms.

Sudip said, “Thank you for coming to help again, brother.”

After his children were asleep, Sudip took a deep breath and said, “You may be wondering why we live in the mountain and how we survive without any trade or connection to the world.”

“We had to leave Kathmandu, Nepal’s capital, because gangsters threatened us. We left everything behind,” Bianca explained with sorrow in her eyes.

“But my brother here,” Sudip explained, “brings us food, clothing, and other such needs from the city.”

“Oh, I am so sorry!” Ivy cried.

“Anyway,” Sudip said, changing the subject. “You’d better sleep now.”

In the morning, they continued their trek. Sudip’s family would walk with Sudip, Ivy, and Abbey for a few kilometers and then part with them. Ivy couldn’t wait to continue.

“Stop playing with your ski poles and use them properly,” Bianca scolded.

“Why?” Samir asked, crossing them over again.

Suddenly, he disappeared from sight, tumbling down the snowy hill. “Samir!” everybody cried in unison.

“I’ll get him!” Ivy shouted as she dashed after him. She tripped on a loose stone. Suddenly, one of her ski poles slipped from her grasp and Ivy found herself clinging for dear life with her only hand on her last pole. She quickly recalled Sudip’s warning. Her eyes widened as she saw a mass of snow plummeting directly towards her. She lost her grip and plunged into the deep snow. The last thing she saw before blackness encased her vision was Abbey’s eyes wide with terror, an outstretched hand reaching for her friend.

Ivy awoke to see Sudip looming over her. “She’s alive!” he cried with joy. Everybody raced over.

“Where is Samir?” Ivy groaned.

“Over here,” Bianca answered.

Samir was pale and his chest hardly moved. His eyes were closed, as he lay sprawled out on the ground. Sudip strapped an oxygen mask to Samir’s face. Suddenly, his eyes opened and he began a fit of coughing.

“He’s alive!” Sudip cried with joy, his usual calm, controlled emotions nowhere to be found. Samir groaned with pain. “Let’s get him back to the tent,” Sudip decided. Once back, Sudip gave Samir medication and warm blankets.

Several days later, Ivy and Abbey left for the top again. This time, only Sudip joined them. Ivy looked up and saw the summit of the mountain. She looked down at the mist of clouds.
Eddie and His New Shoes

By Hamza Hasan

Naperville, Illinois

Third Place Tie

“They’ve come! They’ve come!”

He sprinted up the stairs as the happiest kid in the world. For as long as he could remember, he wore red and uncool looking shoes. For the first time in his life he had shoes that were not cheap looking. His new shoes had come through the mail and had been left by his door. Now he could walk down the street without people snickering and making fun of him. Eddie jumped onto his bed and opened the box.

“So cool!” Eddie exclaimed.

“What’s all the noise for?” His brother, Josh, shouted from the next room.

“I just got the coolest looking shoes ever!” Eddie gushed.

Eddie’s older brother was always in a bad mood. Whenever Eddie got something nice, his brother would always criticize him. Like when he got his first paint-it racecar for his birthday. “That is the worst birthday present ever. Aunt Susie must have got that present for her worst nephew,” Josh had sniggered.

Just then, Josh walked into the room wearing his black skull t-shirt.

“Lemme see these shoes you’re talking about.” Eddie opened the box and showed him the dark blue shoes with red stripes. “Some dorky shoes those are,” Josh said and walked away.

Eddie couldn’t believe they were siblings. As he started to think of all the mean words to call his brother, Eddie heard his sister, Elizabeth, walking up the steps. Eddie dashed over and showed her his new shoes.

“I love them! Why don’t you slip them on and go play in the park with Mark? I bet he would love them!” she said.
Elizabeth was the complete opposite of Josh. She took Eddie for ice cream and bike rides around the neighborhood. She was simply the best! Eddie ran to the park and found Mark playing in the field.

“How many times have I told you, Eddie, you are not allowed to run in the hallways?”

Eddie thought.

“Stop right there,” she ordered. “How many times have I told you, Eddie, you are not allowed to run in the hallways?”

“I have no idea. Probably many times. I will try to walk next time.”

“Those are very nice shoes, Eddie,” she said kindly.

“Thank you,” he beamed. When he got to the classroom, most of the kids were there. “Welcome, Eddie! Did you have a nice weekend?” said Ms. Roberts, Eddie’s teacher. “I love the new shoes!”

“I had a wonderful weekend! The new shoes I got are really cool!”

Eddie walked back to his seat carefully, avoiding stepping on any supplies placed on the floor. When he got to his desk, he pulled out his math and English journal. After announcements, he had to go to gym class. He wondered if his shoes could give him speed so that he and his team could win “Capture the Flag.”

Eddie and his class walked silently in the halls to gym class. When he and his class got there, they were assigned teams for the game of “Capture the Flag.” Eddie was great at playing this competitive game.

This is it, thought Eddie. He had to win. He and his teammates were great players. They had every chance of winning. When the beginning whistle blew, the game was already intense.

Eddie dodged taggers. He looked for the other team’s flag. While he was looking for the flag, he saw the other team’s player on his side. Eddie tagged him.

One player is in jail. There are fewer taggers. I can get the flag, Eddie thought. He juked a kid, ran to the right. Then he faked left and came back right. He had a clear path to the flag and victory! He sprinted to where the flag was placed, snatching it. Three kids on the other team came at Eddie.

He spun around one. One of them fell. Eddie hurtled over him. Two down, one to go! Eddie was almost tagged by the last of the three, but he slid under the tagger’s arm and onto his team’s side. They had won!

After gym class, Eddie walked back to his classroom with his classmates. He speedily wrote a note on a piece of paper and threw it under his friend’s desk. The note said, “Can you come to my house after school?” His friend, Jack, intentionally dropped his pencil on the floor and picked up the pencil in his right hand and the note in his left. He read it and passed a note to Eddie. Eddie quickly read it. It read, “Sure, I will come over.”

After school that day, Eddie and Jack took the bus to Eddie’s house. They got off at the closest stop to Eddie’s house and then walked the rest of the way there. When they got inside, they had some snacks, and then raced their way down the hall and down the stairs to Eddie’s Ping-Pong table.

The two of them started hitting the Ping-Pong ball back and forth, and the next thing they knew they were playing a game. After they finished they played a few video games. Eddie liked having friends over because he didn’t have any brothers his age.

Two hours later it was time for Jack to leave because his mom wanted him back before dark. When he had left, Eddie put his new shoes in the box they came in and put it inside his room. Now Josh couldn’t do anything to Eddie’s new shoes. While Eddie got ready for bed, he thought about his great day. People had commented on his shoes and he had won “Capture the Flag.” His shoes were the best a kid could want. Eddie went to sleep as the happiest kid in the world.
POETRY

First Place

Pieta Jan Mackle Bayley
Age 11
Christchurch, New Zealand
“From Their Boat”

Owen Alexander Dudney
Age 12
Arlington Heights, Illinois
“Here”

Liam M. Goodowens
Age 11
Winter Park, Florida
“Impetus: Knowledge vs. Imagination”

Preston Yuping Yao
Age 12
Darien, Connecticut
“Where I’m From”

Second Place

Angelina G. Chan
Age 12
Long Grove, Illinois
“Recollections”

Dora Ivkovich
Age 12
Okemos, Michigan
“Ode to an Ant”

Alyssa Kelly Schulz
Age 12
Mount Prospect, Illinois
“One Candle”

Third Place

Ryan J. Liew
Age 11
Singapore
“The Angry Bird”

Reanne Rui Xuan Lim
Age 12
Singapore
“My Best Friend?”

Isaac Leon Marks
Age 12
Naperville, Illinois and Tel-Aviv, Israel
“The Chicken Poem”

STORIES

First Place

Dora Ivkovich
Age 12
Okemos, Michigan
“Gears”

Lucy Ming Yi
Age 12
Singapore
“Metamorphosis: The Tale of the Unwanted”

Second Place

Cai Hui Lien
Age 12
Singapore
“A Congregation of Stars”

Kiri Peterson McMann
Age 11
Boca Raton, Florida
“They Will Acknowledge My Awesomeness Tonight”

Third Place

Emily Cecilia Boyer
Age 12
Brooklyn, New York
“Roses of Revenge”

Jeffrey J. Huang
Age 12
Lisle, Illinois
“Light Across the Mediterranean”

Isaac Leon Marks
Age 12
Naperville, Illinois and Tel-Aviv, Israel
“Fearless Liam”

Johannes Vilhelm Molle Storbjörk
Age 11
Wroctaw, Poland
“The Water Droplet Story”
From Their Boat

By Pieta Jan Mackle Bayley
Christchurch, New Zealand
First Place Tie

Now we leave,
*Going forever.*
I still hear the guns.
*The sound is dying.*
The waves now silence them.
*Listen to the ocean.*
I feel the storm, like a dark omen.
*Let me comfort.*
I feel the waves, as threatening as the world we left behind.
*Let me hold you.*
I shall fall, like a leaf from a tree.
*Let me catch you.*
Into the deep.
*Water surrounds us.*
We’re unlucky escapers,
*To struggle is pointless.*
And yet we are lucky.
*Luckier than those back home.*
Mother!
*Come, my child.*
Drowning is better.
*We cannot escape sorrow.*
I can’t hear the guns.
*The sound of guns ceases entirely.*
Keep me closer.
*Your heartbeat slows.*
Your breathing is nearly lost.
*You cannot breathe in water, child.*
The blue has swallowed us.
*Blue is a tranquil color. More peaceful than what we left behind.*
Waves toss water above.
*Our bodies sink below.*
We are leaving here,
*Yes, we hoped to leave.*
We shall.
*Water is serene, like a tear,*
The tears we shed.
*In that different time.*
Different place.
*Different Universe.*
Now we say good-bye.
*May the turtles carry our pleading voices to the world, as now our time is up. Let them hear our melancholy chanting: “Please. Peace.”* 
Begging.

A steady heartbeat.
*A note of silence.*
Impetus: Knowledge vs. Imagination

By Liam M. Goodowens
Winter Park, Florida
First Place Tie

Twisting passages
  winding tunnels
    KNOWLEDGE illuminates my way

I travel
  alongside history
    observing and gathering the seeds
      left by IMAGINATION

SOCIETY
  teetering on the
    brink between
      what we IMAGINE
      &
      what we KNOW

ever becoming the manifestation
  of HOPES
  &
  of DREAMS
  &
  of NIGHTMARES

shall I blame imagination for war or knowledge for the atomic bomb?
shall I embrace knowledge for the incandescent light bulb or imagination for the polaroid?

in a soft afternoon
  amidst the waning sun
    I ponder
      the exquisite beauty
        of the human endeavor

can it be
  the embers of IMAGINATION
    fuel the everlasting search for KNOWLEDGE
  OR
    is it simply
      UNDERSTANDING breeds
        CREATIVITY
man is constrained
    in the grip of his own insecurity
    
we SEARCH
    and SEARCH
    and SEARCH
    for proof...for purpose...for possibility

we are never enough for ourselves
we endeavor to be enough for others

INTERNAL voids
    FILLED by
    EXTERNAL accomplishments

you ask which has impacted SOCIETY more...
yet as I sit in this park and see
    CARS
    &
    HOVERBOARDS
    &
    DRONES
    listening to PHONES ring and satellite RADIO fill the air

I can’t help but wonder if
    society IMPACTS knowledge and imagination
    and not the other way around

what’s the point? what are we striving for? what does anyone want?

CONNECTION!

in the simple melody of a song inspired
in the soft beauty of an artist’s stroke

passion wins the day in the land of imagination
    ELEVATING
the foundation of truth and knowledge
    BINDING
the souls of men to one another

in TRUE PHILOSOPHER fashion,
I’ll answer your QUESTION
with one of my own:

ISN’T IT IMAGINATION THAT MAKES US A SOCIETY AT ALL?
Here

By Owen Alexander Dudney
Arlington Heights, Illinois
First Place Tie

Here is the land made of Rockets and Blocks
Tetrises falling, ships taking off.
He must be taking a most careful stock
Of the pixels a-landing, the dreams all aloft.

Here is the land made of Lightning and Steel
Huge metal spires are rending the air.
Bolts of sheer power are flying with zeal
As they flip through the sky and ruffle my hair.

Here is the land made of Snakes and Machines
Serpents are winding through gears and on ropes.
They’re finding quarry in small miseries
And taking them back and creating some hope.

Here is the land made of Felines and Cats
(Twice the cats is more fun, I think you’ll agree).
Some are flopping; they’re tired! Or hiding in hats
Still others are wishing to trounce gravity.

Here is the land made of Turtle and Trees
The island’s not lonely, it’s simply alone.
There’s a beautiful forest with ferns and cat-reeds
And below it, a platform of flesh, shell, and bone.

Here is the land made of Photons and Path
Streamers of light, blazing trails through the trees.
Deviance promises brilliant, vast wrath
But the punishment comes as a nudging, cool breeze.

Here is the land made of Shouts and Display
The anarchic noise: predictable, yet brash.
It, from the path, quite typically strays
And it always must lose the resulting clash.

Here is the land made of Halos and Spots
The fine golden bands and the grand inky splats.
The canines are banded and covered in spots
And they’ll never allow any tales to fall flat.

Here is the land made of Fields and Design
The grass is quite green, above the flat land.
The birch and the oak and the chestnut and pine
Are sculpted in fractals, with a most careful hand.

Here is the land made of Donuts and Lights
The glazed and the frosted and sprinkled beauty.
Toroidal perfection, suspended and bright
The filaments gleaming, for you and for me.
Where I’m From

By Preston Yuping Yao
Darien, Connecticut
First Place Tie

I am from tiny plastic golf clubs,
from sleek grand pianos
and tight Piranha swim caps.
I am from the
miniature cloth-covered couch
in the corner of
the cozy, comfortable living room.
(Tan, plush, covered
in colorful geometric patterns.)
I am from Black-Eyed Susans
from the cherry blossom tree,
whose scattered pale pink flowers
disappear and reappear
like Canadian geese gliding south.

I am from delicious steamed dumplings
and shiny glasses,
from Li Yang and Jian Yao.
I’m from hard happiness
and laborious love.
From “Be proud!” and “Be kind!”
I’m from Buddhism
and the cheerful, wide-eyed monkey,
the Chinese Zodiac,
the majestic faces
of 12 animals staring down at me,
observing my every movement.

I’m from “no” to
the mushy, disagreeable baby food,
from summer solstice and soft, fluffy socks.
From my brother’s nearly cut-off ear,
to the dent in the dim gray walls
of our first rental house.
I’m from adored stuffed animals
and luminous, kaleidoscopic night lights.
I’m from old Santa Claus,
the rosy Easter Bunny
and the tiny Tooth Fairy.
From duck-chasing frenzies,
the dark brown feathers
and pudgy fingerprints everywhere.

From jumbo shrimp
and fancy, delicate moon cakes
and Shanghai, China
and a Chinese family
they carefully raise me,
“right vs. wrong,”
“left vs. right,” and guide my way.

In the dark, crowded,
and deserted guestroom closet
sits a large, plastic bin.
There are stick-figure drawings
splattered with paint,
to festive representations
of holidays and parties
to messy dactylograms
and typed-up essays.

I am from those memories,
both joyful and disconsolate –
the anamneses
like the cherry blossom tree
standing tall and strong
through the cold-piercing winters
and the humid summers,
through dancing lightning,
gentle sunrises,
and howling winds
but unlike
the pale pink flowers
of the cherry blossom tree,
the memories
are with me
forever.
Recollections

By Angelina G. Chan
Age 12
Long Grove, Illinois
Second Place Tie

she sat by the window
looking out
at the streets
passing through
much too fast, everything
one raindrop away

with the shadow of
the traveled highway
behind them
she was the only one
who looked back

down at the motion-blurred asphalt
colors blending
a mixture of watered-down paint
dripping down
until
nothing
but
a haze

the water
a scent of
the flooded grass
the mud-filled pavements
strangers’ worn-out dreams
and
just
a meticulous
silence

she paused
for a moment
looking at
each tear
from the sky
but
she only saw her reflection

she wished
she
could catch
a raindrop
on her finger
and see
how true it was
to be
there
Ode to an Ant

By Dora Ivkovich
Okemos, Michigan
Second Place Tie

The ice freezes, and the numbness is omnipotent.
   My eyes, however deadened, are the only things left,
As I fight the cold, the tips of my fingers are impotent.
   The warmth is gone; I claim it is theft.
For I did not consent to this atrocity,
   Nor did I even get to say anything different,
      Before they, without thinking, took it on a whim.
      But, would thou protect a comrade with enough ferocity?
Nevertheless, it was stolen while others stood indifferent,
   Looking away, their faces secretly grim.
The support that is lacking, forces us all into endless cold,
   A harsh land of winter and solitude.
While thou, with thy brethren, reside in heat, which is, for us, pure gold.
   All the while your need for it has been subdued.
Teach us the way, O mighty ant, that you are strong together,
   The way you are dependent yet independent on one another,
      Supporting others in need,
      Yet requiring no tether.
      But a man does not regard another as a brother,
      Not caring, taking no heed.
There is a sense of dependence,
   Lacking where it is needed most,
That pushes us into independence,
   Our pride making it a ghost.
All while you pay no attention to our devastation,
   Always working together,
      Supporting one another without fail,
      Basking in your warm creation.
      Is there a way you could teach us what it means to be together,
      To be able to trust others with no bail?
Even when the bitter cold hits,
   When a wind threatens to blow everything away,
And others, as if trapped, lose their wits.
   You come together with your brethren and stay.
Many lights have been extinguished,
   Many times have we all felt the burn
      Of betrayal and of pain,
      Where no one has been distinguished,
As being ready to learn
   About being weighed down by a ball and chain.
O loyal ant, there are no bounds to the lessons you teach
   From the Book of Proverbs to Aesop,
Although many have tried to preach
   The lessons you drop,
As the mind continues to be reclusive,
   There is no change in the cold,
      The numb infants bawl,
      And the warmth is still elusive.
   For mankind, although the most bold,
      Is the most oblivious of all.
One Candle

By Alyssa Kelly Schulz  
Mount Prospect, Illinois  
Second Place Tie

In a dark room  
Where there is no evidence of a moon  
A candle sits  
And that candle is lit  
Small and bright  
Giving us light  
And the dark room is dark no more

But time goes on and that candle gets lonely  
So tired of being the only one  
That he wishes for a mate  
Not caring how long he will have to wait  
And calls above  
Searching for a love  
And, finally, his prayers are answered

In a right room  
Where this no evidence of a moon  
Two candles sit  
And one is newly lit  
Both small and bright  
Both giving us light  
And the bright room is even brighter than before

But time goes on, quicker  
And their light begins to flicker  
So they spread their light  
Thinking that they might  
Be able to give the gift of flame  
Not caring what the name  
To make the room brighter

In a brilliant room  
Where there is no evidence of a moon  
Five candles sit  
Three are newly lit  
All small and bright  
All giving us light  
And the bright room is twice as bright as before

But time goes on and the two candles’ light grows dimmer  
No longer containing their glimmer  
So they say their good-byes  
And cry their cries  
Beginning to fade away  
Their light barely showing them the way  
And their flame is gone forever

In a bright room  
Where there is no evidence of a moon  
Five candles sit  
None are newly lit  
Only a few are small and bright  
Only a few are giving us light  
And the bright room isn’t so bright anymore
The Chicken Poem

By Isaac Leon Marks  
Naperville, Illinois and Tel-Aviv, Israel  
Third Place Tie

My Fellow Chickens, it is time we strike back!  
No more shall we be eaten on a bun with Pepper Jack  
It’s your turn humans, to know what it’s like  
To be butchered, chopped, and eaten. Pretty fair, right?  
We must hold a revolution, be the best that we can be  
And only after that will we finally be free  
So let’s all make a difference; together, as one  
‘Cause I am really tired of sleeping on a bun.

The Angry Bird

By Ryan J. Liew  
Singapore  
Third Place Tie

You glare at the poor bug,  
your feathers ruffled and chest all puffed up.  
Angry, indignant  
hopping madly from foot to foot.  
Squawk! Squawk! you screech.  
Pecking furiously at it.  
The bug dodges nimbly.  

Just like my younger brother  
when he does not get his way.  
Like when Mom says, no more TV.  
Or when the last potato chip is eaten.  

Face red, eyes bulging  
foot stamping. So cute!  
My baby brother! My mynah bird!
My Best Friend?

By Reanne Rui Xuan Lim
Singapore
Third Place Tie

A:
A hundred pairs of unfriendly eyes,
Staring through my soul.
I wanted to run, to say good-bye,
And could feel my stomach take a roll.

The teacher’s voice was crisp and sharp,
Cutting through the silence.
I took a breath and a gulp,
And glanced at classmates who looked like giants.

They were staring down at me,
Hostility or indifference on their faces.
They made me feel like a little feeble bee,
Or someone who is awkward and has braces.

I tried hard to prepare myself,
For the onslaught that might come.
I must do well, to myself I compel,
And do my best to not be glum.

Being the newly transferred student,
I started, hesitantly, the introduction.
After some time, my nerves loosened,
Until someone caused a disruption.

You may be smart, he said,
But you don’t look the part.
Furthermore, your face and head,
Look like abstract art.

The room burst into sniggers,
As I stood there, helpless.
As the teacher tried to calm the reaction triggered,
I knew, in my heart, I was friendless.

What a mystery!
I thought to myself.
Why do they not like me?
Now there is no hope, and to happiness I say farewell.

I heaved a sigh, deep with regret,
I would never have friends here, I bet.
Now, I was merely a reject,
That no one would ever accept.
B:

Looking at her standing there,
A look of despair on her face.
I felt a stirring of pity, of care,
And wanted to comfort her, to embrace.

It would be nice, had it not been impossible.
If I ever did so,
I would be shunned, a fate too horrible
No one would like me at all, I know.

I must be happy,
As I have popularity.
If I help her it will end up badly,
And make me an object of charity.

A:

An hour later, during free time,
Amber announced she was having a party.
Everybody was invited, she chimed,
Except for me, she said, without even a sorry.

I stared at her, unbelieving, hoping for at least something,
But she just sauntered away.
I felt as if my heart was bleeding.
That I was so hated, it’s grieving.

There was no hope.
No invitation, no acceptance.
I feel rejected, by the whole globe.
Now, I only can watch at a distance.

Being left out is not at all pleasant.
That I have just experienced!
I shall just try to be independent.
I shall try to be resilient.

But that is not possible,
As this is a task too hard.
It is not even plausible,
And now my life is in shards.
A:
I sat alone in the cafeteria,
Thinking of my day.
I was ignored, treated like bacteria,
And now, everything was in shades of gray.

The noise of the crowd was ceaseless,
The people moving about were faceless.
Staying here was meaningless,
I was tired, so tired I was emotionless.

To be exact, no emotions but anger,
Directed at my parents.
How could they be so inconsiderate to cause a bother?
But now, the solution was apparent.

I would demand to move back,
Away from this place.
Where in happiness I lack,
Somewhere I can start anew, without disgrace.

I should not give up,
But I have no choice, no alternative.
Now, I feel like a kicked pup.
Now, I cannot be positive.

B:
I looked at her, the picture of defeat,
So alone and spirit so broken.
She then took a seat,
Putting her head in her hands, heartbroken.

I wanted to help her, so, so much.
But if I attempted to do that,
I would lose popularity, be treated like sludge!
Thus, I could not even afford to chat.

I am sorry as her I ignored,
But I really cannot do anything.
It will be better when the others get bored,
When teasing her is no longer a thing.

I looked away, too ashamed to watch,
As she was ignored, mocked.
The feeling of shame I tried to dislodge,
But in my heart, it was firmly locked.
B:
I could not take it, not anymore.
Could not bear to see her suffer some more.
I should not have played a part in this cruelty, which I abhor.
Now, for her I will care for.

I stood up, determinedly,
Ignoring the looks of curiosity on my classmates.
I walked over and looked at her wordlessly,
Hoping she would forgive me and my mistakes.

I should have helped her,
Not just merely stand meekly by.
I would not let this mistake recur,
And no more would I be the bad guy.

Anxiety stirring in my gut.
Knowing a mistake I had made.
Apprehension in my heart,
Forgiveness the goal in my head.

A:
I stared at her, utterly shocked.
Why would she come over when she had friends?
Maybe she was trying to embarrass me, and at that I balked.
Unbelieving that she had come to make amends.

Looking in her eyes, however,
I saw no sign of being mocked.
Should I accept this offer of friendship, a treasure?
After all, she did nothing when I was mocked, and at that I was still shocked.

Why not be her friend?
Things couldn’t get any worse than they were.
If I did, I might not need to meet a bitter end!
My head I bowed, and for her to sit down I allowed.

What a mystery!
Yes, it was!
Why would someone like her befriend me?
This was so unbelievable, so magical, I felt like giving applause.
B:

What a mystery!
She actually accepted me!
After all I had done, for me to be accepted there seemed to be witchery!
I had thought she would refuse, disagree!

I saw a change in her eyes,
A change for the better it seemed.
She looked at me and murmured, “Hi,”
And in her eyes, I could see the beginning of light and life beaming.

A new beginning, a new chance
To be happy with someone unique.
I was so surprised I was in a trance,
As with my interference, her future was no longer bleak.

A:

What a mystery!
Her friend I have been for three years.
I never understood why, that fateful day, when I was wallowing in my misery,
She came up to me and gave me happiness, gave me cheer.

With her by my side, glad I was. Glad!
I enjoyed life to the fullest,
No more sadness, no more classmates, now we were comrades.
I am grateful, but what I have done to deserve this, I am clueless.

I am happy, a chance I got,
I should not question how this became.
I should treasure this chance, this twist in the plot,
Now the challenge of being friendless I overcame.

B:

What a mystery!
Never had I ever expected our friendship to be so fruitful!
This was a new beginning; what happened in the past was history.
Now, her future and mine was hopeful!

My best friend, she is.
My supporter, my rock.
We passed through times together in a whiz,
Now, days do not pass where we do not talk.

We went through everything,
Helped each other when in need.
Went through together, thick and thin,
It is all for the better, we all agree.
C:
What a mystery!
We could have never predicted this!
We have become the best of friends; together we went through failures and victories.
We are best friends, and in bliss!

We brought color to each other’s lives,
Joy, bliss, happiness, delight.
Our history would be archived.

Metamorphosis: The Tale of the Unwanted

By Lucy Ming Yi
Singapore
First Place Tie

I remember when I was a fragile glass shard. Broken off a once flawlessly blown piece, I was burdened with the imperfections of it. No light shone on me, yet the heavy layers of dust on my rough, gauche surface were clearly visible. I was thrown everywhere mindlessly. And I was hurt and bleeding. But I was not born to show that.

I could not learn to be strong. To not smash into even smaller pieces than what I already was. I was my own problem.

My sharp edges made it impossible for me to interact, to love, and to be loved. They cut deep scars into anyone that came near me, reminding them yet again of the monster that lived inside of me.

‘Insignificance’ was my synonym, and ‘glass’ was my antonym.

And then I met her. She was old, wrinkly, and no longer meant any use in the society. But you could see she was trying to regain her place in this world. Her hair would look black from afar, but as you moved closer you would notice that she had tried to paint her white hair black. It gave her hair a dry, ugly look. Just like her lips. Her lips were a crimson red. A little too red, one might say. She had unevenly applied layers over layers of lipstick to her pale lips, just to give her face a little more color. But it didn’t work. Hair that was a horrifying jet black, lips that were distorted and bleeding, and scratches on a wrinkled face, probably out of desperation about one’s loss of necessity in a bustling and growing society. It didn’t work.

When she found me, she was careful. She didn’t dare go near in case I meant harm. But I didn’t. So she slowly picked me up in her coarse hands, ignoring the pricks from my edges. Observing the ruthless cracks in my body, she softly brought me home.

When she found me, she found a soul mate. We were pushed away by society, not wanted, not cared about. Somehow, where others saw my deformities, she saw my beauty. Where others saw my faults, she saw my strength.

It was a marvelous, captivating cycle. She shone hope on me and blew away the layers of dust that had formed on my surface. And as she did that, I was able to reflect once again. I let her see the truth: she was perfect the way she was.

We both saw hope in ourselves.

I realized that I wasn’t as tarnished, wasn’t as dull, wasn’t a dead loss.

From then on, I found worth in myself. What I used to not have, now I proudly possess. Where my edges used to cut anyone who came near, they have been smoothed and polished. Where I used to be incredibly weak and fragile, now I’m strong and robust.

And three years later, I have been reformed to become a magnificent glass window, impervious to the struggles that my journey brought me. Through my spotless glass, she would peer at the vibrant noises of the street. “It’s quite interesting,” I could hear her mutter. The peaceful ambivalence inside seemed to be moving at a much slower pace than the hustle and bustle of our hectic city beyond my body.

Of course, when hailstones strike, or when a little boy accidentally hurls his rocks at my face, a crack would blemish me. But agony would be short-lived, for what would come would be refreshing experiences that would aid in my journey to forever. And my journey would indeed take forever.
Gears

By Dora Ivkovich
Okemos, Michigan
First Place Tie

Marko Braganovich was obsessed with that block. Originally a present from his grandfather, the heirloom was only there for show. But Marko wanted that lock to work more than anything in the world. Day and night, he toiled over the minute crevices and cracks, fixing every part in order. They were organized from large to small, spread across the living room floor in a delicate lattice of organization. Everyone around him saw how absolutely absurd this fixation with the clock was, but they didn’t want to change the strange happiness that came with the machine. Marko had been slowly sinking into depression for years now, but he had a strange smile whenever he was working on it. Almost like he was forcing himself to enjoy the repair, thinking it might go faster and more smoothly if he enjoyed it.

From a purely visual sense, his obsession could be easily justified. It truly was a majestic clock. The wood paneling was intricate, small flowers and ivy detailed and carved out on the walnut-stained sides, and the front... Oh, the front. The clock face itself was made of a fine slab of marble, and the digits were in gold-plated roman numerals. The hands were made from gold as well, stretching toward the numbers in graceful rods. Under the face stood two pillars of wood, made from the same fine-grained walnut as the sides. Between them stood the pendulum, by far the best part of the entire clock. There were small golden patterns engraved in it, cherubs and flowers, and ivy twining up the edges. It gave the feeling of antique power, towering to the top of Marko’s apartment with delicate serenity.

Every morning, he’d wake up and sit down in the living room. The daily clock routine was planned out to the minute. When it got to people and meals, the plan became very general. Timeshare this, skip that. His daughter left a few years ago and his wife spent most of her time at her job. Not that it mattered to him anyway. What was wrong with the clock? Why did it break? That was six months ago. Even he didn’t know what happened that night, the night the clock was supposed to have been fixed. He celebrated with a beer or four, and went to bed, ready for another sleepless night. From the other room, there came a constant tick tock, tick tock. The constant noise lulled him to sleep, relieved, disappointed, and trying to fill the hole left by his completed project. All that he needed to hear to know that the clock was broken was a loud clunk from the living room, at what he presumed to be four in the morning. After some investigation, it appeared that the pendulum fell and scratched the bottom panel, dragging behind it various parts, which shattered to pieces in the process. The shards were the first things he saw sitting on the carpet, shining in the moonlight like the devilish smirk of defeat. Marko cursed quite a bit that night, half because he was sad that his project failed, and half because he needed to find gears from 1927. But deep down, amidst the blind rage and raw frustration, he felt an inkling of joy. He could spend more time fixing the broken machine. That in itself was satisfaction: to put the pieces together, to tentatively fill the cracks, and to mend that which was broken.

Six months had passed since the beginning of the clock project. Most of the time after the clock broke (again) was passed trolling various Internet
vendor sites for very specific gears. Of course, Marko didn't expect to find anything, and his life returned to its normal sad state of affairs. Mainly, he went to work, returned listlessly, and drowned his emotions in a sea of alcohol. But one night, deep in the recesses of an obscure website, Marko hit a jackpot. Exactly the types of gears he needed to make the clock function correctly. They weren't the originals, but they would suffice. Of course, now came the waiting. Three weeks until the first parts would come. In the meantime, Marko began to notice people once more. His wife had started dying her hair, which she also cut at some point. He couldn't really recall that much, which was perhaps a statement of his character or perhaps a statement of his memory. His daughter had gotten a new boyfriend. While he might have been involved in these changes before, they were more passing distractions to him. The only thing he could think was, “When will the parts arrive?” On the day they were supposed to be delivered, the tension in the house was palpable. Every noise on the stairs leading to the top floor left Marko with his hand hovering over the door, waiting, wishing hoping. There was something about that clock that Marko just couldn't let go of. Maybe it was that he just couldn't let go of the memory of his grandfather, or maybe he just needed a distraction from the drab and dreary life he led.

When the parts finally arrived, and the postman left with only a hasty scribble of a signature, Marko went back to repairing the clock. This time, the gears were much more sturdy and robust than the antiques he had before. He immediately repeated the process of fixing the clock, not able to stand another minute of the silence. There was no solace for him without the rhythmic ticking of the pendulum.

Another month or so passed before he was finished. It was pure perfection. The clock had been working for about an hour, and Marko had been steadily pushing away the gaping ravine of emptiness it left. There was no more purpose in his life. He already had a child and he wasn't going to get much further up the food chain at his job. He was destined to lead a mediocre life of misery. But the clock seemed to change all that. It gave him some sort of purpose, something to look forward to.

Chalking up the pounding in his head to his alcohol intake, Marko went to bed, but stopped to balance himself on the doorway to the bathroom. Little did he know a small, almost imperceptible mass was moving toward his brain through his arteries.

It would be wrong to say that his life flashed before his eyes, because it truly didn't. He saw his family, sure. He saw the pendulum swing back and forth in front of his eyes. He saw the clock written to him in the will, signed in the painstakingly proper writing of his grandfather. He saw his daughter and his wife, still with long hair, visiting the apartment and seeing the beginnings of his project. And last but not least, he saw the clock strike 12:00, its face a mockery of its master's hard work. A blood clot moved to his brain; estimated time of death, 12:07. His wife came home; tears blurred in her eyes. She barely stumbled over to their bedroom before collapsing on the bed and inhaling the smell of her husband's pillow, trying to recreate his presence. Then, out of the corner of her eye, she noticed the clock. She would never know whether it was the tears clouding her vision, or it was really true. For, on the clock, the two hands stretched, almost menacingly, to the time of 12:07.
A Congregation of Stars

By Cai Hui Lien
Singapore
Second Place Tie

Seren is nine when her younger brother, Orion, loses his smile. Mother says that he is growing up. She sees it as a sort of trade, and she wonders what possessed him to trade his smile for a fake one. She wants to reprimand him for making such a foolish trade, but he is too caught up with schoolwork or something of the like; he doesn’t have time anymore, as he always says.

So, she tries to get it back for him. It is the responsibility of the older sister to look after younger siblings anyways. She starts by trying to trade it back with small trinkets, like an abandoned coin or drawing. Her brother is reluctant to part with his fake smile though, so the trade never works out. She keeps trying harder, trying to find better things that will make for a willing trade, but things…still don’t work out.

***

She first meets the Paper Man after she sleeps. It is not quite a dream, for she is lucid, perhaps more so than she has ever been. They first meet in a clearing, where trees frame a pond. The pond waxes and wanes in the dapples of moonlight, forming a hypnotizing pattern.

Perhaps the only reason she notices the Paper Man is because of the contrast he brings about to the forest. The Paper Man is crisp, plain, and unlovable, and the forest sways even when the lightest of breezes grazes against it.

“Hello,” she greets. There is no response from him, so she lets herself drift away a while. She kicks the stones in the vicinity into a pile, and scuffs the soil around it to form a ring; she dangles from the branch of a tree and watches the stars in the pond.

Finally, she drops down from the branch and tosses a pebble from the pile into the river. It skips then sinks in a ripple, causing the boat to wobble precariously. Caught by a sudden impulse, she flings a second stone carelessly. This time, some water splatters into the boat and the Paper Man shifts slightly.

She drops the third stone above the water surface, deadpan, and asks, “Will you take me somewhere?”

The stone falls with a plop, and only then does he ask, “Where?”

“Anywhere.”

They go to his hometown. It is a nest for paper dragons, but most dwell in its skies. She watches as one descends into the city, spitting gales of wind and rain. The houses crumble into pulp, and little men with little boots and little hats gather to shovel the rubble. Occasionally, their shovels give way too, and she doesn’t know what else to expect from a paper city.

The dragons weave through the air, elegant and majestic in their dance of devastation. There is twisted beauty in the destruction, perhaps one that Orion, her brother, would appreciate.

“I want a paper dragon,” she decides, upon reaching this conclusion. She is met with the apathy of the Paper Man.

It is not easy to catch the dragon. She trips and stumbles over the card towers, which fall in a flurry of dancing cards, tramples over paper buildings that crumble beneath her feet. When at last her fist closes around its tail, the victory tastes far sweeter, and she revels in her exhilaration.

“I want to go back now,” she declares to the Paper Man, bursting with eagerness to share her catch. They go back to the clearing and she steps through the pond, back into her own world. The paper dragon is still clenched in her first, tail crushed.

The next few nights, she travels more than she ever has before. She glides through the sky in the paper
boat, flits through the lush forests, and descends into the depths of the ground. It soon seems like she knows this world better than her own.

A small flower-shaped stone makes its way into her brother’s collection, joins the paper dragon. Then a glass leaf. A metal snowflake.

He starts making requests. “A jewel,” he says, and she goes to the City of Stones to bring back a sapphire flower. She holds it in her hand as she returns because flowers are fragile, even jewel ones. “A song,” he says, and she brings back a shell that sings a lovely melody. She tucks it in her pocket so that it will not escape. “Gold,” – she brings back a goldfish, but in her haste forgets to bring water, so it is motionless when she returns.

One night, he makes an impossible request. “I want a star,” he says carefully. A star is impossible to obtain, even in the other world. A sudden flash of insight and she realize he is curious, wants to see how far she can and will go.

“Okay,” she agrees carelessly and grins. There is something about the unattainable that makes her defiant and reckless.

His eyes are guarded, and she wonders what exactly he is guarded against.

“I want to catch a star,” she tells the Paper Man on that same night.

“For a price,” is the response.

She is struck off guard for a moment, then starts speaking, tripping over words in her agitation. “I can… I mean… I have… I have money…”

“No that,” the Paper Man interrupts placidly.

“You never asked for a price before,” she says accusatorily.

“Then yours is overdue, for everything comes with a price.”

“No,” she says, suddenly thinking about Orion and her giving and giving and giving. “No,” she repeats, as she collects her thoughts. “There are things that some people are willing to sacrifice,” she insists, “things that transcend prices and whatnot. Isn’t there something beyond that, something far more important?”

“Everything has a price.”

Something cold is growing in the pit of her stomach. “And what is yours?” she asks with sudden urgency. “Your freedom,” he says. And perhaps she finally knows that this is the price she has been paying all along.

***

Violent streaks of indigo are smeared across the inky night sky. It is a careless stroke of a fickle painter, of a person who has painted the night for the past eternity and will continue to do so forever.

She curls her fingers loosely around the side of the ladder, runs her fingers along the sides of the ladder, and contemplates what will happen if she falls. She’ll smash to the ground, she decides idly.

Her hand movements still and she shifts her grip to the rung of the ladder. She feels feverish and weak; can’t find the energy to pull herself up. She leans on the rung and closes her eyes, because the wind must be blowing grit into them. Her grip tightens and then she takes a step up.

She hovers between the ground and the ladder; she hears the roar of her own breath. She tilts her head back to look at the smatter of light in the sky. There is something familiar about their cold shine.

They look like her brother’s eyes, she surmises, as she takes another step up and keeps climbing. What was their view like from the distant stars? What was the world like through her brother’s eyes?

“There is something almost beautiful about the unattainable,” she concludes, and then grins – and, as always, it is a reckless, brazen smile.
They Will Acknowledge My Awesomeness Tonight

By Kiri Peterson McMann
Bocahontas, Arkansas
Second Place Tie

When Mog saw the food, his lips curled. Ewww...what? The sour, dusty smell wafted. But Nani-of-Food placed it in front of him, and when he backed away she used her curled fingers to nudge his hind legs.

"Here, Moggie, don't tell me you don't like it."

Well, I don't want to anger her. So, he forced his legs. Shuddering as the odor grew, he approached the wooden island, picked up a pellet in his teeth, chewed it a few times with a loud crunch as it shattered, and swallowed dryly, the half-chewed kernel sliding down his throat. He gagged slightly. But...

Mog felt his black and white fur stand as his every nerve prickled. Then he stuffed his face into the bowl. And the taste, the taste, flooded over his tongue.

Mog licked the bowl. This must be Bee-the-Wonderful-Great's idea. I mean, it's as awesome as an Office Visit! Minus all the writhing under the Sacred-Chair. I need more! He turned.

Buddy-of-the-Speckled-Nose's gray tabby cheeks jiggled as he wolfed the food. He's eating? Mog stifled a growl and carefully slipped his paw forward. The ceramic bowl chilled his paw as it touched a pellet. He maneuvered it back and scarfed down the pellet. Suddenly, Mog felt a hand.

“No more, Mog. This is junk food.”

What? Why? I'm more important than Buddy-of-the-Speckled-Nose! This is because she's his favorite. Well. Mog set his mouth in a grim line.

Mog sat on wooden panels, his ears twitching at pounding paws. Grappy-the-Strong had better not attack the Awesome-Me again. He needs lessons.

Grappy-the-Strong's bulky gray and white shape charged. He skidded from the magenta chair and galloped forward. Mog hissed, his claws sliding out. He watched his progress toward the magenta couch. It squeaked when Nani-of-Food plopped down, a cat brush dangling from her fingers.

Grappy-the-Strong arched his gray back, stiffening his legs before strutting over. She began to brush him. Buddy-of-the-Speckled-Nose squawked beside her head, and Nani-of-Food sighed as she stroked him. He climbed down the couch, settling into her lap, and she reached around him to Grappy-the-Strong.

Mighty Being, I'm pitiful because Nani-of-Food and Grappy-the-Strong were rude to my presence. You have to go and tell them off!" he sobbed. Water rained upon his fur. Bee-the-Wonderful-Great shifted another white plate under the tap.

"Mog, I have this to finish. Go get Nani instead."

Mog scampered away. How could he? They'll acknowledge my awesomeness tonight. I'll make sure. Mog paused at the cabinet door. Moonlight fell quietly, leaving silver pools on the floor.

My awesome paw stings. I scraped it. Lifting the paw, he licked it and wrinkled his nose at the taste of blood. Blood's metallic scent clouded the air. Mog wrinkled his nose and stared at a cat. He panted, his white sides matted as he crouched. Water dripped and the torch crackled.

"Are you prepared to destroy him?"

Mog turned and stared into the shadows. "Why?" Mog mewed, tucking his tail.

"He is a prisoner. He has committed such that it must be so, and you have been trained for this job. Remember how special you are? How you survived desertion in a drought where..."
none could have pulled through?"

Mog swallowed, shivering on rough cobblestones. His claws dug into moss.

“But he’s a cat, like I am. Maybe I’m special, but we’re still…still cats.”

“Do it!”

A paw shoved Mog and he bunched, springing. As claws reached towards him, Mog saw his huge green eyes…Mog’s eyes refocused and he dropped his paw, shuddering. No. I’m amazing, I’m incredible. Nobody’s scared of me; everybody has to love me. I’m awesome; everybody worships me and everybody wants me to love them.

He shook himself. It’s alright. Everybody can’t get enough of me. Now, I really need to start the plot. Let’s check if they’re asleep again. He twisted his ears. Everybody loves me. I’m beautiful; everybody worships me and everybody wants me to love them.

Mog raised his paw again and shoved the wooden door, leaning upon white tiles. He stepped back, panting. The door stood. He slapped it. Mog hooked his paw around the handle and pulled back with a grunt. Paws digging into the floor, he leaned, straining and pulling. He clenched his teeth. The door snapped. Everything exploded. Mog leapt back as the door soared over his head and crashed into the island. Two pans slid out, and a pot flew over the island and bounced back into another cabinet.

Well, that went alright. But as Mog purred, his ears caught the sound. Thump.

Mog got up quickly. He pulled out the sagging bag and dumped it into two bowls. Then he shoved it back, pushing the cabinet door roughly into position. He sprang onto the counter-top, pulled out a white bottle, uncorked it, and leapt back to sprinkle brown powder into one bowl. He placed the bottle around the corner.

The click of claws rang out. Mog set his ears forward, pulling his head into a regal position, and stared with hard, glistening yellow eyes as his claws slid out.

Buddy-of-the-Gulping-Face rounded the corner, his brow furrowed. “What’s happening? Should we protect the Lovely-Lap-of-Computers-and-Food?”

“For the last time it’s not the ‘Lovely-Lap-of-Computers-and-Food’ it’s ‘Nani-of-Wondrous-Food.’ She’s been promoted. Happy?”

Buddy-of-the-Gulping-Face sighed, his poufy cheeks drooping, but then he perked up. “Mog, is that…is that food?”

Yep. Here’s yours, this is mine. That crashing and clanking was me, oh lovely me, getting this food. This’ll be on Little Kitty News! How I got the food of Pure-Utter-Awesomeness! The story of me! Oh, I’m so awesome! I…”

Mog stared at Buddy, his eyes alight as he gulped down Mog’s food. “No…”

Buddy-of-the-Gulping-Face collapsed and began snoring. Good. Mog stole a secret glance at the sleeping powder. Then he turned to more important affairs…Mog knocked down the cabinet door and stood, gazing. Then he dove in.

Food flew everywhere. He tore the bag, ripped it, and poured food everywhere. Tears opened and food gushed, bouncing against the island, rushing around Mog’s paws. Now for the best part!

***

After being lowered onto the chair, Mog crawled forward and collapsed; his empty belly ached and his mouth was sour.

“Poor Mog,” Nani-of-Wondrous-Food said.

“He’ll be fine,” Bee-the-Wonderful-Great assured her. “That stomach pumping must’ve been unpleasant, however.”

“Yes, I know.”

They stood, looking at his black and white shape and his gunk-covered eyes.

“I should’ve given him treats,” she closed her eyes. “And the repairs to the kitchen…”

“You know,” Bee-the-Wonderful-Great said, “next time Kiri comes, maybe she’d enjoy giving him an Office Visit.”

Office Visit! Maybe I didn’t need pity.

The prone cat’s lips curled.
Mr. Saol had touched thousands of hearts, transferring them from their givers to their helpless recipients. Touching hearts was as gentle as caressing a helpless baby bird. Touching hearts was as nerve-wracking as throwing a lifebuoy to one thrashing in deep dark waters. Touching hearts was as rewarding as watching a baby growing into a man. For touching hearts was holding a life in his hands.

***

Ever since he was young, James had been drawn to the zoo. He could spend countless hours admiring the animals in the enclosures, much to the impatience of his parents. His favorite animal was the critically endangered Hamish Greenland Sheep. How wooly its back was and how unique the brown patches on its sides were! He loved talking to the sheep from the edge of the enclosure. “Are you feeling happy today? Do you like living in the zoo?” Sometimes he would get a reply in the form of a slight nod. Sometimes the sheep would continue munching on the juicy green grass, upon which he would happily tell his parents, “The sheep is hungry and dealing with hunger is more important for him than talking, so I will wait for him to finish his meal.”

This greatly worried his parents. They wanted their son to have real friends, human friends, not some dim-witted, captive animals. How would he be successful in life if he neglected his schoolwork and wasted his time going to the zoo every day?

“James,” his parents said, “You are already ten. We have brought you to the zoo since you were three. Now you are older and busier at school, and we cannot bring you to the zoo so often.”

“Then I will go there myself. Animals are my friends,” James replied.

When James had his heart set on earning a Zoology degree in University instead of becoming a doctor, lawyer, or businessman as his parents wished, they became even more worried. How was he going to earn enough money to survive on his own? Full of knowledge about the benefits animals have given man, he replied, “Animals are our friends. When we help them we help ourselves.”

Not long after, he achieved his life goal of becoming a zookeeper. He put his heart into the job, for he had followed his heart this far. The manager could tell that caring for animals was extremely close to James’ heart and offered him a promotion to the conservation department. James took it in a heartbeat and spent the rest of his life dedicated to animal conservation.

***

Mr. Saol’s head of black hair had whitened and thinned after twenty long years of performing heart surgeries. During his recent surgeries, he began to feel a certain sensation in his fingertips, which translated into an ethereal tingle in his mind. He felt as if he had developed a special connection with the character of the hearts – a unique electrical charge, an empathic connection. A recent patient would never know, but Mr. Saol knew, that the heart he had received was a lion’s heart. He had a heart that sang of acts of courage. Mr. Saol had also touched a heart that emanated kindness; the tingles from the bottom of the heart gave him a sixth sense that its owner had helped beyond the call of duty.

***

James, seated between a few colleagues, eyed the representative from the medical association uneasily. What would a medical man want from a conservation department? After the formalities the representative, Mr. Saol,
addressed them in an earnest voice.

“The world has watched in wonder and deep admiration as the population of the Hamish Greenland Sheep increased two-fold, then three-fold, and, by now, fifteen-fold! We can hardly say how amazed we are at you and the staff of this conservation center have saved the sheep from extinction and, even more, allowed it to thrive like it never has before!” Mr. Saol took a deep breath. “The point is, with the Delirious Pig Pandemic that has spread all around the world, patients who are now in great need of a heart transplant are refusing to accept pigs’ hearts for fear of infection,” Mr. Saol explained. “People are losing out on a second chance at life because of this. Medical research showed that pig hearts are the most compatible with a human body. Now that pig hearts are out of the question, the world medical association as done autopsies on every living mammal – cows, horses, monkeys – but none are sufficiently compatible...except for the Hamish Greenland Sheep.”

Like a lightning bolt, the proposition of taking the subjects of his life’s work and cutting their hearts out under anesthesia struck James’ heart. He was angry that one could think of killing his beloved animals for their hearts. Was a dying human worth more than a living animal? James needed to think it through.

***

Sitting in a circle on tree stumps, James and his colleagues were deep in discussion. While his juniors were having a heated debate on whether it was ethical to kill sheep for a fellow animal, James was in deep thought. Giving up your friends for slaughter was not easy. Yet giving up your fellow men for death was not acceptable.

Sustainability of the species was not a problem, as the sheep could be genetically modified if needed, but what had the sheep done to deserve premature death? Homo Sapiens had come to reign over the rest of animals and hence had given themselves the right to kill other animals for their benefit, he knew. As a Homo Sapien, the inevitable and right thing for James to do was to sign a contract to give the medical association the right to use the sheep hearts for heart transplants. But what would the sheep think? No, he corrected himself. The sheep would not get a chance to think. They would obliviously go under anesthesia and be gone in no time. Would the killing of the sheep be fair? Yet, they would not suffer and they would not die in vain...

James had gone into this profession convinced that humans would put their hearts into making animals equal to humans, like he head. But now he knew that treating them fairly was impossible. He wondered why he had embarked on a futile dream.

He could not help but contrast the sheep twenty years ago, driven to near extinction by Homo Sapiens’ illegal poaching, to now, thriving and peaceful in the green valleys undisturbed by Homo Sapiens. To him, their wool seemed thicker now, their eyes happier, and their bleats more frequent and joyful. He loved it when the sheep came up to him and other staff, bleating after a meal as if they were thanking them. What would they say if they knew they were to be systematically killed after being systematically nursed back to a thriving population?

***

Mr. Saol felt the sheep’s heart in his hands, warm and beating after being extracted. Strangely, he felt a new kind of tingle. It conveyed neither courage nor kindness. There was a simple, distinct emotion that resonated with his heartbeat. Mr. Saol teared, for the very first time in his career. It was a grateful heart.
Detective Thomas Harding stroked his gelled mustache, a pipe hanging from his thin mouth. His big, meaty hands lay on top of a pile of papers concerning the deaths of Mr. and Mrs. Fread. They had been found lying in bed together; hands intermingled, with red roses dripped in blood in their mouths. It was Harding’s first murder case and he was determined to impress his boss, Captain Jack Serger.

The murders had occurred the previous week, but still Harding and his team had no leads to follow. In fact, his team had no evidence at all. They were struggling to occupy their days in the office. On that Monday in particular, all of Harding’s team were at lunch in the local pub, probably drinking and smoking. But Harding stayed, wanting to figure something out about the mystery left in his hands. Serger had come straight to him with the case, passing his peer detectives who also hadn’t yet had a murder case. Of course, whether Harding wanted to or not, the smart thing to do was say yes. Since he grew up in a house of police constables and detectives, he accepted the job.

Looking out the misty windows, Harding knew this was his opportunity to make an impression. He would not fail. His desk was filled with files and papers all related to the deaths of Mr. and Mrs. Fread. Pictures of their bodies hung on the bulletin boards. Their grim faces stared at poor Harding, who was now lowing his mind. His team had accomplished nothing over the past week. Detective Harding was about to cry big, fat, juicy tears. But before he could embarrass himself, the office doors swung open, revealing Officer John Silver. His pale blonde hair was hidden under a wool cap and his young face was full of excitement.

Harding missed the days when he was young with not a worry in the world. He was actually not that old, in his early forties. He had started his career late. He liked John more than his other officers. He was a kind gentleman and was as determined as Harding to solve the case.

“What is it officer? Did George get drunk and do something foolish?”

“No, sir. As a matter of fact, I learned an important piece of information corresponding with the murders of…” Harding was too excited by what his protégé had just said. However trivial this fact, Harding needed evidence. He knew he could rely on John.

“What is it?! Come sit down and explain yourself!”

John came over and took the chair opposite Harding. He took off his hat and placing it on the desk, continued his update.

“I was talking to a woman at the pub who said that she and Mrs. Fread were acquaintances, and when they were in their twenties Mrs. Fread wasn’t seen for ‘bout a year. Strange, right? Well, she reckons that she was pregnant during that time…”

“Why does she think that?”

“I don’t know for sure, but I did some research at the local hospital where she most likely…”

“You did research before coming to me?”

John’s face had become quite red, possibly from his nonstop talking, the cold outside, or from anger that he was being constantly interrupted.

“Well, yes…I mean…Yes, sir, I did. And I found out there was, in fact, a Mrs. Fread at Saint Peter’s hospital and she gave birth to a boy.”

“Do you know the name of this boy?”

“Yes, he was named William. She took him home in secret, and a few months later she gave him up for adoption.” Harding seemed to contemplate hat had been said to him. It was interesting news, but did it have any relevance? Could the boy be involved with the case? He looked into John’s face. It was full of questions, but wasn’t it always? He was such
a bright officer, and Harding knew that he was going to be successful.

“This is great news, officer, but what relevance does this have to our current case?”

“Well sir, it’s just a suspicion, but this boy would now be in his early-to-mid twenties, just like myself. I think that he murdered his parents.”

“What causes you to believe this?”

“Why, wouldn’t you be mad if your parents gave you up? I mean, they put him in St. Joan’s Orphanage, and it wasn’t that good.”

Before Harding could answer the office, the office door swung open, revealing five more officers who were working on the case: James Grady, George Weely, Robert Laxton, Harry Times, and Ben Witherbee. All of them had pink noses and were wrapped warmly in winter attire.

James said, “Sir, what are you and John doing?”

“Well actually, officer, we have come up with a suspect.” All of the officers turned their attention to their boss, their once happy faces now curious. “Apparently Mr. and Mrs. Fread had a child who was neglected at a young age. He seems to be the perfect…”

He was interrupted by the coughing of Officer Witherbee, who seemed to be choking on the bread he was eating. “I am so sorry sir. May I be excused?”

Harding nodded and told the others to start working. They would talk later. They had things to do.

“The boy would be twenty-five to be exact, sir,” said John, who was now sitting at his desk with his back to Harding.

It was late at night, almost ten, and only Harding, John, and Ben were in the building. Harding and John were sitting in their office, researching information that could help the case. Ben was in his own office.

“Sir, I think you’d like to see this.” Harding, still sitting on his wheelie chair, rolled over to where John was examining papers. He held out a file, trusting Harding’s view. “Look, right here. The boy, William, is said to have a scar on his neck. Doesn’t it look familiar? Like you’ve seen it before?”

“Yes, officer, it does. I know who has that exact same scar. Witherbee, Ben Witherbee. I saw it just a few weeks ago. And guess what, John, Ben is short for William. William Fread.

John gasped and nodded his head towards where Ben was. He and Harding stared and then stood up in sync, quietly walking over to him. On the way, Harding grabbed silver handcuffs. John carefully opened the door to see a reading Ben. He looked up, a smile on his face.

“Are you two leaving?”

“No, officer, we are not. We are here to arrest you for the murders of Mr. and Mrs. Fread.”

Ben’s expression changed to one full of anger. He cocked his head to the side and smiled. “So, you found out then. Was it the choking? The name? Or the fact that you could find no evidence at all in the case?”

“Some of that officer, but mostly it was your scar.”

“Fine, arrest me. I don’t care.”

He held out his hands while Harding cuffed them into the tight handcuffs. He pushed Ben out of the room and led him to the cells in the basement of the building. As the solid cell door was closing, Ben said, “You must understand, sir, what it’s like to be abandoned. It’s an awful thing, and those who abandon others should be punished.”

Harding shut the metal door in Ben’s face. Harding had solved his first murder mystery.
Light Across the Mediterranean

By Jeffrey J. Huang
Lisle, Illinois
Third Place Tie

The boat was overcrowded. Both Barakah and Samir knew as soon as they saw it. It was somewhere around thirty-to-forty meters long, by five to ten meters wide. And from the looks of it, the boat could barely hold a hundred people, let alone several hundred Syrian refugees. The amount of people on board made it seem that the vessel had a risk of capsizing or sinking. However, this was the only available transportation to Italy at the moment, so they really had no choice in the matter. It was unnerving that they were going to have to spend the majority of their time cramped into a mass of unwashed bodies. Barakah sighed. They were just going to have to deal with it.

“Are you sure about this?” Barakah asked his brother.

“This is the only boat that’s docked. We may not have an opportunity like this again.”

“No, I mean are you sure that going to Italy is the correct choice we should make?”

Samir nodded, saying, “We’ve made it this far. When we left Syria, we knew that it was something that couldn’t be undone. And, reluctant as we are, we should do this so that we can have a future. Mom and Dad would’ve wanted that.”

“Yeah, I guess they would’ve,” Barakah replied, recalling memories of their parents being killed right in front of them, the boys’ exodus out to different places, being met by smugglers and thieves, and ultimately being led to this dock.

Barakah looked at his brother with admiration. The experience had changed both of them, especially Samir. He had not changed much physically, but mentally he had grown by leaps and bounds. The innocent, ignorant boy from his childhood was long gone.

Despite this, Barakah knew that sometimes Samir would inevitably need him. He put a hand on Samir’s shoulder and firmly said, “Let’s go.”

The boat stank of unwashed bodies. They had already undocked from the port when they got a whiff of the horrendous smell. Despite the boat being their only choice, they instantaneously regretted choosing this form of transportation. They tried not to breathe through their noses and hoped that the fresh smell of the sea would help relieve their nostrils of the lingering scent that was the result of bad hygiene. While they were trying to make their way to the portside to catch a view of the sea, they saw several families sitting on the far edges. Barakah saw people trying to deal with this morbid environment by sharing stories of their excursions with each other. He made his way to Samir.

“The sea looks more beautiful than described in the books!” Samir exclaimed with wonder in his eyes.

“I guess it does,” said Barakah, smiling widely at his brother. And it was – a beautiful blue mass of water flowing smoothly and uniformly, serene and subtle. It sparkled and shone in the light of the sun. He was glad to be on this boat, even though he still had his doubts and reluctant thoughts time to time. The name most suitable for this journey would be an “adventure.” Over the course of the long, boring days, they marveled at an outside world that they never would’ve seen if they had stayed in Syria. It was wonderful, despite their growling stomachs.

One Week Later

Barakah heard screams and shouts from all directions. He woke up from his short-lived sleep to find that it was still nighttime and that the air was chaotic. He could make out several words.

“The ship’s sinking!”

“Get the life vests! And hurry! She won’t last much longer!”

Barakah turned to see if Samir was awake. Sure enough, he was. He quickly briefed him on the situation and his wide-eyed brother quickly understood. They both ran to get a pair of life vests. There were people pushing and shoving each other. Amidst the crowd both Barakah and Samir could see people passing out the life vests. They made their way through the hordes of people as best they could, and managed to seize two before the supply ran out. Both of them frantically helped each other put the vests on, trying to do so before the ship sank completely. The last thing they saw before the boat collapsed into the salty waters of the sea was many people jumping into the water, clutching their children and family close to them. The vessel that once held nearly five hundred men and women sank into the depths below.

The water was cold. So very cold. Barakah’s body felt numb. He couldn’t move. He was surrounded on all sides by sea. It tasted salty and he was not able to breathe. Where was Samir? Was he all right? Was Barakah himself separated from the others? He had other such worries coming from left and right, but he tried to push those questions to the back of his head, because he could feel his consciousness slipping away into utter darkness.

Barakah and Samir, accompanied by their parents, were sitting on a beach during one of their family trips. The sun was setting on the edge of the horizon, and the explosion of red, orange, yellow, blue, and purple colors was a sight to be marveled at. Their father turned to them and said, “Beautiful, isn’t it? It’s not every day that you get to see such magnificence in your daily lives. I want you to know that your mother and I won’t be there for you forever.” He put his hands on their shoulders. “And that is why I want you to be there for each other when we can’t. And please, when you are feeling down, don’t
just view the world as the cruel place that it is.” He pointed his hand to the sunset. “Look at it for what it could be.”

Barakah woke with a start and gasped for breath. He was coughing repeatedly, his body trying to eject the massive amounts of saltwater within him. He looked around him to see that he wasn't on the boat anymore. He was on some sort of beach, surrounded by Samir and a few dozen other refugees.

“Samir…where are we?”

“I'm not sure…but from the looks of it, it's a beach that lines the Italian peninsula. We will be making our way to the mainland soon enough. The majority of the people on board seem to be either stranded on some other country or island, probably just a separate beach, or…drowned.”

So we finally made it, Barakah thought. He smiled at the thought of what was to come. He couldn't believe it. After weeks of wandering through bleak darkness with the one goal of going to a place where they could live in peace keeping them moving, they had done it. Sure, they had wanted to give up at some points and endured a lot of hardship and suffering. But in the end, they eventually saw a ray of hope that had propelled them forward. In the sea, they couldn't even begin to imagine the starvation and boredom that came with being on that boat. But when they saw the sun rise, it gave them newfound vigor and they carried on with firm resolve. It was worth it. They had reached Italy. Across the Mediterranean, the light of a future awaited.

The Water Droplet Story

By Johannes Vilhelm Molle Storbjörk
Wroclaw, Poland
Third Place Tie

There once was a water droplet named Harold. He was born with a lot of brothers and sisters in a cloud high above the Earth. One day, he fell. It happened very suddenly and he thought it was very terrifying. There was lightning and thunder all around him, and he saw his siblings falling with the same terrified expression on their faces. WAIT, they're water drops, they don't have faces, or expressions, or eyes. Um… well…they had the same look? On their surface? Ugh, whatever…MOVING ON.

Harold saw the ground rapidly closing in on them. WAIT, NO he can't see…okay, let's just pretend he can see. As he hit the ground, he felt like he was being pulled in every direction at the same time until he collided with some of his siblings. Then they were rolling over each other and coming down over the slope in the rainforest they had landed on. It took a while, but as time went on, they were running down towards the Amazon River. However, just as they were half a meter from the water, his legs…NO, NOT LEGS! He was being pulled under the ground and…was drunk by a tree root! After that he was, um, trans-evaporated into the air and soon condensed into (sound of dramatic drums) A CLOUD! YAY, HE WAS BACK AGAIN!

As he was pushed by the wind, he saw a lot of, well, water. He also saw a rocket ship launching from a big launch pad. The same rocket heated him up enough to turn him into plasma for a while, but he was returned to gas soon after the ship passed, because plasma needs the heat to be kept up. Anyway, way later, as he was continuing on his adventure, he started to get cold because he had reached Greenland. This place is ironically named, for it is very cold and not green at all. This turned him back into water, and then snow, and he was snowed down onto a glacier. He was then packed into the glacier, becoming part of it. Soon enough, the glacier fell into the ocean and became an iceberg.

With his new iceberg friends, Harold glided for months. In the end, he reached a trade route between America and England. After a while, a USO (not UFO, but Unknown Sailing Object) appeared and kept getting closer, until it crashed into them! While he was sinking, Harold noticed something on the side of the ship, some text. It read (sound of dramatic drums) TITANIC!

PS. YES, I know that rocket ships were invented WAY after the crash of the Titanic, but still…
Fearless Liam

By Isaac Leon Marks
Naperville, Illinois and Tel-Aviv, Israel
Third Place Tie

Hi, my name is Liam. I’m in 6th grade and I like school a lot with one exception – I’m afraid of being bullied. I love to play soccer, but don’t play often for fear of getting hurt. I love to cook, but I never do. I’m too afraid of cutting myself. I am just a boy. I am Liam.

“Liam, GO TO SLEEP!” my mom shouts. I have been trying to sleep for hours, but I can’t. I am too afraid of what lurks in my closet, what lurks under my bed. I am too afraid of what will happen once I close my eyes. Will a werewolf pop out of my closet, teeth bared, mouth foaming, ready to rip me to shreds? Or will a witch come out of the shadows, wand pointed, an evil grin playing on her lips? I hear a creak right outside my door. I jump out of bed and while doing so bang my head. Rubbing my noggin, I cower in the corner of my room.

My mom, hearing the ruckus, asks, “What on earth is going on?”

“I heard a strange noise from outside,” I reply. Teeth chattering from fear, I crawl into bed and hide under the covers. I am so scared that I have lost sense of reason. Fear has gripped me entirely. Shaking, I cry myself into a restless sleep.

I wake up grumpy, claw my way out of bed, and get ready. Brushing my teeth, I manage only to dribble a few drops of toothpaste on my pajama top. Afterwards I get dressed. I have always hated getting dressed. Mainly because I have to face whatever is inside my closet. I pick some underwear, socks, shorts, and a crumpled up t-shirt up off of the ground. Then quickly slam my closet door shut. I head downstairs with a bad attitude and a bad case of bed-head – two things that spell the start of a bad day. I get downstairs and eat a quick bowl of cereal. Right as I finish, dad says from across the kitchen, “Liam, could you do the dishes?” He points to a heaping pile of dishes in the sink. If the quantity isn’t bad enough, there is a slightly rotten smell coming from that general area.

“Uhhhhhhhhhh,” I groan. “Do I have to???”

“Yes, and if you complain again, you will also be grounded,” my dad snaps.

“I don’t want to! You suck!” I yell at my dad. I don’t know what my dad says next because I storm out of the house and run, full speed, towards my school.

I arrive 25 minutes early and have nothing to do. Being early is always awkward for me, because I try to go unnoticed as to avoid being bullied. Therefore, I have no friends, making it awkward to sit and wait for school to start.

The school day passes uneventfully, as usual. I walk home slowly, as if that will save me from the punishment that I know awaits me. My mother and father are waiting for me when I arrive. Immediately, we got into the study and sit on the couch. As I get a better look at them, I see tears in their eyes. “We need to talk,” they say. I expect them to scold me about my actions this morning. I am terribly wrong.
My parents start to sob. Struggling to get a hold of themselves, they begin. Last night, Grandpa Joe was asleep. In the middle of the night, he called the hospital, reporting that he was suffering from horrible pain in his chest. He called an ambulance and was rushed to the hospital. He has been diagnosed with lung cancer. They can't even finish talking. They burst into fresh tears. I am too stunned to cry. Grandpa Joe has been a part of my life since I was born. The memories I have with him are the best of my childhood. Grandpa Joe was always smiling. He was the type of person that lifted your spirits just by being there. And that, I think, explains why I feel an intense sadness, followed by anger, at the news.

Shaking, I ask my parents, “Why…why him?” Before I know it, we are in a group hug, making it all better, if just for a moment. And then we let go of each other, returning to reality. The next day, I skip school and go to the hospital to spend time with my grandpa. Walking through the hospital, many horrors greet me. I see children who are missing legs, people who suffer from severe welts on their body…I look away. Arriving at my grandpa’s room, I rush to his side and ask him if he is all right. Just the sight of him makes me sad. Usually dressed in colorful clothes and a cheerful hat, he looks out of place in the hospital gown. His usually smiling face looks pale and worn, and his usually cheerful demeanor is replaced by a severe aura of sadness. At that moment, my heart skips a beat. I know that it is only a matter of time.

Every day I visit my grandfather. We talk, joke around, play games. But it is not the same. A deep sadness lurks under the surface, never showing itself, but never fully going away either. We have many discussions together, sometimes about death and sometimes about life. But the one that grips me the most is the conversation about fear. He teaches me that some fear is healthy, but irrational fear is very unhealthy. He tells me he is sad that I am afraid all of the time. He talks to me about the true horrors of life, such as some of the things that I saw on the way to visit him that first day in the hospital. He tells me that those are the things you should be afraid of, the things that actually matter. He tells me, “If you are going to live your life, you are going to get cuts and bruises along the way. Cuts and bruises show that you have lived your life to its fullest and that you have tried new things. If you are a person, you are going to get cuts and bruises.”

This visit begins like any other. We start by discussing a new topic, something we have never discussed before. We discuss the science of music. But something is different today. He looks worse. And as he talks about the health effects that music has on our brains, he starts to slow down, get quieter, and to drift away to some far off place where no one else can go. As his breathing slows, I scream for a nurse, for a doctor, for anyone. But they’re too slow. I watch my grandpa take his last breath. His heart is still. His eyes are open but unfocused, unknowing. And just like that, he is gone.

I still can’t believe it. Oh, how I loved him. His death made me realize that there are worse things in life than what might be in my closet or under my bed. I just hope that I will have a chance to fix my relationship with my parents and get some friends. I am Liam. I am not afraid anymore.
## Creative Writing ~ Ages 13 – 15

### POETRY

**First Place**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Poem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bella Faith Caughley</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Rangiora, New Zealand</td>
<td>“Kingsbury”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isabelle Miriam Gawedzki</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Lake Zurich, Illinois</td>
<td>Untitled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alesha Johanes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>“A Visit to Forever”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire Lynn Shao</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Wexford, Pennsylvania</td>
<td>“Uncharted Waters”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Second Place**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Poem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greta Renee Franke</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Tower Lakes, Illinois</td>
<td>“O Brave Soldier”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Therese Frederick</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Topeka, Kansas</td>
<td>“My Fearful Experience”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaime Gooi</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>“A Man I Don’t Know”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Third Place**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Poem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joel Kai-En Hoe</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>“Run”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si Young Kim</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>San Diego, California</td>
<td>“My Laugh”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathalie C. Mitchell</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Seattle, Washington</td>
<td>“Dove Wing”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naia Ishita Nathan</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>“Boys Will Be Boys”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### STORIES

**First Place**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Poem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Haemaru Chung</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>New York, New York</td>
<td>“Dangerous Blue”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eva Maria Sayn-Wittgenstein</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada</td>
<td>“The Palace Theatre”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Second Place**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Poem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By Richard A. Cheng</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>St. Louis, Missouri</td>
<td>“A Difficult Decision”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Todd Robert Redman</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Naperville, Illinois</td>
<td>“It Was A Terrible Night”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Third Place**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Poem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cindy Wang</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>St. Louis, Missouri</td>
<td>“God, America”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elena Grace Woodburn</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Winfield, Kansas</td>
<td>“Ever the Lucky One”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Untitled

By Isabelle Miriam Gawedzki
Lake Zurich, Illinois
First Place Tie

The sun starts to set
Creamsicle clouds stain the sky
Furious magenta argues with the quiet violet
Ice capsizes the still, cerulean riverbank
Piney bushes object being frozen and stand with bronze barbs, ready
Dry, ochre grass soft with age makes a last attempt to warm up this landscape
The tree feels bare without his coat of luscious green leaves
To protect him
For now, the quiet violet must do
As the earth prepares for winter.

Whiskers of light brush the crimson, auburn leaves
And tickle them with warmth
Hints, whispers of turquoise are scattered throughout the fresh batch of grass
After the harsh winter
The bushes reflect the color of the tree, jealous of its received attention
A pale cloud watches, overlooking his land,
Making one last attempt to save the hill from the murky, depressing storm that looms in the distance;
But they don’t mind a break from routine.

Massive, grey rainclouds flood the sky
Pangs of lightning throw themselves onto the earth
And little plinks of rain follow, speckling the grass in a soft shower of sound
The loud, thunderous cumulonimbus is hot;
The gentle, soothing rain like ice on a burn.
The storm swells
Walls of sound barricade and demand to be heard
While whispers slither by like a slippery eel
Middle tones spring up, red and yellow roses
Soft sounds only frail blades of grass
Big sounds shoot up as trees
Adorned with baubles
And overshadow the smaller plants.
The forest of music is in full bloom.
A Visit to Forever

By Alesha Johanes
Singapore
First Place Tie

Today will soon be over,
it will become past.
Tomorrow will soon arrive,
it will become present.
Forever will always linger,
it is the future.

Forever, what is your identity?
Are you a place or time or both?
You sound faraway and impossible,
so mystical and enticingly promising.

Can I go and pursue you?
A journey to forever!
What would my mother say?

I will take a sneek preview,
Thanks for the offer!
This is a chance of a lifetime!

Day of journey, my heart racing.
First time aboard a time machine.
Effortlessly, noiselessly, it bursts at the speed of light
through space and nothingness.
Tumbles and spin-offs, I am saved by the straps.
My lungs screaming
Futuretopia! Forever!
Words come out interspersed and jumbled up.
The journey was the time it took for a child’s drawing to come to life,
fresh and purposeful.

The cabin doors opened in mid-air.
I alighted and up came a unicorn the color of the rainbow.
I could not believe my eyes!
I never knew unicorns existed.
“Welcome to Forever!”
The unicorn exclaimed, gesturing me to mount its back.
Gingerly, I climbed on to its back and we soon landed on ground level.
This must be a dream!

Why is everything hovering around?
Buildings suspended in the air.
One leading to another by snake and ladder?
I can climb up and slide down.

What a way to get around!
Going to schools, banks, shops, and cinemas,
I can nip in and out in a jiffy.

Genetically modified plants stretch beyond
the clouds, high into the skies.
I recognize them.
 Aren’t they water glory and morning lily?
Cross breed animals standing on two feet
talking like ordinary human beings.
Those are Mickey the Pooh and

Winnie Mouse!
This is a myriad of fiction and reality.
Would I be seeing more?
Is this a figment of my imagination?

My stomach rumbles.
I have forgotten to fill up in my ecstasy.
What can I eat?
I think I can eat a horse.
A buffet spread, international fare.
And lo, right before my eyes, I see
museli, toast, yogurt, fruit platter,
chicken salad, spaghetti bolognaise,
‘roti prata,’ ‘mee goring,’ ‘the tarik,’
‘chwee kuey’ – Singaporean delicacies.

A rich, tantalizing smell wafting to my nose.
I clap my hands in glee.
This is just remarkable!
I can’t wait to sink my teeth into them.
I have just conjured up a meal.
Oh yeah! I would never have to go hungry.

At long last, I rub my tummy and
produce a most satisfying burp
I bet nothing can beat this
gastrointestinal feast.
Only I need water.
Touch the nearest leaf and a leafy cup is in your hand.
The water is condensing from the moist water vapor in the air.
Adjust the tree branch as a lever.
The amount of water you want is poured from
the suspended leafy jug into your cup.
Cheers! Bottoms up!

The words came slower than I meant to say.
The ground where I am standing opens up.
It leads to an underground playpen thousands of feet below.
I float down.
I have no wings but I must be airborne.

My time is running out.
I hear the machine is waiting to take me home.
Sadly now, I take one last look.
I have come to love this place.
Forever, where time has no essence.
Forever, where food is called into being.
Forever, where fun never ends.
It is too good to be true.

Today, I can only imagine.
Today, I can only dream.
Tomorrow, I am one step closer.
Tomorrow, forever is slowly approaching.
Forever, a speck from afar.
Forever, a hope that beckons.
Uncharted Waters

By Claire Lynn Shao
Wexford, Pennsylvania
First Place Tie

A new house is like a cold pool,
A new community, a cold ocean.

My old house was easy swimming,
The water warm and calm.

The waves floated with me
And my feet touched the bottom.

At sea, I was the captain,
I navigated the current

And knew the fastest route,
Undaunted, assured, familiar.

But then the weather shifted,
The once clear skies turned gray,

A new house, a new neighborhood,
A tempest of uncertainty.

At first, I kept dry,
Safe in the shelter of family.

I hesitated to test the cold waters,
Fearful of what was hidden in its depths.

Then with a great leap I plunged in,
The storm cleared, and I sailed on to the New World.

For now, the skies are blue,
And puffy clouds are dotted above,

Though I know that before long, the skies will darken again –
But this time, my ship is prepared.

Kingsbury

By Bella Faith Caughley
Rangiora, New Zealand
First Place Tie

Kingsbury is a quirky steed,
strong, black, and of a noble breed,
full of fire and full of bone,
with all his line of fathers known;
Fine his nose, his nostrils thin,
but blown abroad by the pride within!
His mane is like a river flowing,
and his eyes like embers glowing
in the darkness of the night,
And his pace as swift as light.

Look, around his straining throat
grace and shifting beauty float!
Sinewy strength is on his reins,
and the red blood gallops through his veins;
richer, redder, never ran,
through the boasting heart of man.
He can trace his lineage higher
than the Bourbon dare aspire,
Amir, Bayda, or the Gralph,
Or O’Farya’s blood itself!

He, who has no peer, was born,
here, upon a red March morn
but his famous father’s dead
were Arabs all, and Arab bred,
and the last of that great line
trod like one of a race divine!

Yet he was but friend to one
who fed him at the set of sun,
by some lone mountain ‘fringed with green:
with him, a roving Bedouin.
He lived, - (none else would he obey
through all the hot Arabian day) –
Kingsbury was the horse of life,
and yet,
he died, untamed upon the sands
of Arabia in desert lands.
A Man I Don’t Know

By Jaime Gooi
Singapore
Second Place Tie

The man sitting across me is someone I don’t know.

The metal band
on his fourth finger
matches mine
and so does
his last name

but why is it that
our memories
are so
mismatched?

Why is it that I see him, sepia-tinted,
through my
wedding
veil but he stares straight
ahead
and averts his gaze

Why is it that he struggles to
remember the names of the
children
he so lovingly raised

The disease that took away
the man I knew
The disease that took away
a father too
That terrible,
unrelenting
disease
is not contagious. So

why am I,
too,
forge t i n g
y o u ?

O Brave Soldier

By Greta Renee Franke
Tower Lakes, Illinois
Second Place Tie

O brave soldier fighting overseas,
Protecting our great nation,
Who suffered through so much sorrow and pain,
Yet never abandoned his station.

The sky turned ebony by smoke,
Its stench polluted the air,
The sights this bold man witnessed,
Not many others could bear.

By the time the violence ceased,
The carnage was immense,
For starting a great war,
Comes at a huge expense.

The bombardment of the shells,
That caused casualties to climb,
Left battle wounds that never healed,
Unchanged by passing time.

The relieved fighter headed home,
Which certainly made him glad,
My heart holds so much pride for him,
For this man was my dad.
My Fearful Experience

By Sydney Therese Frederick
Topeka, Kansas
Second Place Tie

I was standing there, holding my breath the entire time. Thinking about what I was about to do made me want to cry. As I stepped inside, all four walls seemed to close in around me. Many thoughts were running wild throughout my mind. One thought in particular was making my heart feel as if it were going to explode out of my chest. What if I was never able to escape and I was trapped inside here forever? I felt like screaming! How could everyone else remain so calm? By now I was certain I would never be free again. Biting my lip, I looked down at the floor. After what seemed like an eternity, I heard a distant ding. Relieved, I exhaled slowly. The elevator doors gradually opened; I was finally free!

My Laugh

By Si Young Kim
San Diego, California
Third Place Tie

It starts with a snort.
As always.
My laugh,
embarrassing,
and ridiculously predictable.

It starts with a snort,
a loud puff
of air through my nostrils.

Then,
a smile.
My crooked smile,
with my flawed teeth,
my incisors bared,
like a vampire’s fangs.
Despite the illusion of evil,
it’s pregnant with playfulness.

Next comes the shout.
A whoop,
of surprise
and glee.

Of course,
the guffaw soon follows.
It’s a solo a capella medley of
broad breaths,
gasping giggles,
cackling chortles,
and shaking shoulders.

And finally,
the face smack,
to conclude it all with style.

My hand covers my face,
hiding
the expression
of just
pure joy.
Run

By Joel Kai-En Hoe
Singapore
Third Place Tie

Run
swift as a peregrine falcon
your legs – hydraulics
propelling you
across the undulating foothills of life
that horrible, desolate landscape
devoid of life, except
for thorns you snag your pants on
making you flounder and fall
yet you continue on,
oblivious to the mountains of adulthood
hemming you in,
looming up in front,
behind, on both sides,
but there’s no turning back.

Run,
stumbling along the narrow alleyways
of life, disoriented
but still running nevertheless,
panting from exertion,
complete exhaustion,
vision blurs,
your heart is pushed beyond its limit
(No turning back)
your body system shuts down
(No turning back)
you collapse, lie limp
(No turning back!)
your physical being stops running,
but your mind persists in its flight
“No!” it screams desperately, hopelessly
you must continue!
Too late.
It goes on by itself.
Alone.

I told your mind, your mental being:
Run!
Run like the wind!
Or maybe even faster!
For they are pursuing you relentlessly –
your master
the grim realities of life
threatening, menacing,
eralding doom,
you – trapped,
cornered, desperate
What should you do?
What is there to do?
Nothing.
Just simply
nothing.
Though you will weep
for the world,
for yourself, your world
You have to face it.
Come on, you thought
you could escape?
So easily?
You really thought so?
Dove Wing

By Nathalie C. Mitchell
Seattle, Washington
Third Place Tie

One
Gentle flap of
Silver gray down
Silent waves
without a
ripple
Dipping
under
Tilting
Over
The dove
An experienced flyer
Of chilled dusk skies
Scent of clover
Hint of pumpkin
Autumn
Flowing on currents
Sprinkled with spice
Mountains in motion
Challenging this feathered climber
to summit
    and exalt
in flamingo pink
    mango red
    veins of gold
coursing through
the steady breath
of evening.

Boys Will Be Boys

By Naia Ishita Nathan
Singapore
Third Place Tie

Tin-can titans
face off, mops in hand (stolen from the kitchen)
longkang soldiers
eyes locked and loaded
they smear crayons on their cheeks,
Waiting –

Born in the barrel,
Mouth sucking the trigger
These boys:
fight make-believe wars
watch grenades explode like fireworks
play reaper
wield paper scythes,
take up arms and mimic death,
Laughing.
With such glee that one can only wonder,
How could they stop?

Do they ever?

This boy is a man in sheepskin.
Running after women
Running after paper bills
Running after false gods who preach love –
but inspire destruction.
Lusting for the crimson rays of the mourning sun
Running for the sake of running

Who are we to blame
Men who split skulls,
nations,
families
playing at war.
We who –
gift blades to babes
and stain innocence with the taste of blood

—
Shrieking,
    hearts pounding tin into form
they charge,
    eyes shut
gods in their own right,
    combusting as fireworks.
Boys will be boys.

They are:
Crayons bleeding from white walls,
A vision of tomorrow:
Eternal.
Dangerous Blue

By Haemaru Chung
New York, New York
First Place Tie

The sea and the sky were in perfect harmony, their colors complementing each other. From the aqua blue of the shallows to the light blue of the sky, several distinct and magnificent shades greeted my eyes. The colors stacked upon each other, forming a tropical layered cake. The beach glowed radiant as the afternoon sun reflected off the white sand. Fueled by a strong breeze, powerful waves crashed over the swimmers.

Since my arrival in Cancun, I had gone swimming in the sea twice or thrice daily with my uncle. To keep our heads above the water, we jumped as high as we could whenever a wave came, but that method soon proved ineffective. The waves would slam into our midsections with brute force, simultaneously spraying our faces with stinging seawater. To solve this problem, my uncle jumped while turning around so that the wave would only slap his back while I tried to slide over the waves as they came by, like body surfing while remaining in the same location. I was entranced by the crystal clear aqua blue hue, clean and pure like the glistening surface of topaz, not a color you see at any ordinary beach. Even though the waves looked choppier today, I was not worried.

The sound of breaking waves reverberated like thunder in my ears. The sea’s white foam hissed and frothed, like a rabid animal. As the foam rushed in my direction, I dimly noted how the wave of froth resembled a clawed hand, stretching towards me. My uncle jumped as a big wave smashed into him, throwing him backwards. After a couple of seconds of spluttering and coughing, he opened his eyes and caught sight of me standing still at the water’s edge.

He waved his hand, though grimacing slightly. My uncle had twisted his back slightly yesterday, causing him some discomfort. Nevertheless, he was not deterred.

When I waded into deeper water, I noticed that the sand below me was uneven, sloping drastically every few feet. A rumbling sound caused me to look up, only to get a face full of seawater. The wave slammed into me, knocking me yards back. I found myself sitting in the shallows with my arms braced behind me. Turning my head slightly, I looked once more at the thundering waves. Something was amiss. The pull of the current was too strong, the waves too massive. Suddenly I realized that the current was dragging me slowly to the right. I pushed myself up and dragged my feet through the dense, clinging, almost syrup-like water. With the current pulling me to the right and the waves bashing into me from the front, I struggled to swim straight.

Holding my breath, I jumped as high as I could over the wave, managing to pass over it without getting slapped in the face. My uncle had managed to plow through the wave without getting swept back. With a start, I realized that my feet could no longer touch sand. I was floating in deep water. Looking in the direction of the shore, I saw that we were in fact quite far from the edge of the beach. Suppressing the sudden panic rising in my throat, I tried to swim back to the shore. When I began to move backward instead of forward, I realized we were stuck in the middle of a very powerful current that was tugging us into deeper water. I started kicking in earnest now, but to no avail. Small waves swept over me, causing my eyes to blink and shed tears. Inch by inch, I moved in the direction of the shore while smothering me from above. Once more, I was submerged in the blindingly blue void. My fear was freezing all of my senses. When I opened my eyes underwater, however, I noticed how peaceful it was, unlike the rough surface. The blue had a glossy, shimmery characteristic that fascinated me. I resurfaced to find my uncle spitting out seawater next to me. I met his eyes and an unspoken plan formed between our minds. Placing a hand on my uncle’s back, I pushed as we both kicked and pulled with all our strength. Still, we swam no closer to the shore. We were snared in the clever trap of the current like a fish on a hook.

All the years practicing swimming were proving futile in this one moment I so desperately needed the sum total of my swimming skills. I now fully realized that man in all his power would never overcome nature. I only had time close my mouth before an immense wave slammed into my uncle and me from behind, propelling us forward. Using the wave’s momentum, we were able to shake free from the ravenous clutches of the current.

Another wave rammed into me while smothering me from above. Once more, I was submerged in the blindingly blue void. My fear was freezing all of my senses. When I opened my eyes underwater, however, I noticed how peaceful it was, unlike the rough surface. The blue had a glossy, shimmery characteristic that fascinated me. I resurfaced to find my uncle spitting out seawater next to me. I met his eyes and an unspoken plan formed between our minds. Placing a hand on my uncle’s back, I pushed as we both kicked and pulled with all our strength. Still, we swam no closer to the shore. We were snared in the clever trap of the current like a fish on a hook.

After reaching the hot, dry sand, I gazed back at the sea. The ocean suddenly looked less menacing. Looking around, I saw nothing was different than before. Nobody seemed to have noticed our distress, completely oblivious that we almost died. Although the actual danger we faced was over fairly quickly, the experience felt disturbingly long for me. My head was still pounding like a gong, my whole body still pumping with adrenaline. Supporting each other, my uncle and I staggered slowly toward the white stairs and up to the hotel. We could still hear the shouts of the swimmers as they splashed around.
The Palace Theatre

By Eva Maria Sayn-Wittgenstein
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
First Place Tie

Everything is better in the movies. Everybody looks better in the movies. Everybody talks better and says the right thing. Problems aren’t these overbearing, soul crushing abominations that cripple one with anxiety and fear, but instead the catalyst to how our unconventionally good-looking protagonist saves the day, discovers who they really are, and captures the heart of their love interest and audience alike. Or at least that’s what Marshall Bradbury believed. Almost every day, once all the papers were signed, filed, and faxed, he found his way back again and again to the Palace Theatre. Always wearing his oversized army jacket and beaten, red newsboy hat over his mop of shaggy hair, he returned to the Palace.

Most who worked at the theatre couldn’t recall a single day where Marshall wasn’t there. He would go so far as to trudge through a foot of snow just so he could re-watch a movie he’d already seen about three times. But who could blame him? When Marshall was at the palace, he was a new man. His eyes, which were normally clouded with apprehension and disgust, seemed to glisten with a childish light of pure wonder. Every day the red-carpeted floors, the rosewood panels, and cream-colored ceiling were all so new and exciting. The smell of melted butter and freshly popped kernels would instantly take hold of him and lead him directly to the counter, where he’d always order a medium bag with two pumps of the salted liquid and a large cup of coke. After grabbing his snacks, he’d proceed to scuttle off to whichever room was showing the film he desired most. Marshall watched all movies; he didn’t care. Action, drama, romance, comedy—whatever it was, he’d watch it. However, he did have his preferences. Marshall’s favorite time to go to the theatre was the seventh of every month, because it was then that they would show the well-aged movies ranging from the 30’s to 60’s. He would watch them in a trance, captivated by the strong, charismatic manly man that he so wished to be. With rapt attention, he’d gaze at the silver screen as it was graced by the presence of Frank Sinatra, Humphrey Bogart, Marlon Brando, Clark Gable, and more. The way they exuded such self-assurance, such confidence… Hours would be wasted in those plush theatre seats as Marshall would go from movie to movie, never leaving the building, to just get even a second glance more at the people he considered heroes. As he watched the struggles, yet freedom, of the rebellious Jim Stark, the loyal heart of Rick Blaine, and the sauntering joy of Don Lockwood, Marshall wished for nothing more than for this to be his reality. To be able to walk up to the screen that hung before him and simply leap into the film, an alternate reality. What would he be, in the land of film and movie magic? The manly, gun-slinging cowboy who works for no one? He could see himself now, cigar in the corner of his mouth accompanied by a deadly stare that would surely be the last thing his enemies ever saw. Or would he be the ladies’ man, a suave suit and drink in hand while he made all the dames swoon, despite knowing he was trouble. He could be the guy with all the moves on the floor, down on his luck, but soon discovered and brought to fame. The man with money and a heart of gold. Zero to hero! Rags to riches!

The movies, they had everything over and under the rainbow…but there was one important part they shared: a happy ending. Marshall only watched the movies that had a happy ending. He couldn’t bear to leave the theatre not knowing if things worked out for the better. He needed something concrete and dependable, not dark and depressing; something that he lacked in his life. It was at the movies that he escaped his dull role as the misanthropic underachiever and took his place in the shoes of the hero. It was where he could make the save, get the girl, and have a city rally behind him. He no longer had to deal with pushy bosses, angry ex-girlfriends, nagging mothers, haggard fathers, money-leeching friends… But then the fantasy would have to end. The credits would roll onto the screen and flash the names of the Hollywood hunks all across. Then the lights would gradually brighten, alerting the audience that it was now time to leave and return to their pitiful regularities. And as they would all trickle out, Marshall would stay planted in his seat. He would not leave his chair until the projection was completely shut off. Marshall held on to the very last second, hoping he would never have to leave. And as the final song played on replay through his brain, he’d have to leave through those musty, wood doors. The final underpaid employee would be waiting just outside, key in hand, ready to lock the Palace up. So, taking the same ten minute route he always did, Marshall would trudge back to his humble abode and, even as he closed his eyes, continue to dream of filmdom. And by the time it was morning and he had returned to the waking world, the same cycle would repeat itself.

Without fail, he’d be there. Even as the years slowly ate away at the carpets, the wood became dull, and the once cream walls had turned to a muddle grey, Marshall returned. As his hair began to recede and his face to droop, his eyes still seemed to catch that youthful, free light as they entered the Palace. The same scenes, lines, and jokes would still make him smile every time, crinkling his eyes with delight. Time passed on and Marshall still came back; he came back until the very last day. Plastered with a “Closed” sign across the door, the old, ragtag theatre was being shut down to be replaced by a newer, shinier one. When the improved “Johnson Theatre,” with double the rooms and double the movies, had finally staked its claim, crowds clamored. But as the employees waited and waited, realization soon swept over them. Marshall wouldn’t be back. Because if the Palace couldn’t be there, than neither could he.
A Difficult Decision

By Richard A. Cheng
St. Louis, Missouri
Second Place Tie

December 21, 2058

Dr. Roger Kasper groaned. He was faced with a predicament. Grimacing, he glanced at his television.

“Within a week, Dr. Roger Kasper’s controversial xenotransplant will take place. Soon, history is going to be made, and we will be fortunate enough to live in a world where organs can be efficiently given to those in need. For those of you who don’t know, Dr. Kasper intends on using genetically altered pigs to provide organs for those who need organ transplants. While this may seem crazy at first, he has assured the public with solid research that diseases cannot be transferred between pigs and the patient. His first subject, Katie, will have a procedure by next Friday. The whole nature is watching this hero,” a reporter said, a crowd behind her. “While there is still considerable controversy, many people think that it is entirely beneficial. Last year, 9,000 people died without an organ transplant. With Kasper’s technology, we can greatly reduce this number, as it is very efficient to get pigs and to use their organs. However, there are still concerns about the ethics of killing these genetically altered pigs and the concept of implanting pig organs into a human…”

Kasper turned off the television. He closed his eyes. He had been so close to a perfect opportunity… His technology had been successful. Roger had carefully changed the genetic code in his pigs, creating organs suitable for human use. He could save tens of thousands of lives in one year with his pig organs. He had spent twenty years testing the organs for any possible errors, making sure that the organs were safe for transplant. Finally, he had decided that it was one hundred percent safe. He revealed his technology to the public. After several years of convincing the public, he was finally granted access to perform the first xenotransplant on a girl, Katie. She was a girl of eight-years-old, in need of a liver transplant. Red-haired, freckled, and compassionate, she was the perfect person for Roger to save. The world would see Roger as a hero. All Roger’s life, that was all he ever wanted. Growing up in rural Kansas, he had never even dreamed of becoming an international hero. Everything was going as planned.

And yet, he had been thrown a curveball. After looking back at his data, there had been a discrepancy. It was possible that a small strain of swine flu had emerged, and it had a chance of being transferred from the pigs to the patients. It would take perhaps decades more to come to a reasonable conclusion. Roger got up from his seat, walking to examine his pigs.

The pigs squealed peacefully in the containment cells, unaware of their incoming doom. Roger stared hard at the animals. These pigs could be the key to his success, the start of a revolution, his way to glory and riches beyond anything he could have imagined while growing up on a Kansas farm. Infinite prizes would flood his way, perhaps a Nobel, and he would be admired by generations of scientists. This could have tens of thousands of lives within a year. He wouldn’t just be a successful scientist. He would be a hero: the man who saved so many lives. This was an history event. People like these were legends. Roger desired this honor so much that it was eating him up from the inside. Children would look up to Roger as a role model – the epitome of genius and good will.

He sighed just thinking about it. Research that had taken two decades of his life would finally reach a closure. Thinking about his wife’s face, he imagined the pride from his family. His kids would brag about him to their peers. He would be taught in history and science classes. And if the disease really could be transferred during the xenotransplantation, it was still unlikely the public would be able to link the deaths back to him. The number of people saved would shadow those who died. Even if people did die, they were already on death’s bed. This was a real chance to save them. And, if he couldn’t save Katie within the next month or two, it was highly probable she would die. The whole world was watching this girl. What kind of a person would he look like if he couldn’t save her? He sighed. The chances of the disease spreading also appeared to be extremely low, so the probability was in his favor…

No! Dr. Kasper grimaced. This was not simple gambling. These were human lives at risk! How could he look his son in the face, knowing he had murdered innocent people? Would he deserve his son’s twinkling eyes staring into his face? Was the chance of death worth honor and glory? These were human lives. People with families. He looked around at the sterile environment. How filthy would he feel every day? Lady Macbeth’s guilt would pale to Roger’s shame. And, worst case scenario, the deaths would link back to Roger, and he would live the rest of his life behind bars, scorned by everyone. His family would be embarrassed.

But if he failed to save Katie, how would people view him? Would they trust his technology in the future? Roger had barely detected this new disease. Would the public put their faith in him again? He had already spent several years convincing the public. This was extremely publicized after all. If he released this new information to the public, they would never trust his technology again. Say goodbye to the glory…

So many lives could be saved if he released these pigs. It would take years to grow more pigs and even more to do more extensive research on disease transfer. It would benefit the human species as a whole more if he released these animals.

Frustrated, Kasper glared at a pig. He closed his mind. A decision had been made. Perhaps he would regret this day for the rest of his life. He opened his eyes.

The pig oinked gleefully.
It Was A Terrible Night

By Todd Robert Redman
Naperville, Illinois
Second Place Tie

It was a boring, lazy Sunday morning. Hot and humid, the summer insects buzzing, the day had little excitement. It was quite interesting how day was very different from night. Especially a certain night…

It was a terrible night. Panic and fear were all the villagers could feel. The dragon loomed over the weak houses. In comparison, the houses looked like tiny toy models to the dragon. It was quite rainy, a meek defense against the dragon’s hot breath. Indeed, this was the darkest night of the dark ages. It was a terrible, terrible night. One villager slipped over her old fashioned skirt and fell onto her knees in the mud. She was quietly crying. The pain of losing her family to the dragon’s heavy claws just seconds ago was too much for her to take. In agony, she whispered, “Take me now, dragon. I care not to live. My family taken by the grips of death, let me join them in peace.”

Her eyes tightly closed, she waited for the dragon to swoop down and end her life. All that was to be heard were raindrops hitting the cobblestone roads. After a minute, she opened her eyes and realized that she was not going to be attacked soon by the dragon. She also noticed that the villagers had evacuated the town. She turned her gaze upwards, and to her surprise the dragon’s home!

All the same, her caution had to be neglected. Resting in a damaged town could be dangerous, and a cozy, safe cave sounded better to her. Mary reached out and grasped his hand for support as she lifted herself to her knees.

“By the way, Thomas, how did you find a cave?”

They walked to the edge of the town, past the wreckage of houses and shops. As they went, he replied, “I didn’t find it; I knew of it beforehand. As a child, I had taken trips with my father to the hills beyond. A canyon south of here had a convenient little cave that we used to spelunk in.” His merry face turned to sorrow. “Those times are over now, especially since the dragon got me…” He choked on the next word, starting to cry slightly.

Mary told him, “If it makes you feel better, my parents were killed too. Oh, how I hate that dragon!”

Thomas said bitterly, “Yes, so do I. Still, I wonder how a dragon could have appeared. Those beasts are only in fables, you know.”

Mary suggested, “Well, maybe they existed all along and legends of them were to give warning to those who never thought of their existence.”

Thomas murmured, “Hmm, never thought of it that way.”

They had now reached the end of the town. “Alright, so I remember this tree here, so we turn slightly right.” They walked silently in the direction Thomas had suggested. Eventually, the town looked quite smaller from the position where they stood. “Now we got his way.” They trotted in that direction. Mary could make out a canyon beyond the trees that were randomly positioned. Finally, after a half-hour of walking, they had found it. The two stood at the heart of the canyon, admiring the majestic way the canyon seemed to spread on to the end of the world. Then Mary spotted something. A gap at the side of the canyon, only twelve paces from where they were positioned.

“Oh, Thomas! I think I see it!” Mary announced. “The cave! Am I right?” She turned to Thomas eagerly.

“To her dismay, his expression was hardened and confused. “No, Mary. This is not the cave. I don’t remember this being here before…”

Then a horrifying sight greeted them. A gruesome face appeared at the head of the cave. The dragon had been resting in there and was not pleased with unknown villagers interrupting its peace. It roared in anger, reared its head back, and shot a fiery red ball of flames. Being experienced in swift movements, Mary avoided it, attaining a meek defense against the dragon’s home!

Although Thomas seems like an innocent fellow, Mary thought suspiciously, “he could be someone dangerous. He possibly could be leading me straight into the dragon’s home!”

All the same, her caution had to be neglected. Resting in a damaged town could be dangerous, and a cozy, safe cave sounded better to her. Mary reached out and grasped his hand for support as she lifted herself to her knees.

“Mary!”

She stood up bravely and immediately tried to think of a way out of the canyon without being turned to charcoal. It seemed that there was no way out. The dragon’s head turned towards her, and with her legs too sore to run, the only choice was to face her fate. The dragon looked at her curiously, as if trying to see what was going on inside her head. Mary’s only hope, which had a minimal chance, was that the dragon would spare her. It reared its head back.

The reader shut the book. Maybe an uneventful day would be a better option than reading the suspenseful story.
God, America

By Cindy Wang
St. Louis, Missouri
Third Place Tie

“Go! Defend Little Round Top! Hit them as hard as you can!” ordered a martinet desperately.

Stricken, the young soldier raced up to the peak of the acclivity, while locating a hiding spot between two trees. A rock obscured him from behind, while the trees covered his anterior and flank. Satisfied with his location, he hastily pulled out his rifle and shoved a Minie ball inside. Anxiously, he lifted his rifle and looked through the ‘scope. He narrowed his eyes and surveyed the landscape. Dead bodies were strewn everywhere and blood covered the ground. Approaching from the one o’clock direction was a Confederate soldier panting loudly while signaling his regiment toward the rear of Little Round Top. Upon noticing the Confederates, the young soldier felt ineffable fear as he clicked off the safety and aimed for the Confederate soldier’s left shoulder.

BAM! The Confederate soldier fell down with a thud. His regiment, still yards behind him, were lost and confused. Without any leadership, they erratically charged towards Little Round Top with little to no strategy. Widening his eyes, the young soldier hid behind a worn-down old stockade fence. Glancing around, he realized that only Regiment B and D from the Union were left. Perturbed, he instinctively reached for his pouch of ammunition. He turned it upside down and shook it a few times into his palm, but only a few specks of dust landed atop his hand.

“Captain,” the young soldier aspired. “I’m out of ammo.”

Deliberately closing his eyes for a half-second, General Chamberlain immediately shouted in response, “Okay, everyone! Change of plans! We’re running out of ammo. Fasten your bayonets. We’ll charge towards those filthy Rebs like they never expected.” The general had a menacing tone, and seemed resolute and firmly set in his decision.

Nervous murmurs and shiver traveled through the terrified remnants of the Main regiments.

“Man, I wish I’d paid some attention during school when I had a chance. Then I wouldn’t have to be here, fighting in this dead man’s war,” moaned a nearby soldier.

“That’s right, we’re all just gonna die. What’s the point?” sighed another hopeless soldier.

“I don’t have time to give you guys a confidence-boosting speech like Lincoln, but I’m gonna tell you guys that we are fighting for America, our country, for our families at home, our wives, our children, our brothers and sisters, friends and neighbors!” declared Chamberlain.

The young soldier remembered his family, friends, and his country. He recalled the looks on their faces when he left for the army. He remembered the regret, the tears, the longing from his mother as she begged for him to stay. As wretched as he felt, he wanted to finish it, finish this war for once and for all, and go home, back to the life he had abandoned months ago. His name was Mark Tablott. He was quite an impertious young fellow; that is until he joined the Union army. He had been confident that life as a soldier would be simple and often boasted that he would, “Kill hundreds of those stupid, blustering Rebs, just like getting dates from girls.” However, now he wished he hadn’t enlisted; he should have just paid the fee to evade the draft, should have stayed home and obeyed his mother. As the only son from a wealthy, industrial family, Talbott would have had no problem getting exempt from joining the war, but it was his ego. His oversized ego and arrogance had carried him to this deathbed.

Longingly, he stared into the mountains far, far away, wishing he could just disappear somewhere over there and just accept his cowardly self. He yearned for the life he had once seen as boring and routine. Pivoting around, he spied the American flag bending and curving through the air. Looking downward, Mark then saw the Confederate soldiers hacking the flag down, ripping it to shreds. Suddenly, Talbott felt a little something stir inside him, a feeling of honor and duty, a sense of determination.

Snapped out of his thoughts, Talbott fastened his bayonet and charged at the incoming Confederate soldiers with as much might as he could muster. The Confederate soldiers were shocked and immediately turned back and ran. A few more daring Rebels had run through, only to be met by Maine Regiment B. The troops employed the classic “element of surprise” by effacing themselves from behind a stone wall. They rose up and shot down the unsuspecting Confederate soldiers.

Mark kept stabbing and charging forward, only to hear Chamberlain call, “We’ve won, young men! We’ve succeeded! Those filthy Rebs, we beat their butts!” Gloriously, Chamberlain took out another flag and gleefully reclaimed Little Round Top for the union. While celebrating, Mark stumbled out of the bushes only to hear the rustle of leaves behind him. He felt a sharp pain and screamed in agony. A bullet pierced through his back, shattering his bones and rupturing his internal organs immediately. Gasping, Mark wiped his mouth, only to see his hand covered in wet, sticky blood.

“My life, my whole life. America, God, America,” he sighed.

“’Twas all for that God-darned country,” he murmured, staring serenely at the majestic American flag that was rippling beautiful in the wind. Just seconds later, he was dead, one of the many that gave their lives for our nation that very day in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.
Ever the Lucky One

By Elena Grace Woodburn
Winfield, Kansas
Third Place Tie

Someone pinched the side of her stomach sharply. "Well?" a sneering voice demanded. "What do you think you're doing here?"

She turned around slowly, fearing the wrath of an older brother. Instead, her eyes caught a freckled, cheerful face. Laughing from a mixture of relief and joy, Lanie hopped down from the bleachers and gave her friend a hug. "Brian!" she cried, unable to contain her ecstasy. "What are you doing in Ashland?"

Brian grinned. "You remember my little bro Austin, right?" At Lanie's nod, he continued. "Well, he had a baseball game down here today, so I figured while I was in the neighborhood I'd pay a visit to my little buddy." He shot her a wink.

She rolled her eyes. "I'm hardly 'little' anymore," she objected. I'm fourteen since last January.

"Yeah, but I'm fifteen."

"Oh, lay off." She punched his arm playfully.

A few years ago, the two teenagers had met at summer camp and had become fast friends. By the end of the week, they'd collected each other's e-mail addresses, just like everyone else, but quickly lost touch. They'd hardly spoken to each other until the year before, when they happened to attend summer camp together again. Ever since, Lanie and Brian had been inseparable.

Brian shook out his plaid shirt. "So," he asked, "how's eighth grade?"

Lanie groaned. "Two more weeks until summer," she answered. "I don't think I can bear another minute in the same building as all those sixth graders, let alone two more weeks.

"Yeah, I don't blame you." Her friend shifted his weight, revealing a window just side enough for one to recognize he was disturbed. His inner emotions didn't fall on blind eyes either.

"Brian?" Lanie inquired, beginning to worry. "What's the matter?"

He straightened up, slamming the window shut. "It's nothing important," he replied.

She didn't believe him. "Are you sure?"

"Yeah! I'm totally cool." Lanie leaned against the metal bleachers, puzzled. Had she done something insulting? She wracked her brain for possible offense, but couldn't come up with anything.

Did one of her text messages come across as unkind?

It suddenly hit her like a load of bricks. The few minutes before Brian surprised her, she'd been talking with a few friends from school. Megan and Parker had been sitting with her, chatting while they waited for their parents to come get them. Megan left first, which left Parker and Lanie alone until Parker's dad drove up. Had Brian witnessed that?

Maybe, she thought with sudden horror, he thought I'd replaced him.

"Brian?" she asked anxiously. "You didn't think…I mean, you…I wouldn't…" she trailed off, unable to find the words.

He nodded knowingly and averted his eyes. "It was stupid of me, wasn't it?"

"No!" she exclaimed, with such finality that he jerked his gaze back at her, startled. "I mean," she explained, blushing, "it wasn't stupid. I'm sure you had some reasoning behind that. You don't have to tell me, though," she added quickly, noticing his shame.

He shook his head, taking a sudden interest in his shoes. "No, I need to tell you for my sake," he declared, still refusing to make eye contact. "My parents got a divorce a few weeks ago and I've been living with my mom and Austin. A few nights ago, I asked mom when we'd get to see dad again, and she…" He faltered, trying not to break down in front of her. "I've just been feeling…"

Lanie stepped forward and enveloped him in a bear hug. She set her chin on his shoulder and he hugged her back. His ginger hair had a slight scent of shampoo and his shirt was crisp under her chin. It wasn't more than a few wordless seconds until Lanie felt a teardrop fall on her shoulder. She wanted to warn them.

"I've just been feeling…"

She stood there, still locked around him, the teardrop steadily growing larger.

Realization fell on her heart as slowly as Brian's sobs. His parent's divorce must have left him feeling betrayed. After all, no kid would have seen it coming. One minute their parents were laughing and hugging each other, the next minute sends dad out the door forever.

Lanie wished she could offer something more than sympathy, but she still had both of her parents. Ever the lucky one, she thought grimly.

Another drop of understanding fell on her, leaving a large stain to consider. His mother's anger must have made him feel unloved, as if he were a prized possession instead of a son. Lanie knew if she were in the same situation, she would've left at the drop of a hat. This perception must have been enough, for her heart released her tongue, sending Lanie the right words as well.

"Brian," she whispered, "I think I know how you're feeling. Just let me say that I need your friendship as much as you need mine. It may not be for the same reason, but I don't want to lose it." She exhaled slowly, noticing that the spot on her shoulder had ceased growing. "I'm truly grateful for you."

They broke apart. Brian wiped his face with his sleeve before facing her. "You have no idea how much that meant to me," he confided.

She smiled. "I think I do."

In those few moments, Lanie had tapped into a world of emotion that she had never before been forced to experience. She came back from the encounter with two things: a new respect for Brian and a new, grateful heart.

So what if I'm the lucky one? She thought. That doesn't mean I can't share his pain. What it means is I can either work hard to extend to others or I can put myself higher and lose them. But what's the point of that?

Slinging her backpack from the bleachers to her dop shanple, she announced, "Now come on! Let's go get ice cream! My treat."

Brian smiled, but held back. "Lanie?"

"Yeah?"

"I was waiting to mention this, because…"

"You don't have to tell me if you don't want to," she replied, sensing reluctance.

To her relief, Brian smiled. "No, you'll want to know." He took a deep breath, so as to prolong the announcement. "I'm living with my mom permanently, since my dad left Missouri, um, about a week ago. We're moving, too," he added.

"What?!"

His face turned shocked. "No, no! That's not what I meant! We're moving here!"

Lanie stepped back, filled with emotion. However, it didn't take long for her heart to swell with joy. "That…that's amazing!" she blurted, but faltered. "But I thought you liked it in Grand Pass."

He shrugged. "Well, it used to be nice, but my best friend, Drake – you remember him, right? Well, he kinda got involved with the wrong type of guys. Every since, there's sorta been a gang on our street and Drake isn't my best friend anymore."

She nodded, her heart creating empathy. Lanie had been in a similar situation before, with a childhood friend. She was glad to give her heart a chance to express something deeper than sympathy.

"Trust me," she said with a wink. "I have a few people in mind that I think you'll take to. Now, come on! I still want ice cream!"

She gave him an impish grin before the two friends raced down the sidewalk.
Creative Writing ~ Ages 16 – 18

**POETRY**

**First Place**
Lisa Zou  
Age 17  
Chandler, Arizona  
“Tips and Service”

**Second Place**
Vidya Lakshmi D/O Singanathan  
Age 17  
Singapore  
“Ill-fated”

**Third Place**
Phaedra N. DeJarnette  
Age 17  
Lakeland, Florida  
“The Red String of Fate”

Jacqueline Dutkanych  
Age 16  
Chicago, Illinois  
“Hallways”

Joonho Jo  
Age 16  
Exeter, New Hampshire  
“Mom”

**STORIES**

**First Place**
Joseph Park  
Age 17  
Fairfax, Virginia  
“The Hunter Had Become the Hunted”

**Second Place**
Calista Chong  
Age 16  
Singapore  
“Still Beating”

Jimin Han  
Age 17  
Seoul, South Korea  
“The Artist”

**Third Place**
Julia Haein Mun  
Age 17  
Marietta, Georgia  
“The Things They Lost”
Tips and Service

By Lisa Zou
Chandler, Arizona
First Place

Eighty-six years mark the wooden calendar while she pours congee to the brim, eyebrows entangled as pungent porridge smoke rises above cracked porcelain bowls. Cracks like the antique spider webs framing the wooden boards in her restaurant. They tally forty-two splintered dishes and they praise my grandmother a gifted cook over tectonic plates. French businessmen consumed rice noodles crafted by her crinkled palms, the hands that served soup the morning South Vietnam fell into silent chaos.

Even when the foreign man plucked twenty-one plums from her only shrub, she served his empty insides. As each full moon passes, her light leather skin folds itself, each fold counting suns since she last folded my father’s clothes. An invisible Atlas, she pours congee to the brim, as if compensating for the night when she can no longer lift the pan to serve them, him, or me. Each summer, my grandmother knits guilt into my waitress dress and hot privilege lacquers my tongue. I swallow each gated community, each “Made in Vietnam” sticker, one bleached spoonful after the other.
Ill-fated

By Vidya Lakshmi D/O Singanathan
Singapore
Second Place

My heart is afflicted with an illness
It has a voracious appetite
For that which
Can only be given by others

Had I known this I would not have taken
That un-retraceable step with you
Because loyalty is but a sheet of glass
It can bear the weight of a lifetime’s strife

Yet it is shattered by a single stone
Set airborne by your betrayal
And it unwinds the most elaborate of structures
With a single teardrop

I don’t blame you though
People are too unselfish
And we hasten to unload
The burden of our affection

Now this vagrant love has finally settled
In a gloomy inn reserved for loathing
Where a court of law resides
And it demands justice

Because while it is human nature
To feel as others do
It is also inherent in us
To enforce this law on others

The principle of scarcity pervades my mind
The jury has spoken and retribution will be swift
For me to find reprieve
It must be seized from you

Because the real punishment
Has fallen on me
Tell me,
Is it a crime to have loved deeply?
Hallways

By Jacqueline Dutkanych
Chicago, Illinois
Third Place Tie

I see her in the crowded school hallways
I see her in the chaos of my own mind
Seconds startin’ to feel like days
But her baby blue eyes are my escape—out of this place
She’s a classic cocktail mixed with an overdose of meds
And a touch of depression
Got me wantin’ to make a confession
But I still wanna take a sip
God, She’s sendin’ my mind on a trip
Lettin’ her climb over my walls
But they’re already breakin’
And I watch her as she falls.

He watched me as I fell
His imagination like magic
And I was under his spell
But being a con-artist, he played a mighty fine trick
He was teachin’ me a lesson
I ought to be learnin’
As if it was destin
But my glass heart
Used as playing cards
As if the hallways were a supermart
And I was chosen when my mind was still frozen
But his eyes like fire
And I was ‘bout to melt
Shouting into the void for help
But this was just the hand I was dealt.
The Red String of Fate

By Phaedra N. DeJarnette
Age 17
Lakeland, Florida
Third Place Tie

The Red String of Fate, also referred to as the Red String of Marriage, and other variants, is an East Asian belief originating from Chinese legend. According to this myth, the gods tie an invisible red cord around the ankles of those that are destined to meet one another in a certain situation, or help each other in a certain way. The two people connected by the red thread are destined lovers, regardless of place, time, or circumstances. This magical cord may stretch or tangle, but never break. This myth is similar to the Western concept of soulmates or a destined flame.

I can’t see the end of this –
of the red string and the liquid guilt.
It’s an underlying feeling that undermines my feelings.
911 calls sound like wedding bells and
our drunken bouts sound like handwritten vows.

Your love tastes like anger and honey
and my body is your canvas. Splashes of harsh yellows and purples form from your hands. The thread that binds us is fragile, yet fate forced us in love.
All good things end, but we have always been volatile.

We are wounded together forever. I am blue and delirious and you only have serious conversations with whiskey. You leave papercuts on my fragile skin, but you won’t give me a band-aid – you let me bleed to death.

You suffocate me with your dependency and I can’t breathe. I’m choking on your rancid love, but it’s ‘til death do us part, and you know I’m ready to leave. So, you try to patch up our problems with more wine and slurred apologies and I hate that the rusted cord won’t break.

You’re red and I’m yellow.
We were made to be a tragedy for eternity.
Mom

By Joonho Jo
Exeter, New Hampshire
Third Place Tie

1. Yesterday, I sat on the bedrock
   of the shivering stream
   and tossed branches into the river because
   I remembered you said that pebbles were too clichéd.
   I tossed branches and waited and hoped
   to hear the quiet splash when they hit the bottom rock,
   just out of my sight. I don’t know why I was sitting there,
   all I know is that it reminded me of you—
   even the grains of sand
   remind me of you.

2. Finding that I am lost is not a feeling of grief, instead one of
   relief, since now I am no longer stuck
   in a mire, nameless.

3. I packed my suitcase and left my bedroom—the crinkled
   Penang Tea receipts and boxes flooding the living floor like
   unintended tears. And I locked my front door for the first
   time because now I was sure no one would come in to wake
   me up.

1. In the morning, I held
   the letter you wrote before
   you left.
   I sat on the bed
   where I read
   and lay down.
The Hunter Had Become the Hunted

By Joseph Park
Fairfax, Virginia
First Place

Every year on April 11th, our family visits my maternal grandfather’s grave to honor him on the day of his death. One particular year, when I was twelve-years-old, my mother packed my sister and me into our comfortably worn silver minivan to pay our annual homage. I, for one, was not especially fond of this hour-long expedition in which we ventured into Maryland just to see my grandfather’s grave for a few minutes. As cold as this sounds for a twelve-year-old, I was just not as interested with the idea of a two-hour commute for remembering a man that I had never met or seen.

Typically during this commute, I would sleep the entire time in the car. This time was no different. It felt like it was just a few seconds after I had closed my eyes before I felt my mother prodding my side, signaling that we had arrived. Drowsily, I sauntered my way up the grassy hill where my grandfather lay, heavily mined with geese manure. Lazily avoiding the explosive organic mines, I caught up to my mother and sister who had been waiting for me at the top.

After a few minutes of prayer led by my mother the memorial service was over. My mother cautiously went down the hill to water the pink and purple carnations that she had brought to adorn my grandfather’s grave. Meanwhile, I began exploring the graveyard, walking along the rows while reading the inscriptions engraved into each memorial. I began to wander further away from my grandfather’s grave, but stopped in my tracks when I saw a Canadian goose about fifteen feet away from me with its back turned to me. Being the fearless twelve-year-old I was, I began to slowly stalk the goose in hopes of fulfilling my civic responsibility of purifying the graveyard of the little mines that the goose would lay down in the near future. Or I just wanted to scare it away. Either way, I had committed myself to this task and had come up within about five feet of the goose before it turned around. I stopped in my tracks.

I wholeheartedly believed that the goose would flee, terrified at the sight of an encroaching human being. I was wrong. Its cold, pitiless black eyes stared right back at me dead in the eye. I was unnerved. These were the eyes of a predator, not a prey. Slightly irritated that I would not be able to fulfill my civic responsibility (and also perhaps irritated that I did not get the reaction from the goose that I was hoping for), I broke out of my stupor and decided to mock the goose. Despite the chilling looks this particular goose was giving me, my twelve-year-old self was much too haughty for this goose to humiliate me. After all, I was the human being in this situation. I was higher up on both the food chain and the food web. From an evolutionary standpoint, I was far superior compared to these subordinate Canadian geese. Perhaps this goose was trying to make a political statement to his fellow Canadian geese. Perhaps this goose was an anomaly of nature, fearless of its evolutionary superior human being. But either way, I decided to humiliate this goose for attempting to make a mockery out of me. However, I realized one thing: I was not dealing with a normal goose.

I began honking like a goose, sticking out my head and bobbing it, while flapping my arms. To any other passerby in the vicinity, I would have looked like a raving lunatic. But this goose and I had a mutual understand-
“The wheels on a bus go round and round, round and round, round and round…”

Strapped in the back seat of my Toyota, Cheryl crooned a song she had learned in the day nursery. I glimpsed her in the rearview mirror. The shafts of sunlight had turned her rotund cheeks look softer than cotton, radiating with an ethereal glow. Our eyes met in the mirror and she gave me a toothy beam. My lips stretched widely in response. Gradually, my eyelids grew heavier. Cheryl’s singing got fainter and my foot lost strength, easing on the accelerator. My shoulders started slumping, I felt the car rolling to a stop, but I was losing the battle with sleep.

“Moomy!” Cheryl screamed.

Horns blared in the background. My eyes shot open, but they were blinded by the headlights of an oncoming truck.

Bang.

I shrieked, shooting up from my sweat-stained pillow. Heart pounding wildly, I struggled to catch my breath. Breathe, Alice. Breathe. My chest heaved, and with each rise and fall, I slowly regained my grasp on reality. You’re at home, Alice. You’re safe. You’re alive. I trained my gaze on the parquet floor, willing my heart to slow. It was stained with streaks of burgundy—they seemed like week-old wine.

But Cheryl isn’t.

After her passing, Cheryl continued to appear in my dreams every night. The dream always started with the song and ended with the scream—moments before the deadly accident with the pickup truck. The crash never failed to jolt me awake.

It had been a month—without hearing her infectious giggles, without braiding her black, bouncy curls, without helping her into the car before driving her to the day nursery. I felt a migraine setting in, a tornado ready to blow my mind to bits.

I stumbled to the kitchen countertop and reached for a Panadol packet, desperate to curb the incessant pulsing of my temples. But I stopped myself in time. The pills were the perpetrator. They caused the accident. Had I not eaten them, I would have seen the driver of the pickup truck gesturing wildly, mounting, “No brakes! No brakes!” desperately. I would have swerved to the left, right, anywhere, and not stalled at the T-junction, waiting for the collision to happen.

With fiery resolve, I grabbed the packet and slammed it into the trash bin before sinking down to my knees, breaking into fits of sobs.

A buzz from the doorbell interrupted my weeping. The sound seemed almost foreign after succumbing myself after Cheryl’s passing to seek solace. I slowly got to my feet and peered through the peephole. No one. Bewildered and a tad teary, I opened the door cautiously. I furtively glanced around and my gaze fell on a parcel lying at my doorstep. I brought the parcel back into the apartment and began to unwrap it. Opening the box, I gasped.

There were paper cranes—so many of them, in so many colors. Mouth agape, I took a blue one out and felt its contours and edges with my fingertips. It was delicate, yet so defined. My heart ached painfully. Cheryl loved to fold origami. I spotted a red heart nestled in the plethora of paper cranes. One side of the paper heart was scrawled with huge handwriting, letters that were unmistakably written by Cheryl’s hand. I squinted at the words, biting my wobbling lips, as familiarity and nostalgia struck me, wave after wave.

There was the w with rounded bottoms; there was the dot on top of the i which was never colored; there was the lopsided x, because the right diagonal was always drawn longer than the left. I had learned every quirk of the five-year-old’s unseasoned hand. Smiling weakly, I began reading the words.

“Happy birthday moomy! I folded over 1,000 paper cranes for you. Please make a wish! It will come true. The Japanese Gods will help you. Is this a nice surprise? I love you moomy. Xoxo, Cheryl.”

Hearts and more hearts adorned the borders of the paper, but the message was filled with the most love. My nose was stinging again, tears welling in already swollen eyes. It’s my birthday today! I forgot. But she had remembered.

“This is a beautiful surprise, my baby,” I whispered, folding the letter back into a heart. “I shall make a wish now.” Placing the heart on top of all the one thousand paper cranes, my eyes fluttered close and my hands clasped together.

I wish for my daughter to be by my side.

I opened my eyes and then chuckled with resignation. The wish was sincere, but it asked for the moon. I was content with relishing memories of my sweet cherub. I stood up with the box in my hands. I had to find a safe place to keep this treasure.

Suddenly, I heard movement outside the door—a second visitor. There was a light knock, a squeak of shoes, some fidgeting, and some murmuring. Then two knocks. My breath caught as my mind flitted to the wish I’d made earlier.

Cheryl wasn’t tall enough to press the buzzer. My chest tightened. Am I imagining things? I should have taken the migraine pills. I was feverish with expectancy, desperately clinging to a sliver of hope. I sprinted to the door and yanked it open.

“Who are you?” I sputtered.

Two strangers were at my doorstep—a woman and a boy no older than Cheryl. They seemed like mother and son. The son was meek, ducking his head at the sight of me. His mother, on the other hand, was radiating with vivacity, her cheeks and nose flushed scarlet. Her eyes and lips widened in delight, looking genuinely elated to see me. I believed I looked much less enthusiastic. Hope had turned to confusion and exasperation.

“Are you Mrs. Chang?”

“Yes…?”

The woman exhaled shakily and stepped in front of her son. She threw her arms around me, sniffling into my shoulder.

“W-what are you doing?” I was flummoxed.

“Thank you so much!” she cried.

Discomfort crept up my spine. I wiggled out of her embrace and took a few steps back, maintaining much needed distance.

“Tim is able to live again, because of your daughter!” the woman gushed.

My mind drew a blank at first, but realization slowly set in. A month ago, I had agreed to donate Cheryl’s organs; and a month later, her donee had found me.

“You have a big heart. Your daughter too,” she said, taking my hands in hers. “Tim will take good care of hers, don’t you worry.”

Goosebumps rose on my arms. It was surreal, knowing that a part of your child was still living in another’s body. The woman guided her son towards me and I knelt down in front of him, placing my trembling hands on his shoulders.

“C-can I, listen to your heartbeat?”

The boy nodded slowly. I rested my head lightly on his small chest, comforted by the knowledge that a couple of inches beneath skin and skeleton lay Cheryl’s beating heart, still pulsing with life.

Dum, Dum, Dum. Each beat soothed yet strengthened me. It grounded me to a world without Cheryl, but now this reality did not seem as daunting and despairing as before. It revived me.

Moomy will learn to live. Moomy will continue breathing so long as your heart keeps on beating.

Creative Writing
The Artist

By Jimin Han
Seoul, South Korea
Second Place Tie

The rhinoceros gaped at me with its large, bottomless eyes. The hollowness of the eyes reflected its advanced age and despondent helplessness, and yet the beast’s majestic stance shook me and then froze me at an astonished attention. Next to me was a Spanish man in his thirties, neatly dressed in a gray tweed jacket topped off with a vivid red beret. Beside the Spanish man was a curator, a short and chubby man with stubby, toad-like fingers. He stood pompously, with his goatee carefully trimmed and black shirt tucked into his dark jeans. The Spanish man was sitting directly in front of the rhino, his arms hugging his knapsack and chin tucked into its entry. The rhino stayed still for an hour, and the curator and I started exchanging anxious looks. Clearly, the curator was alien to this silence and prudence.

Most of the visitors who came to this archaic museum were those who came to shop for the finest animals and artifacts. They came to this place with a purpose, and demonstrated no hesitation in the fulfillment of their purposes. There was no looking twice or pondering over difficult choices, and definitely no thorough investigations. The tusk of a baby mammoth, feather of a senile dodo bird, even the lightest remnants of the Tower of Babel, were brought to the scale to be measured and priced. Time was a scarce resource, and therefore losing time over anything so petty would be a shame. The visitors would stand at the counter in excitement, bothering the curator with senseless questions and void remarks.

Normally, I was one of them, a patron of the arts, so I could sympathize. But today’s sight was simply bizarre. A rhino! What of the rhino would mesmerize him? It was the dullest creature of all. Its purpose was limited to being hunted down to a mere trophy. The man with the red beret stood up abruptly and approached the rhinoceros.

“Be careful,” croaked the curator in an almost reproaching manner. “Remember, he is the last living rhinoceros in the world. You handle with care.”

The Spaniard whispered, as if he were already communicating with the beast and didn’t want to disrupt his conversation with the enervated creature, “I know, my dear, I do know very well.” He proceeded to kneel directly in front of the rhino, coming face to face, bringing his gaze upon it and locking in his eyes with those of the creatures. He stared for a long while; for how long, I do not know, as I lost track of all sense and time, as I myself was utterly and helplessly engulfed in the spectacle.

I was suddenly snapped out of my hypnosis when, to my surprise, the man delved into his knapsack to pull out a sketchbook. He began sketching the animal. As if on cue, the guide and I simply positioned ourselves in the background, ceding the spotlight to the rhinoceros. The sickly, feeble rhino was primo uomo of the opera, gently but adamantly singing a glorious solo that only the man could hear. The man paused at certain points to listen to the song, perhaps taking some extra time to bask in its splendor, before getting back to blissfully adding each beautifully and meticulously constructed musical note onto his harmonic, pictorial masterpiece. There I stood, rooted to the spot, not sure of what to do or what to listen for. I was a novice in the world of opera and art.

When the opera ended, the man gingerly stroked the rhino’s head in gratitude and started towards us. “Did you see?” he panted, eyes wild with excitement. “It sang to me. I heard it. This moribund rhino of yours used to be the maestro of his land. He stood aloft in his world, roaming the bush land in authority. But now his horns are weary and weak. He is the setting sun in the horizon.” He proclaimed with animated conviction, “I believe it is my duty to reignite that flame of the setting sun.”

I just gazed, in awe. I managed to ask for his name. “Salvador,” he said. “Salvador Dali.” Who would’ve thought!

“And I suppose you are a painter?” I asked.

“No, I am an artist.”
The Things They Lost

By Julia Haein Mun
Marietta, Georgia
Third Place

Celeste was born with a gift. The fire sifted around her fingers enticingly as her family stared with fascination. The flares reflected off the glowing chandeliers and sparkling glasses on the dinner table.

Her mother laughed, “Good things are to come for us all.”

The Professors came the next week in a lavish fashion, roped in their dark uniforms and gilded buttons. Celeste looked through the back window of the car as they pulled away, the image of her family growing smaller and smaller.

Ergastulum looked conventional. The arcade of columns was a familiar sight as Celeste wove in between them, her fingers tracing the intricate carvings on the stone. The open area was scattered with students, the air stinging with electricity and the whispers of promises. She smiled and stepped out into the sun, belonging here wholly and completely.

Kieran was born with a curse. It was an accident. He hadn’t meant to hurt his sister. But it happened anyway. He hated himself, staring at the trailing burns on her skin. His mother cast him scared looks through her tears, holding his sister in her frail arms.

When the Professors came the next day to take him away to Ergastulum, he could hear her say under breath, “Good riddance.”

He swallowed his hurt and didn’t look over his shoulder when he stepped into the dark car. He already knew his mother wouldn’t be there.

Ergastulum was phenomenal. Growing up in the polluted streets and vulnerable brick buildings, Ergastulum was an absolute dream. But it felt wrong. Kieran could feel the magic surging up under his skin and wanted to choke, thinking about this sister. He stood in the shadows of the surging towers. He didn’t belong here.

They met in a practice duel in preparation for the Series, sets of competitions to determine their military ranks. Mages lived and died fighting. That was their purpose in life, or so the Professors said.

Celeste and Kieran were escorted into the main arena. With quick waves of their hands, they lit ceremonial torches, illuminating the area in flickering light.

“My name is Celeste,” she extended her hand, meeting Kieran in the center.

“Kieran,” he returned quietly. They left for their designated positions without saying another word. They stared at each other from across the arenas; vibrant eyes meeting hollow ones. When the signal blared, they didn’t hesitate. It was silent other than the crackling magic in the arena. One fought without limits; the other with tight control. It was like watching an oncoming storm, the feeling of awe in the face of crushing power. They wove around each other’s spells in a dance, trading each blow for a blow. It ended in a tie as they both collapsed in exhaustion. Both smiled genuinely for the first time in Ergastulum.

A friendship built over the years. They pushed each other to greater heights, encouraging each other to develop their skills and learn. Despite their shared laughs and fond memories of library alcoves, stolen kitchen pastries, and small pranks, Celeste watched Kieran carefully, making sure he would surpass her. Kieran watched Celeste carefully, making sure she wouldn’t stray too far beyond her limits. But the forces of nature were at ease and everything seemed right.

With an uneasy thud, Sierra crumbled onto the ground as Celeste stood above her in victory. The crowd watched in murmurs, unsure of what had just happened. Celeste left the arena without remorse.

Kieran approached her that night. He grabbed her arm and pulled her aside into a dark corridor.

“Celeste, you know you can’t use that kind of magic. Where did you even learn that?”

“Kier, relax. The only rule in the Series is not to kill, and I didn’t kill Sierra. Hex magic isn’t forbidden either, so I didn’t do anything wrong.”

Kieran clenched his jaw. “We’ve talked about this. Magic without limits is dangerous.”

“Limits are meant to be broken, Kier. How else can we improve on what we’re capable of?”

“You aren’t improving anything! You’re cheating. You’re hurting others intentionally. Sierra is done for. She can’t even walk, Celeste!”

“I know, Kier,” she looked
down. “But the medics say they can probably fix her.”

“Probably?” he scoffed in disgust. “How many times are you going to do this? This is just like what happened with Adam. Maya. Rowen. What happens when we fight next? Will you try to kill me too? Get out of your head and start thinking about the people around you, Celeste.”

Celeste hissed, “Get out of my way, Kieran. Why are you always trying to stop me?” Kieran stayed silent. She sighed. “I know what magic means to you.” She clasped his hands. “You use it with honor. You use it to help others. But, Kieran, when you have a gift, you should be able to use it to its full potential!”

“You think magic is a gift? It’s a poison. Look at what it’s done to you! All you do is think of glory.”

Celeste recoiled, letting go. “What do you mean, what has it done to me? You’re the one wasting your magic. Try using it for yourself once.” She left him in the gloom, walking deeper into the dark.

Kieran left Ergastulum a week later. Hiding from the Professors wasn’t the problem. Celeste was. Kieran hated himself for being cowardly, but if she had used her Hex spells during the duel, who else would stop Celeste? She was reckless, and Kieran wouldn’t let anyone else be hurt by her.

Celeste won the Series without an opponent to face. Whispers emerged about his protection of the innocent and his status as an honorable outlaw. The world waited for their inevitable meeting.

Celeste materialized in dark wisps, blending in with the dark of night. She stood on a ledge, overlooking a small town. A rebel group had been using this town as a meeting point and Celeste was there to destroy it. The inhabitants of the town had no idea Celeste was coming. Celeste had no idea Kieran was waiting.

Approaching her on the ledge, Kieran didn’t let her have the advantage. He attacked, fire flashing in his hands. Celeste was nearly thrown off the ledge and retaliated with her Hexes.

It was the same dance all over again. Furious eyes met determined ones. They fought each other with everything they believed in and everything they had. Rain began pouring, the only witness to their fight.

Celeste slipped on the wet soil. Kieran’s lightning struck her and she fell, unable to rise and gasping in pain. Kieran ran over to finish his mission, but as he stared at Celeste, he couldn’t do it. Echoes of his sister’s scars resounded on Celeste’s skin. He was met with the destined fact that he was no better than Celeste. He thought he was doing an honorable deed. But there was no such thing.

He collapsed onto his knees next to her, letting himself sink into the ground. Both breathed unevenly under the elusive sky. Both felt in their souls for the things they lost and would never keep. Both closed their eyes, letting the rain flood over them and wash away their destruction.
The Torrance Creativity Awards Competition for the Visual Arts is now entering its sixth year, and has seen the number of participants and the quality of their submissions increase each year. The visual arts competition asks children between the ages of 8 and 18 to submit any form of 2D or 3D visual art. The types of 2D or 3D visual art that may be submitted includes, without limitation, painting, collage, printmaking, photography, sculpture, ceramics, or other related works. The Torrance Creativity Awards Competition for the Visual Arts asks that families submit an electronic copy of a photograph of their work, which ensures easy publication of the winning entries.

Over the course of the year, the Torrance Creativity Awards Competition for the Visual Arts has received entries from children in North America, South America, Asia, Africa, and Europe, making it a truly international endeavor. Although all media have been represented every year, the focus of the children in any given year varies—some years we see more paintings, other years more photography, and other years more ceramics. Ultimately, however, students submit all types of visual arts media, making the competition intense and powerful. The universality of the Torrance themes used, which change every two years for variety, inspire the young artists to excellence and distinction. As the competition expands into the future, we will continue to see work that is creative, comprehensible, and coherent as children engage with the marvelous themes established by E. Paul Torrance.

Stephen T. Schroth
Coordinator of Visual Arts, International Torrance Legacy Creativity Awards
Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education, Towson University, Towson, Maryland
Visual Arts ~ Ages 8 - 9

First Place

Shinun Oh
Age 9
Wroclaw, Poland
Next Step Forward

JuSeong Park
Age 8
Bielany Wroclawskie, Poland
Sea Sunrise

Second Place

Christopher Jin Chang
Age 9
Norwood, New Jersey
Blockbusters

Seoin Kim
Age 9
Wroclawskie Wroclaw, Poland
Royal Family Breakfast

Singyee Liu
Age 7
Long Grove, Illinois
Hobo Grandma Potato

Third Place

Muhammad Alaa
Age 9
Kingdom of Bahrain
Self-Portrait

William C. Kush
Age 8
Steger, Illinois
Happy Cupcake

Taehun Lee
Age 8
Bielany Wroclawskie, Poland
Spaceship
Next Step Forward

Shinun Oh
Wroclaw, Poland
First Place Tie
Sea Sunrise

JuSeong Park
Bielany Wroclawskie, Poland
First Place Tie
**Blockbusters**

Christopher Jin Chang  
Norwood, New Jersey  
Second Place Tie
Royal Family Breakfast

Seoin Kim
Wroclawskie Wroclaw, Poland
Second Place Tie
**Hobo Grandma Potato**

Singyee Liu  
Long Grove, Illinois  
Second Place Tie
Self-Portrait

Muhammad Alaa
Kingdom of Bahrain
Third Place Tie
Happy Cupcake

William C. Kush
Steger, Illinois
Third Place Tie
Spaceship

Taehun Lee
Bielany Wroclawskie, Poland
Third Place Tie
Visual Arts ~ Ages 10 - 11

First Place
Rachael Run-xin Huang
Age 11
Darien, Connecticut
Chasing Your Dreams

Emma Mason
Age 10
Christchurch, New Zealand
Peacock

Second Place
Nada Mikati
Age 11
Wroclaw, Poland
Butterfly World

Cecilia Nicoli
Age 10
Bielany Wroclawskie, Poland
A New Sunrise

Third Place
Angela A. Deng
Age 11
Lake Forest, Illinois
A Boat
Chasing Your Dreams

Rachael Run-xin Huang
Darien, Connecticut
First Place Tie
Peacock

Emma Mason
Christchurch, New Zealand
First Place Tie
Butterfly World

Nada Mikati
Wroclaw, Poland
Second Place Tie
A New Sunrise

Cecilia Nicoli
Bielany Wroclawskie, Poland
Second Place Tie
A Boat

Angela A. Deng
Lake Forest, Illinois
Third Place
Visual Arts ~ Ages 12 - 13

First Place

Pang Hsien Teng Elody
Age 13
Singapore
*A Universe Without Climate Change*

Sally Seulgi Park
Age 13
Fairfax, Virginia
*Undiscovered Treasure*

Second Place

Greta Renee Franke
Age 13
Tower Lakes, Illinois
*Blossoms of the Geisha*

Da Eun Lee
Age 13
Wroclaw, Poland
The Meeting Hearts

Alyssa Kelly Schulz
Age 12
Mount Prospect, Illinois
*Elephants in the Morning Mist*

Third Place

Sanjna Ganjam
Age 13
Sugar Land, Texas
*Peacock of Life*
A Universe Without Climate Change

Pang Hsien Teng Elody
Singapore
First Place Tie
Undiscovered Treasure

Sally Seulgi Park
Fairfax, Virginia
First Place Tie
**Blossoms of the Geisha**

Greta Renee Franke  
Tower Lakes, Illinois  
Second Place Tie
The Meeting Hearts

Da Eun Lee
Wroclaw, Poland
Second Place Tie
Elephants in the Morning Mist

Alyssa Kelly Schulz
Mount Prospect, Illinois
Second Place Tie
Peacock of Life

Sanjna Ganjam
Sugar Land, Texas
Third Place
Visual Arts ~ Ages 14 - 15

First Place

Haemaru Chung
Age 15
New York, New York
Lucky Bird

Tuyet-Nhi T. Nguyen
Age 15
Gilberts, Illinois
Japanese Geisha

Second Place

Shea Margaret Frawley
Age 15
West Chicago, Illinois
Reach

Third Place

Uttaran Das
Age 14
Kalyan, India
Are Black Holes Gateway to a New Universe?
Lucky Bird

Haemaru Chung
New York, New York
First Place Tie
Japanese Geisha

Tuyet-Nhi T. Nguyen
Gilberts, Illinois
First Place Tie
Reach

Shea Margaret Frawley
West Chicago, Illinois
Second Place
**Are Black Holes Gateway to a New Universe?**

Uttaran Das  
Kalyan, India  
Third Place
Visual Arts ~ Ages 16 - 18

First Place

Emily Yanlei Chu  
Age 16  
Savannah, Georgia  
Duet

Morgan Amber Baldinelli  
Age 16  
Savannah, Georgia  
*Birds of Paradise: Greeting and Farewell*

Second Place

Alex Garnica  
Age 16  
Dalton, Georgia  
*A Reluctant Adventure*

Brandon Heebner  
Age 17  
Savannah, Georgia  
*Star Sign*

Madden Alaphair Palefsky  
Age 17  
Savannah, Georgia  
*Fight Club*

Third Place

Kashta Naeem Dozier-Muhammad  
Age 17  
Savannah, Georgia  
*Father*

Yezu Lee  
Age 17  
Wroclaw, Poland  
*The Narrowest Path in Life*
Duet

Emily Yanlei Chu
Savannah, Georgia
First Place Tie
Birds of Paradise: Greeting and Farewell

Morgan Amber Baldinelli
Savannah, Georgia
First Place Tie
A Reluctant Adventure

Alex Garnica
Dalton, Georgia
Second Place Tie
Star Sign

Brandon Heebner
Savannah, Georgia
Second Place Tie
Fight Club

Madden Alaphair Palefsky
Savannah, Georgia
Second Place Tie
Father

Kashta Naeem Dozier-Muhammad
Savannah, Georgia
Third Place Tie
The Narrowest Path in Life

Yezu Lee
Wroclaw, Poland
Third Place Tie
Photography ~ Ages 8 - 12

**First Place**

Frances Mun Dinh  
Age 8  
Chicago, Illinois  
*A Heart Full of Petals*

**Second Place**

William J. Ee  
Age 10  
Norwood, New Jersey  
*To the Top*

Pia Janaea Tica  
Age 10  
Wheaton, Illinois  
*In the Midst of Hot Smoke*

**Third Place**

Claire W. Goodowens  
Age 9  
Winter Park, Florida  
*Dragon*

Callum Wyer  
Age 9  
Houston, Texas  
*From a Leaf Cutter’s Perspective: Tiny Ants*
A Heart Full of Petals

Frances Mun Dinh
Chicago, Illinois
First Place
To the Top

William J. Ee
Norwood, New Jersey
Second Place Tie
In the Midst of Hot Smoke

Pia Janaea Tica
Wheaton, Illinois
Second Place Tie
Dragon

Claire W. Goodowens
Winter Park, Florida
Third Place Tie
From a Leaf Cutter's Perspective: Tiny Ants

Callum Wyer
Houston, Texas
Third Place Tie
Photography ~ Ages 13 - 16

First Place
Samantha Caasi Tica
Age 15
Wheaton, Illinois
In the Midst of the Stars

Claire Morgan Wagner
Age 16
Darien, Illinois
Pele’s Wrath

Second Place
Hadiya Yousuf
Age 15
New Delhi, India
Journey to Forever
In the Midst of the Stars

Samantha Caasi Tica
Wheaton, Illinois
First Place Tie
Pele’s Wrath

Claire Morgan Wagner
Darien, Illinois
First Place Tie
Journey to Forever

Hadiya Yousuf
New Delhi, India
Second Place
Music Composition

There were 11 submissions to the Torrance Creativity Awards Competition for Music Composition. They came from several U.S. states, Poland, and three states in India. Entries fell into 3 levels: Elementary (up through age 10), Junior/Middle School (ages 11 through 14), and High School (age 15 and up). The submissions covered several genres including compositions for piano, piano and vocal, guitar and vocal, sitar and vocal, musical theater, and orchestra. Several of the participants won high praise for their work from the judges, both in terms of the level of creativity that they represented as well as the technical quality of the compositions.

Comments from judges include the following:

“The structure of the composition took the listener on a ride but then brought the listener back to where the journey began.”

“This is an ambitious composition that works well. It provides great musical descriptions through the use of intriguing orchestration. It took our emotions on many journeys throughout the piece.”

“The lyrics, vamping, piano runs and frills and the key changes employed in this composition are engaging. It is a great, fun example…”

Edwin Selby
Coordinator of Music Composition, International Torrance Legacy Creativity Awards
Senior Associate, Center for Creative Learning, LLC, Branchville, New Jersey
Ages 8-10

First Place

Peyton Nelesen
Age 8
Saratoga, California
Midnight Ride to Winter's Moon

Second Place

Johanna Epstein
Age 10
Roswell, Georgia
You’re a Star for the Night

Ages 11-14

First Place

Luke A. Brossard
Age 14
McPherson, Kansas
The Waves of Light

Ages 15-18

First Place

Hieu Nguyen
Age 17
Malden, Massachusetts
Fantasia

Second Place

Ben Ballmer
Age 16
and
Dani Jean-Baptiste
Age 17
Evanston and Chicago, Illinois
King of Sleaze

Visit www.centerforgifted.org to listen to the winning entries
The Torrance Legacy Creativity Awards Competition for Inventions challenges young inventors to solve problems using the scientific method. Students from ages 8 to 18 years old create original products ranging from enjoyable activities (Arts and Leisure) to playful fun (Toys and Games) to helpful solutions (Science and Engineering). Young inventors attend public, private and/or home schools and submit applications from North America, Europe, Asia and Africa. They begin with a need, develop their concept and design a prototype with detailed instructions and three-dimensional graphic. Applicants select a Torrance Legacy Creative Award theme and submit a 300-500 word description with drawings or electronic images.

A team of qualified judges evaluate applications in each category with a rubric scoring problem-solving skill, real world application, and product presentation. In addition to Torrance Legacy Creative Invention Award recognition, previous invention award recipients have received an academic scholarship, patented an invention, and appeared in local news media.

**Connie Phelps**
Coordinator of Inventions, International Torrance Legacy Creativity Awards
Director of Gifted Education and Great Plains Center for Gifted Students, Emporia State University
Emporia, Kansas
Ages 8-12

First Place
Callum Wyer
Age 9
Houston, Texas
*BUILD IT! A S.T.E.M. Challenge Game*

Second Place
Dora Ivkovich
Age 12
Okemos, Michigan
*TRADE TROTTERS*

Third Place
Cassidy Kao
Age 10
Glendale, California
*Biome Sweet Biome*

Ages 13-14

First Place
Varun Jha
Age 14
Mumbai, India
“Infrared Remote Control Car”

Second Place
S. Pon Balaji
Age 13
Virudhunagar, India
*Salvage the Sphere*

Third Place
Jinghan Xie
Age 13
Singapore
“Inverted World”

Esther-J Yoong
Age 13
Singapore
“Fearing to Wet Their Paws”
BUILD IT! A S.T.E.M. Challenge Game

By Callum Wyer
Houston, Texas
First Place, Ages 8-12

If you want an awesome game to play (that’s also educational) BUILD IT! is perfect for you! My school always does a S.T.E.M. Friday each week where we get to build, invent, and explore different ideas from science, technology, engineering, and math…or S.T.E.M. I thought that creating a game where you, or your friends, can challenge each other to do S.T.E.M. would be interesting. That’s the idea behind my BUILD IT! game.

For BUILD IT! you or your team select a challenge card, either EASY or HARD. Read the instructions on the card and follow what it says to do. Each card will give you a specific task or challenge to complete, what materials from the box you are allowed to use for that challenge, and a time limit to complete the challenge. Based on what the challenge card says, you (or your team) can earn points by either: 1) successfully completing the challenge in the given amount of time stated on the card, or 2) by winning against the other team in a race or contest specified by the challenge card. The first person, or team, to reach six points, wins!

If you just want to have fun building and inventing on your own, BUILD IT! is a great game. Or get some friends, classmates, or family members together for a whole other fun experience. When playing BUILD IT! in teams, it encourages teamwork, sharing of ideas, creativity, and cooperation. BUILD IT! is best for ages 7 and up. Teachers will also love BUILD IT! as it can be used in the classroom. Once the materials and supplies in the game box are used, they are easily replaced by going to your local store.

I invited a few of my friends over to test out my BUILD IT! game for the first time. We had an absolute blast, and my friends didn’t want to leave—they wanted to keep playing!

Example of challenge cards:

**CHALLENGE: EASY**

You forgot to bring your fishing pole on your camping trip. In your backpack, you have 3 craft sticks, 4 paper clips, 4 rubber bands, 1 craft roll, string, 1 pencil, and 1 clothes pin. Your team must design and build a working fishing pole that can reel in a fish.

You have 20 minutes to complete the challenge. If your team successfully completes the challenge, they earn 1 point.

**BUILD IT! Game Box and Contents**

Game contents include:
- 19 challenge cards
- small Dixie cups and red plastic cups
- twine and string
- marbles
- craft sticks
- rubber bands
- paper clips
- drinking straws
- pipe straws
- 2 rolls of tape
- craft rolls
- pencils
- clothes pins
- plastic spoons
- construction paper
- paper fasteners
- wooden spools
- plastic frogs
- tape measure
- ruler
- digital timer

Items needed from home (with adult supervision)
- scissors
TRADE TROTTERS

Dora Ivkovich
Okemos, Michigan
Second Place, Ages 8-12

TRADE TROTTERS is a board game for two to eight players, ages 8 to 128. Like ancient traders, players travel among ancient markets (Rome, Egypt, Persia, India, China). Players encounter challenges, trade, and collect goods sold at these markets (olive oil, papyrus, barley, spices, silk). The game helps players appreciate the complexity of trading, use logical reasoning, and get familiar with ancient civilizations and trading.

The game box contains the board, 1 die, 8 game pieces, 5 price indicators, goal cards, news cards, and the ledger pad. Before the game starts, each player places own game piece on one of the five markets and draws a goal card (not revealed to other players until the end). The goal of the game is to collect the quantities of goods specified on the player’s goal card (e.g., 512 amphorae of olive oil or 512 bolts of silk). The winner is the first player to achieve the goal specified on the player’s goal card.

Players move by rolling the die and advancing accordingly. They follow the trade routes on the map leading from one market to another market of their choice. Upon reaching a market, the player may trade the goods at market prices before rolling the die. The home good is traded at half price at the home market (e.g., olive oil in Rome). Players do not trade with each other, but with the imaginary traders in the local market. Players may pass through without stopping in the market; players who intend to trade in the market with their next turn have to stop in the market. When leaving one market, the player must continue toward the next market of choice (no turning around).

On their way, players encounter three types of special spaces. A player stopping on a fortune space receives money (amount determined by another die roll). A player stopping on an oracle field has to pay the oracle (amount to be determined by another die roll). If a player does not have enough money to pay the oracle, the player must sell some goods at half the current market prices to make full payment (players who cannot pay the oracle in full forfeit the game). A player stopping on a news space turns around the top news card, revealing an event (e.g., a locust invasion in Egypt) that changes the prices of the goods. The first player fulfilling the goal from the player’s goal card is the winner. Other players are scored based on the shortfall to achieve their respective goals.

TRADE TROTTERS features asymmetric information because players do not know the other players’ goal cards until the end of the game. The game does not require total domination to win the game. It not a zero-sum game because doing well does not rely on defeating other in direct confrontation. Most importantly, TRADE TROTTERS is FUN TO PLAY!
Biome Sweet Biome

By Cassidy Kao
Glendale, California
Third Place, Ages 8-12

Do you think you are an expert in biomes? Let's put that to the test and see if you can race back HOME first.

Are you just starting out on learning journey about the biomes of our amazing Earth? Well, Biome Sweet Biome is the right game for you. You will have fun going around the world and learning about five types of biomes: Tundra, Aquatic, Forest, Desert, and Grasslands.

After racing around the biomes, you’ll find your biome is indeed a sweet biome.

OBJECT: The first player to get home is the winner.

GAME SETUP: Open the game board and place it on a table. Take out the characters and the cards. Stand the characters up by folding backwards on the dotted lines.

CONTENT: One game board. Five characters. One instruction card, 50 cards for each biome, 250 cards in total.

GAME PLAY: The youngest player gets to go first. The first player chooses a character representing the biome of his choice. The player on the right of the first player will pick a card from the biome of the first player’s character and read the question on the card to the first player. The correct answer is on the card in red. If the first player answers the question correctly, he gets to move ahead the number of spaces listed on the bottom right corner of the card. If he gets it wrong, the character stays put. It doesn’t matter if the first player gets it right or wrong, the player that read the card will go next. The same process will happen (i.e., the player on the right of the second player will read the question on the card to the second player). If there are three players, then the first player will read the card to the third player. Each player gets a card from the character's biome until he answers a question correctly and moves off of the starting square. After that, he must answer questions from the biome that corresponds to the color of the square his character lands on. For example, if the square the player landed on is blue, he’d have to get a question from the Aquatic biome. The legend matching each biome to its color can be found at the bottom of the game board.
Infrared Remote Control Car

Varun Jha
Mumbai, India
First Place, Ages 13-14

The project I have made is an infrared RC car. It can be controlled by virtually any kind of IR remote such as the remote of our TV. It uses the infrared light to receive instructions. The materials I have used are:

- Arduino uno
- Breadboard
- 100 rpm DC motor
- IR receiver
- L293D motor driver IC
- Jumper wires
- Chassis and wheels
- 9V batteries
- Battery clips.

Arduino is a microcontroller. We can consider it to be a miniature computer. It has the instructions which the RC car has to follow. The remote emits infrared light captured by the IR receiver. The IR light is then interpreted by arduino which has a hexadecimal coding to interpret it. There are separate sets of instructions for the motor driver and the remote. Once the instructions have been interpreted by the Arduino, they are sent to the motor driver. Then the motor driver relays the instructions to the motors. Once the motors receive the instructions, they move accordingly, that is forward, backward, left, and right.

IR light is a good medium for transmission as it is cheap yet effective. I used 100 rpm DC motors, but one can also use motors with 150 rpm. The higher rpm provides more speed. Similarly, one can also use TSOP1738 IR receiver. I used two motors on the back wheels and dummies on the front wheels. The coding of the car is pretty simple. The car uses three 9V batteries as more batteries can damage the motor driver. This RC car is fun to play with!
Salvage the Sphere

S. Pon Balaji
Viruohunagar, India
Second Place, Ages 13-14

**Moksha patamu** is a classical children's board game. The game was perhaps invented by Hindu spiritual teachers to teach children about the effects of good deeds and bad deeds.

The ladders represent the good virtues, and the snakes represent bad virtues.

- Moral of the game is that a person attains salvation (moksha) faster by doing good deeds and by bad virtues one took lower forms of life (Patamu).

- Number of ladders are less than the number of snakes to remind people that treading the path of good is very difficult as compared to committing sins. Presumably the number 100 represents moksha (salvation).

- *Salvage the Sphere* would be a good way to teach moral and ethical values to children. The game has remained a firm family favourite over the years in India, with many themed variations.

- With traditional values embedded in my game, the salvation for humans of this age is to leave behind the "green value" to our future generations.

- *Salvage the Sphere* is board game that reminds players of the ill effects of the pollution caused to Mother Earth and to instill the good deeds to make it a livable planet.

- The game is an enlightening entertainment that creates joy over the completion of the board to attain the salvation—"The Green Earth."
Playing the Game

- It is recommended to play this dice game with 4 to 5 players.
- Each player starts at one end of the game board and rolls the dice to move.
- The minimum dice roll is 1 and the maximum is 6.
- When the dice are rolled, the player must draw the card corresponding to the face of the dice.
- The player then moves the specified number of spaces on the board and draws another card.
- All dice rolls should be recorded and used for the total score.

Example:
- If a player rolls a 3, they move 3 spaces to the right.
- They then draw a card and perform the corresponding action.

Bonuses:
- If a player reaches the ‘GO’ space, they move 1 space to the right.
- If a player rolls a 6, they move 2 spaces to the right.
- If a player rolls a 4, they move 3 spaces to the right.

Penalties:
- If a player rolls a 1, they move 1 space to the left.
- If a player rolls a 2, they move 2 spaces to the left.
- If a player rolls a 3, they move 3 spaces to the left.

Recycling Action:
- When a player lands on the ‘Recycling’ space, they must draw a card and perform the corresponding action.
- If the card says ‘Recycling’, the player must pick up trash from the board and place it on the ‘Trash’ space.
- The player then moves 1 space to the right and draws another card.

End Game:
- The game is won by the first player to reach the ‘GO’ space and collect all the trash from the board.

Instructions:
- Let's practice good habits!
- Pick up trash and put it in the ‘Trash’ space.
- Remember, we all have a role in keeping our environment clean.

Deanery:
- St. John’s
- Rev. Dr. John A. Brown
- 30, Marce Princess Road
- 30, Ughfughy Road
- 30, Ughfughy Road
- 30, Ughfughy Road
Inverted World

Jinghan Xie
Singapore
Third Place Tie, Ages 13-14

Inspiration

My interpretation of the theme, “Who Would've Thought,” is something opposite, thus I designed a toy that has been turned the other way. It illustrates a person in an upside down house that has been turned into a boat. My inspiration came from pictures of upside down houses in magazines. The shape of the roof caught my eye. It was triangular, which allowed the house to rock, so the upside down house leans to one side for support. This led me to think: What if the house was on water? The triangular shape was similar to that of a boat, inspiring me to come up with the idea of an upside down house sailing on the sea.

Features that I put thought into

A boat rocks while moving on water, so I designed the toy to move sideways. To make it look as if it came from a fantasy world, I used black marker to outline the toy, just like cartoon characters. On the box holding the mechanism, I painted a few crabs on the box with a carefree and bored expression on their faces to show that they are rather detached from our life—they neither feel what we feel; they do not know what we are thinking. The upside down house would not be a horror to them, instead merely something that the humans have created. The carefree expression on the crabs creates contrast compared with the human in house who is enjoying himself at this exceptional idea. To give the sea a tranquil feel, I decided to give it a cold colour. On the other hand, I wanted the house to appear joyful as it was supposed to be an interesting adventure for the inhabitant. To create contrast and catch attention, I decided to use complementary colours, orange and blue.

Design and Planning

In the first few stages of designing, I drew a boat in order to observe its base in greater detail, and I realised that most boats have a curved base. While designing, I thought: How do humans move around in an upside down house? Would the furniture be stuck to the top of the house? As it would be uncomfortable and thus unlikely for a human to walk upside down, I decided to make the inside of the house upright. From the inside, the house appears normal. But on the outside, the house is upside down. Ironic, isn’t it?
Fearing to Wet Their Paws

Esther-J Yoong
Singapore
Third Place Tie Ages 13-14

“*All cats love to fish but fear to wet their paws.*”

After a suspiciously uncanny drowning incident, a cat-boy finds himself in a different world—a world where all the fish—fish he barely ever notices for anything other than his next meal—are much, much larger and could easily overpower him. Being overly accustomed to his regular capacity to eat them—“being the big fish in his pond”—might he form an unbreakable bond with one of them, despite his frustration and trauma at his sudden marginalization…?

This toy may be used to encourage anyone who has felt out of or detached from his/her surroundings or who has felt reluctance to conform to his/her situation….

This toy was also inspired by these proverbs:

1. “All cats love fish but fear to wet their paws” (not having the courage to take a risk to obtain something desired)
2. “A small fish in a big pond” (being the low man on the totem pole)
3. “A fish out of water” (feeling uncomfortable/reluctant about a situation one is in)

In addition, cats are commonly known for having fish in their diets. What if the situation was reversed, somehow?

The boy in question here takes the design of a neko boy, a common design in modern Japanese anime and manga. In contrast, the fish are koi, a species of fish frequently depicted in East Asian paintings, often dating back hundreds of years. Moreover, in Japan and China, koi traditionally symbolise prosperity, friendship, and love. The unique melding of old and new culture in this product design is the aim (as well as a common sight in the inventor’s native Singapore).

The colour palette used in the design of this toy features a complementary scheme of warm reddish-orange and cool blue colours commonly used in media to portray polar opposites. It is hoped that the use of these colours is able to reflect the feelings of said cat-boy protagonist, being different but harmonizing in the setting.
First Place

Kylie Luk
Age 12
Singapore
“French Fry Artist”

Second Place

Olivia Jane Pixton
Age 12
Shawnee, Kansas
“Stresscuber”

Claire Goodowens and Liam Goodowens
Ages 9 and 11
Winter Park, Florida
“The Game Exchange Box”

Third Place

Natalie Peterson
Age 12
Shawnee, Kansas
“Cap Catcher”
French Fry Artist

Kylie Luk
Singapore
First Place

My invention is a fun version of a box of French fries, each fry decorated with a French beret or moustache and the box itself holding a palette and paintbrush (see photos). My parents used to take us to McDonald’s once in a while. As children, we would play with our food. My father would dip a fry in ketchup and speak in a funny French accent, pretending the fry was talking to us before unexpectedly biting its “head” off. My sister and I would burst out laughing, then do the same to our serving of fries. We grew up watching movies and dreaming of going to places like Paris. We would try to paint the streets of Paris based on some cliché movie scenes. I really treasure such memories, and I decided to combine a few things we loved doing together into one simple invention. I put thought into giving my invention a happy and cheerful feeling that can lighten people’s moods.

The box is painted with the strong colours of the French flag and with silhouettes of the streets of Paris, as in movies, including a table and chair from an outdoor cafe. In this busy world, people are often too stressed working or studying to sit down and enjoy life.

My invention has four moving parts. The two arms of the invention wave and two French fries move up and down. I wanted to make the fries seem lively and childlike, hence the jumping up and down. For the parts to move, I have attached strings onto the end of each part. A motor inside the box has a rotating handle which pulls the strings downward and releases them again, allowing the parts to move. For the two fries, rubber bands were attached so that the fries would be pulled down by the motor and bounce back up!
Stresscuber
By Olivia Jane Pixton
Shawnee, Kansas
Second Place Tie

The Stresscuber is based on the idea of the stress ball, except it has a different concept for its use. This product is in the shape of a medium sized cube. The cube acts as a die with different numbers on each side ranging from one to six (just like a regular die). There is a box of nine cards players can randomly choose from. Once picking a random card from the pile, you can look at it and follow its directions. These cards have different exercises that essentially relieve stress. Some cards may tell you to name something you are thankful for. Other cards in the box may tell you to take deep breaths or to go on a walk. A certain card in the box is to take a selfie. This is because when you take a selfie you smile. When you smile it releases chemicals into your brain that give you a more positive attitude. There are many other cards. Like a stress ball the Stresscuber helps relieve stress, but this cube does it in a different way. You can use the Stresscuber as an activity to do when you are feeling angry or down.

Directions for Use: First, you can pick a card from the box. Roll the cube and see what number it lands on. The number you roll determines how much you do of the activity on the card. For example, if you picked a gratitude card where you name what you are thankful for and roll a six, you will name six things you are thankful for. If you pick a card like listening to music, you can choose to listen to music for the number of minutes you roll or to listen to that number of songs. If you picked a card that tells you to read a book and roll a four, you may choose to read four sentences, paragraphs, or pages—it’s up to you. This product worked for me; let’s see if it works for you!
The Game Exchange Box

By Claire Goodowens and Liam Goodowens
Winter Park, Florida
Second Place Tie

Our invention fosters civic pride, neighborhood communication and happiness. The invention began when Lily the dog was shot by a neighbor on our street. We brainstormed how to help our neighborhood, and we received a $500 grant from Vision Winter Park to bring our project to life. We also partnered with Cool Stuff Games Inc. We met with the city of Winter Park, Florida, to begin our partnership by hosting a citywide game night as well as repurposing news bins donated by the city as “Game Exchange Boxes.” The original boxes for the program are repurposed newspaper machines donated by the city of Winter Park in conjunction with the Vision Winter Park grant. We dedicated our “Neighborhood Box” at Phelps Park to symbolize good will and collaboration; the “Vision Box” at the Winter Park Train Station for higher visibility, and the “Community Box” at the Winter Park Public Library to promote equal opportunity of access for all. In January 2016, we sponsored our “First Annual Family Game Night” and gave a “State of the Game” address to the Mayor and City Commissioners. We still visit our games on a weekly basis to ensure they are well maintained. Also, we curate donated games for appropriateness and completeness.

Visit our homepage at www.gameexchangebox.org or find us on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/Game-Exchange-Box-185459808455393/?fref=ts&ref=br_tf.
The Cap Catcher is an invention that can change the lives of lake lovers everywhere. It is designed to prevent the user’s hat from blowing into the water while on a boat or jet ski ride. I got this idea while I was on a boat ride with my family. My hat blew off, and I knew there had to be a way to fix the problem. The Cap Catcher is an easy and comfortable way to do this.

Each of the three designs allow the user’s hat to stay out of the water in a different way. The first option (see photo), for girls, is made from a section of strap material with two small pieces of Velcro at each end. One end of the material uses Velcro to wrap around the back of the hat. The other end wraps around a swimsuit or tank top strap. Now when the hat blows off, it stays with the user. Another design, which is also for girls, uses a piece of ribbon, Velcro, and an alligator clip. The end with Velcro attaches around a swimsuit or tank top strap while the alligator clip attaches to the hat. The last option, for boys, wraps loosely around the user’s neck and has a loop of Velcro to attach the hat. This way the invention works even if the user isn’t wearing a shirt. All three of the options work for different people in a similar way.

The Cap Catcher is an important invention for anyone who likes boating because a person can wear a hat without fear that it will get lost in the water. Every year thousands of hats make their way to the bottom of lakes and oceans all over the world. This product will help that number go down. The Cap Catcher will make life on the water easier.
Ages 12-13
First Place
Siddhima Varyambat
Age 12
Mumbai, India
“Alcofreeze”

Ages 14-16
First Place
Shiloh S. Curtis
Age 16
Sunnyvale, California
“Enabling Situational Awareness of a Hat-Based Hands-Free Navigational Aid for the Visually Impaired”

Second Place
Team Name: Triple T
Team Members: Haemaru Chung, Said Gulcelik, Donovan Shin, Owen Heffer-ren-Harkless, Tyler Masuyama, Alexander Sheen, Andrew Ting, and Umar Ali
Age 15
New York, New York
“Wet Chemical Fire Suppression System for Apartment Kitchens”

Third Place
Akshobh S. Kulkarni
Age 14
Kalyan, India
“MilkBot”

Ages 17-18
First Place
Tristan Ross Myers
Age 17
Topeka, Kansas
“Modular Bicycle Water Pump”

Second Place
Richael Shola Makinde
Age 18
Accra, Ghana
“The Self-Heating Canned Food”
Alcofreeze

Siddhima Varyambat
Mumbai, India
First Place, Ages 12-13

From the advent of the human species, we have always been the curious kind. Our physical attributes did indeed change to adapt, but we were never the ones to submit everything to the hands of fate, instead we invented things to help us as times changed. From the discover of fire to the invention of 3D printers, we have always found a way to overcome our problems using our mental prowess. To overcome one such problem, i.e., drink and drive casualties, I’ve come up the idea of “Alcofreeze.”

Drunk driving is a serious problem that continues to take thousands of lives each year. A death from drunk driving does not only affect the victim, but it affects everyone around them. One night, one drink, one mistake is all it takes for drunk driving to take its toll.

I’ve come up with a device that uses the basic principles of a breathalyzer for estimating blood alcohol content (BAC) from a breath sample and a GSM Shield. The device is like Ignition Interlock Devices (IID), the only difference being that the device will send a message to a previously decided list of numbers and a taxi service helpline, while simultaneously recording a message on the “100” helpline using the GSM Shield. Also the mechanism will be a thousand times simpler as I’ve used Arduino UNO. The sensor used would be an MQ-3 Alcohol Sensor connected to the analog pins of the Arduino UNO. The model I’ve made is a mock representation of what I thought could be the device. The red LED blinks when the sensor senses alcohol; the green LED blinks when it’s neutral, and the switching off of the yellow LED signifies the breaking off of the circuit.

When a user exhales into a breathalyzer, any ethanol present in the breath is oxidized to acetic acid at the anode:

$$\text{CH}_3\text{CH}_2\text{OH}(g) + \text{H}_2\text{O}(l) \rightarrow \text{CH}_3\text{CO}_2\text{H}(l) + 4\text{H}^+(aq) + 4e^-$$

At the cathode, atmospheric oxygen is reduced:

$$\text{O}_2(g) + 4\text{H}^+(aq) + 4e^- \rightarrow 2\text{H}_2\text{O}(l)$$

The overall reaction is the oxidation of ethanol to acetic acid and water:

$$\text{CH}_3\text{CH}_2\text{OH}(l) + \text{O}_2(g) \rightarrow \text{CH}_3\text{COOH}(l) + \text{H}_2\text{O}(l)$$

The electric current produced by this reaction is measured by a microprocessor and displayed as an approximation of overall blood alcohol content (BAC) by the Alcofreeze.

Public breathalyzers are a popular method for consumers to test themselves at the source of alcohol consumption, in pubs, bars, restaurants, charities, weddings and all types of licensed events, and can prevent the consumer from causing any blunder while under the influence of alcohol.

The Alcofreeze, by adding automatic contacting of a taxi helpline and friends/family to a breathalyzer, will not only stop the untimely death of innocents but will also help intoxicated individuals reach their home safely.
Hat-Based Hands-Free Navigational Aid (H-NAV)

Shiloh S. Curtis
Sunnyvale, California
First Place, Ages 14-16

Close your eyes and try to walk in an unfamiliar environment. It is a confusing, disorienting, and difficult experience. The visually impaired face this situation every minute they are awake. There are an estimated 285 million legally blind or low vision people worldwide, according to the World Health Organization.

Commercially available obstacle avoidance aids for the visually impaired (such as white canes and guide dogs) do not detect head and torso level obstacles (such as tree branches), are cumbersome, can be expensive, and are not hands-free. As a blind friend of mine says: “When you go blind, you lose two eyes and one hand.”

To answer this need, I designed a haptic navigational aid for the visually impaired or H-NAV (US Patent 61/959,215 pending, Fig. 1). This hat has a laser distance sensor (similar to those on self-driving cars, Fig. 2) mounted on top of it to sense obstacles and an array of vibrating motors (such as those in cell phones, Fig. 3) inside the hatband to alert the user to the presence and direction of obstacles. A slider allows the user to adjust the motors’ vibration strength. It is controlled by rigid and flexible circuit boards that I designed and programmed. In tests, my second prototype effectively helped blindfolded users perform basic navigational tasks such as walking through doorways, alongside walls, and through crowds with a 90% average success rate on all tasks (Fig. 4).

I then created my third prototype, which implemented major engineering revisions based on the feedback from the testing of my second design (Figs. 5-8). The next step is testing on a statistically significant sample of visually impaired beta users. The Bill of Materials for my third prototype, based on 1000 units, has an estimated cost of $90-$150 per unit.

My effective and affordable invention could significantly improve the lives of the 285 million visually impaired by enabling them to be safer and more independent. In fact, a blind rehabilitation specialist at the Veterans Administration is very excited about the H-NAV. The specialist is a member of a private organization for the blind, and this organization has also expressed interest in testing the H-NAV.

To move beyond testing and into production, more funding will be needed. A venture capitalist has said he is supportive of the H-NAV, so I am hopeful that one day the H-NAV will be available to the visually impaired worldwide.
IIAPTIC NAVIGATIONAL AID FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED (H-NAV)

FIG. 1: FINISHED H-NAV

FIG. 2: PHASE DIFFERENCE LASER DISTANCE SCANNER

FIG. 3: ERM SCHEDULING SYSTEM

Obstacles within 0.25 m
Obstacle within 0.5 m
Obstacle within 1 m
Obstacle within 2 m
No obstacle or obstacle farther than 2 m
FIG. 4: SUCCESS RATE BY TEST

FIG. 5: MAIN PRINTED CIRCUIT BOARD

FIG. 6: USER INTERFACE PRINTED CIRCUIT BOARD

FIG. 7: FLEXIBLE PRINTED CIRCUIT BOARD
FIG. 8: MAIN AND FLEXIBLE PRINTED CIRCUIT BOARD SCHEMATICS
Wet Chemical Fire Suppression System for Apartment Kitchens

Team Name: Triple T
Team Members: Haemaru Chung, Sadi Gulcelik, Donovan Shin, Owen Hefferren-Harkless, Tyler Masuyama, Alexander Sheen, Andrew Ting, Umar Ali
New York, New York
Second Place, Ages 14-16

Our project idea is to create a fire suppression system that can be installed individually in each apartment’s kitchen. Unlike the existing suppression systems used in restaurants, our system is smaller and simpler, but just as effective. Our system is specifically designed to target kitchen and oil fires. The system’s main components are a refillable and removable tank filled with wet chemical fire extinguisher, two sprinkler heads connected by pipes to the tank, and several sensors.

Kitchen appliances have been reported to be involved in 45% of home fires, and the most common types of kitchen fires are oil fires. Taking this into account, our team decided to use wet chemicals in our suppression system as wet chemicals specifically target Class K Fires (fires caused by cooking). Wet chemicals interact chemically with burning oils and form a soapy film with the top layer of the oil, quickly putting out the fire. In addition, web chemical extinguishers prevent oil fires from spreading by enveloping the oils.

As our suppression system has a limited number of extinguishers, it will need to be activated immediately when the fire starts. To do this, a combination of fixed heat detectors, rate-of-rise heat detectors, and motion detectors will be attached to the ceiling. The motion detector will ensure that if there is someone in the kitchen, the system will not activate even when the heat detectors activate. The reasoning behind this is that if a kitchen fire is small enough and there is someone in the kitchen who can easily put it out, it is unnecessary for the system to put out the fire. Rate-of-rise heat detectors respond to rapid rise in temperature ranging from 12-15 degrees Fahrenheit per minute. Since our system requires a quick response, using this type of detector is an ideal solution. The detector will be set to trigger the fire suppression system only when a rapid increase in temperature, well above the speed that one might expect a room to heat up upon turning on a heater, occurs. As rate-of-rise detectors do not detect slowly developing fires that release little energy at a time, however, we will use a fixed heat detector as a safety measure. Therefore, if either heat detector goes off, the fixed heat detector, along with the motion detector, will trigger an alarm. With both sensors working together, the system is designed not to be triggered under false circumstances.

The plan for our system consists of 1 inch diameter PVC pipes, a 3 liter refillable tank, and two sprinkler heads that will disperse the wet chemical as a mist. A section of piping that splits the flow of wet chemical into 2 pipes will be attached to the tank. The rest of the pipe system will be broken into sections of straight or curved pipes that can be fitted to match the configuration of the kitchen. In this way, the sprinkler heads will be able to be placed directly above the stove and oven of each individual kitchen.
1) Approximately 7.25 x 6.5 x 9.5 inch (L x W x H) container that opens by a handle and cover on the front

2) Approximately 6 x 4 x 8 inch (L x W x H) removable & refillable wet chemical extinguisher tank

3) PVC Pipe Segments

4) Pipe Straps/ Extensions
Close Up of Removable & Refillable 3 liter Wet Chemical Tank
(Outer container attached to wall not pictured)

can remove tank by unscrewing circular pipe connector

Close Up of PVC Pipe Connector

pipe splits into two sections
Ceiling Plan for Detectors

motion detector will be attached to the middle of the ceiling

heat detectors will be attached above stove or oven in accordance to individual kitchen
MilkBot

Akshobh S. Kulkarni
Kalyan, India
Third Place, Ages 14-16

This product is viable for markets similar to India where the daily milk is delivered in loose packets or in vessels.

In all parts of India, someone in the house has to get up very early to take milk from the milkman gives the milk in loose packets or vessels provided by the customer.

Through this invention, I aim to:

• Make the consumer’s life easier
• Reduce his/her effort

What does the MilkBot do?

The Milkbot receives milk for you in the morning, refrigerates it, and, when you wake up, it makes Coffee, Tea, or any other milk-based beverage and delivers it to your bedside.

Working of the MilkBot

Every morning, the milkman would pour fresh milk into an opening in your door. The milk would first be filtered through a series of differently sized nets and then funneled down to a Refrigeration Unit. This unit would keep the milk cool. The refrigeration unit would be electrically connected to an Alarm Clock in your bedroom. When the alarm went off, it would send an electrical signal to the refrigeration unit to release some amount of the milk (set by the user). This milk would be pumped to a Beverage Machine through another small pipe. The machine would prepare the beverage of choice and pour it into a Cup. The cup would be present on a tray supported by a Hydraulic Platform. This platform would be situated on a Line Following Robot. Once the beverage had been poured into the cup, the Hydraulic Platform would lower itself and the whole thing would go ahead guided by lines drawn on the floor and ultimately reach your bedside. It would then raise itself to your level. Thus you could start your day with a beverage you like without getting up from your bed!
Modular Bicycle Water Pump

Tristan Ross Myers
Topeka, Kansas
First Place, Ages 17-18

Water is an essential resource for human life, and its purity and availability heavily impact quality of life in communities around the world. If the only consistent source of water available to a group of people is both remote and contaminated, they must expend a considerable amount of time transporting and purifying it, taking time and resources away from other pursuits such as agriculture, construction, and education. Increasing the quantity and quality of readily-accessed water supplies would massively improve quality of life for communities lacking a safe and stable source of water and have secondary benefits in agriculture and sanitation. My invention is designed to aid in the transportation, filtration, and utilization of water.

I call my invention the “Modular Bicycle Water Pump.” The primary unit of the system is the bicycle-powered water pump, which can be used by itself or in conjunction with other modules, including a hose, a showering system, irrigation equipment, and a water filter. The pump module will consist of a bicycle and mechanical water pump configured together so that pedaling the bike will power the pump. Although complications may arise from integrating salvaged or recycled equipment into the design, each module will ultimately be designed to be as simple and flexible as possible for ease of production and maintenance. The hose module will consist of rugged tubing that can be used to either pull water from a distant source (such as a well or tank) or transport it somewhere else. Any filtration module would likely have the advantage of being both efficient and reusable; most water purification systems in common use are either convenient but consumable (purification tablets or other chemicals), or reusable but ineffective (charcoal or cloth filters), although product quality may vary. The shower unit will help with sanitation by using water in a more efficient way than taking a bath would. The system I envision will be modular so that any part can be connected to the water pump or replaced as needed (just as a cordless drill can hold a variety of drill bits).

Although “bicycle-powered water pumps” have been constructed before, most of the examples and designs available are DIY projects that do not incorporate additional functionality with separate modules that could be applied in a real-world setting. Furthermore, the simplicity and flexibility of my system mean that it could be used in situations where sources of clean water might already be readily available; for example, campers could use the system to supplement their water supplies, enabling them to take less water with them at the outset of their journey.
Self-Heating Canned Food

Richeal Shola Makinde
Accra, Ghana
Second Place, Ages 17-18

This invention, as simple as it seems, has never been designed before.

It always seemed that I would never be able to heat my canned food without an oven or stove…now, boarding students all over the world will be able to do something I didn’t have the chance to do.

This invention was once an idea which took me more than a month to develop.

At first, the main idea was to invent something that could be heated by placing it in water. But then I asked myself, “What if there was no water…in the case of a person stranded in a desert?” This is what inspired the other three designs, which use joule heating effect, electrolysis, and electromagnetism.

For the one using the concept of joule heating effect, its dielectric is Strontium titanate since its dielectric constant is approximately 250. I calculated the heat energy produced per second using 15volts of electricity and I obtained approximately 10 mega-joules per second (10 megawatts). The nichrome coil must be long in order to increase its resistance as the electric current passes through it, thereby increasing heat energy produced.

The one using electrolysis uses Rubidium Fluoride (RbF) as its electrolyte. I chose RbF because it is very soluble and Rubidium ions easily lose electrons whilst Fluorine easily gains electrons…creating a large current. The steel can’s resistance will produce heat energy, which will heat the contents of the can as the current passes through it.

The one using electromagnetism will have its wire made of copper since it has a high electric conductivity. The wriggling of the wire will produce a change in magnetic flux linkage leading to the production of current. This current will produce heat on the underside of the can, which will heat up the contents of the can.

This design’s can-stand will be plastic simply because the change in magnetic flux linkage will induce a flow of current in the can-stand if it is a metal.

Well, I may have not had the chance to use my invention when I was in a boarding school, but I will be ecstatic to see others use it. Thank you.
Index

Alaa, Muhammad 76, 82
Ali, Nusaybah Aisha 8, 14-15
Ali, Umar 149, 156-159
Balaji, S. Pon 127, 136-137
Baldinelli, Morgan Amber front cover, 103, 105
Ballmer, Ben 123
Bayley, Pieta Jan Mackle 20-21
Boyer, Emily Cecilia 20, 44-45
Brossard, Luke A. 123
Brumblay, Codou Ndao 8, 10
Caughley, Bella Faith 50, 53
Chan, Angelina G. 20, 26
Chang, Christopher Jin front cover, 76, 79
Chong, Calista 64, 71
Chu, Emily Yanlei 103-104
Chung, Haemaru front cover, 50, 58, 98-99, 149, 156-159
Curtis, Shiloh S. 149, 152-155
Das, Uttaran 98, 102
DeJarnette, Phaedra N. 63, 68
Deng, Angela A. 85, 90
Dozier-Muhammad, Kashta Naeem 103, 109
Dudney, Owen Alexander 20, 24
Dutkanych, Jacqueline 64, 67
Ee, William J. 111, 113
Elody, Pang Hsien Teng front cover, 91-92
Epstein, Johanna 123
Franke, Greta Renee 50, 54, 91, 94
Frawley, Shea Margaret front cover, 98, 101
Frederick, Sydney Therese 50, 55
Ganjam, Sanjna front cover, 91, 97
Garnica, Alex 103, 106
Gawedzki, Isabelle Miriam 50-51
Goodovens, Claire W. 111, 115, 143, 146
Goodovens, Liam M. 20, 22-23, 143, 146
Gooi, Jaime 50, 54
Gulcelik, Sadi 149, 156-159
Guzman, Ella Day 8, 11, 17-18
Han, Jimin 64, 72
Hasan, Hamza 8, 18-19
Heebner, Brandon front cover, 103, 107
Hefferron-Harkless, Owen 149, 156-159
Hoe, Joel Kai-En 50, 56
Huang, Jeffrey J. 20, 46-47
Huang, Rachael Run-xin front cover, 85-86
Ivkovich, Dora 20, 27, 36-37, 127, 130-131
Jean-Baptiste, Dani 123
Jha, Varun 127, 134-135
Jo, Joonho 64, 69
Johanes, Alesha 50, 52
Kao, Cassidy 127, 132-133
Kim, Seoin 76, 80
Kim, Si Young 50, 55
Kulkarni, Akshobh S. 149, 160-161
Kulkarni, Tannay 8-9
Kush, William C. 76, 83
Lakshmi D/O Singanathan, Vidya 64, 66
Lee, Da Eun 91, 95
Lee, Taehun 76, 84
Lee, Yezu 103, 110
Lee, Yeu 20, 29
Lim, Reanne Rui Xuan 20, 30-35
Liu, Singyee 76, 81
Luk, Kylie 143-144
Makinde, Richael Shola 149, 164-165
Marks, Elliot Michael 8, 12
Marks, Isaac Leon 20, 29, 48-49
Mason, Emma 85, 87
Masuyama, Tyler 149, 156-159
Mun, Julia Haein 64, 73-74
Myers, Tristan Ross 149, 162-163
Nathan, Naia Ishita 50, 57
Nelesen, Peyton 123
Nicoli, Cecilia 85, 89
Nguyen, Hieu 149, 164-165
Nguyen, Tuyet-Nhi T. front cover, 98, 100
Oh, Shinun 76-77
Oh, Shinun 76-77
Ohshimbe, Kotono 85, 88
Park, Joseph 64, 70
Park, Sally Seulgi 91, 93
Persner, Natalie 143, 147
Pixton, Olivia Jane 143, 145
Redman, Todd Robert 50, 61
Roberts, Clara 8, 13
Sayn-Wittgenstein, Eva Maria 50, 59
Shao, Alyssa Kelly 20, 28, 91, 96
Shao, Claire Lynn 50, 53
Sheen, Alexander 149, 156-159
Shin, Donovan 149, 156-159
Storbjörk, Johannes Vilhelm Molle 20, 47
Tica, Pia Janaea 111, 114
Tica, Samantha Caasi 117-118
Ting, Andrew 149, 156-159
Triple T (team) 149, 156-159
Varyambat, Siddhima 149-151
Wagner, Claire Morgan back cover, 117, 119
Wong, Cindy 50, 62
Wong, Clarissa Wern Ting 20, 42-43
Woo, Kevin 8-9
Xia, Emily 8-9
Xie, Jinhgan 127, 138-139
Yao, Preston Yuping 20, 25
Yoong, Hadiya back cover, 117, 120
Zou, Lisa 64-65

United States

Arizona 64-65
Arkansas 20, 40-41
California 50, 55, 123, 127, 132-133, 149, 152-155
Connecticut 20, 25, 85-86
Florida 20, 22-23, 64, 68, 111, 115, 143, 146
Georgia 64, 73-74, 103-108, 123
Kansas 50, 55, 63, 123, 143, 145, 147, 149, 162-163
Massachusetts 123
Michigan 8, 10, 20, 27, 36-37, 127, 130-131
Missouri 8-9, 50, 60, 62
New Hampshire 64, 69
New Jersey 8, 11, 17-18, 76, 79, 111, 113
New York 8, 13, 20, 44-45, 50, 58, 98-99, 149, 156-159
Pennsylvania 50, 53
Texas 8, 10, 91, 97, 111, 116, 127-129
Virginia 64, 70, 91, 93
Washington 8-9, 50, 57

International

Bahrain, Kingdom of 76, 82
Canada 50, 59
Ghana 149, 164-165
India 98, 102, 117, 120, 127, 134-137, 149-151, 160-161
Israel 8, 12, 20, 29, 48-49
New Zealand 20-21, 50, 53, 85, 87
Poland 8, 16, 20, 47, 76-78, 80, 84-85, 88-89, 91, 95, 103, 110
South Korea 64, 72
Midwest Torrance Center for Creativity / The Center for Gifted offers an innovative and inspiring approach to education, providing new opportunities for motivated students to explore subjects in a creative environment, free from the pressure of tests and grades. At the Center, programs are designed specifically to meet the educational needs of advanced learners in an environment innovative and nurturing of their individual gifts and talents.

Founded in 1983, the Center serves children who express capacity for high performance in diverse areas of intelligence. Through creative teaching strategies, materials, and curricula, the Center’s programs offer unique, hands-on activities and inventive modes of participation. Our faculty represents outstanding professionals, experts in their respective fields, who communicate effectively with children and evidence a genuine sensitivity and commitment to learning. Differentiation, creativity, inventiveness, and critical thinking are the cornerstones of our programs.

Midwest Torrance Center for Creativity / The Center for Gifted offers half and full day programs for fall, winter, spring, and summer. Programs range from Wondrous Workshops on Saturday or Sunday to Winter Worlds of Wisdom and Wonder, four Saturday and Sunday afternoons each, to a summer of many exciting one, two, and three week programs, half day and all day, June, July, and August. These programs reflect courses in technology, science, math, humanities, the arts, social sciences, robotics, all designed to advance the thinking of participants, to think more perceptively, deeply, and expansively.

Parent Seminars are offered year round in conjunction with Center programs. The Director of the Center is a major speaker along with other experts to introduce parents to the world of encouraging bright, motivated children and young people in both school and home settings through specific activities, materials, and strategies applicable to them. Parents are the most accurate judges of the talents of their children, age one through seven, and are deserving of knowing how to support and advance these talents and abilities. Parent Seminars will enable parents to encourage their child’s ability to create, problem solve, invent, imagine, reason inductively, and produce. Varied collections of materials will be distributed, and books written by the Director and faculty will be available for review and purchase.

a publication of

The Midwest Torrance Center for Creativity / The Center for Gifted
A Northern Illinois University Partner

Joan Franklin Smutny, Director
Maria Freeman, Michael Gorelick, Jennifer Rinne, Associate Directors

1926 Waukegan Road, Suite 2, Glenview, IL 60025 USA 847.901.0173
info@centerforgifted.org www.centerforgifted.org

© 2017 | The Center for Gifted | All Rights Reserved
Students are invited to submit their finest creative work to help celebrate the great legacy and heritage of educator and creativity pioneer, Dr. E. Paul Torrance, author of more than 2,000 tests, articles, and books.

Submissions Accepted: January 1-August 21, 2017 | Students ages 8-18

Themes: Students are encouraged to interpret freely these themes.

- The Honor and The Glory
- A Grateful Heart
- What A Mystery!
- Couldn’t Help Laughing
- Journey to Forever
- A Reluctant Adventure
- Who Would’ve Thought
- Exploring a New Universe

Creative Writing

Poetry and the Short Story
Creative writers may submit one poem and/or one story, responding to any one of our six themes. There is no prescribed word limit for poems; there is, however, a 1,250 word limit for stories. Students may find “Tips for Writers” supportive of their original ideas and expression (see website).

Contact:
Joan Franklin Smutny - (847) 256-1220
www.centerforgifted.org
torrancewriting@centerforgifted.org

Music Composition

Students may submit original musical compositions for any solo instrument or any combination of instruments or voice (e.g., solo piano, multiple instruments, voice and accompaniment, vocal duet). All submissions must include a recording of the composition and a score. All materials must be submitted on a CD/DVD to: Edwin C. Selby, The Center for Gifted, 1926 Waukegan Rd., Suite 2, Glenview, IL. 60025 USA

Contact:
Edwin C. Selby - (973) 948-9201
www.centerforgifted.org
ecselby@me.com

Visual Arts

Students may submit photographs of any 2D or 3D visual art, including without limitation painting, collage, printmaking, photography, sculpture, ceramics, or other related work. Please note that you must submit a photographic representation of your work of art. Each student may submit only one submission for the category of 2D or 3D art or both.

Contact:
Stephen Schroth - (410) 704-4292 or (240) 467-7160
www.centerforgifted.org
torrancevisualarts@centerforgifted.org

Inventions

Categories: Arts and Leisure; Science and Engineering; Toys and Games. Write a 300-500 word description and include 3D drawings or photos of all aspects of the invention. One invention accepted per category.

Contact:
Connie Phelps ~ (620) 341-5817
www.emporia.edu/gpc-gifted/
cphelps@emporia.edu

Sponsors: National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC); Creativity Network, NAGC; Torrance Center for Creativity and Talent Development, The University of Georgia; Great Plains Center for Gifted Studies, Emporia State University; Future Problem Solving Program International; Center for Creative Learning; and Midwest Torrance Center for Creativity/The Center for Gifted
Celebrating the life and legacy of educator and creativity pioneer Dr. E. Paul Torrance