

# THE RIVER



VOLUME 2

Cover photo by Adrian Perez

# THE RIVER

## VOLUME 2

A Literacy Commons Publication



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Morgan Ewing  
Massey Hill High School  
Grade 10  
Cumberland County

## Lump of Clay

Life is a lump of clay.  
Messy and confusing,  
it starts out as nothing special.  
The process begins,  
to use your own calloused hands  
to form and mold your future.  
Mess up, start over.  
Fix your mistakes.  
In the end,  
enjoy the outcome of your hard work.

Destini Samuel  
Fairmont High School  
Grade 11  
Robeson County

## Down By This River

Flowing free with beauty and dignity,  
You can't find the Lumber River in any city.  
One of North Carolina's great sights,  
Down by this river, reflecting the sun's lights  
Shady environment because of all the trees  
Nature definitely knows how to please.  
It's more than just a river and rocks,  
Life dwells here within time, tick tock.

Abram Caruso  
Massey Hill High School  
Grade 9  
Cumberland County

## Unfolding Character's Story

I helplessly watched as a mob of shouting young men and women came at me and placed a rope around my neck. They tied a knot in the rope and began to loop it around a tree. There was absolutely nothing I could do to break free of the rope, let alone the crowd that began to grow rapidly. Luckily, the rope was not tied that tight, so when they hoisted me off of the ground I could still breathe. I was extremely relieved that I was not dead, but I had a feeling that this would not last long.

I hung there, a few feet off of the ground, and stared in horror at the crowd beneath me. They shouted at me, and many were laughing. I still was not sure what I had done to offend them, but it must have been one good reason, because, as if almost suffocating wasn't enough, one of the young men came around the corner, to the tree, wielding a metal rod with a pointed end. He quickly marched up to me while the crowd separated to let him in. He lifted the rod above his head, and then closed his eyes. (Was he trying to make some sort of game out of this? Did they really consider this horrid event to be a game?) I couldn't believe that anyone could be this cruel. These people seemed to treat me as an animal, and I felt as if I was about to be slaughtered like one. The young man spun around and swung the rod with his eyes shut. I swear that he missed me by only two inches! The crowd let out a murmur of disappointment as he missed, but he soon made ready for another swing. He

spun around, twice for momentum, raised the staff, and landed it right in my neck!

There was a sickening sound of the impact of the sharp end of the staff colliding with my body. I had never felt that much pain before in my life! The crowd roared with excitement and satisfaction of my impalement, and cheered for the young woman who stepped up to swing at me next. I was confused and dizzy, but not bad enough according to the cheer of the angry mob that was a few feet below me. The young woman didn't even close her eyes and spin around, giving me hope that she might miss; she just grabbed the rod and smashed it directly into my skull! I blacked out for a few seconds, and when I came to my senses again, I looked down to see small packages of candy leaking from the wound. The combined blows had left my head, just barely attached to my body, and there was a five inch-long gash along my neck that spewed chocolate and little fruity candies. My days of being a piñata were over! I was useless! I would never be able to do anything ever again! The young people beneath me lost all focus of me and wrestled for the candy that spilled from my neck. Within fifteen minutes, the entire crowd had dispersed, leaving me hanging up in that tree. There I was, helpless, torn apart, feeling as if my life had been taken away from me. I just wished that those kids would come back and finish me off, for my sake.

Dakota Britt  
Fairmont High School  
Grade 11  
Robeson County

Visual Art by:  
Adrian Perez  
Fairmont High School  
Grade 12  
Robeson County

## The Blade and the Angel

I saw what the knife had done to her arms and I just couldn't believe it.  
Had she done this because of me?  
Was it something I said?  
Was it because of someone else?  
Why? Why would someone so pure and cheerful do this?  
When she noticed I was looking she pointed to my arms and said,  
"I won't let you feel alone ever again."  
I started to cry as she held me close.  
My angel had done this for me.

## My Angel's Wings

My Angel's wings are softer than silk.  
When she spreads them it resembles a newborn's first smile.  
They are made of the purest light.  
But my angel is different.  
This world has turned her gray.  
She cares too much for a world that cares not for her.  
One day I hope she realizes this so she can fly away.



Aalera Hardin  
CIS  
Grade 8  
Robeson County

## Tears

Just brought into this world,  
took two good breaths,  
got held by your loving mother  
and gone like a swoop of a breeze,  
scaring her heart and bringing tears.

How it hurts her to burry you.  
She wanted a future  
but it got token away  
by a gift she thought she'd never lose.

And that was by you.

## The Womb

Carried nine months;  
Nine months for me to love and care for him.  
He stole my heart  
as I felt him grow  
ready to hold him in my hands  
and to take the responsibilities  
to enjoy that he is mine.

## Sweet Little Darling

When she weeps soft at night,  
so soft and low,  
hearing the wind with a little blow,

rocking her away,  
dreading another day;

she soon will grow  
with the fast flow.

Feeding her little mouth  
looking way down south.

Mama will always be here  
so add a little cheer

Lay you down  
without a sound  
when she weeps at night

Thomas Murray  
Massey Hill High School  
Grade 12  
Cumberland County

## Imagine

I'm a dreamer  
And sleep is death's cousin  
So many people said that I would amount to nothing  
I just pray to God  
And ask him how he turned nothing into something  
How'd you get life from death?  
They're the same thing I guess  
I am Great.  
I'm just trying to speak those words into existence  
I just hope the world is listening.  
Can you hear me?

Alexis Williams  
CIS  
Grade 8  
Robeson County

## Invisible

People and kids think that they are Invisible.  
They get bullied, cussed out, or get pushed around.  
They are beautiful, thankful, inspiring, exciting, and  
have lots of energy and are full of joy.  
So for all of the inspiring kids or adults out there, people  
see the real side of you.

Visual Art by:  
Darian Hunt  
South Robeson High School  
Grade 11  
Robeson County



Christopher Bell  
Massey Hill High School  
Grade 12  
Cumberland County

## The Bargain of Jack Faustus

Jack sat alone in his study; textbooks sprawled out in front of him. He was excelling beyond what the university had to offer him, and like everything else, he became bored of the menial studies. Professors would personally visit the Faustus estate to offer Jack private courses, which he would always accept and complete within the week. The Faustus fortune was known to everyone at the university, and the professors knew the families' reputation for their constant pursuits of knowledge. A play was even written about one of Jack's ancestors, making fun of how far he'd go for his academics.

Jack closed his books and sighed as he got up to return them to their shelves. He was just tall enough to place the mythology tome in its proper place on the top shelf. Reaching as far as he could, he lost his balance and knocked over the surrounding books onto the floor. Frustrated, he picked up the books and noticed they were unlike any of the other ones in his library. This seemed archaic, an encyclopedia sized leather-bound book with a solid cover. He ran his hands over the book, and noticed it had collected no dust despite Jack never once knowing it existed. He held it open in his hands. It was warm, like someone had just set it down from a long session of reading. He turned the first few blank pages, and saw in the lower hand corner of one "Dr. Johan Faustus, 1594," as if he was dating a journal entry. "Someone in my family wrote this" he said aloud further examining the page. Jack began furiously turning the pages

occasionally seeing the same name in the same spot on various pages. It wasn't until he reached the end of the book that he saw the illustration of the man he presumed to be the doctor, gazing at an illumination above a large book.

Ecstatic that he actually had something to peak his interest, he ran back to his desk to continue examining, not even bothering to clean up the rest of the knocked over tomes. "Invisible ink?" he thought out loud. "Was that even around at the time?" Jack frantically tore out the first page of the book using a pocket knife. In his haste he accidentally sliced his finger in the process, not a deep cut, but it stung. He held the page up to his desk lamp, hoping it would reveal at least an outline of words. The clock tolled midnight, and a chill overtook the room when Jack realized a drop of blood from the cut dripped onto the page. "Damn it" Jack said trying to relieve the page of its stain. "Damned you are indeed Jack Faustus." The voice was deep, and his German accent was heavy. Jack spun around slowly, terrified of what awaited him. At first he saw nothing, only shadows dancing on the walls. Relieved, he sank in his chair and watched them trying to calm himself down. It wasn't until the shadows crept off the walls in front of him that he felt genuine terror. A deep blue pin point of glowing light rose from the shadows, and formed a line expanding left and right from the center of the room, swirling into a globe of blue and white. The room became increasingly cold and frost formed along the wooden planks of the floor and on the window of the illustrious library. A pair of pale blue eyes with burning red irises and pupils appears like giant embers. With the whispering wind of the voice repeating the words "Bargain" as an echo in Jack's mind. A pair of deep blue eyes shining like an LCD light appeared from the gate and a dark shape steps from the gate into the Faustus Library. Standing slightly less than six foot, a man

with chiseled features fitted in a coal black suit now stood menacingly before Jack. Adjusting his crimson tie, his smirk showed no effort in trying to conceal how he relished in the fear and confusion on Jack's face. "Relax Mr. Faustus, I am nothing more than someone who wishes to help you." the voice now had a face and Jack was no less relieved. So many questions raced through his mind after what he just witnessed that it rendered him speechless. Never wanting to appear the fool, Jack thought it best not to remain silent. "Who- What are you?" he asked with a slight tremble.

"I am the devil named Mephistopheles. My friends, if I had any, call me Meph." He remarked with a slight bow; "You are Doctor Faustus, and have summoned me to strike a deal." He said sounding awfully presumptuous.

The confidence Meph spoke with was unnerving: "A deal? I have done no such thing," said Jack. "And I am no Doctor, I'm only in school to become one."

Meph raised his eyebrows at the comment and said, "A member from the powerful lineage of the Faustus' who has summoned me unintentionally? No less by one that is not even a Doctor." The man laughed a wicked and howling laugh that suited his ear to ear grin that accompanied it. "You must be very confused, and my time as I'm sure is yours, is very valuable." He stopped himself, "Well perhaps mine is slightly more valuable, but it's inconsequential really".

Something clicked in Jack's head. "My lineage" Jack said "You called me Doctor Faustus, are you implying that the play was not a work of fiction?"

Meph's face turned slightly more serious, and spoke between his teeth "The stories, the play, the movies. ALL of them, nothing but works of fiction." Getting under the Devil's skin raised Jack's confidence a bit "Your family's name was not the only name to me

made a mockery of. To think I would serve someone as lowly as a mortal man, or as arrogant as Lucifer himself." Jack was overcome with confusion, what he seemed to understand was unraveling. "Are you telling me Lucifer doesn't rule over hell?" Jack was surprised those words even came out of his mouth, the absurdity of it all.

"Well aren't you knowledgeable." Pulling back the sleeve of his suit, Meph checked his watch. "You also ask a lot of questions. Now, as I said along the lines of before, my time is more valuable than yours so let's continue this." Jack was amazed at how mundane holding this conversation seemed for the context of it. "For the ever so low price of- you'll never guess- one soul. Twenty-four years of your life you'll receive the service of one of my loyal servants. All you could ever ask for would-be Doctor, knowledge, power, magic, all at your fingertips."

"I've read about you before" Jack said "I've studied you, Mephistopheles. You're the deal making devil. For someone with such a title, you're not doing a very good job selling me."

"Am I not?" Meph seemed genuinely hurt. "The kinds of people that sell their souls don't need convincing from me, they need me to convince them otherwise."

Jack was taken back by the Devil's remark: "You mean to tell me you don't enjoy taking the souls of mortals?"

"Devils are far more complex than the world would have you believe." Meph extended his hands out and a chair on the far end of the room seemingly floated to him. "We are fallen angels by nature, we know the joys of heaven and yet remain in the torment of hell." He sat down in his chair "Not by our choice of course, but the point remains that we know the consequences of the choice you'll make better than anyone else, would-be Doctor Faustus."

"I don't believe in heaven or hell," said Jack. "They're stories

with the same cautionary meaning as the boogeyman. Be good or face the consequences, and the boogeyman never frightened me either.”

“The boogeyman?” Meph’s boisterous laughter echoed in the library, his glowing blue eyes seemed to pierce the aura of superiority Jack was trying to exude. “Tell me Faustus, do I frighten you?”

A lump appeared in Jack’s throat. “Yes,” he choked out

“Funny how the victim of hell’s wrath can frighten someone who doesn’t believe in it.” The hypocrisy was clear to Jack, and it jabbed at his ego. “Doctor Faustus the first said the same, do you intend to follow in in his footsteps?”

Jack knew his answer as soon as Meph first mentioned making a deal. Jack’s life was pointless, uneventful, trivial, easy. “What are my limitations?”

“Limitations? The only limit to this power is your own mind.” He opened his arms out wide and said, “All of this, the estate, your fortune. Four hundred years of making deals with your family, has let all this to be possible.” He looked around. “It’s so mundane isn’t it? Knowledgeable is your family, but their dreams and aspirations seem limited don’t you think?” Meph leaned in closer and said, “Imagine what you could do that they couldn’t.”

“I suppose you know my answer then,” Jack said with some form of childlike eagerness.

“Yes I suppose I do,” said Meph in a tone that replicated the look of judgment branded across his face. “Your dealings with me are finished, would-be Doctor Faustus.” Meph pointed to Jack’s desk, “On the front page of that book, renounce your faith in god in blood by signing away your soul with your name.”

Jack turned in his chair and looked at the book. Filling the pages were now words and symbols Jack’s never come across before.

Gruesome illustrations and frantic writings of various authors were abundant on every page. Jack grabbed the book, and turned to face Meph but was met with nothing but an empty chair. Jack looked down at the book again and saw it had turned to the first page on its own, branded on the top of the page were words written clearly in English. “Knowledge may be power, but is power worth your own suffering?”

Editor’s note: this poem was previously published at <http://mhchswordsahoy.blogspot.com>

Visual Art by:  
Lindsey Lewis  
South Columbus High School  
Grade 11  
Columbus County



Abby Stapleton  
Massey Hill High School  
Grade 12  
Cumberland County

## School Days

Sleepy mornings.  
6:30 A.M.  
Heavy eyes.  
The squeal of the truck door.  
Slam.

Little hands.  
Little chocolate covered hands.  
Little chocolate covered face.  
Big chocolate smile.

November.  
Crisp air.  
Fallen leaves.  
Red not green.

The scene fades from the windows of the truck.

I drive myself to school now.

Visual Art by:  
Kelsey Thompson  
South Columbus High School  
Grade 12  
Columbus County



Brian Ransome  
Purnell Swett High School  
Grade 10  
Robeson County

## My Story

I'm known for being the class clown or the boy with long hair that raps, or possibly the kid that was in the newspaper for conspiracy of murder; but either way you look at it—I'm always going to be just Brian Ransome in my head. This is the story of Brian Ransome.

I'm only 16 but I've seen it all. I've seen drug addicts roam the street asking for change for the next high. I've seen bullets fly and tears too from a family's loss. I've been behind the small four white walls with only one late night phone calls for four months straight. I was in the line of getting six years at that time, but I'll tell you more about that later on in this story.

I'm from a small city with big dreams, and most that stay in Pembroke don't make it to the age of twenty-six because most people out here make the simple mistake of thinking they have friends, but in this world you might have one loyal friend. I live in a house with very few laughs. My house suffers from depression. My mother was shot in the head at a store when I was only in elementary school. It was in the middle of summer. What kid wants to spend their summer in the hospital standing over his/her mama on life support, praying that she will wake up and become mama again, and that the twenty-five percent of living turns into one hundred percent to live.

I knew the whole time that she was laying there with a bullet hole through her head; to feed our family it made me feel bad. I

can't lie, there were times when I would sit in the deep woods and hope God would take me out as fast as possible. I didn't care about life at all at that time. If it wasn't for my son, I would have probably been dead today. That's my opinion, because of all the trouble I get into.

Yeah, what you just read was right; I'm sixteen with a baby. Yeah, I know you're thinking "what a screw up." Yeah, I know I'm so young for that, but I feed him and take care of him—me and his mother—like good parents should. I love him a lot—him—and his mother. That's the reason I was arrested, because I was protecting my little family.

My mother-in-law was almost close to killing our son. I stayed Halloween night at my grandma's house with her since I promised. We laughed and played for those days I stayed. The day that I was going to leave, we heard a car door shut. I looked out the window; it was her mother coming in the house to find me in the room behind the door and my girlfriend on the bed. She looked behind the door and looked at me, and her face turned red in five seconds from anger. The crazy thing was I wasn't even scared. I was just confused what would happen after that moment. I was scared I might never see Brianna until she was eighteen (she was only 13 at the time, and I was 15). We were in a trouble, I knew, but I didn't know how worse it would get in three more weeks.

That day I was hit with a belt by her mother in the face and back. I didn't feel any pain; I just felt my pride come in and be smashed by every hit. My mother didn't even beat me, so why was this woman? That's what was going through my mind. I let anger get to me in those three weeks, which is a stupid thing to do. My anger told me to kill her, and I could run far away with Brianna and take care of our son, which was in her stomach at the time. I was lost at

that point, so I had nothing but intentions to hurt her some way, the same way my heart hurt from being apart from my girlfriend. She was taken into another county with her mother.

I just wanted us to be happy together. We were before her mama entered the picture.

The whole reason she was at her grandmas was because she was kicked out by her father after finding out she was pregnant because her daddy didn't want anything to do with social service, but I don't blame him, who would want to deal with a white car with yellow tags and DPS across the side of the car. So later on, three weeks after the accident, I was walking down the road from celebrating my first track on my mixtape with my friends. We were three minutes from walking in the yard, when my phone rang. I answered; my sister told me there were five cops in the yard. I called her a liar.

She said, "You're about to get daddy in trouble."

I was like, "How?"

She said they found uncle buddy's pistol he left before he died. My daddy has charges, so he can't have a weapon. So at that moment I was like I know they're waiting for me to walk in the yard and slap the cuffs on my wrist and take me to a place where I would spend six years in a detention center and miss out on half my son's life.

I was arrested, told my rights, and shipped off to a detention center in Cumberland County. Brianna was in there with me for two months, and moved to a different one. We saw one another but couldn't talk. It hurt both of us to see one another, and not to be able to talk. The day before they moved her out, I told her I loved her and the baby, and to eat and take care of herself. I was called to court a month later. She was there with a smile on her face to show me she was ok. She was moved into a foster home with a white

woman that loved to shop, but Brianna didn't like her. She only liked the clothes she bought her when they shopped together. While I was sitting in a small white room, with one boat painted on the wall, but at that moment we were looking at one another across the court from one another, trying to hold back my tears, so we would both stay strong.

We were both told we were getting six years in a youth detention center. I had already missed Thanksgiving and Christmas at that time.

I blacked out and told my lawyer, "I got to go home. My family's going to die, mostly my daddy—you got to do something, please."

I said every single word, trying not to cry. I was put in the shoes of a man, and I wasn't ready for that yet, but I had to be to survive. So I was taken in front of the judge, about to take those six years, with the sounds of my family behind me crying and sniffing and praying.

As I sat behind the table, the Bible's gold letters glazed across my eyes, and I stood up and said, "I have to go home. I need to be free and take care of my family; my daddy can die at any time. He's not eating. He's going to have a heart attack. Please let me just go home. I just want one more chance."

When I said those words, it wasn't me talking, it was an angel, God, probably; it was a positive spirit. I fell back into my chair and realized what was going on. The judge looked me in the eyes, and told me to come back in three weeks after my behavior was studied by a therapist.

So, between those times, I talked to a therapist. He's the man that got me out of all that time. He came back to court with me and told the judge that I was stable enough to come home. The judge looked at me and smiled, and said I was free to go home. Hugs

rushed and kisses rushed on me; my family just rushed me out just in case the judge changed his mind. I was sentenced a year of probation. Brianna was released a month after me.

Months later, on Father's Day, I was informed my son was born. So, I'm taking presents and giving them. It makes me laugh when I think about it. That all happened a year ago. It's crazy when I think back, and all I can say about it is I hope it never happens again. It just shows you one bad choice can cause your life to go downhill. I almost missed out on a big part on my life.

When I first got out I chilled with rappers, so at the same time I think everything happens for a reason. I just thank God I made it out. I got to see my son grow his first teeth, crawl, and laugh. I thank God for that. I keep faith in him no matter what. Life is crazy that's all I can say.

Skylar DeLong  
Massey Hill High School  
Grade 10  
Cumberland County

## Slightly Gorgeous

Hair covering her faces like snow covering the ground,  
eyelashes longer than a summer night,  
eyes so brown and relaxing.

Her body wrapped in his hoodie,  
Sweatpants, and cozy socks  
cuddling her coffee and book.

No makeup on at all  
surely I still fall for her  
no worries at all.

Her eyes covered with her glasses  
her smile showing brightly  
something so special and simple.

She loves with her heart  
gives you every ounce  
and expects nothing but the same back.

The girl she is today grew,  
she came to be from who she was  
now she is taken and simply gorgeous.

Camryn Dwight Locklear  
CIS  
Grade 8  
Robeson County

## Christmas Is Here

Christmas is a time of year where  
we celebrate Christ's birth with a cheer.

Christ chose to show us his love,  
by coming to Earth from Heaven above.

Christmas is a wonderful time where  
we sing songs and read poems that rhyme.

Christmas is a time to buy people we love gifts,  
and make long Christmas wish-lists.

Santa in his red and white,  
does not compare to the love of Christ.

I hope we never forget the reason for the season,  
Christmas without Christ has no reason.

So when you buy the next gift for someone you love,  
stop and think of Christ's wonderful love.

Visual Art by:  
Brian Hunt  
Fairmont High School  
Grade 12  
Robeson County



Jake Faircloth  
Massey Hill High School  
Grade 10  
Cumberland County

## A Blast to the Past

I had woken up in a grimy alleyway. The only thought in my head was if it had worked. The Chronological Tarriance Device; or the more colloquial name that most people use no matter how many times I have to correct them: the Time Machine. The funny part about this was that I never meant to use it. I was inserting an essential piece of hardware into the machine when all of a sudden I was surrounded by a flash of light. And that is when we got to the backstreet.

I sat up and looked down the alley towards the road and saw a mint-green and white classic Chevy car pass by. I stood and dusted myself off before walking out onto the sidewalk. I then noticed that I was surrounded by completely unfamiliar buildings and people. All the banks and stores had a simplistic style to them like the old abandoned buildings downtown in my own time. As for the people, the women wore casual dresses with different designs on them, like polka-dots or flowers. The older men wore business suits and the younger men sported short-sleeve dress shirts and blue jeans; some wore black leather jackets as well.

Yep, it was obvious; I was in the 1950s. Don't ask where, it doesn't matter. If you were trapped more than sixty years in the past, you wouldn't be asking stupid questions. What mattered was how I was able to get back. The return mechanism for the Time Machine was my watch, which I never got to work. Since I had some time, I

got to thinking about how I could get my watch to work. I always think better on my feet, so I started walking down the street. "I doubt that I can get a hold of any pieces I need in a hardware store," I said to myself. Then suddenly, I was knocked down to the pavement. I looked up to see a greasy-haired teen in a leather jacket standing in front of three others dressed like him.

"Hey, where's this hub cap going that's so big?" the guy that knocked me down asked, sounding and looking like he belonged in a bad James Dean movie. I could see that my jacket was torn from falling on the ground. From the situation I was already in, I was in no mood for this.

"Nowhere that concerns a guy with more grease in his hair than brains in his cranium," I replied, feeling extremely annoyed.

The greaser looked at me with anger in his eyes and said, "Yeah? Listen to me, ya nosebleed; why don't you either go cop a breeze or drop dead?"

"Drop dead? Well, I would, but then I'd look like you," I said back. With the sight of the rage in his eyes explode from out of nowhere, I immediately regretted that decision.

"Alright, if you wanna be smart, you better be ready to take a punch," the leather-clad caveman said right before he swung his fist hard and fast at me.

I blocked his strike, which threw me back a bit. Then I did what only the bravest and most intelligent beings would do in this situation. I turned and ran down the street away from my attackers. I turned the corner and almost ran into another teen boy who was wearing a bright orange puffy vest. Now that I think about it, his clothing was odd for the times, even for our time. But I had other problems. Or so I thought, until I noticed that my watch had been activated. When I had blocked the greaser's punch, he must have hit

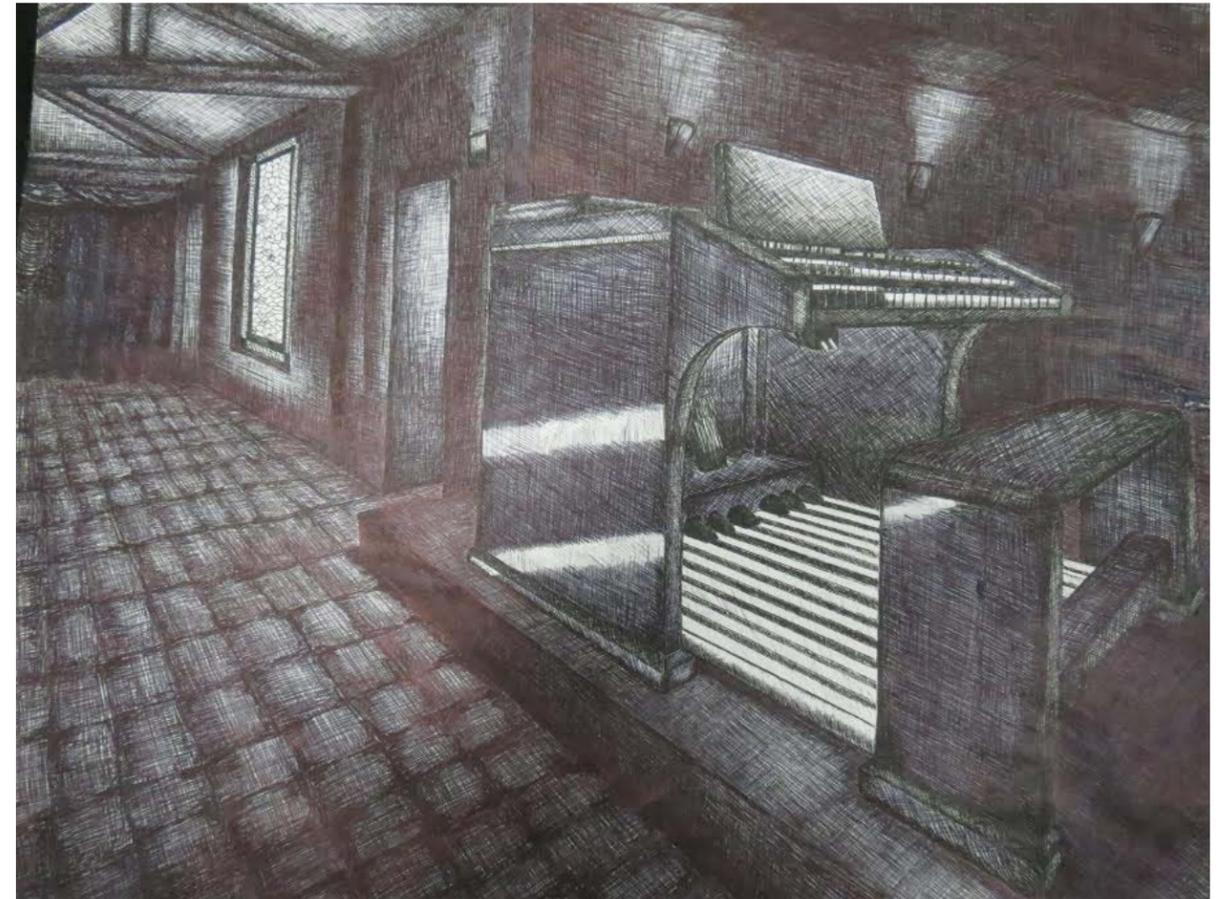
my watch and caused it to work. I've decided to call that little rule the "Happy Days Solution." Anyway, I turned back to the leader my chasers and said "Thanks for the help, Fonzie!" before pressing my watch. A flash of light obscured my vision and before I knew it, I was back in my lab with my machine in my own time.

Kiara Glover  
Saint Pauls Middle School  
Grade 6  
Robeson County

## My Loved One

Even though she's so far away,  
I still love her to this day.  
I can't wait to see her.  
I love her more than my brother and sister.  
I call her mema, because she's one of a kind.  
I really miss the times we spent together.  
It sucks that we can't get to see each other.  
I'm proud to say she's mine.  
I think about her every day.  
The woman I love so much is my grandmother.

Visual Art by:  
Michael Livingston  
Fairmont High School  
Robeson County



Melissa Quintero Segura  
Robeson Early College High School  
Grade 12  
Robeson County

## Quetzal Facing Herself

*Quetzal was hidden in a dark cave. There were no windows or any form of escape, just a huge rock that was blocking the light from outside. She cried for help, but her soft voice was not enough. After all the whining and helpless tears, Quetzal fell asleep on the cold floor. A man quietly removed the huge rock and slowly entered the cave. He was carrying a lit candle in his hand. He approached Quetzal as she was asleep and used the light to admire her. He kneeled down to where she was lying down and started playing with her soft, long black hair. He then started to caress every inch of Quetzal's body and constantly said "cualtzin" as he kissed her neck. She then opened her eyes and she was startled as she saw a dark figure. Quetzal was eager to see the man as she thought he was her method of salvation. The man put his finger on Quetzal's lip and told her to remain quiet as he removed her dress. She obeyed his orders and did exactly what he wished. He then started to feel all over her body and she felt confused and disconnected. That day Quetzal knew the definition of a "woman."*

Quetzal suddenly woke up. Sweat poured down her face as she shivered in silence. She closed her eyes and started to cry as she remembered how the man's hands felt all over her body. Every night, for the past fifteen years, she remembered every single detail from that night as if it happened yesterday, a nightmare that will never vanish away. She went back to sleep and waited for a better day in the morning. After Quetzal's father abandoned Quetzal and her mother for another woman, both of them lived by themselves in a

village on the tallest mountain in Oaxaca, Quie Yelaag. Quetzal came from a poor but humble family. She could not afford to attend school, so she was educated only by her mother. Since she was at home the majority of the time, her job was to help her mom maintain the house, and every morning she would go in search of maiz, corn, to make tortillas. Quetzal did not have many friends and she feared men, thus she never had a boyfriend. She was a very beautiful girl: tall, thin legs, caramel skin, perfect smile, and most importantly, long, black, curly hair. Her hair piqued many people's attention since not many young women had curly hair. Long hair defined purity and virginity. In her spare time, she would pick flowers in the meadows and sing to the lovely birds and by doing this, her mind would be clear and in another world. But then the happy moments were over as night approached.

Quetzal woke up every night because of this incident that happened when she was a little girl. She could not take the pain any longer, especially without her mother or anybody knowing anything from her past. Quetzal's mom would sometimes hear her cry, but she was left clueless whenever she asked what was wrong. Quetzal wanted to end this tragedy by deleting this memory once and for all and finally feel peace within her. The only way she could do this was to search for Aquali, an evil substance, that raped her fifteen years ago.

It might have been dark that day, but Quetzal recognized the face of Aquali, the man that raped her. When she was younger, she overheard people speak about Aquali and where he fled to. Quetzal's plan was to go to the place he fled to, search for him, and seek revenge. Before the sun came out, Quetzal started packing stuff she would need: clothes, food, and a sharp, small spear made from wood. She left her mother a note that said she would be back, and

not to worry. Quetzal never left so far from home but she was eager in finding Aquali. The place he fled to was called Zacatepec, a small village near a famous river, Atoya, and it was one day of walking from where Quetzal lived. She was determined to find Aquali and took the risk to walk all the way to Zacatepec, an unknown place to her.

Quetzal sadly left her village and started her journey. As she walked, she prayed to Tepeyollotl, God of the Mountains, to help her through her journey and to make it alive to the other side. She decided to leave early in the morning so she could arrive to Zacatepec early the next day. She walked past mountains, valleys, and meadows. She was so focused on getting to Zacatepec that she ignored all the beautiful flowers she normally picked up every day, and did not bother to sing to a single bird. After a while, Quetzal started to get hungry so she pulled out an apple from her bag. She sat on a small rock close by and imagined what life could have been if she was never raped and her father never left. Tears fell down her eyes as she remembered what happened in reality. She did not want to repeat the same story and feared that she may encounter men during her journey. Quetzal feared the possibility of seeing men, so she reached in her bag, pulled out the sharp spear, grabbed her long hair, and sliced all of it at once. She sat on the rock for a few minutes, stared at what used to be her hair, wiped her tears, stood up, and kept walking.

The sun drowned in the horizon as it hid behind the mountains. The glimmering lights faded in the darkness, and Quetzal soon started to hear wolves howl from afar. She feared the darkness, and she had no form of light to see. Quetzal prayed to Coyolxauhqui, Goddess of the Moon, to guide her through the night. That night, the hue of the moon shone brighter than ever before. The

beautiful radiance emanated by the pale circle and lead Quetzal to her destination—Zacatepec. Quetzal stared at the moon and smiled as the light touched her skin. She did not want to waste more time appreciating the gods and goddesses that have helped her thus far, so she turned around and kept walking.

At this point, Quetzal had blisters on her feet, but this was not going to stop her. She was exhausted and had walked all day and only ate once. As she was about to lie down and rest, she heard some noises. It sounded like the laughter of drunk men. The men carried torches which helped them navigate through the forest. Quetzal rushed to get up, ignored all the blisters on her feet, and hid behind some shrubs. The men got closer and closer to where she was at; she panicked and could not stay put behind the shrubs so she ran. The men were trained to hear such noise and followed the yells of Quetzal. Quetzal lost her track as her eyes blurred from tears; she ran until she did not see any signs of fire or men. She stopped running, put her hands on her knee caps, and took deep breaths.

Quetzal thought she escaped this danger zone until she turned around and saw one of the men staring at her. His stares were so focused and deep, it seemed like he was looking through her past. The man was satisfied with what he was seeing but hesitated as he saw Quetzal's hair. In his mind, he was shocked to see such a beautiful, young creature with very short hair. He slowly grabbed her hand and gave her the torch. He told her to leave his sight as he felt disgusted and ashamed of what was in front of him. Quetzal did as he wished and left. She did not regret cutting her hair, as it saved her from experiencing the same tragedy.

The sun was slowly rising from behind the mountains when Quetzal arrived at Zacatepec. It was just her and the trees that were awake; everyone else was still asleep, or at least still in their villages.

She started walking around the villages and hoped she could find someone who could help her find Aquali. From a distance, she saw an elderly woman picking up maize. Quetzal gasped and approached her and asked if she had seen a tall man with curly hair and an Aztec sun tattoo on his left arm. The elderly woman said she had seen a man like that but he had left earlier with his daughter to find cocoa beans close to Teocalli, a God house. Quetzal thanked the elderly woman and gave her an apple as a form of appreciation.

As she walked off to Teocalli, she heard cries, cries of help. The cries were from a little girl and they came from an enclosed place, as she could hear the girl's echoes. The cries came from a cave, the same cave she was hidden in when she was younger. The cave brought Quetzal memories and she thought the cries were just an illusion. She heard the cries over and over again but suddenly they stopped. She was shocked to see her life being played in front of her eyes. Quetzal did not want her story to repeat, much less to another young, innocent girl. She finally reacted and went to the other side of the cave where the entrance was.

As she was about to reach for the rock, she heard a deep voice whisper *cualtzin*, beautiful. At that moment, Quetzal knew her past was not yet over, her past was now the present, but with a different victim. She rapidly seized her hands onto the huge rock and tried to move it as much as possible. Her strength was not enough as she struggled to move the rock by herself, but she was not about to give up. With resentment and anger of what happened, and what could happen, she gained the power to remove the big rock.

Light finally entered the cave and she was able to see the young girl and the man. As soon as she saw who the man was, she used what was left of her breath to scream *Tatzintli!* Father! Her father was left speechless as he saw how much her daughter had changed

over the past few years. He tried to grab Quetzal and snatch her into the cave, but she was quick enough to dig in her bag, grab her spear, and point it towards him. She told her father to step back and give her the little girl, her step sister. He refused to let the girl go and dragged her behind him. Quetzal was disappointed to see how evil her father had become. She had to think of way to get the girl before her father committed another tragedy. She glanced at the candle her father had in his hands, then at him, then at the candle again. When her father looked down towards what Quetzal was looking at, Quetzal jumped and kicked the candle, causing it to land on his face. The man yelled for help as the fire ate his skin alive and soon his whole body.

Quetzal ran and picked up her sister by her waist and rushed out of the cave. Both of them grabbed the huge rock and pushed it until it blocked the cave's only opening. Quetzal hugged her sister as hard as she could and tried to calm her down. They stood still and hugged each other until they could no longer hear the supplicates of their father. Quetzal looked down at her step sister and wiped her tears. She saw her reflection through her sister: same skin color, perfect smile, and hair texture. Quetzal accomplished her revenge and also helped her little sister maintain her purity and innocence thus burying the reality of her own tragedy.

Hannah Hubbard  
Massey Hill High School  
Grade 12  
Cumberland County

## Above the Influence

I float above it all,  
the smoke of happiness,  
the alluring sounds of lovers' embrace,  
the noise of freedom rings over it all.  
Temptation so great with curiosity's ever growing reach.

I feel all alone up here,  
all my friends have let go,  
everyone is down there now  
living free,  
loving each other,  
having fun.

So why shouldn't I?  
I have lofted in the sky for so long  
never have I experienced the life there is below,  
but do I dare to?

To fall beyond  
the grasp of reality,  
to be consumed in a carefree world,  
to lose touch with my family above.  
surrendering to the drums,  
to get lost in the embrace of another's love,  
to be coaxed in the wrenching smell of smoky happiness.

I float above it all and  
holding on tight because...

I'm just not ready for that Fall.

Morgan Shelton  
Massey Hill High School  
Grade 9  
Cumberland County

## The Unknown

I didn't know her name  
I was mesmerized by her beauty  
her luscious red locks,  
flowing in the wind.  
But there was something odd about her:  
she had no voice and  
she couldn't tell me her name,  
but then I heard a little voice,  
a little voice calling her name,  
a name I could never forget.

Visual Art by:  
Kelsey Thompson  
South Columbus High School  
Grade 12  
Columbus County



Visual Art by:  
Lindsey Britt  
Fairmont High School  
Grade 12  
Robeson County



Isaiah Jones  
Massey Hill High School  
Grade 10  
Cumberland County

## The Abyss

The ocean, so vast and beautiful.  
The surface, so radiant and reflecting.  
Though amidst this place of beauty, there is an underlying horror  
just below the surface.  
Here there is no light.  
Here there is no feeling.  
Here there is no emotion.  
It is a place of pure black and bottomless depth, with abominations  
humans weren't meant to see.  
If you ever come face to face with this place and find yourself staring  
into its infinite black, know that millions of eyes stare back, and that  
they are hungry.

Rachel Clegg  
Saint Pauls Middle School  
Grade 6  
Robeson County

## Monsters

star light, star bright  
fire burning in the night  
twisted thorns, growing thick  
breathing heavy, knees weak  
did you hear that nasty creak?  
monsters lurking,  
it's coming soon  
glass shatters  
it's your doom  
wolves howl  
you're all alone  
sift through clues  
forget what you know  
long nights  
forget your life  
struggle for the strife  
of giving in one last time  
you wake up from dreaming  
shoot up from your bed  
smell the roses darling,  
the monsters were in your head.

Visual Art by:  
Katelyn Bass  
Fairmont High School  
Grade 11  
Robeson County



Jenna Nabors  
Massey Hill High School  
Grade 10  
Cumberland County

## The Waiting Game

Waking up this Monday morning, the only thing that kept me going was that I only have four and a half more days. Four and a half days until relaxation, until pleasure, until... Winter Break. As I trudge through each class period, I know that it is getting closer and closer. Only four and a half more days of cafeteria foods, unsightly bags under my eyes, struggling to stay awake, and a backpack full of work. As impatient students stare at the clocks and wish they would tick faster, including me, I began to realize a few questions to be wondered from this Waiting Game.

As I wait for time to pass, I am losing seconds, minutes, hours, and even days of my life that I will never be able to get back. Time is a tricky concept. People try to kill time while time is actually killing them. Sometimes people wait for excitement rather than making excitement of their own. Thinking about it now, I have been alive for over 15 years. That is at least 5,475 days alive and how many of those days were even memorable? Not enough. If I constantly wait for events to happen, I am wasting precious moments of my life. Make every day a day worth remembering.

If each day should be memorable, then this proposes the question of living in the moment or planning for the future. By living in the moment, you are spontaneous and reckless. Paying no attention to the consequences that might ensue. But if time is so sacred,

shouldn't you live in the moment? However, by living in the moment and not planning for the future, who knows what could happen? It is like a domino effect, when one event happens, it starts a chain reaction. Say I decided to party instead of do homework and this became an everyday occurrence, because live in the moment, right? Then my grades drop significantly along with my class rank, and I lost the trust of my parents. Soon, I get declined by college after college. All because I refused to think of the future before making decisions. Still a tough decision though, considering that you never do know when your life may end, and if you were able to do all you wished. Luckily, one can swap between the two, being spontaneous one moment, and strategic the next.

As I continue to play this Waiting Game, I begin to wonder if life in general is a game and we are all mere players? Have you noticed that a single event can change the course of the rest of your day or week even? Whether it is the weather or an action of another. Life is like a real life game of Jenga and the people of the world are players trying to make sure it does not collapse. The tower is getting higher, time is ticking, and you are waiting for the moment when it will fall. One mistake and it could all come crashing down. I guess it's a good thing you can always build it back up.

Still waiting until Winter Break comes, but more enlightened, and a bit frightened too. Time is killing me, slowly but surely. To live freely or to live rationally, that is the question. Then there is the thought that life is a game of building blocks essentially, and as they ascend higher, they get closer and closer to the fall. Okay, more so frightened than enlightened. On a positive note, there still is an early release Friday, break will still start, and I will be happy. This time the Waiting Game will yield a good result.

Visual Art by:  
Darian Hunt  
South Robeson High School  
Grade 11  
Robeson County



Julianna Mendoza  
Saint Pauls Middle School  
Grade 6  
Robeson County

## Friendship

I'll always be at your side until the very end.  
Wiping all your tears, being your best friend.  
I will smile when you smile.  
I will feel all the pain that you do.  
If you cry a single tear I promise I will cry too.  
I just wanted you to know,  
what joy it is to have you as a best friend,  
giving me strength until the very end.  
For lifting me up when I'm feeling down,  
and putting a smile on my face when I have a frown.  
Thanks for helping me grow our friendship.  
And I just wanted you to know,  
that you're my best friend.  
You were from the beginning and the start.  
We stand strong and shall never fall apart.  
We found a friendship so powerful and true.  
That's how I know that we will last forever, me and you.

Katie Gibson  
Purnell Swett High School  
Grade 10  
Robeson County

## You're Worth More

Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. Seriously, you have so much to look forward to in life. Your skin isn't paper, don't cut it. Your face isn't a mask, don't hide it. Your size isn't a book, don't judge it. Your life isn't a movie, don't end it. If you ever need someone to talk to or you feel like you don't have anyone to lean on...don't be hesitant to talk to me. I can be there for you, forget your haters/bullies. Just message me and I will try my best to make you feel like you aren't alone. You can get through this. Stay strong, everything will be alright. There is still hope, you have me, and we can get through the bad time together. Don't listen to people who tell you what to do. Listen to people who encourage you to do what you know in your heart is right. Suicide does not end the chances of life getting worse; suicide eliminates the possibilities of it ever getting better. Depression is like a storm. It starts slow, eating away at you slowly, and then it becomes stronger and causes more damage. Then it stops, and you think it's fine, that it's getting better. Like it's safe to go outside now and enjoy the finer things, that it's getting better. Kind of like the eye of the storm. Then out of nowhere it hits you again, knocking you down, harder than before until you are no more. It swallows you, it clogs your vision, so then you can't see, how close to the ending it is, and some don't make it. Thinking that the only way to stop the storm, is to stop themselves.

I don't think people understand that when you commit suicide, you are ending your life. You will be gone, there won't be a you anymore. You have affected so many people; so many people's lives will be affected of you killing yourself. All the people from school will wonder what they could have done to help you. I know that you just want the pain to end and it will end. It will, it has to, but it doesn't have to end by you killing yourself. I promise you that everything will be okay, it may not be tomorrow or the next day, but one day, everything will be okay. Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem, and suicide is never the only option. So if you are thinking about killing yourself, look at how many people you have affected. How many people will miss you, how many people you think didn't care, but just never showed it. Think about them. I wish I could help you. I wish I could hug you, but this is the best I can do from here, so I'm trying to make this count. Let this be your reason not to. You're not worthless, fat, or ugly. You would be missed. You are incredible, no matter how terrible you think you are. You don't deserve any of this torment, so I hope this helps a little. I wish I could save you all. I know I am not superman, but I would try to fly for you all. You can overcome any obstacle that is in your way.

Saquoya Hunt  
CIS  
Grade 8  
Robeson County

## Christmas Joys

See the sunset on a cool beach.  
The tears from the ocean hit my feet.  
The ocean seems just within my reach.  
Yet it slips away with just an ease.  
The whispers from the wind are telling me:  
"This isn't a dream." But how can't it be?  
This Christmas really did seem to flee.  
But it was the best Christmas one could ask to see.  
To spend it with friends and family.  
So to me, it was the best Christmas yet to be.

## White Snow

I'm the bird that's unpredictable.  
I'm the snow white bird.  
The bird that's never forgotten.  
The bird you fear.  
The bird that is time's companion.  
I'm the bird of fatality.

Laiken Strickland  
Purnell Swett High School  
Grade 10  
Robeson County

## My Speech

As you sit here at this desk, you hold your future in the palm of your hand. Not your best friend, not your Mom, or your Dad – only you. You all say you want to be doctors and lawyers, but without a high school diploma you will be lucky to sweep the floors at McDonald's.

So, as you all sit here today, it's time for you to decide do you want success as bad as you say you want it? Has someone ever told you, you will amount to nothing in life? Are you going to sit back and let them watch you fail, or will you step up to the plate and prove them wrong? So, then they're the ones wishing they were you. It's your life; you have to live for you and only you.

A wise person once told me, "Life doesn't make you, you make life." My Pap always said we're gonna have doctors and lawyers, and then there are people that flip burgers at McDonald's – now which one will you be? I am not saying accomplishing your goals in life will be easy. It may get hard, but you got to want it as bad as you want food. You got to want it when you're asleep, but there are so many paths in life. The question is – will you choose the right one in the end? Yet, remember, you only live once.

Christian Mason  
Massey Hill High School  
Grade 11  
Cumberland County

## Reverso Poem

Love Lost  
I have no  
Warmth in my heart.  
You are the  
Reason for my hate.  
I will never have  
Happy days in my life.  
Thank you for the  
Remorse or regret  
You shall never cause  
Because I loved you.

Because I loved you  
You shall never cause  
Remorse or regret.  
Thank you for the  
Happy days in my life.  
I will never have  
Reason for my hate.  
You are the  
Warmth in my heart.  
I have no  
Love lost.

Visual Art by:  
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Grade 11  
Robeson County



Ruben Gonzalez  
Massey Hill High School  
Grade 10  
Cumberland County

## Red Balloon

I hear a loud rumbling noise along with some heavy construction vehicles. I get out of my bed and step outside. The air is filled with smoke and there are factories on almost every street corner of town and there seems to be no sense of life in the area. I start to freak out; all I see is industrialization. Then, as I turn around, I watch as my house fades to grey and slowly crumbles to the ground. I went on walking, not knowing where I was taking myself, searching for any form of life or sense of hope. The land was all dark and gloomy. I begin to walk faster, and faster, and faster, as fast as my legs could take me. Was this it? Am I in a purgatory, trapped in an industrialized world? I begin to panic, searching for the least bit of light in this godforsaken place. Then in my peripheral vision, I notice a small, round, red object floating in mid-air above a pile of ashes. I ran to it, hoping that it would lead me to a better place. It is a balloon. Not sure what to do with it, I reach and grab the string. Then, suddenly, a burst of wind comes and the balloon begins to carry me through the sky. As I'm floating, I see all the death that this city has become. Then out of nowhere, a huge, blinding, bright light emerges from the sky. I am curious, but also terrified. I didn't know what lie behind that light; I just hope that it was far better than the place I was in. The balloon drags me toward the light. I go into it, and as I enter I see the most perfect world there could ever be. All the streets

were made of gold, and it was all so bright. Then the balloon disappeared and left me at the biggest, most beautiful gate I had ever seen.

Editor's note: this poem was previously posted on Massey Hill Classical High School's Blog at: <http://mhchswordsahoy.blogspot.com>

Visual Art by:  
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Visual Art by:  
Madison Rumppe  
Saint Pauls High School  
Grade 10  
Robeson County



Nicholas Barnes  
CIS  
Grade 8  
Robeson County

## White Death

As the wind blows.  
The trees shake.  
The ice falls.

The blanket floats like a  
cloud of ash.  
I cover the place in white.  
It strangles the life out of  
everything.  
It is like a coma of sleep.

Sophia Schuster  
Orrum Middle School  
Grade 6  
Robeson County

## Star

“Mom! I want a pet! Please?”

My name is Graceanne, me and my family live in a small cottage in the Rocky Mountains.

My brothers, Nick and John, have the same bedroom as me. They always make threats towards me and win arguments.

My mother and father also have the same bedroom. I don't think they have any problems with each other at all.

“Sweetie, please, understand that our house is too small,” Mom explained.

“Why do you want a stinky, whiney, dirty pet anyway?” Nick yelled down in his room. He was grounded for punching me in the nose.

“Especially a dumb mutt,” John said while watching TV in the same room.

Almost everyone agrees.

Almost.

That day we had an unexpected surprise.

Scratch. Scratch.

“MOM! MOM! Something's at the door,” I screamed.

“A deer?” mom questioned me.

“KILL IT!!!!!!!!!!!!” Nick yelled.

“NO!” I screamed, “It's a dog!”

Long story short, it was a puppy with a star on his face and his eyes

were bright blue. So, after a long argument we called him Star and kept him, but on a long leash outside. I still love him.

But in order to keep the dog we had to move. So here we are in the Illinois suburbs. We enjoy the peace and quiet. Star does like to be curious every once in a while.

Bark bark!

“That's a bus boy.”

Ruff! Ruff!

Yup. This is life, I thought.

One night construction was going on and Star was gone too.

I cried, sobbed, and whined; my parents offered to get another dog, but I rejected. Star is just too special, I can't just push him over and get another. It's like pushing over ice cream for broccoli soaked in salt and vinegar.

We looked everywhere and someone reported that he was seen during construction and he was in the crane. We hurried and found him in the tractor. We whistled and almost came before an officer came and told us to leave. As we got in the car, Star beat us to the car. We were so happy to see him we got him a “mate.” They had babies and lived very happily as a family. And so did we.

Micaela Cooper  
Massey Hill High School  
Grade 12  
Cumberland County

## Autumn's Afterthought

Brown and gold spiraling round,  
and metal tinkles to the ground.  
precious jewels as each one falls  
a breath,  
a moment,  
lost to all.

As Time's old spirit puffs his chest,  
and blows a wind to down the rest,  
a minute with each leaf that falls.  
to be broken.  
scattered.  
lost to all.

Yet, dry leaves crumble as they must,  
fragile things that turn to dust.  
and one can't blame as sleepy Fall,  
mourns moments,  
memories.  
lost to all.

When gold submerged in frozen dew,  
awakens Winter's silver hue.  
ice and frost, if have they the gall  
replace the colors  
lost in fall.

There comes a time at Winter's end,  
Spring seeks to find its shining friend.  
memories found beneath the snow  
were never to us lost to know.

Yes, all that lives  
must also die  
but surely autumn is alive  
and in sleep,  
with her,  
our memories lie.

Haileigh Taylor  
Massey Hill High School  
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Cumberland County

## Painted Into Something New

We ran for ages,  
the hunters chasing us.

At last we stopped,  
and realized there was no place to go.

No snow to hide us,  
nothing—completely dressed in white.

An idea came to us,  
as we stepped in a pile of mud,  
and smeared it over our bodies and faces.

We painted and drew  
streaks that looked like a mask.  
We were painted into something new.

Visual Art by:  
Niya Dickens  
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Visual Art by:  
Lindsey Britt  
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Kendall Rowdy  
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## The River

Some fish, some maybe swim.  
Some just like to sit and watch the flow of it that never ends,  
while some try to keep up with the latest trends.  
Some just appreciate the same peace that it always sends.

You never know  
how it will flow  
but for all of your problems  
one thing is for sure,  
The River is the cure.

Mikayla Rich  
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## First Night at Freddy's

It was a normal day for Mike Schimdt. He woke up, took a quick shower, and got ready for his interview. He was low on money and he needed to pay rent, so he was looking for a new job. He found one in the newspaper earlier, and he called to see if he could apply. For some strange reason, the manager seemed extremely relieved at Mike's offer to take the job. It looked like an easy job to Mike. All he had to do was look at cameras from Midnight to 6 in the morning! Easy job, right? Besides, Freddy Fazbear's Pizza, the place he was applying for, was meant for kids! Sure, it was a bit creepy, but with the animatronics Freddy, Bonnie, and Chica on the stage, but to Mike, for a \$120, it was all too easy.

Boy, was he wrong.

He almost instantly got the job. He was quite surprised, to say the least. "You know," Mister Sazoki, the owner of Freddy Fazbear's, said, "You have to be quite the night owl in order to not pass out during the day!"

"Don't worry, Mister Sazoki, I'm always up late!" Mike replied happily.

"If you're sure then! Be here no later than 11:45 tonight!"

Later that night, when Mike finally made it to Freddy's, Mister Sazoki decided that Mike would be fine on his own on the first night. Mike made his way to the security room, where he would spend the next six hours checking cameras and watching over

animatronics, making sure no one broke in. After Mister Sazoki left, he heard a phone ringing. He looked everywhere, but he couldn't find the phone. He decided to just let it ring. After about 3 rings, the phone picked up.

"Hello? Hello! I wanted to record a message for you on your first night!"

Mike jumped a bit at the voice, but laughed at himself once he realized it was just a recorded message.

"Well, you see, I, uh, I have to read a welcome message. You know, legal stuff. 'Welcome to Freddy Fazbear's Pizza, a magical place for kids and grown-ups alike...' The voice continued reading the legal papers, which was quite boring to Mike, so he blocked out the voice and focused his attention on the cameras. He kept doing so until he heard the phone man say something particularly disturbing.

"Freddy Fazbear's Pizza is not responsible for the death or missing of employees. Upon finding a body, police will be alerted after three months or when the carpets have been replaced and the walls bleached."

Death or missing of a person? Mike thought nervously. He decided that the best thing to do was listen to the man calling him.

"Now, that may seem bad, but there's nothing to worry about! Now, I admit, the animatronics do tend to get a bit quirky at night."

Mike didn't need to hear anymore. He wanted to leave. Now, he would've left if it weren't for the purple, animatronic rabbit he spotted staring intently at him from outside the room. His eyes widened at the horrifying sight, as he scrambled to hit the button that would close the door; an act that would ultimately saving his life. He inhaled a large, deep breath, trying to calm himself. He didn't know what the animatronics would do to him, and, honestly, he admitted to himself, he didn't want to. Why had the manager been so relieved

when he called for the job? What had happened to the last guard? Why did the Phone Man warn him about the seemingly harmless animatronics?

Only one thing was certain now.  
He had to survive.

*News Paper Article from "WMRN News"*

'A man who has asked to remain unknown has recently sued Freddy Fazbear's Pizzeria, saying, "I worked as a night guard at Freddy Fazbear's. I'll tell you one thing, that place is not safe." Many have grown suspicious of the children restaurant after 5 young children went missing and one child almost died due to one of the animatronics biting the frontal lobe of his brain. The famous pizzeria has fallen into hard times, and it is believed it will close down by the end of the year.'

Visual Art by:  
Victoria Stubbs  
South Columbus High School  
Grade 12  
Columbus County



Melissa Townsend  
Massey Hill High School  
Grade 9  
Cumberland County

## Closure

The squat is  
dirty  
old  
hot  
and damp  
all over.

Jesse found it  
last November;  
a lucky find  
and just in time  
because  
I was more than ready  
to go.

School is  
boring  
uneventful  
depressing  
hard.

Mrs. R says  
that I'm immature,  
I play too much,  
talk too loud,  
and I'm barely passing  
with a D.

But  
I have this theory  
this idea

it's nothing really  
just a thought  
for a cure...

but  
I'm too loud and  
I play around  
just a little  
too much.

I'm starving  
and Jesse's  
gotten sick and  
my grades are dropping  
and so is my weight;  
Jesse's smile is fading  
and Mrs. R says  
I won't amount  
to anything.

They say  
that I can't last a day  
in the  
"Real world";  
I say  
you wouldn't survive  
one night  
in mine.

Joelle Hunt  
CIS  
Robeson County

## Forever

The way we laugh fills me with joy.  
The way we laugh about random words  
or even weird fruit  
will stay with me forever.  
Well yeah they say we're immature  
but those outsiders don't understand  
one day we will all be torn apart  
with different schools and friends.  
When I think of this time  
when we all will be apart,  
I feel all kinds of heaviness in my heart.  
So let's have all the fun we can  
and dread the day as planned.

Jonathan Cooper  
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## Girl at the Window

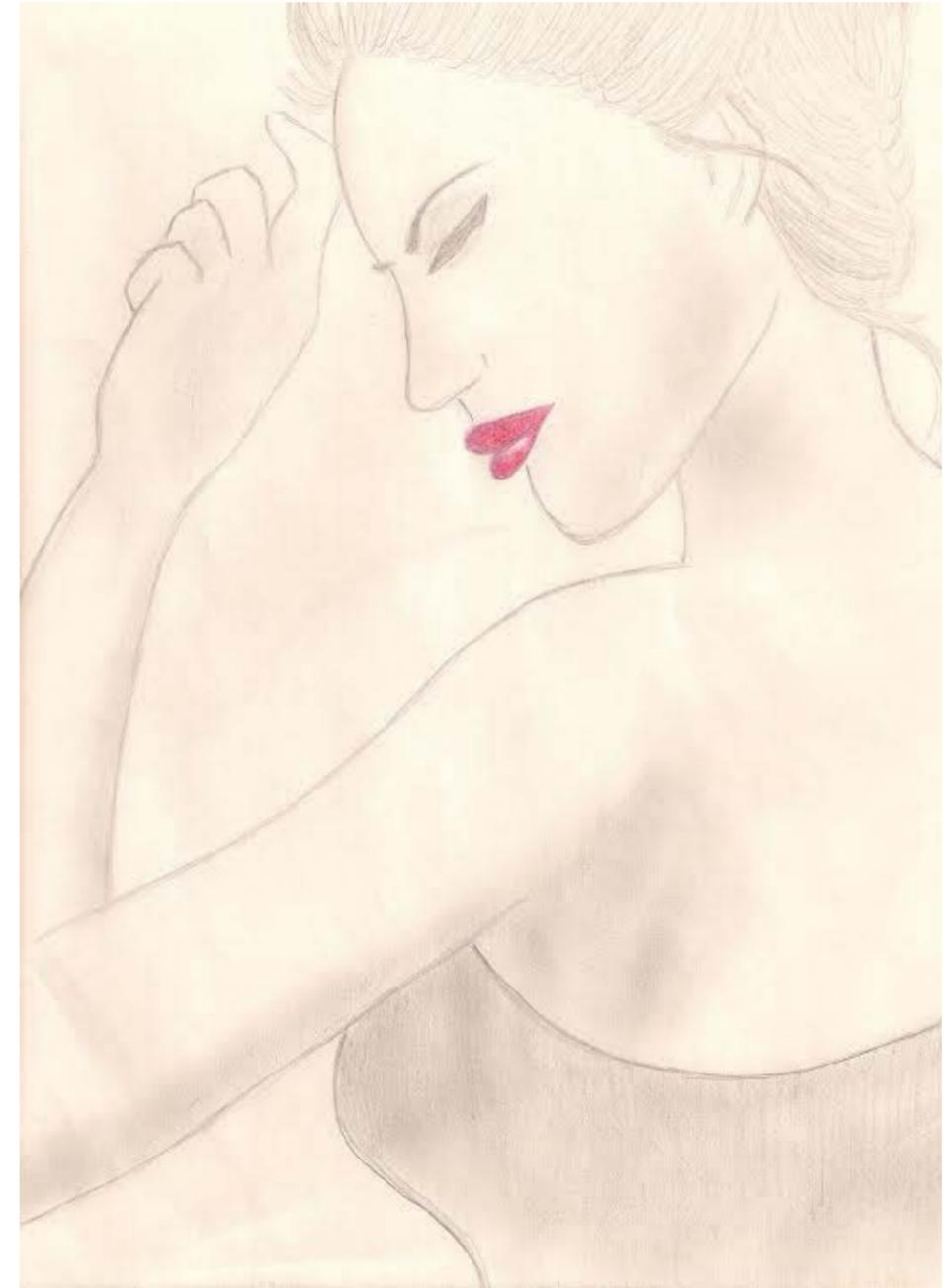
Ever since I was diagnosed, I have not gone outside.  
Oh, How I long to be free of these mundane walls,  
to run free in the fields, to laugh, then to laugh some more.  
I wish to climb and feel the grass between my toes,  
to feel rain upon my lips and face the sun.  
To be healthy and strong  
I don't want to be the Girl at the Window.

But something's happening!  
I feel dizzy, and my legs seem to disappear.  
The floor is cold against my cheek, my head pounds to a drumbeat  
and I am so tired.  
Just one nap, then I can eat and take my medicine.  
Just. For. A. Minute.

Now I'm free, weightless. I run through the greenest fields,  
sweet flowers blossom at my feet.  
The walls are gone and the sun kisses my face, as if to welcome me.  
I can climb, I can jump, I can dance round and round.  
The birds are singing, and a soft breeze blows.  
I am finally free,  
for the Girl at the Window is no more.

Editor's note: this written work was previously posted on Massey Hill Classical High School's Blog at:  
<http://mhchswordsahoy.blogspot.com>

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Mohamed Alsaedi  
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## Islam Is Not Terrorism

Hello, my name is Mohamed Alsaedi. I am a 14 year old Muslim, and I am not a terrorist. Now, I know that most terrorist attacks have happened from Muslims, such as 9/11, the bombing of the Boston marathon, and so on. But just because one group of Muslims try to do something crazy, does not mean a whole religion should be marked as terrorist. In fact some Muslims are actually so against what these groups are doing, that they are risking their lives trying to stop them. Thousands of Muslims have died in the hands of these extremist groups, just to stop them from ruining the name of one of many peaceful religions. So not all Muslims are terrorists, and I will prove my statement here.

For instance, a few days ago a very cruel death was inflicted on a man trying to fly over the Isis base. They shot the plane down, put the man in a cage, and filled the cage with gas, then burned the man to ashes. Now the army of Jordan is so infuriated that they have promised the whole country the destruction of Isis. Another example is the Houthi in Yemen, thousands of Yemeni soldiers have died for the sake of stopping this force. Not only have they died to stop these extremist, they have also died for the sake of the name of Islam. Not even then has the Houthi nor Isis been stopped, but the thousands of men, children, and women have died in the hands of these extremist. The Muslims that are suffering in the hands of

these shameful faces of Islam are still trying, struggling, and even dying for what? For the sake of Islam. Alright, let's move on.

How about the strange looks we Muslims get when we go out in public? People look at us as if we are monsters in disguise. My mother walks out in public with a scarf over her head, not to show a symbol of terrorism but to preserve her beauty for her husband instead of revealing it to the world. She would be cursed at, yelled at, in public, but she pushes through that pain and agony so she may follow her religion no matter what. One night we were out in the mall and this lady walks up to us and starts saying things like "YOU BUNCH OF TERRORISTS" and "I WISH YOU WOULD GO BACK TO YOUR COUNTRY." But guess what? Instead of making a big ruckus, we let it go and just left. Why you may ask? Because we are a very peaceful religion.

So what I'm trying say is that not all Muslims are terrorists. Only Islamic extremist groups are. Islam is marked by terrorism without a reason. It's just because of those groups that are shaming the face of Islam. Because of those groups we Muslims all over the world are suffering and being treated like monsters in disguise. Muslims are not what some people think they are; they're actually the complete opposite of those extremist groups.

Camryn Dwight Locklear  
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## My Favorite Pet

This poem is about my favorite pet;  
I loved him the first day we met.

I was eight years old when we brought him home;  
I was proud to have this beautiful puppy to call my own.

As he grew we knew he was a great addition;  
he always acted like he was on a mission.

He knew how to find and kill a snake;  
he would bite it and give it a big old shake.

He protected me like I was his family;  
he walked beside me like he was my companion.

He thought he was smaller than he really was;  
he would try to sit in our lap as we gave him some love.

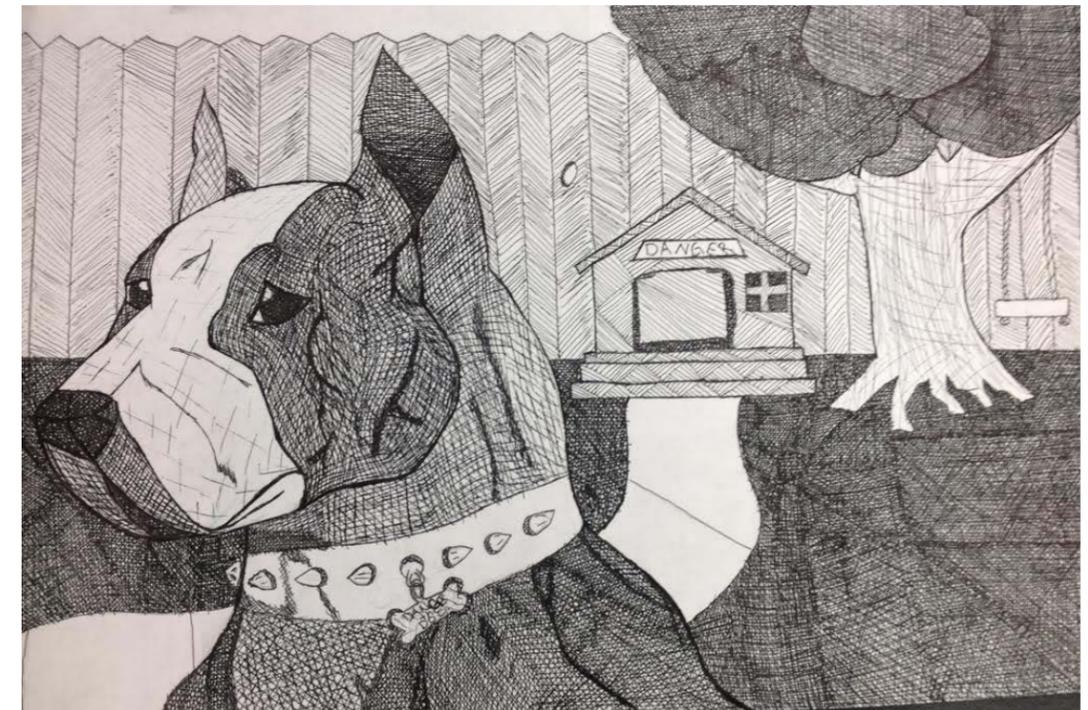
My Grandpa was given his sister, which he loved;  
I was thankful that both puppies could grow up with each other.

I miss Brownie my chocolate lab,  
but I have his sister Ginger for which I am glad.

My Grandpa died not too long ago;  
both are in Heaven and that makes me glad to know.

This is a poem about two things that I love;  
today they both are looking down on me from Heaven above.

Visual Art by:  
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Visual Art by:  
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Madison Rumppe  
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## The Oak Tree

Let me tell you the story of a girl who quietly lived the life that some of us dream of living.

There once was a quiet girl who always kept to herself. She didn't have many friends, but she didn't mind. She spent her days alone in her room, reading, writing, drawing, or whatever she desired on that occasion. She never felt good enough for anyone or anything, much less herself. She wrote countless stories about how she wished she could travel the world, and just escape from reality. Well, one day she felt a bit adventurous, so she grabbed her notebook and pencil, then headed outside. She walked deep into the woods, where she found a shady tree that seemed to call her name. She took her seat beneath that big oak and its beautiful green leaves, then she settled in and began to write. The words flowed from her brain and onto paper like a rushing river of creativity. She smiled at her masterpiece of words, then watched as her smile slowly faded away at the thought that no one will ever read this. "Beauty like this must be shared," she mumbled to herself. But then she packed up her things and headed back home. She confided in her writing, because she didn't really have anyone to turn to when times got rough. She looked to it for everything. No one had ever read her stories, nor could she possibly imagine their reaction. That night she slept on that thought and it continuously ran through her mind until morning.

For the next few days, she went back to her oak tree and wrote. As she was writing, a tear fell from her eye, then another, and soon they were continuously rolling down her cheeks. She wiped away the salty droplets, but they didn't stop. Suddenly she felt a smooth hand on her cheek, and heard a soft voice by her side. "Why are you crying?" the stranger ask.

"It's nothing," She replied with a sniffle, wiping away her tears from her puffy face.

"It must be something, you don't just cry for no reason," The stranger retorted. "Why am I crying?" she thought before she replied.

"Well, stranger, why must you know?" she spoke.

"I've seen you here, you're different, and I find you interesting." The girl did not speak, for she had no words to say, so she just politely smiled in reply. The stranger was a young boy who seemed about her age, with dark hair and bright eyes. His smile was like a glowing ray of sunshine. It could make any person's day, but who was this kind stranger before her?

"I'm Rylee, I live on the other side of the woods, if you were wondering." He smiled, shaking her hand. "I'm Veronica, but you can call me Ronnie." She smiled back. Now, Ronnie wasn't your average teenage hipster. She was a pale faced girl with blonde hair, and baby blues that put the sky to shame. She always tied her hair off into a braid, or some sort of updo. She wore glasses that were always being pushed back towards the bridge of her nose. Rylee took the seat beside her, under that big oak and read as she wrote.

"Please don't read my writing." She stated.

"Why not? Books are written for reader's enjoyment." He laughed, causing Ronnie to giggle to herself. She set her book down to talk with Rylee.

"How did you know I was here?" she ask.

"I too came here to get away, not knowing that I'd find someone else here," he said as he lay down on the grass-covered ground.

"But you seem like the type to be out with friends, you know, not the loser type such as myself," Ronnie replied with sadness evident in her voice.

"Looks can be deceiving." He laughed. "What about you," he asked? "You seem like the type the guys would be all over, the cute artsy girl, so why are you here," he questioned?

"Looks can be deceiving." She snorted, as she adjusted her glasses once again. In fact, she was the complete opposite. They sat there just carrying on in mindless conversation for hours until the night crept in, which meant it was time to head home. They said their goodbyes and went their separate ways.

As days, and even weeks went by, they still met every day at that oak tree. Before they knew it, they had become best friends. Then, it happened. Rylee had talked Ronnie into sharing her stories of the desire for adventure with the world. So she did just that. Her stories were out, and they were now accessible by the internet. To her surprise, people loved them. Because of these stories, these wonderful tales of travel and escape, she got a call. This wasn't just any ordinary call, it was a call that could change her life. This call was from a publishing agency. They wanted to publish her book, and soon. She told Rylee the good news under their oak tree that day, and it was definitely a day to remember. But there is one thing she didn't mention, Which may have been the fact that they are sending her on a round trip, around the world that is.

This was her dream come true, and everything more, but how would she break this to her newly found best friend? This thought troubled her mind, so she decided to write about it like she always

had. That next day when they met at the oak tree, she knew what she had to do.

“I want you to look at a new piece I’m working on, tell me what you think,” She said, sliding him her notebook. The tears began to stain her cheeks as she watched him read. The lump in her throat grew bigger as he turned to her and said, “Ronnie, don’t cry. I’ll be here when you get back. I’m so proud of you, but I’ll miss you.” They both smiled and hugged one another tight as if it were their last embrace.

A week later, Ronnie was all packed up and ready to go. That day they said their last goodbyes, and she was off. It was her journey, the beginning of a new chapter, and nothing could stop her now. When she boarded the plane she opened her notebook to write, and a note fell out. It’s from Rylee, she noticed, and laughed. She unfolded the note and as she began to read it, her heart fell to her stomach. It read:

*Ronnie, if you are reading this, I know you’re sitting on an airplane trying to pass time. Well, here goes... I waited until I knew you were gone to tell you and you’re probably going to kill me for it, but I am very sick. I don’t know if I will be here when you return. I didn’t want to be the one to stop you from living your dream, so I’m telling you now. Sorry you had to find out like this, but please don’t turn around. I’ll always love you Veronica. Always. (P.S.) I’ve actually been on my own adventure, and I called it life. It was wonderful spending it with you. I’ll be okay, don’t worry about me. Enjoy yourself. Adventure awaits you.  
Sincerely, Rylee.*

Reading that note made her want to run back and never leave, but her plane had just taken off. No turning back now.

After almost two years of traveling, she was returning home. As soon as her plane landed, all that was on her mind was him. She

pulled into her driveway and ran through the woods to that old shady oak that held so many memories. When she reached the tree, she fell to her knees. She broke down crying because carved into that tree were the words “I waited.” Two simple words, yet they held such a powerful meaning. Ronnie ran to his house and got the hospital information she needed. She rushed to this hospital and as she walked down the long hall leading to his room the realization hit her that this was all really happening. She knew how she felt and what she had to do. She stopped in front of his door and took in a deep breath. “Here goes nothing,” she mumbled to herself as she turned the handle and stepped through the door. “Ronnie?” Rylee said as enthusiastically as he could while lying in his hospital bed, and turned to face the door. Ronnie rushed to his bedside and kissed him passionately.

“I love you Rylee.” She whispered through her sobs.

“I love you too Ronnie.” He smiled his best smile as a single tear trickled down his face. “Always.”

Rylee died later that year and was buried under the big oak tree in the woods. Carved in the tree above his stone were the words, “The wait is over.” Ronnie eventually got married and had a beautiful baby boy named Rylee after her best friend and first love.

This is the tragic story of two quiet souls, who brought the best out of each other, and whose story lives on forever. It all started with a notebook, a longing for adventure, and an oak tree.

Jenna Nabors  
Massey Hill High School  
Grade 10  
Cumberland County

## Wilted

I used to be a flower  
    Blooming and vivacious  
But now I have wilted  
    Unwanted and fallacious

I used to be the light  
    Bringing along joy  
Now I am the darkness  
    Hope I will destroy

I used to be a tree  
    Growing and alive  
Yet I am now a stump  
    Altered and deprived

Visual Art by:  
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Ky'Shayla McLean  
Hoke County High School  
Grade 12  
Hoke County

## We Are Girls

We are Girls,  
Empowering, strong, open-minded,  
Girls.  
Liars, fakers, sneaky, back-talking,  
Girls.  
Loving, caring, playful,  
Girls.  
Hurtful, emotional, heartbroken,  
Girls.  
Ambitious, fun, different,  
Girls.

Everyday we make a difference.  
Lose a friend,  
gain an enemy.  
Try to be perfect for everyone but yourself,  
when your nothing but human.  
Talking about, hurting, disrespecting each other,  
to find out,  
in the end,  
you're exactly alike.

Not everyone is thick in the hips or the butt,  
so why judge because of it.  
And does being disrespectful make you proud,  
letting your body get touched by boys,  
or being called anything other than your name?!

*We are empowering*

So never be taken advantage of but stand up for yourself.

*We are beautiful*

So always hold your head up high, what are you looking down for?

*We are all somebody*

So never let anyone, not even yourself, make you feel like nothing  
less.

*We are life-changing*

*We make a difference everyday*

*We are amazing, beautiful, wonderful—*

*We are girls!*

Grace Schilling  
Massey Hill High School  
Grade 10  
Cumberland County

## Sound Suit

(Inspired by Soundsult by Nick Cave)

His mind is a mess.  
Yes, he is whole, but torn inside.  
His mind is broken, shattered, bruised.  
He's confused.  
All his thoughts are trapped inside.  
Everything he feels is magnified.

All he can do is smile and act as if society's standards are not poison.  
He grew up being told he was never good enough, now he believes  
it's true.  
He grew up being compared to the superficial people society wants  
us to be.  
He grew up in a world where it's better to "be a man" than it is to  
show apathy.  
He grew up in a world where being rich is the only thing that  
matters.  
He grew up in a world where quantity matters more than quality.  
He grew to fit society's standards.

Now all he is... is a man who thinks little of himself.  
Now all he is... is a man who looks perfect on the outside.  
Now all he is... is a man who shows no compassion.  
Now all he is... is a man who has more money than he needs.  
Now all he is... is a man with friends whom share none of the same  
passions.  
Now all he is... is society's "perfect man."

He knows that perfect is overrated.  
Perfection has tainted him.  
He is exactly what everyone wanted him to be, except happy.

No one thought to ask him who he wanted to be.  
No one encouraged him to be original, to be different.  
No one told him that being unique is what makes us important.

So now, his mind's a mess because his internal conflict is always  
raging.

All he wants to do is speak up. All he wants to be is himself.  
He wants his old friends back, the ones who truly cared how he felt.

As he sits behind his corporate desk, with fake friends on the other  
line, he wishes he were somewhere else. He had once dreamed of  
helping others, and of sharing his love of the world with others.

Sadly, he listened to every little voice he heard telling him to "fit in."  
So now he wishes he hadn't congealed to fit society's ideas of a  
"perfect man."

Editor's note: this poem was Previously Published at <http://mhchswordsahoy.blogspot.com>

Visual Art by:  
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Marcus Johnson  
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Robeson County

## Bull Durham Credo

I believe in the Lord.  
The wisdom of the elders.  
The success.  
The effectiveness of hard work.  
The evil that exists in money.

Death, Mars, and television shows.

I believe in gods of wisdom.  
I believe in the wisdom of my parents.  
I believe in red moons,  
gratitude, gravity, and courtesy.

The biggest person in the world

Reynaldo Reyes-Arroyo  
Massey Hill High School  
Grade 11  
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## We Are the Boat

(For those that want to help others and those who might need a little convincing)

A man, about to drown, able to see the kingdom come  
Said that God's got me, both in peril and in fun  
A man in a boat came to him and said, "I've got your back"  
But the man said no, he said that idea was whack.

That guy... that guy was crazy

He drowned, and he yelled at God, saying "Why didn't you save me?"  
God only looked down, smiling, saying he sent him a boat, that God isn't lazy.  
The man stood there, mouth agape, mind aghast,  
thinking, it's nobody else's fault. It's on me that that moment was my last.

See what I meant? Crazy.

But I go out, I see the sky, the stunning blue or the drab grey,  
I'll see people on the street who wish that they didn't live to see the day. Why should I spend every day in comfort while they, they do not? While we all sit here, complaining about our tiny grievances, they are left to rot.

Absolutely crazy.

I first turned to God, saying "How DARE you leave people on Earth to starve and die?"

I'd go to church; I'd stare down the cross, and look God right in the eye.

When I was alone, I'd yell, but I soon saw that I could try, try, try, because there was no way in Heaven or Hell, on this Earth or the next, that I'd ever get a reply.

How many times do I need to repeat crazy?

But then, in my epidemic of faith, I learned something; I did have the answer.

It was in my face all along, and I sat there ignoring it, so I could throw stones at Jesus, because I thought I was better

God, he sent that boat, because a boat can't pilot itself.

A boat doing that is about as ridiculous as a boxing match between Pacquiao and an elf.

That'd be pretty crazy too.

No, God sent more than that boat, because in that boat was a person, a conduit, an instrument.

In that moment I saw that life is an orchestra, and we are all instruments; that to live we have to lend.

That man died, not because he was abandoned, but because he didn't reach for the right hand of his fellow man.

We are ALL humans, black and white, man and woman, cis or trans.

I'm sure for some, that idea is pretty crazy.

Now, when I walk out I see a world where opportunity is stricken by those who are fearful.

Where, please tell me, WHERE can the world go if the fearful are the powerful?

The power needs to be put in the hands of those who accept, those who can accept without even a trace of regret.

The whole crazy thing is going somewhere.

We are all instruments, humans, people, and hands.

And we are tasked to live and love, throughout EVERY land.

That is your duty, and it is harder than most, but one day, we can tell the world that we said and wrote:

Let's be the people who pilot the boat.

This all sounds pretty crazy,  
and I'm sure my idea will face perversion and blight  
but I know it will stand strong, and weather any foe,  
for I am right.

Visual Art by:  
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Fairmont High School  
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Ruben Gonzalez  
Massey Hill High School  
Grade 10  
Cumberland County

## First Line Story

I am parked in a rental car in front of the house where I grew up. It's a bit strange how I got here, but I'm not here to reminisce on my lovely childhood memories of this house. I am actually here for a completely different reason.

It all started in fourth period when my friends and I were playing truth or dare. It was my turn and I didn't want to seem like the guy who would always pick truth, so I picked a dare. Of course my friends took their time to look around the room to think of a dare that would truly embarrass me. So finally, they dared me to ask out Valerie. Now she was the cliché hot girl in the school; head cheerleader, popular, perfect everything. When I heard the dare I immediately wanted to back out, but I didn't want to seem like a chicken so I foolishly accepted.

I slowly walk up to Valerie, and as I'm walking I tripped over my shoelace and fell flat to my face. I got back up with the small shred of dignity I still had left, and kept walking. I got to her desk and immediately started to panic. "So umm... You come here often?" At this moment I began to mentally beat myself up for such a ridiculous question. She replied with, "Yeah, I come here an hour and a half a day for ninety days." I laughed a little and I felt a little eased from her response. I asked her if she wanted to go hang out some time, and she said yes. In my natural sense I said, "oh okay I completely understand, wait...What?" She gave me a piece of paper with

an address and phone number. I took it without looking and shoved it in my pocket and walked off.

Class ended, and everybody went home. I got home and sat on the couch; I frantically pulled the piece of paper out and read it. She said to meet her there at 5:30P.M. I asked my mom to take me to a rental car place so I can get a decent car to drive. I found the coolest looking car that I could afford. I got home, took a shower, got dressed, and checked the time. It was only 4:00, so I sat on my couch and waited. I ended up falling asleep. When I woke up it was 5:45! I rushed out the door and drove to the address. As I'm driving through the neighborhood, I began to recognize all of the houses. I pulled up to the house and parked. I was too scared to get out, so I waited. Three hours passed by and I begin to cry. I remembered that there was a phone number so I called it. Anxiously waiting for a response, I heard a very raggedy, scratchy voice answer the call. "Hello? Who is this!?" in panic I hang up. Then I saw a very old woman step out of the front door. Frightened I tried to pull out, but instead drove forward and ran over the old lady. In a rush I backed out and drove off.

Just a future tip to all geeks out there: If you ask a really hot girl out on a date and she says yes, most likely, chances are, it's a stick up and you'll probably run over an old lady. Good Luck.

Visual Art by:  
Adrian Perez  
Fairmont High School  
Grade 12  
Robeson County



Michelle Sweatt  
Massey Hill High School  
Grade 11  
Cumberland County

## The Fox

Swift and agile,  
he weaved through the crowded  
airport to board his flight.  
He was a traveler.  
He couldn't stay in a single place  
for more than  
2 months.  
He took photos from the  
plane window to  
capture life the way it was in  
that very moment.  
Departing the plane,  
he grabbed his luggage  
and dashed into the  
forest of people and buildings.

Margot Hunt  
Fairmont High School  
Grade 10  
Robeson County

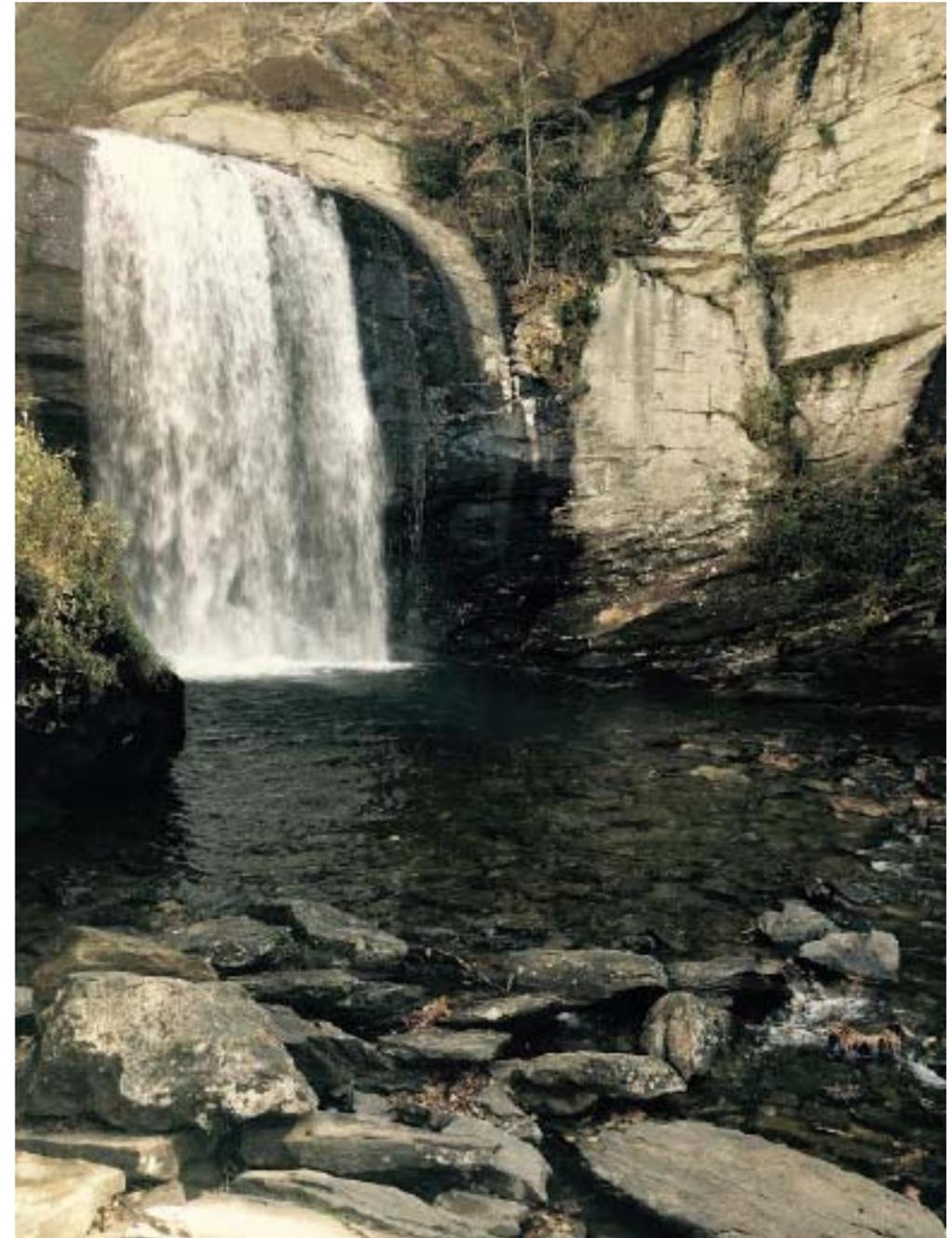
## Run On

Run away to the water.  
Keep your feet away.  
When you reach the end,  
don't let it be too late.  
Far too fast, and far away,

In the river,  
don't go too close,  
don't touch it at all.  
If you go too far,  
you just might fall.  
If you dare I will help you up,  
follow the flow as well as the road.

Don't fall in,  
keep swaying,  
just the way you're drifting.  
Don't go away fast,  
even though you're in a raft.  
There's a mountain,  
at the end, where,  
you only find,  
you've just begun.

Visual Art by:  
Lindsey Britt  
Fairmont High School  
Grade 12  
Robeson County



Darian Hunt  
South Robeson High School  
Grade 11  
Robeson County

## Society

Is this how I should feel? The way others make me feel?  
Is this how I should look?  
The way they want me to look?  
Is this what we have morphed into—  
people who judge based on their ideas of "right" and "wrong?"  
If we are all created equal, and all bleed  
the same red blood, then who should judge us?  
Why do we let them?  
Who should have that power over us?  
Who should make me feel like I'm a misfit  
in an equal world?

Visual Art by:  
Reva Locklear  
Fairmont High School  
Grade 11  
Robeson County



Savannah Alyss Locklear  
CIS  
Grade 8  
Robeson County

## Jumping to the Clouds

Sometimes I wonder.  
Maybe I wonder about why I can never touch the clouds when I  
jump.  
But yet I keep jumping.  
As if one day I will.

When I jump I like to close my eyes.  
It's almost like time freezes.  
I feel the wind underneath my outstretched arms and open fingers.  
It's like I've jumped much higher than Mother Nature allowed.  
When my feet touch the ground, I bend my knees and spring again.  
But this time I try to go higher.  
Higher than ever!

Visual Art by:  
Juanita Martinez  
Fairmont High School  
Grade 11  
Robeson County



Visual Art by:  
Mariah Octavia Kirkwood  
South Robeson High School  
Grade 12  
Robeson County



Maria Reid  
Massey Hill High School  
Grade 9  
Cumberland County

## Sound Suit

I wish there was a suit  
that I could sew with my Singer  
that could protect me from the unkind words of others  
because,  
surely,  
it is better to hear nothing at all  
than to face such agony  
from the cruel words that leave your lips.

Camryn Dwight Locklear  
CIS  
Grade 8  
Robeson County

## My Papa Taught Me a Lot

My Papa Hallman has taught me a lot that I will never forget.  
I try to listen and do my best so now I have no regret.

My Papa loves to be outside and always finds something to do,  
even when things did not work, he thought "that won't do".

I have learned from my Papa with patience and time,  
that things could be fixed without losing your mind.

He is not afraid to work on anything he owns and  
he will not give up until his light bulb comes on.

Our family made up a word that describes what he will do;  
not afraid to fix what does not work like new.

If you borrowed something that Papa had worked on,  
my family would joke "he has made this his own."

After using it a short time, you quickly realized,  
"This has been *Hallmanized*."

*Hallmanize* is not a word that is well known,  
but a man as smart as my Papa deserved a word of his own.

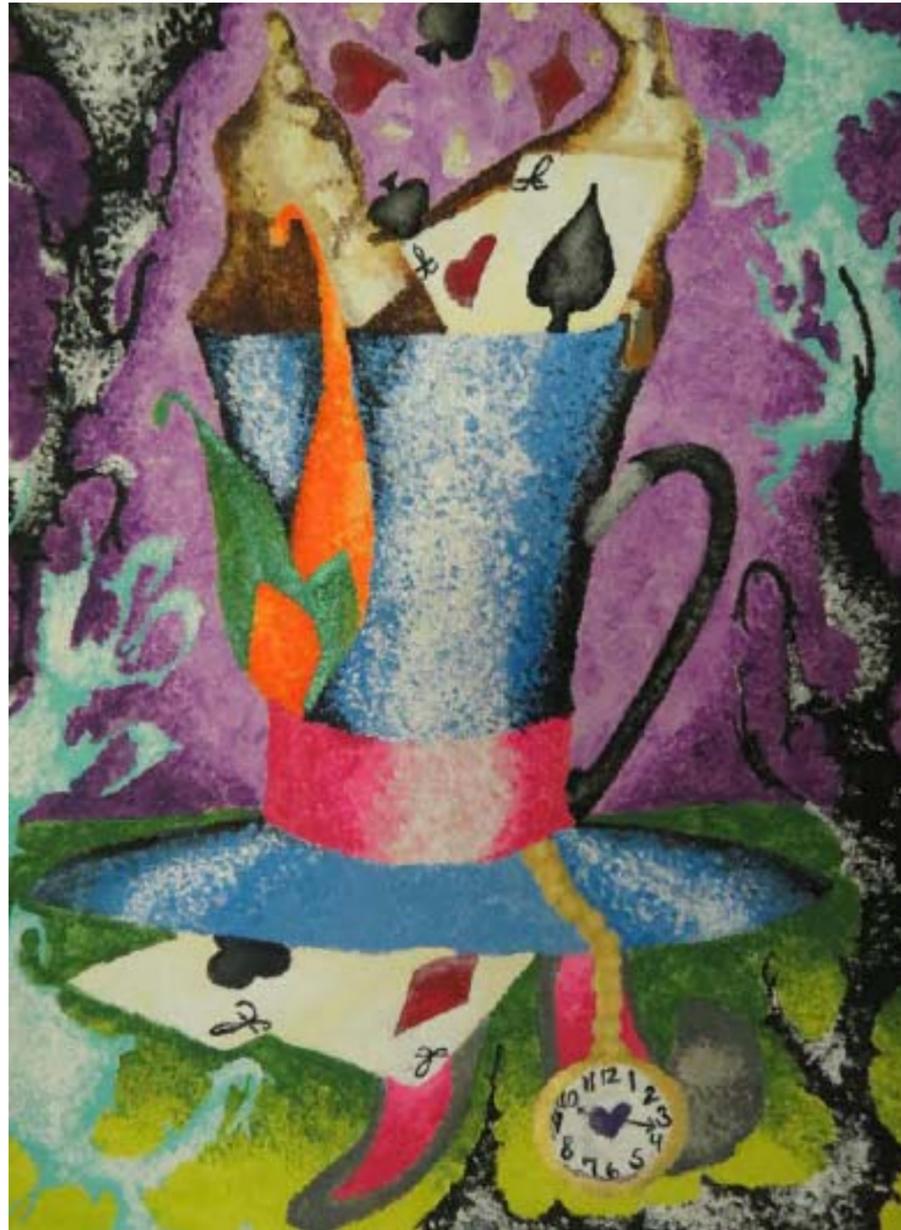
*Hallmanize* is a word that to me means don't give up,  
work hard, think hard, and you will eventually get things to work.

My Papa is gone now and I think of him a lot.  
Thankfully, I have wonderful memories to hold in my heart

Visual Art by:  
Carly Godwin  
South Columbus High School  
Grade 11  
Columbus County



Visual Art by:  
Katelyn Bass  
Fairmont High School  
Grade 11  
Robeson County



Jacenta Wallingford  
West Hoke Middle School  
Grade 8  
Hoke County

## NADALA

In this short story there are several things that should be explained. For instance, the names for the 9 fox pups are Native American and all mean something.

### MALE NAMES

**Noshi:** Father (Algonquin), this is the alpha male

**Antiman:** Is a Mapuche name meaning condor of the sun  
(condor means vulture)

**Aponivi:** Hopi name meaning where the wind blows down the gap

**Askuwhteau:** Algonquin name meaning he keeps watch

**Bidziil:** Navajo name meaning he is strong

### FEMALE NAMES

**Hehewuti:** warrior mother spirit (Hopi), this is the alpha female

**Abedabun:** Chippewa name meaning sight of day

**Achak:** Algonquin name meaning spirit

**Adsila:** Cherokee name meaning blossom

**Aiyanna:** tribe unknown; means eternal blossom

**Akecheta:** Sioux name meaning fighter

**Natasha:** wolf friend

### WOLF FACT

Scratching and pawing- Wolves are known to paw or scratch the ground and/or trees. This may release odors from glands in the paws.

## NADALA

The snow is so beautiful, it falls in random patterns. I learned just a week ago, that no snowflake is the same. They are all different. On their own journeys, living their own lives. \*Sigh\* I guess I have to explain myself to you. I'm Nadala, a human female, I live in Juneau, Alaska and this is my story. It began 14 years ago.

I remember the snow was lying on the trees like a soft white blanket that pieces dissipated off of when you touched it. I could have slept there when Hehewuti called me back into the cave with the rest of the pack. See, I live in the bountiful woods with a pack of foxes, 11 to be exact. They raised me, nurtured me, kept me alive. They were my family.

I followed Hehewuti back into the cave. There were two adults and nine pups, ten if you included me. Hehewuti (the alpha female) had found me in the snow when I was little. I was no more than a pup she said. After Hehewuti found me, lying in the snow, she had to leave. She couldn't bear to leave me in the cold, she would say- I had no fur! So, she brought me to Noshi (the alpha male). For a night and a day they discussed me and what was to be done about me. Finally, after a day he allowed me to stay.

Hehewuti cared for me like her own pup. She found some skin coverings that belonged to humans, which she said that they wore. They were hairless creatures that wore coverings made of some indescribable material since they didn't have fur of their own. I asked her about it once, about what I was. She just snorted and said "You are a fox, of course." "But," I said. "I sound like the humans you-." "You're a fox! You always have been and always will be!" she snapped. For fear of angering her, I never asked the question again and accepted her answer without complaint.

Ten years later, I met another pack of foxes. They looked

strange. They only had 1 tail instead of nine like Hehewuti and Noshi. Not to mention they were smaller as well. When I asked Hehewuti she told me that they were lesser foxes. They had shorter lives and weren't as strong or big as they were. Not to mention that nine-tailed foxes could hunt and successfully capture animals that wolves usually hunted. While she told me this I looked hard at her muzzle. She looked exactly the same as she did all those years ago. Her pelt still had a deep, dark, red luster as her gold eyes twinkled with the setting sun's reflective shine in them. I was baffled and intrigued by this new development and soon became engrossed in trying to figure out how to change myself into the nine-tailed fox I knew I was inside.

A year later Hehewuti and Noshi had a litter of nine pups, 4 male and 5 female. Antiman, Aponivi, Askuwhteau, and Bidziil were the males. Abedabun, Achak, Adsila, Aiyanna, and Akecheta were the females. They never seemed to tire before the sun was replaced with the moon in the sky. They were very cute, especially when they slept. They always seemed to snuggle together.

Four more years passed. The pups were still in the pup stage. Being nine-tailed foxes, they would be this small for a while which I relished with obvious delight. This year I was 60 seasons old (15 years x the 4 seasons). The years that passed were happy. This year was special, though, because I was of age and could finally hunt with Hehewuti and Noshi. This was causing much anxiety, however, because this would be the first time we would be away from the pups for as long as it would take for us to hunt, which could take the whole night.

This problem was solved, however, when we asked if Natasha would care for them. Natasha was a wolf, strangely enough. We had met her one night after smelling a distinct scent that was only made

by wolves when they pawed at the ground. When we met her she was scared and alone. When we asked her where she came from she only replied with: "Russia". Of course, we didn't know what this meant so we asked her about it. She told us it was a place far from here. Separated by a large blue river that seemed to last for weeks on end. She said her mate had come here but she had lost him. We were so sorry for her loss that we allowed her to live in a cave not far from ours. We became great friends.

I watched Hehewuti and Noshi pace. It was dreadful to watch. This would be a long night. Too soon the moon had appeared from behind the clouds. We said our goodbyes and left quickly for fear of forfeiting the hunt and staying. After about an hour, we found a big elk. As we crept toward it, Hehewuti and Noshi's ears were pulled back, their bellies dragging against the ground as they lowered themselves to keep from being seen. I followed their example and lowered myself to the ground.

I couldn't believe I was hunting, this was so exciting; creeping forward as a single body; not one step misplaced, so silent, we couldn't hear ourselves. The wind was pushing our scents back and away from the elk. The conditions were perfect for a hunt.

I looked to Noshi and didn't look away. I watched him silently until he looked back. I knew he could see-in my eyes-what I wanted. It was to take down this elk and to relish in the success of the hunt. I saw him give me permission. I grinned and crept forward ever so slowly. The elk raised its head from where it was grazing. Its ears were pulled forward. It looked around it and ran. Before I could go chasing after it, a light set on the woods.

I heard Noshi and Hehewuti run back to the cave but I just sat there mesmerized. The animal that held the light was walking on two legs-like me. When it stepped closer I saw that it had other

characteristics that I had as well, even though it was obviously a male. He had no fur, except for the top of his head. He had no tail, and his claws weren't sharp or long.

He walked forward-the light now gone-and stopped. He turned slowly and looked at me. We stayed like that for a while until he started making sounds, pointing, and gesturing in ways that I didn't understand, but I came to realize that he was pointing at me and saying "I know you. Don't move." He looked down and quietly pulled something out of his strange skin covering that resembled the coverings I wore. He showed whatever it was to me, and I was surprised. It looked like me. It was glossy and looked like I was looking into a river at my reflection. I didn't know what he was saying, and I just lay in the grass like I had been since before he had come. I now know, that he had said that the mayor of Juneau's daughter had been lost for 14 years now, and that the computer had generated an image of what she would look like now. I looked exactly like the image. At the time I didn't know, but this encounter would pull me into a world for which I wasn't sure I was ready.

## About the Literacy Commons' The River

The Literacy Commons publishes *The River* annually. *The River* showcases the creative (written and visual) endeavors of Robeson County (and adjacent counties) Public Schools' 6th – 12th grade students. Here in Volume 2, we are delighted to continue showcasing the creative talents of the great students in our region.

## Looking Ahead/Call for Submissions

*The River* publishes annually in April/May. For Volume 3, we will be accepting submissions from September 14th through January 17th of 2015 – 2016. In order for us to cater to a wide range of submissions, please continue to circulate this call for submissions widely. To learn more about *The River* and our submission guidelines, please visit: <http://www.uncp.edu/academics/outreach/literacy-commons/current-projects-and-programs/river-literary-project>.

## Sponsorship and Donations

The University of North Carolina, Pembroke (UNCP) has provided us with initial funding that has allowed us to move forward with this publication; as well, the Literacy Commons functions as part of UNCP's Engaged Outreach and hopes to continue to function and be funded under this umbrella. However, funds will always be limited. The Literacy Commons will always appreciate any sponsorship or donations. To learn more about how to sponsor and donate to the Literacy Commons, please visit: <http://www.uncp.edu/academics/outreach/literacy-commons/donations-and-gifts>.

## A Final Note on Behalf of The River's Editorial Staff

### *The Literacy Commons and The River*

The Literacy Commons is unique! We are driven by UNCP's students. With this, it's no surprise that this literary project is lead by an editorial staff encompassing UNCP students. These students come from vastly different cultural backgrounds with different academic majors ranging from elementary education to biology; these students worked diligently with planning, soliciting, laying-out, and implementing this Volume 2 of *The River*. Without these students, this editorial staff, *The River* ceases to exist. This is a testament to and of the cohesion of the Literacy Commons—and this current publication of *The River*.

### *A Note to the Students Published in this Current Volume*

We want to thank the students whose work is published here in this journal. Without your submissions, there is no journal. Your work is much appreciated, and we are extremely grateful for your work. Thank you.

### *A Continued Thanks to the Public Schools of Robeson County*

Throughout our endeavors to continue publishing *The River*, we want to thank Tasha Oxendine—and all of the educators who have helped connect their students' work with that of *The River*. We hope you continue to do so in the future.

*Thank You to The Kiwanis Club of Robeson-Lumberton*

Thank you for your \$5,000 donation to the Literacy Commons. Much of your donation has helped to promote this journal and continues to help with many of the Literacy Commons' outreach projects and programs. Thank you!

*A Final Note on Reciprocity*

Together we impact Robeson County (and our surrounding region). Without this support and sense of reciprocity, our work flounders in the shadows of mere theory and speculation. It should always be, collectively, our mission to engage our community with that of UNCP's students, faculty, and staff—and vice versa. And it is through this sense of reciprocity, volunteerism, and collective engagement—where it is we can continue to foster the development of literacy.

On behalf of *The River's* editorial staff, we thank you all.  
Sincerely,

David Marquard  
—the founding director of the Literacy Commons and assistant professor at UNCP

## Editorial Staff of *The River*

Sarah Austin is a junior at UNCP. She is a member of Kappa Delta Sorority and serves on their executive board as Vice President of Community Service. After graduating with her degree in Public Relations, she plans to pursue a career in event planning. She is from Whiteville, NC and plans to move to Florida after graduation.

Jacob Brown is a sophomore, Elementary Education major with a Reading concentration. He is from Burlington, NC. At the Literacy Commons, he is involved with *The River*, *The Voice*, and has volunteered at Oxendine Elementary School. He is also a member of Literacy Commons Advisory Council.

Stephanie Brown is a junior at UNCP with a major in Mathematics. After graduation she hopes to become a naval officer.

Brandi Guffey is a sophomore Biology major at UNCP with a concentration in the field of Zoology. She is a member of the Esther G. Maynor Honors College and is a class representative for the Student Honors Council. Within the Literacy Commons she is involved in Athletic Connections, and is the designer of *The River*. Upon graduation, Brandi hopes to pursue her Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine degree in Zoo Veterinary Medicine.

Zachary R Lunn is a junior attending UNCP. He served two tours in Iraq as a combat medic. After graduating with a Biology degree, Zachary plans to pursue a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing.

## Editorial Staff of The River

Dr. David Marquard is an assistant professor at UNCP and the founding director of the Literacy Commons. His Ph.D. is in Rhetoric and Composition from the University of Nevada, Reno.

Marcos Simon is a junior and is studying Social Studies Secondary Education. He has had a passion for learning and sharing the information he learned with anyone he comes into contact with. His service in the Literacy Commons ranges from acting as parliamentarian in weekly meetings to acting as assistant director of Athletic Connections.

## The Literacy Commons' Mission Statement:

The Literacy Commons is dedicated to promoting the plurality of literacies through cooperation and reciprocity among those who live, work, and attend school in our region. For us, literacy encompasses and engages the ability to create, read, and use various texts for multiple purposes in multiple settings, from understanding the instructions on the back of a medicine bottle to writing a novel to interacting with web-based digital media. Through participant-centered classes and workshops, individualized tutoring, and inspiring and enriching community events and collaborations, The Literacy Commons fosters, advances, and sustains the development and continuation of literacy.

