

**MEMORIAL HALL**

**LIBRARY'S 2021**

**TEEN POETRY CONTEST**



# Memorial Hall Library's 2021 Teen Poetry Contest

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## **Middle School Winners**

*First Place: "Blocks of Time" by Bryan Bu, West Middle School*

Every day,  
Every hour,  
Every minute,  
Every second,  
We build our buildings.

Not real buildings, of course.  
but these buildings are more precious  
than the most beautiful mansion,  
or tallest skyscraper.

These buildings are made with  
the blocks of time.

Some will go right for building towers.  
To become the tippity top  
at what they do best.  
It could fall-  
I'm warning you!  
But then again,  
it might not.

Others will play it safe.  
Work hard at many things  
and build a strong foundation.

It might not look like much, compared to a tower,  
  
but it's got loads of potential.

Wait...  
How come she's got more blocks than him?  
I suppose he's lost some time.  
Through bickering,  
daydreaming,  
and procrastinating.

So consider carefully.  
Do you like towers or foundations?  
How many blocks do you have?  
Place your blocks of time wisely.

*Second Place: "Hope" by Ishaan Padmawar, The Pike School*

Τηε λεαπεσ, τηεψ σωαψ, τηεψ φλαπ ιν τηε χολδ ωινδ  
Τηε στεμσ, τηεψ ωαπε, τηεψ τωιστ ιν τηε χολδ ωινδ  
Τηε ροοτσ σταψ στιλλ, νοτ ηαρμεδ βψ τηε ωινδ, βυτ βψ α φροστ  
Τηε χολδ ισ χομινγ, βυτ τηε πλαντ σταψσ στρονγ  
Ανδ τηε βυδ, ιτ οπενσ  
Γινγερλψ, ασ νοτ το φαλλ απαρτ  
Βυτ εαγερλψ, ασ το θυιχκλψ ρελεασε ιτσ σχεντ ιντο τηε επερ χηιλλινγ αιρ  
Το σηοω ιτσ χολορσ το τηε ωορλδ  
Βλοομινγ επεν τηρουγη τηε χολδ  
Ανδ τηρουγη τηε φρεεζε  
Ωηερε οτηερ πλαντσ γαπε υπ  
Τηισ ονε περσιστεδ  
Ιτ ωιτηερεδ  
Ιτ γρεω  
Ιτ ηοπεδ

The leaves, they sway, they flap in the cold wind  
The stems, they wave, they twist in the cold wind  
The roots stay still, not harmed by the wind, but by a frost  
The cold is coming, but the plant stays strong  
And the bud, it opens  
Gingerly, as not to fall apart  
But eagerly, as to quickly release its scent into the ever chilling air  
To show its colors to the world  
Blooming even through the cold  
And through the freeze  
Where other plants gave up  
This one persisted  
It withered  
It grew  
It hoped

*Third Place: "Drowning in Thin Water" by Addison Feltz, West Middle School*

There used to be a little girl,  
who danced in the rain,  
never watched what she ate,  
she got lost in the books that crossed her eyes,  
but that little girl is gone now.  
Where did she go?  
Well, she is falling,  
down, down, down,  
into deep thoughts that the little girl wouldn't have recognized.  
The rain that dripped on her face formed into tears,  
700 calories is something she can't bear,  
those books burned,  
and what was left was a woman,  
who has destroyed herself to please *you*.

## Middle School Honorable Mentions

*"One Day" by Lyric Bartleson, Wood Hill Middle School*

Walking behind the school  
Saw the shadows that we cast  
Wanting to be with you  
But-  
Too afraid to ask

My pinkie flitted out  
Almost finding its way  
But I stopped myself and thought-  
What would he say?

I asked for help that one time  
You were too close to me to think  
Why oh why did I ask you  
To come over to my seat?

My heart was beating faster  
Barely stuttered the words  
Guess the books are right  
Must've looked crazy to the world

But it's not all fuzzy butterflies  
You're not the perfect guy  
I don't know why I like you  
Don't know why I try

You've said some things that made me shatter  
You made me mad-  
That made me sadder

You walked away like nothings wrong  
Like you didn't stab me in the heart  
My insides crumble as I bend down  
To gather my broken parts

And now I'm trying to fix myself  
Teach myself to see  
With all the facts laid out I know  
You're no good for me

I'm learning to walk away  
Don't look for you, avert my gaze  
I know some day i'll be over you  
But-

That day is not today.

*“My Future” by Anna DeLeo, West Middle School*

“There” i say  
pointing to the  
future  
i know what i’m hoping for  
i’m hoping for family  
and friends  
and happiness  
and light  
but i  
don’t see any of  
that  
in fact,  
i don’t see  
  
anything.

*"The Strangers" by Anna DeLeo, West Middle School*

this world is full of  
Truth  
but it will not be shown to you by the  
rich  
the powerful  
the mighty  
no it will be shown by the  
outcasts  
and loners  
the rebellious and the  
meek

in the eyes of a  
survivor you will see  
true hope and  
endurance

on the wrists of a  
broken teen you will learn  
suffering and  
pain

on the lips of a  
drunken stranger you will taste  
longing and rebellion and  
regret

in the screams of a  
lonely child you will hear agony  
and hopelessness in its  
purest form

in the mind of an abuser you will  
discover what it means  
to be  
cruel

in the laugh of a  
child you will see what joy and innocence and  
freedom really mean  
in the arms of a  
lost lover you  
will feel what comfort and safety  
and warmth truly are

and one day when my time here is done  
we will recognize each other on  
the street  
not as friends but  
as

strangers and i  
will slip this poem in your pocket  
and  
you will learn what it means to feel  
you will learn not from the  
great  
or the important  
not the wealthy  
and affluent  
No  
you will learn from  
the forgotten  
the melancholy  
the lost  
the broken  
you will learn from all of us,  
the strangers.

*"The Impossible" by Addison Feltz, West Middle School*

It is difficult to be a girl  
when someone is expecting you to be made of sugar and spice.  
You must have nice curves,  
but not any fat.  
Down to the bone,  
let your arms stay thin.  
And to anyone who passes by,  
no matter how you feel,  
remember to give a grin.

I want to be the girl who makes you stop and stare,  
by how she smiles and talks, and by the clothes she wears.  
I want to have a little nose,  
and I want to have bigger lips.  
I want to have straight teeth, and I want to have wider hips.  
Nobody knows.

Somewhere out there, not too far away,  
a little girl is dreaming of being a princess one day.  
She'll grow up as we all do,  
and she'll wish that she never knew.

She wishes she didn't know that pain is beauty.  
She wishes she didn't know that she must acquire such things.  
She wishes she was a bird and could sprout wings.  
She wants to fly far away.  
She wants to land on the moon someday.

But if a bird travels too far in the sky,  
they will come,  
down, down, down  
and they will die.  
This is how us girls live  
when you comment on our weight, on our clothes, on our meal.  
Something that you may not know is that  
girls have feelings too.

*“Hello, From Space” by Henry He, The Pike School*

Over the vast oceans and jubilant lights,  
Through the mess of puffy clouds,  
In the pink glow of the caressing sun,  
During the thrilling ride that’s speeding fast,  
A rocket soars.

Among the shining stars, a rainbow of color,  
Amidst the soothing ocean of black,  
Beneath asteroids blasting past with a trail of dust,  
Around the array of insurmountable planets,  
A spaceship floats.

On the vast moon, sprinkled with divots,  
Among floating moon rocks,  
By an array of flags, a beautiful unity,  
Besides a sleek behemoth of a ship,  
An astronaut bounds.

Upon the big, blue earth,  
In a cozy house that’s not quite full,  
By a stove and a bed, both untouched for months,  
Near a waiting dog, lonely without its best friend,  
Two children wait.

In a plain bedroom, not so used,  
In a high tech spaceship, not so lively,  
From high in space and low on ground,  
Through a glass picture frame,

A family is united once more.

*“COLORS” by Samiha Jaffar, The Islamic Academy for Peace*

**We have never really noticed the colors around us**

**The green trees in spring**

**The red leaves in fall**

**The shiny white snow in winter**

**The blue water in summer**

**Now we notice everything**

**We are stuck in our homes**

**We take a peek outside**

**And see a rainbow**

**So many colors...**

**Stuck inside, we feel like**

**All we see is black and white!**

*“The wait is over” by Samiha Jaffar, The Islamic Academy for Peace*

Spring of 2020 we longed  
All of us with glee to welcome spring  
And to flee to have fun on the swing  
Corona tagged along  
All of us with woe to go on lockdown  
And to know the world is shutdown

All of us thinking it is for two weeks  
it's been over a year

We walked to school  
now we sit before devices  
We walked in school wanting to leave  
now we can not go back  
We walked out of school to go to activities  
now we stay at home cause everything is cancelled  
We went outside seeing our friends  
now we are in our home not able to leave  
We made new friends  
now we are alone

We are downhearted  
We are dejected  
We are bereaved

But we need to be brave  
Fight the virus  
And be bold in front of the awfulness  
We are almost there  
The vaccine is here  
Let's roll up our sleeves

The wait is over..!

*"Ocean at Night!" by Niranjan Nair, West Middle School*

The stars shone like millions of rays of light on to the cold dark night sky  
The moonlight reflected in the sea like fire in the water  
Fish leaped out of the water into the air  
Creating splashes of light as they hit the ocean surface  
The reflection of the stars on their cold scales  
Glistening their dark figures  
As they flew into the sea  
The water was calm and steady  
The wind blew mist across the seashore  
The man watched  
As the seabirds chirped their lullabies  
And the fish danced on the sea  
And he thought  
The ocean at night  
Is something special.

*“George Floyd” by Simone Pillidge, Doherty Middle School*

I'm not black, I am white, but I still know what's right. You put your knee on his neck and you don't regret seeing his last tiny breath. For you saw is death. The words “I can't breathe” weren't enough. Though you may bluff You had done it, and I will stand and say that it is enough. If he was white, you would not dare take his life. I will fight for what's right for a black person's rights, I will fight for what's right for a black person's life.

*“Save the Ocean” by Keira Schaefer, Mountain View Middle School*

Bright colorful coral reefs  
Schools of fish wind through the water  
Turtles sharks eels  
Splash  
Plastic falls into the sea  
Remnants of trash dive into the ocean  
Coral fades away  
Turtles, sharks, and eels abandon the reef  
Fish surface to the top  
The once beautiful sea is deserted  
Flying plastic bags, murky water and death  
This is one of many seas that are polluted  
We must  
Share it  
Protect it  
Respect it  
And all animals and humans can live in peace

## High School Winners

*First Place: "a letter to the goat in my backyard" by Michela Rowland, Phillips Academy Andover*

i've heard that goats can eat anything.  
i was wondering if you'd humor me,  
if i decided to cook you a meal.  
nothing too fancy, just a couple of courses  
and maybe some extra...  
shall we say, eccentric?  
ingredients.

see, if goats can eat anything,  
i was wondering if i could toss together  
a salad of the invasive bittersweet that's  
stealing the breath of my maple tree  
(that almost sounds romantic, but they're  
not in love, it's kind of a toxic relationship.)

i'll put shredded scraps of documents that  
hold my bank account info on top, for some  
crunch, and maybe i'll even add a crushed  
poison-ivy and coronavirus dressing -  
i've heard it's all the rage these days.

for your dining pleasure, the second course  
will be hatred soup, mixed with all of the  
-ists and -isms and a bit of injustice,  
for kicks. (i hope you like spice; 'a bit'  
may have been an understatement.)

a slice of pollution bread for dipping,  
rolled in honeyed oats and  
motorcycle exhaust, and some  
global warming noodles sprinkled  
with sea salt and tangy acid rain.

the third dish will be from the lovely garden  
of the obnoxious neighbor next door,  
who starts blasting christmas music in  
october and doesn't let up until march -

i'll make you a sandwich with morning  
glories and tomatoes and three kinds  
of basil, topped with daffodils and  
peonies and all the perennials that  
take forever to grow.

i was thinking the fourth course could be  
hazardous waste, and the fifth could be  
homophobia, and the sixth, those

horribly scented markers that falsely  
claim to be washable.

i'm not the finest cook, but i promise to  
try my best, as long as you promise  
to rid my kitchen of everything i make.  
do we have a deal?

(p.s. let me know if you have any allergies -  
i'd hate to have leftovers.)

*Second Place: "spiderwebs and snowflakes" by Michela Rowland, Phillips Academy Andover*

*november*

- it's  
    11:11  
  
    you  
        murmur,  
feather light  
    fingers  
unraveling  
    my  
    braids  
empty wineglasses,  
    strewn  
        on the  
        mantle,  
    glistening  
pale blue  
in the  
    moonlight.

- careful,  
you whisper,  
- it's bad  
    luck to see  
    the minute  
change.

my eyes  
    flit closed,  
        goosebumps  
            dancing  
        across  
bare skin  
as frost  
    finds  
        its  
        way  
        through  
    the rifts  
in the  
windowpane.

i wish  
    for you

*january*

it's  
11:11.  
if you  
were here,  
you'd  
nudge me,  
and tell me  
to make  
a wish,  
send me a  
small smile,  
lashes brushing  
cheek  
as eyelids  
flutter  
closed and-

the clock  
flickers to  
11:12.

*Third Place: "Not What I Had Expected" by Maureen Wright, Greater Lawrence Technical School*

Who would've thought that halfway through the year we'd still be playing "get to know you" games and trying to get glimpses of what everyone looks like?

I certainly did not.

It's my freshman year,  
I imagined crowded halls  
**booming** voices  
the never-ending laughter...

Silence.

Silence is what our reality is  
Awkwardness is what our reality is  
"6 FEET AT ALL TIMES" is what our reality is  
Those words have been ringing in my ears more than the school bell has gotten the opportunity to

This school is still one huge labyrinth to me  
It twists and turns and it loops and all of a sudden you're back to where you started  
I'm a little duckling waddling around in these halls just following Mother Duck and letting her lead the way because I know the second I stray away,  
the walls would consume me

I hadn't imagined what the school would smell like before  
but since entering all I know are the scents of cleaning supplies and my own toothpaste  
Would the cafeteria be filled with the scent of that day's lunch?  
Would the halls smell like guys cologne or girls perfume?  
Or  
Would it reek of B.O.?  
You know what? Maybe it's for the best that we have masks

We are hopeful and we are trying to get things back to normal  
but...

I miss hugging people  
I miss getting to talk face to face during lunch  
I miss laughing  
I miss getting to spill tea with my friends  
I miss it.  
And I'm missing something I don't even know

This isn't what I had expected.

## High School Honorable Mentions

*“Rapunzel” by Elizabeth Anderson, Andover High School*

Counting down the seconds  
Two people, six, eight--  
Join, mute, arrange  
Her face. No smiling, just stare  
Into a void.

No masks  
But lots of tasks  
Block 1 block 2 block 3 block 4  
Done.  
Now homework by the ton.

A question met  
With only silence  
Faces set  
In self conscious stone.

The breakout room  
Of quiet collaboration.  
Camera? No camera?  
The question of doom.

Do you even know her name?  
It's through a screen but  
her face is the same.

Aching wrists and  
strained eyes and  
Crazy quarantine hair.

Virtually anonymous  
College tours asynchronous.

Remotely distant  
Connections nonexistent.

Rapunzel in her tower.

*“A Gentle Reminder of All You Can Do” by Anat Briskin, Andover High School*

I see your silhouette in the corner  
The burning handprints they've left on you  
When they try to shut you down  
Beaten down by the lies you're fed  
Until you started to believe them  
You think that when they say you're not enough  
You need to be more  
And when they say you're too much  
You think you need to fold yourself down to fit a mold that's always shrinking  
You don't know yet  
That when you speak your mind  
The heavens tremble  
When you stand your ground in spite of your fear  
The earth spins twice as fast  
When you look around an empty stage and still say your truth  
Humanity falls silent in awe  
When they tell you you're not worth it  
And you look them in the eyes and say you are  
Angels and gods fall to their knees  
Your voice shatters mirrors of doubt  
Your mind is a hurricane ripping through barriers  
Your breath brings life  
And your wrath destroys it  
In your hands you hold the power  
To mold galaxies and shape realities  
With a flick of your wrist  
Constellations dance across night skies  
Your calloused fingertips  
Hollow out valleys and flood oceans  
Your spirit seeps into the ground  
You are what built Rome over night  
And you are what brought it down just as quick  
So for the love of Mother Earth and all she bears  
Don't let anyone take that from you

*“Scrapbook Love: a Smattering of Whispered Guesses and Analogies” by Anat Briskin,  
Andover High School*

I've never been in love, but I've always wanted to write a love poem  
I guess I'm a bit obsessed over the thought that you could feel something so fully that you  
couldn't help but write it down  
I heard that love was like an earthquake  
It would knock you over where you stood  
That love would shake you to your core  
I heard that love was like tectonic plates when they touched  
That their meeting **was** love  
That it would spin you round and round and when you regained your balance  
Everything had shifted  
Three inches to the left  
And you didn't really want to move it back  
I heard that love was like a raging fire  
If that fire was made of gasoline  
And burned bright enough to blind you  
That love would take everything you thought you knew and burn it to nothing  
That love would laugh from the ashes  
And watch you dissolve  
That love would take and take and take  
It would wrap you in its fiery embrace  
And leave before you ever truly felt its warmth  
I heard that love was like butterfly kisses  
And sleeping on a cloud  
That love was delicate and fragile  
That it was pure  
But would crack at your fingertips  
If you didn't grip it tight enough  
I heard that love was like lying on a warm rock  
With a todo list full of checks  
And you could only hear the wind  
And the beating of your heart  
I heard the love took more effort than climbing a mountain that never stopped growing  
It would take your breath away  
And your heart would ache  
And your lungs would be sore  
But then you would look out and see the view  
Even if you looked up at the hill and saw you weren't even halfway done  
You would know that your ledge was just fine  
And for the next few minutes  
Each breath would feel like your first  
Because you remembered why you were there in the first place  
I even heard that being in love  
Was like holding a glass ball  
On a tiny lifeboat  
In a huge storm  
And hoping it didn't break  
I'm not sure I know what that means  
Because I've never been in love  
But I like listening to people tell me what love is  
And I like writing poetry

*“elegy of artemis” by Claire Cahill, Phillips Academy Andover*

orion's bow  
forever points at the sky  
frozen in infinite boast and impossible  
promise, for when one beast  
is slain another arises:  
the beheaded hydra's neck  
springs forth twice yesterday's  
evil but no one  
looks at the stars  
anymore.  
yesterday's lesson  
today's ignorance  
tomorrow's mistake  
past, present, future  
forgone before it begins  
as medusa lifts her head and  
turns the world to stone  
before the stars know any difference,  
history starts today  
and tomorrow and  
the day after that but  
never yesterday.  
we are a species frozen in time  
seized by lethargy masked  
as stone-cold determination and  
colorful lies turned black and white:  
an ignorant cesspool  
that drips deeper  
than we are tall conceals  
the kraken's tentacles in the  
darkness of arbitrary division.

now all we have is moonlight  
on the nights that we're lucky.

*“music” by Claire Cahill, Phillips Academy Andover*

deep in my body let the music flow  
rattle and thrum  
bone against bone  
let it eat away at memory  
drink with black hole eyes  
until everything is new and  
I am naive  
and commanding and  
loud and  
rude and not just a presence  
in other people’s stories but  
a protagonist  
or a villain  
I’m okay with that too  
I just want to be  
something  
something other than the death  
threats and the knives of  
reality beating down on  
hopeful tomorrow  
just for a moment let me be the  
beat the drum  
the rumbling base that you  
feel more than hear let me  
be let me be let me  
be.

*“a neutron star” by Claire Cahill, Phillips Academy Andover*

tongue tied twisted  
stuck silent stardust: gold  
iron sulfur  
reduced to squares on a  
table,  
crumbs of yellow and a  
rotten smell,  
protostar to protoplasm  
and none of it matters  
to you.

I’m just another statistic.  
you look at my footsteps  
trailing beyond x and y  
and think “she’s  
just another one, someone  
that didn’t open her eyes”

degenerate deplorable  
incompetent insufficient:  
pretty till I’m not  
smart till I’m not  
till I drop  
collapse  
like the core of a dying star  
exhausted.

eloquent anger  
stymied thoughtcrime  
avoidance  
blame  
guilt  
gravity.

condensed  
collapsed  
restricted  
pressed

dimmed  
not  
dead

just  
waiting.

*"The School System is Broken" by Mimi Cung*

First period, history.

1920s. A time of revolution.

Where women were fighting in protest

Where blacks were being addressed yet suppressed

A century later.

2020s. The same old story.

Where women are fighting in protest

Where blacks are being addressed yet suppressed

Second period, physics.

Newton said for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction

But then the variables that matter are only part of a fraction

Gravity does not account for every attraction

There is no "equal" in legal action

Third period, chemistry.

The atoms that make everything up

The poison that fills up the cup

It may be a microscope that helps us see

But it is not enough to make us agree

Fourth period, calculus.

Reflect along the x-axis, shift to the left  $\frac{2}{3}$ , move up 4

How about we graph the number of assaults that were just next door.

How about we graph the lives that have not been accounted for.

How about we graph the murders that increase more and more.

Fifth period, study hall.

The time to have total freedom

Except stay in the classroom, don't wander the halls, keep silent,

Keep silent and don't mind all the violence

Because everyone has all their rights until everyone needs them.

Sixth period, english.

Write about your opinions but do not make it bias

Make sure to keep quiet before you become a virus

The grammar matters more than the message

When ultimately we all become a percentage

Seventh period, gym.

We throw balls while they throw bombs

Flying across the gym like bullets

The adrenaline flows from your head to your toes

There is no room for you to oppose

I never learned that life is not what you plan it to be,

Not until it steered off course.

I never learned how to defend myself,

Not until it was my only option.  
I never learned the evils of the world,  
Not until all the good was gone.  
I never learned how to do my taxes,  
And honestly, I still don't.

*“The Motivation Behind the Authentic Pain” by Isaac Diaz, Greater Lawrence Technical School*

So many questions yet all the answers feel out of my reach. So many calls and so many unanswered rings. I tried to call you titi but I guess heaven is treating you real good up there. I'm glad. I really am. I rather have you up there then with six tubes in your body and you only living through a machine. Hearing the beeps like the last one could be any moment. Hearing the beeps in slow motion as reality hits louder than the voices in my head. As I wear this rose gold chain around my neck with honor and pain with your name gleaming with hope I reminisce about our times. I remember when you pushed me into poetry. Always wanted me to be around you and those little moments where we laughed with only us around as others faded into the background. And also those memories where I saw you in pain And I wanted to take all of it from you. From the cancer that was devouring you and destroying your chances too live, to your family being your last supports to me wanting to do something and not doing it. If only life hit me harder at that time maybe I would have been shaken up and done something. Spoken up or maybe save you a year to live. Instead of making it three years of you gone it would have been two. Sometimes I question if I even made a difference. You might think I'm so okay with you being gone but every step I take it's for you. My biggest inspiration is your absence in my life as I have you in my heart and not holding your fragile hands that always smelled like coconut. I remember noticing the different wings. From short to long, black to brown to a sunset gold. I remember the cookouts you threw to hide the deadly reality, that you didn't have much time left. That you were racing against the clock trying to do everything you wanted to do before the beeps went flat. Going on cruises and having the last of your laughs. Trying to make it a bit longer to see your own son's make something of themselves instead of being in their rooms playing 2k. But I guess it had to be your absence for those to realize how amazing you are. For me, it made me realize how I never told you enough. How I always smiled because of you. Of how you were the first person to guide me through my first heartbreak that devastated me into pieces. Getting my first gut punch from love. How you would always tell me "you're a handsome boy papi keep your head up." With your hands on my cheek, the feeling of them softer than the feathers and the white dress you had that day. Your words, more comforting than blankets or dreams can comfort. I idolized you and still do till this day titi. I wear this chain with pride, love, hope, faith, and pain. I'm happy that you're in a happy place but please don't leave me forever. I will always have you in my heart. Trust me, there is space for you. You're the one that made it strong everyday so you should know. I won't ever forget that moment. When you died right in my hands. Squeezing your hand and watching the last breathes flutter out your body and the machine making an eerie "beep!" I love you titi. Keep being the amazing person you are in heaven as you were here on earth. I wear this chain with pride and hope for the both of us. And I promise, I will take the steps forward no matter the pain. Doesn't matter. Three long years and gone too soon. Rest easy queen.

*“love in the dark” by M.D., Greater Lawrence Technical School*

she took her by the hand and taught her what it felt like to love another person entirely. the sun was completely and utterly theirs. the moon was envious of their passionate love. the moon belonged to those who shed tears in the midst of the night because of their loneliness. it belonged to the chosen ones who'd rather be a lover underneath the night sky instead of underneath the vibrant rays of the sun. they belonged to the light and we, my love, we belong to the dark.

*“waves” by M.D., Greater Lawrence Technical School*

i never got the ocean. how it was calm and dewy in the morning, but during the night the storms were rough, making waves crash violently. but now i understand. because i’ve been loved by you.

*“The Drifting Monster of Present Day” by Nya Leonardo, Greater Lawrence Technical School*

A social dilemma  
Rises upon a planet  
Soaking up young minds  
Refusing to back down

A social dilemma  
Conquers the world  
In need of more power  
Expanding nonsense

A social dilemma  
A platform of disappointment  
Craving attention  
Relationships collapse

A social dilemma  
Hypnotizes young ones  
Oblivious young ones  
Only if they knew

A social dilemma  
A darkness  
Settling for less  
Covering young potential

A social dilemma  
Strikes and traps  
Damaging minds  
Continuing to take control

A social dilemma  
Rips apart unity  
Loving that departure  
It continues to grow

A social dilemma  
A conflict with no solution  
Awaiting a challenge  
Who will step up

*“Ode to WWE” by Florence Mwangi, Greater Lawrence Technical School*

Ding ding, the match starts  
Wrestlers using different moves to fight  
New moves: the spear, jumping high knee, signature finisher  
The bod they show smiling to the crowd  
A place where it smells like victory  
A place where it is exciting like parents having their first baby  
A place where it tastes like sweat  
Showing off while hearing the happy yells of the crowd  
The stadium always full of people like a city  
WWE, a dead place without people to cheer  
A heavenly place  
Noisier than thunder roars  
Pero out of all wrestlers  
I am inspired by three  
Who are they, you ask?  
They are monsters among men  
They can smell your fears or pain  
They are aggressive than a pack of wolves  
They are the kings of the arena  
People die of happiness when they see them  
Teammates, brothers and inspiring dads Their team name “The Shield”  
The mates: Seth Rollins, Roman Reigns and Dean Ambrose  
I don’t know them but I believe in them  
Mi Papa introduced WWE when I was a baby  
Yet he says mi hija it just entrenamiento  
Pero Para mi, it has taught me a lot  
It taught me “ you never give up on somethings you love”  
Quotes by Seth Rollins and many WWE stars  
It taught me impossible is another word of possible  
Gracias WWE and to you the Shield  
Sus legados vivirán para siempre en mi corazón

*“Beautiful Girl The Melancholy Princess” by Celia Schwartz, Innovation Academy Charter School*

I cannot even see myself,  
anymore, and my therapist says  
that I should look instead at the

glass half full, the things in which  
I can control--- the beauties and  
the sun, to see my people, near and dear, but

what can you do? Who can I  
talk to? How can I tell her a  
thing, why, we have only just met

do you know what it took for me to cry in front of  
my mother? To say

fuck you to the boy

who never loved me when I  
drive past his house, to tell my brother  
I am sad, and I will always be

sad, the ache gets bigger until  
it is numb, and then I am just  
alone, aching, sobbing—I

learned how to cry as a  
rabbit speaks, as wind moves through  
air and is quiet like that, breathless like that;

the lulls and swoons of my own  
emotion, finding the strange things to  
say that don't make sense,

doing the things I can do, staying  
chin tucked, head down  
running and screaming at the top of my lungs--

watch me spiral and turn  
into the moon, watch the moon  
crash and burn, watch me

loose my mind over boys who  
see me and see nothing at  
all,

see the shadows and call them  
substance, the bodies and

call them fuckable,

living off hormones  
and three hours of  
sleep, you are the one who is

confused and unstable and  
unsure of everything you know to  
be true. And

I am too. Find the comfort in the  
solidarity I give and give but  
cannot find myself, those people that

see you cry and know what you  
are going through-- watch  
me sing to

petty melodrama, the tune shifting as I take one  
breath and then another,  
call me by my name, Beautiful Girl The Melancholy Princess,

Fighting Resilience, I  
brush my teeth and go to sleep, wake up, again, again, it  
is not a dream we ever wanted, it will never be a dream we wanted, it is only

life, and when you and me is just  
me, I don't know what else to  
do. So I

take a breath  
and brush my teeth.  
I fall asleep

and hope  
my next therapy session  
will end before the hour is through.

*"The Pigeon" by Madeline Shin, Andover High School*

A large courtyard looms just ahead in the labyrinth of the city  
Quite a magnificence to behold for the visitor's eye!  
Bustling with all sorts of people walking across its ancient cobbled floor,  
They crowd around a majestic ivory marbled fountain in the center.  
The roaring sound of the ever flowing water inspires quiet  
Even the most voluble tourist cannot resist the urge.

In that quiet, a few sharp eyed observers may be able to see it:  
A lonely pigeon perched on the top of the lofty fountain.  
With a black plume covered by flecks of different shades of gray  
Along with an iridescent neck that shines brightly against the glare of the sun  
And brilliant fire orange eyes,  
The pigeon is a mainstay on the fountain.

Seemingly without companions, it spends its days watching the courtyard,  
With an unblinking and critical eye.  
Repeatedly, it scans its surroundings  
There's the same old man sleeping on the stairs,  
His hardened face softened by gentle dreams.  
The three little children who always run across the courtyard,  
Their bright scarfs streaking colors in the air.  
And who could forget the never ending sounds of footsteps?

On rare occasions, the pigeon will leave its watchpost.  
Its wings flutter without a rhythm  
As if it is not used to using them.  
Yet, it soars to impressive heights into the gentle morning sky  
A speck of black against a blue canvas.  
It gracefully dives and ascends in this ocean  
No sense of direction and no clear purpose  
Perhaps it is searching for nourishment  
Perhaps it is searching for companions  
Perhaps it is searching for an escape.

When its clawed feet finally perch themselves onto the fountain,  
The anchor that traps it to the ground,  
It once again surveys the courtyard.  
There's the same old man sleeping on the stairs,  
His hardened face only made harsher through nightmares.  
The three little children who always run across the courtyard,  
Their bright scarfs now dirtied through hours of play.  
And who could forget the never ending sounds of footsteps?  
All this time, no matter where it flew  
Always inevitably ending up back at the courtyard  
Stuck in an open prison  
Nothing has changed.

*"In the night" by Fiona Veletzos, Andover High School*

There are no colors  
in the night  
Just shades of gray  
all black and white

And while your soft snores  
fill the air  
Night creatures emerge  
everywhere

Tall and short  
big and small  
walk and fly  
slither and crawl

Gather with me  
'neath the new moon tonight  
Let's have some fun  
give the humans a fright.

Come let's go  
wake the sleeping undead  
watch as they rise  
from their coffin like bed

Swift in the shadows,  
darker than night,  
we travel on towards  
the city of light

where you sleep,  
safe in your bed,  
visions of happiness  
drifting through your head.

Well not for long,  
we'll give you a fright  
skulking through the darkness  
us creatures of night.

Climb through your window  
from underneath you bed  
lean over your body  
we need to be fed

A claw pokes your leg  
you jolt awake

but we've disappeared  
leaving fear in our wake.

We have no colors  
creatures in the night  
just shades of gray  
all black and white.

*"The Darkroom" by James Wong, Andover High School*

The process is simple  
First you expose the photo paper with the enlarger  
Next you agitate the chemicals onto the image  
Finally, you rinse the photo through gentle flowing water  
In the end, you hang the picture up to dry

My favorite print has always been a photograph of a shriveled up gardenia I found at the park  
I watched its delicate petals appear as it drifted through the crashing waves of the developer  
After the violent sea calmed, the decaying flower came back to life  
Only then did it return to the light

The process is simple

Life begins with a ray of light gleaming upon the angelic smile of a newborn's tiny face  
Who of which grows to be the child playing with his friends in the radiating sun

Only, the light shuts off the moment it's needed most  
It gradually dims until all that's left is a flicker  
The purity of life's innocence becomes engulfed by the shadows  
Shadows made to entrap all morality in the pitch-black of night

In the darkness, life will become agitated by the toxic chemicals of a finite environment  
The sour vinegar-like scent wafting up the stairs of a merciless hierarchy  
The acidic burn of unresolved justice tearing away any remaining fragments of virtue  
Sitting in a pool of bigotry tinted by the crimson hues of the safelight

Eventually, life can be brought back from the poison  
Cleansed by the tranquility in a bowl of clarity  
Once fully dried off, only then has life escaped  
Becoming a divine image of unimaginable possibilities  
Shimmering brighter than the world has ever seen

The process is simple

*“Junior Year” by Alexandra Zetea, Andover High School*

Junior year was stressful back in normalcy  
But in COVID it's heightened an insane degree  
Motivation and drive are hard to keep alive  
When it takes half your energy just to survive

When quarantine renders silence suffocating  
Calls make the pandemic feel less isolating  
But rooms full of Zoom squares with imperfect sound  
Aren't a replacement to having friends around

The threat of the future always looms overhead  
Creeping up day by day with its slow-mounting dread  
All actions are decided by the justification  
of if it looks good on college applications

Time's measured by test dates and As drop to Ds  
All that counts is acing the dreaded SATs  
The pressure's immense, and though it keeps you intact  
You only last so long before starting to crack

Half-hearted essays not fully written right  
Not learning, just turning it in before midnight  
Losing time, losing friends, losing points, losing sleep  
Under-eye bags have never looked quite this deep

You start to wonder if it's all in your head  
So you find upperclassmen to ask them instead  
But when you reach out, hoping someone will hear—

They answer, “Tough luck. Welcome to junior year.”