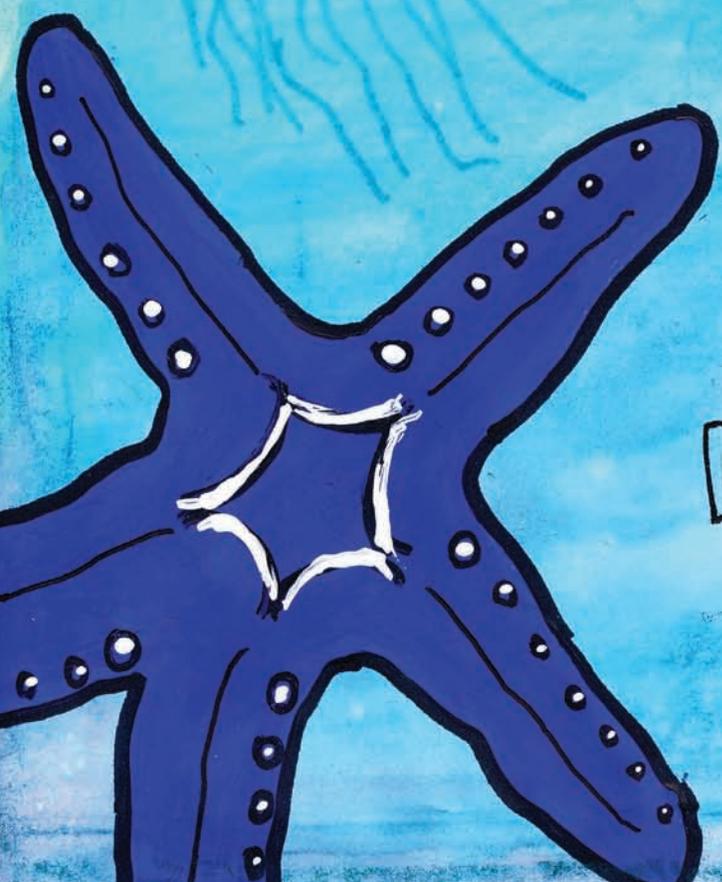


# e l e m e n t i a

~ tenth  
in issue ~  
~~~~~



B C D

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z



A complex arrangement of letters and symbols, including 'a', 'b', 'c', 'd', 'e', 'f', 'g', 'h', 'i', 'j', 'k', 'l', 'm', 'n', 'o', 'p', 'q', 'r', 's', 't', 'u', 'v', 'w', 'x', 'y', 'z', and various geometric shapes like circles and lines.

Cover Artist  
Ayah Abdul Rauf



Drawing by Cody Lee Cooper

Johnson County Library is honored to dedicate the 10th issue of *elementia* to renowned author and current Ambassador for Young People's Literature Walter Dean Myers.

Mr. Myers' commitment to the undeniable fact that Reading is not Optional, his diverse canon of literature, and his effervescent support of young adults are an inspiration and a driving force to librarians, teachers, parents and students all over the world.

The pieces of literature that inspired the young adult writers and artists in this issue are as follows:

*Monster*, *145th St*: Short Stories, *At Her Majesty Request: An African Princess in Victorian England*, *Hoops*, *The Beast*, *Fallen Angels*, *Sunrise over Fallujah*, and *Looking Like Me*

We thank you and we honor you, Mr. Myers – you bring a light, sir, that shines like morning.

Central Teen Services  
Johnson County Library  
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Overland Park, KS 66212  
913-826-4600

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magazine

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to

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and

represent

creative

young adults

issue 10



Mixed Media by Courtney McKown

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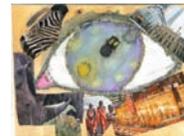
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Photographer Samantha Hilderhof



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Artist Teara Perry



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Photographer Sarah Bibler





Painting by Christa Jane Pierce. All rights reserved

I had a tree house  
One to sit in all day with my spouse  
I would read to the leaves  
Feel my hair move with the breeze  
A tree supporting so much  
Like a caring father that does such  
The power to hold all  
Until it gets cold, and the leaves fall

Wish by Gage Oshman

# Poems by Alexandra Miller

## Pages

Crack the spine loudly.  
Savor the pages fragrance  
Consume the content.

-

Turn the pages slowly.  
Continue reading aloud  
Voice calls me away.

-

Return to the book  
Curling up to read again  
The page comes to life.

-

Battle villains, win,  
travel, a faraway place  
at the climax, end

-

Close the book for now  
reaching for another.  
Open: Adventure.

## Pen to Paper

Pencil joins with paper.  
At once, a  
pattern of words  
begins to flow  
and spread  
about the page  
stories of another world  
of creatures  
unknown to man  
of sports played  
on the moon alone  
fairytales,  
fiction,  
novels,  
biographies

# Books

Books  
everywhere,  
open one  
and hear the sounds of  
a market in Cairo.  
Open one  
and smell the crisp air  
of the mountains.  
Open one  
and see the torrential rain in London.  
Open one  
and feel the passion of two lovers.  
Open one  
and share in the thoughts,  
the ideas  
of a criminal.  
Open one  
and take a journey,  
go on a trek,  
travel by map, or page  
follow a dream  
foil a plot,  
solve a mystery,  
travel to a place  
that may not even exist.  
Open one  
and experience,  
live,  
love,  
laugh,  
die,  
taste,  
smell,  
feel,  
hear,  
see,  
let down the barriers of your mind  
and allow these to wash over you,  
knocking you back,  
enticing you to read on,  
and all from one spot in the library.



# Simple Words

How could reading be an option?  
It definitely could not.  
I think of all the books I've read  
that will not easily be forgot.

The stories that stay inside my head  
The characters that become my friend  
The books that made me laugh out loud  
The ones where I cried at the end

All wonderful examples  
on why reading is required.  
It's more than just understanding words  
or knowledge you acquire.

It's the magic way simple words turn  
into stories, amazing and unique.  
The ones that remind us we're not alone  
when things are looking bleak.

by Rylee Wilson



# she writes a poem

words fill the pages  
the pages fill the void  
void an existence  
and her head is filled with these words  
not knowing their meaning  
she writes but the words lose reason  
she writes and the words are empty  
she lives without understanding  
the meaning lost in time  
the meaning, she sought for it.

from her head to the void  
from the void to the pages  
and on those word-filled pages  
meaning found.

by Michelle Chan

# My facade me

I used to rely on compliments  
But now I strive off them  
I used to keep my chin up  
But now I cry non-stop  
I used to follow my sister  
But now I lead us deeper in the dark  
I used to try to be myself  
But now it's no use trying

I seem to be all smiles  
But really I am lost  
I seem to be calm and collected  
But really I am screaming to speak  
I seem to be boy crazy  
But really I am just wanting to be loved  
I seem to be confused  
But really I am set on what I want

by Jackie Trammell





# The Truth

Though once you might have thought  
To cast away conformity,  
"We must go along with the majority."  
Are the words you've just wrought  
And now I finally realize  
The clanging bells of hypocrisy  
Have been tolling with the fluency  
Of your words used to visualize  
A world of individuals

Who am I to protest?  
You live and breathe what I only preach  
But you are the one who lives hidden away  
And you are the only one to say  
"What are you doing out of jail?"  
Individual is synonymous with single  
Single is synonymous with lone  
And to be alone is such your fate  
You, my friend, are one in millions  
Yet still forced to comply with law  
Yet still forced to go along

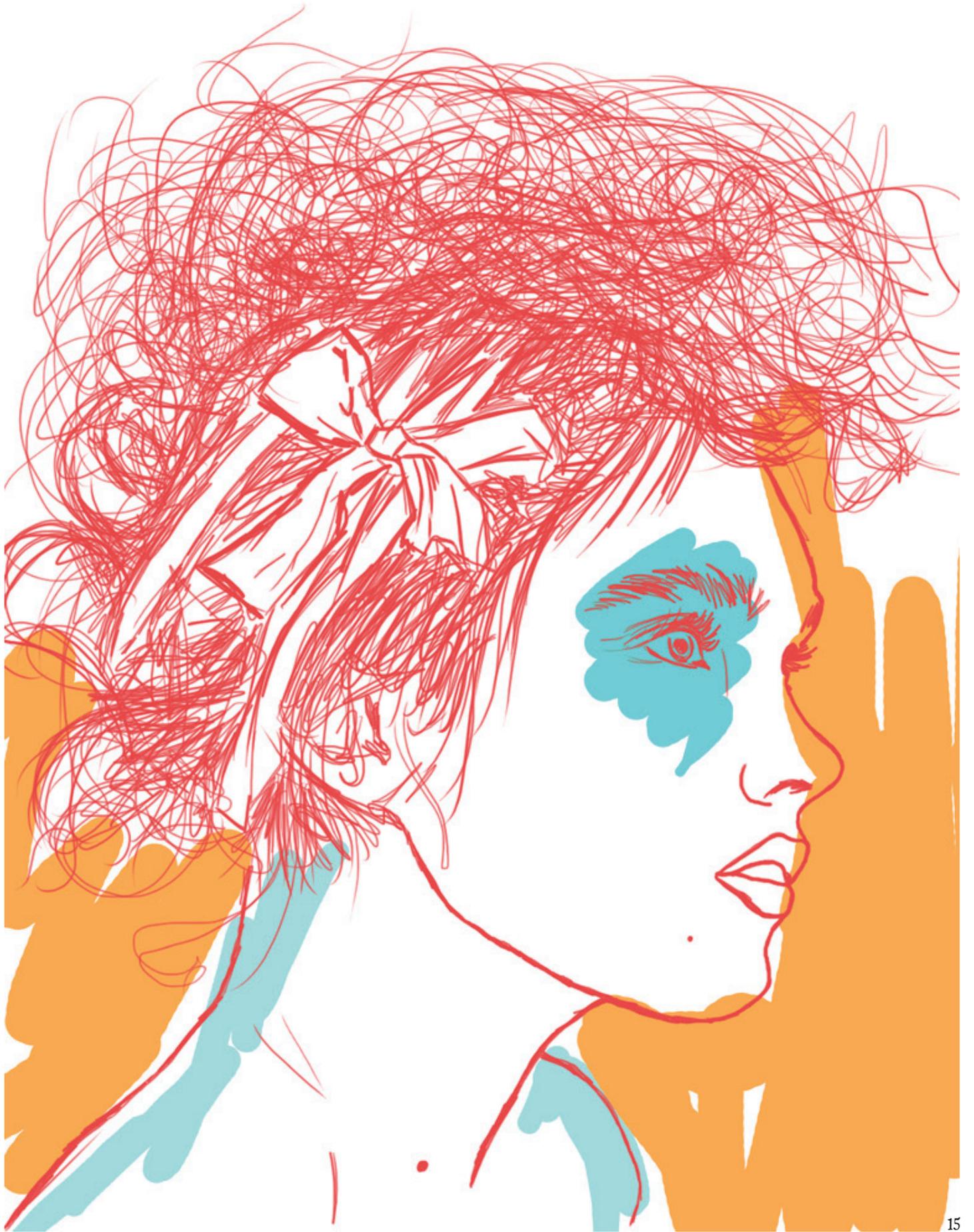
by Lauren McGrath

## Sarah Forbes Bonetta

### Captured African Princess

Screams thickened the air,  
A scene taken from a nightmare,  
Flames licked through the dry grass,  
Tribe members pounded the ground, fleeing,  
Rifles blasting, the sound deafening,  
I hid in my hut,  
Peering through the window,  
The air smelled of smoke and blood,  
My parents' heads lay a stone's throw away,  
Turning the grass red,  
The sky was holding its breath,  
Those who once screamed for life moments ago,  
Lay dead,  
Staining the African desert,  
Dark,  
Dark,  
Red.

by Calla Hinderks



## Lonnie Jackson

The days are piling up,  
But I can't move,  
So little motivation,  
Yet so much to prove.  
I don't want to be here,  
But don't know how to get away,  
My only escape,  
Is the game that I play.

I know that I'm good,  
But for Cal I'm not great,  
Playing for this wino,  
Just fuels my hate.  
He wants me to trust,  
But what do I decide?  
Do I play for him,  
Or do I hide?

Now for Mary-Ann,  
Foil Tyrone's plot,  
I never thought I'd do the right thing,  
By giving up the final shot.  
But now I wonder to myself,  
What was the moment worth,  
As we stand here mourning,  
Knowing Cal will go in the dirt.

One more walk, with Mary-Ann,  
College now, my future plan.  
Now I am certain, my days will not pile,  
That is at least, not for a while.

by Jacob McIntire



## Anthony Witherspoon

Eating my thoughts,  
Twisting my mind,  
Her shadow passes through,  
My words I can't find.

She looks to me, waiting,  
Her eyes pierce my heart,  
I know what is coming,  
I can't let it start.

My head contains voices,  
In sureness of the day,  
They tell me to worry,  
Her feelings have begun to sway.

She says nothing is wrong,  
There is no reason for change,  
I begin to go numb,  
She's acting so strange.

I realize it's ending,  
All too soon,  
She turns to the kitchen,  
I'm alone in this room.

by Tori Shephard



## Steve Harmon, age 16

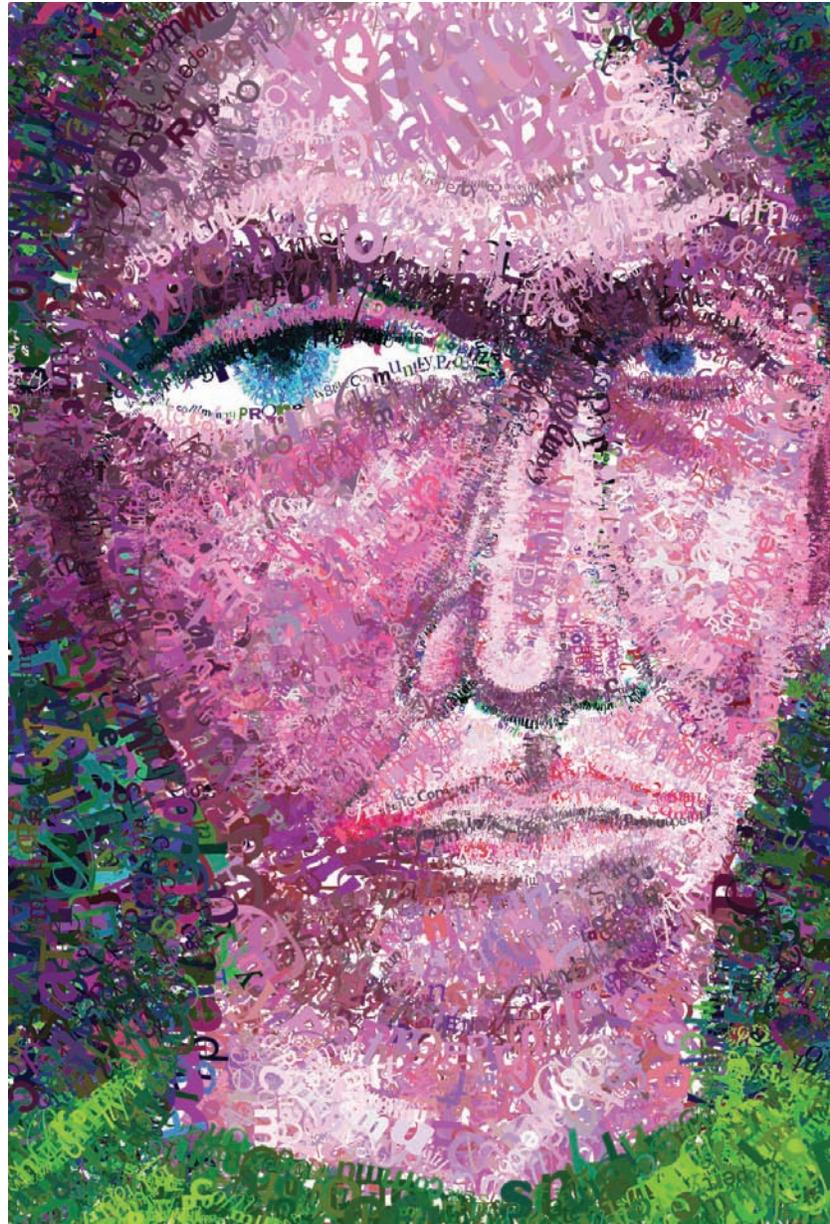
### Prisoner

They say they help,  
They ain't no good.  
Ask for food,  
Barely get kelp.  
I wish I could just be  
F r e e

They don't believe me  
When I say, "I ain't guilty!"  
They think I am filthy.  
I wish I could just be  
F r e e

Their eyes so cold,  
Pain that cannot hold,  
They wish they could whap!  
Can't wait to see me snap.  
I wish I could just be  
F r e e

by Paige Breyfogle



Mixed Media by Julia L. Kay. All rights reserved.



## Untitled

I want respect  
I need tough love

I want freedom  
I need control

I want to be wanted  
I need to be independent

I want things  
I need nothing

I want the high  
I need sobriety

I want happiness  
I need reality

I want no judgment  
I need the truth

by Jackie Trammell

## Wish

I wish I was home  
I wish I was stoned  
I wish I was high

I wish I could succeed  
I wish I would try.

by Jake Oltremari

## About My Life

I messed up with my life  
Now I get held with a knife  
I am out here trying to survive  
I'm glad I'm still alive  
I sit in JDC  
Thinking how my life is going to be  
My dad told me I would be aborted  
To my mom I was important

In me, she believes.  
For her, I want to succeed.

by Brady Barnes

## O'Brien, 35

### Patrol officer

Walking up and down every street,  
Every day – thump, thump, thump  
Go my boots.

Walking past the park  
Every day – thump, thump, thump  
Goes the wino's stereo.

Walking past Mother Fletcher's house  
Every day – thump, thump, thump  
Goes my heart.

by Emma Van Lieshout

## My Job

Will O'Brien - policeman

I met a woman  
Old as dirt  
Yet nice as the morning sun,  
Living where some considered  
The worst part of town  
Yet somehow  
She finds time  
To knit me a sweater  
Of dark green string  
Straight from the soul  
With kindness from the heart  
All because  
I did my job  
And called an ambulance  
As a good man should  
For a nice old lady

by Ryan Fitzgerald

## Officer Bill O'Brien

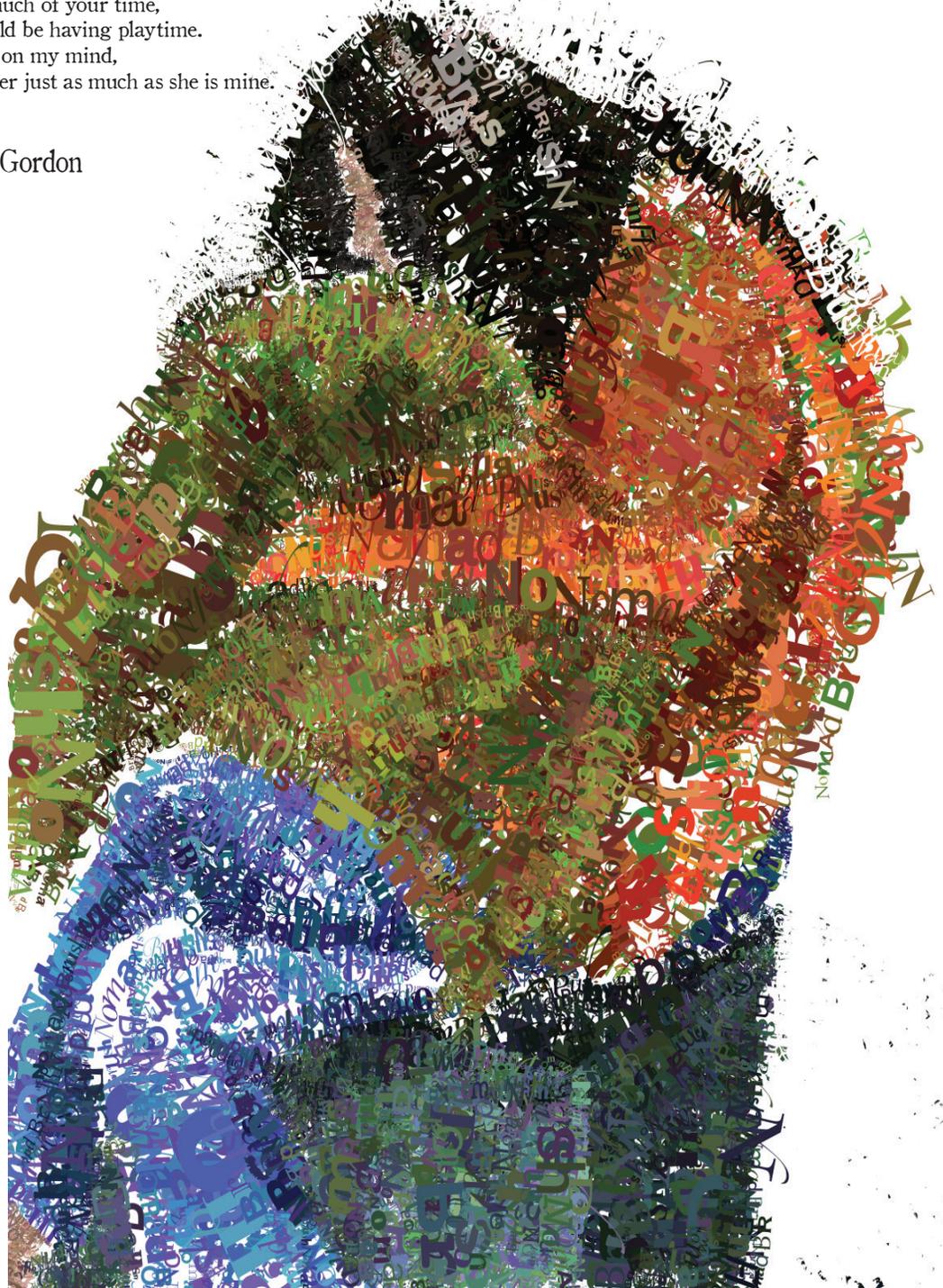
My job is so exhausting,  
I don't have time for parenting!  
Maybe my wife should try fighting crime,  
and I can stay home all day wasting time.  
All she does is cook and shop and clean,  
I don't understand how it's difficult to do those things.  
I know my daughter wants me to play with her,  
but I have to sign and organize so many papers.  
My job is so exhausting,  
I don't have time for parenting!

by Alexandra Gordon

## Kathy O'Brien

So much stress is on my mind,  
she's your daughter just as much as she is mine.  
I brush her hair and iron her sweater,  
when the winter brings such unfriendly weather.  
You might say your work is rough,  
well so is every day making our daughter's lunch.  
TV takes up so much of your time,  
instead, you should be having playtime.  
So much stress is on my mind,  
she's your daughter just as much as she is mine.

by Alexandra Gordon





# Why Reading Is So Important To The World

Reading. Books. Even if the two are generally frowned upon in our day and age, they shouldn't be. Books are the things that raised our nation. John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, John Hancock, and countless others used books, or rather, the knowledge they gained by reading the classics in history, philosophy, and literature, to create the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. The best books have influenced the organization of a government that protects our freedom and rights here in America. So how can these classical books not be important? And just because those people and those events are past and gone now, doesn't mean that books have become any less important. In fact, we young people need to keep up the great tradition of reading the classics to become educated and well-versed in the world, so that we can better fulfill our future leadership roles.

Why would becoming educated and well-versed in the world be important? Think of it like this: we are the future. We are the people who are going to be running this country. We are the people who will be teaching in our schools, who will be running our businesses, who will be our congressmen. We are the future. If we want to be successful leaders in the future, we must learn from the past. We can't just expect things to come to us naturally. We are the future. We have to learn; we have to prepare. How are we going to do that?

READ THE CLASSICS! And while the Internet is very useful (that cannot be denied), it doesn't always present hard facts. Websites and blogs are created every day, and those are full of information, and a lot of biased opinion. The Internet is designed for short articles, bursts of information, short blogs and opinion pieces, and 60-second video clips. Whereas books, and the classics specifically, exercise a person's ability to read, write, and comprehend; they require focus and sustained effort, and an attention span longer than it takes to read, "OMG." Of course, not all books are equal: Goosebumps is not Jane Eyre, or Plato's Republic, or The History of Herodotus. "In order to form a more perfect union," and understand and maintain our rights, we must become truly educated. Books are the best way of doing that.

If you've already read plenty of books and are thinking, "I already do all that, isn't that good enough?" I thank you. Our posterity thanks you. But, your "good enough" isn't good enough. You have to be the very best you can be. This means that you must keep reading, and encourage others to read. If you have and do, again, I thank you.

We are the future. We must become the future leaders that our founding fathers would be proud of. Let us become educated, let us explore behind the cover of those classics that began our great country. Don't just let them sit on the shelf, gathering dust. READ. We are the future.

by Leanne Chun

# Blood, White, and Blue

February 2003

by Catherine Strayhall

It's been more than 30 years since Nam. It's been about 20 years since the Wall went up, but this is my first time visiting it. Right now, my nephew, Robin, is headed to Kuwait, and probably soon, Iraq, for another war. Ever since he joined the military instead of going to college, just like I did, I've felt a need to come here. When I called Peewee to tell him where I was headed, he said I was crazy. We've both avoided any invitation from any of the guys from Alpha Company to go. He didn't try to talk me out of going. He knew it was useless. Before he hung up, though, he asked me a question.

"Hey, Perry, you'll say hey to the guys for me, right? I just, I mean, I don't think I can..."

"You know I will, man. You know I will," I had replied.

The clouds above me are dark, heavy grays and blacks. It's around 1:00 in the afternoon, but it looks like nighttime.

Before I head to the Wall, I stop by the Vietnam Women's Memorial, which depicts three female nurses, or Faith, Hope, and Charity, helping an injured soldier. I already live with Nam everyday; the sound of the gunfire all around me, the burning hell of napalm, the hours of fear when our patrol sat in the darkness, waiting. Just waiting.

But I wasn't prepared for this trip, for all the memories rushing back at once, many of which I've tried in vain to forget. And I definitely wasn't prepared for the statue of Hope, the female nurse with her eyes lifted toward the sky in trust and belief, to look just like Judy Duncan. Judy, who'd

told me she liked that I knew the good stuff in life. Judy, who'd barely known me, but checked up on me in the hospital when she recognized me from the flight to Nam. Judy, who kissed me goodbye. When Peewee and I were headed back to the World after our injuries, I discovered

I feel like I'm being pulled apart, and I haven't even made it to my final destination yet. I take a deep breath, salute the statue, and head to the Wall.

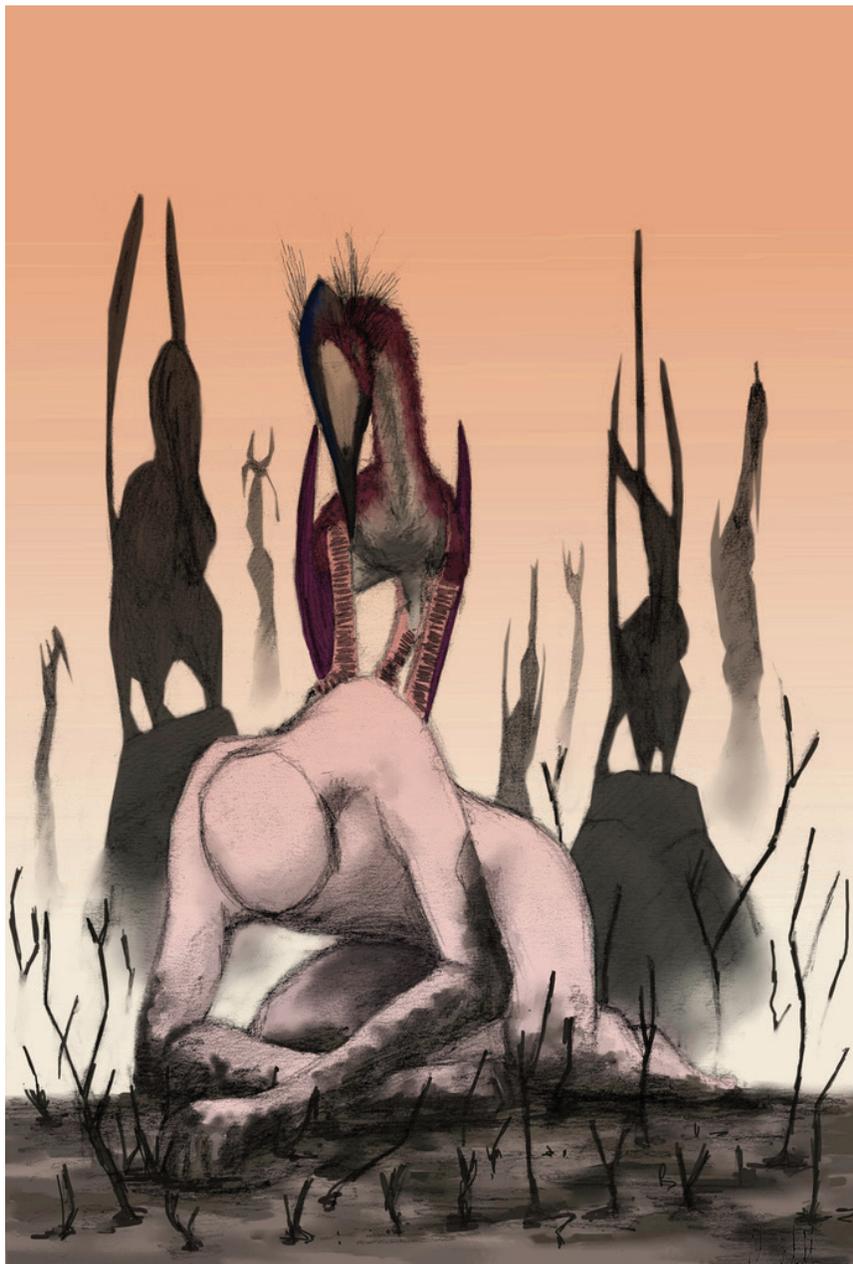
The American flag whips in the wind high above, its colors contrasting the darkness of the sky. Suddenly, the red

stripes become blood to me. I smell the blood on Jenkins where he's been hit, his wound bubbling as he draws his final breath. I feel my own warm blood leaving my body as everything around me spins. I see the bloodiness of the destroyed face of the VC I shoot, and keep shooting, the one who almost kills me. Click! Click! Click! Click! I hear each time I escape death by his hands, see his fear as he tries to force his gun to work before I turn his face into a twisted mass of bone and blood.

Thunder booms, bringing me back to the present, where I stand frozen on the sidewalk.

As I make my feet move, more voices and thoughts flash through my head. I hear people tell me in the World and in Nam that my knee will keep me from combat, or that the war will be over in a few days. I feel Brew's hand in mine as we lay side-by-side in the chopper before the medics cover him. I smell the bodies we burn in a hut, the ones whose tags burn along with them as we hurriedly do the only thing we can to keep them safe in death from the enemy.

The Wall is right in front of me now. They have directories that tell you how to find who you're looking for, but I just head toward 1967 and 1968. I feel a need to discover the names myself. I pass a middle-aged woman crying, her hand resting on the Wall in desperation. I walk by a man with the straight-backed



she'd died when the field hospital she was transferred to was hit. It was like a punch in the gut, knocking all the breath from my body. Standing in front of that statue, I remember that she was from Texas. I remember the tired look in her eyes at the hospital.

posture of a veteran as he stares steadily at the names. Two young children sit on the ground next to the flowers their parents have rested in front of the Wall, somehow understanding the need for silence. There aren't too many people here; most are probably indoors, away from the thunder and lightning that are occurring closer together with every passing minute. The air is thick and charged as the anomalous February storm draws near.

Something makes me stop walking even before I look up to check the years, knowing I am in the right spot. Pacing a stretch of the Wall, I find them all. Sergeant Dongan. Turner. Lewis. Jenkins. Brew. Seeing their names etched into the black granite is painful. Each letter is like a bullet tearing through my body. Just as the heavens open up, I find Lieutenant Carroll's name. My hand feels the etched letters as I press my fingers to the smooth, black Wall that's already slick. Slowly, I bend over, ignoring the rain and lightning as I rest a sunflower on the ground. The Lieutenant was from Kansas. I'd thought he'd like that.

I step back from the looming Wall and let my eyes rove over all the names that are carved into the long, black slate. I can't help but realize that the people they represent are free from pain and hard memories, the kind that wake you up in a cold sweat at 3:00 a.m., or that you can't explain to your family no matter how much they try to understand.

I remember Lieutenant Carroll calling Jenkins an angel warrior, and how Monaco recited his prayer after the Lieutenant died. The cold rain beats down on me, and my clothes are thoroughly soaked. Lightning flashes, and thunder echoes all around me, shaking my surroundings, but I stand stock still, and do my best to keep my voice steady as I say it for all of them, and for every name on that Wall.

"Lord, let us feel pity for Lieutenant Carroll, and sorrow for ourselves, and all the angel warriors that fall. Let us fear death, but let it

not live within us. Protect us, O Lord, and be merciful unto us. Amen."

My words are swallowed up by the howling wind, but I feel lighter for having said them. As I stand there in the pounding rain, more memories hit. The thunder becomes artillery. The flashes of lightning are flares and shells, rising into the sky as light or a signal, or speeding down to bring destruction. I feel the grip of death as Peewee and I sit in that Cong's spider hole, alone and scared.

Mostly, I think of how I became less and less sure during my tour of why we were in Nam. Why were we trying to take one small hill, and then watching our fellow soldiers be cut down around us by hidden VCs? Why were we fighting a war where the Vietnamese boy a woman handed to a GI exploded in his arms, blowing him apart and forcing other men to shoot down the woman and her other child? Many long years and sleepless nights later, I still don't know The Why.

When Peewee and I made it back to the world, everything had changed. Many people hated me for fighting for our country, for following orders. They spat on me when they found out where I'd spent my late teens. Called me "baby killer." I never said a damn thing in response, because how can you describe Hell to someone?

Kenny thought I was a hero back then. He wanted to know how many bad guys I had killed, what the guys in my unit were like, what it was like to go on patrol. I could never find the words to explain Nam to him, either. Maybe it's better that he didn't know.

And maybe they were right to spit on me back then. I was certainly no hero. I was just a poor kid from Harlem who had the brains for college, but not the money. I was the guy who helped shoot our own men once in moment of fear and confusion. I was a man who made it home when so many others who deserved to did not. I turn from the Wall.

My boots squelch as I walk away, each step taking all my energy. I hope to God that if

Robin faces combat in Iraq, he makes it back in one piece. A lot has happened since my war, but any soldier understands the fear and uncertainty that come with combat. Friends die all around you; you fear you'll never see your family again. I never wanted that for my nephew. He sometimes looked disappointed in me because I wouldn't tell him about Nam. He tried to hide it, but I could see it in his eyes. The truth is, I couldn't tell him, just like I could never tell Kenny everything that had happened to me, how it had changed me. Maybe if I had talked to Robin, he wouldn't have joined, even if he did feel a need to take a stand after the horror of that Tuesday in September a year and a half ago.

If he dies, Kenny will blame me. Kenny had wanted me to talk his son out of it, convince him to go to college instead. He'd seen the ways I was broken when I came back, even if I mostly seemed to be the same big brother as before. But this was a decision Robin needed to make for himself.

I need Robin to make it home safely, not just so he can live out the rest of his life, but for his mother's and Kenny's sake, and for mine. If there's any chance that my words could've kept him home safe – no matter how small a chance – I'd never forgive myself for being too tired and aching to share them.

The rain is still falling. I turn one last time, touching my hand to the dead metal of my dog tags. I throw one final salute at the Wall, the statues, and the flag in the distance.

The last thing I see before I turn around again is the white of stars waving in the wind, mixed up in a swirl of blood, white, and blue.

"Amen," I say to myself.

"I'm sorry."

"I love the worlds inside books  
that seem as real as ours,  
And that I have the power to  
make my own sky and stars."

by Catherine Strayhall



Mixed Media by Sierra Wilson

## O'Brien's Gun

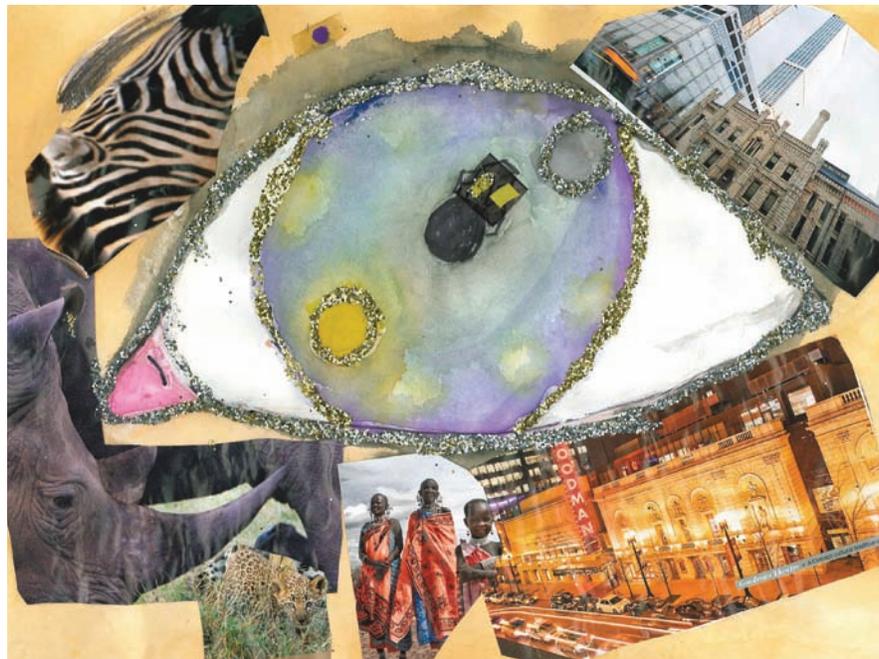
A gun's cause's harm  
To the innocent  
And gives fairness to the verdict  
It's not really the gun but,  
The soul behind the gun

by Anna Castillo

# This Man

This man is rueful,  
This man was done,  
This man let go, temptation had won.  
This man was punished, for things of great crime,  
This man left a sod to eat on a dime.  
This man, crushed and torn,  
This man was tired and worn.  
This man, turned to a book.  
This man found his place,  
This man, changed his ways.  
This man grew older, and wiser,  
This man was not just a man, but an advisor.  
This man changed, and came "home",  
This man wasn't truly home, but forced to roam.  
This man faced tough decisions,  
This man was sleeping, he saw a vision.  
This man looked into HIS eyes,  
This man was forgiven for all his lies.  
This man was left in awe,  
This man looked in a heart, with no flaw.  
This man had realized his true place,  
This man had seen HIS face.  
This man is now brave,  
This man is fearless to his GRAVE.  
This man is truly a MAN...

by Enrique Gutierrez



Mixed Media by Serena Fenaroli



## The Coffin

The coffin wood grabs at my clothes  
The wood chokes me  
The darkness attacks me  
The weariness crawls around me  
When it opens the sun grabs me  
I am back

by Jack Kavanaugh

## Restaurant owner

What makes me me,  
Is the way I see things.  
The happiness it brings,  
That tells others what I see.

The way I see things,  
Brings out the colors around us,  
That helps me see clearer,  
It also brings me nearer to my dear, dear friends.

by Abby Headley

## Giver

When I give, I don't think of me  
But still I'm known for my generosity  
I just gotta give.

One gift for your apartment's rent  
One gift for the woman whose cash is spent

One gift, this I believe,  
One gift is all you need.

by Emma Van Lieshout



Mixed Media  
by Jenna Gallogly

## Big Joe's Fake Funeral

Music Will Play  
People Will Cry

But Big Joe  
Didn't Die

by Alex Pereira

## Peaches Jones

Hey! You see that  
girl? Yeah right over  
there. Yes the pretty

one. Yea she's pretty  
as a peach on a large  
peach tree. But she isn't

the type you want  
to hang around with.  
She isn't any good.

She spews words that could  
Burn you like fire. Hot with

Curses and sears. Yes I'm  
sorry to say a

girl like that is bad

news! It isn't anyone's fault but  
hers and her attitude

I am Peaches Jones

by Ciara Smith



Mixed Media by Anna Castillo

## Haiku

Angry and spiteful  
Attractive and very tall  
Yah I am a teen

by Micayla Gleaton

# Peaches

Mother is marrying Big Joe.  
Why she decided to, I do not know.  
Doesn't she know,  
She is betraying Father?  
Doesn't she know I don't want to be a daughter,  
To anyone but Father?

But I am torn.  
Squeezie says Mother will feel forlorn,  
If I tell her what I really think  
If I tell her that I don't want them together,  
Connected, like a link.

If only Father were here  
I wish he hadn't disappeared.  
Like a candle, suddenly blown out.  
Like a flower's petals,  
Drifting slowly down to Earth  
Without a single doubt

Right now, they both look so happy,  
Dancing together and acting all sappy  
Mother is finally again in love  
Mother is floating above the ground,  
Just as a dove.

I have decided  
I must sacrifice.  
For my Mother, as a daughter, I must suffice.  
I still do not fully approve this,  
All this marrying and betraying father  
But for my Mother, I give my consent.  
For my Mother, who is now finally  
Content.

by Romila Santra

# Peaches

My name is Peaches,  
I am not very fond of Big Joe,  
I think my mother deserves better than a man with dough.  
He is selfish, impatient, and acts like a child,  
Even though he helps people, and he has a very big smile.  
My mother deserves better than Mr. Old Big Joe,  
She sees him as a funny man with dough,  
But I can see,  
Something that my mother doesn't, it is just that he,  
Really likes my mother,  
He treats her with care, but I think he is a bother.  
He thinks it's funny to fake being dead,  
He lies in his coffin like he is in a bed.  
Smirking and thinking that it is funny,  
To spend all that money,  
Even though he is not dead.  
My name is Peaches,  
And I am not fond of Big Joe,  
My mother deserves better, than a man with dough.

by Bryson Vanlandingham

# Peaches

It was a bad day.  
Mysterious,  
Big Joe had a bad idea.  
He was going to ruin our street.  
Big Joe is a bad man.

I will stop him.  
I won't let him do this.  
Everybody will hate him.  
I'm not just a little kid.  
I am going to take charge.

He was faking.  
But everybody believed him.  
He will pay for his actions.  
We are too good for him.  
Destroyed.

I will suffer the consequences.  
He is doing the wrong thing.  
I am standing up for my ideas.  
The smell of funerals makes me sick.  
The day was dark.

Lonely,  
Not dead,  
Lying,  
It's over,  
This was not funny.

by Nancy Green

# Let Me Show Me

by Bailey Reinoehl

Look at her,  
I look at myself.  
I see him,  
I see myself.  
I find what I want...  
It's not an option.

Color shows on her hair,  
color shows in my eyes.  
Color brightens his arms,  
color runs from my mind.  
Color is what I want...  
It's not an option.

Change is in her veins,  
change is in my soul.  
Change looks at me,  
change turns away.  
Change is what I want...  
It's not an option.

Spirit moves them left and right,  
spirit moves only my heart.  
Spirit rushes people to new places,  
spirit rushes back home.  
Spirit is what I want...  
It's not an option.

Joy brightens their eyes,  
joy brightens, then lightens.  
Joy sparks their lives,  
joy sparks, then dies.  
Joy is what I want...  
It's not an option.

Expression lightens their day,  
expression lightens my thoughts.  
Expression pulls them farther,  
expression pulls me to dream.  
Expression is what I want...  
It's not an option.

Parents want me perfect,  
parents want no change.  
Parents see no other way,  
parents see only their way.  
Parents must see what I want;  
It's not an option.

# untitled

by Skyler Pippin



Painting by Angel Mitchell

I hate putting my family  
through pain  
If I could wrong my rights I  
would be sane  
Until that point I hang  
my head in shame

I wish not but blame myself

For what I did I know not  
Help  
They know I do have faith  
Even though I'm in this  
deep dark place

ohne  
die  
be  
L  
um  
de  
Nein  
del  
und  
man  
und  
kle  
Falt  
ne  
den  
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f  
nicht  
ne

# Black



wish more things were black.  
Watch the depression stack  
Bury the emotion in a deep sack  
Take all the hate and give it back  
The whip of remorse has a thundering crack  
I wish more things were black.

by Gage Oshman

die fesseln köchen oder tinner  
jeden Tag gegen neht bla fuh der  
dann einmal nicht was war noch niemals  
achte nach in welchen sah von rein  
alte tran die h gegenüber wohnte  
siner an ihr gair in gewöhlich  
lichtete dann aber als ihre tag  
Lohnung



One Word  
Can make the difference.  
Guilty? or Not?

It doesn't matter what I think.  
It only matters what the jury believes.  
I am nothing but a name in a story.

And that terrifies me.  
I have no control.  
Will the rest of my life be like this?

One word  
Can make the difference.  
Guilty? or Not?

## One Word



I hope they've done their job.  
Made me look innocent.  
Made me look kind.

But the other side's done their job  
Made me look like a monster.  
Trying to seal my fate.

One word  
Can make the difference.  
Guilty? or Not?

The question mark  
Inconsequential, but also important.  
The fate of a world, mine, depends on it.

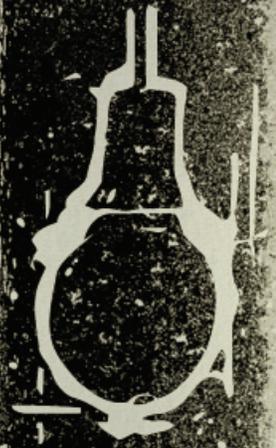
One word  
Can make the difference.  
Guilty? or Not?

I can't control my destiny.  
I don't know why this happened to me.  
Am I a monster like they say?

by Rylee Wilson

Mixed Media courtesy of Flickr user Annokath  
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# MOTHER

## Full Grown

I'm old, I tell them,  
Older than you.  
I tell them I'm old,  
I'm full-grown.

I've seen many days,  
Lived many years.  
I've been many places,  
I'm full-grown.

I'm very old,  
That's all there is to it.  
You don't need to know the number,  
I'm full-grown.

by Anna Wolock

## Growing Old

I used to be young,  
Running around Harlem having fun.  
But now I grow old,  
And the angels are calling.

Time to go home,  
Time to go home.

Leaving the ones that I love,  
And meeting the ones that I have lost.  
Going home at last  
Knowing that I am done.

by Hunter Woosley

# Fletcher

Every day is a new day.

day is a new day.

Every day is a new day.

the Sun also rises.



Drawing courtesy of Nick.

# Old Woman

by Greta Pereira

When I look at myself I see  
Harlem reflected back at me  
A great city with  
A great history  
When I look at myself, I see the roads I have traveled  
To get here, and though they took a while,  
In the map of wrinkles in my face  
They are long, but lead to a smile  
When I look at myself,  
In the dark pool of my eye,  
I see all of my memories,  
And let out a sigh,  
Because when I look at myself,  
Crippled with pain and age,  
I see all of Harlem's hurt  
All of Harlem's rage  
When I look at myself,  
Though I may be old and frail,  
I see how Harlem has risen up

To help itself, its people  
And how it has never failed  
To make a home for everyone,  
No matter who they are, or what they may be  
How it has pushed aside its feelings to make everyone a place  
And that is what I see, when I look inside of me

# Mother Fletcher

by Ashley Ruckman

My skin dark as a winter's midnight,  
Tiny body as delicate as morning light.  
As worn as dusty books on the attic floor,  
Don't expect things to happen on their own anymore.  
My eyes like coal in a lifeless fireplace,  
Beneath a dark and bony face.

The best things in life are not out in plain sight,  
Sharing is the key to unlocking delight.  
Giving sweaters is my way of saying,  
"Thanks for all the help you're displaying."  
This is what our earth needs,  
More love, kindness, and benevolent good deeds.

Thanking others means a lot,  
For all the helpfulness they've brought.  
When they know how much you care,  
Friends appear out of thin air.  
These companions will stick by your side,  
The bonds will never be untied.

But all thanks have very different looks,  
Doesn't have to be expressed by knitting hooks,  
It doesn't even need to be classy,  
Or big or bold or slightly flashy,  
Gratitude shown in a simple way,  
To show your thanks and make someone's day.

# Poor Great-Great-Grandmother

by Calla Hinderks

A creaking windowpane,  
Pelted with snow,  
Reflecting light onto the dusty, deep brown floor.  
The rooms seems to sigh, pained with age,  
Abandoned; left waiting,  
The cold is kept at bay by a single lamp,  
Filling the small space with warmth.  
A cracked oven door clicks open,  
Spreading the aroma of beef and spices.  
Chipped china lay strewn upon the counter top,  
Covered in holiday foods,  
Gray in the dull light.  
Abandoned; left waiting.  
A single rocking chair,  
Tucked in the corner,  
Tilting back and forth,  
An old woman sits upon it,  
And sighs with the room,  
Abandoned; left waiting,  
On  
Christmas  
Eve.



Photograph by Samantha Hilderhof

## Mother Fletcher

by Tripp Shertenlieb

Full-grown Harlem lady  
Eyes as black as night  
If caught in a situation  
Her decision would be right

Full-grown Harlem lady  
Welcomes every child  
If one makes a wrong decision  
They will be reconciled

Full-grown Harlem lady  
Quiet as a mouse  
Please invite me over  
To your little lonely house

Full-grown Harlem lady  
Happy as can be  
You now have cleared my vision  
This work, I now can see

Full-grown Harlem lady  
Expecting nothing much  
Couldn't show up to her house  
She'll make some sweaters and such

Full-grown Harlem lady  
With a very big heart  
If you find a new perspective  
She has done her part

## Angela, 10

Singer

Out of my mouth  
Comes a beautiful song  
All of Harlem  
Sings along  
In the church  
Bells ring  
Saluting our friend,  
Big Joe, they sing  
The world dances to  
The sweet sound  
The best is the  
Earth's pulse, all around  
When I stop  
It is still  
Except for wind weaving  
Through the streets and hills  
In the town  
All is quiet, calm  
While Harlem sings its

Own silent psalm  
For Big Joe  
For our friend  
Here in Harlem  
'Til the end

by Greta Pereira

## Leroy Brown, 55

Band Leader

My pulse rises when we begin to play  
"Amazing Grace" and "One More River to Cross"  
This is where I belong  
Playing with the All-Star Stompers all day long  
I hope they play on my dying day

by Connor O'Brien

## Freddy

Deceased & Homeless

Freddy oh Freddy  
Is an alcoholic  
He will beg you to lend him spare change,  
To grab an ice cold beer at the bar.  
He will never be quiet!  
He is underground laying in a coffin.  
Freddy oh Freddy.

by Chad Roberts

## JT

I live on the streets  
I don't have a pillow or sheets  
I've been arrested many times  
All for stolen goods worth only pennies and dimes  
I have to steal to survive  
Even though I don't really thrive  
But I'm still me  
And that's JT

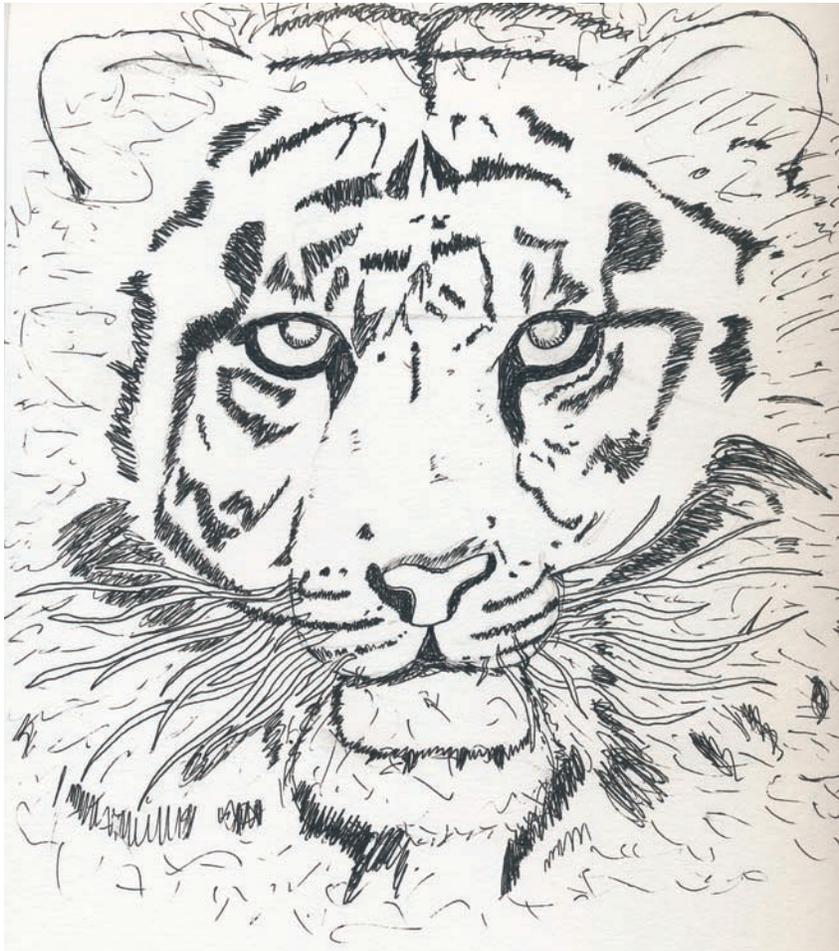
by Chris Farrell



## Larry, 50

His music will dance around you  
And pour into your heart  
They will run around the rooms  
And jump around the walls  
He will bake his notes in emotions  
For you to taste  
You will never want to leave  
His house of soul

by Samuel Pankey



Drawing by Teara Perry

## The Tigros

They are dangerous and frightening,  
Like a strike of lightning.  
You have to watch out,  
Because they can black you out.  
You try to hold back,  
Until the police come attack.  
Watch out they're coming,  
Just like lightning is stunning.  
Can you make it through?  
So nothing happens to you?  
You can do it,  
You know it's true.  
You can do anything,  
If you believe in you.  
The tigros are bad,  
Their parents are probably sad.  
The lady tigros are worse,  
Just like a wasp sting hurts.  
Hang on to yourself,  
Don't give up,  
You can do it,  
Don't be like a pup.  
What can I say?  
I can't just be on my way.  
I'll say goodbye,  
But please don't cry.

by Sophia Daniel

# The Mistake Girl

by Portia Miller

The mistake girl is in the corner,  
Facing the wall,  
Counting how many cracks are in the cheap,  
Thinning plaster.  
Trying desperately and  
Failing to block out her mother's voice.  
Seductive,  
Setting a price.

The mistake girl is in the hallway,  
Frizzy hair confined under a pair of headphones.  
The music understands her,  
doesn't hurt,  
Or hate her.  
It blocks out the sound of her mother's job.

The tattered notebook is her savior,  
Bitten at the edges,  
A feast for the rats,  
Pregnant with too many papers.  
Full of truths,  
And Fantasy,  
Which makes life bearable.

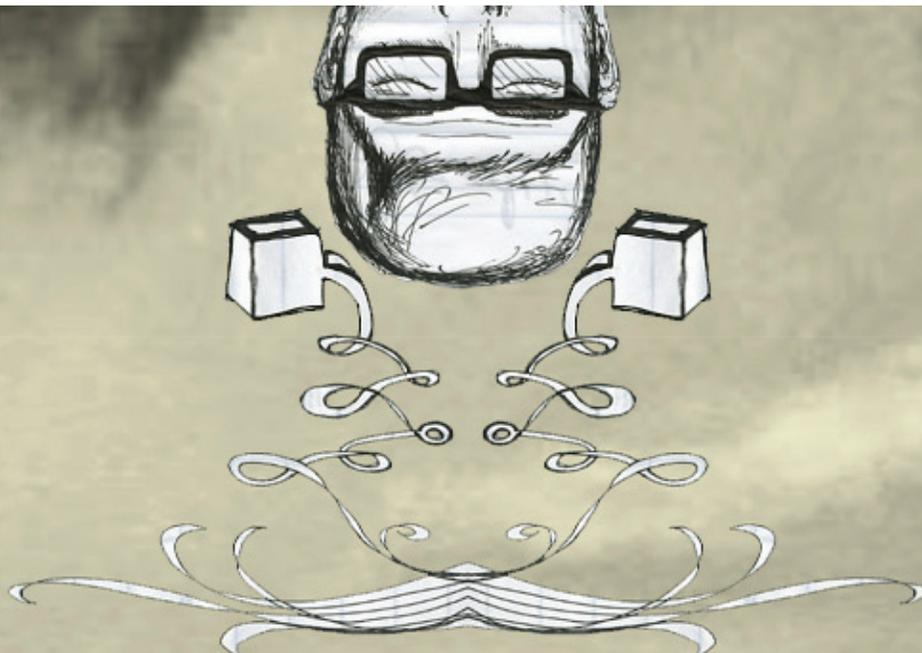
The mistake girl is in the basketball court,  
Sitting on the bleachers,  
With her constant companions,  
The tattered notebook,  
And the headphones.  
A high schooler comes up,  
Shouting,  
The insults fall on,  
Headphoned ears,  
Only filled with sweet music,  
Not the dirt of the streets.

The mistake girl is crying in the hallway,  
Crying,  
With the remains of her savior,  
Cradled in her hands,  
Mourning her loss,  
With her mother.  
Holding her hand  
Being there while her daughter's world  
is crashing down around her.

The mistake girl is in school,  
Being picked on.  
No protection,  
A new notebook clutched closely.

The mistake girl is in her world,  
Where people are kind,  
And look up to her.  
They don't rip up her notebook,  
Or push her down to the unforgiving ground.

Right now,  
She is protected from the world.  
But soon,  
The real world,  
Will stop  
the music.



## These Are My Friends

I am me  
They are them,  
Three halves make a whole.  
They are the oddballs  
Nerds and geeks  
People with voices in their heads  
And we love being weird  
We're none of your labels,  
And yet ... all of them.

Welcome to my family.

by Portia Miller





## The Tease

The chase reels me in.  
You lie and fake me out till the end.  
I hope and pray that you will be true.  
But you let me down.  
Screw you.

by Jackie Trammell

# Call of the Unbiased

by Lauren McGrath

You see the clothes  
You see the hair  
You don't see the person there.  
(You see a thing)

You don't see the scars or bruises  
You don't see the fragileness  
You see only what you want to see.  
(You don't see a person with emotions)

You don't really see the tears  
You don't really see the pain  
You just laugh like it's all a game.  
(You see what you've been told to see)

The 'nerd', the 'geek'  
The 'emo', the 'goth'  
The 'fag', the 'dyke'  
The 'weirdo', the 'freak'  
The 'whore', the 'slut'  
Even...  
The 'prep', the 'jock'  
(They're people too, you know)

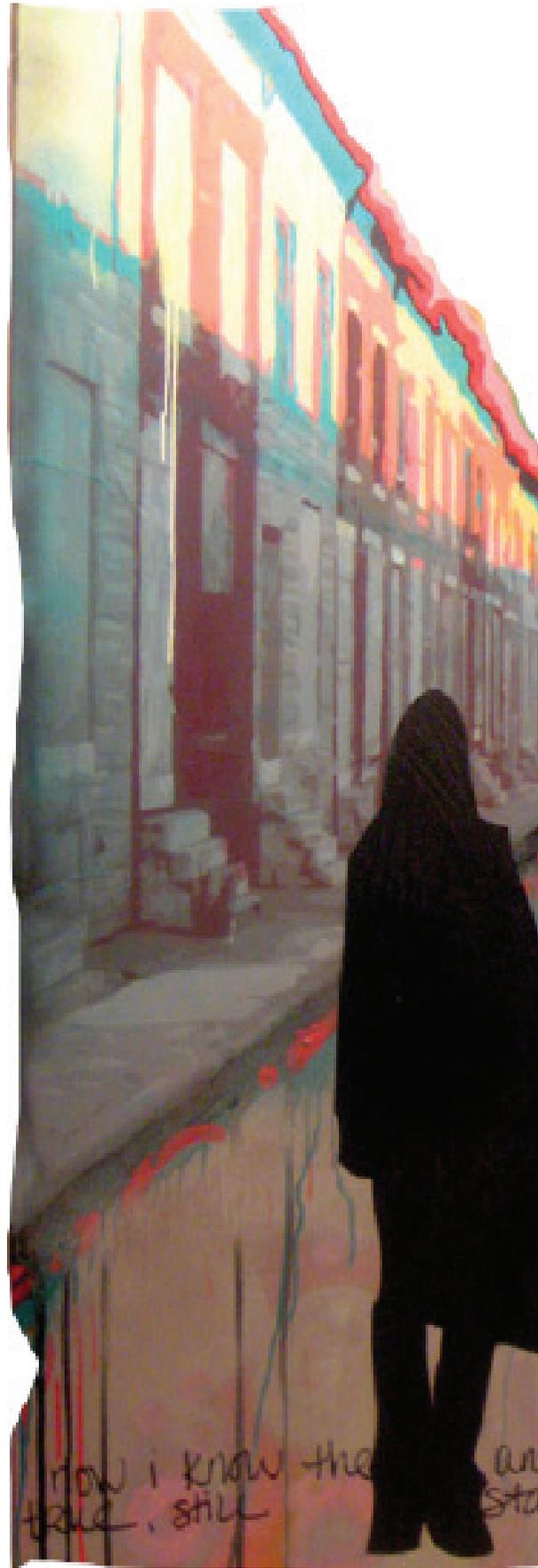
Hopes, dreams, ambitions  
Wants, desires  
Now,  
Broken hearts.

Look at what you did in your selfishness  
You crushed a flower not yet bloomed  
And tore it from its roots.

(Can you see now?)  
(Can you really see?)  
(Try, why don't you, to see through the veils)

(Stop the lies, bare the truths)  
(And when the truths are bared)  
(Don't look away)

Learn to see more than what you were told to see  
(Learn to see more than what we were all told to see)  
This world is dark and dirty  
(We made this world so filthy)  
So maybe, instead of crushing the flowers we don't like  
(Instead of continuing the circle of bias, and hate)  
You should let them grow and flourish  
(Be the better person and break the chain)  
Then maybe, this world, so filled with filth  
(Then maybe the word 'equals'  
Could grow and flourish  
(Could mean something)  
Into a garden  
(Meaningful)



# The Endless Spirit

A bright desire shines, wanting to be noticed  
Throughout the day,  
she begins to lose hope, starting  
to diminish as if she were to disappear.  
Fading to nothing more than a shadow  
of what once was.

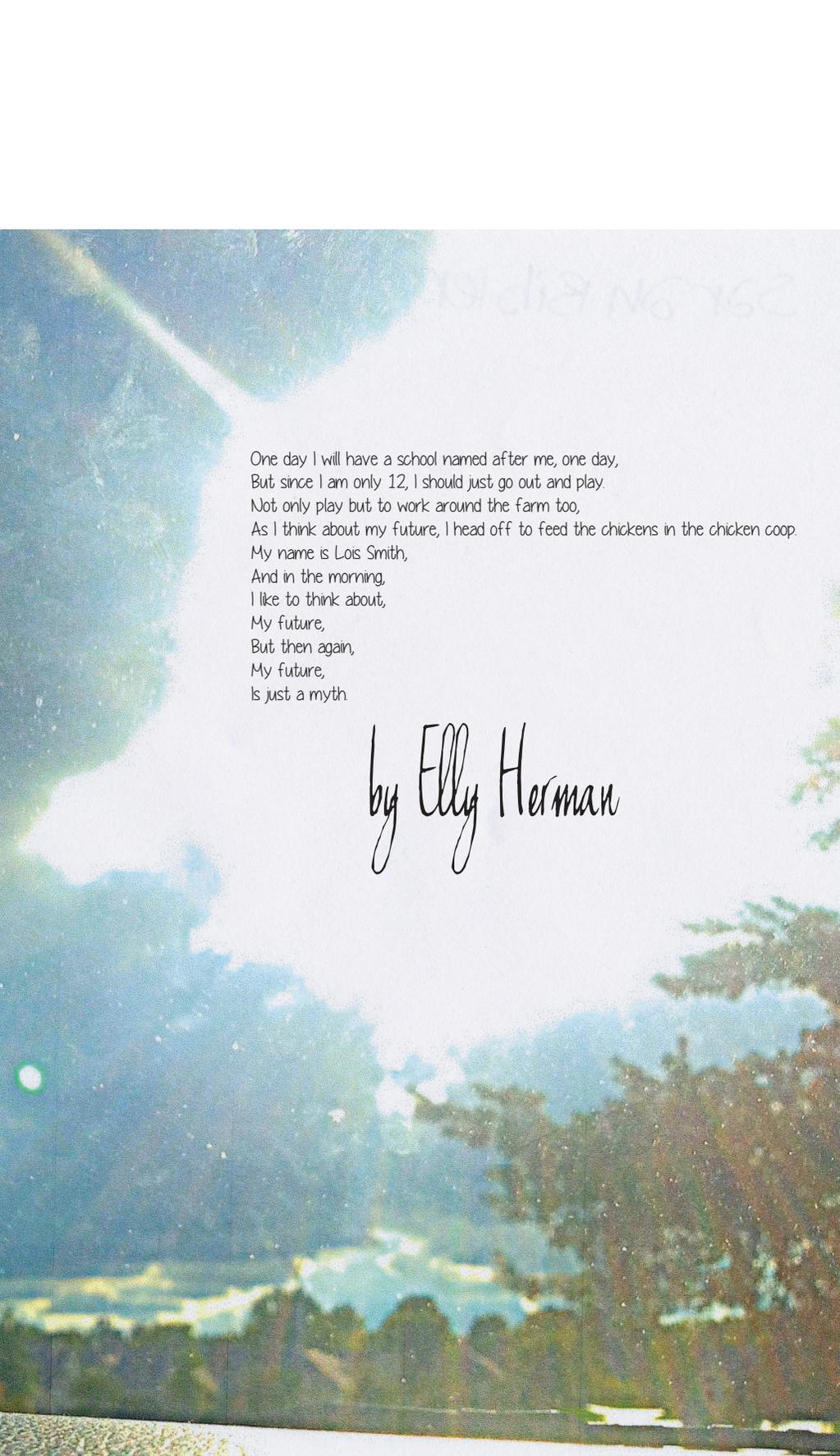
As she sets into the horizon, she smiles  
lightly to herself, thinking tomorrow  
is another day to try again.

by Emily Hilderhey



## In The Morning

In the morning, I open my eyes  
Sit up and stretch, and let out small cries  
I wiggle my toes, and crinkle my nose,  
And get out of bed to the sound of rooster crows  
I slip on my jeans, and my long furry coat,  
I creep downstairs and out to feed the goat  
I live on a farm, with my uncle and aunt,  
I want to go to school but I can't  
I am very smart, not many shady kids are,  
12 years old but I can still be a star  
One day I'd like a school named after me,  
Nobody listens, "I'm just a small pea"  
As I walk out of our house, I stop and think,  
"Is this who I am?" And just let that thought sink  
In my head, it seems to grow inside,  
"Is this who I am?" It echoes in my mind  
I'm only 12, but I can see,  
A successful future ahead of me  
As I walk to the field, I thought and thought,  
Because that one thought had me thinking a lot.



One day I will have a school named after me, one day,  
But since I am only 12, I should just go out and play.  
Not only play but to work around the farm too,  
As I think about my future, I head off to feed the chickens in the chicken coop.  
My name is Lois Smith,  
And in the morning,  
I like to think about,  
My future,  
But then again,  
My future,  
Is just a myth.

by Elly Herman

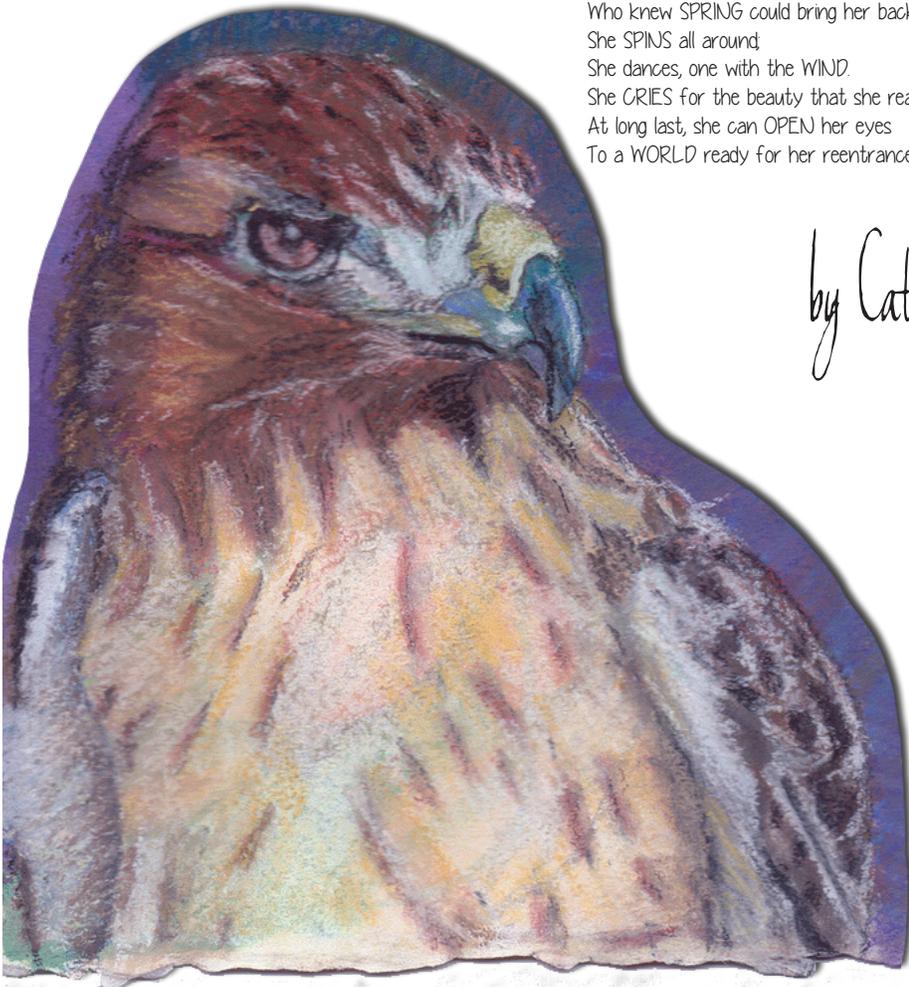
Photograph by Sarah Bibler

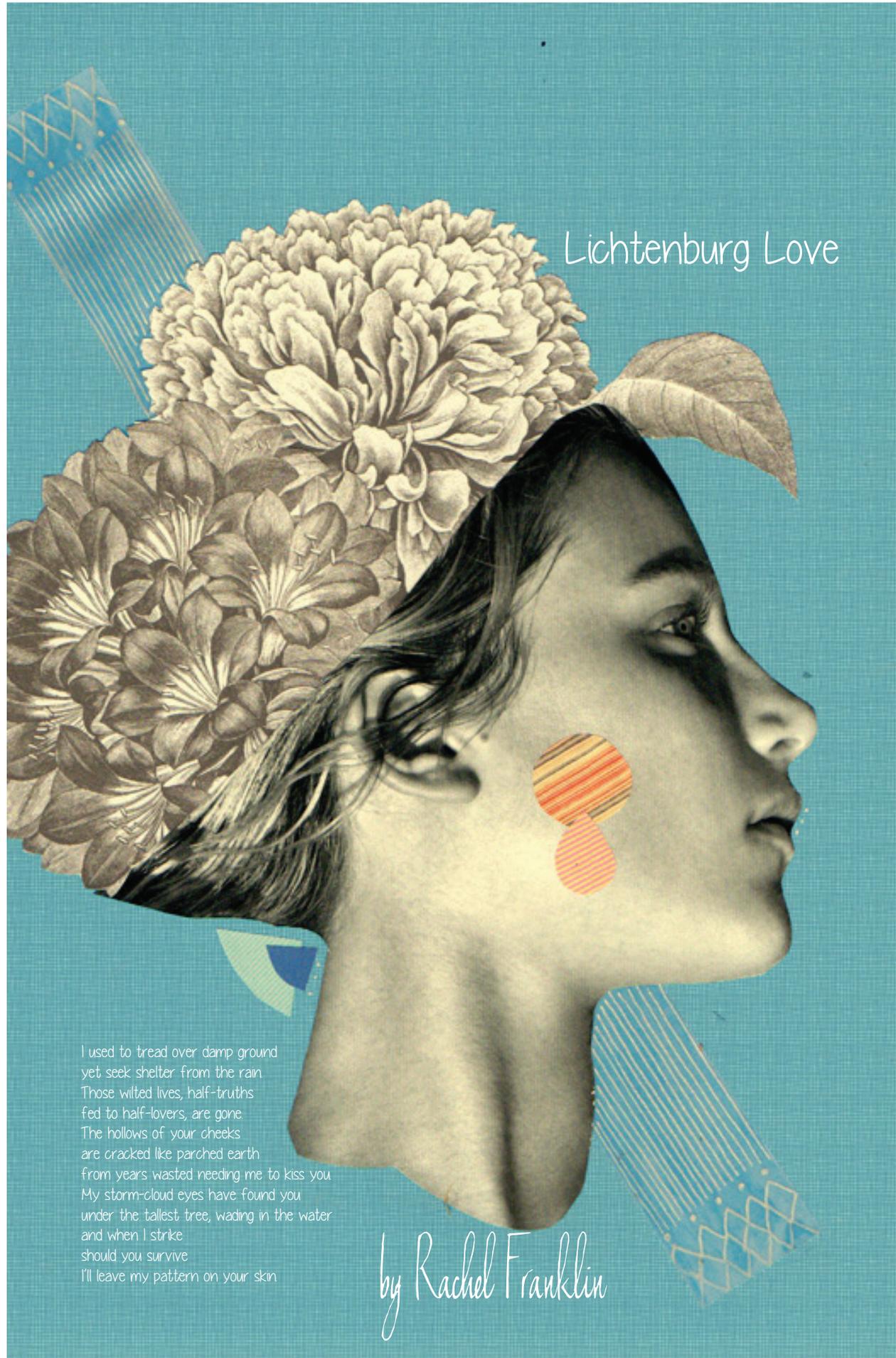
## Crying for the Beauty

With winter gone, she can THROW her window open wide  
With spring arriving, she can dance in bright SUNSHINE  
This is what it is to LIVE without regret,  
To know she can NEVER FORGET, only move on  
With BLUE above, so open, so clear and bright  
How wild and FREE she can be in no one's sight  
And as she stares UP, it's like for the first time  
In so long, she can LOOK God in the eye.

Smelling the scent of WILDFLOWERS all around,  
BREATHING in new life, new hope, new days,  
She knows that her heart SINGS for spring  
She prays that she's ready to FEEL something  
And with sunlight FALLING down upon her shoulders,  
She LAUGHS, her burdens gone.  
Who knew SPRING could bring her back?  
She SPINS all around  
She dances, one with the WIND.  
She CRIES for the beauty that she realizes every day is  
At long last, she can OPEN her eyes  
To a WORLD ready for her reentrance.

by Catherine Strayhall





Lichtenburg Love

I used to tread over damp ground  
yet seek shelter from the rain.  
Those wilted lives, half-truths  
fed to half-lovers, are gone.  
The hollows of your cheeks  
are cracked like parched earth  
from years wasted needing me to kiss you.  
My storm-cloud eyes have found you  
under the tallest tree, wading in the water  
and when I strike  
should you survive  
I'll leave my pattern on your skin.

by Rachel Franklin

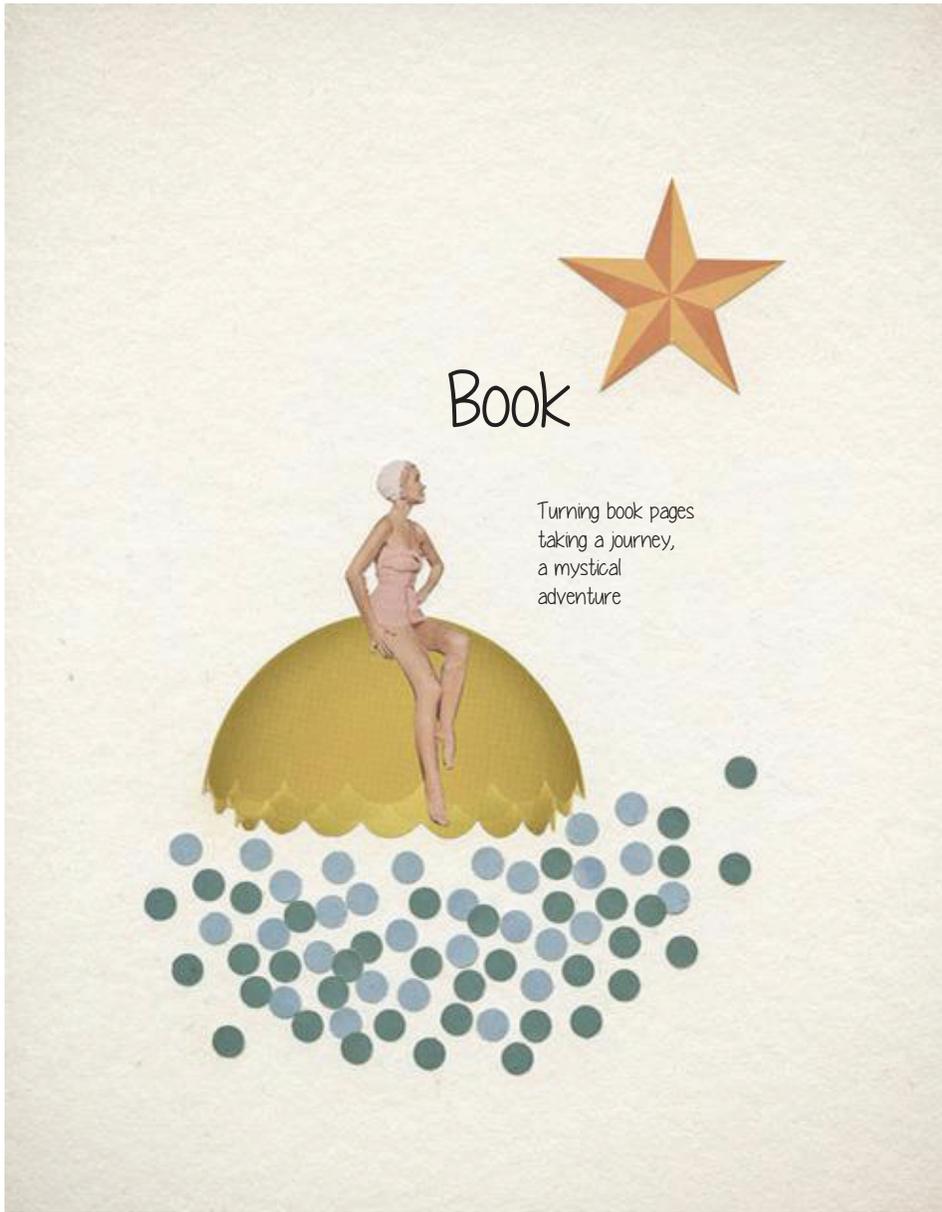
Mixed Media  
courtesy of  
Laura Redburn  
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# untitled

Reading should never just be  
considered an option.  
A life without reading, not  
understanding words, only  
spots on a page, with the power  
to change worlds, but they're  
dead without a voice, no meaning  
till they're read.

Reading inspires peace, and war,  
reading can release your mind,  
pass time, increase your knowledge  
of the past and present.  
The power to read is one of life's  
greatest blessings.

by Hannah McCann



# Book

Turning book pages  
taking a journey,  
a mystical  
adventure

Drawing by Cassie Beck. All rights reserved

by Alexandra Miller

# The End

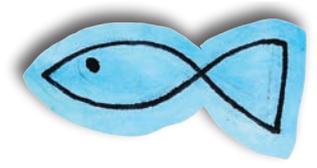
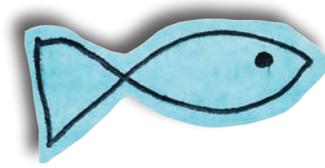
As children everything is pure  
Endless and pure  
As you age you notice the stars  
Burnt out memories light years away  
Only if you can see them  
Past your city lights and suburbs  
In their memory we keep living on  
And amongst our betrayal and companions  
We grow into a wise ripe age that understands  
Things are short, endings come with a blink of the eye  
The goal is not to burn out the fastest  
But to let the flame kindle and consume  
In those flames we capture moths and live life  
When the flames burn out and when pictures become pictures  
Our forgotten childhood truths are reborn  
And we mumble into the endless abyss

Nothing can hurt us  
Nothing can hurt  
Nothing can



Painting by Delaney Barclay. All rights reserved

by Michelle Chan



# THANK YOU

- ayah abdul rauf
- robert barr
- marsha bennett
- barbara brand
- sean cassirley
- michelle chan
- so choi
- cassidy coles
- angel dew
- leslie goodwin
- linda lawson
- kate mcnair
- joe morgan
- meredith nelson
- gene ann newcomer
- kasey riley
- dennis ross
- vanessa schneider
- mary shortino
- kelly sime
- tricia suellentrop
- jennifer taylor
- carolyn weeks
- jael whitney



Special thanks to Flickr Artists featured in this issue and to our brilliant cover artist Ayah Abdul Rauf.

"IT IS IN COLLABORATION THAT THE TRUE NATURE OF ART IS REVEALED"

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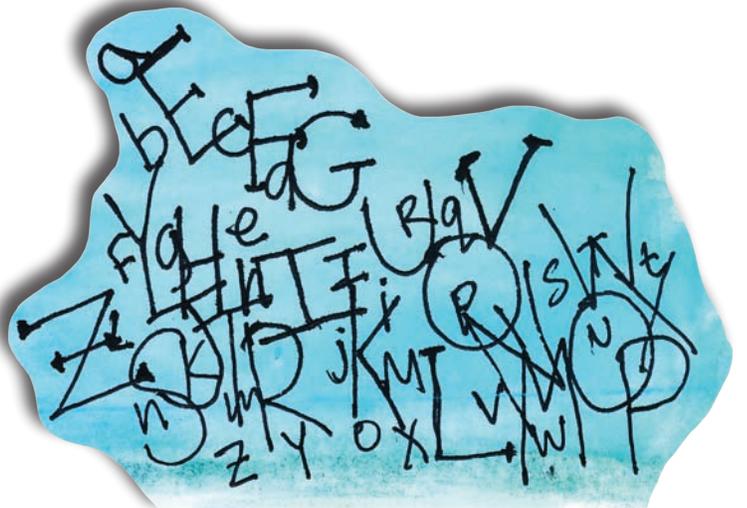
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