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The editor of **The Writers' Slate** invites original, creative and expository writing by students in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The editor also invites submissions of book reviews of children's or young adult literature written by students. Educators are also encouraged to submit article ideas for feature article consideration.

The deadline for the fall issue each year is June 15. The deadline for the spring issue is December 15.

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Submissions, including electronic submissions, **should clearly indicate the writer's name, school, grade level, and home address. The teacher's name should be included if appropriate.** Due to the number of submissions and mailing costs involved, the editor will only respond to a student author's submission if a self-addressed stamped envelope is included. Submissions will not be returned.

The editor reserves the right to edit manuscripts for clarity, style, and according to space limitations.

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John H. Bushman  
Director, The Writing Conference, Inc.

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*February 15, 2009*

*Greetings!*

*Welcome to this winter edition of The Writers' Slate. We start off this issue with a look at a current trend of young adult literature: vampire novels. This article is followed by an in-depth look at the works of Walter Dean Myers. You're sure to put some of these books on your current reading list if you haven't dove into them already.*

*There are five exemplary narrative pieces in this edition as well. We know you'll be excited to read these narratives, for they demonstrate strong writing skills and intriguing plot lines. In addition, there are thirteen poems that were selected for publication. It's always important to read and reflect upon good poetry; we are glad we were given the chance, and we encourage you to do so as well.*

*Enjoy reading this edition of The Writers' Slate. We look forward to reading more submissions in the future.*

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## *Fang-tastic: Vampires Take a Bite out of Young Adult Literature*

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*Erin Heyman*

Garlic? Check. Holy water? Check. Crucifix? Check. OK, now throw all that out because today's young adult authors are turning the world of vampire literature upside-down. Once viewed as a dark, terrifying, and tragic figure, the vampire has been transformed into the next teen object of affection. Dracula is getting a makeover unlike any the world has ever seen.

When one thinks of vampires, names like Bram Stoker and Anne Rice immediately spring to mind. Stoker and Rice meticulously sculpted the classic fang-wielding fiends society has come to know so well. Historically portrayed as tragic, monstrous, and menacing, the vampire was traditionally found most often in adult fiction. Titles like Dracula, The Historian, and Interview with the Vampire have infused literary culture with images of ancient ethereal beings who exist only to tempt and destroy. They are dark, romantic, and inherently sexual.



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In recent years, there has been resurgence in vampire literature but not in the world of adult fiction. Readers of all ages have always seen vampires as a source of great fascination but they are now experiencing a renewed interest and the vampire is getting a spanking-new fan base. The vampiric figure is not new to young adult literature by any means, thanks to titles like The Silver Kiss, but it is currently undergoing a massive transformation. Today's young adult vampire novel is infused with darkness as well as light. Characters are more richly developed and plot lines are significantly deeper. There are more titles available now, and many of these novels are a wonderful break from the norm. Gone are the days of vampire novels filled only with terror, tragedy, and evil. Oh there is plenty of that in this new batch of literary wonderment, but there is also an abundance of romance, adventure, and even comedy, which is, in large part, why vampire

literature is on the rise in popularity. While there are many new titles for teens to devour in the vampire genre, what follows is an analysis of four particularly striking examples of the diversity in contemporary young adult vampire literature.

### **The Twilight Saga-Stephenie Meyer**

Stephenie Meyer's wildly popular teen vampire series, which includes Twilight, New Moon, Eclipse, and Breaking Dawn, has taken the world by storm. She has created a world that readers of all ages have embraced. Each book in the series gives us insight into the lives of Bella and Edward, the star-crossed lovers. Bella is not your typical teenage girl. Oh sure, she listens to music, drives a monstrous hand-me-down truck, and has trouble with her raging hormones, but she also happens to be head-over-heels for a "dazzlingly" gorgeous pulse-challenged boy named Edward Cullen. Edward and his family are a very elite, mysterious group living in Forks, Washington where Bella has come to live with her father, Charlie.

The saga begins as Bella attends her first day at Forks High School and encounters the Cullen clan at lunch. Each Cullen sibling is strikingly beautiful, almost painful to look at. Bella learns more and more about this mysterious group as the day goes on and, to put it mildly, has a rocky introduction to Edward in science class. As time goes on, events unfold that transform Bella and Edward's relationship from rocky to smitten. As the first novel, Twilight, transpires we learn many things about



these two individuals, as well as those around them. One of these things is that Edward and his family are vampires. The twist, however, is that these particular vampires are not the human-stalking, skulking-around-in-the-dark, "I want to suck your blood" type of vampires. The Cullens are what you might call noble vampires, vowing only to feed on animals, not humans. Unfortunately for Bella, the vampires who do feed on humans are just as fascinated by her as the ones who do not.

**(WARNING: Spoiler Alert)**

As the series continues with New Moon, Eclipse, and Breaking Dawn, the romance between Bella and Edward deepens and encounters obstacles the normal teenage romance would never have to face. Edward must overcome his “thirst” for Bella in order to be near her and Bella must face the perils of dating a vampire, being the object of a werewolf’s affection, fighting to stay out of the clutches of the less “human-friendly” vampires, and finally, becoming a vampire and a mother at the same time. Between the pages of these four equally-captivating novels we see not only a dark, romantic, and tumultuous adventure, but also the everyday struggles of life as a teen, complete with quirky out-of-the-loop parents, melodramatic friends, and gut-wrenching break ups.

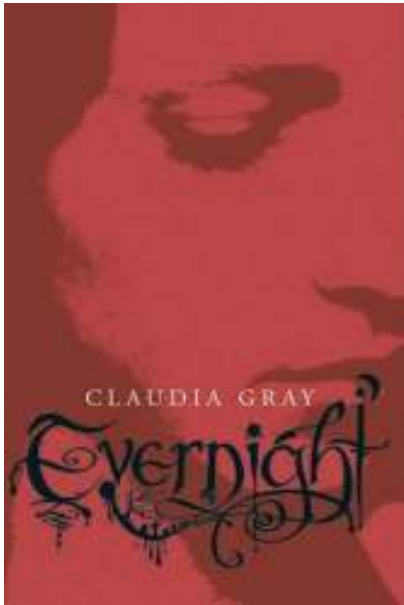
Rather than filling pages with tales of sexual debauchery, as is the case with many a vampire novel, Meyer has captured the innocence and tenderness of a powerful first love. In an interview with Life Story Magazine at Comic-Con in San Diego this summer, Meyer confessed, “I am not a vampire person. I’d never seen a vampire movie. I’d never been to a vampire movie. I’d never read a book about vampires. I’m really not into the genre. It’s why my books are different” (Life Story Magazine 15). Meyer has set the stage and many authors have now followed suit with their own blood-thirsty-page-turners. Avid Meyer fans do not have to mourn the end of the saga as the screen version of Twilight hit theaters in late November 2008 and the production company, Summit Entertainment, has been given the green light to begin working on the film version of New Moon.



vampire person. I’d seen pieces of them but I’d never read a book horror, so I don’t know different” (Life Story Magazine 15). Meyer has set the stage and many authors have now followed suit with their own blood-thirsty-page-turners. Avid Meyer fans do not have to mourn the end of the saga as the screen version of Twilight hit theaters in

**Evernight-Claudia Grey**

In the world of Evernight we are privy to the secret lives of the boarding school elite. Evernight Academy is the new home of Bianca Olivier and her parents. They have come to give Bianca a top-notch education and secure positions for themselves as professors. Bianca is less than thrilled with the move, and, having spent her entire life in suburban bliss, finds difficulty likening the gothic spires of Evernight to home.



In a botched attempt at running away, Bianca meets Lucas, a handsome fellow classmate who will soon become a very dangerous love interest. Lucas is not the only beautiful one at Evernight, not by a long shot. Its halls are packed with scores of teen blue-blood elite, which is more than intimidating for Bianca and the few, make that two, “normal” people she manages to befriend. There is something strange about the teachers and students of Evernight; stranger though, is what we eventually learn about Bianca and Lucas.

Slowly, events unfold that serve to inform us that Evernight Academy is stocked with vampires. We also learn a very surprising fact about Bianca. She is the mostly-human-born daughter of vampires, and thus fated to become a vampire herself. In this particular tale, Bianca is to remain almost human until she feeds from humans multiple times. She has grown up drinking blood with her dinner and was raised to believe that was normal. This is a departure from the norm in that she is not “turned,” as is the story with the average vampire. She was *never* completely human. It is because of this that her parents manage to shield her throughout her childhood from the major setbacks of her true identity.

Later, in an even more shocking twist, we discover that Lucas is a member of an ancient clan of vampire hunters known as the Black Cross. Again we see the theme of forbidden love and perilous obstacles. Evernight Academy serves an unorthodox purpose. It is used to help vampires keep up with the modern world because, as the vampires at Evernight discover, in an ever-changing world, living forever can be a disadvantage. As things heat up, Bianca makes an effort to save her family and the boy she loves from each other, and flees with Lucas, only to find herself entering the dangerous world of the Black Cross. The adventure is just beginning for Bianca and Lucas. According to Miss Gray’s website, [www.claudiagrays.com](http://www.claudiagrays.com), a sequel is in the works.

### **Tantalize-Cynthia Leitich Smith**

Having lost her parents at a young age, Quincie Morris has learned to be quite

independent. She has inherited her parents failing Italian restaurant and is left almost entirely on her own with the task of “revamping” the family business, as her uncle/guardian is otherwise occupied by his oversexed gothic girlfriend. Taking a cue from said girlfriend, Quincie decides to play on the local Austin cult vampire scene and give the restaurant a vampire theme.

The restaurant is named Sanguinis. The chef is to be transformed from inconspicuous culinary specialist into The menus are two-fold, one for adventurous diners) and one for “prey” (try chocolate-covered squirrel). Before open, however, Vaggio, the chef from restaurant, is brutally murdered in the must quickly find an open-minded mourning an old family friend. Things bizarre when Quincie hires an unlikely



Head Chef/Vampire. “predators” (more (those not willing to the restaurant is set to the original family kitchen. Quincie replacement while become even more replacement for

Vaggio. Henry/Brad Johnson is as plain as day with very little hope of becoming the Lord of the Undead he needs to become in order to make the restaurant a success. With a little luck, and a lot of hard work, Quincie manages to turn the strange newcomer into a very convincing vampire chef and the restaurant becomes a huge success.

In the midst of all of this, Quincie unknowingly attracts the attention of real vampires. Of course, Quincie is no stranger to supernatural beings. Her best friend since childhood, Keiren, just happens to be a werewolf hybrid. Quincie is head-over-heels in love with him, which is in itself a large problem, not to mention that he is all but impervious to her feelings. As the action comes to a head Quincie must deal with some very harsh realities: someone very close to her will betray her, Kieran will ultimately have to leave in order to be with others like him, and she will experience some very cruel irony as life imitates art with unforgiving accuracy.

This novel is a seductive fusion of the author’s two loves: food and the supernatural, or as she so eloquently puts it on the back jacket of this novel: “I tapped into my romantic nature and my love for monsters and marinara. Hold the garlic and enjoy!” One other interesting quirk about this book is the name of the main character. In

her author's note Leitch-Smith informs readers that her inspiration for Quincie comes from the character Quincy P. Morris in Bram Stoker's Dracula.

### **Suck it Up - Brian Meehl**

Morning McCobb is just your average teenaged vampire. At the onset of this novel he is about to graduate and join the International Vampire League, an organization formed to help vampires integrate into the outside world and whose aim is to eventually rid themselves of all vampire stigmas and live out in the open without fear of persecution.



Morning has spent the last few months learning the art of “shape-shifting” or “cell differentiation” as Leaguers now call it. His only fear, up until graduation, is remembering to put on his “epidex”— a device that prevents “cell differentiating” vampires from standing around naked after shifting back to “human” form. Yes, he is just your typical teen vampire who enjoys comic books and feeds his bloodlust with a blood substitute known as “Blood Light.” That is, until the leader of the Leaguers selects him to become the poster-boy for

vampires.

Rather than accepting some meager, boring job and attempting to blend into society like his classmates will do, Morning is chosen to move back to his hometown of New York City and make a good name for vampires everywhere. In Morning's world vampires are forced to live in secrecy, afraid of what humans will do if they learn of their existence. The International Vampire League, however, has plans to slowly bring Morning into the public eye and show society that humans and vampires can live in harmony. Just how do they plan to do this? With the launch of the first ever International Vampire League website, IVL.org, and with the help of New York City's most successful public relations specialist, Miss Penny Dredful and her teen daughter Portia.

The two whisk Morning off on a whirlwind weeklong publicity tour in order to let the outside world form a better-educated opinion of him. Morning soon learns, however, that not everyone is so keen on vampires becoming the minority group du jour. Outside of the world of the International Vampire League lies a smaller group of vampires known

as the loners. The aptly-named loner vampires keep to themselves, do not invite attention, and still practice the “old ways” of feeding on human blood. When an on-air display of Morning’s cell differentiation skills prompts one of the more aggressive loner vampires to put a hit out on Morning’s head, things get interesting to say the least.

This action-packed, high-tech adventure will keep readers guessing as to whether or not Morning will ever succeed in bringing humans and vampires together and will also leave them wondering if it is such a grand idea in the first place. How many casualties will there be in the quest for vampire “World Wide Out Day?” Suck it Up is Meehl’s first, and potentially only, attempt at vampire literature. According to his website, BrianMeehl.com, this is his second novel aimed at young adults and each of his books differs significantly from the other. A former children’s television writer and Jim Henson puppeteer, Meehl’s inspiration for Suck it Up came from years of working in the “politically correct” world of children’s television. He wanted the chance to poke fun at being p.c. and chose the popular world of the vampire as the stage for his very humorous tale (BrianMeehl.com).

### **Challenging Old Mythology**

From ancient, chilling folktales to the most sought-after books on the shelves, vampires permeate the literary world. Vampire literature is a sub-genre in and of itself. It is because of this that with the click of a mouse or the crack of a book we can find almost anything there is to know about these preternatural beings. When we think of vampires we think of holy water, garlic, sunlight, and the like. We picture pallid, nefarious figures preying on the innocent while they sleep. This new batch of vampire prose is challenging what we believe we know about the myths behind the figure. Gone are the days of evaporating in the sun, cowering from crucifixes, and morphing into bats. These new vampires have delightful new quirks indeed.

In Stephenie Meyer’s acclaimed Twilight series we are treated to some fantastic twists on old vampire legends. For example, in Meyer’s world vampires do not perish in the sun but rather glisten unnaturally so as to appear more attractive to potential prey. Also, the lovable vampires of Forks, Washington love a good thunderstorm. This because they too enjoy America’s favorite pastime: baseball. A thunderstorm is the perfect cover

for the deafening sound of ball on bat when these powerfully-strong vamps step up to the plate. In addition, Meyer appears to be one of the first to introduce the “vegetarian vampire” to the scene, though several others have now followed suit. Brian Meehl’s vampire protagonist is also more than capable of taking a stroll on a sunny day and has been given access to a cache of new high-tech vampire technology (stake-proof vests are just the beginning). Additionally, when faced with an unwanted vampire, a stake and a cross simply won’t do these days. The authors of these contemporary young adult vampire novels now offer a variety of new ways to annihilate an unfriendly fiend. It would seem the literary vampire has evolved to become much more resilient than ever before.

Another interesting spin on vampire mythology is the emergence of vampire-hybrids in the young adult novel, and Meyer’s Twilight Saga has once again made an intriguing contribution. In the last book of the series, Breaking Dawn, readers are introduced to a character born of both vampire and human. This causes several interesting side effects such as rapid development and extrasensory perception. In addition, Claudia Grey’s vampire debut Evernight, features the protagonist, Bianca, as a human born to vampire parents who takes on many fiendish traits of her own. The idea of vampire procreation adds a fascinating twist to an already captivating sub-genre of literature.

One of the more dominant patterns in newer young adult vampire fiction is the role of the vampire as hero. In recent years we have seen the vampiric figure undergo a massive transformation.

gone from evil to maybe misunderstood. From Morning McCobb, these are giving superheroes a As we’ve already day vamps are nearly come with an arsenal of

In recent years we have seen the vampiric figure undergo a massive transformation. The vampire has gone from evil to maybe just a little misunderstood.

The vampire has just a little Edward Cullen to not-quite-dead-men run for their money. discovered, modern-indestructible and defense mechanisms.

Not only are they exceptionally well built, but they also have a softer, more relatable side. While they are a far cry from the Harry Potters and Peter Parkers of the world, these characters have grabbed hold of readers with astonishing ferocity.

The Twilight Saga alone has made a palpable impact in the world of popular culture. It has captivated such a large audience in such a short period of time and has branched out into film, music, and even clothing and jewelry. Stephenie Meyer has

Stephenie Meyer has created a monster, a lovable, relatable, coveted monster.

created a monster, a lovable, relatable, coveted monster. She may very well be single-handedly responsible for the abundance of vampire-themed young adult literature that has surfaced in recent years. Meyer has not written a vampire series, she has written an epic love story that just happens to be about vampires. In addition to all of that, IMDB.com reports that the actor Robert Pattinson, who is currently starring as Edward Cullen in the screen version of the epic first novel, was recently voted the “hottest male movie vampire of all-time” in a recent online poll, beating out the likes of Brad Pitt and Tom Cruise.

Readers have fallen in love with the Cullen clan and shown their appreciation for the

world Meyer has created by standing in line at midnight to get the first glance of her newest book, selling out theaters through advanced ticket sales in order to witness the epic love story on the big screen, and turning the tiny town of Forks, Washington into a hot new tourist attraction.

### **Overwhelming Appeal**

With vampire-mania emerging all over the entertainment world it is hard not to wonder about the reasons behind the new obsession. From the local bookstore to the red carpet, vampires are cropping up all over the place. Fang fans can even catch them on the small screen by tuning in to the new HBO television series **True Blood** (based on a series of vampire-themed mystery books by Charlaine Harris). The appeal is not new but the popularity is most definitely on the rise. There are several theories to explain the phenomenon. The most obvious is that vampires, and many other supernatural beings, are dangerous, mysterious, and somewhat depraved. Society has always been taken with the darker side of life, as evident by the success of writers like Stephen King. This phenomenon in the young adult sector can, at the very least, be traced back to the original

Goosebumps series by R.L. Stein or perhaps the chilling works of Christopher Pike. In essence, what is old is new again. It isn't the just the thrill of the dark side that is creating hordes of new book-lovers, however. One could easily argue that at the very core of each of these exciting new novels is that all-consuming, tumultuous thrill of a first love. These clever authors have tapped into a market full of young adults thirsting for a classic love story after coming down off the J.K. Rowling high. These tales are a scintillating blend of horror, fantasy, and above all, romance.

In an interview with Life Story Magazine, Nancy Collins, author of Vamps, another acclaimed series of vampire novels, gives her spin on the reason behind the vampire's most recent meteoric rise to fame. She believes that "vampire young adult novels have become so popular because you can either see yourself pining for someone you can never have, or you can see yourself as the female attracted to something you know is dangerous; something you know is not good for you, but you're compelled to go after it. That is real life. It's the moth to the flame" (Collins 70.) It appears young adult readers whole-heartedly agree with this statement, as is evident in the sheer number of these novels flying off bookshelves each and every day.

At the end of the day, Dracula is just the boy next door. The gorgeous, brooding, living-challenged neighborhood crush. He's not hiding out in castles or hanging upside down in caves. He, along with his other blood-lusting comrades, has set out to capture the hearts and minds of the young adult world and has more than succeeded. It is quite possible that this is just a passing fad, that just as The Hobbit gave way to Harry Potter, so too will Twilight and its shelf-mates give way to the next literary phenomenon. Do not be surprised, however, to see new generations of young adults each year trade in their wizard wands for a gleaming set of fangs.

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*Erin Heyman is an English education student at Metropolitan State College of Denver. She spends a considerable amount of time reading books "far too young for her age" and enjoying them much more than their "age-appropriate" counterparts.*

## *Walter Dean Myers: Teacher of Values*

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*Doug Nogami*

Walter Dean Myers is an unlikely author. He spent much of his youth in speech therapy, and his thoughts were often lost in his inability to communicate them (Goodson 26). He lived in a foster home. His foster father was illiterate; his mother read “sparingly, at best” (Goodson 28) and was an alcoholic (Myers Morning Edition). He dropped out of high school (Monster Extras 13). And Myers discovered in elementary school that few of the characters in the books he read were like him, African American (Nilsen and Donelson 257). Yet Myers has become one of the most recognized authors of young adult literature today. His works have won two Newberry Honors from the American Library Association, five Coretta Scott King Awards, and the Michael L. Printz Award. His standing in young adult literature is such that Greenwood Press and McFarland & Company, Incorporated, have both published literary biographies of Myers. A selection of his works including Fallen Angels, Scorpions, and Monster shows why he has achieved such notoriety. Myers’ works succeed because they are easily read, teach valuable lessons, and demonstrate an ability to simplify yet illuminate the complicated topics he tackles including war, gangs, poverty, racism, death, violence, and the judicial system. His works make compelling reading choices for young adults, and teachers and librarians who regularly offer reading suggestions for teenagers, because they offer high quality literature presenting topics relevant to this audience.

This quality and relevance can be seen in Fallen Angels and Sunrise over Fallujah, which examine the Vietnam and Iraq wars and provide vivid descriptions of the

wars, missions, and characters, and Scorpions and Monster, which provide insight into the lives of inner-city African American teenagers who face critical choices in their lives without realizing the potential impact of what they are deciding. In all the works, Myers ensures that today's African American students have books that feature characters with whom they can identify as he explores the issues many of them face.

Fallen Angels tells the story of Ritchie Perry, a young man from Harlem who has grades good enough to get into City College but does not have the money for tuition. So

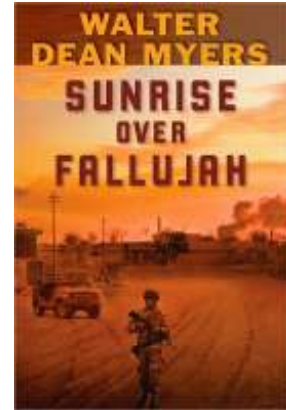


like many blacks in the 1960s, he enlists in the Army (Angels 13-14). Myers writes an engaging coming-of-age story that explores two of the 1960s' defining issues, racism and Vietnam, as well as the impact of choices young people make, a recurring theme in all four works. For example, Perry's choice not to pursue college immediately endangers his life because during the Vietnam War, college would have provided him a student deferment from the military draft. Perry then is presented a choice of training for surveillance or possibly military intelligence but chooses an assignment that might keep his dreams of a professional basketball career alive. As a result, he ends up in a combat unit in Vietnam (Angels 38).

Myers' fairness in tackling the larger issues of racism and the Vietnam War make his insights even more effective because he teaches rather than preaches. For instance, when Perry is loaned to another company and ends up in a battle where it kills soldiers in another squad of the same company, Myers does not assign blame; he merely explains: "The guys that our artillery blew away didn't have a reason to die. They hadn't died facing the enemy. They just died because somebody else was scared, maybe careless.

They died because they were in Nam, where being scared made you do things you would regret later. We were killing our brothers, ourselves” (Angels 106). Similarly, when addressing racism, Myers shows both positive and negative aspects of the army. Peewee Gates, a black soldier, likes the army because “this is the first place I ever been in my life where I got what everybody else got....Back home when everybody got new sneakers, I didn’t get none....Either Moms didn’t have the money, or she had the money, and we had to get some other stupid thing, like food” (Angels 15). Gates, Perry, and the other African American soldiers, however, have to cope with racism that endangers their lives when a new sergeant puts the black soldiers in the most dangerous patrol positions. Gates recounts how Johnson, one of the African American soldiers, asked the sergeant “how come he put a brother on point and another brother in the damn rear with the sixty (M 60 machine gun)?” When the sergeant replies that he does what he thinks best, “Johnson said he gonna (sic) mess around and get himself shot in the back of the head” (Angels 221). Myers also demonstrates how the vagaries of Vietnam made it difficult to determine right from wrong as when Perry reflects on his company’s arrival at a village that had been attacked by the Vietcong. “We could have killed as easily as we mourned. We could have burned as easily as we put out the fires. We were scared, on the very edge of control, at once trying to think of what was right to do and hating the scene about us” (Angels 178). Through such illustrations, Myers, who dedicates Fallen Angels to his brother who died in Vietnam, enlightens the reader on how we ended up in the political quagmire without the judgmental diatribes common to many discussions of Vietnam and how adults can make decisions that have great consequences for young people.

Myers connects the Vietnam and Iraq wars by making the protagonist in Sunrise over Fallujah the nephew of Ritchie Perry. Robin “Birdie” Perry enlisted in the army, over the objections of his father, after the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon because he “wanted to do something, to stand up for my country” (Sunrise 2). Like his uncle, the teenaged Robin Perry has made a potentially life-and-death decision, and Myers places him in a war that still has the immediacy of today’s headlines for young adult readers. In other ways, the contrasts with Ritchie Perry’s Vietnam experience are striking. The army is much more integrated in terms of both gender and race. Women played minimal roles in Fallen Angels. In Sunrise over Fallujah, they are commanding officers coping with the pressures of sending soldiers into harm’s way and executing orders that give them pause. Similarly, African Americans were limited to the roles of enlisted men in Fallen Angels but have become officers in the very different United States Army of Sunrise over Fallujah. In this new army, Robin Perry is assigned to a Civil Affairs company that has the mission to help bring democracy to Iraq after the military victory is secured. By placing Robin Perry in this framework, Myers is able to describe his coming of age while undertaking a mission that most Americans believe has failed to this point. Like his uncle, Robin Perry learns the horrors of war and death early on, in Robin’s case when his company takes an Iraqi boy into custody because they found a rocket propelled grenade launcher in his house. A sniper opens fire on the Americans; the boy runs and is shot. Robin describes the scene as the boy’s grandmother comes running from the house. “Her lips moved but there was no sound. She gestured toward



the boy, took a tentative step to him, then stumbled forward and fell on her knees. She looked at him and then up at me. Her anguished eyes pleaded hopelessly. I walked away. Away from the house, away from the body, away from the grandmother” (Sunrise 57). Myers’ ability to find poignancy in the death of a suspected enemy displays his gift for presenting a point of view without being judgmental, describing a very unpopular war in a way that is both instructive and analytical. He describes the frustration of the war when a Humvee is blown up by an improvised explosive device. “The whole thing was over in a heartbeat. The marine patrol had been coming down the street, the IED exploded, and now people were dead. There was no confrontation, no blurred figures flying across the busy street, no one to chase down for revenge, no one to be mad at” (Sunrise 134).

Sunrise over Fallujah also illustrates Myers’ ability to see issues from a broad range of perspectives, including an Iraqi viewpoint, that gives the reader a much deeper

understanding of the war. He describes a village whose young men had decided to put themselves at the mercy of the Americans until Saddam Hussein’s Ba’athist troops came and forced them onto a truck to join the Iraqi army. As the villagers including many children bid their men goodbye, the truck heads for Baghdad only to be destroyed by an American plane after one of the Ba’athists

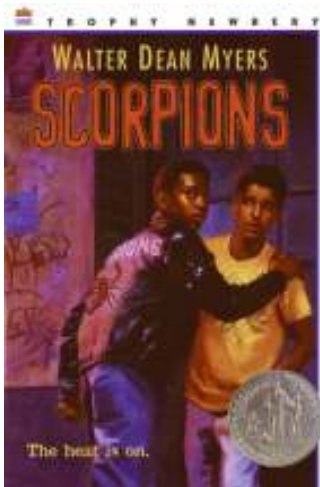
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fires a shot at it. “We ran toward it. The children ran faster. But there was nothing left but pieces of bodies,” an Iraqi woman named Halima explains. “There is so much killing that there is

no place left in our hearts to hold our grief or our anger. Now the children are asking the same question as their brothers: Why have you come to kill us?" While Robin Perry understands the village's tragedy, he also knows the men in the truck were bound for military duty with a mission to kill Americans (Sunrise 147-148). This ability to consider all human relationships, and not just the issues of race between blacks and whites, has gained Myers a broad audience much to his delight. "Unless a reader (who writes to Myers) identifies himself or herself racially, I no longer assume that they are African American," Myers said. "This, of course, is how it should be" (Goodson 27).

Still, African American characters are central to Myers' work, and Monster provide great insight into the experiences of young blacks growing up in Harlem. In Scorpions, Jamal Hicks is a 12-year old whose brother, Randy, is the leader of the



Scorpions gang who has been sent to prison. Randy and another Scorpions member, Mack, decide to make Jamal the leader of the Scorpions so he can hold the position until Randy returns from prison. Scorpions describes Jamal's struggles to support his mother, learn in a school where he is clearly not valued, and decide the right course when his choices are to continue on a path that shows little promise or become leader of the Scorpions and try to manage the older members who oppose his ascendancy to the leadership position. Myers complicates Jamal's choices by holding out the promise that leadership of the Scorpions might provide the money needed for Randy to appeal his guilty verdict. Jamal's alienation from adults and lack of promising options are readily identifiable by young readers struggling with the transition to adulthood.

Ultimately, Myers shows that Jamal is more child than gang leader, more family member and friend than young thug. For example, to help Jamal solidify his credentials as a gang leader, Mack provides him with a gun, but it makes the young boy uneasy. “His legs were stiff as he walked. He felt that the gun was going to do something—fall out of his pants, or shoot all by itself” (*Scorpions* 80). But Myers also shows the attraction of guns to young men when the Scorpions back off as Jamal flashes the weapon (*Scorpions* 83) and again when Jamal displays the gun to scare Dwayne, a school bully. “Jamal took a step toward Dwayne, lifting the gun toward his face. ‘Hey, Jamal...’ Dwayne’s voice cracked as he spoke. Dwayne started backing up. He put his hand in front of his chest. Jamal was trembling. His heart was racing. He looked at Dwayne’s face and saw his fear” (*Scorpions* 106). Myers worries that teenagers rely on violence. “I think that the problem with so many young people is that violence gets to be a resource. When nothing else works for you, violence always does, and you’re always drawn to it....When you’re young, you make mistakes. The big thing that’s different now is that when I was a kid, you could survive your mistakes. Today, kids have access to guns.” The difference, Myers adds, is that mistakes when he was young meant a bloody nose and a stern admonition; today, it can mean a dead body and ten to fifteen years in prison (*Monster Extras* 14).

In *Monster*, Steve Harmon is on trial as an accomplice to murder after the owner of a drugstore is killed in the struggle over the gun the man pulls to ward off an attempted robbery. The title comes from the characterization of Harmon by the prosecuting attorney who calls Harmon and his co-defendants



“monsters in our community—people who are willing to steal and kill” (Monster 21). The job of Harmon’s attorney, Kathy O’Brien, becomes to present Harmon as “human.” Harmon understands the challenge as he sits in prison. “I want to look like a good person. I want to feel like I’m a good person because I believe I am. But being in here with these guys makes it hard to think about yourself as being different. We look about the same, and even though I’m younger than they are, it’s hard not to notice that we are all pretty young. I see what Miss O’Brien meant when she said part of her job was to make me look human in the eyes of the jury” (Monster 62-63). Ultimately, Harmon is found not guilty, but Myers illustrates how many might respond to the verdict when Harmon reaches to hug his attorney, who turns away from him, gathers her papers, and leaves (Monster 276).

Harmon, who has excelled in a high school filmmaking class, tells his story through his journal and a screenplay he is simultaneously writing about his experience. This style allowed Myers to have Harmon talk about his situation in the first person in the journal but in the third person in the screenplay. Using the third-person narrative distances Harmon from his crime and trial, an interesting tendency Myers found when interviewing prisoners about their crimes as research for the book: the inmates invariably talked about their crimes in the third person (Monster Extras 7).

Monster and the other works examined demonstrate Myers’ understanding of his young adult audience. In Monster, he immediately grabs the attention of his young adult readers with a compelling opening paragraph: “The best time to cry is at night, when the lights are out and someone is being beaten up and screaming for help. That way even if you sniffle a little they won’t hear you. If anybody knows that you are crying, they’ll start

talking about it and soon it'll be your turn to get beat up when the lights go out" (Monster 1). Fallen Angels and Scorpions start in the middle of conversations that the reader must puzzle through while being drawn to the characters. Sunrise over Fallujah has a less dramatic opening with a letter in which Robin Perry explains why he is in Iraq and his father's unfavorable response, but it furthers Myers' recurring theme of youth not fully understanding the implications of their decisions. Robin Perry writes, "He (Robin's father) was thinking about me and about my future—which is cool—but I still need to be my own man, just like you were at my age" (Sunrise 2).

Once Myers captures the reader's attention, he engenders identification with the protagonists through a number of devices. In three of the books, Myers uses first-person to solidify that identification with young adult readers. In each of the books, he has serious, intelligent, talented, young men who are faced with life-and-death decisions. The plots and character development tell the readers that Myers takes young adults and their issues seriously. His main characters are fully developed with strengths, weaknesses, and ultimately an ability to meet and conquer adversity. The Perrys have no concept what they will face in their respective wars, but they survive and experience personal growth in the process. Harmon uses the lease on life of his not-guilty verdict to further develop his filmmaking talents, and Jamal learns the value of friendship. All of the main characters have a basic goodness that endears them to the reader. Harmon is probably the least sympathetic of the main characters having been

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accused of murder, but he exhibits remorse for the pain he has inflicted on his parents. Jamal makes some errors of judgment, but his love for his mother is obvious. And the Perrys find themselves in war wishing they had developed better relationships with their loved ones back home.

Myers also makes his stories more accessible through humor. In the opening of Fallen Angels, when Peewee Gates tells Ritchie Perry the Vietcong have cleared out of the vicinity because they must have heard Gates was coming, Perry and Judy Duncan, a nurse, consider whether Gates understood they were in Anchorage, Alaska, where their airplane had stopped en route (Sunrise 3-4). Ultimately, however, Myers' strength is clean, brisk prose that he uses to educate and illuminate. At his best, Myers focuses his easily read style on complicated subject matter producing clear explanations of issues as when he describes the Iraq war through the eyes of a sheik, who explains that the conflict is actually two wars. United States soldiers won the first, military war but just stand on the sideline and "hold the coats" during the second war. "You are trying to stabilize a government in Baghdad. But there are others who are creating—how do the English put it? A shadow government?—and which government in the end will rule the Middle East is the new war. Look around you; it is my people who are being killed in the streets of Baghdad and Fallujah. Yes, yes, I know. They kill one or two Americans to make it look good is all" (Sunrise 224).

Myers wields the clarity of his prose in teaching lessons by example that are more readily accepted by young adults. His characters lack the macho personalities that are commonplace in many Hollywood African American male characters. His young men bristle at violence and death as Ritchie Perry does when he sees a soldier die. "Jenkins

had been walking with me and talking with me only hours before. Seeing him lying there like that, his mouth and eyes open, had grabbed something inside my chest and twisted it hard. The neat pile of body bags was waiting for the rest of us....I didn't know what to think about what had happened. I didn't know what to feel" (Angels 43). Harmon realizes the absurdity of trying to look tough when his co-defendant tries to stare him down. "I go to bed every night terrified out of my mind. I have nightmares whenever I close my eyes. I am afraid to speak to these people in the jail with me. In the courtroom I am afraid of the judge. The guards terrify me. I started laughing because it was funny. They do things to you in jail. You can't scare somebody with a look in here" (Monster 96-97). And they even quake when they first handle a gun. In contrast to the misogyny of some rap lyrics or image of males as sexual conquerors, Myers' males are considerate, shy, and almost inept in their relationships with women. When fellow soldier Marla Kennedy suggests she and Robin Perry should have showered together, Robin is not sure how to react. "The girl is messing with my mind big-time. I'm beginning to think that she doesn't believe I know much about women, which is true, but I don't like women knowing that" (Sunrise 93). The normalcy and decency of Myers' characters make them believable and people to whom readers, especially young adults, can relate.

Characters are not Myers' only vehicle for teaching lessons. His stories also provide social commentary on many of the important issues of our lives. In Scorpions, Myers illustrates the racism of a school whose teachers and administrators have given up on 12-year-old Jamal. Mr. Davidson, the principal, talks to him about being late. "I would ask you to bring your mother to school, but she probably doesn't care any more about your education than you do." Jamal felt tears coming to his eyes. He looked up at Mr.

Davidson again, and this time he didn't put his head down" (Fallen Angels 16). Fallen Angels and Sunrise over Fallujah show the consequences of ill-conceived wars. "Uncle Ritchie, I used to be mad with you when you wouldn't talk about Vietnam. I thought you were being selfish, in a way. Now I understand how light the words seem. If I ever have kids, I think I won't tell them much about what I did here, or what I've seen. I'll tell them something because I'll want them to know about war. But are there really enough words to make them understand?" Robin Perry asks (Sunrise 282). In Monster, Myers shows a judicial system where blacks feel they face long odds in finding justice as Harmon's attorney points out. "Half of those jurors, no matter what they said when we questioned them when we picked the jury, believed you were guilty the moment they laid eyes on you. You're young, you're Black, and you're on trial. What else do they need to know?" she asks (Monster 78-79). The impact of poverty is a recurring theme. Jamal tries to lead the Scorpions because he needs two thousand dollars for the appeal of his brother's conviction. Richie Perry enlists in the army because he cannot afford college. Here, Myers draws from personal experience for background as he writes in The Horn Book Magazine, "The problem for me was that my family had grown so dysfunctional (alcoholism, depression, an uncle murdered) that even a free New York City high school had become a financial and emotional burden. My grades suffered accordingly" (512).

While many of these issues had major impacts on African Americans, Myers presents them almost incidentally making his commentary more lesson than sermon in the hope that young, poor children will take heart in the possibility of hope. "I write to give hope to those kids who are like the ones I knew—poor, troubled, treated indifferently by society, sometimes bolstered by family and many times lacking support,"

Myers comments (Monster Extras 14). “I am a product of Harlem and of the values, color, toughness, and caring that I found there as a child,” he adds (Monster Extras 11).

Myers brings a modesty to his work. He says he provides his lessons not to change lives but to make young adults think because they tend to act first and then think. “I’m more and more interested in the ways young people develop their values and the difficulties that so many inner-city kids face when forced to make adult decisions at an early age,” Myers said (Ishola 65). And Myers hopes his young readers will examine themselves. “It is this language of values that I hope to bring to my books. I want to bring values to those who have not been valued. I want everyone to keep their values in mind and to live by them” (Monster Extras 17). Myers’ ability to provoke thought and engender introspection make his works well worth exploring for young adult readers as they search for those values.

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## A Trial Separation

By: Danielle Kowalski

I should've known to virtually erase you from my memory. It wouldn't have been too hard. In the distant future you could've called my name, and I would introduce myself to you as a whole new person. "Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_." So this is what I've decided to do. I've decided to create a whole new identity for myself, so I can let you go.

I'll be named Marie, and I'll be the same age, sixteen. But I won't live where I do now, I'll live in France, and I'll have many different types of friends. One will be named Jacques, like the old French explorer, and he will be the one to introduce me to wine, and all of life's other great wonders. "Merlot," he'll whisper seductively in my ear, and then after a few minutes of silence and sipping he'll go off on a tangent, telling me how everything has changed since he met me.

Isabelle will be my best girlfriend, but she won't be like Jacques. When I'm with her I'll wear tailored skirts and flowing blouses, pointy-toed flats, even though my feet will hurt. After we attend school we will drink tea in the gardens behind her house. For a short period of time we will lay out on the mowed lawn, chatting about our lives and current issues. She will tell me about a boy who broke her heart, and, reminiscing, I will mention quietly that my heart once was broken too.

It won't all be perfect, my new life. Nothing can be perfect. I will still feel bad about my body, and feel awkward when I'm thrown into the uncomfortable situations where I have to meet new people. My parents will tell me to do better in school, and though I am trying my best, my best will never be good enough. At night, I will get down on my knees next to my bed, the wooden floor poking splinters through my pajama pants, and I will pray for perfection. An ideal life is not possible, but still, I will pray. Afterwards, when I climb into my bed, and listen to the sounds of the ever so foreign country around me, I will think of you. It will be horrible to remember, my heart will hurt again, as it did when you tore it in half. But it will be a necessary ritual before I fall asleep. In my attempt to hide from it, I will become addicted to the past.

If France won't work, I'll move on to India, and start my new life over again. I will have survived two years in France, so I will complete my travels alone, without my parents. When I get there I will go into the airport bathroom and change into my new attire. Cargo pants and tank tops will be what I live in from now on, I decide. When I find my apartment, a boy will be leaning on the outside wall, smoking a cigarette. I will ask him for one, and after lighting up, will

introduce myself as Celine. "I just moved here from France," I will say, but he will just look at me, and I will wonder if he speaks English or not. But quickly after he'll grab my hand, and pull my key out of it, looking at the number, and then drag me up the many flights of stairs to my new home.

His name is Mitesh, and he tells me that his name means one with few desires. "Why are you telling me this?" And he says, "Just a warning." It will not be any concern of mine whether he desires me or not, I just need someone to walk around with, so I can get to know my new surroundings. I will enroll in a small drawing class, something to do to pass the time. The first day I go there, Mitesh accompanies me. He's holding my hand as we walk down the street, and my hand is clammy under his. I do not know what he wants from me. The art class is on the upstairs level of a small restaurant, relatively close to my apartment. I think the teacher's husband is the cook downstairs. Mitesh kisses me on the cheek goodbye, and then let's go of my hand, which I wipe on my pant leg soon after he disappears around the corner. The building I'm going into is dark and musty. There are a lot of shadows, not the kind of light you'd expect for an art classroom. A girl is standing in one of the darkened corners of the room. Remembering my shy qualities I go over and introduce myself. She is American as well, and her name is Cleona. She will eventually move in with me, and our small, two bedroom apartment will become a refuge for us, Cleona, Mitesh, and me.

Later that night, the night of my first class, I will sit at my desk which is facing one of the white wash walls in my apartment. It's facing a wall because I don't want anything to distract me while I'm drawing. I want the process to be organic. My pencil will be waiting on a blank piece of paper as I sit and think about the first class assignment, which will be to draw a picture about love. That night, after not doing any work, and drinking too much wine, I will kneel down beside my bed, shoo away the spiders which are nesting in the crevices between the floorboards, and I will press my hands together and pray. And what will I pray for? What else, but for you, and only you, and perfection. But I won't want to let a few sinful thoughts ruin my experience just yet, so I'll climb under my covers to sleep. My body will lean to one direction that night, as if to protect myself. So if my imagination spontaneously manifests you beside me in the middle of the night, I won't be touched by you; I won't be hurt.

In India I will not have as many friends as I did in France. I will take to spending most of my time with Mitesh, who will learn to desire after all, and Cleona. I will see so much of myself in her. Once, I will ask her if she is trying to escape something, as I did so long ago. She will just look at me with wide doe eyes for a long time. She will know I understand.

At some point Jacques will come and visit me, but will become more infatuated with Cleona, who never in her life has even held hands with a boy. Cleona, Jacques, Mitesh, and I will take a stroll through one of the parks at nighttime, and like when I was sixteen, we will drink Merlot straight out of the bottle while chatting mindlessly. Jacques and I will sit on a park bench for a few minutes while Mitesh and Cleona venture onwards, and I will ask him what he meant, when he said so much had changed since he met me. He will tell me in that soft, French drawl of his that I, being so mysterious made him want to actually get to know someone for the first time. Love somebody for the first time. "Obviously it was a long time ago", he says. "Cleona is quite the interesting one, isn't she?" he jokes. I tell him that me being mysterious doesn't change everything, maybe some things, but not everything. "Yes it does," he whispers, leaning closer to me, his lips next to my ear. "Everything is an illusion. You make things up, and you control what others see and feel. You don't think I didn't know your real name wasn't Marie? You're going by Celine now aren't you? Your pretend games controlled my life so I spent all of my time trying to convince you that you were somebody different. You're doing it to them too. Cleona and Mitesh, they're smarter than they look. Nobody can convince you of anything unless you convince yourself. You're not Celine or Marie, you're just yourself."

Taken by surprise from his response, I will awkwardly pull away, only to be stared at by him, with a smile on his face. "Goodnight, my mystery girl," he gives his one last goodbye, and stands up to join the others, leaving me by myself.

I'll make it home all right. I will get on my knees to pray. "I want my life back," I will whisper, but I won't even think of you. You are not the problem. This fake life I have been leading is the problem, and I will realize that.

In the morning I will remember I have an art class, my last one. I remember that I have not done any work, for my life, which has revolved around my two friends for the last couple months has taken me away from my other priorities. I will make my way to the restaurant, walking slowly, working on cigarette after cigarette, trying to come up with a justifiable excuse. I will get up to the top floor and take my seat next to Cleona, and when the teacher comes around I will say to her, "I'm sorry, I seem to have misplaced the final draft." She tells me that I must have something to show for any of the work I have done, and before I will be able to stop her she will flip open my sketchbook.

And there you are. Your face, sketched, shaded perfectly, in my sketchbook. Above your face, in my perfect script, is the word love. My teacher looks at me happily, and says I should be proud of my work. I have done a very good job. But I don't know when I did this work. I don't know why. I was trying so

desperately to get away from you, and your love.

I have been given no choice but to snap back into reality. My subconscious within my subconscious has turned against me, and I was too scared to stay in my pretend India, and figure things out for any longer. I hope Cleona and Mitesh will forgive me. No, you didn't commit some sort of misdemeanor or have sex with another girl, but you told me that you love me. In-between all the trivial details of my life, school, gossip, things like first base, love seems like too much to handle. I'd rather have things be trivial, because that way there's less of a chance of me getting hurt.

Everywhere I go, love stares me in the face. It is in my parents, and the way they look at each other. The hugs between cheerleaders and football players, TV characters, and even imaginary people, like Cleona and Jacques. Love is staring me in the face but I cannot accept it because still, it is not perfection. I know this because there is divorce, and abusive husbands, and unhappy soccer moms who drink all day. I don't want to have to succumb to that at some point down the road. So I'm asking you just to expect less of me. I will be there for you, and I won't escape off into a distant daydream anymore to try to avoid what is happening in real life. Just expect less of me, because if I have obligations I will never discover what my perception of perfection is. Maybe it's selfish to think that way, but I'm determined to know.

## **FORGOTTEN**

**By: Hannah Langley**

As I open the door, I hear the familiar screams. Home sweet home, I think, rolling my eyes. I stomp into the center of the living room and see my mother rocking the little crying demon. My stepfather smiles down at the creature. Neither of them looks up. I wonder if they're even aware of my presence. I wander into the kitchen, grab a plate out of the sink, and drop it onto the cold tile floor. It explodes with a thunderous clap. The idol worshippers don't even turn to look. They're too worried about their pink pagan god's displeasure to notice. Just as I suspected, they don't even know I'm here. I run up the stairs, throw open my bedroom door, and crawl under my bed to hide.

I look up at the underside of my mattress, letting my eyes adjust to the darkness. Between the rusty metal cross bars supporting the canvas-covered springs above me, sways a thin veil. A spider's limp web droops inches above me. It's long abandoned. The knotted white-transparent cords hang in a haphazard mass, like unkempt hair. I reach up and touch a sticky cord. A bit unwinds with my touch. It seems so fragile in this state. I blow softly on the wispy web so as not to break its weak grip on my finger. I stop, feeling remorse for disturbing the roots of something so frail. I know what it's like to have to struggle, to fight, futilely, to hold onto a foundation.

My mother and I lived alone - just her and me, ever since I could remember. I was her life she used to say. We were two single gals, best friends, each other's one and only. And that's how we were going to be forever. Until Rich. My mother met him a year ago. Long story short, after a month of dating they were married. I dealt with it, although I didn't like it. My mother still spent time with me. That's what mattered. And, Rich was cordial. I thought I would survive. But then the "joyous gift from God," as they call him, was set to arrive. From the moment my mom peed on that little stick I was to be pushed aside to make room for the tiny thing growing inside my mother's womb.

My eyes dart from the fragment on my finger, back to the remnants of the web. I wonder why the spider abandoned her home. Not only her home, but her majestic creation. I gaze at the many long-dead insect carcasses embalmed in the web's tangles - proof of its former grandeur. The spider must have been proud of her work. I slide my arm across the rough Berber to find a more comfortable position. I feel something under my fingers. I lift the small scrap of paper to my eyes, and squint to read it. It's my report card. I must have thrown it under here. All A's. I showed it to Mom last week, but she was too busy feeding the spawn to really look at it.

I observe how the web spans the great distance from one corner of my bed to another, the remains of a great silk trapeze. A once-perfectly effective trap to bring a spider all that she could ever expect from a web. I've done all that Mom has ever

asked of me. The spider must have loved this web. She must have taken pride in caring for her spectacular creation. Mom was proud of me, or so she said. This fine product of diligent work provided the spider food and a functional home. I always try my best. So I can't help but wonder why the spider would ignore its wondrous invention, leaving it to quiver, alone, under an old mattress and a rusty bed frame. Why would Mom just forget about me? A maddening sound from downstairs seeps through my bedroom floor. Mom is cooing again softly to my new half-brother.

Then it strikes me. Now I know why the spider left her web and why my mother has discarded me. It only takes a spider an hour to weave her web, an insignificant hour. It didn't take long for my mother to make a new family either. With so little time spent on a project, once the object of interest gets too old the creator can move on - move on to create a new, even better life than was had before. The saggy lonely thing, its once-glistening strings now obscured by bits of dust and lint, trembles as I release a shaky breath. I crush my report card into a damp wad and toss it aside. I brush a dusty strand of hair out of my eyes as I look back up at my new friend and taste a salty tear. We share the same fate, the web and I. We are forgotten.

## **Beyond the Glass**

**By: Alexander Pyle**

The bag around Ben Freeman's head began to rub against his face. He could not recall how long it had been since they had taken him. He tried to remember the clock just before he left, but for some reason it almost seemed impossible to remember anything in the pitch blackness.

"Where are you taking me? I didn't do anything," Ben said from under his black cloth.

Silence filled the room, but he knew they were there. They had been there when he had gotten into the van. All of them wore sunglasses even though they had come during the blackness of night. That was all he remembered. They could not have been driving for more than an hour. He began to wonder if they were taking him out of New Mexico. Maybe they would kill him.

Sweat started to seep from the bag over Ben's head. What if he never came home? What if this was the end?

"Why are you doing this to me?" he sobbed.

The uncertainty of his situation crushed him. His questions filled him and his loneliness became overwhelming. Panic set in, and he began to wiggle from his seat. His voice was growing inside him. He could no longer contain his yelling. There were no ties around his hands, but the cold gun that began to press against his neck was more than enough to convince him to sit back down.

Just as he was about to scream, the car came to an abrupt stop. He heard car doors open and slam close, and he could faintly make out the quiet voices of people on the outside of the car.

"Up", an emotionless and cold voice said from his left. The bag was removed from his head and he saw that they were in an empty garage. It was dimly lit and the wind howled from above them. He exited the car and stood next to a man with sunglasses and a stern look of anger in his face.

"Come with me," he said.

Ben opened his mouth to agree, but nothing came out. He slowly began to follow the man to an elevator. The doors opened and they entered it. The doors closed and they were both in a metal tomb. He took out a key and unlocked a panel underneath the last buttons on the elevator's control pad. He opened the panel and a single red button was revealed. He pressed the button and the elevator began to move.

He realized the elevator was going up. After about five minutes of waiting in the cold elevator with the mysterious man, the elevator lurched.

The man put his finger on the button that held the doors closed and took off his glasses. He looked Ben straight in the eye with his own grey eyes. He had the eyes of a man who had seen too much. They were the eyes that no longer wanted to see.

“Mr. Freeman, what you are about to see is classified above top secret, and could end the war. You are about to be a part of one of the most important decisions in history.”

He put his glasses back on, removed his finger, and the doors slid open.

They walked into a large room with an enormous window. The words “Project Trinity” were engraved above it. There were four other elevator entrances that all opened at nearly the same time. Each contained the same cargo: Two people. One who wore a military outfit and another who looked as bewildered and horrified as Ben did. They all approached a man in a white lab coat who wore dark covering goggles. He removed them and began to speak.

“Ladies and gentlemen, you have all been selected to voice your opinion on the greatest war machine ever developed by mankind.”

He spoke with a meek smile and contained the same set of grey eyes that the man in the elevator had. He seemed almost dead on the inside.

Ben looked around at the others to whom the man was obviously speaking. There were two other men and two other women. One man was extremely thin with a small mustache, the other had long brown hair and thick glasses and he began to fiddle with his hair. One woman was older with graying hair and glasses, and she appeared to be looking everywhere at once trying to assess her situation. The other woman was much younger with short black hair. She was staring at the floor as if her eyes were glued to it.

The scientist turned back to the window and looked out towards the desert that lay beyond.

“Please grab the goggles to your right and put them on now,” he said.

Ben looked right and saw that there was a table with five goggles for them. He grabbed a pair and put them on. He looked up at the wall above the elevator and realized that there was a clock and date. It read 4:13 A.M. August 3, 1945. A sudden sense of confusion came over him. He could not have been in the car for more than an hour, and yet the closest desert to the one he was seeing was at least three hours away from his house.

Suddenly the scientist’s voice pierced the air as he said, “You will each have one vote in whether or not this weapon should be allowed in combat.”

He turned back around with his goggles on. A sudden maniacal grin emerged on his face like a lion stalking its prey.

“Prepare to view the future of warfare.”

He flipped a switch and pressed a small blue button.

For nearly a minute there was silence. All eyes were out to the barren wasteland before them.

Then it happened.

A massive explosion erupted out beyond the horizon.

“My god,” one of the women said.

A cloud the size of a skyscraper reached out up toward the sky as flames stretched across the desert. A gust of wind hit the building and it shook violently.

"What on Earth -" one of the men said.

The lights flickered and then everything was still. The silence returned and surrounded the inhabitants of the building. Ben found himself speechless again. The words that filled his head could not seem to leave his mouth. Only one word croaked out of him. It was the only word that he could find.

"Wow," he said. He looked at the massive crater in the distance and repeated himself, "Wow."

The scientist took his goggles off and turned towards them.

"What you all just saw has been dubbed the Atomic Bomb," he said, "and now you all have to make a decision."

He walked in front of all of them in a line and continued speaking.

"When I point to you, you simply tell me whether you want the weapon to be allowed, or if you feel that it is too powerful, deny your country of this golden opportunity and say 'no'."

"Why us?" the older woman cried out in despair.

The man took a step back and took a deep breath. He looked at each of them with utmost seriousness and the grin that he had flashed earlier was nowhere to be seen.

"As you all know, Congress is in charge of military control. After viewing this weapon, the members of Congress felt that it was too..." he paused, as though he were trying to rephrase his words, "powerful."

He looked now at Ben in the eye and continued, "But President Roosevelt felt that the weapon was ready and could possibly help to end this miserable war. So as you can see, the country is at an impasse. Theoretically, our country is based on the principle of 'for the people by the people,' therefore, we need a vote from citizens; people like yourselves."

He held his hand out to them and they looked at each other. Ben began to think to himself, are we really prepared to activate the most devastating weapon on the planet? His mind began to race. He wondered if other countries had this technology, or if only America had engineered this. Suddenly a question emerged in his head and out of his mouth. He could not believe that he actually spoke.

"Will you use it against the Axis?" he said nervously.

The scientist wet his lips and looked at Ben straight in his eyes. He began to examine Ben. He was looking at him from head to toe as if he had just insulted him. He shook his head and at that moment Ben knew that he was lying. He knew that whatever words came out of his mouth next were untrue.

"Of course not. They would have to attack us first."

He turned around, and Ben had an odd feeling that he had his little grin back on his face, but couldn't tell from behind.

He walked to the man on the far left, and pointed to him. The man nervously looked down at his shoes. He fidgeted and began to fiddle with his hair again. Finally he croaked out the word, "Yes."

The scientist patted him on the shoulder and said, "Good man."

He walked over to the women next in the line. The voters were nearly touching shoulders, and yet no one could have felt farther away from the world.

The elderly woman looked up and said with confidence, "No."

The man said nothing to her and continued on to the young woman. Quickly she said, "Yes." Again he patted her on the shoulder and said, "Good."

He then came to the skinny man, who looked up into the grey eyes and said nothing. The scientist put his hand on his shoulder, and whispered, "It's okay son."

The man took a breath and said, "No."

The faint, comforting smile on the scientist's face evaporated. It was replaced with his stern look of seriousness.

Ben was the last one. His vote was the final piece to the decision. He knew the pressure that rested upon his shoulders.

The scientist approached him and put his hand on his shoulder as he done with some of the others.

"Ben, what was the word that you used to describe what you saw out there?" he asked as he pointed out to the desert.

"Wow," Ben said.

"That's right, Ben. Now imagine what our enemies would do if they had that power. Do you think that they would hesitate to use that against us?"

He furrowed his brow as though he was examining Ben again.

"No," Ben whispered.

"If you say 'yes' Ben, then we can all go home. If you say 'no', then maybe it will take a bit longer to get you back home. You do want to go home right son?"

His cruel grin had returned. His grey eyes seemed to pierce Ben. Ben lowered his eyes. He could not say no now. Home seemed like the only safe place on the earth now.

"Yes."

The scientist smiled and patted Ben on the shoulder.

"Ladies and gentleman, you may have just made America the most powerful country on the globe. Of course, this weapon is for last resort purposes only."

The five people were led back into their respective elevators.

The scientist was staring with his grey eyes at Ben as the doors slid closed.

"Wow," Ben said, "Either I just saved the world, or destroyed it."

Three days later, Hiroshima endured the worst bombing in world history.

## **The Best Kind of Superhero**

**By: Becki Steinberg**

I woke up right after we got off the highway at our exit. I peered out the window at the church I never knew the name of, at the familiar stop lights and street signs, marveling that no matter how deeply asleep I was, I managed to wake up every time at exactly this point. The silent bends in the road, the dark passing landscape, always seemed to gently rock me out of sleep. There's something about home, I think, that transcends slumber, that penetrates the soul even when it is unconscious.

The rhythmic snoring from the back seat was mesmerizing, calming. My parents, it seemed, were sitting in silence. The moment was so lovely that I laid my head back down, feigning sleep, so that it would go on for just a little bit longer, until we would turn onto Brackett Street and the potholes in the road would jostle the car, waking my brother and my sister too.

From the front seat I heard a snuffle. I peeked in the rearview mirror at my dad, and found him sitting erect, tears gushing from his eyes. He didn't even wipe them away, he just let them fall. Water pooled at the crevices beside his mouth and overflowed, streaming down underneath his chin. He never took his eyes off the road, he just stared straight ahead. His hands, though normally laid loosely on the bottom of the wheel, were clenched tightly around the rubber. His arms were flexed, as if he were competing in a NASCAR race, not meandering through the quiet back roads of Needham, Massachusetts.

So the sound had to have come from my mom. Propping myself up on one elbow ever so slightly, I glanced through my dad's headrest at her. She, too, was crying, but with boundless emotion. Her chin quivered and her eyes were searching as she gazed up at my dad's hard face and put her hand over his on the wheel.

From what I could see, he didn't react. He did not look down at her. Only, I noticed a moment later, the hand that my mom was holding slackened a little, and his knuckles, which had been white, returned to their natural color.

"Don't you think you should pull over or something?" I wanted to ask, but was suddenly hushed by a rush of sadness so powerful that it seemed to physically force my head back onto my headrest. I felt clobbered; a dull pain began to throb at the back of my neck and my mouth felt dry, shriveled. I had no idea why they were crying, but nevertheless tears began to prick the back of my own eyes and constrict my throat, making it difficult to swallow.

My mom and dad remained still, past the library and through the winding neighborhoods I knew by heart. I lay quietly, trying to control my breathing, determined, for some inexplicable reason, not to be discovered awake.

We turned onto Highrock Street, and my dad twisted to look at my mom. The silence was so thick I felt as if I could hear the muscles in his back realigning; see the phantom words he longed to say forming behind his pursed lips. I was struck with

an uncanny desire to reach into the trunk, grab one of our sandy, oversized beach towels, and soak up the interlacing streams that were making their way down to his check. Instead, I struggled to keep my fluttering eyelids closed.

As we pulled into the driveway, I pretended to wake up at the same time and in the same way as everyone else did. Without saying much, I carried my suitcase up to my room, changed into my pajamas and crawled into bed. I felt drained. But sleep did not come.

I'd seen my mom cry all the time. During sappy movies, while reading the *Chicken Soup* books, throughout the whole ceremony at my fifth grade graduation, even at my singing recitals. She was a sucker for sentimentality. So the reason the incident struck me, then, was because of my dad. I'd seen him cry before: at family funerals, even when my brother was born, I think. After all, I thought to myself, everyone's supposed to cry at such occasions. When I was younger I would even pinch my eyes shut at moments, willing the tears to trickle down my cheeks, convinced that if I didn't cry it would mean I wasn't sad enough or happy enough.

But, in that instant, I understood that my dad was not the person I'd always thought he was. My dad, who'd been an eagle scout, who saved lives every day and balanced my mom's anxiety with his unshakable calm, he was susceptible to pain. He concealed it when he could because he felt he had to, I realized, because he knew that we were relying on him.

I had always likened my father to a superhero, capable of escaping worry and sadness and doubt. The discovery that my dad was not in fact so invincibly should have disappointed me, should have shattered the childish image I'd always clung to. But, instead, my revelation only made me admire him more. The night my dad's façade collapsed, and that did make me sad. But he was still as strong as ever. Sure, my dad wasn't an impervious superhero anymore. He was a human superhero, and to me, that made him even more incredible.

**Legacy**  
**By: Kimberly Shen**

*Thwack.* The axe sliced into the tree, forming a wound that snaked through the jagged hills of bark. An avalanche of splintered chips spurted from the cut, raining in puddles around the axe man's feet. A youth of no more than fifteen fixed his steady blue eyes on the tree as it jerked spasmodically from the blow. A light breeze rustled the tree branches in defiance as the black clad executioner raised his axes one last time. The curved blade swung around the youth in a whistling silver arc before heralding its mark with an air-splitting thwack. With a mortal groan, the great tree hurtled to the ground, bowing before its newfound conqueror.

"Elik."

The boy whirled around to see his father advance through the heavy underbrush. Brisk and businesslike in manner, the man, although well past middle age, was still singularly striking. Tall with the finely chiseled features of a marble sculpture, the sinewy frame revealed no grey hair in strength. His icy blue eyes were expressionless as he surveyed the fallen tree. After moments of utter silence, the man's lips finally curled back in a smile.

"Well done, my boy." His tone was saturated with warm approval. "But it won't be necessary to exert all this effort to cut down a mere tree. You simply have to give the order and one of the hundreds of workers will operate a machine to accomplish the job more efficiently. "After all," as he raised his chin a fraction, "your father does own the largest lumber industry in this country."

With this declaration, the wind, which had been playfully ruffling the leaves of surrounding trees, immediately hushed into a frail thread of a sound in the infinite atmosphere. Even the river emitted a watery gasp of awe, for a man with an iron fist of control over nature stood only inches away.

Reaching into his coat pocket, the father acquired a briar pipe. After lighting it, he proceeded,

"And the day you inherit the company will arrive. On that day, all this land shall be yours." He waved his pipe towards the boundless expanse of wood encircling them with one sweeping gesture. Tiny flecks of ashes fell like black rain into the azure waters and mingled with the spiraling years of the factory's waste.

"Well, son," the man declared, "I'll leave you here to think my words over. But keep in mind, money is what makes this industry and, ultimately, the world, go round." With a knowing smile, he retreated into the shadows, disappearing for the night.

Elik gazed longingly at the wall of the foliated cathedral that encircled him—his rightful heritage and most of all, destiny. This was it—his domain—where he belonged.

"Someday," he whispered, "soon."

He heaved up his axe and hesitated for a moment, noticing for the first time the mountainous texture of the dark bark. The lines that wove through the bumpy labyrinth were silhouettes of a forest. The word *beautiful* flitted across his mind for a split second, but he raised his axe, poised for the first blow.

"Pretty, isn't it?"

Dropping his axe with a metallic *thud*, Elik snapped his head around to view his questioner. A man hobbled towards him, staring at the tree. A straw hat that crowned the stringy curtain of grey hair overshadowed the wrinkled visage.

"I used to visit this forest often," continued the man, "when I was about your age. Of course, it has changed much since then." He laughed shortly.

"How so? This piece of land has been in my family's possession for several generations. Father himself says that one day I shall own this entire stretch of land." Elik drew himself to his full height as he emphasized the last few words.

The corners of the old man's mouth twitched slightly. "No," he replied quietly, "you are wrong. Neither you nor any of your ancestors ever owned this land."

Elik's hand inched towards the axe handle, ready to brandish the weapon to defend his family turf and honor. His mind spun as deadly fumes of anger clouded his head. "*The feeble, old fool,*" thought he, "*must be suicidal to so blatantly question my rightful inheritance.*"

"So, you sir," his voice dripped with malevolence as he raised his axe, "claim what has been lawfully passed down through generations of landowners?"

The man, unruffled by the threat, calmly asserted, "No, I do not challenge you for ownership of the land because it does not and never will belong to me."

Elik, startled by the collected response, lowered the axe. "Who then?" he demanded, "who?"

Instead of answering directly, the old man whispered, "Come with my and I will show you to the best of my ability."

Dazed, Elik allowed himself to be led out of the foliated maze into the serpentine roads, vaguely noticing for the first time wispy smoke that cut through the air like a dark whip. Before he could further wonder about its origins, he found himself standing before a hut on the outskirts of the town. Its thatched roof balanced precariously, the house was a pitiful skeleton, coated partially by a tattered cloth that flapped helplessly even against the lightest breeze. There were no doors; only an arched portal carved neatly into the rickety wooden frame, revealing nothing but the black of the shadows.

"Come along," the old man beckoned towards Elik. "We don't have all day."

Fumbling his wrinkled hands into his torn pockets, the man struck a match and lit a candle, illuminating the shelter to reveal its utter lack of interior beauty. The single room seemed almost devoid of furniture, except a makeshift straw bed that reeked of poverty.

Yet, as Elik scanned the cracked walls that besieged him, he was rendered utterly speechless. Amidst the enclosing fortress of decay were paintings, all depicting the forest—now a ghost of its past glory. Gone were the bulldozers and factories in the swirling world of vibrant colors. The trees extended endlessly into the domed skies, forever journeying, a rainbow of seasons.

“Did you paint all this?” Elik finally found his voice.

The old man nodded wordlessly.

“I used to be quite an artist,” the old man shattered the silence. “The forest had been my home. I remember visiting it every day when I was no older than you—just to capture a moment of nature through paint and canvas.” He chuckled quietly. “But it has been years since I last visited the forest, much less picked up my paintbrush.”

“Why?” Elik demanded. “What do you mean the forest had been your home? Father told me that it was uninhabited by people when my great-grandfather bought the land years ago.”

In response, the old man clasped his aged fingers around the calloused hand of the youth as he led him to the archway. With one glance, Elik saw yet another painting—nature’s painting of destruction.

Dawn had unmasked its true form in the shape of sunlight that sliced across the glowing red sky like blades—axe blades. The horizon was laced with the green of foliage, out of which arose a black hand of smoke that extended its sinister fingers in all four directions. The faint morning crow of a bulldozer was audible, even from the distance. Although Elik could not see distinctly, he knew that this accompanied the even drumming of trees as they crashed one by one. This was a cycle he was all too familiar with, a cycle his ancestors began and he was to continue.

“The mill,” Elik felt his lips moving, “my father’s mill.”

The utter quiet ensued. Finally the old man declared,

“It was because I loved the forest so much that I chose not to live there. The forest, as I had known it, was beautiful, completely untouched by mankind. Clearing a slight portion of the wood would be destroying nature’s artwork. Was I not an artist? Wouldn’t erasing animals and plants just to live in a desirable location only be the verge of selfishness, but also contradict the principles of an artist? Therefore, when your family dominated the land, I realized, with a heavy heart, that I could not bear to paint the dark changes that the landscape would soon undergo. As it turned out, I did not need to. Nature has provided a portrait unsurpassed by humans.”

"But what has this to do with me?" Elik burst out. "This is a practice that has been passed down in my family for years. How would ending the practice now do any good to the world?"

Locking his piercing eyes in the inquiring ones of the boy, the old man simply replied,

"As great as the forest is right now, it diminishes day by day due to the activities of your family industry. What do you plan to do once all the trees are gone? The obvious answer, as your father would say, is to relocate the mill to another forest. But there are only so many trees to cut down in the world. You father, shrewd businessman that he may be, is not the one to replant the trees due to the expenses. After all," he winced, "isn't money what makes the world go round?"

Lowering his head, Elik whispered "But if money isn't, then what is?"

Instead of responding, the old man gazed through the archway, focusing unwaveringly on a horizon now overshadowed by dark clouds. Whip-like black rain sliced unrelentingly across the forest and world. The echoing dive of thunder abruptly snapped him out of his reverie.

"It's getting late, boy," he continued, "It won't be long before your father comes looking for you. But before you leave, I have a gift for you." The old man reached into his tattered packet before closing the boy's fingers around a miniscule object. Elik opened his hand to perceive a seed—the gift of life.

"It's all in your hands now," the old man's voice was barely more than a whisper. "You are the new generation that has the power to reverse decades of mistakes. But to do so, you must first understand that greed, your family's most faithful servant for so long, may become the executioner of the world. The change, therefore, starts with you."

Elik uttered a hoarse "Thank you," before sprinting into the rain, swimming through the dizzying whirlpool of his sown thoughts. As he penetrated the fortress of the forest, he perceived a crescent of light gleaming amidst the black wall of rain. Elik outstretched his hands; suddenly recoiling as the light took the shape of the axe. The silver apparatus rested against a tree stump—shriveled with the rings of a vanished life. Blinking, Elik swerved his head, noticing for the first time the battlefield between Man and Nature. The once proud trees sprawled across the forest floor like a myriad of fallen soldiers. The river itself almost appeared black, pierced relentlessly by the watery bullets of rain. Trembling, he bent down beside the withered stump—a desecrated cathedral, as he slowly molded the brown dirt into a hole. He then allowed the seed to slip through his fingers into the welcoming embrace of Earth—beginning the cycle of rebirth. Grimly, Elik then realized that he had not inherited a wide stretch of land as he had once thought. Instead, he was the heir to his ancestors' legacy of mistakes against Nature. It was his duty, as the rightful heir and the start of the new generation, to reverse the errors.

"Someday," Elik whispered. "Soon."

Only this time—the words had a new meaning—one of a changing heart.

## August

By Linda Tian

I sat on the front porch steps,  
whose white paint was flaking and peeling,  
from those who had lived generations before me.

I watched the tall golden stalks of wheat waving in the wind,  
remembering good times of the past,  
running through the field of gold stalks,  
playing hide and seek,  
I closed my eyes,  
trying to hold onto these memories.

**BOOM!!!**  
A clap of thunder,  
cutting through the sky,  
jolting me awake.

# Red

By Caroline Gebhart

Red is a broken family  
Falling apart during the night  
When no one can witness the sorrow  
And red is the color of the bleeding hearts of girls  
Shot by guns loaded with three lying words.  
And the tears they cry are not silvery blue  
Like the tears of mourners with ones to cry for  
Or a young boy with a broken yellow airplane.  
No these tears glisten red as they roll down pale cheeks  
And into the bloodied hands dirtied with wishes  
That will never wash away.  
Red is the three words written in the fine line of a knife  
And red is the last words of the craftsmen as they slip  
Farther and  
Farther into the  
Quickly fading  
Crimson  
Night.

## What a Book Remembers

By Ma'Kaya Washington

A book remembers how to tell a story  
What its chapters are  
It remembers its settings, problems, and solutions  
Its main characters  
It remembers getting held by a reader

?

By Michael Zimmerman

The arched back of a person picks up a coin  
While a gymnast jumps and tries to touch her toes.  
A man reels in a fish with a bent rod  
Who has a half bright idea with  
A bowtie hanging in a closet,  
And all it does is confuse  
Leaving you only asking why.

## The Crush

By Amanda Saulsberry

I glanced away so fast, my irises probably blurred.  
It's that same stupid girly reaction,  
But at least there's one thing:  
He won't see the color flood my face.  
As much as I don't want him watching me,  
And catching my insecurity,  
It hurts not to feel his gaze.

He's looking just past me.  
Invisibility is a sort of security to me.  
Daydreaming, waiting, watching –  
*Does this constitute as stalking?*

Though it's just a dream,  
The idea of *he* sitting by me  
I relish in the thoughts.  
They overwhelm my mind – that need  
That compulsion to reach out,  
To touch, to speak;  
It's not so easily pushed away. . .

But, it's a practiced sport  
Combined with my cloak of invisibility,  
Others might call it a lack of social status,  
Repression is my Defense mechanism of choice.

## The Eraser

By Stanley Hayes

You stand tall in your throne atop the pencil  
 Held firmly in place by a beautiful metal clasp  
 For the elite are higher than the rest  
 And you my friend  
     The Eraser  
 Are the elite  
 Atop the pencil, ruling the graphite and wooden staff  
 Which you are so pleasantly atop  
 But for you my friend  
     The Eraser  
 Your might does not stop you there  
 You have the power to get rid of the graphite  
 The power to fix mistakes at will  
 You my friend  
     The Eraser  
 Are neater than the whiteout  
 And the crossed out text  
 You my friend are  
     The Eraser  
 And  
 You  
 Are all powerful in your metal clasp  
 Atop the wooden pencil

(untitled)

By Becki Stienberg

back there  
 when we simply didn't care  
 that the rain clung to our hair,  
 our tangled shoulders, wet and bare  
 completely unaware  
 that life is not quite fair.

## Polaris

By Clara Fannjiang

we are black  
and black is like blinding  
light. evening-parched eyes, the  
singing of headlights  
as we slip down the night road  
a blur of blue-black urbanites.  
out of nowhere the rock flies  
it is the size of my father's fist,  
maybe bigger. one  
whistle, one shattering c r a c k  
a ringing bite of silver blood lines  
crown after crown, clenched in the  
windshield glass  
where my mother's reflection  
slapped us numb.  
the anger of gods is not belittled  
yet the sky smolders starless  
dead.  
with only these glinting  
knife lines as light.  
silence knowingly betrays us  
this was not hatred. this is  
us, alone.

Ode to Tennis Shoes  
By Kate Cheney

O, tenacious tennis shoes,  
with your tongue,  
you speak to all the amazing feats  
you have done,  
hike, bike, hop and skip,  
you've been on every trip.  
Your round steely eyes  
have seen mountain peaks,  
and muddy puddles.  
Your eyes secure the  
laces that hold me tight.  
How holy your soles  
after so many years,  
after countless games  
out on the court,  
you still offer support,  
you're such a great sport.  
Whatever the size,  
you will always be my prize.

# Where I'm From

By Hanne Yuffa

I am from hard work and struggle  
From the strong stench of shoe shine polish  
And rich roasted coffee beans  
Daily summer lemonade stands  
To make a dollar off my old man

I am from family  
Crazy, loud, and unbearable  
Under the big maple tree we played  
As conversation consumed our mothers' mouths  
From the time when friendship was easy  
Trading celery and infamous chocolate chip cookies for approval

My imagination is a foreshadowing of disaster  
One adventure after another,  
Whether my fault or another,  
I am from emergency room and first aid

Nonetheless, I am from love  
Tough and thorough,  
Doubted and questioned,  
But never lost or overlooked

## Ocean

By Kiana Billot

Tickling my feet  
Watching the waves break  
The cool water splashing me  
Hoping my grandpa would never leave me by myself  
Me in the water missing my grandpa  
There I was  
The clear blue water  
My cold feet buried in the sand  
Him there to get me  
I will never forget him  
For he took me from the cold water  
To the warm sand beach

## Cinderella Pencil

By Tess Swanson

Like Cinderella,  
She stands on her one glass slipper,  
With a thin tan body,  
A head that was a lot of use, wears out.

Her friends,  
Have all been used and chewed on.

She leaves a thin gray line of lipstick,  
Wherever she goes.

With a hard exterior, but a soft core,  
She remembers everything.  
She can correct any mistake,  
With one whip of her peach colored hair.

She laughs with her friends while she can,  
Because she knows her life will be short.  
Unlike her best friend, the pen.

# Please Don't Cry

By Jared Szekely

The rain is humming  
The rain is humming  
How do you fall  
You're telling me that the boy is crying  
Please don't cry  
Please don't cry  
I'll make it up to you  
Please don't cry  
Please don't cry  
I wonder how would you be happy  
By a toy or gold  
Please don't cry  
Please don't cry  
You're so cute  
I hope you're fine now  
Why are you so sad  
Please don't cry  
Please don't cry  
I hope you can be happy soon  
Yellow like the sun – don't be blue  
Please don't cry  
Please don't cry  
I wonder how I can make you yellow  
Please – you're happy now!  
I am proud of you wonderful little boy