

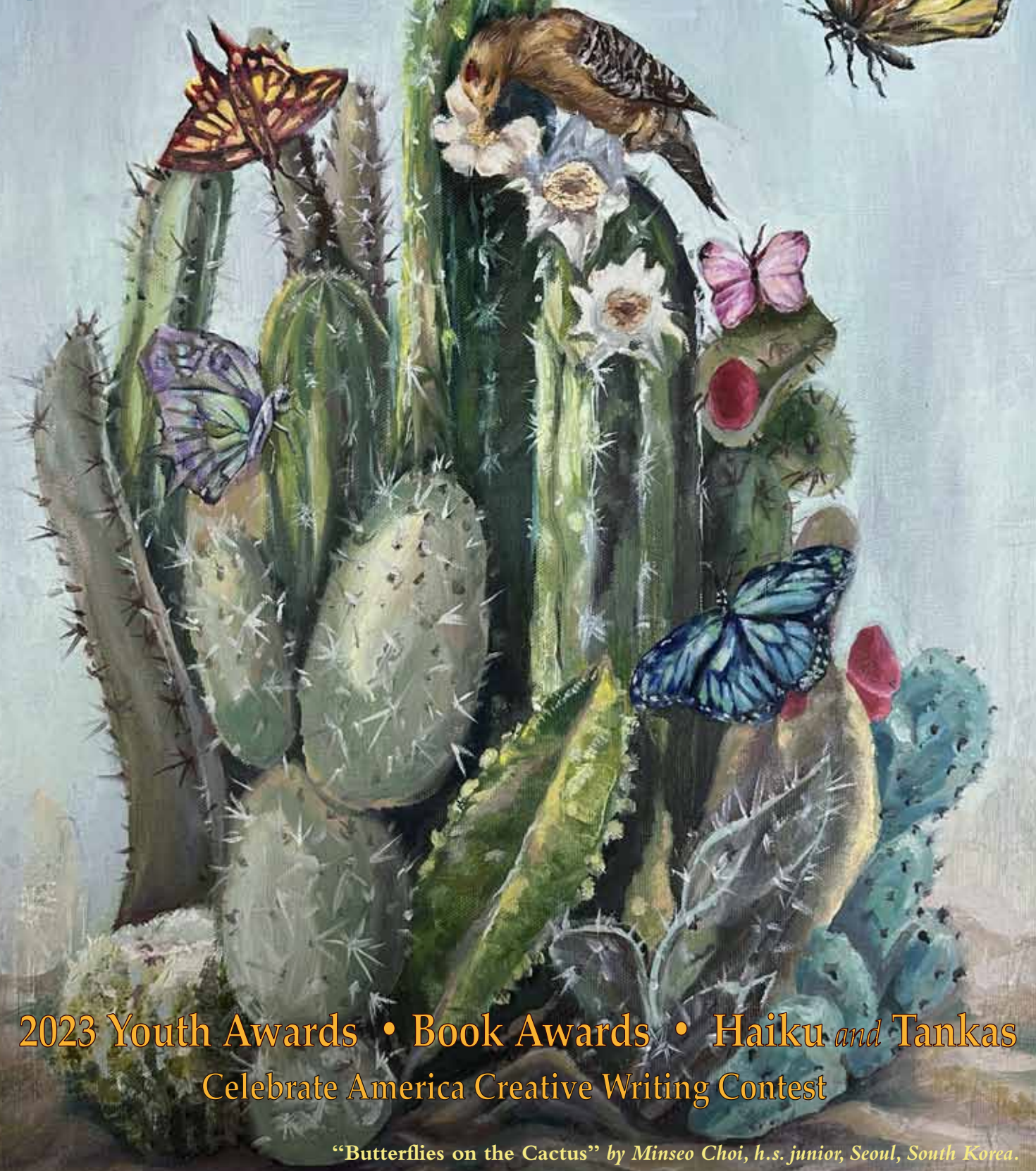
Skipping Stones

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A Multicultural Literary Magazine

Vol. 35, no. 2

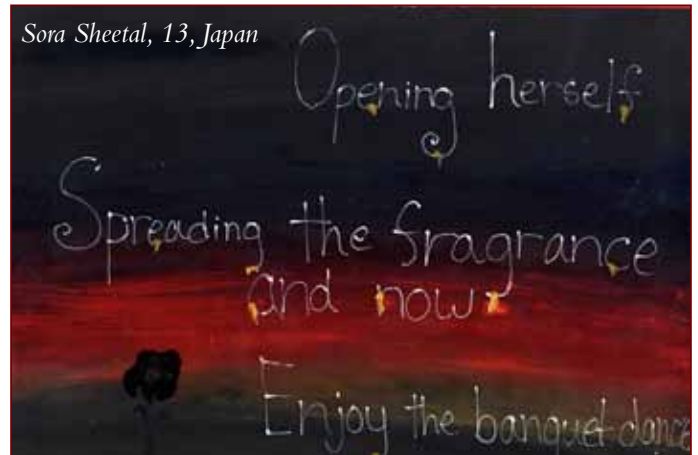
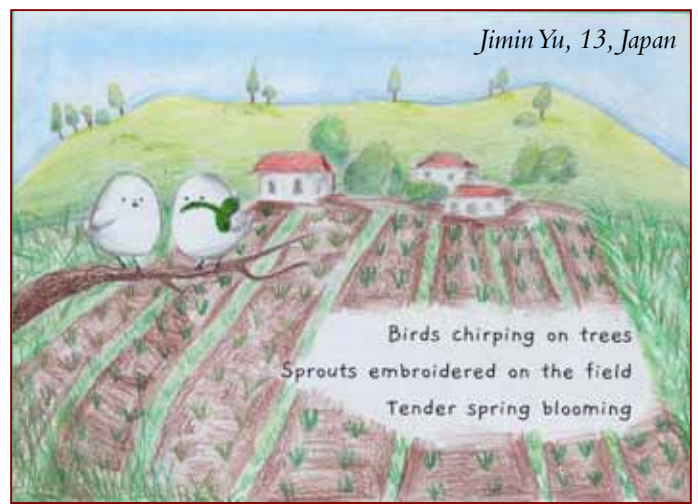
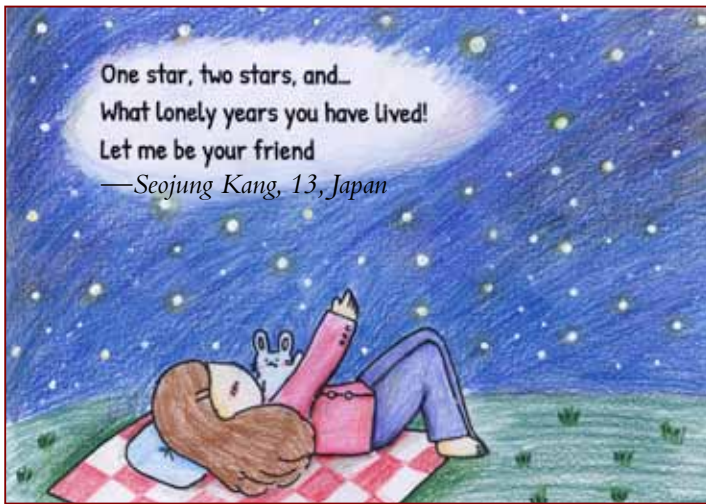
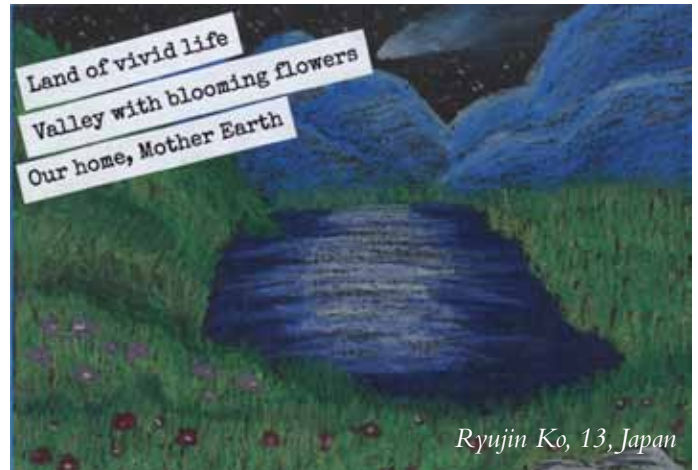
Sept. - Dec. 2023



2023 Youth Awards • Book Awards • Haiku and Tankas
Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest

"Butterflies on the Cactus" by Minseo Choi, h.s. junior, Seoul, South Korea.

Haiku and Artwork by Students at I.S.S.H., Tokyo, Japan



From the Editors

I am working at *Skipping Stones* this summer as a community college intern. An internship with a magazine seemed like a good idea as my degree plan is focused on writing studies. Little did I know, this would begin what I've been calling my "season of culture."

My other two classes this term are Cultural Anthropology and Intro to Mythology & Folklore, which go together quite well. *Skipping Stones*, with its multicultural focus, fits right in. On either side of this term, I also have classes in Chinuk Wawa (a pidgin language indigenous to the Pacific Northwest of the U.S.). I couldn't have planned this better if I'd tried.

Cultural diversity can be found all around us if we just take a little time to notice it. In learning Chinuk Wawa, I found out that many local place names are Native American. When I looked at maps of other places I've lived, I realized just how common that really is!

I live in a college dorm along with many other students. Almost half of them are from countries other than the U.S. There are often very interesting smells when other students cook foods that I've never had before, and I have heard several different languages spoken here. Sometimes, students will get together in the common room for a potluck, bringing all sorts of dishes from their various cultures. You never know what you'll get to try! Just today, one student made delicious cookies with a recipe her grandparents brought from Lebanon.

I've started using a manual wheelchair to get around; and it can be difficult sometimes. I have learned that even disabled people have their own culture, in addition to their family heritage. When I connect with other disabled people, I often discover things that will help me with my own disability. It has also made it easier for me to educate others who might not understand different abilities.

The *Skipping Stones* office is only a few blocks away from where I live, and it's a good thing, too! Because of climate change, the summer has been very, very hot here. Because of the forest fires in the region, the air is heavy with smoke sometimes, and it is not healthy for me to go outside. We have to be careful and make sure to wear our masks during "fire season." But since we're all in this together, friends and neighbors have been taking extra time to check up on each other and make sure

Introducing the Issue

everyone is OK. Being part of a community helps keep us safe, no matter where we're from.

Interning here, I assumed I'd mostly learn about publishing—editing, proofing, and layout, even though I'm fairly skilled at such things already. I am getting the chance to do some writing, too. I've enjoyed reviewing dozens of most amazing children's books here. Also, I've realized that I can and should change my own approach to proofreading for different pieces. While I am learning much about all of these things, I've learned far more about the different cultures, feelings, thoughts, concerns, hopes, and dreams of the countless amazing young people who send in submissions to the magazine.

Do you want to know what has been the most challenging? The hardest thing I have had to do here has been to help select both the award entries and the regular submissions. The youth submissions we get here are just so good! I genuinely wish that we could publish every work of art, writing, and poetry sent our way. I want to recognize them all! Don't get me wrong—this is a wonderful problem to have. It's the sort of problem that makes me smile instead of get upset.

I look forward to the time I spend at *Skipping Stones*. No matter how my day started out, even if it was terribly frustrating, I know things will be better once I head to the office to work with more amazing creative pieces from young people all over the world. Seeing your thoughts and perspectives gives my mind a workout in the best possible way. It genuinely lifts my spirits, and I always leave feeling much happier (even if my morning was good, too).

We're delighted to present the 2023 Awards Issue! Please enjoy these exceptional creations by very talented students from all over. There were so many more entries that deserve to be shared. We'll publish them on our website later this fall and also in our spring issue.

We encourage you to continue to write and draw and paint, and to share your work with us. While we're limited on space here, I can promise that we do read everything. Your submissions brighten our days!

Happy reading!

łaxayam shiksh,



Scooter Milne, LCC student intern, Oregon.

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Allison Liu, age 16, Massachusetts.



By Carina Araujo, 10, Maryland.

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Hoping
If I throw a coin
Or blow this dandelion
Will my wish come true?
—Chloe Min, gr. 10, Florida.



In the spirit of ecological sensitivity, we choose to print with soy ink on recycled and recyclable paper with a 30% post-consumer recycled content.



Skipping Stones Stew

About *Skipping Stones*:

Skipping Stones is a nonprofit children's magazine that encourages cooperation, creativity, and celebration of cultural and linguistic diversity. We explore stewardship of the ecological and social webs that nurture us. We offer a forum for communication among children from different lands and backgrounds. *Skipping Stones* expands horizons in a playful, creative way. We invite you to send us your creative art and thought-provoking writing.

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Winner of three National Association for Multicultural Education Awards, as well as EdPress Association of America, Writer Magazine, NewsStand Resources, Eugene Ed. Assn., and Parent's Choice Awards.



Another World

In my dreams, I see another world, a world the same, but better.

I wonder if you dream of it too—

That better world.

The plains that are full of plants;

Flourishing and healthy.

The living;

Breathing healthy

And happy.

We are no longer trapped—

Staring at that captivating screen all day.

The water flows,

But now,

Clear and blue.

But when I open my eyes,

I see a different world.

It is a world full of despair—

A world that needs a little hope.

I take a deep breath,

A sigh,

And another breath.

I gather up my courage.

And I do something different.

I say,

Why not create that world that I dream of?

This is a world—

Of happiness,

Of hope,

Of equality.

This is the world that I dream of.

—Cindy Zhang, age 11, Illinois.

Stop Trashing Our Oceans by Brian Ji, age 15 (p. 26)

"As an aspiring artist, I enjoy creating multimedia artwork. I am intrigued by this form of art because it allows artists to depict reality with added complexity and nuance through mixed forms while creatively conveying meaning through unexpected and compelling lenses. Within the art and writing fields, I am most interested in social commentary, depicting elements in a piece of art or writing to represent and symbolize societal issues. Therefore, I created this multimedia artwork to highlight the detrimental effects of marine litter."

The 2023 Asian Celebration Haiku and Tanka Exhibit

From I.S.S.H., Tokyo, Japan

Shooting stars come here
Glistening in the dark night
Always standing out
—Kii Aoyama, age 13.

Splash Splash! You can hear
Waves crash and the sea sparkles
What a vibrant sight!
—Hana Hasegawa, age 12.

Heart Chocolate box
Given to those you cherish
Sweet Valentines
—Naona I., age 12.

As the sunlight shines,
The sunflowers get taller,
Shadows block my view
—Pearl Hara Yamazaki, age 13.

Sweet smells fill the air
Pink flower petals drift down
Spring is here at last
—Ashmi Kumar, age 12.

Lying on the sand
The ocean in its fury
Aggressive waves crash
—Lina Pontes, age 13.

Falling gracefully
Last amber before Winter
Crisp orange Autumn
—Yumeho Ito, age 13.
Please see artwork by I.S.S.H.
students on pages 2 and 35.

Wild Mother

Gazelle clutched in teeth
She gives the best to her cub
Loving ferociously.
—Allison Liu, age 16, Massachusetts.

First fall, then winter.
Soon spring and summer's delights.
Nothing's forever.

The glimmering stars.
The navy-blue dome above.
This is pure beauty.

It's useless, they said.
Give up, it's impossible.
I will not, I said.

—Nova Macknik-Conde, 11, New York.

waterfront geese gather
around grandmother's palm—
breadcrumbs

flashlights
darting through flipping pages:
fireflies

—Sophia Hall, gr. 12, Washington, DC

Stillness of the night,
Silent whispers soothe the soul,
Peaceful dreams take flight.

Stillness of the lake,
Reflecting peaceful beauty,
Calmness within me.
—Cadence Liu, grade 8, California.

Love

What is wistful love?
It is the sun and the moon.
Forbidden to touch,
Yet the sun hugs the moon with
Light so bright she shines like pearls.
—Chloe Min, gr. 10, Florida.

Cold Embrace

The waves crash fiercely
Bubbling sea foam rises up
Smell the salty air
No need to fear the water
Its cold embrace welcomes us
—Anjali Oliver Rajan, grade 5, Illinois.

Bamboo

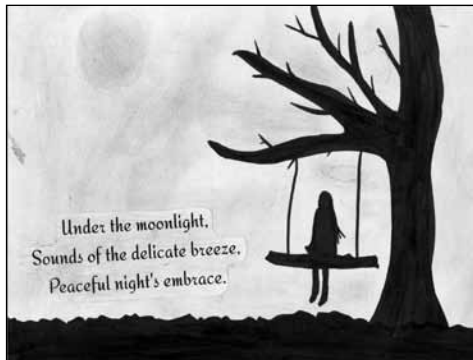
Yielding, flexible,
Swaying, bending with the wind,
Not snapping in half,
Always standing right back up,
Going with the winds blowing
—Derek Meng, grade 6, California.

She paints our trees green
Rain falls when she feels mean
She weaves a spring gale
And it trails me like a fairytale
She is who I want to be.

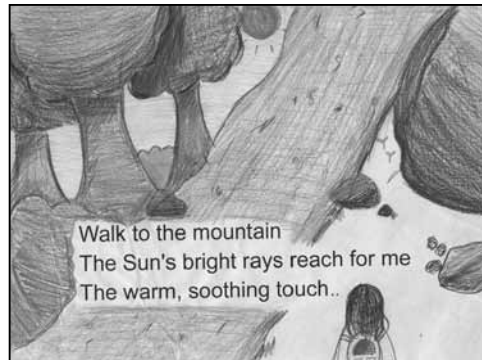
—Erin Lee, grade 8, New Jersey.

Rain

Splashing in my boots
Pitter-patter on my roof
Wet and cold I'm soaked
—Matthew Koscho, gr. 12, Oregon.



—Natsumi Yasuzaki, age 12, Japan.



—Jiwon Baek, age 12, Japan



—Hannah Nussbaumer, age 13, Japan.

**Fourth Graders @ Laurence School,
California**

A Setting Sky

Transforming the sky
Into a mix of color
Which fades into stars
—Finn Maguire.

Representing Beautiful

Vibrant red petals
Representing beautiful
Memory, and hope
—Catherine Nemecek

Beautiful Sky

Vibrance in the sky
See the beautiful colors
Makes you feel happy
—Mia Smith.

First Light

Red, yellow, orange
Floating up in the blue sky
Beauty at first sight
—Agatha Blumenthal.

Grass

Grass is amazing
Waving in the breeze it's free
Freshness fills my nose
—Levi Luke Reyes.

Opportunity to Glow

Lights, flash, bright, talking
Action, focus, pressure, script
Headshots, agent, smile
—Katherine Bunch Mercado.

Let's not be like clouds
Birthed sky-high up but leaking
And dying on ground

Be like a clock, living
In the moment, not ever
Looking back or front

Life's interesting
You always look back on past
But never go back
—Pratheek Tangirala, gr. 11, Virginia.

Equinox

Budding from cold earth,
Snowdrops waken and whisper,
“Join us in new life.”
—Allison Liu, age 16, Massachusetts.

Boredom

I sit down at the
table that should quench my long
lasting greed for some-
thing more. But I find myself
lost in a long, empty space.

Glass

you speak words of glass.
Clear with no deeper meaning-
slowly breaking me.
—Aditi Nair, age 15, Virginia.

1. Island

Sand sparkle in sun
Travel and explore island
Large algae and sea
coconut fell on bald head
Hit the coconut so hard

2. Marigold Haiku

Tiny buds new world
Patience sees dazzling colors
Tiny bugs inside

3. Platypus Haiku

Otter tail
Venomous mammal
Lay some eggs
—Sky Tosheng, age 11, California.

Bare branches, white snow
sugar blankets wrap us in.
Quiver in warm dreams

Insects come wiggling
And then birds come free-floating
Lush and lively spring.

Birds chirping, singing
Drown the dissonance to ash
Sounds that relax me
—Victoria Gong, grade 5, New York.

Fifth Graders @ Yujin Gakuen, Oregon

I spot mushroom
On the lush, green, forest floor
Wow. So beautiful
—Mieko Soria.

It's raining hard
Why should I go outside now?
The rain is calming
—Olivia Bengtson.

Look, now, look now, look,
Life is but a fragile haze,
When the first plum drops.
—McKenzie Kneale.

Open up my eyes
and now I see the monster
I'm supposed to be
in the mountains hiding scared
of what other people think.
—Tia Smith.

Shimmering currents,
a dam blocking the river
a beaver swimming
—Daichi Shibata.

The light and bright pink
The cherry blossoms gliding
Watch them fall all night
—Alyssa Kim.

The single crane flies
Away, away in the dusk
Goodbye lovely crane
—Astoria Migneault.

The flowers bloom bright
Brighter than the crescent sky
As the moon rises
—Coco Hall.



Celebrate America 2023 Creative Writing Contest



Honoring our immigrant past, shaping our immigrant future

We are pleased to present the national winners of the American Immigration Council's Creative Writing Contest for fifth graders. ***Skipping Stones*** is one of the cosponsors of this annual contest. Visit: www.celebrateamericawritingcontest.org for more information.

First Place Winner: “3” by Lillie Villezcas

I am number 3, but how does number 3 apply to me? I am the 3rd generation of an immigrant family, the 3rd generation of fading traditions and lost nationalities, but I refuse to let that be me.

My grandmother immigrated into this country with high hopes and her luggage full of dreams. In this country she made a home and started a family, holding on to her culture and her beliefs.

As she passed that conviction to my mother, she knew it was a vow of importance for her to keep. My mother held onto those values a little tighter, but it wasn't as easy as it seemed; everything is different in the land of the free.

English became my mother's primary language, and she learned to hide her accent until there was no trace left. She began to identify more with her peers, same style, same likes, but certainly not the same face.

I have yet to experience stories such as the ones my mother once told us, a warning to never feel as if we don't belong. There may be name calling or discrimination, but stay true to yourself, and to your roots, be brave, and no matter what always stand strong.

Whenever I am in doubt or feel out of place, I recite our national anthem, for this is the home of the brave. Brave like my grandmother when she left for the land of opportunity, and brave like my mother when she chose to stay true to herself, rather than just fit in.

Now it is my turn to take the vow to pass on through our next generation, our culture, our traditions, and our appreciation for this nation. For it is easy to forget where we came from, but in my family I will always find my motivation.

For I am number 3, a number that will always be of meaning to me. I am the 3rd generation of an immigrant family, the 3rd generation of lasting traditions and 2 nationalities, and the one to carry this on will be me.

—Lillie Villezcas, grade 5, Nevada.

Second Place: “Belonging” by Katrusia McPeck

My country is at war.

I am not safe.

Mother and father

Try to hide it.

But how could I not know?

Mother thinks we should leave.

Father thinks we cannot leave our life behind.

But I think my family should be happy and safe.

It is not safe.

Every day there are

Flashes

Light

Heat.

I can no longer

Go to school

Play

See my friends.

I hear of the deaths.

People with their lives

Taken for this war.

Mother and

Father have been fighting

But they stop

When we get a call from

My uncle,

Ivan.

He tells us that Auntie

Is dead.

We are all

Upset,

Frightened.

But mother most of all.

The arguing gets worse.

Then one day mother

Breaks the news to me.

Katrusia, she says

In a tone that tells me to worry,

We must leave tomorrow.

My heart sinks.

I heard my parents

Belonging... *continued*

Talking about it, but
I never thought it would happen.
I want safety
But also
My home.

We are leaving!
The nerves telling me to feel
Scared
Excited
Apprehensive
Nervous.
Mother spent all her savings
On the train
But we couldn't pay for father.
I can tell he is actually
Happy.
He will never want to leave.
He is sad that we will leave, though.
We sneak to the train at night.
We are on it for weeks.
Mother keeps saying we will
Get there.
We don't.

We are finally here.
America is a place of wonders.
We are on the shore
as we walk towards
The long line.
We finally got through the line.
I look around
And see all kinds of people
Shops of different cultures
Pressed up together.
I learn the name of the city I'm in.
New York.

New York is
Where we are together.
It is where the noise
and tumble of cars rush by.
The smell of the subway
Rushing past
The wind swirling in my hair.

I can tell
Mother misses
Ukraine

Father
But she is
Happy to be
Alive
To have me.

School in New York is hard.
Mother wishes she could set up a private tutor.
I barely know English.
We barely have money.

I would be good at school.
But every subject is different.

Math
When I'm asked to explain my answer
How can I,
Without English?

Science
A mix of words I don't understand
Of words that weren't in the
Learning English textbook.

Walking around New York, I see
All cultures
Immigrants.
Slowly,

I don't feel so out of place.
Immigrants made New York.
I fit in here in the way
That I don't fit in.

My English is getting better.
I am the best at math class.
I have friends.

Father calls
He is happy to see me
But so sad to be apart
To have war.
He tells me to stay strong.

I am happy.
I have friends.
I have love.
That is why I'm glad
America is a nation
Of Immigrants
And we all
Belong.

—Katrusia McPeck, grade 5, New York.

Third Place: “A Welcoming Nation”

Welcome means inclusion,
hands held out to catch you when you fall.
It means families living in peace.
No worry of hate.
Welcome does not mean
Walls built around borders.
Families reaching for their children,
and being dragged away.
Rage they're not able to say.

It means always having
a safe haven, somewhere to go
when life gets you down.
Inclusion, not segregation.
Not barely scraping by,
because you are paid less.
And the laws are a mess.

Being inclusive can mean
not being left out,
not having to pass a test to be legal,
not being treated like you are special.
Not special enough to be a citizen.

Coming home to a loving family,
Being able to provide your family with food,
Being safe.
These are all things that everyone deserves, regardless
of the place they were born.
But those ideas are now torn.

Nobody deserves
inequalities
violence
separation.
But this is what some people got.
And some did not.

Unfairness exists in many different forms.
This one we may be able to change, though.
After centuries of hostility,
we could live in tranquility.

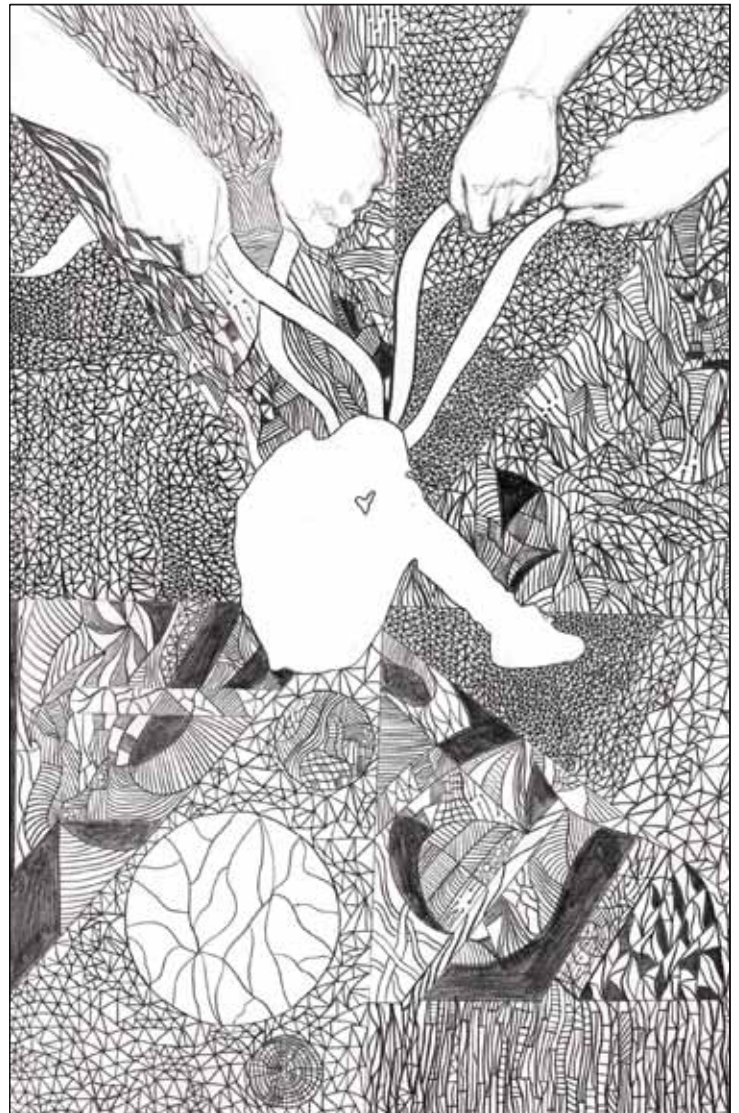
A welcoming nation
Is not ours.
A beautiful nation
has not been ours.

—Mae Seavey, grade 5, Indiana.

The 2024 Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest

The contest challenges fifth graders across the country to reflect on and write about one of two themes: “**Why I Am Glad America Is a Nation of Immigrants**” or “**What Does it Mean to be a Welcoming Nation**” The American Immigration Lawyers Association runs the contest at local levels. Winners move on to the regional and then national levels. *Skipping Stones* often publishes the national winners. If interested in entering, please visit:

www.celebrateamericawritingcontest.org



Alone by Chungman Jung, grade 11, Jeju, South Korea.
Chungman explains: “This piece is about the sensation of being alone, and I tried to convey the feeling of solitude.”



The 2023 Skipping Stones Book Awards

We are pleased to recommend the following 28 outstanding books—in Multicultural, Nature, and Teaching Resources categories—as our 2023 award winners. These picture books, chapter books, novels and nonfiction works promote an understanding of cultures, cultivate cooperation, and/or encourage a deeper awareness of nature, ecology, and diversity. They foster respect for multiple viewpoints and closer relationships within human societies. The honored titles offer various perspectives, help us understand our diverse cultures and their histories, and how we overcome challenging situations. Hearty congratulations to the creators of these excellent books!

Please visit our website, www.SkippingStones.org, for the book reviews.

Multicultural & International Books

Kesar and the Lullaby Birds. By Aditi Oza; illustr. Debasmita Dasgupta. Picture Book. Yali Books.

The Clever Wife: A Kyrgyz Folktale. By Rukhsana Khan; illustr. Ayesha Gamiet. Picture Book. Wisdom Tales.

Bonnie's Rocket. By Emeline Lee; illustr. Alina Chau. Picture Book. Lee & Low Books.

Still Dreaming / Seguimos Soñando. By Claudia Guadalupe Martínez; illustr. Magdalena Mora. Picture Book. Lee & Low Books.

Chabelita's Heart / El corazón de Chabelita. By Isabel Millán. Picture Book. Reflection Press.

Black Boy, Black Boy: Celebrate the Power of You. By Ali Kamanda & Jorge Redmond; illustr. Ken Daley. Picture Book. Sourcebooks.

Marvelous Mabel. By Crystal Hubbard; illustr. Alleanna Harris. Picture Book. Lee & Low Books.

My Fade Is Fresh. By Shauntay Grant; illustr. Kitt Thomas. Picture Book. Penguin Workshop.

Stacey Abrams: Lift Every Voice. By Sarah Warren; illustr. Monica Mikai. Picture Book. Lee & Low Books.

Finding My Dance. By Ria Thundercloud; illustr. Kalila J. Fuller. Picture Book. Penguin Workshop.

Lunch From Home. By Joshua David Stein; illustr. Jing Li. Picture Book. Rise x Penguin Workshop.

Fly High, Lolo. By Niki Daly. Chapter Book. Catalyst Press.

The Prisoner and the Writer. By Heather Camlot; illustr. Sophie Casson. Ages 9-12. Groundwood Books.

Same Here! The Difference We Share. By Susan Hughes; illustr. Sophie Casson. Elem. & middle grades. Owlkids Books.

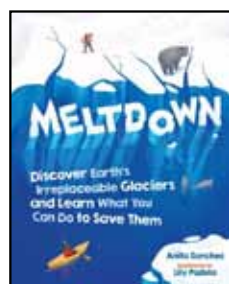
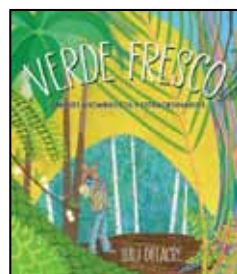
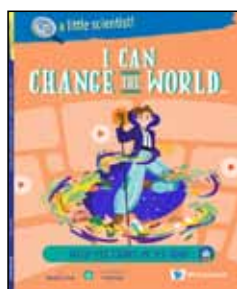
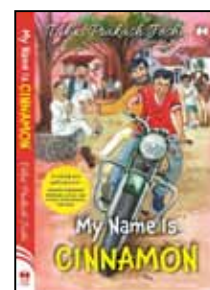
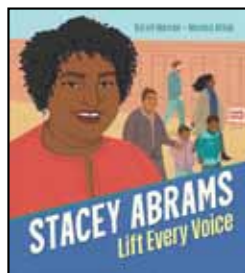
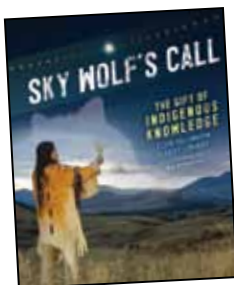
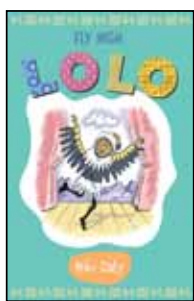
Sky Wolf's Call: The Gift of Indigenous Knowledge. By Eldon Yellowhorn & Kathy Lowinger. Grades 6-8. Annick Press.

Ida in the Middle. A novel by Nora Lester Murad. Middle & Upper grades. Crocodile Books. www.interlinkbooks.com

My Name Is Cinnamon. By Vikas Prakash Joshi; illustr. Niloufer Wadia. Ages 11 and up. Hay House Publishers (India).

Barefoot Dreams of Petra Luna. A novel by Alda P. Dobbs. Middle grades. Sourcebooks.





Nature & Ecology Books

Tour the Tundra: *Biome Explorers*. By Laura Perdew; illustr. Lex Cornell. Ages 5–8. Nomad Press.

Safe Travels for Squirrels. By Maxime Bonneau with Joanne Mattern. Picture Book. Red Chair Press.

Hope For Kareem: *The Brave Chimp*. By Sylvia Medina & Grace Peters; illustr. Andreas Wessel-Therhorn. Picture Book, elem. grades. Green Kids Club.

I Can Change the World: *With the Choice of my Food*. By Ronald Chan; illustr. Yeewearn. Picture Book/Elem. grades. W. S. Education.

Dr. Rosie Helps the Animals. By Jennifer Welborn; illustr. Rozillia MH. (Also available as a Spanish/English bilingual edition: *La Doctora Rosie Ayuda a los Animales*). Picture Book/Elem. grades. Waterbear Publishing.

Cool Green: *Amazing Remarkable Trees*. By Lulu Delacre. (Also available in Spanish: *Verde Fresco: Arboles Asombrosos y Extraordinarios*). Picture book/Elem. grades. Candlewick Press.

Meltdown: *Discover Earth's Irreplaceable Glaciers and Learn What You Can Do to Save Them*. By Anita Sanchez; illustr. Lily Padula. Ages 9 and up. Workman Publishing.

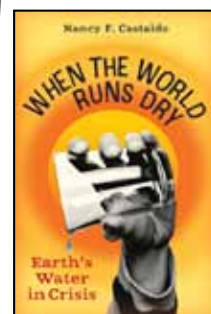
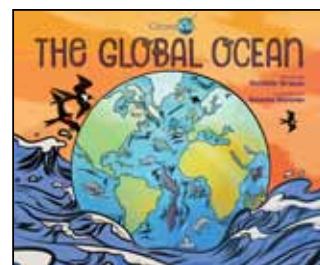


Teaching Resources

The Global Ocean By Rochelle Strauss; illustr. Natasha Donovan. Picture Book. Elem. & middle grades. Kids Can Press.

The Media and Me: *A Guide to Critical Media Literacy for Young People*. By Project Censored and the Media Revolution Collective. Grades 6–12. Triangle Square Books for Young Readers / The Censored Press.

When The World Runs Dry: *Earth's Water in Crisis*. By Nancy F. Castaldo. Grades 6–12. Algonquin Young Readers.



Reviews of these and past years' honored titles are available on www.SkippingStones.org.

The 2023 Youth Honor Awards



- ** Sophie Xu, age 9, grade 4, Illinois, *and* Eden You, age 10, New York.
- ** Nova Macknik-Conde, age 11, *and* Iago Macknik-Conde, age 16, New York.
- ** Jaslene Kwack, age 13, Illinois, *and* Arianna Shaprow Crain, age 12, Nevada.
- ** William Park, age 17, Virginia, *and* Elena Davis, age 15, Virginia
- ** Minseo Choi, h.s. junior, Seoul, South Korea, *and* Chloe Rui, grade 8, California.
- ** Ellie Payne, age 17, Kansas, *and* Juliana Isabelle Ongking, age 17, Philippines.
- ** Yutong (Annie) Wei, grade 8, *and* Mia Liu, age 13, both of Ontario, Canada.
- ** Ishani Singh, grade 10, New Jersey, *and* Nidhi Nadgir, age 15, California.
- ** Students of Share Ground Project in South Korea.

Hearty Congratulations to the 2023 winners! We received far too many amazing entries for us to include them all in this issue. Please look for more Noteworthy Entries in our next issue as well as on the website.

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★ Huo Guo / Hotpot / 火锅 ★ *By Juliana Isabelle Ongking, age 17, Philippines.*

my mother and i are talking about kongkong
at the hotpot table. a server gives us the menu,
who everyone but us refers to as their sister, jie.

i yearn for this familiarity, searching for a pair
of eyes across the bowl of chicken broth
between us, thick smoke lumping at our throats.

smoke curtains our feeble attempts at forgotten
words & worlds—yes we are worlds apart
cleaved into lonely islands

we dip papery tripe & drying strands of tofu
inside bubbling stock, blowing away double-helixed
strands of circulating steam. i watch kongkong

materializing from the vapor: my mother's
face, once blurred, sharpens into view,
age marks growing on her cheeks,

how much she looks like my dead ah ma:
kongkong trembles with dry laughter,
staring at a daughter who

has forgotten for too long, a granddaughter
who doesn't know how to remember.
these are two different things, he says.

mama's voice breaks, asks me to lower
down the heat, wants to see my face
before it disappears completely from view.

kongkong evaporates. should i reach
for the butterflied fish, carve out the sweet
bulge in its cheek? i am taught that it takes only

three or less seconds for the meat to tenderize
so i scoop it out of boiling soup & leave
this glistening apparition onto my mother's plate.

★ what i don't tell you when you ask me to write about my country ★

I don't tell you about the chartreuse of the eucalyptus leaves or the summer wind's breath,
nor do I divulge the nuggets of gold nestled in oblongs of jackfruit papa harvests every july
stewed in gatâ with sweating pork belly, and the ampalaya *ate* always hated—

you tell me you love filipino food, eat it at the place next door,

but I watch your nose scrunch when i open my tupperware of salmon sinigang,
frowning lips at the cloying smell of mama's tuyo on early sunday mornings,

that sticks to the fabric of my uniform for the rest of the week at school—

I stay quiet, don't tell you about my sisters and their packages of vigan longganisa
that we bloat with water before they caramelize on lola's charred skillet, pricking
the membrane of albumen that encases golden yolk that spills

over a mountain of stir-fried garlic rice—

or the dessert that follows, snowflakes of ice melting with evaporated milk (*how dare we drink milk from a can?*), mixed with creamed corn, topped with a generous
scoop of queso ice cream and home-fried pinipig—reminiscent of the fifty-peso
popsicles of my youth, garish in their cheap, plastic, cyan coloring.

—J.I.O.

★ A List for a Better World ★

equality among all people
all religions considered equal
water's always close by
no poaching, hunting, no need for innocents to die
boys, girls, both, neither
all faces shining different shades
a single color's nice, but isn't a rainbow so much nicer?

the temperature isn't rising, turn off the global heater
children can learn, have people to care
workers earn fair
no one shrinks under a gaze, anyone can say what they think
no oppressed, no depressed,
no limits on how to dress
all different flowers can flourish under the sun

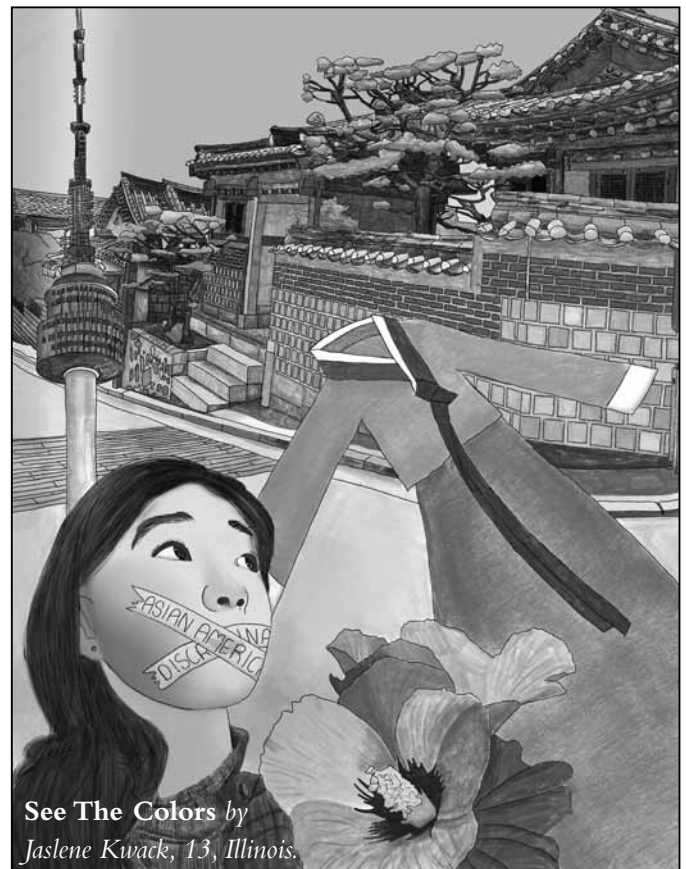
medication, education, no corruption or inflation
no government debt, or people kept
enslaved

no war, clean water
diseases cured
freedom ensured
everyone has a place
no cultures, families, or races erased

the list can go on
but we should be making a change
we've got to rearrange
the current system somehow
So what are you doing sitting here reading this poem now?

—Jaslene Kwack, age 13, Illinois. She adds: "I wrote this poem on human rights because it is something that I have recently been learning a lot about. I think that they are like a symbol for all humans and almost represent the rules and values that we stand for. They show that in this world, we are all one group and all of us are united as humans. Basically, human rights are the most fundamental rights and freedoms that apply to every person in the world. The real topic we should be thinking about is what these human rights are doing for us now. All of the 30 articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are just... Declarations. And it is supposed to be our job as people to make sure these declarations become reality.

They are dreams and visions for a future where human rights are not merely a possibility, but a reality. Who knows what the future will hold? Maybe human rights really will be enforced. Or maybe they won't. But the people of this world are the ones that should be protecting them."



See The Colors by
Jaslene Kwack, 13, Illinois.

"I was inspired to create this art because of my visits to South Korea. Though I live in the U.S., most of my family is in South Korea. There are so many cultural differences between there and America ranging from the food to the norms to even the people. I wanted to capture that feeling of difference in my artwork and show that it's okay to have your own thoughts and memories that reflect who you are.

In my art, I show a line of traditional Korean buildings stretching across the background... Even though the houses are really old and traditional, there are normal people living in them...it illustrates how culture and tradition can live alongside modern technology and current society. The tower is Namsan Tower in Seoul, an iconic landmark for Seoul and South Korea. The dress is a traditional article of clothing called a hanbok. It is an important symbol for Korean culture. It has been passed down as a tradition that represents cultural heritage. Below the hanbok, there is a cluster of pink flowers called "Rose of Sharon," but in Korea, they are "mugung-hwa," the national flower. I wanted this to symbolize the blooming of different, colorful cultures. Finally, there is a girl looking at these illustrations with tape covering her mouth. This shows how many Asian people have been silenced from speaking or sharing their culture and heritage in other countries due to prejudice or discrimination. I hope this drawing spreads the message that if you just open your eyes and your mind, you can see so many beautiful traditions, ideas, and cultures to create a more colorful and diverse world."

★ Who Am I? ★ By William Park, age 17, Virginia.

As soon as I was old enough to go to school, my parents and teachers told me that everyone was unique—we each had something special. *No two people are the same*, they said. *Everyone has something they can contribute*.

These words were supposed to be reassuring, but they have planted seeds of doubt in my head.

Who am I?

I am many things, but a major part of my identity is my Korean American heritage. I was born in Korea, and my parents have continued to instill aspects of this culture into my upbringing. For instance, they emphasize success, a characteristic that has been important to many Koreans since ancient times, when the government administered an essay-based test to its citizens. Both insightful and correct answers were valued, and successful participants could access higher positions in society as a result of their performance.

Now, my parents support me with all they have to ensure I accomplish my goals. But that is not a unique story. In fact, one could say it is the stereotypical story of the children of immigrants.

Who am I?

In Korea, a celebration is held for a child's first birthday, during which an array of objects is placed in front of the child. Whichever object they touch represents the type of person they will become. Typically, these objects are a calligraphy brush, money, rice, string, and a bow. If the child picks the brush, they will be smart. If they pick money, they will be successful in life. If they pick the rice, they will live a fulfilling life. If they pick the string, they will live a long life. And if they pick the bow, they will have a successful military career. The object they choose is a prophecy of their future life.

On my first birthday, I reached for the money. You might say that the prophecy is fulfilling itself, as I am working hard to become successful in the future. But this dream is not only idealized by me but by everyone. Financial freedom is not an uncommon ambition, whether that means just having a stable job or becoming the next Bill Gates.

Who am I?

I go to a competitive high school. I have black hair. I play the violin. I enjoy sleeping in. I like to read. I hate the heat. I love my family. But no matter how many characteristics of myself I observe, I can see all

those same characteristics in other people.

Who am I?

This disconcerting uniformity relates to the concept of assimilation, which describes the process of minority cultures being consumed by the majority. Personally, I feel this sense of assimilation in a slightly different way. Compared to the US's 7% Asian population, my school has a percentage that rises to about 67%. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that most of my peers have a similar background to mine: children of immigrants who dream of becoming successful, regardless of the difficulty.

There isn't anything wrong with this goal. But finding something that makes me unique is difficult when I feel like I am part of the background every day. On the announcement system, I hear my friend being congratulated for earning an award for a mobile app he developed to help the disabled. I am sincerely happy for him, but my peers' amazing accomplishments make me feel like part of the crowd, watching the players move.

Who am I?

I realize that no one can really see the full picture of my personality. My friends know that I am quiet, but they also know that I am short, kind, and a tennis player. My parents know that I struggle with time management, but they also know that I am diligent, determined, and love to eat Korean food. My actions and my words create an image in their heads, and this image is different for everyone who knows me. I am not defined by some expectation that demands I derive the next $E = mc^2$.

Who am I? I am a Korean American. I attend a competitive high school. I have black hair. I play the violin. I enjoy sleeping in. I like to read. I hate the heat. I love my family. I am quiet, short, kind, and play tennis. I struggle with time management but am diligent, determined, and love Korean food. I appreciate spending time with my friends. I adore playing with my younger brothers.

When I write my college applications, I will tell a story of what I have done and what I want to accomplish. And beyond college, I will show the story of who I am, not to validate myself for the satisfaction of someone else, but to satisfy my own expectations.

One day, I'll finally finish tearing out my deeply rooted doubts and ask myself: *What will I do?* ✨

★ Hope Can Be Any Size ★

My family and I wandered through the bright green trees at the Rocky Mountains National Park. The pine leaves swayed peacefully in the slight breeze. We gasped as the sight of the summit caught our glance.

It was the summer of 2021 and we were spending our vacation on a road trip to the Rocky Mountains. Soaking in the warm sunshine, we enjoyed ourselves in the natural scenery. My mom informed us that quite a few trails were closed off due to the recent wildfires. I nodded, observing the beautiful setting around us, and didn't pay too much attention to what she said. Changing the subject, I yelled excitedly at the sight of a log propped over a small flowing creek. I balanced my feet on the bole and steadily walked across. When I made it to the other side, I fist-pumped the air and my dad clapped. The creek led us to a big crystal clear lake. The sun glistened on the surface; the lake water peacefully kissed the shore. In the distance, a snow-capped glacier was reflected into the water. I stared at it, mesmerized, thinking the reflection was a perfect mirror of the real glacier.

Later in the afternoon in our hotel room, we were on the porch eating dinner and my mom was on her phone. My brother Henry and I crowded over to her. We asked what she was searching up. She said a new trail was recently opened after a brutal wildfire that burned continuously for over half a year. I didn't realize a wildfire could be so powerful that it closed a trail for so long.

As we walked down the trail, it looked normal at first. Lush grass and colorful flowers bloomed. However, when we rounded the corner, I gaped. The view had suddenly changed. All the trees we could see were burnt to the core and charred black. They looked as if they were going to crumble at the touch. All that was left was the sad stump of what used to be a tall, majestic tree. I was shocked. There was no trace of any life forms. It seemed as if the entire world held its breath. Did the wildfire do all this?



I walked with my mom along the trail and suddenly stopped. My mom asked if anything was wrong. I didn't answer. Something in the distance had caught my eye. I sprinted ahead with my mom shouting behind for me to slow down. I skidded to a stop in front of a splatter of purple paint. When I looked closely, it was not a splatter of paint but instead a single fireweed sticking out of the ashes. I smiled at it. This one little flower in all the ashes was an incredible sight. I gently brushed off some ashes and smelled the flower. Its scent was so amazing I had to smell it again. Soon my mom caught up. She saw the fireweed and smiled too.

We stood up and started walking again. I noticed the farther we went, the more vegetation sprouted up from the ground! I felt like watching a black-and-white movie turn colorful. My mind was filled with joy.

The whole forest was trying to grow and become beautiful again, and I certainly hope it does. I can imagine soon trees will come out, birds will be chirping, and the forest will be full of life. My family and I will make sure to revisit this trail and see it thrive.

—Sophie Xu, age 9, gr. 4, Illinois.



★ The U.S. Holiday Season ★

At the start of October, my whole neighborhood is full of ghosts, witches and spiders. Every yard is decorated with pumpkins, skeletons, and lights. This is when the US holiday season starts, which is between October and December. You get quite a few holidays: Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year. On Halloween—the last day of October—you wear your fancy and scary costume and go outside with your parents. Halloween can sometimes be pretty scary for younger children, because they sometimes think that the fake, plastic decorations are real. Then, when they look at peoples' Halloween costumes, they get even more freaked out.

When you go outside, you should remember to bring your Jack-O-Lantern with you so you can put your candy in it. Your parents leave some candy outside as well so other trick-or-treaters like you can take a few pieces and bring them home to eat. But sometimes, you want to tape a piece of paper on your door that says “Only 2 pieces of candy!” or “Leave some for others!” so that children don't just take all of the candy. If you forgot to buy candy or just ran out of time, make sure that you put a piece of paper that says “Sorry, no candy!” or else they will just ring your doorbell and knock at your door a million times. If you live in an apartment, I advise you to go trick-or-treating in your building. The apartments are way closer to each other, meaning that you will get more candy. If you live in a house, you'll have to go trick-or-treating house by house. You won't get as much candy since houses are further apart, but that's okay. Not eating too much candy means that you'll have a lower chance of getting a cavity and you won't gain much weight. Also, if you happen to eat a lot of Halloween candy, make sure you brush your teeth twice a day and floss daily.

Less than a month later, you have to prepare a Thanksgiving meal with your family. The most important dish is the turkey. Unlike most holidays, you don't have to decorate much, but you need to have a fantastic meal. A few dishes you might want to have are mashed potatoes with gravy, corn, and green beans. You might want to sing some songs with your family to thank the Indians who once lived on this land, or sing traditional Thanksgiving songs. You might want to have apple pie or pumpkin pie for dessert too.

Wow! Time flies by really fast, and it's already the middle of December. But you panic when you see that other peoples' houses and apartments are all decorated with Christmas lights, candy canes, Christmas trees, and lots more. You and your family didn't even buy anything yet! But if you quickly order or shop for decorations in the next few days, you should be just in time. Christmas is on the 25th of December every year, and Christmas Eve is one day before Christmas, on the 24th. When you buy your decorations, buy a Christmas tree and lights and decorations for the tree. Then, wrap the lights around your Christmas tree and hang the decorations on the branches. If decorations happen to be expensive, sorry! If you buy decorations earlier, it will be cheaper. However, if you buy your decorations right before the holiday, it will be awfully expensive. Careful not to get hurt! Make sure that you don't accidentally touch something sharp near the branches. Sometimes, there are pieces of metal that might poke you if you get too close to the tree. After you've decorated your Christmas tree, you've got a decision to make: How much do you want to adorn your house? What decorations do you want to use?

Anyways, it's your choice how much you want to adorn your house, but there are just so many different types of decorations you could use. Candy canes, gingerbread men, Christmas stockings to hang on your door, and yes, lights everywhere. And soon, you're only one day away from the big day! It's Christmas Eve! Make sure that you've wished for everything you've wanted, and you've left chocolate pudding beside the chimney. The next day, Santa will probably leave your gifts under the Christmas tree. If you celebrate Hanukkah or Kwanzaa, it's all around Christmas, so you can celebrate them together. And make sure you take the right present! There should be name tags on every one of them, so take everything that has your name on it. Also, meals need to be delectable! You want to have a really leisurely Christmas, so delicious meals are the key!

Christmas has just passed, and it's only a few days until New Year. New Year is also a typical holiday because every country celebrates New Year. Just like Thanksgiving, you don't need many decorations, although you can put the numbers of the year that =>

★ Impressions on Hieronymus Bosch's
The Fall of the Rebel Angels ★

I. The Multiverse

A person thought, and women
With wings and weapons
Were born

A child imagined, and a fairy-
mermaid was brought
Into existence

An artist drew, and sharks
Without fins and frogs
Without eyes spiraled
Into being

A supernatural being tore open
The fabric of the multiverse, and all
The infinite timelines
Were sucked into one

II. The Rebelled

The rebel angels broke
Free of their chains

And the protector of humans and all life
Set the creatures of strange existence
Upon the once admired but now despised

And thus as quickly as it escaped its bounds
The rebellion was quenched

By Nova Macknik-Conde, age 11, New York.



*By Josie Mieger Guiley, age 12,
grade 6, Washington.*

★ **The Cavy** ★

After "The Panther," by Rainer Maria Rilke

He stirs from restless sleep, ready to leap,
He scans the enclosure with swift eyes
And finds that the bars still keep
Him. He springs in surprise
Or sudden joy that he is unhurt.
The pacing panther came
And went. Piercing claws did not subvert
His sanctum, the steel frame.
He does not wish to break free
From his world, caged and controlled.
Countless dangers lurk beyond. His plea
Is that the metal will hold.

★ **Glory** ★

Just 160 years ago,
Did our grandfathers' grandfathers
March in blue uniforms
To keep our country united
And free our fellow Americans
From the tyrant's chains.

Only 80 years ago,
Did our great grandfathers
Respond to the call
To protect freedom
And crush fascism
Around the globe.

Hardly 30 years ago,
Did our grandparents rejoice
After decades of striving
They tore down the curtain
Toppled the wall and
Brought liberty to the world.

Except they didn't.

Here we are,
Controlled by corporate powers,
Fighting each other for scraps,
Chopping our dreams down to size,
And forced to accept the future
Our elders decided for us.

So here I am,
Wondering,
What glory is left for us?

Both poems by Iago Macknik-Conde, age 16, New York.

=> has passed and the year that is coming. Try to have a good night's sleep on December 30, because the key point of celebrating New Year is watching the countdown on New Year's Eve. You have to stay up until midnight, so if you don't get the rest that you should get, you will be dozing off when you're supposed to be doing something spectacular. Then, turn your television on and watch it with your family. Make sure you have a TV channel that does the live countdown. A famous one is the New York City Channel, and in Times Square a huge ball filled with confetti drops down and then lets out the colorful confetti. Since you might be hungry, have snacks beside you. At 11:59 PM, do the countdown along with the TV channel.

Next year, remember to buy decorations earlier so they are cheaper!

—Eden You, age 10, grade 5, Chinese American, New York.

We Can't Back Down

We are getting judged by the color of our skin,
They're trying to snatch us from this earth so that they can win.
They are just judging us by our looks, and they scored a point in this (endless!) match and killed
Rayshard Brooks!
We can't back down, we have to stay strong. Why can't they understand what they're doing is wrong?
We can't back down, we need to stay tough. We are tired of all this racism, we've had enough!
They're trying to throw us in the trash,
They burned Black Wall Street because we were living it up, we had all the cash.
They weren't okay with that, that behavior wouldn't suffice. They scored another point and killed
Tamir Rice!
We can't back down, we have to stay strong. Why can't they understand what they're doing is wrong?
We can't back down, we need to stay tough, we are tired of all this racism, we've had enough!
Eric Gardener, George Floyd (Say their name, say their name!)
They are killing Blacks; they are going paranoid!
Breonna Taylor, Freddie Gray (Say their name, say their name!) This is abuse!
They get mad at us when they are the ones that lit the fuse!
They watched those innocent souls die, they felt no guilt when they saw them cry,
They said that they did something wrong but it's all just a lie!
But I have a message for all those Black haters, and skin color raters.
I won't back down, I am going to stay strong. You shouldn't be doing this. It's wrong.
I won't back down, I will stay tough; but for the love of God, please just stop.
I've had enough. —Brianna Cross, age 14, African American homeschooler, editor of a literary magazine, Texas.

★ Environmental Justice? ★

Our Black communities sit adjacent to factories
Plumes of pollution fill the air
Environmental justice?
if you take it for granted
Your view is slanted
Fighting for justice
Day by day
Environmental racism
That's what is happening in our nation
America is segregated
Plants and factories
Planted near minority youth
Emitting pollution
God please find a solution...
Near our homes
Near our schools
Near our playgrounds
Our zip code determines our health
The health of our future generations
Black and brown children
Minority youth

Not one black person...
sitting in the city council meeting
Where they decide...
And seal our fate
They choose whether we live or die
They silence us
Our speech, our rights
While our people suffer
from pollution induced asthma, cancer
heart disease, strokes...
When people start to die...
They lie.
They say they will fix it.
Environmental justice...?

—Arianna Shaprow Crain, age 12, Nevada. She adds:
"I was inspired to write my poem by Robert Bullard. He is
a Black professor of environmental justice and he is known
as the father of environmental justice. Professor Bullard serves
as an educator, author, activist, and role model for communi-
ties of color... America is still segregated, and as a result, a
majority of dumping occurs in Black communities."

★ Not A Foreigner ★

“...the time I spend writing brings out a different side of me than the one I see normally; a calmer, more serene Elena. My story is about being a biracial girl who grew up in both Korea and the US. As a child from two cultures, the only thing I wanted to do was forget about myself, what I thought, and how I felt. Growing up, it was always difficult to grapple with the idea of identity because I felt like I was being pulled in a hundred different directions. Myself was never something I wanted to talk about. So that’s why I wrote about it. I wrote about one of the most difficult challenges in my life because, unlike talking, writing isn’t scary. It’s comfortable. I write because I want to share the stories I don’t have the courage to speak. I write because speaking is hard. Of all, the hardest is speaking about myself, what I think, how I feel. So I sit in my comfy bed with my snuggly pajamas and I spill my guts out...”

Last summer I took a long-awaited trip to South Korea after nine years. It had been my first time visiting my birth country since I was a child. The experience was invigorating, the country was everything I had dreamed of—lush with beautiful scenery and rich traditions. I had never been prouder to claim South Korea as a part of my heritage. I wanted *only* South Korea to be a part of my heritage. As beautiful as it was, stares from strangers pestered my trip. Judgemental comments hushed under muttering breaths slipped by my ears. The accent-coated English from irritated cashiers plagued my runs to the convenience store. “*Aish*, another westerner,” I would overhear them later mumble in Korean, after trying their hardest to communicate in English with me. I wanted to tell them I could just be spoken to in their language, as a Korean. It didn’t bother me at first, because I understood. In Korea, I was different enough to be unique. But I wasn’t similar enough to not be distinct. Like the westerner I was, I stuck out like a sore thumb. I was stripped of the opportunity to prove myself as a Korean before I even had the chance.

In 2001, my Korean mother met my American father while they were working as English teachers at an academy in South Korea. In 2002, they got married, and five years later, I was born. As a biracial baby in a Korean hospital, I was fawned over by doctors and nurses. “She has her father’s eyes, her mother’s nose!” they would tell my parents in voices laced with adoration. The story of their marriage and my birth is one of my favorites,

because it was always told to me by my mother through memories of happiness and joy. “*How nice it must be to marry the person you love and have a child that is adored,*” I would think whenever she described the experience. When I was eleven, however, I was told a side of the story that I had never heard before.

My father—tall, tanned, and big-nosed—was the exact opposite of what my Korean family considered “the perfect husband” for my mother. I remember the exact words my mom told me her grandmother had said to her after the wedding with my father: “*I wish you had married a Korean man.*” My dad was a kind and lighthearted person, always putting in the effort to learn about Korean culture for my mother while working as a teacher and simultaneously studying for his doctorate. Nonetheless, in spite of his benevolent nature, my father’s freckled face, deep cheekbones, and hairy limbs prevented him from ever truly being accepted into my mother’s family. In time, his experience became mine as well.

Walking around the congested streets of Seoul, I understood that this trip was different from when I had lived there 9 years ago. I had grown up, looking less like my mother and taking more after my father. South Korea, a country I had once called my own, was no longer accepting of the girl I grew into, the face I grew into. Behind the looming stares from people in subway stations, restaurants, and *pojang machas* was the same thought: *She’s just another tourist*. The only country I had ever known was one I was unallowed to call home. In turn, I developed what I now know is called “Racial Imposter Syndrome.” Defined as self doubt when your own racial identity doesn’t match how other people perceive your race, the feeling only amplified when I disembarked the KoreanAir airplane and took my first steps at Incheon Airport. In Korea, nothing was unfamiliar to me. I could read the Korean lettering on road signs, understand conversations I overheard, and fit in with the flow of the country just fine. And yet, although Korea wasn’t foreign to me, I was foreign to everyone else.

Although I wallowed in my own self-pity for a great deal of the vacation, I felt a stronger sense of sadness for my mother. Walking around Gwangjang market, Gyeongbokgung Palace, and Namsan Tower, I knew the people there were eyeing her just as much as they were

**“And yet, although Korea
wasn’t foreign to me, I was
foreign to everyone else.”**

eyeing me. In America, my mom was just a woman who happened to have a mixed-race family. In South Korea, she was a woman who made a mistake. I could see it in the faces of the men in tweed suits that passed us by and in the grandmas that ran the *bindaetteok* stands we bought from: disapproval. It was the kind of look that said, “*How can you call yourself a Korean when your family is not?*” That trip, I spent hours and hours in front of a mirror, assessing every un-Korean feature on my face. I pondered over the same few questions in my mind, thinking them over and over, rolling them like stones. What if I hadn’t been born biracial? What if I didn’t look like my father? If my nose was smaller, hair was straighter, and skin was lighter, would I finally feel less guilty about calling myself my mother’s daughter? If I was just Korean, only Korean, would the two of us be able to live our lives without feeling shunned by our home country?

As I came to the end of writing this memoir, it dawned on me that I needed an ending, a conclusion of some sort. Yet, although I graduated from middle school, from trying to scrub my freckles off with toothpaste, and from resentfully staring myself down in the mirror, that despondent feeling of isolation never truly left me. I still wonder if, when I someday return home, I will continue to be treated as a foreigner. My racial identity is still something I grapple with. As my life continues on, however, I hope that my struggle with race comes to a natural conclusion. Then, and only then, will this piece be complete with the ending it deserves.

—Elena Davis, age 15, grade 10, Virginia.

★ Nature’s Legacy ★

In the peaceful light of dawn, nature awakens to greet the day,
A gentle breeze rustles through the trees, the sparrows sing and play,
And in this tranquil and still place, a young girl stands in awe,
With her grandpa by her side, she feels no fear, no flaw.

Together they trek through the woods, every step they take with care,
The trickling streams and the emerald ponds create a sight so rare,
But they hike further to a clearing, where the sun shines bright,
And the serenity and beauty of nature fills the girl with delight.

They rest and relax for a while, absorbing the peaceful view,
Grandpa tells her tales of his youth, and of adventures new,
The girl listens with wonder, her heart full of enchantment and cheer,
She knows that this special place, she will always want to come near.

Her grandpa explains, with wisdom and love,
How precious nature is, a gift from above,
He talks to her of how nature can help and heal,
How it makes us all complete, how it makes us feel.

Time ticks away, twenty candles on the cake, but she never forgets that day,
For the magic of nature and the moments with her grandpa will always stay,
So she hikes back to the clearing, heavy tears filling her eyes,
Thankful for the gift of the outdoors, and the memories that never die.

This time there is no figure next to her, telling her stories,
There is only blank space, yet she has no worries,
She feels him there around her, in the rustling leaves,
In the gushing river, in the gentle breeze.

She knows that nature’s serenity is a blessing to hold,
And the memories made in it are more valuable than gold,
So let us all cherish and preserve nature, for years to come,
And share its marvels and wonders, before it’s all gone.

—Nidhi Nadgir, age 15, grade 10, California. Nidhi is the founder and president of the Creative Writing Club at her school, and is an ambassador at The Prose Train. She wrote *Mosaic Musings*, a set of poems, to express her thoughts regarding experiences she’s gone through and key themes she’s noticed about life. We’ll share more of Nidhi’s poems in our next issue and also on our website.

----- About “Placated Power” on Back Cover

“My artwork encapsulates the value I put on my culture, family, and heritage. The piece depicts a young woman in a traditional Korean dress (*hanbok*) lounging with a tiger, a key figure in many traditional Korean art pieces. The pair soak in rays of sunlight in a peaceful and isolated bamboo forest. Placated Power stems from the correlation between tigers and strength in Korean culture. I decided to create this painting with inspiration from my mother. She and my father always kept me grounded in my Korean heritage and made sure I knew the language, developed a taste for the food, and visited often. I displayed this part of my Korean identity.” —Chaeyoung Kim, h.s. junior, New Hampshire.

★ The Change of the Current ★

My vision became clear as I dove into the crystal-clear water of Isabella Island. The ocean had always been my second home.

For six months a year, the water was warm, and food was not abundant. But now the water was cool again; that was a good sign. Schools of fish surged in this part of the sea at this time of the year. It has always been this way.

I weaved through the refreshing water, feeling my feathers flatten as I picked up speed. A glint caught my eye, and I knew I had found them. I tightly tucked my flippers back and darted straight down, feeling my streamlined body cut through the chilly currents toward my prey.

They swiftly noticed my approach and darted away. But this was my hunting ground, and they didn't stand a chance.

The silverfish were so small and delicate. Their scales shone in the sunlight like precious jewels. I locked my eyes on the biggest in the school and lunged forwards; my beak swiftly snapped shut on my quarry, and the satisfying sound of crunching bones echoed in the ocean.

My feathers were slick with seawater as I emerged and was greeted by the other penguins. I settled onto the rocky shore and basked in the sunset while chatting about the first day of the hunting season.

However, our conversation was interrupted by a gruff voice that penetrated the air.

"The current feels different, doesn't it?"

We pivoted in the direction of the sound. It was the respected elder penguin. He slowly waddled towards us, stumbling on tired feet with greyer and worn-out feathers.

"What do you mean?" my sister asked curiously, standing up from the rock.

"The current never changes," another penguin chimed in.

The elder penguin sighed deeply. "Yes, it hasn't changed, but something doesn't feel right. I have been swimming in this water longer than any of you, and something's different. I can feel it in my bones."

I looked out at the ocean. The sun was setting over the island, casting the waves on the reef with a mesmerizing blend of orange and pink. Everything was just as usual.

"Things change on the island, but not the currents; it is a rule of the ocean." I tried to sound polite, but my voice betrayed my skepticism.

The elder penguin fixed me with a piercing gaze. "You have much to learn, young one. The ocean is unpredictable." His words sounded wise, and a sense of unease began to fill the air. "Most of the fish we eat arrive with the current, and I'm afraid a change in the current will affect the hunt."

For the first time in my life, I felt unsettled and looked at my sister. However, others looked unconvinced.

The elder penguin's eyes narrowed as he saw the doubt on their faces.

"You will notice the change." He paused. "It will lead to something."

I returned to my burrow, just as every other day. But something felt different inside me. As I settled in the sand, I watched the sky grow darker.

The next few days went just as usual, as if nothing had happened. We dove into the cool refreshing water, and the hunts went well. My unsettled feeling started to disappear.

At first, it was barely noticeable. The water felt less refreshing than usual, but I didn't care. Then soon, the change became apparent. I could feel the water temperature rising gradually. We continued to hunt, but the catches became smaller. Within two weeks, I couldn't spot any fish. The ocean had become oddly quiet, and panic surged through me.

The group began to starve as the food ran out.

The sound of whining and arguing came out from the burrows as I approached.

"The younger ones cannot hang on any longer if they continue to starve like this!" said my sister, hurrying towards me.

I stood in silence, peering out at the endless horizon of the cobalt-blue ocean.

"Why don't we go further?"

She had taken the words right out of my mouth.

"Are you serious? We never go far!" gasped another penguin.

"No one knows what's out there, and we've all

“You have much to learn, young one. The ocean is unpredictable.”

heard about the story of the seals. It’s too risky!” stressed a penguin standing beside the burrow.

A cacophony of voices erupted from the group. Some penguins slapped their flippers anxiously against themselves with their eyes darting around.

“It is risky but worth a try,” I raised my voice, trying to be heard over the chaotic mess. “We don’t have a choice.”

My sister and I looked at each other and shared a smile.

She stepped towards the coastline, then declared, “We are going to leave tomorrow morning; who’s going with us?”

I looked at the group. Some of them shared uncertain looks, but no one answered. So, I returned to our burrow dejectedly.

Are they just staying here and waiting to die from hunger?

But what if they’re right?

The ocean is as unpredictable as the elder penguin had said. My stomach clenched with anxiety, and the sky became pitch-black outside.

The gentle lapping of waves against the shore woke me. The uncertainty lingered in the morning air like a thick fog, and we watched the sun gradually emerge over our island, maybe for the last time.

I tried to remember this moment, the dampness of the morning dew and the light breeze on my feathers as we made our way down to the coastline.

In the distance, I heard the voices of other penguins calling, or maybe it was just the wind. However, the voices became clearer. I saw a few figures coming toward us. Then I heard their words:

“We’re going with you.”

I smiled.

My feet slowly reached into the warm water, and I suppressed a shiver. Though, it might have been just the wind. Not knowing where we were heading, we dove into the warmth of the water, and the wind stopped blowing.

—Yutong (Annie) Wei, grade 8, Ontario, Canada.
She adds: “I wrote this short story to raise awareness about

the harmful impact of global warming on animals and our environment. I decided to leave the ending open because global warming continues to be a significant issue that requires our immediate attention and ongoing efforts.

The Galapagos penguins, the main characters of my story, are an endangered species. While researching for my story, I found out that the temperature of the water current from Antarctica is rising due to global warming. These penguins depend on that current to keep the waters around the Galapagos cool for living and hunting. I hope my story can encourage people to take action and positively impact our world.”

The Greenhouse Effect

Have you ever wondered why polar bears are dying or why you get hotter and hotter every year? It is all because of one thing: people. That’s right, polar bears are dying because of us. You get hotter and hotter every year because of us. “How?” you ask.

Let’s start from the beginning. Global warming is caused by something called the greenhouse effect. The Earth is like a greenhouse. The atmosphere is the glass walls and Earth is the plants. The sun’s rays go into the atmosphere and onto the Earth, warming it. This is good because without the sun, Earth would be freezing cold. Air pollutants such as carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and CFCs absorb sunlight and solar radiation that have bounced off the Earth’s surface warming the Earth the right amount. But when we add more air pollutants it traps more heat than needed. These heat-trapping pollutants—specifically carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide—are known as greenhouse gasses. “But how is that our problem? And how are there more air pollutants?”

When we burn fossil fuels, cut down forests and even things as simple as driving our cars to work, we add enormous amounts of greenhouse gases to those naturally occurring in the atmosphere. This makes more and more greenhouse gases into our atmosphere, and when these greenhouse gases trap sunlight they make the Earth hotter and hotter. Fun Fact: When cows fart and burp they release air pollutants, but not as much as we human beings do everyday.

—Harmony Zhang, age 10, grade 4, New York.

Noteworthy Nature Art Entries

The Earth Is Melting and So Are We

I have noticed that among my peers, social media has a strong influence on our actions and values. Instead of taking pictures to capture a special moment, we take pictures for the aesthetic, to upload to our Instagram or TikTok. When we look at the world through a small screen, there seems to be a disconnect with the real world. We are repetitively told that climate change is an issue, but to many, a picture of the melting polar ice caps is just another photo for more “likes.”

I believe that despite the convenience and accessibility, digital photos have significantly diminished the value of the photographs being taken. It is easy to take, keep, erase, and even restore digital photos. This is why my painting is of a Polaroid, and of Polaroid photos of climate change issues. Each Polaroid in the world is unique, and cannot ever be replicated or restored. Similarly, we need to remember that the Earth is unique, and this is the only Earth that we get. Perhaps Polaroid photos that capture the consequences of climate change—the rapid changes to ecosystems, pollution, the displacement and loss of many species—will encourage people to truly understand what is being taken in the photo, and start appreciating our nature, ecology, and the Earth.

—*Sunwoo Na, grade 10, South Korea.*

Wind and Water

This is a depiction of traditional Korean tiled buildings floating gracefully across the sea. Looking at the charming scene, you're struck by wind blowing over your face, shaking tiles and stirring water for a quiet dance.

In capturing the essence of the Korean landscape and its rich cultural heritage, which is reflected in every aspect of its architecture, the colors in this painting are vivid and alive. There is a stunning visual contrast between the bright, lively house against the calm and serene water that reflects the unchanging nature of our world.

As you explore this work of art, I invite you to contemplate the theme of wind and water. The wind is an inexhaustible source of energy for life, continuously moving and constantly evolving. The water, on the other hand, is an expression of calm and peace, reminding us that in a world where there is always change, we must find equilibrium.

—*Harry (Hyunwoo) Son, 17, grade 11, Seoul, South Korea.*

The Green New Deal

My artwork is inspired by the New Deal that was promoted to re-inflate the sharply fallen economy in the 1930s by President Franklin D. Roosevelt of the U.S.. I believe that the present is an appropriate time to revive the broken Earth ecology due to global warming and climate change. I think there should be more specific regulations to solve the worldwide issues. Although there are already global efforts, such as the 17 SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) of the United Nations, I wanted to focus more on the examples from the past, and how we solved the issues that people experienced during the Great Depression.

—*Joon Seok Lee, grade 9, Connecticut.*

Like The Oceans We Rise

This piece is meant to identify the problem of ocean pollution and present ways to fix it (through innovation, awareness, and building communities). It connects humanity with the ocean. The piece itself is also a call to action on ocean environmental justice as a form of awareness.

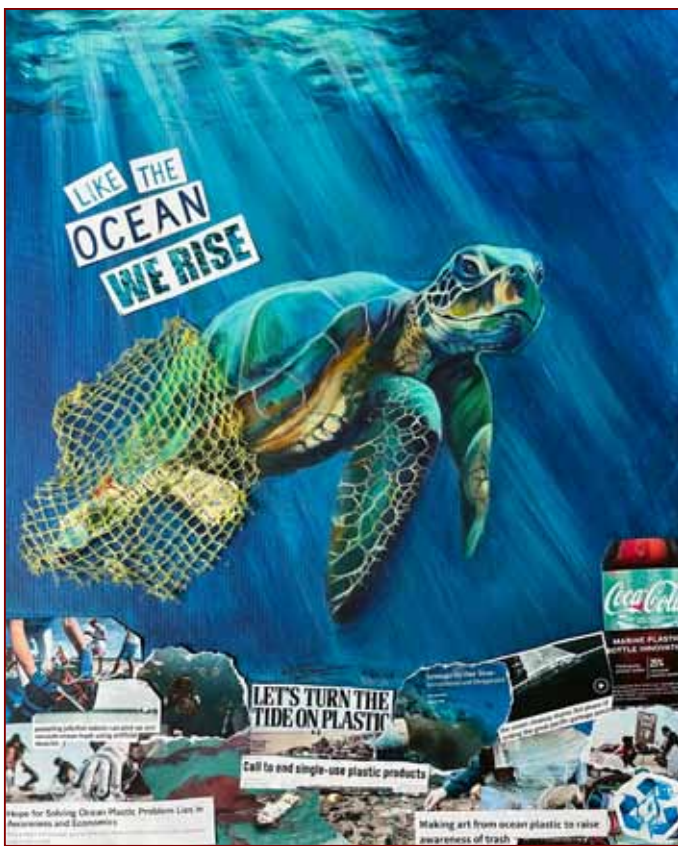
—*Serena Lin, age 15, New Jersey.*

Reflection (on back cover)

This is a portrait of an elderly Tibetan woman. I was inspired to create this painting after seeing a reference photo my art teacher showed me. I hope this piece encourages people to ask questions about her story: Where did she grow up? Who is her family? What stories and anecdotes can she share about her experiences living in Tibet? For me, art is more than colors on a canvas. Instead, it is a way of telling stories and shining light on different people and their respective cultures.

As an artist, I've realized that diversity goes hand in hand with creativity in fostering an artistic community. Viewing art, whether it be online or in art museums, has broadened my knowledge of different colors. Although everyone may use the same reference, each person produces a unique creation that demonstrates their style, from the brushstrokes to the use of color. When I view my peers' artwork, I find the individuality in each piece incredible. Although art builds upon certain technical aspects, its diversity is what makes it so remarkable. Diversity carries art forward and encourages people to become artists. My role as an artist, among others, is to maintain this diversity by welcoming new perspectives wherever I go.

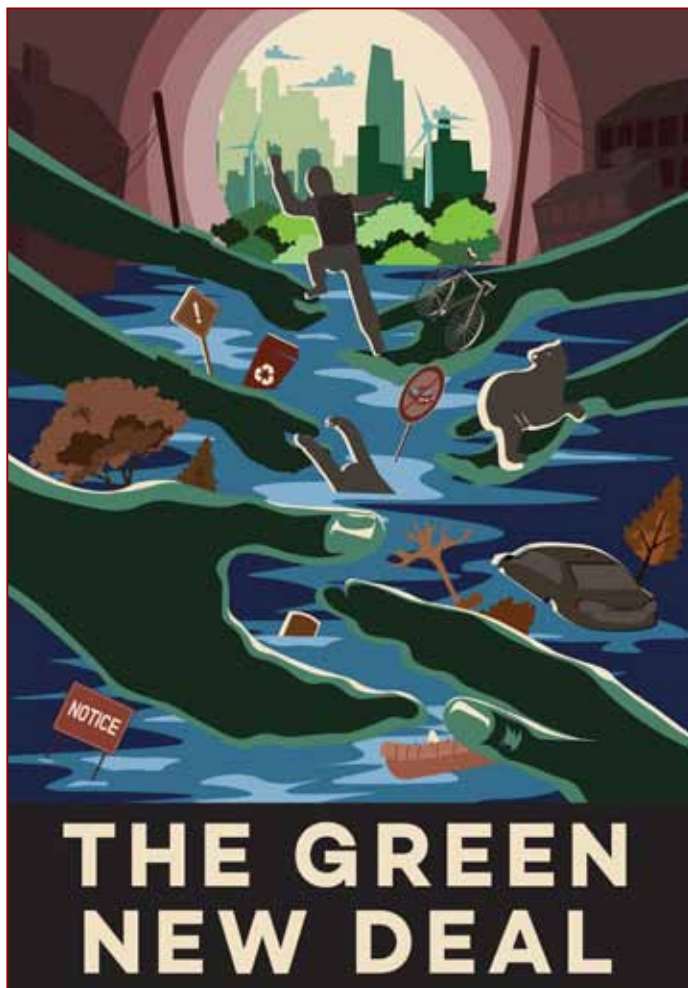
—*Desiree Luo, grade 11, California.*



By Serena Lin, age 15, New Jersey.



By Sunwoo Na, grade 10, South Korea.



By Joon Seok Lee, grade 9, Connecticut.



"Wind and Water" by Hyunwoo (Harry) Son, gr. 11, S. Korea.

Art by Students in South Korea

- (clockwise, from top) *On Our Table* by Jihoo Choi, grade 10
 • *Homecoming* by Yuhyuk Chang, grade 12 • *Look Back* by Ryan Park, grade 11 • *Stop Trashing Our Oceans* by Brian Ji, age 15 • *Helping Hands* by Chloe Han, grade 11
 • *Wonder What's Inside?* by Lina Chang, grade 8



Also see pp. 5 & 28 for artists' statements.



★ To See Beyond ★

I had heard enough. I took the remote and quickly turned the TV off. Despite my just being ten years old at the time, I knew exactly what the expression “Kung Flu” meant and who it was directed toward. It was during the shut down due to the Covid pandemic that I first encountered anti-Asian prejudice on a large scale. I had heard the random, playground nasty remarks directed at me or others of Asian descent, but it wasn't until a disease that began in China had begun to make its way around the globe that I realized how far reaching anti-Asian prejudice extended. On the news, I heard stories about Asian people being attacked for no reason other than their physical appearance. I couldn't understand why people would harm others for physical appearance or for any other difference over which they had no control.

One day, I asked my mom to explain why people had such trouble accepting each other's differences. Her vague response kind of shocked me: “I believe, Chloe,” she replied, “that you already know the answer to your own question.” Since we were on lockdown, I had a lot of opportunity to give the matter some thought and consider why my mom put the ball back in my court. Lying on my bed, I tried to think of incidents that would clarify what my mother had meant in saying, “... you already know the answer to your own question.” As I laid there, I was taken back to the year before and thought of a friend that I often had lunch with. She came from a different background than me, being part European and part African American, but we got along perfectly fine and, in fact, had a number of similarities. I was aware that there had been a couple of kids who'd made snide remarks about Kayla's ethnicity as well as our friendship, but I had never given our differences any thought; Kayla was a nice person and my friend. But there was something else there with Kayla beyond her mixed heritage, something that I couldn't put my finger on at the time, something that others seemed to sense about her. To my way of thinking, Kayla was not related to my concern over anti-Asian prejudice or my mother's puzzling remark about differences. For a long time, I continued having trouble trying to pinpoint the connection between these things.

When school resumed after the shut down, Kayla and I returned to our in-person friendship. Nothing

much seemed to have changed except we were older. One sunny day when we were eating lunch, Kayla suddenly said she had something to tell me. “Okay,” I said, “what is it?” Kayla hesitated. She seemed to be searching for the right words. “During the shut-down, I admitted something about myself,” she stammered, “Something I've kept hidden for a long time. I'm bisexual.” I nodded, said okay, and then continued talking about our classes. “Aren't you shocked?” she asked, interrupting me. I asked her why I should be. “Because my parents are and so are some of my other friends.”

During our lunch discussions throughout the following days, Kayla told me stories about her experience of being her. She told me about hiding herself in fear of rejection. She told me about how hard she had tried to fit into a mold made for her by someone else. She told me about the worries and troubles she faced interacting with people every day. To me, she was the same person she'd always been, but I think that I now understood the occasional snickers that had come our way as others passed our lunch table. I asked Kayla how she lived with such daily fears and why she felt that people reacted as they did. “Because I make them feel uncomfortable,” was her response. I recognized that truth the minute she'd said it. I also recognized that it was what my mother had meant when she told me I knew the answer to my own question.

For a long time, my mom had pointed out to me that prejudice is not about peoples' differences, rather it is about the misperceptions of those who are prejudiced against others. While Kayla was my first actual experience of my mom's wisdom, it went further than that. I also understood that the anti-Asian sentiment I witnessed due to Covid came from the same place as the intolerance that Kayla experienced; that people find it easier to force their own feelings onto others rather than face those feelings themselves.

Prejudice is like a disease that can grow and grow until it blinds a person of the truth behind the mask of appearance. All people should be treated as equals whether they see, think, or believe different things.

In addition to continued racial prejudice, almost daily there are news stories in this country about peoples' differences. All of these things are based on igno-

rance and blindness. When I think about tolerance and diversity, I think about Kayla and myself. Kayla cannot change her nature anymore than I can change my Asian heritage. To me it is unreasonable to victimize people for a trait over which they have no control. I think I now understand what my mom has been teaching me all these years. Those who display intolerance toward others should not focus on misconceptions about others' differences.

—Chloe Rui, grade 8, California. She adds: "I was inspired to write this short story by emotions I felt when hearing new news stories every day on the topic of discrimination. Through this story I aimed to share my learning experience and how that changed my understanding of discrimination and intolerance."

Homecoming by Yuhyuk Chang, grade 12. (on p. 26.)

"I wanted to relate to my personal cultural background and investigate both sexual desire and the desire to dominate others. I took up a part of South Korea's terrifying history called *comfort women*. I used mannequins as they're easily manipulated by others. I show gloomy feelings by painting The Rising Sun (*Yukilgi*) in the top backdrop, which appears to melt, and the dark clouds are in the lower background. The bleeding flag represents blood loss and pain of Korean women during the Japanese occupation. Mannequins are strolling out of the Yukilgi in the centre to indicate a hopeful return to their motherland. Mannequins are symbols of Korean women used for sexual slavery in Japan. They are all the same form and colour. I wanted to communicate my frustration with Japan's injustices..."

A Message to the Message of My Expected Excellence

My face is, not the face	of someone whose throat hasn't dried.
Call me what I am	
Call this	what it is
	—with or without your
	failed revisions,
your word keeps me in the empty columns.	
Border of text, end of page.	
Past mountain ranges of this left	Where I am meant to exist profoundly.
	to
	right language.
Hidden between lines,	
a whistleblowers' exploit.	
It was built on top of quiet achievement,	now it will only tolerate just that.
of course marginal resistance,	keeps our daughters safe.
	Still, my roots insist this pyrite mercy is fair.
Rejecting silence means loving the oppressor,	at least I was taught.
Convince myself my place is fortunate, and not unjust,	
sunbaked fury,	—drained by hand.
I could be the clever annotations in your margins.	
I could effortlessly struggle, between the lines.	
So may I close my fist,	
and crease my hands just so	
—That way,	
texture finds no escape between	
printed press,	
	and your favorite color.

—Christina Dong, a h.s. freshman in California, shares her experiences of growing up Asian American in a mostly white area.

What's On Your Mind?

★ Autumn ★

A gentle breeze wafted
Through the tree's fiery crown.
A jeweled leaf fluttered
To the daisy-covered ground.

The girl tried to catch it as it fell,
Giggled when she missed.
Kneeling, she pocketed
The flare-filled charm.

The leaf met more of her kind
And though she shone bright red
Her sisters wore glorious shades
Of joyous amber
Fierce orange
Chocolate brown

The child placed all on her desk
And preserved them in a liquid
That set after a while.
She poked tiny holes
Through the leaves
Without upsetting their beauty.

She took out a length of twine
That shimmered scarlet, ginger, and gold
In the artificial light.
She sang softly to herself
As she wove and laced.

Then the girl donned a dress
That embodied red-hot flame.
She set the wreath of fallen leaves
On her sunset-colored hair
And left to show the world
Who she was.

She was the loveliest season,
Filled with cheery decline.
Not too warm, not too mild,
The time of fun-filled frights.
She was proud to be its namesake
Though her classmates thought it strange.
Odd to say and odd to spell.
She was the in-between.
She was Autumn.

—Nova Macknik-Conde, age 11, New York.

Fluttering Thoughts

Stalking through the shouting streets
I listen to the silhouettes sauntering all around me
talking, tittering, tearing
near the golden whispers of the candles
and the decayed photographs of the altars

The orange vibrance of the marigolds
remind me of my mama
My mama's favorite animal was always a monarch
but mine is a caterpillar
stuck in time, not quite changing

Just then, shadows of the sky enclose on the buildings
It's that time of year
Thunderstorms of butterflies swarm the streets
The wings clapping with delight, booming with colors
Mama would have been proud

Then one lands near my feet
Staring at my glossing eyes
I gawk as if it was a phoenix
Newly reborn, here for me
Just a thought, just a fluttering thought
But even so, I leave behind a nectared flower
And a home in my heart

—Hannah Hufana, age 13, Illinois. She writes: "Fluttering Thoughts" is about a child that misses their mother on Dia de los Muertos. When monarch butterflies come to their town, they are reminded of their mom, whose favorite animal was always a butterfly, and the child begins to appreciate the monarchs. I was inspired by the prompt 'Multicultural Awareness and Nature Appreciation,' and I wanted to write about how the two can strengthen one another, especially when emotions are involved."

Cover Art: **Butterflies on the Cactus: A Dream of the Connection between Unconsciousness and the Natural World** by Minseo Choi, h.s. junior, Seoul, South Korea. Oil painting; 20" x 16"

"This artwork is a representation of the connection between our unconscious minds and the natural world. The cactus, with its sharp spines and tough exterior, represents the barriers we put up to protect ourselves from our deepest fears and vulnerabilities. Butterflies, with their delicate wings and vibrant colors, represent the beauty and potential that lies within us, waiting to be set free. It explores the ways in which our unconscious minds can manifest our dreams and how these dreams can offer us valuable insights into our deepest fears, desires, and motivations."

★ Retirement ★ By Ellie Payne, age 17, Kansas.

There are many different planes in which I was raised. Seeds sowed and uprooted again and again, creating in the end a unique hybrid plant with adaptive capabilities. For a young seedling, such upheaval typically results in the degradation of soil microbes and long-term fertility issues. For the purpose of this piece, however, I will count my blessings. Telling the story in beautiful words mollifies my resentment.

Through a child's eye I've seen greens and blues tumble through a blackened sky, an event impossible to capture without my father's Nikon camera. As far as I was concerned, the grainy pictures uploaded to our family computer were life-changing and spectacular; NASA had nothing on him. He showed me Alaskan mountain ranges swelling to life, swallowing the sun before regurgitating a plentiful Milky Way. We once stood together upon a ridge carved into the side of the tundra, small and vulnerable against arctic winds until the light rose to touch our faces and warm our cheeks. My father was an explorer, a scholar, an artist, and a warrior. He knew everything, and he knew it first. I watched as he hung Orion's Belt in the night sky, and taught me how to find the constellations, dazzling against the darkness, a skill he alone possessed.

I've seen heavenly arches of crumbling sandstone eroded over millennia, crafted perhaps in the palm of some strange and fantastical being. I sang show tunes while traversing through that natural architecture. The desert brought out some kind of wild hunger from within me. There was something about the ancient stone marvels that gave me the desire to see more, to experience more wondrous phenomena of nature. I believe the character of this sentiment was hereditary. My father, brought to life by the heartbeat of Tennessee forests, showed me how to stand still and feel the rhythm of the trees, pulsing through the soles of our feet and flowing into the bloodstream; blood we shared. Planted within him, and subsequently me, was a feeling of ancient belonging.

I've seen Pacific reefs alive and bubbling in magnificent motion; an aquatic kaleidoscope that I witnessed from the surface of the ocean (the back of my neck got sunburned that summer). Learning to breathe through a snorkel is an unnerving feeling; humans aren't meant to do that sort of thing underwater. I was

never truly afraid though, even when it seemed that I was miles from shore. There was an invisible tether connecting me to my father; if the water got too deep, the waves too rough, he was there. I got the hang of it soon enough, and that topsy-turvy feeling in my stomach dissolved when he guided my gaze to a sea turtle, a real-life sea turtle, bobbing and diving among rays of light filtered through the water. It's easy to forget that life like that exists beyond the walls of human existence, far past the reach of my mother standing on the shore.

Having the opportunity to explore such a world, one that begs to be wondered and marveled at, is a favor I hold close to my heart. My dad gave me this and everything else, both in a biological and emotional sense. I have his eyes, as well as his humor and stubbornness. This inheritance is something I resented in the past. We shared an intrinsic sense of right and wrong, but our headstrong attitudes often resulted in a battle; the angsty teenager in the midst of her adolescence vs. her father, who really does know what's best for her, despite what she wants to believe. Upon his return from his last deployment, the dissension between us was the entirety of our relationship. War does things to a man, things I will never truly comprehend. It ruins people, but my dad has never been "people." Over time, patience and care licked his wounds until he was able to heal mine.

This month he retires from the Army, the ending of his 20 years of service and the only life I've known. A chapter of life closes for both of us; as he begins his post-retirement existence, I graduate from high school. I will be sent off into the world with the rest of my peers, however, I think I have a certain advantage: the life I have experienced thus far, thanks to my dad. Every landscape he imparted to me is illustrated on my heart's canvas, layer upon layer. Such memories have instilled in me the knowledge that there is always something beautiful to look for. Whether it is in the tide pools of Hanauma Bay or in the treeline of our front yard, my father always silently pointed out to me the overlooked wonders of our world. I am forever indebted to him, although he asks for nothing in return. I only hope that I too can make a lone deer perched upon a wooded hill known to my child, and watch their eyes fill with wonder. ✨

★ **My Wise Little Krishna** ★ By Ishani Singh, grade 10, New Jersey.

“Little Krishna was a god, and the most playful of them. He would play tricks on the girls walking across the street and tease out enchanting melodies from his flute. He was also one of the wisest gods, but Yashoda, his mother, did not know this just yet.”

“How does she know?” I asked.

“One day, Yashoda was at the river getting some water. Little Krishna was at home, and he was hungry. So, like all the times Krishna is hungry, what does he want?”

“Butter!” I said.

“Good!” *Amma* responded. “Krishna went around the house looking for some butter, and at last he found a pot, high on a shelf. Little Krishna couldn’t reach it! But, he was as clever as he was hungry. He went searching around for a stone, and when he found one, he threw it at the pot!”

“Smash!”

“It all came crashing down! The butter spilled out onto the floor, and Krishna immediately leapt on it and began to scoop it into his mouth. When he was almost finished, he heard his mother’s steps approaching. Krishna tried to run away from the mess, but Yashoda had already seen the shards of clay strewn on the floor. ‘Krishna,’ she asked, ‘What have you done?’

Silence.

‘Did you eat the butter?’ she asked. Krishna shook his head and ran off.

Yashoda sighed and started cleaning up the mess. After a while, Krishna’s friends came running.

‘Krishna is eating mud! You have to stop him!’ one said.

Yashoda walked over to the forest to find Krishna on the ground.

‘Were you eating mud?’

Krishna shook his head.

‘I don’t believe you. Open your mouth.’ Yashoda said. She tried to pry his mouth open. At long last he gave in, but when he opened his mouth, Yashoda was stunned by what she saw. It was not mud but... the entire universe in Krishna’s little mouth.”

“How is that possible?” I asked.

“You will learn soon, my little Krishna,” my mom said, pinching my cheeks.

I was 5 years old then. I’m 33 now, and I still have no idea what that really means.

I always figured it was because Krishna is a god, but then what would the point of the story be?

Was it just one of the many Hindu stories *Amma* would tell me to keep me in touch with my culture?

“Diya, we’re home!” my husband calls from the front door. I hear my little one, Mohan, running in, his shoes clomping on the wooden floor.

“Mohan, what did I say about shoes in the house?” I yell out. Suddenly, the stomping stops.

“Sorry, *Amma*,” he responds. I hear him walk back to the front door to take his shoes off.

“How was the park?” I ask as he and my husband walk from the hallway into the living room.

“It was great!” Mohan says, sitting beside me on the couch. “I had so much fun on the swings.”

“That’s wonderful. Now, it’s time to go work on your math practice.”

“But, I want to play some more!”

“Mohan, no, it is time for you to do some problems.”

Mohan frowns and trudges up the stairs. I can hear him grumbling under his breath, and it reminds me of the times I had to spend hours putting elbow grease on pages of homework in my room.

“Diya, aren’t you being too hard on him? It’s summer after all, and he’s just a 7-year-old.”

“We’ve been over this, Mark. The only way I got this successful was by working hard every second I got. I want Mohan to have the same opportunities.”

He shrugs. “Fine. Just...don’t overwork him. He should enjoy his childhood.”

I nod and go back to my computer. Work was piling up, like my boss had no regard for people’s well-being. That’s why Mohan has to start learning about how hard life really is. He can’t be surprised

"...but I miss you."

and overwhelmed in the real world.

After two hours, I close my laptop and put my head on the table. I don't know why work should be this difficult. I walk up the stairs, head to Mohan's room, and open the door.

"Hi, *Amma*," he says, looking up from his book.

"How is your practice going?" I ask.

"I'm tired of this. Can we watch a movie together?"

"No, I'm sorry, I don't have much time," I say, sitting down next to him. "Maybe later."

"You always say that!"

"Trust me, our work is much more important. Later in life, you will regret it if you spend your time doing other things."

"...but I miss you."

"I'm right here!" I say, giving him a hug. "Don't worry."

I get up and leave the room, but not before I notice a little snuffle come from behind me.

Hours of elbow grease.

The following afternoon, Mark walks into the living room with Mohan by his side.

"Going to the park?" I ask.

"Yeah, and I think Mohan wants someone to go with him too."

"Oh, did you make a new friend?"

"No, I want you to go with us," Mohan says shyly.

I look up at my husband and he gives me the puppy dog look I have seen too many times over our marriage. I then look down at my computer at the 50 emails I had to respond to. I then look at Mohan, who is staring at his blue sneakers. I have never seen him so sad.

I grab my phone. "Let's go."

"Thank you!" Mohan screams and runs up to give me a squeeze. I laugh and ruffle his hair.

At the park, I watch Mohan as I push him higher and higher on the swings, and the Krishna story my mother told me when I was younger flashes into my brain. I haven't realized until now how happy a child can make you feel. Tears fill my eyes. And I see the entire universe around my wise little Krishna. ❀

When Dreams Pick Me Up

The day passed
and the mighty sun shivered
under an ancient orange blanket
I hear a faint dream calling
I wish my steps following
but the boundary loomed
and our gaze is blocked

When will we meet if the obstacles mess up?

If the hope sends no message or shows up,
maybe tomorrow, another dream will pick me up,
accompanied by the heart flowers blooming
and the spring sparkling

Can we forget yesterday's sad thing
and reach each other?

If we can't meet this evening,
at least our hands wave to each other

—Zanjabila Khadija, age 8, Indonesia.

Sunset

I thread through thin leaves
I cause a whirlwind of green
I hear the gentle rustle as I pass by
I swoop low under
hugging branches
and twirl over
calm puddles of
crystal water
I snake over a beautiful
sleeping giant
holding my breath
as his grey head rests between
his huge paws
I roll up a hill and
stare at the sinking
sinking
circle of fiery crimson
sinking under the orange water.

I sit down.

—Lilian Wang, age 11, Washington.

★ Same and Different ★

Two steps to the left of the brand-new clothing store above Xiuying's apartment, there was a charming restaurant that was a favourite of hers. After school, when the exams had slowed down, she and her friends would visit the slouchy shop, sitting in one of the back tables and chatting their hearts out.

This was all in the past, of course. Because Xiuying was now in America's pride of New York, eleven-thousand kilometres from the shop and all her friends.

Xiuying sighed. The unbearable heat from New York City's unpredictable weather combined with the humid breeze made her want to hurl. Besides, her English hadn't improved at all in the two months she had lived in the United States.

The ring of the annoying school bell interrupted Xiuying's inner monologue, as the students got up to shuffle awkwardly out of the creaky doorsteps. The blonde girl shoved past Xiuying as she raced to catch up with her friends, giving Xiuying an apologetic look before mingling with the rest of the students.

As Xiuying trudged through the musty hall, her eyes caught upon the poster that hung on the bulletin board outside the school's walls. Two pink hearts boasted the words "Valentine's Day Celebration!" while the following script read as an invitation to a dance of some sort. The label of the date was that of February 14th, 2010—exactly two weeks from now.

"Hey, Xiuying, right?"

Ignoring the butcher of her name—as Xiuying had learned that Americans were not able to pronounce such syllables—Xiuying turned around, to face the girl that had smiled apologetically at her before. "I'm Erica." In her hand, she proudly displayed the same poster Xiuying had seen earlier. "Me and my friends were wondering if you wanted to join the Valentine's Day planning – we're short a person for planning and it would be really nice if you joined."

Xiuying squinted, adjusting her eyes from the bright sun. The date read eerily similar towards another 'festival' she was familiar with—but the name escaped her. As Erica turned red and muttered hasty apologies, she realised her mistake. "Sure!" she smiled sheepishly, trying to pronounce it the way that her English lessons had gone through. "So when do we start?"

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"Xiuying!"

The joyful cheer of Xiuying's little brother, Yiming, was the first thing that greeted her. His eyes were lit with undisguised amusement, whilst he clutched a plastic superhero figure in the pocket of his new jean overalls.

"Hi, Ming," Xiuying replied, smiling. It was then when she noticed Yiming seemed to have calmed down, shaking his head. "Not Ming!" he laughed, as if Xiuying had mistakenly called him an adult. "My name is Max." With that, Yiming went back to his superhero, ignoring the wave of shock that he had washed over Xiuying.

"Who said your name is what now?" Xiuying snapped, eyes in disbelief. She marched over to where the tiny kitchen housed her mom, who was cooking wearily at the stove. "Mama!" she cried, using the pronunciation dubbed 'When-Xiuying-Wants-Something.' "What does Yiming mean when he changed his name? It's so stupid, you need to talk to him—"

Mama Chen sighed, in the tone that had also been frequent when Xiuying-Wants-Something showed up. "Xiuying, your brother wants to be called Max—I don't know why—but let's let him have his change. It's part of moving."

"But—" Xiuying protested, as her mother stopped her stove. "I thought you said most things aren't going to change. When we moved here, you said it'd be just like Beijing—and it isn't!"

Her mother seemed to freeze for a moment, before patting the top of Xiuying's head with the untouched end of a chopstick. "You worry too much about small things of another." She laughed, but her eyes remained wistful. "Sometimes I wonder if Yiming is younger than you."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"I don't know which colour looks better—the pink or the maroon," fretted Erica the next day, as she handed pieces of heart garlands to Xiuying. Xiuying startled as the paper pieces materialised in front of her. The pink was horrifyingly pastel, creating a mirage effect against the light of the wall. However, the maroon was even more hideous—it didn't match the theme of "Love and Peace" that Erica had explained to Xiuying.

Same and Different... *continued*

"Valentine's Day has to be perfect," another one of Erica's buddies gushed. "I mean, what can you do with red and pink?"

Lightbulbs went on inside Xiuying's head. *Red...*

"Lunar New Year," she blurted, watching how everyone snapped to look at her.

"I've heard of that," Erica muttered, still focussing on her garland. "And by that, you want—"

"Could we combine heritages?" Xiuying said excitedly. *Maybe then Yiming will see how nice his name is.* "In China, we had these paper fireworks and money bags—red bags! We can put them together or something." She animatedly waved her hands around, before watching the solemn environment around her.

"Sounds... cool." Erica's friend didn't even look up.

Xiuying's heart dropped.

"I think that sounds good," smiled Erica. She shrugged. "What do you think?"

As the rest of the girls mumbled about how the colour schemes may match, Xiuying had never wanted to hug someone as much as she did right now.

"I think the stores will sell a nice red paper which we can advertise with..." trailed Erica, finishing her sentence. "There are a couple of new immigrants and we really want to make them feel at home, right?"

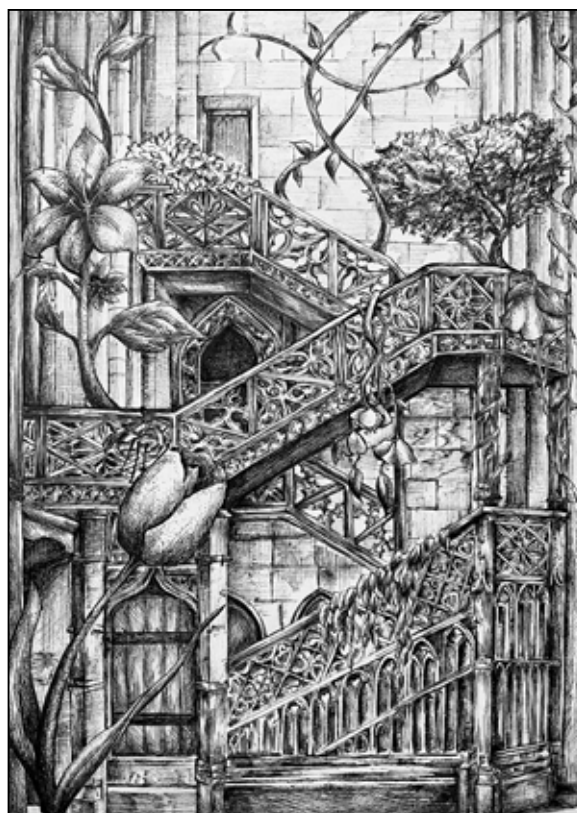
The chorus of agreements warmed Xiuying's heart. She smiled at Erica, as the blonde girl laughed and waved at her to come look at patterns on the Internet.

Maybe change wasn't so difficult. ❀

—Mia Liu, age 13, Ontario, Canada. She adds: "The changes you go through when you move, such as leaving your previous neighbourhood, friends, and family behind, make it a stressful experience... I wanted to express the love of discovering something familiar in a new area as well as the feeling of fitting in."

Haiku from St. Hilda's Primary School, Singapore

You be my jelly.	Fresh and beautiful
I'll be your peanut butter—	Sunlight shines through the water
Let's stick together!	Colors in the sky
—Guo Zhiyun Isabelle.	—Lim En Yi Kyler.
Down the dark tunnel.	It is drizzling
The ants are in a hurry.	Frogs are leaping everywhere
The queen is hungry.	They are having fun
—Mathews Stanley Wesley.	—Yeo Yi Xuan Summer.



"My piece, '**Coexistence**' is a pen and ink illustration depicting a world in which man-made buildings and nature live together compatibly—a stark contrast from the present where deforestation and habitat destruction rampages nature as people continue to farm irresponsibly for resources."

~Grace Lee, age 17, South Korea.

Our 35th Year Sale on Back Issues

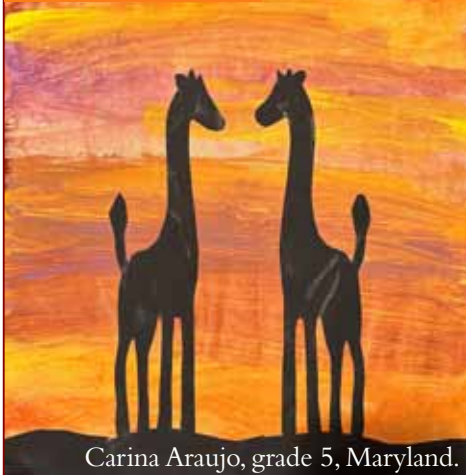
To celebrate our 35th year, we are offering 10 back issues for \$35 (or 35 back issues for \$100), including postage within the U.S. (International postage is extra. E-mail us for additional overseas postage). To order, e-mail: info@skippingstones.org, or write to: **Skipping Stones**, 166 W. 12th Ave, Eugene, Oregon 97401 USA.

Waterfall in Winter

Frozen to the spot
An icy heart without sun
Migraine stabs surface
Sunny in spirit below
Weeping depths stopped at the door
—Anjali Oliver Rajan, grade 5, Illinois.

Haiku & Nature Art Entries

Beauty surrounds us
Standing tall and elegant
Looking far ahead



Carina Araujo, grade 5, Maryland.

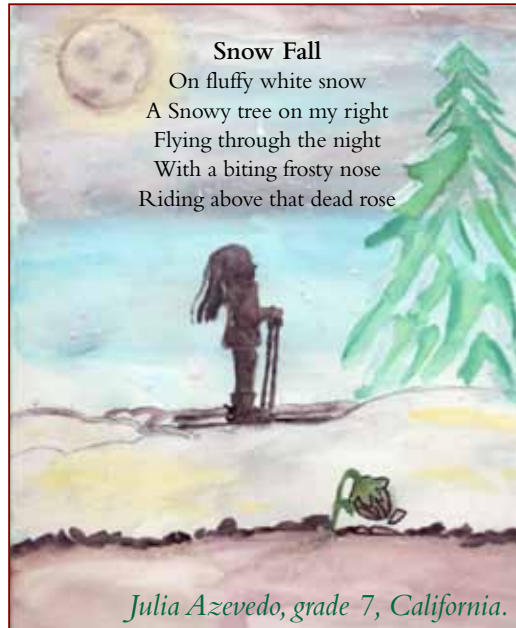
Sophia Hall, grade 12, Washington, DC.



rock creek park
hum of traffic silenced
softened by snow

Snow Fall

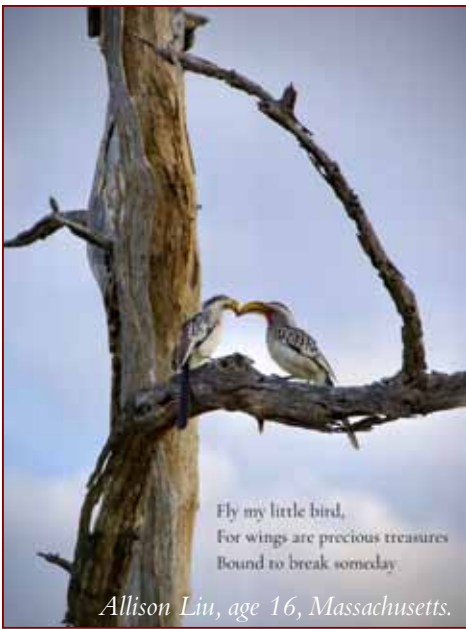
On fluffy white snow
A Snowy tree on my right
Flying through the night
With a biting frosty nose
Riding above that dead rose



Julia Azevedo, grade 7, California.

Fly my little bird,
For wings are precious treasures
Bound to break someday.

Allison Liu, age 16, Massachusetts.



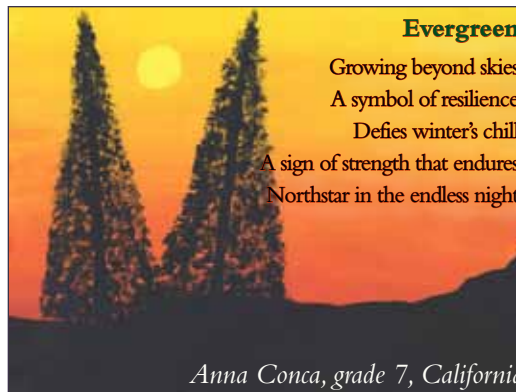
The light and bright pink
The cherry blossoms gliding
Watch them fall all night

Alyssa Kim, grade 5, Oregon



Evergreen

Growing beyond skies
A symbol of resilience
Defies winter's chill
A sign of strength that endures
Northstar in the endless night



Anna Conca, grade 7, California

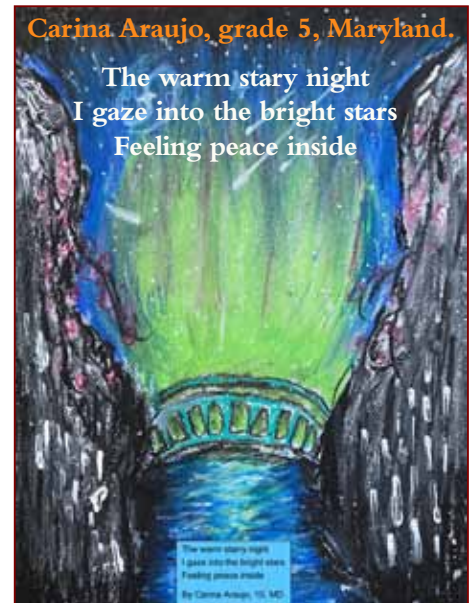
Like a warm blanket,
Provides warmth and happiness
Shining everyday

Miku Hasegawa, age 12, Japan.

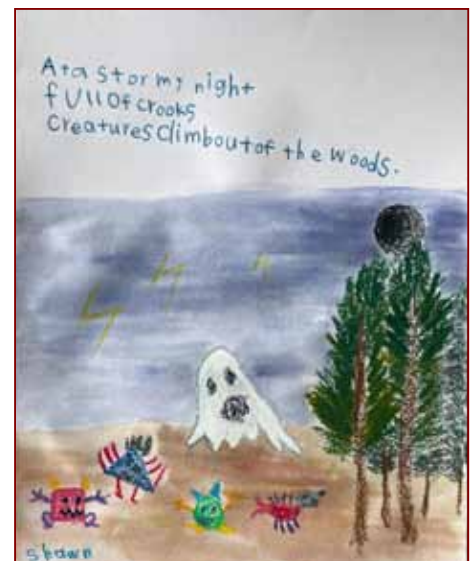


Carina Araujo, grade 5, Maryland.

The warm stary night
I gaze into the bright stars
Feeling peace inside



Ara stormy night
full of crooks
Creatures climb out of the woods.



The Bad Storm in California
By Shawn Yang, age 5, California.

Dandelion field
Sending one thousand wishes
I blow a flower

Anna Svininnikaa, age 12, Japan.



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Placated Power by Chaeyoung (Coco) Kim, h.s. junior, New Hampshire.

(top, right) **Reflection** by Desiree Luo, grade 11, California.

(bottom, right) **Islander** by Lia Hwang, grade 11, South Korea.

(below) **Enviro Wick** by Junseok Shin, grade 10, South Korea.

