

Soundings

V. 70
Spring 2024

Northeast High School, St. Petersburg, Florida

Dear Reader,

The dictionary definition of sounding is as follows:

sound·ing1 - /'soundiNG/ (noun)

the action or process of measuring the depth of the sea or other body of water.

In other words, sounding is the act of testing the waters. It is checking for depth and exploring what lies beneath. Within these pages, Viking writers use their creativity to test, explore, interact, and interpret the world around us. We welcome you to join us on this journey of discovery and entertainment.

Truly,
Your Viking Creative Writing Crewe



Colophon

Soundings Vol. 70 Ed. 1, Spring 2024

Editor: Nancy Engle

Adviser: Bernadette Langiotti

Printer: Florida Sun Printing, Callahan, Florida

Specs: 20 Pages

80# Gloss Text – All pages

Process color on all pages w/ bleeds

Stitched - Finished Size 8.5 x 11”

Thank you to Mr. Kevin Olis and Mr. Scott Tilbury, art teachers, for the outstanding submissions from the Visual Arts students.

Thank you to the staff and administration of Northeast High School for your support and encouragement, and for advertising our writing and art contests.

Thank you to the Northeast High School students for your support and readership.

Cover art chosen by committee:
Great Barrier Reef by Nancy Engle

The Journey Within

BY JOHN NGETH, THEME CONTEST WINNER

In the depths of our souls lies a labyrinth,
A maze of intricacies waiting to be explored,
Each twist and turn a pathway to discovery,
A journey of self-exploration yet to unfold.

We embark on this quest with trepidation,
Fearful of what we may uncover,
Yet drawn by an irresistible curiosity,
To delve into the depths of our being.

With each step, we unearth fragments of truth,
Pieces of ourselves hidden in the shadows,
We confront our fears, our doubts, our insecurities,
And in doing so, we find strength we never knew we possessed.

Through moments of introspection and reflection,
We peel back the layers of pretense,
Exposing our vulnerabilities to the light,
And embracing them as part of who we are.

In the silence of contemplation, we find clarity,
As the noise of the world fades away,
We listen to the whispers of our inner voice,
Guiding us towards our true purpose.

The journey within is not without its challenges,
There are obstacles to overcome, demons to face,
But with each hurdle conquered, we emerge stronger,
More resilient, more attuned to our innermost desires.

And as we traverse the landscape of our souls,
We discover hidden talents, dormant passions,
We uncover buried dreams, forgotten aspirations,
And we realize that the potential within us is limitless.

For in the depths of our souls lies a universe,
Vast and boundless, waiting to be explored,
And the journey within is but the beginning,
Of a lifelong odyssey of self-discovery and growth.

Surrealist Piece
by Unknown



Under Cover

by Meghan McIlvey

Tortoises, reptiles of the
Testudinidae family.

Megan, human of the McKelvy family.

As in: slow and steady.

As in: thinking before you say or do.

A nice and friendly animal,
and a polite and well-
mannered kid.

While tortoises hide in their shell, to avoid
situations

I shut down and bottle up.

Out of their shell they pace slowly,
when opening up, I carefully gain trust.

Tortoises hide in the dark.

I hide in my emotions.

They camouflage to hide from predators,

I blend in with others to not be seen.

Tortoises live in water and land, shifting their
abilities depending on their environment.

I change my personality and the way I act,
depending on who I am with.

Slow and steady wins the race,

but how can I
still keep my pace?



Sea Turtle

by Morgan Hagerty

Ceiling Tile

by Ariel Laemmel-Jenson



Felidae

by Alyssa Trafford

Felidae means,
of the feline species

As in: a solitary being

As in: An introvert

While Felidae take
Naps all day

Introverts go on all day
Wishing they could do the same

In their habitat, Felidae
Are surrounded by trees. In public

Introverts feel surrounded By
eyes always on them.

Felidae develop large claws.
Introverts develop defense mechanisms.

They use them to
Protect themselves from others.

Felidae have
Colorful coats.

Introverts have
Colorful clothes.

But they won't wear them,
As not to bring attention to themselves.

Their colors aren't seen.
They camouflage.



Crab

by Giovanni Delvalle

Soundings

BY ARIANNA
CALEF

LOST IN THE VAST EXPANSE OF THE OCEAN,
THE WAVES CRASH AROUND ME,
PULLING ME UNDER,
AND I FEEL MYSELF BEING CARRIED AWAY.
AT FIRST, FEAR GRIPS MY HEART,
AS I STRUGGLE AGAINST THE CURRENTS,
SLOWLY, A SENSE OF CALM WASHES OVER ME,
AND I ALLOW MYSELF TO BE TAKEN BY THE TIDE.
IN THIS ENDLESS SEA,
FILLED WITH CORAL REEFS,
I LET GO OF CONTROL
AND EMBRACE THE UNKNOWN.
THE CLARITY I SEEK,
CAN ONLY COME FROM BEING TRULY LOST.
THE WATER IS COLD ON MY SKIN,
BUT THERE IS WARMTH THAT FILLS MY SOUL.
THE SEA PULLS ME DEEPER,
AND SWADDLES ME IN ITS DAMP BLANKET.
THE OCEAN IS A MIRROR,
REFLECTING BACK AT ME ALL THE THINGS I'VE BEEN TO AFRAID
TO SEE,
MY SCARS ETCHED WITH SALTWATER TEARS,
WHILE HEAVY THOUGHTS BUBBLE LIKE SEA FOAM,
NAVIGATING A LIFELONG VOYAGE WITHOUT A MAP,
MAY SEEM SCARY AT FIRST GLANCE,
BUT REST ASSURED, YOU WILL SOON EMERGE,
STRONGER, BRAVER, AND MORE WHOLE THAN BEFORE.

From the Water

BY TREVOR STAPLES

WHEN DEEP WATERS RISE
AND TAKE THE LAND,
WHO KNOWS WHAT HORRORS
WILL RISE AND STAND?

PERHAPS, DARK BEASTS
WITH MAWS MILES WIDE:
OR FEARSOME THINGS
THAT STAIN THE TIDE.

MAYBE CONTINENTAL EELS,
WITH SKIN BLACK AS COAL:
OR GHASTLY APPARITIONS
SEEKING OUT THE HUMAN SOUL.

ALAS, THESE BEINGS
MAY NOT BE REAL AT ALL.
ONLY HUMANITY IS RESPONSIBLE:
THEIR EXISTENCE, OF GALL.

STILL, THE MIND WANDERS:
UNSTABLE SHADOWS, DISTANT LIGHT,
THE UNKNOWN, UNKNOWN:
ALWAYS JUST OUT OF SIGHT.

Depth

BY ELIZABETH MILLER

SEARCHING DEEP DOWN BELOW
INTO THE GREAT BLACK ABYSS
THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN
THE HIDDEN CORE
THE UNKNOWN
WHEN IT GETS HARDER TO BREATHE
AND YOU FEEL THE PRESSURE RISING
AS YOU SINK LOWER
KNOW ITS WORTH IT
KNOW GREAT UNKNOWN WONDERS AWAIT YOU
DIVE DEEPER

BUT AS YOU CONTINUE DOWN
FURTHER INTO THIS UNKNOWN
KNOW ALSO SUPPORT AWAITS YOU
TAKE YOUR SURROUNDINGS
HOLD YOUR BREATH
AND NEVER FORGET THE WONDER
AS YOU DIVE IN

YOU MIGHT BE SCARED THE DEEPER YOU GO
BUT YOU'LL RISE AGAIN.

Where Do I Belong?

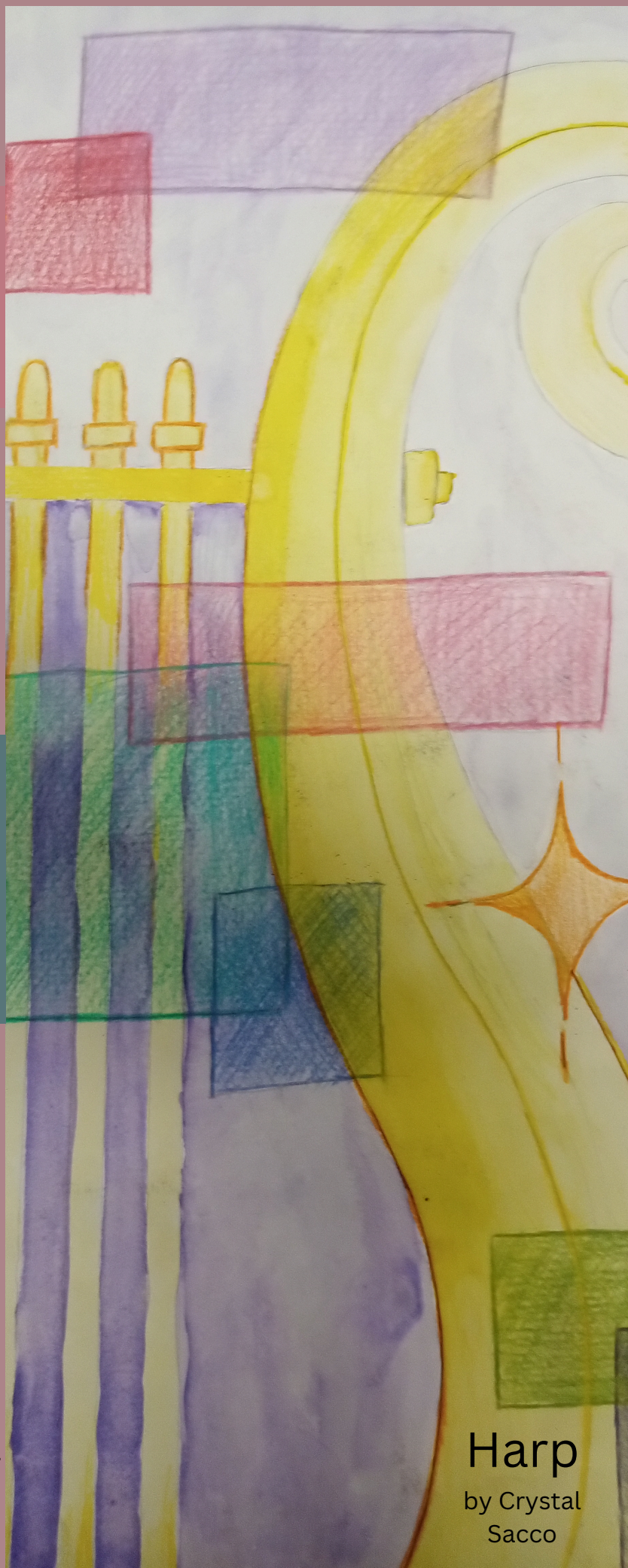
BY LILY BRINKLEY

Where do I belong
It's the center of many a song
The question everyone asks
As they hide behind their masks
What is my home
Where do I want to roam
How do I figure it out
When I face so much doubt
It's easy some say
Others have not found their way
Searching for home is hard
And you have to stay on guard
For things can go wrong
And the road is long
With bumps along the path
You can feel the universe's wrath
But when the time comes
And the pain starts to numb
You can find where you're meant to be
And finally, feel completely free

The Unknown

BY ASHLEE SMITH

The strange unfamiliar scene.
A fear In the unrevealed.
It could be embarrassment, a surprise, a failure, even danger.
A demonstration of true humanity even.
A reflection of a true desire to understand the world.
The unexpected moments,
And the failures are the most fulfilling.
The unknown is also,
An exploration of new things in life.
A powerful tool of personal development.
It could also be demonstrated by the cultural and scientific beliefs.
Exploring the unknown could be rewarding,
An initially terrifying experience you really never know.
Without taking a shot at the unknown things won't happen.
People and society can never grow or even mature.
When you wanna look into things and stay with the familiarity,
You could miss opportunities for any experience life has to offer.
But when you do take a look into the unexpected, the unfamiliar,
It's a worthwhile experience for the growth an maturity it could provide.
So let's take a deeper look and explore the unknown.



Harp

by Crystal Sacco

The Heart's Desire

by Grace Graham

The clock ticked and ticked,
As the time was swept under her foot
She was left with two choices,
Yet she could not decide.
For only if she could look into the future
To make it easier on herself,
Only if time was in her favor,
The only thing time favored for was desire itself,
Time only ticks for desire.
Stuck at a decision,
that would stick with her forever.
Once again,
the clock kept ticking.
But this time
there was no choice to be made.
Time had passed, only she hadn't.
She could now look into her future,
To see that there wasn't a future there
And what once was her heart's desire,
Desired no more.

Drained

by Lilly Bates

Your love was warmth to a cold heart that shut
You out. You melted my center with sincerity,
Clarity, and prosperity for a new mentality of
Intimacy. Your embrace was inviting: a blanket of
Safety. I've never felt this before. Your presence
became a necessity, a remedy for broken souls, it
was comforting, caring, and especially craving. I
bathed in your kindness, soaked in your smile,
and nearly drowned in your sweet aroma. You
were my everything, I was nothing. I drained you
of your felicity in its entirety. Once so full of
life, you now have become dull because of me.
Then I could lean on you no more. I had to move
On to a new victim for my vampire-like
Tendencies toward monstrosity.

Wilting

by Autumn Helwig

I tend to be underwatered, withered.
My broken soul as bare as my shedding leaves
My stems search for sunlight I cannot reach
I tend to be wilting.

I sometimes reach too far
My pot tipping ever so slightly,
My flowers bend for your fingertips
I sometimes beg for hands that refuse to hold
me

I feel ugly
My roots poking out of the dense soil
My petals decaying bitterly
I'm still wilting.

I wait patiently for your return
My rotting body begging for your care
For your tender touch of love
And yet I'm here, wilting.

I accept the coldness of the world
Sunlight fading from your windowsill
I reach one last time, my once bright flowers
drooping
Why would you leave me to die in what I
thought was home?

-A fading flower

Go With the Flow

by Preston Bruni

In a room full of darkness
There was no understanding of
light
The caveman, confused with
fright
Continued to find a source
Soon finding flint and steel
Able to fire it up

Those cavemen grew to
understanding
So, then, why can't you?
Scientists and teachers learn too
Mistakes are meant to be made
So why can't you learn to grow
Understand you are smart
You can Change your mindset
You can become your best

Become who you've always wanted to
be
Your mindset determines
You are not going crazy
You need mistakes to grow
So keep changing and flourishing
Don't stop, just go with the flow.

Do We Dare

by Ashley Jairam

We dare to go, exploring the unknown.
Far from home, in a world of mysteries.
Through thick forests and vast oceans,
seeking truths not yet uncovered

we set out on our adventures
with curious minds, and driven hearts,
to find the untold stories

We stretch our wings and try to soar,
high in the mountains and deep in caves.

We turn the pages of life,
Finding places close and far,

learning something new with every step
Through overcoming obstacles
and working through challenges,

we discover strengths and more
In the nights and days of bustle
we discover our calling and our
mission.

So we explore
and find a lot more in the unknown.
A voyage of discovery is ahead.

As we daringly enter the gates of
existence.

Crystals

by Kateryna
Shuryha

How I was Raised

by Nancy Engle

If I were raised in the woods, I would be raised to survive

To partake in a cycle of hunt or be hunted, eat or be eaten, provide or be served to others more deserving.

If I were raised by wolves, I would be raised to protect

To provide for the pack, to work with my littermates and to live in the moment's rush.

If I were raised in the mountains, I would be raised to climb

To scale treacherous heights, to be nimble and brave, to always prioritize life.

If I were raised by an albatross I would be raised to fly

To dominate the sky, to feel the power in my divine wings, to teach my precious young to do the same.

If I were raised in the ocean, I would be raised to coexist

To clean sharks for food, to use the stinging anemone as a home, to imitate the sea to deceive.

If I were raised by dolphins, I would be raised to play

To be social and love unconditionally, to coordinate with others, to swim through air bubbles while I still can.

But I was not raised in the woods or the mountains or the ocean,

Nor was I raised by wolves or condors or dolphins.

Rather, I was raised in a city or two, among many homes and houses, between two sets of parents and with one very special cat.

I was raised to appreciate the arts, to know my best is all that's asked of me, to experience my location, and that the love of my life knows when I should have woken up to feed her.

I was raised with a love of flashy, action-packed anime, and grew to adore the beautiful ones that make me cry uncontrollably.

I was raised with a fascination for animals and adventure, and regretting the long walk in Florida's ugly humidity.

I was raised with just me, not realizing how alone I looked, then suddenly having an extensive family made me realize how lonely I must have been.

But that only how I was raised—I've got plenty more experience to find "me"

Mountains

by Te'anie Franklin

Mountains tall and big,
Reaching up to touch the sky,
Their beauty takes my breath
away,
As I stand awe, oh my!

With peaks that touch the clouds,
And valleys deep and wide,
The mountains hold a mystery,
That fills my mind with misery.

Their rugged slopes and rocky cliffs,
Are a challenge to explore,
But the views from up above,
Are worth every step and more.

Mountains so high, touching the sky,
Majestic peaks, reaching up high,
Their beauty vast, a sight to behold,
In their presence, my heart feels bold

The Experience

by Ariel Laemmel-Jenson

Feeling like throwing up
Just to present in front of a crowd.
Looking in the mirror
To only notice my stretch marks
Whether it's the tears burning my face
Or my heart being crushed
To a simple "bye".
It's the experience.

But I can still wake up in the morning
To eat food,
Hangout with my family,
And smile.
Be able to go to the park
To walk
And smell the fresh air.
It's The Experience.

Imagine

by Aspen Yates

Is it weird I still imagine,
what you would look like on my lap.
My fingers buried in your hair,
I imagine you there, asleep.
Your eyes locked shut and your chest rises
and falls,
all the while I still recall
how you used to love me,
more than you love me now.
I can almost guarantee.
Your sweet little words depicting how you
felt,
I took them for granted,
and how they made me feel.
Now all I do is sit here and wish you were
near,
what I would do to,
do it all over again.

Silence

by Ashley Jairam

When I was 8 years old my house was full,
there was no corner alone,
I found myself yearn for the quiet I could not reach.

When walking into the house the sounds of chaos
filled ears,
Chaos sounded like yells from sibling to sibling,
teasing, fighting.
Chaos sounded like yells from parents to children,
and sounded like grandparents' yells to parents and
to children.

At the same time chaos sounded like
uncontrollable laughter,
sounded like fast stomps following other sized
stomps,
and like counting from 10 to 1 in search of each
other.

Distraught from it all, I was unwilling to give it up,
not ready leave behind,
and unsure what the quite would bring.

Time moves forward,
people grow up, grow taller.
Others grow shorter, then grow under.
But all grow further.
The silence is upon as the house grows emptier

Silence fills the ears as chaos once did,
silence sounds like the absents of chaos.
I chose to remember the sounds of chaos.

The Apartment

by Isobel Keyser



New Person BY ISABEL NANGLE

IF YOU DON'T DO IT FOR YOU NOW. DO IT
FOR YOU THEN.
EVEN WHEN THE LIGHT BREACHING YOUR
WINDOWSILL SEEMS TO BURN MORE THAN
ENLIGHTEN AND THE AIR SEEMS TO
SUFFOCATE RATHER THAN INFLATE.
STILL DO IT.

FOR WHEN THAT MORNING COMES
AROUND THAT YOUR CHEST FINALLY FEELS
FREE, AND YOUR LUNGS CLEAN
DO IT FOR THE YOU THAT WILL RISE WITH A
PURPOSE AND BREATHE WITH INTENTION.
FOR THE GIRL THAT MAY ONE DAY FEEL
THE WIND OF FREEDOM GLIDE THROUGH
HER HANDS DOWN A ROAD SHE'S DRIVEN A
MILLION TIMES, BUT NOT LIKE THIS BEFORE

THE YOU THAT DOESN'T FEEL AN
EVERLASTING PIT THAT HOUSES ITSELF DEEP
WITHIN YOUR CORE, SHAKES AT NEW
EXPERIENCES, AVOIDS STRANGERS
DO IT FOR THE YOU THAT ACTUALLY WANTS
TO BE ALIVE. ONE THAT WANTS TO SURVIVE.

SO DON'T DO IT FOR THE YOU NOW. NOT
FOR THE PERSON YOU SEE IN YOUR
REFLECTION. BUT INSTEAD FOR THE ONE
CREATED IN YOUR HEAD.
BECAUSE IF YOU DON'T THAT'S WHERE SHE
WILL REMAIN. INSIDE YOUR HEAD.

BECAUSE IF THE YOU NOW DOESN'T TRY, THE
YOU THEN WILL BE FACED WITH THE SAME
REFLECTION.



Fear by Brooke Borzelleri

LOSING WAY BY ISABEL NANGLE

I'VE BEEN THERE, BEEN THAT PERSON.
I DESTROYED MYSELF. MY MIND. MY SOUL.
SUFFOCATED MY LUNGS AND DEPRIVED MY BODY.
I LET CARE BE A DISTANT STRANGER, ONE I PUSHED
AWAY IN MY EFFORTS TO FIND A BETTER
TOMORROW.

I MADE DECISIONS THAT FUELED THE BUILDING
FIRE INSIDE OF ME. FEEDING IT TO GROW LARGE
ENOUGH TO BURN DOWN THE FORCES AGAINST ME.

I'VE BEEN THERE.
SCREAMING AT THE WORLD. RUING THE POWER
THAT I BELIEVED OWNED GREAT FAULT.
YELLING AT WHOEVER WOULD LISTEN. TEARS
SEARING MY FACE TO MATCH THE RAW INSIDES OF
MY THROAT.

OWNING ONLY CONTROL THAT SEEMS WRONG.
BREAKING BRIDGES AND BURNING PATHWAYS
TRYING TO LEAVE THE PAST BEHIND ME.

I'VE BEEN THERE.

TO LOOK WITHIN

by Jinx

In the very depths of my mind exist doors hidden so far nobody can find them. These doors are me, and I am the doors. There are four of them; all in order neatly in a row. Each time I visit I clench the key engraved into my palm, drawing blood through the same ritualistic pattern as I reach for the handle. Behind the first door are my regrets. These take me back to days of scraped knees and torn shorts where I was tutored privately in the lessons of life, having the word gifted thrown at me as a coat of paint on rotted walls. The door shuts, whispering names of people long dead as it closes. Turning to the next door: overgrown and covered in vegetation. My dreams. With an agonized creak, the door creeps open. The stagnant air contained within engulfs me as I step through. Piles upon piles of shattered wishes and dreams fill the dusty library where it all began, framing the gleaming and intact book sitting in the middle of the room; pages empty as if waiting for the right moment, the right pencil, the right mind. With that, the door shudders shut and is left to grow over once again. Two doors down, two to go. The next door was decorated with stickers and floral patches. This door opens to my childhood bedroom I spent so many days in. 4 walls containing so many emotions as my tear soaked plushies watch from corners of my bed. Posters and books catch fire as I walk through, soaking up the sopping pit of memories I so desperately hoped to forget, then leaving it to burn as the final door looms; calling my name through hushed whispers and cigarette smoke. This door was different. See, upon opening this door, it's entirely blank. Absent of all but the faint scent of apple blossoms and smoke. A white canvas aching for it's artist, though it seems they hadn't gotten that far yet. This door 's purpose has not been yet decided and yet it looms more menacingly than the rest. It serves as a taunting melody, reminding me of where I've been and warning me of where I shall end. I refuse to listen to this door as it knows not of my aspirations. It knows not of my mind. It knows not of me. In years to come I will slowly etch and sketch into this canvas, shaping everything I could ever hope to be. But not yet. For now I will let it swing shut and lock with a click. For now I will toss the key on the floor, possibly kick it under a rug. For now, I will live.

THE KEY

by Devan Moore

Infinite universes expanding beyond our comprehension
Dimensions left completely unknown
Mysteries so keen to grab our attention
Mysteries too dangerous to keep locked away

Sometimes emotions are locked behind closed minds
People close themselves off to the world
Rotting talent left behind
The mind itself, it's own mystery

We can dig deep trying to find, "why"
Trying to unlock a purpose or reason
Spending vast nights staring at the sky
Some people don't find themselves in time

Finding answer is easier said than done
People so arrogant and stubborn
The discovery could be an endless run
How do you open the lock

Your key is the key
A best friend who helps them find themselves
A favorite hobby that let's someone be free
They key for you is the key to your lock

The key that let's you be you
The key that give you reason
The key to unlock what hidden in you
The key to unlock you

Thank You, Michael

by Devan Moore

Back when I was ten, many shenanigans began.
Overprotective but great parents, they knew best.
Michael, was always mean while I was innocent and naïve.
But I still tried to be his friend, a mistake indeed.

Egotistical, rude, mean, and manipulative he was.
At recess, we would play in the yard, and we'd run.
In one ball game, I caught it but was tripped.
Blood flowed from my knee to the concrete.

Michael did it, looking down at me, ball in my hands.
He reached his hand out and forced it from me.
Walked away, and continued to play, just another day.
But me, still naïve wanted to be his friend, a mistake indeed.

Saw Michael at lunch with his bad friends wanting the
bullying to end.
So I sat down next to him trying to be his friend.
He wants to Show me something Cool, Putting all my
fingers down is
What He said to do. All except for the middle one that is.

Me, naïve did as he said, I got an invitation right to the
office in the
End. Crying, not knowing what I did wrong, explained
what he did.
The principal looked at me and nodded her head.
That was another referral Michael managed to obtain.

After kindergarten, surprisingly I grew, but still naïve and
a fool.
But I did learn great things too, how I hate the egotistical,
rude, mean,
And manipulative bullies. The first time I'd hated anyone
in my life.
So I guess one thing I can say to Michael, my first bully.

Is Thank You.

Chef Serata

by Zack Miller

Colors dance up his pant legs,
and clash with his almost rainbow shoes.
The black chef coat highly contrasts with his other
brightly colored clothing.
He carries himself assertively
and tall as he walks to the stovetop.
With high confidence he sends the pancake into the
air to land back down,
causing his black beanie to shift on his head.

I Am a Conqueror

by Trinity Graham

It was the worst news ever,
Oh no please tell me you're a lie,
I'm not going to die. I will hold,
My head high, and always look,
Up to the sky. My faith is the size,
Of a mustard seed his word declares
That's all I need, I will fight,
Because in the end I know I can win,
Cancer is its name,
And my life will never be the same,
I'll never be defeated,
Because I know I'm strong enough to beat it,
This is a test,
For my testimony and nevertheless,
God gets the glory this will forever,
Be my life story,
Give God glory,
This will forever be my life story,
So, give God glory,
I am a Conqueror.

Character Figurine

by Emma Butcher





Exploring

by Issy Altieri

The light was too bright
It was too easy to be seen
To be looked in the eyes
For people to truly recognize me

The shadows were too dark
Too fearful of the unknown
You never know what's lurking
Too scared to let go

The gentle glow of the candle was
perfect
It wasn't too bright nor too void
But being stuck within
apprehension is too boring to be
enjoyed

The sunset was nice
It was peaceful and warm
But eventually the sun comes up
Leaving me blinded and worn

Through exposure
And acceptance
Exploring the shadows became less
difficult
It became easy
And so did exploring the sunbelt

Sunset

by Mr. Diaz

THE END

BY MYKAYLA MEFFORD

Lying still in their glass cages, the sheen of a fading fluorescent bulb reflected off of the surface covering them. Their wings are spread, pinned just shy of piercing the veins, each and every insect laid bare for onlookers to see.

Yet, the only onlooker that can faint remember this place stands in the hall.

Lost to time, the fluorescent light flickers. The wood framing the cases rots, though a trick of the eye, same as it always is. The finish melts, the bark flickers off, splinters beginning to float in the air as if on light water. The boy reaches out to touch it, and like pricking a spindle, destiny bleeds his skin and he winces.

The way he jumps back is predetermined, unbeknownst to him. Shaggy hair is ruffled with the right hand, the left's fingers curling, shaking, pointer beginning to bleed red.

He's lost himself in this place, in the future that has not yet come to pass. Not now. Not here.

Brows furrowing, he looks at the rotting wood as the white paint begins to melt. It does so before the drywall, and as if he can't even see it, can't see the gallery fizzling out and fading to become something other before him – he turns and moves on. Like a spoiled boy, he looks at what does not bow to him with little other than disdain, turning a blind eye.

Inside their cages, the butterflies' wings flutter. Their beats are faint as forewings begin to melt, thoraxes burning to golden honey dripping from the walls. The glass cracks, but the boy is long gone before it silently shatters.

There is another onlooker in the gallery lost to time.

Hands in his pockets, the shaggy hair has grown to locks flowing and brown. He tilts his head, a heavy sigh from his chest as tense shoulders slump. From his pocket, he picks out and flicks a lighter.

"Burn, then," he mutters, blowing smoke from his lips after a moment. "See if I care."

Oh, but he does. He did. Used to.

After a moment, he stops. He rolls his eyes, dragging limp limbs over to the wall, white having rotted away to black. The plaster gives way to void, and though it is a sight long since first seen, his mouth curls with a grimace.

He sighs. "Danaus plexippus," flicking a cigarette to the floor. Dull eyes flick up, where a monarch butterfly pleads for help with the beats of its wings. "Don't think I forgot about you."

The little boy is long gone. He knows what he is now. Devils in the streets whisper how saintly he is with disdain in their wretched tongues; priests accuse him of status as Lucifer's child.

Truthfully, he's only a man. Keeping pets for his pleasure, prodding at the butterflies with iron stencils, seeing what makes them tick. The monarch weeps in the frame, missing a thorax, leftmost forewing bleeding from what remains of the curled veins.

He did not grow up kindly. He did not grow up to be kind.

Lifting his boot, he stomps out a cigarette. The friction makes the sole squeak on the marble tile. Ringing fills his ears sooner than sound – though he's quick to pry at the inside of his ear with a dull finger.

“I knew a lady, once,” he tells the rotting butterfly, ignoring its deaf pleas, the flutters of wax wings; “She went on to become a gardener, can you believe that?”

Like clockwork, his hands light another cigarette.

Taking a drag, “I think it’s a waste of time. I already know who I am. What does she have to gain from a bunch of dumb flowers?”

A voice jeers from the wall, *‘The same thing you have to gain from torturing us.’*

Ah, Attacus atlas. Poking at his own temple, the man scoffs. “You’re not even a butterfly. I only keep pretty things here.”

‘Don’t you know who you are? I used to hold the world in my wings, lift you all up. And then you stuck me in this box and tried to forget yourself.’

“I’m done here,” He drawls, flicking the cigarette backwards. Uselessly, it pops against the atlas moth’s cage with a thunk. “Can’t you take me somewhere else?”

The void does not reply.

(Deep down, he knows the moth is right. His love, that woman in the green dress, emerald fibers kissed with dew to kiss the flowers proper – she’d probably found some semblance of belonging.)

(He, though: the man who’d chosen to bury everything. Not forget, never forget, he’d always remembered his regrets; a shovel in hand, he feels as if he’d buried two graves that night.)

There are two paths, in grief. You can drown in your sorrows, take to hurting others as you have hurt... or, you can grow life from the death and pick up that shovel. Yet the second he’d set it down the first time, he never picked the spade up again.

In the peaceful garden at the end of time, she had.

HER

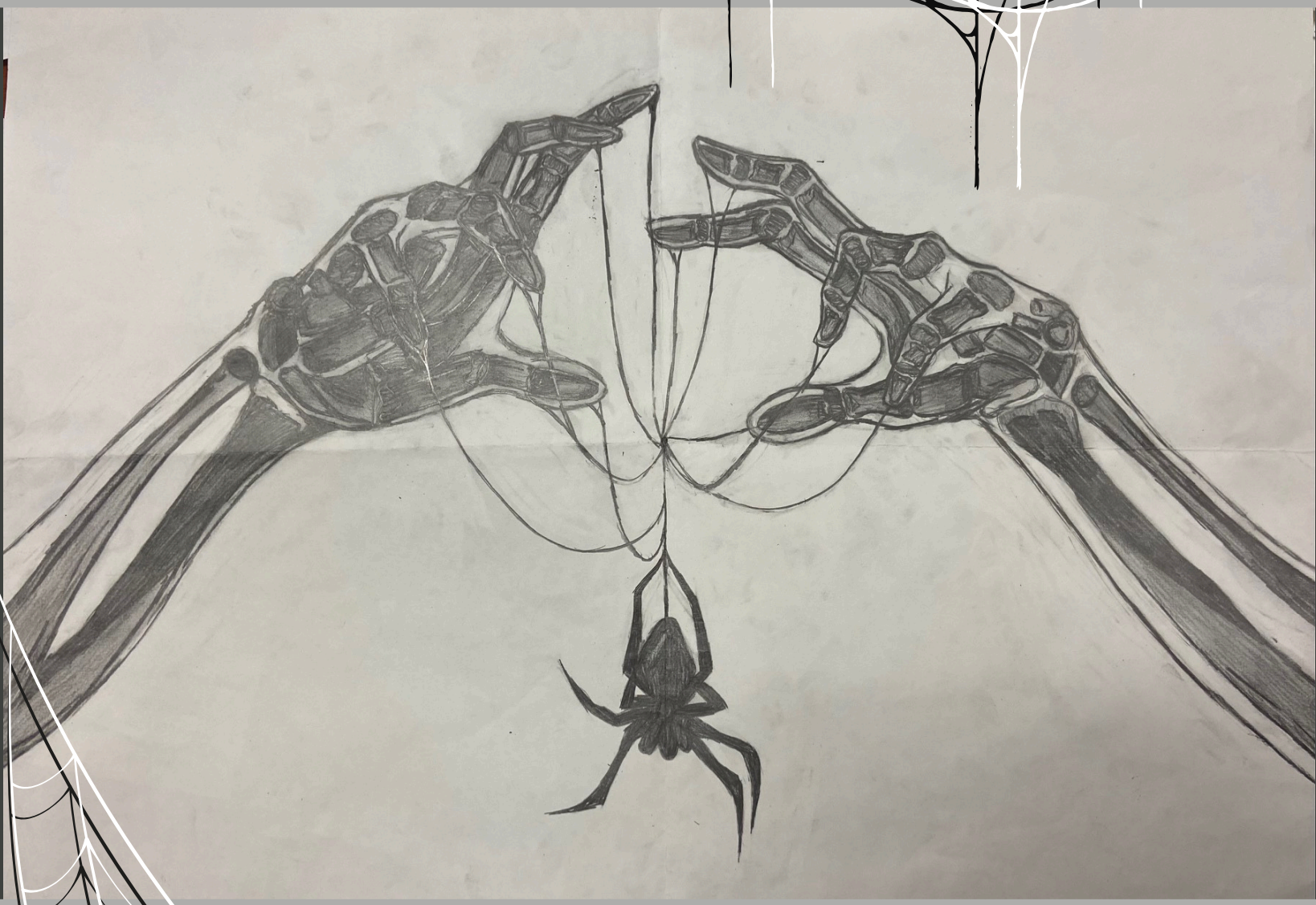
BY LILLY BATES

I see her and I hate her.
I look to the left holding my breath, trying to
Avoid her.
I raise my hand to the sky praying to God to
To change her.
I look to the right to hide my fright because she
Scares me.
I look down to the ground knowing that I have to
Face her.
I catch my breath, I squeeze my arm, I scrunch
My nose.
Then I look into the mirror and I see her, but I
Can’t hate her.
I wont change her.



Scratchboard Butterfly

by Marranda Norwood



Spiderhands
by Brianna Hamilton

CONCRETE

by Issy Altieri

BIRDS ONCE THRIVED IN THE SKY
NOW THEY SCORCH ON THE PAVEMENT IN THE ACIDIC RAIN
THE ONLY THING IN THE SKY IS THE AIRPLANES THAT FLY
OTHER THAN THE FREQUENT HURRICANE

THE SUN WOULD SHINE AND GIVE GENTLE WARMTH
BUT THE ONLY THING LUMINESCENT NOW IS THE
FLUORESCENT LIGHTS
THE LIGHTS THAT OVERSHADOW THE STARS AS THE EARTH
MEETS ITS DEADLINE
THE LIGHT'S POLLUTION SO BRIGHT THAT THERE'S FEW
STARS AT NIGHT

THE SPECIES CONTINUE TO DROP
THE STRESS OF THE HEAT DIMINISHES THE CROPS
THE DROUGHT MAKES IT SEEM AS THOUGH MOTHER NATURE
WAS SHOT
NOW SHE'S ON LIFE SUPPORT BECAUSE WE DON'T CARE TO
DO OUR JOBS

THE SEA RISES AND EATS AWAY THE SHORE
ITS HUNGRY AND INSATIABLE, IT'LL ONLY TAKE MORE
WE DRINK POLLUTANTS WITH A SIDE OF WATER
CREATURES OF THE EARTH WE CONTINUE TO SLAUGHTER

WE USED TO DRINK THE SUNLIGHT THROUGH OUR SKIN
NOW THE SKIES ARE DARK LIKE INK FROM A PEN
WE LIVED IN HOMES OF HEARTH AND HEAT
NOW WE LIVE IN GRAY COMPACT APARTMENTS IN THE
JUNGLE OF CONCRETE

Want to read more student work?



Scan here!

