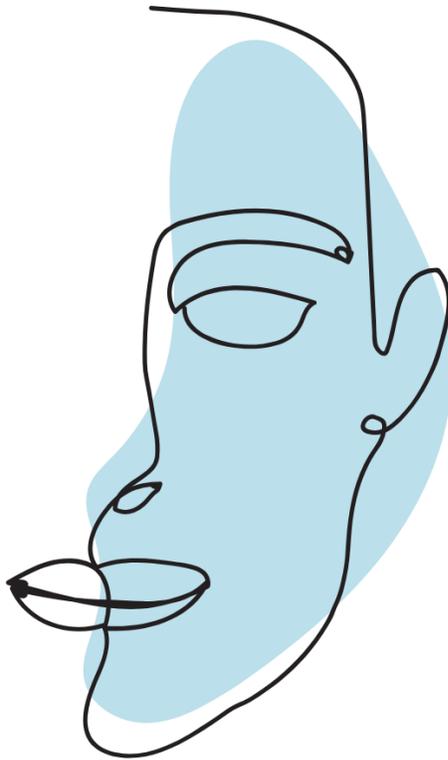


MEMORIAL HALL LIBRARY'S  
19TH ANNUAL  
TEEN POETRY CONTEST



RECEPTION AND READING

WEDNESDAY, MAY 10 AT 7:00 PM

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We wish to thank: Gayle Heney for serving as the judge of MHL’s Teen Poetry Contest, Fernanda Lopez and Jayvie Song for their translation services, and the Friends of the Library for sponsoring this event.

## Middle School Winners

### **First Place: “Dancing in the Rain” by Satabhisha Sarkar, West Middle School**

It was a quiet night  
The trees shook in the darkness  
There was a quiet rage  
Lurking in the dark like a harness  
Preventing every good thing from blooming

There were cries  
There were fears and tears and sadness  
There was bitterness  
Like the taste of broken promises  
Made long ago in a game, just for show

It was a terrible thing  
Everyone would like to forget it now  
But some remember  
The aftereffects, but they forget how  
Everything collapsed that night

The sky was dark  
The thunder drowned out everything that mattered  
Before the rain came  
And the sky split while the world shattered  
Drumbeats on the frozen ground  
A cacophony of triumphant sound  
They never saw us dancing in the rain

But I saw it, and what a sight we were  
Hearts beating in rhythm, fingers interlocked  
It didn't matter anymore who you were  
No one saw us crying in the rain  
The raindrops blended into our pain

It was a brilliant morning  
They remember it as the dazzling aftermath  
The age of glory  
Rising from the ashes, ignoring the wrath  
That decimated and rejuvenated them over and over

There were cries  
There was laughter after the disaster: happiness  
It was all so sweet  
Like the taste of childhood promises

Returning to come true, things like “I will always love you”

It was a wonderful thing  
 Everyone would like to remember it  
 But some things still fade  
 Things like us, so subtle you’d miss it  
 First glance would fail you, but now I’ll tell you

The sun was setting  
 A short, glowing shower of rain fell from the sky  
 The last of the golden light danced  
 No one paid attention, and you know why?  
 They celebrated the big things and forgot the small  
 You can always go up, but someday you’ll fall  
 But not us- we twirled through it all

It was like being in the center of a kaleidoscope  
 The world shifted, and so did the way we saw it  
 The rain lasted for barely a few minutes  
 No one noticed it, and no one remembered it  
 No one saw us dancing in the rain

But I saw it, and I remembered all of it  
 The good, the bad, and the shadows no one talks about  
 The laughter, the pain, and the nothingness no one knows about  
 The joys, the shames, and the struggles no one cares about  
 And I learned from it  
 And I realized how many things, how many secrets there are  
 To living in this wild, ever-changing world

There is hope and there is pain  
 Acceptance and disdain  
 There are footsteps in a thunderstorm  
 And then there’s dancing in the rain

**Second Place: “School” by Zoey Prout, Doherty Middle School**

School  
 Stress  
 Homework  
 Stress  
 Tests  
 Stress  
 Teachers  
 Judging our every step

Do your homework

Ace your tests  
All while waking up  
At an ungodly hour

Wakeup  
Go to school  
Stress  
Take the test  
Stress  
Go home  
Relax?  
No  
do your homework  
Stress  
Done with your homework?  
Go study for that test?  
It's midnight!  
Go finish your essay

And you wonder  
Why we fall asleep in class  
Why we can't pass our tests  
Why we can't finish our homework

What's wrong with you guys  
I only assign 5 pages a night

I take 8 classes

But if we ask  
Did you grade my test?  
You ungrateful students you have to understand  
I have to grade 8 classes worth of tests  
But you "can't" understand our struggles  
And you ask why don't you...  
Have a good social life  
Have good grades  
Get enough sleep  
Make time for your family

I'll tell you

School  
Stress  
Homework  
Stress

Tests  
Stress

And you wonder

**Third Place: “A Sign from the Universe” by Satabhisha Sarkar, West Middle School**

Sometimes, the universe sends you a sign  
Sometimes, you read into it too much, but you don't care  
Because your long-time crush just did the exact same thing as you  
And the universe is definitely telling you something

Sometimes, the sign comes from all around  
People are talking about the same thing, the same opportunity  
You have to try it out yourself  
And when it works, when you get lucky, it's because of the universe

Sometimes, the sign is luck itself  
There were so many things you wanted to do this year  
And so many of them came true  
The universe must be watching out for you

Sometimes, the sign is in music  
One moment, you're listening to a song, letting the beats wash over you  
And the next second, it clicks as if  
The song was written for you to hear it in this exact moment

Sometimes, the sign is in the people surrounding you  
Everyone is laughing and so are you  
But for a moment, you stop and look around, and it feels perfect  
As if the universe has given you a place to fit in

Sometimes, it hits you all at once  
Sitting in the sunset, gazing out the window  
You know that there are less fortunate people out there  
That you are immensely privileged to be where you are today  
But then the stars come out, and there it is- the universe  
All of your dreams and realities  
All of your past and your present  
All in front of you, as if the universe is sending you a sign

## Middle School Honorable Mentions

### **“Blank Pages” by Nina Capaldi, Wood Hill Middle School**

If I reflected upon my life,  
I would find without strife  
a black pit brimming with shade  
And through the dark halls I strayed,  
searching vainly for any form of aid

If I were to cast a line,  
then I would be sure to pine  
for the pit was indeed empty  
And yet the halls still tempt me  
but through my life I go, with emptiness aplenty

If I ran my hands across the wall,  
all I would remember is the endless fall  
And through the shadows I run,  
waiting for the darkness to shock and stun  
But perhaps I am ready for this dusk to be done

If I waited for the light,  
would all I find out is that I’m not all right?  
What is to be known,  
when nothing is all I’ve ever been shown  
would instead I discover that forever I’ve been alone?

But I have not lived through ages,  
just to have blank pages  
For the world is vast and wide  
and though I may have once or twice lied  
my life can still be attempted and tried

### **“Demon in the Mirror” by Satabhisha Sarkar, West Middle School**

The girl in the mirror doesn’t smile back at me  
She’s a demon, with a tail and talons outstretched  
Her smirk keeps me up at night and follows into my dreams  
If she were to kill me now, it wouldn’t be too far-fetched

In those dreams she isn’t a mirror away, she’s with me  
Pacing around my form with delight  
Her laughter shakes the leaves on the trees outside  
She lunges, and I cower in fright

Sometimes, she’s just the wind nudging me

Rippling against my curtains if I hide  
 On the worst days, she's inside me, comforting me  
 Protecting me, always at my side

If I were to touch her, she would devour me  
 But everyone has to touch their demon someday  
 Even just reaching for the mirror makes the temperature rocket  
 She chuckles: "I just want to come out and play..."

It burns when I finally let her swallow me  
 The burn of a long-deserved victory  
 If that was the day all my enemies disappeared,  
 Well, let's just leave it at a "mystery"

The girl in the mirror smirks back at me  
 We flex our talons and flick our tails  
 They'd call us witches and burn us if they saw us now  
 But witches don't burn as they say in their tales

**"quiet" by Elena Stamm, West Middle School**

The feeling of the words "ew getaway"  
 Have power over me you never understand  
 The way I wanted to yell at the top of my lungs. But no I stayed quiet. Quiet you always  
 told me to be quiet. When really I stayed quiet quiet enough for you not to understand  
 To understand the silence you caused.  
 Now it's always quiet  
 Quiet glares  
 Quiet stares  
 Quiet  
 Just quiet

**"Voyagers" by Justin Wang, West Middle School**

We prepare for our grand tour  
 To lands unknown, to lands obscure  
 The gears and engines are locked in place  
 Ready to fly into deep space

In a burst of fire, in a beacon of light  
 Twin swords brighten the night  
 Carrying a message engraved in gold  
 We craft our destiny without molds

In the depths of space,  
 It's dark vacuum,  
 Puts out hope's fire

Wondering if we'll be alone  
We coast until we sight  
The king's palace, majestic

In the courtyards  
We meet new friends  
Who help reignite hope  
Sharing insights for our path  
And new knowledge  
Propelling us forward, to the next lord

After the king, we visit time's lord  
Admiring his rings, crystals of wisdom  
One might not know their importance  
However, learning the ways of time  
Helps build foundations  
For spires of success

Passing by the lord of the skies  
Winds shake our tools  
And storms pound their fists  
But the fire burns steady  
And our course hold strong  
Traveling on, to the next element

The seas of knowledge  
Farthest of the worlds  
It needs years to discover  
And the oceans are full of an ore  
Hard to mine or refine  
But they hold incomparable value

The tour complete  
The quest beginning  
Having built the path  
The voyage continues  
Traveling forwards

Towards the stars

**“Young Blood” Nina Capaldi, Wood Hill Middle School**

A vine,  
young and yearning,  
swift and strong,  
bright and bold

Climbs the steps  
crafted from years of experience  
A handhold here,  
an extra boost there  
Life carves notches and nooks,  
degrades and deforms,  
weathers and weakens  
all the while making way for the new  
Finally,  
it reaches the top,  
wrapping over wilted and warped wood,  
scaling splintered and shattered spines,  
between the beaten and broken branches  
looking up to the light.  
Does not notice its vise-like grip,  
strangling its helper.  
Does not notice what is,  
but what can be.  
Noise resounds through the forest  
as the great old tree releases its roots

## High School Winners

### **First Place: “skin (endpages)” by Jaelah Fernandez, Lynn Vocational Technical Institution**

my words offend you, and so does my color  
do you want me to be discolored?

you see me as threat  
one that should be dead  
does my tan skin upset you?

you accuse me crimes  
that stereotype my right  
but it's fine, I get it, you're white

it's so obscure  
they put you in power  
yet your ego is still sour

maybe if I was like you  
white and light  
maybe you would treat me as if I had a right

### **Second Place: “Vivimos en un mundo” by Marisol Almanzar, Greater Lawrence Technical High (Translated by jayvie song)**

Vivimos en un mundo en donde las apariencias son más importantes  
que la inteligencia por que tener silueta de muñeca abre más puerta  
que el conocimiento sincero .

Vivimos en un mundo donde las mentiras es  
más relevante que lo real que si mientes bienvenido serás  
a cualquier lugar pero la verdad es una crueldad que nadie se quiere enfrentar.

Vivimos en un mundo donde las personas “distintas” tienes que actuar para poder  
encajar en una sociedad que solo le importa lo de afuera donde los valores no son lo letal  
si no la mentira que no es real en realidad la realidad es la verdad que quieren mantener  
cautivas para que no vean que lo real si lastima.

Vivimos en un mundo en el que tal vez no quieras estar por que injusticia siempre habrá  
pero todos mis pensamientos se van cuando a mi lugar tranquilo vuelvo a estar en esos  
brazos cálidos que me hacen olvidar de las apariencias,inteligencia y todo lo demás.

*We live in a world where appearances are more important than intelligence.  
than intelligence because having a doll's silhouette opens more doors*

*than sincere knowledge.*

*We live in a world where lies are more relevant than the truth, more relevant than the real thing; if you lie you are welcome to go anywhere but the truth is a cruelty that nobody wants to face.*

*We live in a world where people who are "different" have to act in order to fit into a society that only cares about the outside where the values are not what is lethal; the lie that is not true in reality the reality is the truth that they want to keep captive so that they do not see that the truth does hurt.*

*We live in a world in which you may not want to be in because there will always be injustice but all my thoughts go away when to my quiet place I return to be in those warm arms that make me forget about appearances, intelligence and everything else.*

### **Third Place: "BANG!" By Justin Santana, Greater Lawrence Technical School**

Darkness

I am kept in the dark all day everyday never taken out

Listening carefully to the conversations around me

Today I hear anger

Yelling

Fighting

Footsteps walking to the drawer

Finally taken into the light

Two seconds was all I was given before put into the dark once again

Thump, Thump, Thump

Heavy footsteps as we move down some stairs

I feel alive

I hear arguing and fighting once again

The voices louder and louder

Until finally I'm brought out into the light once again

A loud scream in desperation fills the room

**BANG!**

I see a flash of light

The light fades away as well as the voices

I am turned around and see the face of my user

**BANG!**

I see the flash again while i'm in motion

Falling

Crash

I am motionless once again on the floor

Time passes and I hear the faded sound of sirens

Banging on the door

Screaming once again

My existence has brought nothing but anger.  
I want to be in my room again  
Back to the darkness  
Where everyone is happy

## High School Honorable Mentions

### **“An Evening Payment” by Valencia Melody Zhang, Phillips Academy Andover**

You shell me pistachios and drop  
 them into an empty ceramic bowl. I already  
 told you I don't want them.  
 Your thumbs rawed from their jagged shells, your fingertips stained  
 a purple pistachio hue. Your neck, strained from  
 looking down at your hands,  
 but they must be shelled. For your daughter.

What the fuck is wrong with you? You snap at my mother, while I watch  
 a broken pistachio shell lodge itself  
 between your teeth. You left  
 that chopstick unwashed! I tell you to stop.  
 Please. Stop what? Why are you defending  
 that woman's ignorance?

You remind me of the money you have made for  
 this family. In my head, I remind you of the bruises, the blow  
 square in the stomach, the jagged hole  
 in the bathroom door in the shape  
 of shattered porcelain.

You remind me of your sacrifices I never asked you to make.  
 Who was the one who got the ice for you when you were sick? I already told you  
 I didn't need you to. You needed me. I pay for your meals,  
 except my mother does too.

The bowl is halfway full now. You shove  
 it across the table, offering the nuts  
 as some deposit to me. I watch  
 the bottom of the bowl scrape  
 against the wood, side into ground,  
 a cut through skin. The rim etched  
 upon the grains, a form of scar tissue.

Let's say you shelled a bucketful, filling fourteen plastic bags.  
 You think I'd love you? I push the bowl back  
 across the table to you, waiting for your face  
 to fall. My father, when will you learn that

even the best daughters are not banks? You cannot deposit  
 pistachios into me, hoping to one day  
 withdraw love.

The bowl is overflowing now. Daddy, please stop.

**“A head full of Disaster” by Destinee Dozier, Greater Lawrence Technical School**

A head full of disaster is what I have  
It's remarkable  
No matter how hard I try  
It's unstoppable

A head full of disaster  
One day it will be a hurricane  
A strong one with wind slapping my face  
Slapping my body and shaking my place

The next day it will be tsunami  
stealing my air  
drowning my thoughts  
And leaving disappear

A head full of disaster  
It's always there  
Others may not see it  
Or maybe they do and just don't care

Maybe they sense the thoughts in my brain  
Maybe they feel the fear in my heart  
Maybe they see the disaster in my head  
Maybe they hear the pain in my lungs

But it doesn't matter  
Because who can save me from a head full of disaster  
Nobody wants to come near a disaster  
They all stay astray

So when they see the things in my head  
They choose to go the other way  
Because I'm a head full of disaster  
But disasters are beautiful too

Destruction can turn into a city of hues  
Maybe I can be a beautiful chaos  
Or maybe I can be like the tides in the sea  
Maybe if you give me a chance, you can discover just what i can be

**“Famous” by Jederlin Veloz Santana, Greater Lawrence Technical School**

The problem with being a person known to many people is that no one knows you. Any little rumor that someone spreads is not going to be seen as a misinterpretation, but rather as the truth that no one has seen before, but now they do because even your gait is suspicious.

Being in the industry is like being a clown,  
your sole purpose is to entertain but not to be, your personality doesn't exist or at least that's what we think.

A doll, a ghost, a little voice, you turn the crank and the doll will talk and tell you all the wonderful things you want to hear.

Truths suddenly become lies, and dreams become painful nightmares that will make you cry and scream in the middle of the night.

Trust no one,  
you are alone,

if you thought you had someone after the beginning, you are very wrong because there is always a price, an expectation, nothing is enough,

Being yourself is not enough, being a good person is not enough.

The beautiful sun high in the sky, the flame that once was, is now fading away,

And then we mourn the fact that another soul is long gone.

**“Growing up with a part of me missing” by Yadira Almonte, Greater Lawrence Technical School**

Losing you while i was young meant growing up with part of me missing

It meant growing up without your love

It meant i never got to experience all of the love a mother would give to their kids

From what i hear i missed out on a lot

I missed out on mother to daughter talk

I missed out on that unconditional love only a mother could give a their child

I hear my friends complain about their mothers all the time

Their mothers don't let them go out

Their mother took away their phone

Their mother yelled at them for the stupidest thing

As i'm being told this all i can think about how lucky they are

I think about the fact that you're not here

Not here to tell me i can't go out

Not here to take my phone

You're not here to yell at me for the most stupidest thing

So i nod and hum

As i sit there not being able to say anything.

**“I feel everything” by Rishika Agarwal, Andover High School**

i feel everything

it's like i'm lying

in a bed of needles

the tips drenched in emotion  
each stabbing into me  
an overwhelming wave  
that crashes  
recedes  
then washes over  
again  
and again

i've mastered  
the smile  
joy  
lips upturned  
amused  
even with the needles  
still pressing at my back

so when i'm alone  
i break  
shattered into a million pieces  
unable to hold back  
the pain  
the rage  
the love  
the everything

isolated  
it becomes too much  
springs tears to my eyes  
because i've spent  
the whole day  
holding them back

loneliness  
unworthiness  
sadness  
mistakes  
frustrations  
fall like bricks  
one after the other

i cry myself to sleep  
hidden from everyone  
forever in fear  
that one day  
the facade  
will break too

**“I was chosen” by Zurichbel De La Cruz, Greater Lawrence Technical School**

Jesus, they call him, the protector of this world  
While curled on my bed.

With things stuck in my head, and nothing left but tears on my face.  
I try to look for his trace, but I am not able to find him.  
My hand reached into the mist of my room, but I couldn't understand why I had become so slim.  
While looking at my food I could feel a lump In my throat that wouldn't let me eat.

People judged me and looked at me with grim faces, but he was the only one who understood me.  
They couldn't understand that a girl like me could ever be normal again

While looking In the mirror I stared at my body.  
Whipping tears off my face.

Stepping inside of school was a nightmare.  
Hearing the cackling and laughter.  
The noise would only get louder.  
Overwhelmingness filling my head.

Everyone around me spoke badly of me.  
“You're worth less”  
“Why do you exist”  
“You did this to yourself”  
They judged me for trying to be me.  
Every night I would lay In bed, hoping nobody would hear me.  
Hoping they wouldn't hear my cries.

The shortness of breath, and empty feeling in my heart.  
Numbness overcame me.  
Loneliness overtook, anger, sadness, and pain.

I walked into the church hoping to hear from his word.  
While sitting down I felt my heart pound.  
Teardrops fell down my face, and the more I wiped my tears the more I could feel him speak to me.

The preacher walked up to me, but I was shaking and crying.  
He said that my Jesus had heard my prayers, and my cries at night, and that my storm would soon be over.  
Guitars, drums, and a piano  
It was a type a music I couldn't explain, and I could only feel comfort.



*On the second wall, scars that are forgotten by the shades, dark tones in sad times, I'm referring to grey shades.*

*The third wall, anarchy, nothing more affects this ironwork that will soon fade between clouds that asks to know the fourth cloudscape.*

*The fourth wall is a canvas so that you may start anew, with this new canvas no happy ending will be too far, with this complex ending I leave you.*

**“Living” by Tess Moglia, Andover High School**

Looking out for a time to thrive,  
held back only by the words in my mind.  
Copying others who are in their jive,  
like an electron searching for a bind.

Something to keep and something that is mine,  
a person to be, filled with love and light.  
Wanting to have a curve, not just a line.  
Eager for my growing to a new height.

Having the need to be memorable,  
an unquenchable thirst for legacy,  
for my novelty is measurable,  
considering it's my identity.

My love is nothing compared to my life,  
so I sit here waiting, rolling the dice.

**“a love letter to the lady of the moon” by Rebecca Koleth, Phillips Academy Andover**

if i could string the planets of the solar system  
like beads onto a starry necklace  
i would ask you to wear it  
ask you to let me lift your hair off your neck and fasten the clasp of the universe

i know it would feel light to you like the brush of my eyelashes against your skin  
a butterfly kiss against your cheek, your arm, your lips  
you hold the blue skies right there in your eyes  
and you wear the stars wrapped around your body  
a lovely dress made of only the sweetest midnights

we both know that if you could  
you would float up to the moon and use your favorite of galaxies to make your face  
glitter

it's where you'll always belong and where you'll forever yearn for  
after all, you are my lady of the moon

you stay only to make me smile and you would hate that i know that  
i hate to see you wish to be among the constellations  
but then again i hate even more that i hold you so tight  
'cause i know that the stars miss you more than i ever could  
and i know that you'll only ever be as happy as you make me  
when you're finally back up there

i just want to ask you  
before you leave  
do the shooting stars carry wishes to you? can you make them come true?  
when the tears come so easily can you just let them fall?  
and do the stars you weep crystallize and carve tear tracks on your pretty face?  
when will you leave me so you sleep just one night without the moon tugging on your  
heart?

and can i visit you one day just to touch your face?

i hope that's not too much to ask,  
lady of the moon

**“My Door” by Olivia Baggett, Greater Lawrence Technical School**

My door was never open  
Not even a crack  
My door was never open  
It'd always go back  
But from your force  
It opened up  
Now my door never opens  
Not anymore  
You lie and say it was a mistake  
I laugh and say it wouldn't matter anyways  
You cry and apologize  
I sigh and give my goodbyes  
You look so sad  
And I wish I felt bad  
But my door was never open  
Not even a crack

**“My Mind is fine gold” by Destinee Dozier, Greater Lawrence Technical School**

My mind is like fine gold  
If only you treasured it as much as I did  
If only you thought as much of me as I thought of myself  
You won't find my ideas everywhere

But you didn't realize that when you told me  
 Nobody cares  
 You took it as a joke  
 You scoffed in my face  
 You took that time to laugh and make a mockery  
 What you didn't know  
 Was the thoughts in my head  
 Begging and pleading asking why I couldn't just leave things unsaid  
 The digging feeling of regret  
 You didn't know the thoughts I had wondering if anyone even cared  
 And you don't know how hard it was to get through that day with all of those stares  
 You didn't know how excited I was to tell you  
 But you shut me up before your ears could even hear  
 You neglected my brain and got mad at my ideas  
 You refused to let me take a weight off my chest even when it was too much for me to  
 even bare  
 And when I had a complaint because I was being treated unfair  
 Well  
 You didn't care  
 Why do you refuse to listen to me  
 What did I do  
 Maybe I could make it better  
 If I at least knew  
 Why does my voice matter less  
 And why when I'm in a room full of people  
 Am I not deserving of the same respect  
 Why are you so against me  
 Even when I respect you  
 You're the world though so I guess I should just let you.

**“My rage” by Destinee Dozier, Greater Lawrence Technical School**

Take all your rage and turn it into something forever lasting they told me  
 But  
 What if the rage is the forever lasting?  
 Well Then you turn your rage into something  
 beautiful they told me  
 But what's beautiful about rage?  
 The amount of rage I have I could speak for days they will overflow on a page and still  
 some how find a way to make space in my Brain  
 The amount of rage I have will turn into hate and allow every other emotion to dissipate  
 Nothing is beautiful about my rage, and I can't even find the words to explain it  
 The emotions I feel are much more than Heinous  
 The amount of rage I feel is so strong it makes me want to cut the stem off of the flower I  
 tried to grow into for so long  
 Nothing good comes from rage  
 It's just a devious game that forever replays  
 It's like watching a movie with no good plot

The rage I feel leaves me distraught  
 You tell me to turn it into something beautiful  
 But that rage is me, I am my rage  
 So how do I make myself beautiful  
 How do I make people understand the words on my page  
 How do I make people want to dance to the melody of my pain  
 How do I make people listen to my voice of disarray  
 My rage is not beautiful it's not something you find in between the horizon  
 My rage is not going to wake you up on a early morning and tell you good rising  
 And my rage is not rare it's not a lunar eclipse or on blood moon timing  
 My rage is everyday and it starts way to soon  
 my rage will come behind me and extinguish my candle  
 my rage is so strong i wish there was a turn off handle  
 but with all that my rage is still apart of my voice so I guess I should learn to use it  
 all that to say, learning how to use my voice is so god damn confusing.

**“New House // Old Shame” by Lily Townsend, Andover High School**

If I had a stone for every regret,  
 I could build myself a new house.

A new house to hide away,  
 To forget my shame.

To forget my shame,  
 I'd never regret.

I'd never regret,  
 Living in my new home.

My new home,  
 Free of shame.

Free of shame,  
 But regret follows me.

But regret follows me,  
 Free of shame.

Free of shame,  
 My new home.

Living in my new home,  
 I'd never regret.

I'd never regret,  
To forget my shame.

To forget my shame,  
A new house to hide away.

I could build myself a new house,

If I had a stone for every regret.

**“Runs in the Family” by Valencia Melody Zhang, Phillips Academy Andover  
after Cathy Linh Che**

She looked up from the bed and a cat  
burst from her eyes, clawing her face puffy. Then, a lizard  
slithered out of her lips, his hands gripping tightly on the  
wrinkles crowning her cheeks. I walked over to her and  
him, and she let go of his cold, dead hand.  
Just like that.  
No more dad, my mother says. He's gone.

The blankets smothered her. The fuzzy one, his old  
wool one from China, mine that I knit years ago. She  
slept and slept and slept, snore snore snore, rotate  
and readjust, snore snore snore.  
I stared at her from above, birds-eye view,  
watching the lizard wither  
to death on her cheek and  
the cat deepen the gashes. I poked  
her every so often, waiting for a nudge  
back. I held her hand,  
shaking it to wake her up.  
I needed food.  
I needed to be fed. She'd

peel her eyes open, see me, and close them shut, sealing  
the creases together.  
Ah, just like that. No more mom, I say.

I begin cooking and cleaning. The toilet bleach, ammonia, extra virgin  
olive oil. The gurgling of the garbage disposal, wooshes of the laundry  
machine, stench of sizzling garlic frying in the wok.

Snore snore snore. And I let go of her hand.

**“Tell Me About Yourself” by Rishika Agarwal, Andover High School**

Tell me about yourself  
 they ask  
 They don't really want to know  
 about you  
 They'd ask your mom if that was the case  
 They want to know how you perceive yourself  
 What is important to you  
 What assumptions shall they make  
 Should they question  
 the words you typed on your application page?  
 Are your parents divorced?  
 Why are you telling them that?  
 Is that who you are?

When they ask Me  
 I will tell them about my innocence  
 Shattered  
 as I realized the ugliness of a world  
 that needs change  
 leaving me with the desire to help others  
 I will tell them about  
 my family  
 my Support System  
 About how they told me I could do anything  
 I will also recite my perfectly crafted college essay  
 And they will smile  
 Thinking  
 This girl is smart  
 Caring  
 They'll look at my face and think it's nice- pretty  
 They'll think they learned so much about me  
 That they could give an answer  
 When their supervisor asks,  
 "tell me about her"

And -  
 Even though  
 everything I say is true,  
 I will be silent,  
 while they contemplate me  
 Thinking about all the things I haven't revealed  
 Thinking about how  
 I've never told anyone about myself

**“wish it had a taste” by Seoyon Kim, Wheeler School**

When God wanted an off-white colonial in the suburbs  
He got an off-white colonial in the suburbs  
When God wanted a sealed cedar deck with a matching  
patio furniture set  
He got the sealed cedar deck  
and the matching patio furniture set  
and a fire pit, to boot  
No kidding  
But I guess it's not all that different  
'Cuz you know if my girl wants it  
well  
My girl will have it  
If my girl wants to tear the house up then my  
girl will have it and if  
My girl wants to burn it all down she'll have that, too  
Raggedy teeth  
Ash on my tongue and it tastes like nothing. Mouth all  
dried up I can't even spit. We wheeze on the couch.  
It's what God would have wanted