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Teen Writing
Competition
2013

-Winning Entries-

6th-8th Grade Poetry



The Unheard Voice by Innia Macasieb

The whispering wind calls my name
I whisper back again and again
The message I tell him is always the same
But he doesn't hear me

Listen to the songs of the beasts and the birds
That can be heard from the ends of the earth
My actions may speak louder than my words
But no one else can hear me

And as the sky turns dark and dim
We all make our way back to our kin
Saying nothing for too long is a sin
But I have to, for no one will hear me

Crowds may gather at the center of town
Their hollers and laughter are shaking the ground
I raise my voice with them, loud and proud
And yet no one can hear me

Sadly, even my family and friends
Can't understand the messages I send
They don't know about the heart that needs to mend
I speak, but they can't hear me

So if you find yourself in the realm of night
If the world deserts you, and you have nowhere to
hide
And if you open your heart and clear your mind
Only then will you be able to hear me



Revival by Sakura Gandolfo

A revival is what she yearned for.

She desired to become a hibernating black bear.
She wanted to slumber and wake up with her.
Anger abandoned,
Heart healed,
And body exhibiting elation.

She desired to become a migrating bird.
She wanted to fly away when,
Adversities arrived,
Sadnesses surfaced,
And tears trailed her face.

A revival is what she yearned for.



IGNORANCE BY JUSTIN BARTLETT

We wait, we watch, we listen
 And yet no emotion given-
 It's so isolated,
 Our own fears, fears of oblivion
 Somehow don't apply to the other millions
 As headlines break reporting more death
 Of grown and children, of murder and theft
 And reality eludes us 'till it strikes at our hearts
 But by then too late the cost and remarks
 Until at our own city lie dead the survivors,
 Fallen by the hand of our own

One country with outliers
 Outliers of heroes and villains that shall or
 shan't be remembered
 But of different valor-some surrendered
 The city watches in disgust
 As limbs fly from runners
 But rejoice, with the capped man cuffed
 When he is taken by the hunters,
 Another sun has fallen down
 But has it made a difference?
 The stars gleam, but frown
 They see our ignorance.

9th-12th Grade Poetry



Salt Water Promises by Isabella Lopez

Harsh rock threatened to scrape my hands,
 While wild flowers bloomed.
 The climb whispered of greater things,
 The air, with hope, perfumed.

We sat as queens on mossy throne.
 Waves broke, jumping higher,
 Chuckled, foaming back to the sea.
 The seagulls sang for her.

The wind danced sweetly through our hair;
 Children squealed below.
 Troubles were pebbles in the sand,
 Thoughtless of tomorrow.

An endless horizon gleamed,
 While the sea kissed its shore.
 Salt air swirled through each of my lungs,
 And promised I was more.



The Seabird by Carly Pusateri

The vast beach, asleep;
shallow waves, respiratory,
foaming at the mouth.
Serenity undisturbed,
except for the seabird

wandering the shore,
awake, agitated
confused, solitary.

The bird, once comforted
by the lull and the idea
that the horizon would always be
one straight line,
soon turned to unease.

The breeze whispered tales
of far off places; adventure.
Something alien to the bird,
the thought of a new experience,
almost tangible;
so close,
yet unreachable.

It's open wings unfold,
catch and soar as the
FLASH fossilized
the memory:

The bird, sky-owned,
forever entombed;
a lost creature
wandering a beach.



Sometimes I think... by Sadhana Subramanian

Sometimes I think I was born backwards
Waiting on a life I never had
Dreaming for lost chances
Reaching for former ambitions
Repeating a mistake—a lesson too late learnt
Grasping onto a future objective
Clawing at innocence and play
Retiring early and living belatedly
Suffering consequences of undone actions
Paralyzing fear and unattainable achievements
Rewarded but unnecessary

Sometimes I think of the sun and moon as lovers
Pulling me from the depths of hell
To the flowing rivers of ambrosia
Enticing, scintillating
Resurfacing spirits and attachments
The flow and ebb of resentment
Leaching through my body
Blighting my core soul with unsolicited emotions
Rejuvenating my senses and
Showing my drive — passion

Sometimes I think it's better to never ask why
It was not you, it's I,—it was guilt
Consuming me that pushed me
Whispering temptations
Notorious accusations
Over the brink
Falling down the valley of unknown
Facing the strangers and the friends

Sometimes I think it's a sin
The unwritten pledge of family
A painful reminder of inadequacies
A repeating tapestry that winds around the assembly
Tighter and tighter
Restricting transformation, emotions, and
Denying the freedom of LOVE

Sometimes I think I have vanished
An unfair farewell, An undue adieu,
I question what I meant to you,
Lost in the depths, of deadly despair,
You sucked out of me,
My last gasp of retribution,
Left here to die, I question how I,
Could have ever thought, I could think

6th-8th Grade Fiction & Nonfiction



Sunset *Siobhan Gannon*

The sun rises and the sun sets. The old man squints into its radiant rays and breathes in the humid air. He gradually stands up and stretches his stiff, aching muscles. The whispering winds blow through the air and cool off the strange man. The man reaches for a slender stick he uses as a cane and begins his journey through the hazardous city he once called home. The deserted streets echo with the thud of the walking stick against the solid road ... a thud that would never be heard, since the man had lost his hearing during his time of isolation.

He trudges down the center of the road, exhausted from years of traveling. Alas, this is the final day of his painstaking trek. The final day that life exists on Earth, for death is a sly trickster that creeps up on this wise man. He sighs with relief as a grand tower appears in his sights. He scurries towards the building and, shoving through mounds of dirt and trash, reaches for the rusty handle.

With a creak, the eerie door pushes open and the man trudges inside. He slams the door shut and bolts the locks on as tight as this lone soldier holds onto life. Paranoid thoughts of other survivors push into his mind, but he ignores them with the realization there was no one. A rough cough chokes the man along with the gaseous fumes lurking in the room. He retires to a wooden chair that Fate placed into the room.

The sun rises and the sun sets, but unfortunately, this man has risen for a final time. He collapses into the chair and just as his eyes close, there is a knock at the door.



Time's Up **Jaelyn Kassoy**

One day I was just chillin' with my buds in the supermarket. "Look at that lady's shirt! I love how it's so colorful," I shouted to Olivia.

"Yeah, I would totally wear that! I am tired of wearing green and black stripes. I feel like it makes me look rounder than I really am," Olivia exclaimed. "I think you look fine."

All of a sudden, the lady with the colorful shirt placed her hands on me. She squeezed me, shook me, and knocked me on the head. She raised me above her head, looking at me like she could see my insides! Then she rubbed me and turned me all around. "Please don't pick me! Please don't pick me!" Finally, she put me down! Today must have been my lucky day!

That night Liv and I went to bed early. I was dreaming about how lucky I was but boy do I miss my family. All I could dream about was being back on the field with my family and friends. I can see Farmer Frank staring at me. I miss seeing his big brown beard. I miss seeing his straw hat and his tan skin. I MISS MY HOME! Now I am stuck in the supermarket.

All of a sudden I felt a pair of hands on me. I woke up and noticed that I was not in the supermarket any more. I was in a place that had a big white box that makes things cold and a silver thing that makes things hot. The next thing that I saw was a man's face. His eyes were wide and he was licking his lips at me. He reached over to a drawer and pulled out a... KNIFE! At that moment I knew I was a goner! "Please don't hurt me! I am young, and smart, and nice and ripe!! I have my whole life planned out!!" It's not my time. Not ye..."



Work Hard, Have Fun, and Help Others **Zarius Dubash**

In my thirteen years on this planet, I have witnessed and experienced many small and large events that have altered my philosophy on life. Whether it was seeing extreme poverty in India, losing my beloved ninety-three year-old great-grandmother, or meeting an extraordinarily brilliant student when I joined AMSA, everything I do or that happens to me impacts the way I think in my daily life.

One major event related to my life philosophy was my eye-opening trip, almost six years ago, to two overly populated cities in India. As I left the crowded noisy airport, I recall seeing the slums, with makeshift homes made of scrap metal and cardboard, along the congested roads. I recall barefooted, raggedly clothed beggars, tapping on car windows at busy stoplights, hoping for a generous someone to spare but a single rupee. During my trip, I saw beautiful monuments like the grand Taj Mahal as well, but some of the most haunting images I still remember from that trip six years ago are of the terrible poverty and the filthy slums with horrible smells, where the little children were playing in the garbage. From this trip I realized that so many people are not as fortunate as I am, and that helping others in any way possible is a very important action that I should do often.

Another philosophy-altering event was when I was accepted to AMSA. I was not happy to be leaving my close friends of many years, and I was definitely not prepared for that much homework! One notable part of coming to AMSA was meeting a genius born in the same year as myself, Ryan V. I have never met anyone as smart as him. He would read books and textbooks for fun, and spend his free time researching random ideas and concepts. I recall many instances of discussions we had on various obscure topics, in mathematics, science, and even history. One notable, heated debate had the both of us yelling, much to the entertainment of the rest of our sixth grade homeroom. "Point nine repeating is a different number than one!" he yelled. "But there is virtually no perceptible difference!" I countered. After eventual consultation with various mathematics teachers around the school, we concluded that there was no definitive answer. He led me to the idea that hard work and study will pay off, and make you very knowledgeable in almost any topic. Although he has left AMSA due to his long commute, I still talk to him often, and we have intellectual discussions and debates for fun over Skype or chat, which helps both of us learn and teach each other. He has influenced my philosophy because I learned from him that hard work and curiosity pays off.

The third event that changed my philosophy is when my loving great-grandmother died. She was ninety-three, and although I was rather young when she passed away in the hospital surrounded by family, I realized that every person's time here on earth is finite, and we need to make the most of whatever time we do have. I still distinctly remember her wrinkled smiling face, laying in her warm arms as a small child, sitting with her on the couch watching "The Price is Right," and later, gently holding her trembling, weak, and soft hand in the hospital. Her death taught me to live for the moment, and to make the most out of every single day. When I wake up each morning, her framed photograph hanging on my bedroom wall above my dresser inspires me to be a good person, be grateful for what I have, and enjoy every minute of my life.

It is clear that I have structured my life philosophy around these three events, but it could change tomorrow, or maybe even later today. Philosophy is not a constant, but a variable; it is dynamic. My philosophy could be totally different in the course of a year, a month, or maybe even a week. But for now, I "work hard, have fun, and help others" based on my philosophy. I feel that this is a good basic philosophy to live by, because it helps keep a steady balance between work and play, and adds an element of service to others.

9th-12th Grade Fiction & Nonfiction



Chasing the Moon *Katie Zaqzoug*

The moon is so huge tonight it looks like it might fall on us. But I know it won't, because gravity exists, so it's okay.

"Gus, ten more minutes." I hear the echo of my mother's voice in my head, knowing we'll be out well over her limit—we always are. I kick my feet against the pavement and glance up at my brother. He stands a good foot above me, with light hair and gray eyes that remind me of my father.

"You ready, Parker?" He bounces up and down on his toes impatiently.

"Yesplease, Gus, yesplease." I nod and hide my smile from him.

"On your mark..." Parker leans forward, flapping his massive hand against his thigh. "Get set..." He breathes in deep, two rows of crooked white teeth stretching across his face in a grin. "GO!" I push off the asphalt and spring through the air with my brother at my side. We're neck and neck but we aren't focusing on each other because we're only set on one thing: the moon.

You kids will be the ones to get it, I know you will. Dad was certain Park and I would be the ones to catch the moon. You'll be the richest men in all of Indiana. We would laugh and ask him how the moon would get us any money at all. Think of all the cash you'll make as cheese salesmen!

"The moon isn't really made out of cheese, Dad," I'd say, and Parker would laugh.

Looking at him now, my brother, with his hair flying backwards and his tongue hanging out, it really makes me think of Dad. It reminds me of when he was out here with us, chasing the moon. Running fast, but not faster than us because he wanted us to believe we were the fastest kids in the whole universe. It makes me miss him.

At the end of the street where the last fire hydrant is, we stop and lean on our knees. I breathe in and out slowly, then turn to my brother, who's staring into the sky.

"I swear I almost got it that time, Gus. Iswear, Iswear."

I pat his back, leading him to the steps. "You'll get it next time, man." We sit down and I watch Parker closely as he picks grass from the lawn, presses it between his thumbs and shreds each blade into tiny pieces. He mumbles to himself about the moon and how proud Dad would be and how he's *suresuresure* he'll get the moon tomorrow.

I lay back and balance my head in my hands, looking up at the moon. I see my father in the moon just as much as I see him in Parker, my mother, our house and everything else. I miss him and I swear that as long as I do, I will never stop chasing the moon.



The Story of the Clever Girl

Colleen McCarthy

I watched shadows play among the trees as they came. The town was lined up at the forest edge. Trolls controlled this mountain, demanding a tax paid by one's trade. If you weren't able to pay the tax, you paid in "other" ways... Which made me wonder why my father and I were here... It's been a long time since the farm was doing well. The animals were few and unhealthy, the crops just barely able to feed the two of us. Somehow the trolls let us off with what little we gave in comparison to everyone else. But this season had left us starving and nothing to give when they came.

I wondered in fear why Father had insisted we come this morning. The trolls were gathering the taxes, going down the line and getting closer to us until a troll stood in front of us. Father said, "I have nothing of the... usual variety." Glancing at me.

The troll looked at him. Then something sparked of understanding. "Then you will give as you gave last?"

"Yes." At Father's answer, the troll grabbed my wrists and bound them.

"Wha-wh-FATHER! What is the meaning of this?!" I said in confusion.

He looked at me with a dead stare. "Have you ever wondered why the trolls let us get away with giving them so little...? Had you ever wondered where your mother had gone?" I stare at him open-mouthed. He shrugs. "I'm sorry, Katya. It's either you or me."

The trolls take me away as the towns people watch. I keep my eyes to the ground. Nobody can see the fire raging in them. The trolls drag me through the forest back to their caves under the mountain. My feet are sore from tramping through the undergrowth, I pause at the entrance. The troll behind me pushes me forward. I try to hold onto the warmth of the sun as we go into the deep, dark, caverns...

Once I'm taken to a servant's quarters, they try to find out what I'm good at. Anything I sew, unravels. Anything I cook, inedible. Any animal I'm put in charge of, escapes. Really, there's nothing practical I'm any good at... One night, I overhear them trying to figure out what to do with me.

"The girl is useless."

"I know, there's nothing to do with her unless... You want to see how human girl tastes?"

I run back to my room, frantic to think up a plan to save myself. Thinking of none, I throw myself onto my bed and start to cry.

"Awww, the little thing cries. It cries so much for one so little, oh yes it does."

I bolt out of bed to my feet, my eyes zipping to all corners trying to find the intruder. It drops down from the ceiling to the floor in front of me. I fall down on my rear in surprise. "Who a-are you?" I ask.

"Oh never mind names, never mind." It says. "Why does little one cry?"

Now I could see it, I saw the small humanlike form, bat-like ears and wide dark eyes. My eyes narrow. "You're an Imp."

"Ah, still with names, still. Yes that is what I am, if little one need know."

"Why are you in my room?"

"Well..." It looks sidelong at me. "I'm come to help little one. Yes, I have."

"Oh, really? Why? What do you want?"

"OH! Nothing, nothing from little one but...If you must ask...I want a game."

"A game?"

"Yes. A game. We'll head to the exit as we play. If little one wins, little one gets out.

But... If little one loses...then I take little one's soul. Yes, the soul..." I see a sinister flash in its eyes. "Oh, but little one shall not lose." It laughs eerily. "Game's easy, oh very easy. Will little one play?"

I gulp... Do I have a choice? "Yes, I'll play."

"Yay! Yay!" It dances around. "No backsies. Come, we go. We play."

It moves my bed and shows me a hole in the wall. We both crawl through, on the other side there are countless tunnels. It walks on through one like it knows where it's going." Alrighty, alrighty. The game is riddles. I ask, you answer," it says as we walk. "First one is, 'I'm the part of the bird that's not in the sky. I can swim in the ocean and yet remain dry. What am I?'"

"Uhhh..." I try to think... Glancing over at our shadows made by the torch light... "A shadow!"

"Clever girl, clever girl," It mutters. "Oooh got a good one, 'What's something that belongs to you, but other people use it more then you do?'"

"Something I have...?"

"Oh, is little one stumped?" It says gleefully.

"My name is Katya not-MY NAME! It's my name!"

"Clever girl, clever girl," It grumbles. "Fine then..." It stops to pause and think.

"Alrighty. 'I'm light as a feather, yet the strongest man can't hold me for much more than a minute. What am I?'"

I gulp. What's the answer...? I glance to my right, I can see the light of the exit... Really hard to think with the Imp staring at me and licking its lips... I'm finding it hard to breathe... Wait, breathe? "BREATH. It's breath!"

"NO!" It screams. It grabs for me, but I run to the exit. I can hear it yelling behind me. I reach the light of the tunnel right as he grabs my dress. It yowls, and jumps back like it's been burned. I run as fast as my legs will go, it's howling in the caves far behind me, surely alerting the trolls, but I will be long gone before they know, with my freedom and soul intact. Clever girl, how true!



On Social Tension

Erinn Farmer

Society can be compared to a coiled spring, filled with kinetic energy as its metal coils are compressed downwards. When the energy is released through the spring unfurling, sometimes people nearby are pinched, or hit by a flailing wire end, casualties of an outpouring of energy. As Martin Luther King Jr. claimed in his well-known *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, “We who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension... we merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive,” and no truer statement has been made for those who, as King did years ago, feel this tension every day. Throughout history, every objection against an established paradigm has been labeled as a disturbance of the peace, and has thus categorized the oppressed as dangerous and criminal, though they are not at fault for feeling marginalized within a society of privilege, and merely seek to claim basic rights denied to them.

As King protested the segregation of African Americans all over the United States, so too have other victims of a negligent society. Most recently, the Supreme Court’s standing on the definition of marriage has been challenged by same-sex couples, who are often not provided the same right to marry whomever they choose as any other (heterosexual) human being in America. The resulting deluge of both anti and pro-DOMA sentiments have been criticized for their disruption of the daily routine of life in the good old USA. However, these decisions need to be made. For too long, the United States government has fretted over the definition of marriage, while the rest of the world patronizingly ogles them, monkeys in the zoo flinging mud at each other. In one of the few fits of lucidity the controversial issue has had, a heterosexual couple in the defense of same-sex marriage told reporters that they would not have been able to marry fifty years ago, accompanied by a picture of their contrasting races. This interracial couple embodied the crux of the issue. For all those opposed to change would gripe about the flagrant disruption of daily life and tradition, the parallel between the plight of homosexual couples and the African Americans of the Civil Rights Movement puts change into a different perspective. This horrible, world-ending ‘change’ would not, in fact, end the world. Just as race riots and sit-ins eventually became unnecessary in most parts of the country, college students protesting for the rights of themselves and their friends and their family would be able to go home to a better life. The pacing and daily routine would return, and the tension, which had always been present before, would ease with the change, just as the release of the coiled spring would ease its potential to go bombastic, and the world would not end in fire and brimstone.

Before the current debates over marriage and even the Civil Rights Act, another group fought for acknowledgment and equal rights: women. In fact, women still engage in daily struggles to assert their position as human beings with unalienable rights. For them, the spring is still coiled with energy, though the intensity of the discord is masked by governmental platitudes and weightless claims that the tension has been eased. Contrary to these assertions, the true equality of women is still constantly in debate by men in government who do not possess ovaries, vaginas, breasts, or even, maybe a passing clue as to how the female body functions. Many did (and still do) whine about the ungrateful attitude of women towards the rights they are provided, even when females are reduced to body parts and baby incubators in life-changing decisions such as *Roe v. Wade*.

Those in power clash against women protesting the meager scrap of \$0.74 they are paid in comparison to men's \$1.00, and some men even attack nonviolent protestors unjustly. During a Slut Walk, an organized march against male-propagated rape culture, a man paraded his genitalia and cussed out the "Femi-Nazis" of the crowd, most of whom were rape victims. The very term "Femi-Nazi" that he threw around so casually not only paints female rape victims, and by extension, women, as rabble-rousers, but as murderers and zealots who persecute those not in their favor. Yet that man was probably more deserving of such a slander than the protestors, given that the attitudes of him and men like him have silenced women for too long. Much like Martin Luther King Jr., these women protest in order to show sexists what social turmoil their actions have caused, not to promote misandry or to take over the world with the 'horrors' of capital-F Feminism. For the answer of who has caused this spring to coil until taut with tension, it is certainly not the women who were victims of a violent crime, just as it is not same-sex couples looking for a governmental acknowledgement of their rights, or African Americans who had a dream so long ago. Blaming those who are marginalized for protesting their situation will only tighten the tension between the oppressed and the oppressors, making the eventual release of energy even more potent.

The issue of social tension is not one of whether it is present, but of how it is addressed. Those who engage in nonviolent direct action address it maturely, and with cognizance of how their decisions will affect the society that denies them their rights. Those who cry foul when their toys are taken away from them or who deny anyone who is not exactly like them their basic human rights are the reason the tension exists. Perhaps there is a karmic reason why the backlash of the coiled spring of social tension fires upon them.