

**PTMS**

**PRESENTS**

**Bits Of Lit**

**2015-2016**

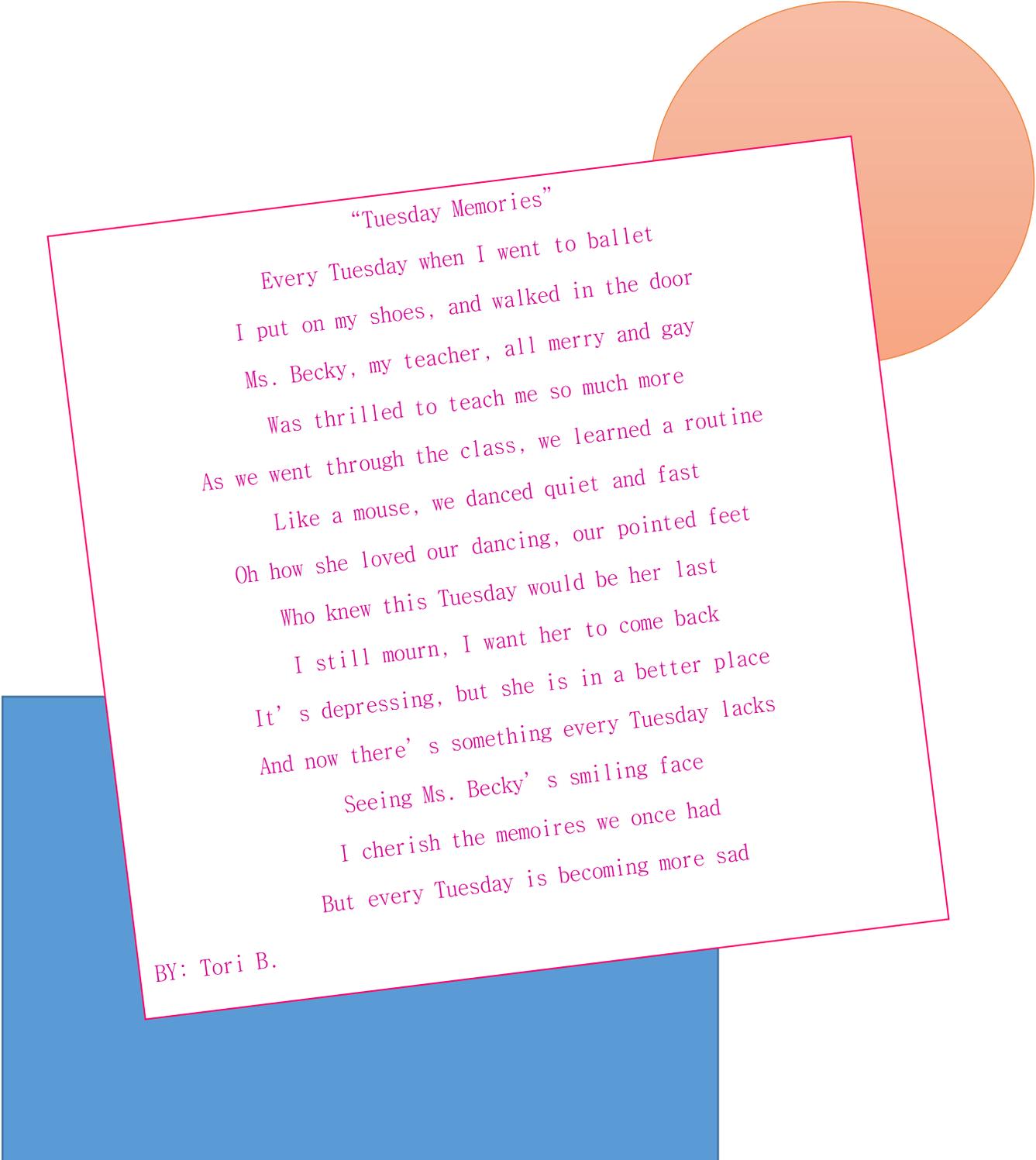
### **Here comes the Boom!**

**Jack pounced on the grenade with a cat like swiftness, and in doing so he saved his best friends life, but substantially changed his forever.**

**Jack, now a returning war veteran and American hero, was awarded the prestigious Purple Heart for his undaunted willingness to risk his life to save others. Now, Jack spends his days sitting in his hospital bed usually succumbing to his Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and crying uncontrollably for hours on end as flashbacks flooded his brain. When his disorder did not control him he would sit silent in his bed pensively thinking about how he could have saved more precious lives when he had the chance. So, when notified about the incendiary device in the basement he sprung to action.**

**He sprinted down the hall and grimaced in pain with every step. Finally, he burst through the doors and assured himself that he could finish the job faultlessly. Suddenly, the lights went out due to the emergency at hand and by doing so left Jack alone with his own thoughts and the eerie blue glow of the ancient emergency lights in the decrepit hospital. Now face to face with the behemoth of a bomb he grabbed a scalpel from the table and went to work. Bang! Jack collapsed to the floor and started to scream at the top of his lungs. Again he was having a flashback and could not control himself and would receive no help or consolation from doctors or nurses, as they had evacuated the other patients. After an hour of terror he composed himself and grabbed the bomb. As he removed the metal casing the look of awe on his face was due to the abundance of wires to choose from. The hiatus he took due to the flashback caused him to lose precious time. On edge, Jack, now drenched in sweat and his heart racing a thousand miles a minute, reluctantly he reached for the scalpel to finish what he was sent to do and to receive closure for himself. Shaking like a madman, he reached in with tentative hands and cut the wire.**

**By: Matt L.**



“Tuesday Memories”

Every Tuesday when I went to ballet  
I put on my shoes, and walked in the door  
Ms. Becky, my teacher, all merry and gay  
Was thrilled to teach me so much more  
As we went through the class, we learned a routine  
Like a mouse, we danced quiet and fast  
Oh how she loved our dancing, our pointed feet  
Who knew this Tuesday would be her last  
I still mourn, I want her to come back  
It's depressing, but she is in a better place  
And now there's something every Tuesday lacks  
Seeing Ms. Becky's smiling face  
I cherish the memoirs we once had  
But every Tuesday is becoming more sad

BY: Tori B.

### "Three Beautiful Stages"

A little seed was planted in the soil  
Was handled with care like a newborn baby  
But be careful, don't let the seed spoil  
Anxiously waiting to become a young lady  
The little seed had become a new bud  
And later grew a tall leafy stem  
With water in sun, it grew in the mud  
Soon to become a glamorous gem  
And now a flower, so blooming and bright  
All the stages were officially complete  
The pedals danced in the wind, and shined in the light  
The admirable flower, stood tall and sweet

By: Tori B.

## The Forest Motel

Fenster Schluswig was a German-born man of a stocky build who had recently moved to Ontario, Canada to pursue Lumberjacking: a career which he had seemingly been made for. One cold and insidious Tuesday night, he was driving home from his work when a vile feeling entered into his stomach. The warning light that signals low gas started to blink. He had forgotten to fill up his tank in the morning and was now stranded amidst a giant forest. The sun was rapidly setting over the trees, and although he was mournful over the fact that he would not be able to salvage anything from his car, his fear of wolves and bears ultimately determined his decision, which was to abandon his things and seek shelter for the night. Not long thereafter, he came across an old motel that was noticeably worn down and rotting of disuse. He was reluctant to enter seeing as how creepy it looked, but since he had nowhere else to go, the only feasible option would be to stay there for the night, which is what he did. Once he entered the building, he found himself standing amidst a barren room, its inhabitants being only himself and an unoccupied front desk. His attention was then drawn to his right where he saw a long and narrow hallway that was as dark as the night sky up to the very end, where a dim light shined from a room with a visible bed inside. So, seeing as how the manager wasn't there, and being that there was nowhere else to go, he decided that he would sleep there for the night and explain his situation to the manager in the morning. He set off down the hallway, but his footsteps faltered as he noticed the hallway's peculiar design. Stretching from the beginning to the end of the hallway there were portraits of these strange looking people in a dark forest. They all had these big creepy smiles and wide eyes, but what was even stranger was the manner that they were drawn. The artist, whoever he was, depicted them all with their hands pressed up against the point of view of the painting. But their eyes were what bothered him the most, he felt as if with every step he took, every move he made, the paintings' eyes followed him. But he couldn't think of any feasible explanation so he dismissed it, after all it was late at night and he was delirious. So he walked to the end of the hallway and entered the room which had a bed and a single hanging light bulb on the ceiling. He turned the light off, laid down on the bed, and fell asleep before he could even pull the covers over top of him. The next morning when he woke up he immediately got up out of bed, not wanting to waste any time he opened the door to the hallway. But as soon as he stepped foot out the door, his blood froze in his veins when he realized that the creepy "paintings" that he saw last night were not paintings, they were just windows.

By: Zack G.

## *As Red as Rubies and White as Pearls, Chaos on the Dawn*

*Norwegian Dawn was the most magnificent vessel one could only dream of, with the brilliant water slide enveloping the sky deck to the enchanting dining room; it was truly a ship of beauty. On July 16, 2015 my little sister Milly, my brother Zack, my dad Craig, my mom Tina and I, Paige, boarded the ship to set sail to Bermuda. We were greeted by Captain Smith, the cruise director and our cabin steward. Eagerly, we headed to our quarters to unpack for the seven day stay. Our cabin was the house of the Seven Dwarfs. We were squished together like a can of sardines. Mom got worried because she could hardly find a place for her precious jewelry and feared it would get lost.*

*Dinner was served in the Blue Lagoon Dining Room. Beautiful string lights adorned the ceiling, and a faint sound of classical music to set the mood. After dinner we went to the sky deck to explore. As we walked along the deck, gazing at the sinister sea, I heard my mother suddenly gasp "Oh no! My ruby red necklace it's gone!" Then I heard my dad say "Dear, you didn't wear your ruby red necklace tonight." When Milly, Mom and I got back to the cabin; he promptly appeared and asked several questions. When Captain Smith finished, he swiftly turned to leave and we caught a glimpse of a holster and gun anchored to his belt. The next morning, we were awakened by the vile sounds of gunshots. Startled and curious, I ran up to the deck. With sweat dripping down my neck, I peered around the corner. I thought it could be Captain Smith putting his lethal weapon to use. The shots got louder and louder and screams echoed throughout my ears. To my relief, it was only the skeet shooting sessions on the Lido Deck.*

*Gunshots resonated again. Millie, Zack and I were so scared we clung to Mom and Dad. This time, we all rushed up to the Lido Dec. The sun glaring as if pointing to danger, I looked into the ocean waters. A soft red wave reflected the body of a man floating in the sea. I let out a ranting scream. Captain Smith ran to the crowd of mournful passengers. The captain had to be the killer, I saw his gun. The sagacious captain instructed everyone to go back to their cabins. As we approached our room, the steward was just leaving and he averted our path. A few hours later we received a knock on our door. It was Captain Smith. He visited each cabin to check in on the passengers. He assured us that everything was fine. The cabin door gently closed as he left. All of a sudden, Mom gasped, she realized her pearl necklace was missing too. Mom vehemently blamed Captain Smith for all of the chaos. Feeling skeptical, I peered into the hallway and saw Captain Smith and the docile cabin steward dashing down the passageway. Unexpectedly, both turned and starred into my view and only one had eyes as red as red rubies and teeth as white as pearls.*

*By: Nico G.*

## Free Fall

It could be ... difficult to deal with Amara when she was like this. Tipsy on her own pain, so close to the edge a half step would lead to her own demise. The state she was in was no docile one. "Be careful", I whispered as she traipsed on the decrepit bridge's edge, which I had given up convincing as a horrible hang out spot. Several rocks and cement pieces crumbled beneath her high-tops and dust fell with it.

"What do you hear? She spoke. "The rush of the water, or the secrets it whispers?" Her voice was raspy, so close to broken I wanted to envelop it like a china doll. She stopped walking, bouncing on the balls of her feet and leaning over the lethal looking bridge side. I walked with precaution to the edge by her, still keeping my distance and averting my gaze from her enthralling features. "I'm gonna do it," she said almost brokenly brave.

"No," I start. "Please." In all honesty, my voice was tired of pointless talks that ended with Amara just as depressed as she was before. The real irony was that half of me hoped she would stop bothering me. The sickest, deepest, darkest part of me wanted her to jump. To finally prove to everyone else (and myself) that I was done being "the bipolar's therapist/only friend/emotional toy". I was done. And it seemed, so was she. She took a deep breath in through her nose with a slight hiccup, then breathed out. I began to leave, turning on my heel sharply. Too sharply, "Bye, Amara. See you tomo-," my breath caught and didn't return. It never would. Never, in all my time spent and wasted with Amara, had I thought that idiotic broken down bridge would be brining my downfall.

By: Elise R.

## The Most Important Steps

First baby shoes, so shiny and snow white  
First precious steps into waiting, outstretched hands  
Growing like a weed, soon they will be tight  
Family clapping so loud, how proud baby stands  
New pink tights and tutu, hair in a bow  
Little hands lacing pointe shoes, standing at the bar  
A new pair each year as dancer's feet grow  
Wishing of someday becoming a Rockette star  
A white beaded dress, beautiful lace veil,  
Every little girl's fairy tale, now coming true  
A joining of hearts, a sweet fairy tale  
Slipping into stain shoes, a bride's something new

By: Lauren P.

## Buried in Snow

It was a cold January day, and Kayla did not want to go to the museum. She would much rather hang out with her friends but her mother would not let her. With her blonde curly hair and blue eyes, Kayla Peterson was an amiable girl with many friends. Mrs. Peterson had red hair and was a very good mother even though Kayla didn't realize it yet. As they walked past the dinosaurs, Kayla thought about how unfair it was that she could not hang out with her friends that day. She had just turned 11 and had a cell phone, so she did not know why she could not go.

"I'm going to the bathroom," Kayla told her mom. As she walked there, Kayla checked her phone for texts and realized it only had 5 percent left. She got to the T-Rex, where she last saw her mom, but she was nowhere to be seen. After walking past all of the exhibits she got to the service desk, but her mom was not there either. Then the loudspeaker stated apathetically, "Extreme Winter conditions warning. Please remain calm and no one is to leave the building."

Kayla typed her mom's phone number into her phone, but just as she pressed call, her phone died. This is when Kayla got scared. The tour guides ushered everyone to the art exhibits, since it was the biggest room, of the building. Surely, she could find her mom with everyone else. The room had windows across the whole front wall, and Kayla could see the snow falling hard, outside. It almost covered the entire window, and the wind howled. "Please step away from the doors and windows. Snow is starting to pile up in front of them. The temperature outside is 20 degrees, and if the doors are opened it would be lethal." The loud speaker announced.

Kayla looked towards front doors and saw the chaotic crowd surrounding them, but she did not see her mom's distinctive red hair. What was that? Everyone was silent, so silent. Kayla's heart was pounding, pounding in her chest. A chill ran through her body. Her fear enveloped her. Did a window break? She turned slowly towards the sound. She saw the shattered glass on the ground. When she looked up, she did not see a broken window, but instead just a small boy who broke a glass vase. As Kayla sighed in relief, she sees a flash of red, out of the corner of her eye. Her fear returning, she jumps onto a chair to get a better view of the doors. Kayla glimpses the red hair at the front of the crowd and her heart sinks.

Then the doors open.

By: Leah H.

## *My Sports*

*It started with golf, playing with my pap,  
Wanted to be like woods, make them all clap,  
Then it was baseball, Jeter is swinging,  
At Venetia Field, hitting dinging*

*Sports of all kinds can make you have much fun,  
Even if you lost, and have never won*

*Next it was soccer, shooting like Messie,  
Mom was the coach, muddy filed got us messy,  
Swishing swag shots as if we were like James,  
At the Peters Rec Center for our games*

*Sports of all kinds can make you have much fun,  
Even if you lost, and have never won*

*Then lacrosse, ripping the net like Rabil,  
Learned new lax skills that I can enable,  
Sweet snowboard shredding like Shaun White,  
Big mountain, tall as a giant, take flight*

*Sports of all kinds can make you have much fun,  
Even if you lost, and have never won*

By: *Cade M.*

## **Ode to Black and Gold**

**O, how I love the city of steel.**

**City of bridges and Heinz 57**

**Steelers fans get hype they are so real.**

**Need more Super Bowls the stairway to seven.**

**Home of the Stillers, Gwinny's and Bucs.**

**We have the best teams in the entire game.**

**Bleed black and gold we don't need any luck.**

**Primanti's on game Day there's nothing the same.**

**Cap egg and cheese with red devil sauce.**

**Outside PNC park stands number 21**

**No sauce on my shirt ate like a boss.**

**A day at the baseball game is so much fun.**

**Steelers have the most Super bowl wins.**

**We got all those Lombardi's how about yinz?**

**By: Anthony K.**

## Hybrid Island

We were about five hours into the flight when it took a turn for the worst. The plane would shutter and sway in a concerning motion. Me, and my little brother, Peter, were headed to South America to visit our cousins for the holidays. The flight attendant said the ride would be a lot longer than predicted so “sit tight” and relax. There was no possible way to relax in a situation like so when all that’s going through your head is “we are going to crash”. I peered out the window and I kept seeing the little black flying animals. I say “animals” because they don’t have feathers. My brother suspected they were giant bats, but I thought something more. I was pulled out of my thoughts as the plane shook more violently this time. Cries of fear rambled through the aisles. I sat wide-eyed as screeches of claw against metal could be heard from the top of the plane and wings. The big machine started to tilt downward and downward. The screams became louder as the plane progressed towards the sea underneath. The bat-like creatures disappeared and I looked out again, the fear pulsing through my veins. There was a rather large island. Then everything turned black and all sound faded.

I woke to the slight chirp of birds and a very annoying ringing in my ears. Everything hurt. I opened my eyes to the aftermath of the crash. Most of the passengers were either dead or unconscious. Not me. I, somehow, survived. Come to think of it, that would be a great story to tell my cousins. That is if I ever saw them again. I groaned and sat up. “This does not look like Hawaii.” I stated to nobody in particular. “Your right...” moaned a voice next to me. “PETER!?” I screeched and hugged him. “What happened?” He asked. “I guess the big bat things made our plane crash.” Then he stared around frightened, “Where is mom and dad...?” he trailed off as a piercing shriek echoed. “We need to go...” The plane was wedged between two giant trees, it seemed pretty stable as me and Peter slid down and off the plane, coming out the broken window of the pilot’s section of the plane. “I wonder who else survived.” Peter said gazing up at the wreckage. “I hope we aren’t the only ones...: “You got lucky miss.” I swiveled my head around as I heard a voice. Three others appeared. “Thank goodness. Who are you and where are we? I said and they frowned. The taller man stepped forward, “Name’s Gabe Steele, this is Katherine Hentrix and Kody...something...Alger I think,” Gabe said. “And its Kate, not as much Katherine.” Said Kate. I smiled at the trio. “Well, hello. I’m Sheri Stone and this is my brother Peter.” He waved and smirked. “Is this all of us?” Peter asked. “No, Sammy is up there digging through his discovery’s bag. Me and him are travelers.” I looked back and a tall man with slick, black hair comes meandering down the aisles with a brown bag slung over his shoulder. “Hey, Sammy! This is Sheri and Peter Stone.” Gabe introduced us to his companion. “Hey,” he looked at me. “Can you carry this over to where we set up camp?” I raised my eyebrow, “And this is where?” “Uh, fine, I’ll do it.” The man grunted and hobbled over to a patch of open area about thirty feet in front of us where a bunch of emergency packages lay around. How did I miss that? The six of us walked over to the camp where the travelers set their supplies down. It wasn’t the best looking set-up in the world, but it was stable. “It’s pretty big...” Peter said, peeking inside. I nodded and walked around the camp. In the middle was a heap of gray boxes full of ropes and food kits. Then it started.

Peter perked head up from where he was kneeling. Everybody froze, eyes wide with bewilderment and curiosity. The trees started to quiver as the thump of feet grew closer. Everyone started to back away from the clearing. If only they could make it to the plane. A loud outcry caused the ground to vibrate. “Everybody run!” Yelled Gabe as everyone started sprinting. I started to run as I overheard something large crash through the trees, but I dared not to look back. Peter was beside me as the plane neared. “We need to go to the plane...” I panted. “No! We can’t, it’ll eat us! He was right. I spotted to others yards away from us, running for their lives. Kody, however, had trouble keeping up. “C’mom Kody!” screamed Sammy. “I can’t —Then Kody was swept up as the monster tore her apart. “Faster! Peter yelled in absolute fear. I could vaguely smell salt, we must be near a beach. “Keep running, I can smell salt!” I yelled over to the last survivors. I dodged trees and hopped over logs. The beast was catching up as it barged over trees and crushed vegetation. The trees ahead opened to.. it wasn’t in fact a beach at all. It was a cliff. We were going to be trapped.” It’s a cliff!” I announced to the others who were still running. I was slowing down as the monster was catching up. The trees opened up as I looked back at the beast. It was some sort of hybrid of a gazelle and a velociraptor. It ran on four legs and was double the size of a school bus. “Sheri!” Peter’s voice seemed distant as the edge neared. There was only one option. Three yards, two yards. The beast’s breath was warm and foul as it brushed my back. One yard, and I leaped.

By: Sydney C.

## The Box

It is a chilly winter afternoon. The air is crisp and you can see your breath. My mother and I have come to my grandmother's house to collect what is given to us in her will. Grandma has left most of her belongings to her only child, my mother, but she left her most precious item to me. "A beautiful porcelain doll with amber curls and emerald eyes," my mother had described to me. Although we were very close, grandma had not shown nor told me about her magnificent doll. I was surprised she even owned such a frivolous object because she was not known for buying something just because it was pretty. So I assume it was a gift from her childhood, and must be packed away somewhere in her attic.

So here I am, choking on dust and the vile smell of mold as I search through cardboard boxes in my grandma's attic. My mother is in the basement searching for the ancient photo albums that have been passed down for three generations. I considered myself a very logical person, but it's still a bit creepy in the attic and the fact that my mother wouldn't be able to hear me scream for help is a little concerning. Only a single light bulb illuminates the attic. I brought a flashlight as a precaution because the electricity here is known for being a little spotty, especially with all the snow we've gotten.

There must be at least twenty boxes in here! All the ones I've looked through so far have held old sweaters. As I'm digging through the eighth box, I hear a sound. A loud crash. I quickly whip my head around and sigh with relief. It was just a pull down stairs leading up to the attic. Mom will eventually come upstairs looking for me, so I'm not all that worried about being trapped up here. I resume searching. Just as I go to open box number nine, I hear something. A faint scratching. First I thought it was my imagination, but it's growing louder! Now it's a full out pounding, in sync with the beating of my heart! Slowly, I turn to see where the sound is coming from. It's coming from box number thirteen. Curiosity's tug is stronger than the fear I feel in my bones as I carefully lift the edge of the box and peer inside. A pair of eyes, as green as an emerald, stare back apathetically at me. Before I can turn and run, the electricity shuts out and I drop the flashlight as I jump back from the box. I sit in silence for what feels like an eternity. The only thing I can hear is my quickening heartbeat and the sound of the box opening on its own...

By: Alex J.

## *One Amongst Us*

*The year is nineteen sixteen and the Great War has been raging for two terrible years. Recently both sides have been trying to figure out how to break the stalemate; it would appear that Germany has opted to spies. Yesterday one of our boys was found dead and stripped of his intelligence papers. We all knew the spy was amongst us. I knew he was lethal.*

*I was given orders to find and neutralize the enemy spy, and it vexed me because you just do not know who he is. Just then I heard a door slam and decided to go check it out. My mind was telling me it was the spy. I opened the door just to find my Commanding officer McGregor, I simply saluted him and walked out. That is when I saw him a rather tall and skinny man, smoking a cigarette, dressed in a British uniform. Although I noticed a small red stripe up by the color of his shirt I only noticed it because it was bright red. We didn't have any red on our uniforms.*

*I thought it to be frivolous but then I remembered the red on enemy officer's field blouses. The man swayed like the daisies in the wind back on the farm, it was obvious he was uncomfortable. It also appeared he was ranting to himself, I tried to read his lips but he turned away. I followed him and he went right back into his office of which I just came. I hesitated to open the door I feared for my life but I knew what I signed up for. I opened the door to see him with a pistol pointed at McGregor. McGregor winked at me and smiled.*

*By: Jake B.*

**"Jelly Bean"**

Once there was a bean  
That shone with a gleam  
And all the other beans were Jelly  
He could feel it in his Belly

So all the other beans were mean  
Because he said a simple pun  
He thought it would be fun  
Saying "hey how you bean?"

And so it went on for so many years  
And he carried billions of tears  
But then he put on shades and said "laters"  
So he couldn't see the haters

And suddenly it was clear  
It was his determination that drove him here  
He was the most popular bean  
That has ever been

**By: Danny G.**

***"Another World"***

***A couple of pages  
Or even a hundred  
Reading a story  
Can keep you wondered***

***Before your very eyes  
Leave the world of reality  
To a world without lies***

***Just open a book  
And you will see  
Anything you've ever  
Seen in a dream***

***Reading will take you  
To a place like no other  
Millions have already  
Picked up another***

**By: Rachel R.**

## SOS Betrayal

*As our boat slowly circled the island, we stared admiringly at its bright green jungle, the magnificent, blue waterfall tumbling down the side of a mountain, and the peaceful white sands of the beaches surrounding it. We had been searching for new islands to collect data from for days, and finally, we had found one worthy to explore. Adam turned the boat for the beach, "Let's not waste another moment and go ashore."*

*We stepped onto the warm sand, cameras in hand. "Come on," he said, "this could be groundbreaking, maybe even medically beneficial!" I noticed something furry leap into the foliage out of the corner of my eye with a spotted tail and claws sharp as daggers. "Jaguar," I pointed out. We walked along the beach looking for anything of interest when we came across something most peculiar. Spelled out in the sand was the word HELP, facing the sea. "If someone needs help we have to look." He'd said before he marched into the jungle on a skinny footpath. "What about the jaguars? And how will you ever find them? What if they're pirates?" I protested. "Don't worry; this path should lead me there. Stay here in case they come back." Then, he was gone.*

*Before I knew it, 20 minutes had passed and it was dusk. I had been waiting on the beach fascinated by an exotic flower. Still no sign of Adam. I considered following the path, but decided against it. If I got lost and he came back, then I would be in trouble. I began to get worried when it got darker and I noticed shadows stalking through the jungle. The shadows of hungry beasts. The shadows of jaguars. Maybe he'd gone back to the first beach. I ran back to the boat, it seemed the shadows were following me, chasing me. I ran faster. I reached the beach, scanning the coast for it, but our boat was gone. It had vanished. Had he left me to die here on this island of nightmares? I began fearing the worst when I felt a hand on my shoulder; I looked up blinking through tears at Adam. "He stole it," he said, the castaway pirate stole our ship." A snarl, a growl, and then, the shadows pounced.*

By: Caelan O'D.

**“Blanket”**

**Looking back, it was my happiness  
Not once did I ever let it go  
But the blanket was worn, I must confess  
Now the blanket is stored just below**

**After all this time, it's still my favorite  
The blanket gave me warmth in the cold of night  
As a child and now, I wish to savor it  
I could sleep soundly without a worry**

**I received it when I was first born  
And I have kept it treasured since then  
One time I lost it, depressed and concerned  
I found it and kept it until age ten  
The blanket had a soft and gentile touch  
Even now, I treasure it very much**

**By: Danny G.**

**“My Cubical Conundrum”**

**My Rubik's cube is the best one  
I use it almost every day  
It always provides lots of fun  
I can count on it to never stray**

**Some might say that I'm a hoarder  
But really I don't have that many  
It's great because it's always in random order  
And it doesn't cost too much money**

**I never let it out of my sight  
Until I win I will not flee  
I try to solve it with all my might  
This crazy cubical conundrum puzzles me**

**Even if it is to say the least  
It is an untamable beast**

**By: Zack W.**

## **“AFC Wildcard”**

**Last game, great game hours of fun  
Big Ben versus the Cincinnati run  
The game was close up to the end  
A day in the hospital Brown may spend**

**Defenses dominated in this brutal match  
Less and less points this game was a blast  
Ryan Shazier stripped the ball  
The defense was like a moving brick wall**

**Touchdown from four miles away  
Steelers knew they had to come and play  
Interception into the locker room  
The Bengals had brought out their wooded broom**

**When the ball went loose for Hill and the Bengals  
Ryan Shazier hit him from all angles  
The Steelers marched down to the fifty  
They made the kick because of the penalty**

**By: Michael V.**

## Nightmare at the Zoo

It was an extremely cold night in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The air was bitter and I could see every breath I took due to the visible steam when I exhaled. As Tim and I were walking back to the security room, like we do every night, we realized how late it had already become. This was only Tim's fourth night working at the zoo, but I had become great friends with him already. We kept walking until we saw the security room emerge out of the fog. In fact, the fog was so empowering that we could not even see ten feet ahead of us. We approach the security room and opened the door. I let Tim go ahead of me. As I closed the door behind me, it was as if the fog enveloped the whole room.

Tim and I followed the normal procedures with precaution. We locked the door, checked our emails, and headed over towards the security monitors. All of the cameras were normal except for one. I averted from the monitor and found Tim's eyes looking at me in a vile way. The gorilla cage had been left ajar.

We both unlocked the door and sprinted outside. The frigid air told us to go back inside. Tim and I both knew that we screwed up and had to fix what we had done. Tim ran toward the entrance of the zoo to get help from anyone that had not left yet. I stayed, my job was to find the escaped gorillas and enthrall them back into their cage. I ran down every path with caution, trying not to trip over my own feet. I turned the corner past the reptile exhibit and screeched to a halt. What I saw stunned me. I was frozen in place. Slowly, the gorillas emerged from the fog ahead of me. The three black beasts charged.

By: Mason Z.

## “Twins”

Being a twin  
Is not what it may seem  
Sometimes it is amazing  
Sometimes I want to scream  
She always knows everything  
That gets annoying sometimes  
But she is always there for me  
Even when the darkness entwines

People always assume  
That twins are exactly the same  
But my twin and I are the example  
That disproves that claim  
I am the sporty one  
She is the girly-girl  
But she is as unique as can be  
And as perfect, of a sister, as a pearl

By: Erin Shannon

## SEALed Away

"Hey, Max! Come check this out!" It was John doing what John does best, ranting excitedly at absolutely everything. The warm Florida sun beamed down on my face without a single cloud in sight. I was 22 at the time, and I had just begun recruiting for the SEALs. As tradition, the higher-ups took us for a shipwreck SCUBA dive every summer. Fortunately, a cargo vessel had just sunk in a storm only fifteen miles off the Atlantic Coast (28 degrees 20 minutes 43.82 seconds North, 80 degrees 18 minutes 36.82 seconds West). Groggily, I sauntered over to John and peered over the port side. As I looked down at the cloudy water, the shape of the ship loomed like an eerie shadow at the sea bed. At approximately 180 feet long and 25 feet wide, it could take hours to explore thoroughly.

While we were suiting up, the dive master recommended that we all take a surface tank with us. If our main tank failed, it contained just enough air for the trip to the surface. After we finished suiting up and checked our air pressure gauges, which read 2,483 psi, enough for about 30 minutes underwater, we all took a surface tank, except John. "John! John, wait! You forgot your ..." Before I could finish my sentence, I heard "SPLASH". As John leapt off the boat, I hastily grabbed a precautionary surface tank, not checking how much air was in it, clambered off the boat and looked for my diving partner in the water. I found him already 20 feet below me, so I rushed after the lunatic. It took almost a whole minute to reach the massive ship. Then, I planted the guide wire in between a few heavy rocks, and John uncoiled the life-saving cable.

Nearly 20 minutes passed since I reached the ship. I entered what looked like a mechanic's tool room. John was a few rooms behind me looking vehemently at the structure of the ship and collecting salvageable parts. Without any warning, the ship trembled and shook from a strong, sinister current passing overhead. Then the door slammed shut behind me, snapping the guide wire, and locking me in the room. Silt rose from the floor, blinding me to the point that I couldn't even see my hands or my diving instruments, which meant I had no idea how much air remained in my tank.

My first instinct was to find a weak spot in the hull of the ship but the silt that had blinded me would not settle for hours. Then, I felt the large latch to the locked door. I quickly took out my dive knife and started knocking, "SOS!" in Morse code, hoping John will hear the metallic noise. Minutes passed. By then, my tank must have been close to empty. First, my vision started fading. Immediately, I thought to myself that I would die then and there. Next, my vision had gone completely. Consequently, I could not tell up from down. After that, I could not breathe. As I let go of my knife, on the brink of unconsciousness, I remember hearing a single, lonely, ever so quiet knock from the door.

By: Matt P.

“THE BOOK OF FANTASIES”

WHEN I WAS BORN SEVERAL YEARS AGO  
I RECEIVED A LARGE BOOK OF FAIRY TALES  
AS A TINY BABY, MY LIMBS WERE DOUGH  
LIFTING THE BOOK WAS LIKE LIFTING TEN WHALES

EVERY PAGE WAS A TALE TO BE UNFURLED  
ON THE FRONT: A LION, SOLEMN AND BOLD  
FILLED WITH FANTASIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD  
THE EDGES OF PAGES GILDED WITH GOLD

CINDERELLA TO THE EMPEROR’S CLOTHES  
A WORLD OF ITS OWN FOR ME TO SAVOR  
HOW MANY STORIES COULD PEOPLE COMPOSE?  
GIVING MY CHILDHOOD QUITE A SWEET FLAVOR

OVER THE LONG YEARS IT WORE AND IT TORE  
BUT I NEVER FORGOT MY BOOK OF YORE

BY: UMA T.

“Growing Up”

**Sippy cups protect from spills  
Full of milk and hugs  
Sippy cup is small like a toddler’s hand  
Tough, tumble, tiny, comes in many sizes**

**Water bottle, strong, durable, and colorful  
Won’t brake if it falls  
Often lost and irresponsible  
Would crack under pressure**

**A coffee cup, careful as a mother  
Afraid to drop  
Strong and confident  
Fragile but can last**

By: Grace S.

“Burfict Is Not Perfect”

There is a man named Burfict,  
And he is far from perfect.  
He went up high for Brown  
And knocked him down.

There is a man named Burfict,  
And he is far from perfect.  
He hit Big Ben down low  
Which cost him a lot of dough

There is man named Burfict,  
And he is far from perfect.  
The Bengals are now done.  
It has been forever since they have won.

The lesson for everyone  
Is just to have fun.  
Just try not to jump the gun,  
And remember, Burfict is not perfect.

By: Jack W.

## **“Cookie Monster”**

**Hey Cookie, just between you and McCue  
You are my brother and best thing I ever had  
You where the one who helped me get through  
You were always there even when I was sad or bad**

**I really, really miss you boy  
I would protect you with everything I got  
You where my most favorite toy  
I would take you even when I should not**

**You where no one else’s but mine  
You blue monster you were real to me  
You would always make my day shine  
I would even take you to go pee with me**

**Others may not even believe  
But I will, even when it’s time for me to leave**

**By: Liam Mc.**

### Importance

Being told since I was younger,  
No matter what, feed your hunger.  
That the price tag didn' t matter.  
Not fitting in shouldn' t make you sadder.

What you were not, won' t matter later on.  
The mean friends don' t last very long.  
Not to follow them if I know it' s wrong.  
Through the peer pressure to stay strong.

Don' t listen to the negativity.  
Let out your creativity.  
Do something to make you happy,  
And fill yourself with positivity.

By: Ava S.

### "My Center of the Earth"

Stubbornness is navy blue and dusk gray.  
It tastes like sour lemon juice on sweet apples.  
It sounds like storm clouds arguing profusely,  
And smells like onions that create rivers of tears.  
Stubbornness looks like a dried-colorful flower,  
And feels like the very center of the earth.

By: Juliette L.

### Procrastination

It is a million degree burning red flame,  
It tastes like toast that's charred and burnt to a crisp,  
It sounds like a deafening bull horn being blown,  
Procrastination smells like a pungent scent,  
It looks brilliantly dull in the dancing night,  
It feels like scratchy sandpaper on my skin.

By: Lizzie B.

***Welcome to Grandma's House***

***Delicious smells of food fill the warm air***

***Cookies, candies, or maybe even a cake!***

***What in the world did my sweet Grandma prepare?***

***"Come in dear, I made you a big, juicy steak!***

***Twenty bucks sitting on the reserved seat***

***Glass of hot tea is waiting for me***

***A scrumptious cupcake, an after dinner treat***

***At seven o'clock we begin Jeopardy***

***Outside the raspberries whine to be picked***

***Snatch a cookie before the berry find***

***Basketful in hand, can't wait to see Grams face!***

***"My oh my dear, let's make a raspberry pie!"***

***Laying on Gram's couch, letting time fly***

***Never ever wanting to say goodbye***

***By: Nico G.***

## When the Night Goes To Sleep

The sun burns o'er the horizon so hot  
Yet I'm still awake with eyes that are burning  
Knowing daybreak shouldn't wish me to rot  
Praying for the night to come back - yearning  
The moon had danced with a dress made of stars  
And shone bright with light to the creatures of the night  
The clouds were wispy like smoke from cigars  
And silence ruled over before birds took flight  
I miss her splendor, and how silent it was  
The birds are now singing and having their fun  
The world around me pressing play after pause  
But for me and the night, our song is not done  
I miss her peace and the time to think  
But again tonight to my bed I will sink

By: Elise R.

## Seeing Double

There is something about being a twin  
We give each other a helping hand  
Having someone to always let you win  
Even when it becomes hard to stand  
When you have an instant partner in crime  
Switching is easier said than done  
Someone always there to help with the climb  
Sometimes when I even want to run  
People say that you cannot have a clone  
We do everything with no despair  
With a twin I will never be alone  
With a bond we can always repair  
Even when we fight we always make up  
Together forever even when grown up

By: Taylor S.

## **Dreams I Used to See**

**Goodbye to my cozy, tranquil and calm sleep,  
When my dreams would be flowing with hope.  
I would snooze away without making a peep,  
Smelling like soft, soothing baby soap.  
The stars on my ceiling would light up my room,  
I'd lay still in the warmth of my bed.  
The moonlight would give the night sky a bright gloom,  
My eyes stared at the shadows ahead.  
The books on my bookshelves would sing me their songs,  
And slowly I'd start dozing away.  
I'd think about the characters rights and wrongs,  
And if the peach would forever stay.  
Goodbye to the cozy, calm, and blissful night.  
You'll be back soon, and I'll be alright.**

**By: Surili P.**

**Talkative**

**Social is the sun rising to say hello  
It takes like a large pizza shared with friends  
It sounds like the dull roar of people at lunch  
It smells like sweaty teammates after a win  
It looks like 500 notifications  
It feels like high fives and pats on the back**

**By: Jon W.**

## **You are Your Harshest Critic**

**You are your harshest critic  
Don't listen to your words they are acidic  
Don't let your thoughts drag you down  
If you do you will have a permanent frown  
If you think this you will dread  
Get the discouraging thoughts out of your head  
Instead fill your head with hope  
Don't you dare stand around all day and just mope  
Don't just stay home and pout  
Ignore those thoughts it is time for you to sprout  
If you don't you will regret  
Chances had, didn't take, won't ever get**

**By: Sarah W.**

## *The Little Things*

*As she walked into the big door  
She felt her stomach drop down to the floor  
She slowly walked down the new hall  
Until she felt her heavy book bag fall*

*A young girl looked her way kindly  
A grin soon formed across her face widely  
The girl now felt more confident  
The helping hand friend gave a compliment*

*Realizing all the time that passed  
She ran like a cheetah to get to class  
And now the girl was all alone  
Now not wishing she was back at her home*

*By: Becca V.*

## Decisions, Decisions

Trying to decide which way to go  
Which path will pick me, I never know  
Too many options and choices to make  
The stress could cause anyone to break  
What is right may even be wrong

By: Taylor M.

### Organization

Organization is like a white rainbow  
It taste like a sweet lollypop  
It sounds like sleeping meadow  
Smells like a fresh bakery  
It looks like books stacked neatly  
Feels likes a soft pillow

By: Raegan S.

By: Raegan S.

Feels like a soft pillow  
It looks like books stacked neatly  
Smells like a fresh bakery  
It sounds like a sleeping meadow  
It tastes like a sweet lollypop  
Organization is like a white rainbow

### Impatient

The impatient is a red rush of steam  
It tastes like anxiousness and furiousness  
Sounds of a train swaying along  
Smells like a fast made cake  
Looks of a deep, dark scary tunnel  
Feels like a slow rush

By: Raegan S.

By: Raegan S.

Feels like a red rush  
Looks of a deep, dark scary tunnel  
Smells like a fast made cake  
Sounds of a train swaying along  
It tastes like anxiousness and furiousness  
The impatient is a red rush of steam

"Riding with the Wind"

The brisk wind rushing throughout my hair,  
Leaping over the tall fence, unheard,  
The rushing feeling, gliding on air,  
Like flying on the back of a bird..

There's nothing that could compare to this,  
Happiness is galloping with grace,  
A horse is an angel's loving kiss,  
A gift from God in his highest place.

Trusting, loving, caring, deep inside,  
Compassion and faith is put in me,  
From the moment I get on to ride,  
Only then, can I truly be free

This horse is not only a godsend,  
This horse is forever my best friend.

By: Caelan O'D.

### “Bone of a Kind Dog”

Chocolate brown eyes that twinkle like the stars  
And ears that mounted up like a red fox  
Loyalty at would keep you from the law’s bars  
Her fur was as shiny as geode rocks

I’d come home and she’d be energetic  
She was as curious as a child  
During thunderstorms she was anxious  
When happy her short tail wagged like wild

She was medium sized and also frail  
Her movements were as swift as a black bat  
Her fur was a super soft snow white dove’s tail  
She was timid and acted like a cat

The day she departed my joy did end  
For I had just lost the best canine friend

By: Alex L.

## *Mom*

*Since day one, she's been there for me  
From feeding to diapers, Mom was there  
She is as sweet as honey from a bee  
I need her to live, she is my air*

*I love her food, it is the best ever  
Try her chicken, it tastes amazing  
Can't sneak food, she is too clever  
Pretty? Cute? No, she is blazing*

*Buys me only the best foods  
She miraculously does my messy bed  
During Christmas time, she gets me the goods  
Feeling sick? She can detect the threat*

*My mom is a true warrior, brave and strong  
I hope she takes care of me, lifelong*

*By: Arnoldo O.*

***Everything Is Changing***

***In the year two thousand, my sister was born  
We moved to Bridal Trail, mother was torn  
I came next, then the 9/11 scars  
NASA started plans to put rovers on Mars***

***The world is always rearranging  
People, places, and ideas are changing***

***Time to say goodbye, rest in peace Johnny Cash  
Heat waves, sad space shuttle Columbia crash  
Pluto is demoted, you can send a Tweet  
The web is a drug, the iPhone is complete***

***The world is always rearranging  
People, places, and ideas are changing***

***My sweet sister Samantha takes her first breath  
Finally, Osama bin Laden meets death  
We move again, our house was growing old  
World-wide problems, with terrorists unfold***

***The world is always rearranging  
People, places, and ideas are changing***

***By: Jon W.***

## The Corporate Ladder

A man without home is a man without haven,  
And a lack of respect comes with being unshaven.  
I lived on the streets, along with the crazies,  
How does one survive? "Just stop being lazy!"

Now, I'm employed, under rule of authority,  
Though it seems that we're not their priority.  
Live on the streets, or climb Corporate Ladder,  
To be honest with you, I'd take the latter.

To stand at the top, it'd surely be great,  
To Rockefeller and Carnegie I could relate!  
The American Dream: I tell you, it's a sickness,  
It's not all it seems, it's survival of the richest.

By: Braedon O.

*"The best and worst of me"*

## Oversensitive

*Sensitive soul sparkles pink like champagne  
Bubble gum, red raspberries, pink lemonade  
Blushing cheeks honestly made  
A freshly bathed baby – snuggled up tight  
Wrapped up in hand stitched blankets for the night  
Velvety soft feathers rose petals too*

By: Lauren V.

*"Car Seats"*

*Stuck in the backseat  
Where it is boring  
Playing with tigger  
Who is roaring*

*Sitting in the front  
Access to the radio  
Leaning on the window  
To see everything glow*

*In control, like Ken Block  
Looking through the mirror  
To see the sun glimmer  
Everything is clear*

*By: Anish U.*

**"I Thought I Loved Him"**

**My life took a turn,  
And it wasn't for the better.  
I knew life was full of ups and downs,  
But this down seemed to last forever.**

**Then I met him.  
He changed everything.  
He made me feel great,  
And helped me escape reality.**

**I thought I loved him.  
But oh how wrong was I.  
I needed him, I didn't want him.  
So why am I still meeting him tonight.**

**He hugs me.  
And makes me feel happy once again.  
But then he throws me to the ground,  
And he leaves me in pain.  
So why am I still meeting him tonight?**

**Once more, I met him under the moon,  
And once more he beats me until I'm bruised.  
So why, oh why, am I still meeting him tonight?**

**By: Chris H.**

## “Cease the Hate”

I do not understand  
I do not understand how people can be judged so quickly and  
easily  
Whether it's because of someone's race, sexuality, or even  
their favorite band  
All around the world there is judgement and hate  
Which comes with insecurities and sadness that this injustice  
creates  
I cannot comprehend why all of this goes on  
But apparently some people just can't tell right from wrong  
Some people don't realize that these victims truly suffer  
Sometimes crying rivers by themselves while watching the  
world grown tougher  
It disgusts me how some people treat others like pieces of  
trash  
Leaving mental scars in these people's brains from when they  
verbally bash  
But then there are people like Helen Keller who stood for  
equality and world peace  
People like her are what this world needs in order for this hate  
to cease  
So I am begging you to please think before you speak

By: Emily K.

**“Shooting a Cannon”**

**The Cannon was loaded, ready to fire  
Preparing to embark, a new journey  
A cannonball would soon leave,  
Making its way to its final destination.**

**Boom! Like a bird soaring through the sky,  
A small cannon ball could be seen  
Growing larger as it comes closer,  
Traveling quick through the air.**

**The small cannon ball made such an  
impact,  
That it could be noticed from far, far, away.  
More cannon balls were to follow,  
All hitting their directed target.**

**By: Joe S.**

**“I Began With a Box of Crayons”**

**I had a box of crayons  
All shiny, tall and new  
I spent my days learning  
Coloring, drawing, writing, just to name a few**

**I have a box of pencils  
And many assignments to do  
I spend my days preparing  
Homework, projects, essays, just to name a few**

**I will have a box of pens  
And a mountain of responsibilities will spew.  
I will spend my days evaluating  
Work, finances, my future, just to name a few**

**By: Hunter F.**

**"Pinnacle Of All Tools"**

His glossy coat is brighter than Helios  
Why are you so perfect  
You run across the paper perfectly  
Your graphite is smooth like silk  
You have gloriously gorgeous, glossy skin  
An eraser sits on your head  
But no need for it because you're perfect  
Even when you become dull  
A new sharp tip is always waiting  
There are many different types  
Drawing, writing, sketching all are unique  
If you become too short  
You are reborn into a brand new one  
For you lead me through tests  
The pain of homework or  
You can provide me the courage to write  
You are always with me when I get A's  
And you have never failed me

By: Jose G.

**"C'est La Vie"**

They need, they want, please give them more.  
Their brain it strains to think absorb.  
They're just like a sponge, they will soak it up.  
Disciples do not look at life close up.

Free to fly and flit with fervor.  
Voices in their head will murmur.  
They are telling them the path to follow.  
Life is candy contenders will swallow.

They not stand wrinkled, old and gray.  
Though not senile; to God they pray.  
A sage, young and foolish in days of yore.  
And not at last, they are a connoisseur.

By: Carly B.

## **“BEaYOUtiful”**

**When you look into the mirror in the morning  
Be confident in what you see  
Embrace your true colors  
They are what makes you, you**

**If somebody wants you to change what you see  
Your silliness, your quirks, your flaws  
Run away as fast as you can  
Because they are not a true friend**

**Believe in yourself and in all the decisions you make  
Your self-esteem will then become stronger  
Be confident in how you look each and every day  
Because clearly, confidence is key**

**Don't be what other people expect you to be  
Don't do what other people expect you to do  
Step outside the box everybody else lives in  
Color outside the lines everybody else stays inside of**

**By: Alexis L.**

## “Behind the Lies”

It started as a harmless joke,  
That was until it spread,  
They knew before she even spoke,  
Could not see the grief ahead.

She laughed along to hide her pain,  
But could not ignore this feeling,  
Their whispers danced around in her brain,  
Her fakeness slowly peeling.

The minute she is left alone, breaks down for good,  
Her tears could fill the sea,  
They would not stop, she tried the best she could,  
The echoes of the gossip would not let her be.

Her heart is left like a shattered mirror,  
This joke was not a funny one,  
Rumors will break you, it is clear,  
This should not happen to anyone.

By: Emily M.

By: Emily M.

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