

Saint Basil Academy



Laureate 2019

City of Sisterly Love



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POETRY





We Fight

Erin O'Reilly '20

Ruth, Maya, Malala, Michelle
Our sisters, hand in hand, fists in air

We fight

Oprah, Beyonce, Madonna, Marilyn
Who challenged rules and stereotypes of our society

We fight

Not just for those who need liberation;
For equal compensation of same work done by men

We fight

Not just for those who have been injured by toxicity;
For victims of sexual assault, women AND men

We fight

Not just for every woman who doesn't feel safe in her home;
For the young girls forced into marriage against their own wills

We fight

For those to empower the future of female leaders;
For all women to have equal opportunities for education

We fight

Because we shouldn't feel inferior to anyone;
Because of the dignity that each and every person is born with

We fight

Black, Hispanic, Asian, White
What's Feminism without intersectionality?

We fight

So that we can DREAM CRAZY, do what we love, and choose our own destiny.

The Mystery of Life

Lauren Courtney '20

From the blue light peeking through the white mist, I know that there is more.
From the silent wind blowing against the green trees, I know that for sure.
There is something beyond this atmosphere that we have not yet found.
Our purpose is a mystery, but you shall not go seeking for it will come around.
Life can be resistant, as it is both unfair yet beautiful.
But with a strong conscience and a head held high it can be quite meaningful.
I know it can be hard to face the truth and do what's best.
But to do what's best will put you above the rest.
Learn to face your fears, it might be hard, yet rewarding.
As you face these fears, whether it is letting go or saying goodbye, you are maturing.
Never let the lust of life's advantages get in the way of what makes you 'you.'
For your beauty lights up the world, and if they don't see that then they've no value.
And if my words of wisdom do not help you see through this season,
Always remember that everything happens for a reason.

Going on a Run

Julie Mayer '20

Breathing in the fresh air,
Running through the woods,
The path was clear and the sun was shining above.
Sweat dripping down her forehead,
Music blasting in her headphones,
Accompanied by the birds chirping.
Looking ahead at the bright green trees,
Feeling the leaves crunch beneath her sneakers.
Breathing the scent of a neighboring barbeque.
Feeling the breeze brush against her skin.
Quickening her pace to push her limits.
Cushioned by the soft dirt path.
Looking at the glistening stream crossing her path.
Releasing out a smile at the happiness rushing through her.
Experiencing the best feeling in the world.

What Sisterhood Can Hold

Kelly Grant '20

Let's be truthful, thoughtful
And thankful for each other
Because in high school time flies
You have to make the most of your four years

When things seem bad
And you can't find the good
There is always comfort to be found in our sisterhood

Let's spread positivity
Or say nothing at all.
Let's lift each other up
Never make each other fall

Let's make the memories
And we can never leave them behind
Because in high school time flies
You have to make the most of your four years

You will always remember high school
Even when you are old
You will tell your children the stories
Of what truthful, thoughtful, and thankful sisterhood can hold



Sisterhood is Forever
Kayleigh Nuyianes '20

There comes a time when we all must graduate and face the real world.
We have to leave our small school and break out of our "Basil bubble."
We will say goodbye to our loved ones and learn to be on our own.
Choosing where to go could impact the rest of our lives,
In good ways and bad.
What we must remember is that our sisters will be by our side,
No matter what schools we attend.
We may not be together physically, but our sisters will always be there.
Basil sisters are our sisters for the rest of our lives,
So soon we must leave SBA, and then watch each other strive.

From Then To Now

Lauren Ems '20

I've known you since the day that I was born
Joking and laughter fill my childhood
"I'll take you on my bike," you've always sworn
Your tricks I'd learn all day just if I could
"Laur Laur" was my nickname from you to me
You taught me to be down-to-earth and kind
The picture of me kissing your red cheek
There's not a day that does not cross my mind
I've grown up right in front of your blue eyes
The past few months were nothing but the worst
Don't think I'll ever want to say goodbye
The medicine just wants to make you burst
But Grandma's prayers, they work like none before
They'll kick that cancer right through the damn door



Candy Store

Jessica Keenan, '19

candy coated skies with
cotton candy clouds
sweet on the eyes but
bad for my health
sugar on my tongue
rotting at my teeth
too much of a good thing
isn't always what it seems
licorice wheel boy
dripping honey into my ear
but he stung like a bee
then sunk in the loneliness I feared
the sugary sweet sighs
contaminating my mouth
oh, so sweet on the eyes
but bad for my health

Saddles and Sisterly Love

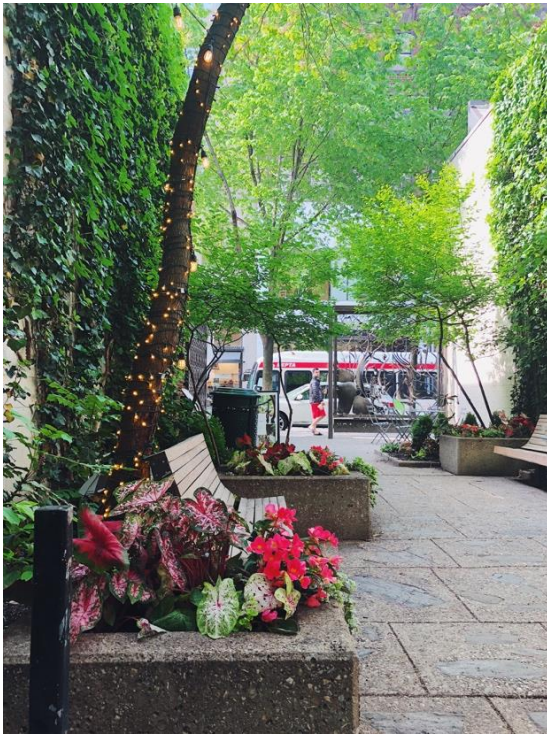
Erin Drumm '19

Saddles on top of lockers
And sweaters with elbow holes
Watching on the sidelines of soccer
Cheering on my sisters' goals
Hoping to stay here as long as I can
But also anxious to leave
Showing that a woman can do better than a man
And getting a few new tricks up my sleeve
Learning to lead without any fear
Shouting for the blue and the gold
Remembering to cherish every year
Knowing the first time you it, your heart was officially sold
Having friends that trust you in which you can confide
Realizing that this school was a gift from above
Standing by your sisters while they stand by your side
And living the magic of Basil's sisterly love

Springtime

Jessica Keenan '19

a small bud
sprouting from a vine
pushing through the
weeds that shield
transforming into
a blossoming beauty
able to stand on
its own



Emily DeMarshall '19.

Northeast Philadelphia

Jessica Keenan '19

Childhood is exhilarating
Like games of freedom
as we race to hide
our little bodies
between houses
with other children
from the neighborhood

Childhood is the smell
of freshly cut meat
inside Mom and Pop
grocery shops
that makes their home on
every corner.

Childhood is freezing
My brain on
Cherry water ice
And soothing the ache
With the saltiness of a
Pretzel

Childhood is not
knowing the navigation
to which we were heading
but knowing we
never wanted to
leave

The Great Outdoors

Meg McMonagle '20

The season was warm.
The breeze was fresh.
Branches shivered as breeze brushed up against the bark.
Leaves and flowers danced through the air after leaving their homes forever.
Girl sat on the grass.
Her silky hair blew in the wind.
Her finger tips caressed the air with grace.
The air was warm.
Grass twirled as it swam through the air.
The clouds gazed down at the earth, watching
The blue sky embodied the school of clouds swimming amongst it.
Boy stood on the dirt road.
His baggy shirt was filled with the cool wind.
The damp dirt hugged his toes and pulled him closer to the ground.
The air was warm.

Spring Fever

Morgan Shissler '20

As the colors shine bright during the change of spring
The florid weather makes another heart sing.
The trees start to change from brown to green
Making the outside nature look pretty and clean.
Yellow tulips everywhere begin to bloom
Which will make their bright colors visible from every room.
The smell of freshly cut grass is omnipresent
Making time outside very pleasant.
Driving with the music blaring and the windows down
Urges us to want to endlessly drive around town.
Spring is here but summer is soon
Almost time for the days when we sleep until noon.
It's just a short few weeks until school is almost over
And after then the shore will have a takeover.
For now, we just enjoy our time with our good old friend spring
And treasure all the joy that it will bring.

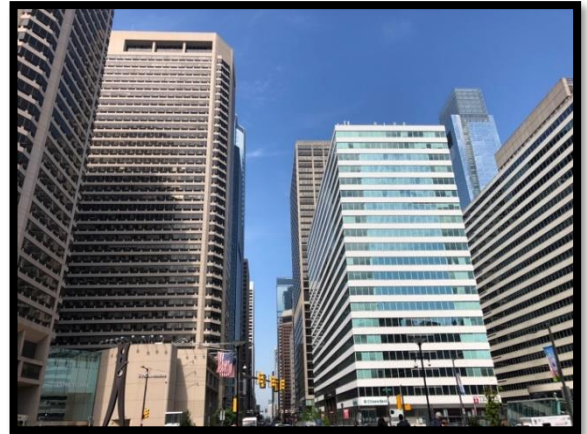
Ode to Philadelphia (haiku)

Jessica Keenan '19

The flow of traffic
Underneath the skyline
Is where I call home



**Photography by
Emily DeMarshall**



Philadelphia Limerick

Lauren Ems '20

Philadelphia is the city of love.
Where the angels look up from above.
Everyone puts their wish in a jar,
But no one seems to go too far,
From Philadelphia, the city of love.

People think that it's all about crime.
That is not what is in the fan's minds.
We may have Philly accents,
And we love this place one-hundred percent,
In Philadelphia, you'll have a good time.

Why

Edna Cassell, '20

I am a woman,
A female by birth.
This word has been beaten down,
Shrunk down, and broken down

Why?

The woman carrying her baby down the street
Proud that she brought a human into the world
Happy to put her life and love
Into someone who could better this chaotic society.
Yet she is beaten down when she tries to nourish them.

Why?

The woman who smiles at everyone
And who hasn't hurt a fly.
She who has only given herself and love to others,
Is put into submission and hurt by the man in her life

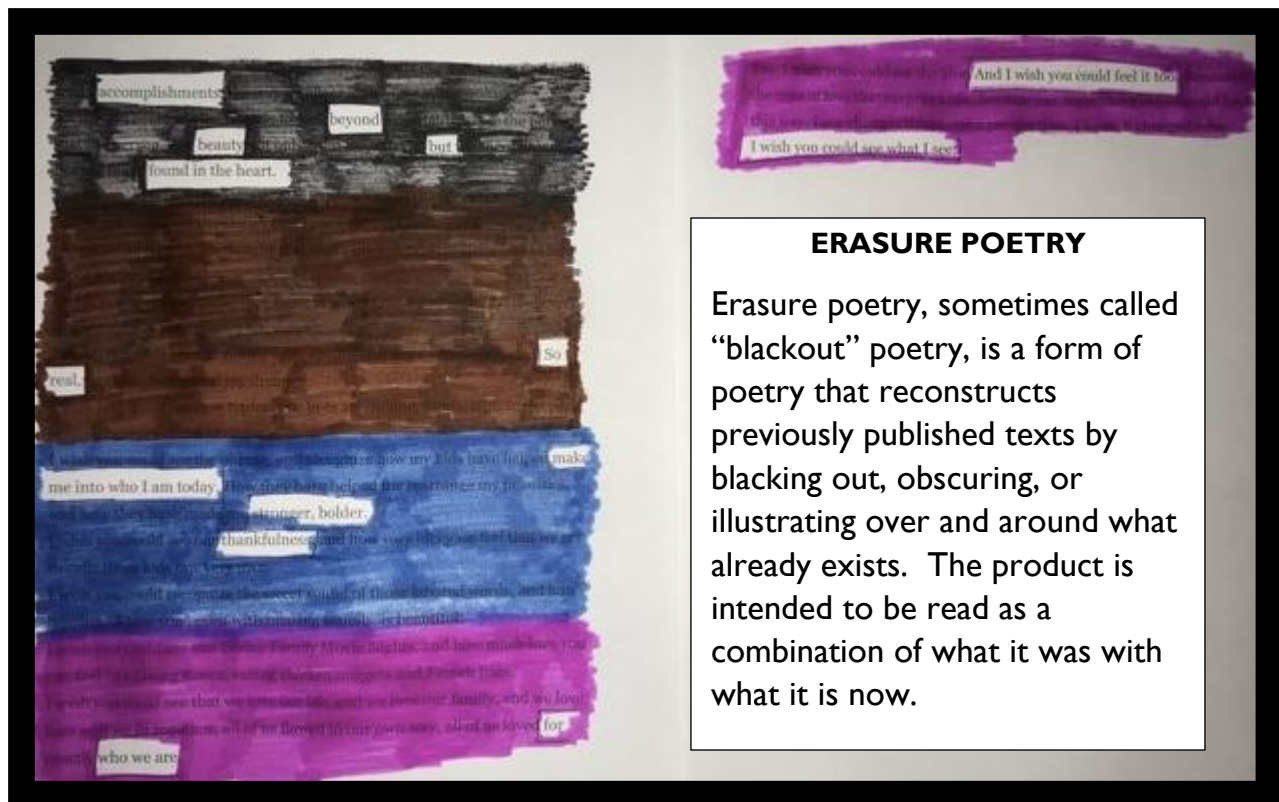
Why?

The woman who fights for her basic rights,
Who speaks her voice and her mind,
Who works just as hard as every man,
Still is treated as less and paid even less

Why?

Why, has to change.
Why, changes now.

Abigail Fox '19



Dog Haiku

Arianna Torres, '19

Tiny dog, sharp bark,
Small paws, running and jumping.
Little puppy friend.

Dog Limerick

Arianna Torres '19

Puppy dog running around
I smile when you make a sound
Barks and howls
Yips and growls
It makes my heart leap and bound.

Somewhere on a Beach

Maria Storck '20

The sand was bright and hot
With a sea of blue behind
Remembrance of that very spot
Sitting on that chair reclined
All I know is relaxation,
With no communication.

A day of fishing in the sea,
The sky was polished like glass
Sitting on one knee
Trying to catch a bass
I know it's not rocket-science
Wish the fish would show some compliance.

Warmth fills the air,
The sun smiles back at me
As the wind blows through my hair,
My face fills with glee.
An afternoon in July,
Never will I cry.

The ocean roared like a lion,
While lying in the sand
Of course, I'll buy in
The days are not planned
But I'll be back for the show,
Some day when the tide is low.

PROSE



What I Like Best

Abigail Fox, '19

Most children are curious and indecisive about all things in their lives. I can say I did, and sometimes still do, fit that stereotype in everything except one aspect of my life – my career. As a naïve six-year-old girl at kindergarten graduation in my old grade school gymnasium, I trotted up the stage stairs, reached up to the microphone, and proudly declared to a large crowd of brothers, sisters, parents, and grandparents that I wanted to be a teacher when I grew up.

Ever since I can remember, I have wanted to be a teacher, but one experience particularly opened my eyes to the challenging and rewarding world of special education. In sixth grade, I volunteered with my dad and brother at a Special Olympics baseball event. My dad has worked with special needs adults since I was a baby, and as I grew up, he allowed me to have multiple opportunities for volunteering at events like Special Olympics. That morning when I woke up, I did not know the lasting impact this event would have on me. I walked into the baseball training facility echoing with excited parents and children eager to take on the day ahead of them, and realized in that moment that this day was going to be special.

I was given a group to lead and learned the names of each member. The group was diverse, with kids of different ages, genders, and special needs. Together, we went through the stages of the event: catching and fielding balls, hitting balls, and running the bases. I bonded with each kid in my group, but there is one boy I remember specifically, a little boy named Jake with Down Syndrome, who was the local police baseball team's bat boy. Jake was everyone's friend. His

personality was like that of a puppy: fun-loving, optimistic, and ready to learn. His personality lit up the room. Every person there was life-loving, optimistic, and carefree, despite the struggles they faced due to their disabilities. They were genuinely excited to learn about the game and were eager to step out of their comfort zones to participate.

I remember this day vividly because I loved every minute of it. I was there to help the kids learn, but in the end, they were the ones that taught me. They taught me patience and determination, to never give up no matter the obstacles, and to keep trying no matter how long it takes. They taught me to work hard and hustle because it will allow you to succeed. They taught me the importance of benevolence and compassion, to help others and treat everyone with respect and kindness. Most importantly, they taught me to love life and to keep learning. That one day I spent with that remarkable group of kids provided me with direction for a lifetime.

The priceless lessons the Special Olympics kids taught me that Saturday morning in a local baseball training facility are principles that will forever direct my life. That day, I knew I was meant to be a special education teacher. Teaching is about educating students, but after that day I genuinely understood the true meaning of teaching – caring for your students and leading them to success, while learning and growing with them. Working with special education children taught me an immense amount of knowledge and insight about life, and I cannot wait to continue learning with them.

The Potter

Julia Mayro, '19

There once was a skilled potter known far and wide for her unparalleled skill. People traveled for many miles carrying clay from their own homes to have the potter shape it with her masterful hands. She lived by the seashore on a hill, so often the sailors would trek up the hundred-step path to her small studio by the sea. One day, a tall and fiery sailor with knowledge of the world sailed to the potter's shore. He was alone with all the knowledge in his head, and no one to share it with. He climbed the steps and met the potter in her studio. She asked him, "What do you want?" He said, "Make me a companion to travel the seas with me, to fight loneliness, and to hunger for knowledge of the world."

She agreed, and held out her hands to accept his clay, but he said, "I have no clay, for I have not encountered any on my travels. Give me some of yours, and I will return the clay to you someday." The potter consented to his terms.

From the heart of her house, she brought her living clay. She whispered her warm breath into the clay's breast and molded it. She pricked her finger and allowed her life blood to seep into the very bones of the clay. She put her creation through fire, and it was born.

The sailor accepted the companion, thanked the potter, and left for the sea. A month later, he returned from his voyage and climbed the hundred steps, carrying the companion. The potter asked him, "Did you bring me my clay to return?" But the sailor had not. He said, "I still have not found any clay, but I need you to fix the companion. It responds to my ideas by talking about itself. I need you to remove its mouth." The potter took the

companion and used her tears to soften the clay. She smeared the mouth out of existence and returned it to the sailor. She said, "I expect you to return my clay soon." The sailor assured her he would and departed once more.

The sailor returned a month later, carrying his companion up the hundred steps. The potter asked him, "Did you bring me my clay?" But the sailor had not. He replied, "Still, I have no clay to bring to you, though I need you to give my companion feet, for I have to carry it everywhere, and it must walk and explore on its own." The potter took the companion again, softened the clay with her tears, and formed feet for the companion. The potter returned the companion to the sailor saying, "I expect you to return with my clay in a month. Do not return without it." The sailor assured her he would not and departed once more.

Yet another month passed and, sure as the tide, the sailor returned. The potter asked him, "Where is my clay?" for he carried none in his hands. He said, "I have no clay, for I have not yet found any, but I need you to fix my companion..."

Before he could finish his sentence, the potter snatched her clay creature from his hands. She cradled it to herself saying, "You wanted a mirror, never a companion. Based on how you treated her, I should have made you a heart of clay, for a heart of clay is better than no heart at all!"

She chased him out of her studio and watched as he sailed away. The potter used her tears once more to soften the clay and finally repaired her beautiful clay creature. The clay had a home at last.



Route 66 Abby Fox, '19

Growing up, I had two homes: my family home with my parents, of course, but also my Grandmother's house. My Grandmother, better known as Grammy, was the wonderful babysitting grandmother every child dreams about. She was my second

mother. Grammy did not drive, (she was secretly scared, but would never admit that) but she was not afraid of public transportation, specifically the SEPTA Route 66.

I grew up on this route, and it is still a part of my daily commute. Route 66 is where I learned to appreciate every person. New commuters and regulars, young and old, the wealthy and those struggling financially. I learned at a young age that every person has worth. No one is above or below another person. It is like comparing flowers to Christmas lights; they are not the same thing, but both are beautiful and have purpose. Though there is good, there is also bad. The world is not always a wonderful and beautiful place, and I realized that at a young age. I was taught to be aware of my surroundings and stand up for myself and the common good. I was beyond lucky to have Grammy to teach me that. Places I traveled included school, work, stores, friends' houses, downtown to see the famous Macy's Christmas lightshow, or to the first ever Philadelphia Eagles Superbowl Parade. Route 66 brought me unforgettable experiences, memories, people, and lessons. I may complain about public transportation, but Route 66 has become a home and a constant reminder of the impact my Grammy had on my life. I no longer have Grammy, but every time I get on the 66, I know she is with me.

Photograph by Julia Mayro '19

The Best Lesson

Emily DeMarshall, '19

Overlooking the city and giving visitors a captivating view of the picturesque skyline of Philadelphia, Belmont Plateau is a vast park with trails, picnic benches, and athletic fields. People are drawn to the plateau weekly for scenic views, sporting events, and in my case, cross-country meets. To my younger self, Belmont Plateau was not just a nice park; it was a stage for 8 years of embarrassment that I oddly enjoyed. This embarrassment began in 1st grade on the day I joined the cross-country team. Countless Sundays were spent at the plateau, myself outfitted in a bright yellow uniform and failing to control my bladder, falling flat on my face right before the finish line, and running with my hair stuck to my neck because my ponytail holder had broken. I would not trade those embarrassing moments for the world, because it was at the Belmont Plateau where I learned the value of commitment, reaped the benefits of perseverance, and blazed the path of my future.

Commitment and perseverance-- the sure signs of a star runner, right? In my case, wrong. I was not a star runner; in fact, I consistently came in middle-to-last pack of two hundred runners from all over the Philadelphia area. Needless to say, I was the brunt of a lot of jokes. My dad used to say that he could finish a television series by the time I was done running. In all seriousness, by the time I crossed the finish line, the crowds of supporters had diminished... that's how slow I was. But I was dedicated to the sport, even when I excelled at other sports like volleyball and softball. I pushed myself at every practice and ran my hardest at each meet, but year after

year there was little improvement. At my very last meet in 8th grade, I was still in the back. However, when I crossed the finish line for the very last time, a realization hit me: I kept coming back each year because I loved the sport. I loved the feeling of getting to the top of the hill, I loved the feeling of sprinting into the finish line, and I loved the feeling of beating my personal record. Despite the anxiety and fear I felt before each race, I felt a sense of pride and accomplishment each time I crossed the finish line. At my last meet ever for a sport for which I felt average, I crossed the finish line for the last time in 141th place, and felt like a winner.

When I entered high school, running cross country was unrealistic because I was a varsity volleyball player, and those two sports fell during the same season. However, the values that I learned from my commitment to cross-country carried me through high school. There is so much pressure to be the best in high school- to achieve the best grades, to possess the best athletic talents, to compete for the best SAT scores, etc. In reality, the only "best" you need to be is the best version of yourself. It does not matter if someone is smarter than you or more athletic than you; it only matters if you try your hardest and commit to your goals. These values have held strong through my life so far. No, I am not ranked number 1 in my grade and no, I am not winning state championships, but I remain committed to my academics, athletics, and service. By committing to my goals and persevering through my hardships, I will become a winner, even if there are 141 people in front of me.

Error and Judgment

Marykate Johnston, '19

Sirens. I hear them in the distance coming closer. My feet keep moving forward, propelled by a fear I've never known before: You need to move; you need to get out of here. I can't stop running. Rain is hitting my cheeks and it's dark where I am.

I need to breathe;

I need to stop and breathe.

I stumble on my untied shoelaces and fall hard onto the cold, hard asphalt. The street spins around me as I sit up, looking around for the first time since I took off running. The wailing of the sirens comes closer, and I get out of the street: I need to hide. Stumbling towards a nearby bush, I collapse, hugging my legs close to me and trying to catch my breath. The streetlight above me flickers dangerously, threatening to shut off and leave me in complete darkness. I strain my eyes and breathe deeply. I'm in an unfamiliar neighborhood, but I can't see the street signs. The rain comes down harder and harder, sending a shiver down my spine. I close my eyes and imagine that I'm lying in bed -- that this is all just a terrible dream.

My mom is probably calling my phone, leaving a voicemail that will go unheard. I lost my phone somewhere on the run. It's probably shattered on the asphalt of these strange streets. It suddenly hits me that I am unreachable. I picture my siblings lying in bed, worrying where I am; I'm supposed to be their role model. I'm supposed to be the best daughter there ever was. I'm supposed to make my mom proud of me. After my dad left, I was her next best thing. I am all she has left.

I don't know if I'm crying or if it's just the rain pouring down my face. I'm starving. I haven't eaten in hours; the

last thing I had was a fried bologna sandwich my mom made. A low, hollow growl escapes from my stomach and I pray it doesn't give me away.

I hear footsteps walk by me and circle around. To them, I am just another kid to arrest. I see through a hole in the bush: a German Shepherd sniffing, trying to find me, trying to catch my scent. His hair is matted because of the rain. I'm praying to whatever person is up there that I don't get caught. The light from the uniformed man's flashlight dances closer and closer to me and I inhale sharply.

I didn't mean to do it.

He's a bulky man with a hat on. Light bounces off his handcuffs and the nightstick in his belt. The dog is on a leash but starting to pull the officer towards my bush. I wish I knew where I was. The dog starts barking. I am caught.

I hear the cop call on his radio, "I think we found her, need backup, Main Street, 500 block." I'm miles from home; I don't live near here, I ran faster than I thought, a lot faster. Philadelphia's a big city. I grew up here. Red, white, and blue lights which once meant freedom are flashing in front of me as men with more dogs and flashlights close in on me. I've been sitting here and crying for what seems like hours.

I just want to go home.

Before I know it, my legs shoot up and my arms go above my head. There are tear stains down my cheeks and raindrops in my hair. They approach me slowly as if I'm a dangerous person; I'm just a kid. I'm harmless, aren't I?

Personal Account of the Pacuare River

Emily DeMarshall, '19

I felt as if though I had just seen Velociraptor, or was it an Apatosaurus that emerged from the iridescent and thick foliage that I was encompassed by? There was nowhere to go to escape these prehistoric creatures, except forward. The long, evergreen leaves of the Jurassic Fern were suspended above the whole river, blocking me from the hot sun as I rushed through the rapids at a high speed. The bright yellow raft was my shelter, the paddle, my trusty sidekick. My group and I, led by John Hammond and consisting of Ian Malcom and Alan Grant, had expelled every ounce of energy paddling our hearts out as we escaped the dinosaurs. Cooled by the steady stream of a waterfall, we realized we had made it. Finally, floating calmly down the river, I saw the harmless Pteranodon soaring through the blue painted sky. Marveling at the Jurassic world around me, it took me by surprise when I realized that I was not in Jurassic Park, but in the Pacuare River.

I was not with the characters from Jurassic Park, but my white-water rafting tour guide and classmates. There were not prehistoric dinosaurs, but monkeys, sloths, and parrots. I was not on a mission to escape the omnivorous dinosaurs; I was racing the other rafts. I was not starring in an award-winning movie; I was in Costa Rica with my classmates on a Travel for Teens trip.

My journey that day began in the Pacuare River, a renowned Costa Rican river lined with lush jungles and known for exhilarating rapids. Arriving at the sandy bank of the river, I strapped into my life-jacket, grabbed my paddle, and then I

was off onto a 17-mile river journey through Costa Rica. The further I journeyed down Pacuare River the more I became captivated by the beauty of Costa Rica's nature. I found myself thinking, "Is this real life?" Every once in a while, after paddling through rough rapids and hearing our white-water rafting guide, Raul order us to, "Paddle Right" and to "Get down," I had to give myself a reality check.

The incessant hum of cicadas, the splashing of the waterfall, the aroma of native Costa Rican flowers, and the playing of monkeys all occurred with perfect timing and unparalleled beauty. It was like my journey down the Pacuare River that day had been staged.

After the overwhelming beauty of this brand-new place took me into another world, I realized that I wanted to experience this same rush of feelings again, the feeling of experiencing something new for the first time and being swept away from reality. The world has so much beauty and nature to offer, but I rarely go out of my way to experience it.

I decided that I was going to spend less time behind a screen and more time experiencing nature. Costa Rica was eye-opening for me because I was able to discover hidden gems of nature in my own neighborhood. One of these places has become a get-away for me, a place to go when I am feeling overwhelmed: a bench that overlooks a farm with horses. It sounds simple, but at sunset, it is the most beautiful sight I've ever seen. Just as the Pacuare River took me into my own movie, my sunset spot takes me out of everyday stresses.

Dionysia

Alex Morgenstern, '21

There was something raw in the salted mist that surrounded them, hedging them into a maze of endless fog, loss, and desolation. The pregnant air held an infinitely vast number of realities and hopes that were hurled into it by the careless, forsaken wonders of man with the same amount of care that one casts off a discarded robe.

It was the kind of a day when the thick sea haze sunk deeply into the sailors, filling their lungs. There were only the empty depths of the water under them and the pale stretch of eternity in front of them. There was only ahead, on and on until the edge of humanity, the edge of the world, but it was not always so.

In the early morning, had they sailed for land in their modest wooden ship, with a handful of a crew and a sky full of stars and longing. They all drifted together, for one reason or another, by an intense want for--what? Riches and power? No, but the want for anything to fill their unquenchable, unhealable ache for more. It was not late enough for the sun to pierce the horizon with its golden, blinking eye, but early enough to make out the form of a sleeping youth laid out upon the dunes of the nearing shore.

He was in a peaceful dose, with curly obsidian hair tossed about his head by the wind and his eyelashes lightly fluttering against his cheeks as dreams wore on.

None of this mattered to the young crew, as they glanced upon his finery. He was wrapped in silks and dripping in rubies like the very earth had found him worthy of worship.

And all at once, a wordless decision was rendered. Whoever had happened to lose this prince, this creature, they were certainly willing to pay a tidy sum to get him back.

They sailed on with this wild being in tow, traveling as far as they could before those who had lost him might come looking. A thick curtain of white was seared by the passage of their craft, led by the sculpted figure of a maiden posed in terror.

It might be said that it was human folly that awoke the god, or it might be said that it was just by chance, as one of the crew members slowly went forward to the self-appointed captain, who stood at the steering wheel, pressing forth. He glanced back towards the captive tied to the mast, who was by some strange magic, was still and asleep. He paused before saying, "This will not end well. We must turn back and lay him where he was before he wakes. The sky cruelly overshadows us; the gods are displeased."

The captain paused, looking at him, and jerked the handle. Time seemed to stop with that gaze. The

ship twisted
awkwardly, waiting.
“Who told you these
things?”

The quick
swerve of the craft
caused the captive’s
eyes to flutter like
the wings of a bird,
foretelling
destruction. It was
then that his eyes
were blown wide
and black, his pupils
devouring his irises.
Suddenly, the ship
stooped, anchored by
time. The wind
picked up, circling the ship in a
cyclone of whipping white blasts.

The ropes sang against his
bronze skin and fell to the deck, and
his robes tossed about him with the
pure power of the preternatural. The
water around the boat spilled in
decadent waves of lush, deep emotion.
The boat began to shake with the
force, tossing the crew to different
sides of the craft, where they held
onto the edges with their fingertips,
or burrowed down behind barrels,
crouching in the shade.

One member made the mistake
of looking into the dark, staring eyes
of the figure, and felt themselves
become lost in the seas of Bacchic
bliss, where they were free from the
bonds of rationality, casting off their
sanity with the wind.



Their bodies were lost with
their minds, and they were
transformed. They fell to their hands
and knees, not in a bow, but in a
predatory lurch, sinew reforming,
with their skin becoming course with
spotted fur, opening their mouth with
a blood starved growl.

The other crew members felt
their fear overtake and devour them.
They let their reason win and hurled
themselves into the darkness below.
The god waved his hand and they
were reborn. Their skin growing slick,
and legs weaving together into a tail.
The sound of a madman’s laugh being
cast out of their throats and
reappearing as a dolphin’s trill.
At long last, they were finally free.

**Photograph by
Jessica Keenan, '19**

Between the Pines

Arianna Torres, '19

Twenty-four people have been reported missing so far. Last night, the number rose to twenty-six. Small children, young couples, teenagers, and elderly people have all disappeared without a trace. There's been a recurring pattern with the disappearances, too. Every single person who was reported missing disappeared at night, with some exceptions, of course. Whoever, or whatever, was taking them decided to wait until nightfall to strike. Any items left behind by those who have gone missing have all been found leading to the same place – Marching Trees.

Everyone has heard the story of Marching Trees at some point. I heard about it from my grandmother when I was young. It's not really a place, but a strange formation of dead pine trees that have lined up perfectly in pairs to form a sort of path. The path is said to stretch on for miles. Not only that, but there have been reports of hundreds of tall, featureless, humanoid creatures marching single file between the pairs of trees, giving the strange phenomenon its name. No one knows how so many have accumulated or why they march. People like to believe that anyone who gets lost in the forest at night loses their soul to them and are forced to join in their cursed parade.

A strip of these trees pass through my property. The estate was previously owned by my late grandparents who left it to me after

they passed. When I learned that I had inherited it, I was ecstatic; it's the only place that ever felt like home to me.

Yellow police tape now curls around the surrounding pines. It was put up yesterday, and I was given a warning about the dangers beyond the line. It is like a winding snake, weaving in and out of the trees.

I stand a few feet away from it. Bold black letters stretch from tree to tree yelling "Do not cross." A war rages in my mind. I bite my lip hard enough to draw blood. I need answers not only for myself, but for the families of the victims. The only one who might have these answers lives beyond the tape.

Far from civilization, he lives among the pines and underbrush of the forest. He has been living in the area for years in an old, dilapidated cabin. Incidents have occurred in which some curious souls went in search of him and discovered him in the heart of a raging storm, unaffected by the lightning and thunder surrounding him. It has earned him the nickname the Stormbringer. Somehow, he has avoided falling victim to the cursed pines. Some say that he



has been cursed himself and that might just be the reason why they refuse to take him.

I figured that being here as long as he has, he would know the truth about Marching Trees. No one has seen or heard from him in months, though, so I might not even get the chance to speak with him. My curiosity and foolish determination drive me to take the risk; I step over the tape.

As I walk, I feel a chill slowly creep up my spine. I notice the sun beginning to set. I quickly check the time, and somehow, it's already 6:47 in the evening. Time has gone by unbelievably fast; I regret not checking it sooner. No use in turning back. I'm already too far away to stop now. Shadows slowly begin to crawl up and devour their daytime doppelgangers. I turn on my flashlight and cut through the shadows with the golden light. As the darkness continues to feast, the forest goes silent. It's as if it was suddenly put on mute. I find it odd. Usually the crickets would take over for the birds and create music in their place. It must be a lazy night for them.

At some point, I notice my flashlight begin to dim and flicker, as if threatening to go out. This is a bad sign. I get the feeling that I should probably turn back. It's difficult to see anything in the encroaching darkness though. The rustling leaves hide away the last of the sun, and I'm left unable to find my way back. With a frustrated sigh, I use my phone's flashlight to find my way in the dark. I'm already out here, so I might as well keep going. I get the feeling of being in some cliché

horror movie. I wouldn't be surprised to be the first casualty.

To my relief, I can see a light up ahead. I must have made it to the cabin. I hear the cricket chirping lazily as I get closer. Their faint singing triggers something in me to walk faster. As I approach the old wooden house, I notice a faint humming mixed with the crickets. Maybe the Stormbringer likes to hum at night. That's what I hope, at least.

I raise a shaky hand and knock on the door. It creaks open with the second knock. I hesitantly push the door open wider and peer into the dusty little room inside. Old books fill a sturdy bookshelf in the corner. A recliner, a side table, and an old TV decorate the rest of the simple living room. I shuffle in, wondering if the Stormbringer would be angry with me for entering without permission. No one seems to be home, though, so I should be safe. I look around and notice that the TV is on, which I find odd. I move closer to inspect it. The humming from before is noticeably louder when I get nearer. A blurry image of trees neatly lined up in rows is displayed on the TV. The image is tainted a threatening crimson. Fear ensnares me, I struggle to breathe. It was as if a boa constrictor was suffocating me. I've made a mistake.

Overwhelmed with anxiety, I attempt to flee. In the split second that I turn away from the TV, I find that I'm no longer in the living room of the old cabin. Instead, I stand in front of the trees that had been displayed on the

screen. It was all an illusion to lure me in. The trees are charcoal black as if they were scorched by a raging fire. Red-tipped thorns grow from the withered trunks, and lanterns emitting a faint scarlet glow hang from their frail limbs. A dark road stretches out between them. It's the same color as the trees, maybe even darker, like it had been turned to ash by a raging fire. The whole area smells of sulfur and rotting meat. It's the stuff of nightmares.

The humming grows in intensity. It escalates into loud groans that form into pained wails. I can barely hear myself think. It's not long before the dark silhouettes come into view. They march between the pines one by one in perfect unison. I try to move. I have to get away, but I find that I'm glued to the spot. The sensation is similar to being trapped in sleep paralysis, except that the demon in the corner of the room is real, and it has its sights set on me. I'm a mouse in a glue trap with no hope of escape.

To my horror, one turns to face me. It breaks formation, ambles closer, and begins to inspect me. This one looks different – shorter, but it still has enough height on it to tower over me. Disproportionally long arms hang limply at its sides. Its small, round face is almost friendly looking. Almost. The jagged teeth in its crooked smile and lack of eyes ruin the entire feeling it is probably going for.

It raises a claw to my forehead and presses gently. A shiver shoots up my spine. My vision immediately goes dark, like someone has turned the lights off. The wailing becomes louder and even harder to bear. This is it. This is the end. How could I have been so stupid? I attempt to get my trembling body to move one more time but to no avail. My search for answers has only brought me to my demise.

I feel a drop of rain on my nose, and suddenly it begins to pour. A sound pierces my ears, a crackle of thunder so strong it shakes the ground beneath my feet. My consciousness begins to fade. I crumble to the ground as thunder rumbles around me.

I feel like I've been asleep for ages. My whole body is numb. There's an annoying little drummer in my head, repeatedly hitting the inside of my skull with his drumsticks. I force my eyes open. Somehow, I'm back in my room. My fingers curl around the plush blanket beneath me. Lightning flashes outside my window. A crackle of thunder follows soon after, adding to the pounding in my head. Last night's events rush back like a flood. The tape, the cabin, the trees, the rain; it felt like a bad dream. I notice a flicker of light from the corner of my eye. The TV is turned on, and an image of me standing in front of the path to Marching Trees is displayed.

It wasn't a dream.

The Birthday Gift

Julia Mayo, '19

Ever since I was three years old, I have taken a trip to the library every Friday afternoon. The librarians, sweet little old ladies with hearing sharp enough to catch the quietest breath of gossip, practically watched me grow up. The children's section in the basement of the library building, with all its board books and stickers, was my home, and the books were my friends. Who needed playdates and preschool when I had a world of books? I experienced middle school drama through the well-worn novels on the shelves, never bothering to listen to any of my classmates' chatter.

Eventually, I found myself emerging from the depths of childhood to the main floor of the library. I never strayed far from the young adult section, experiencing romance and freedom through the lives of various characters. My first date was to a land of myth and my first kiss was with a golden prince. Life in the library was perfect.

On my eighteenth birthday, one of the ancient librarians beckoned me to her with a mischievous look in her eye. The ladies always liked to be updated on the latest whispers outside of the library, and I was always happy to oblige, though most of my news was just retellings of stories I had read the week before. Today, however, something was different.

"I know today is a special day," the librarian said as she stooped to reach under the circulation desk. I secretly wished to myself, crossing every finger



and toe, that she would produce a brand-new book for me, one that had never been seen by anyone else in the world, a book that was written specifically and perfectly for me on my eighteenth birthday.

Instead, she unsteadily straightened, and a single, rusty key appeared in her withered, old hand. The librarian reached across the circulation desk, took my hand, and dropped the key into my palm. I stared at the ugly key, not moving.

"You just take that key to the back room, and your gift will be waiting for you in there," the old librarian said knowingly with a wobbly nod. I sighed and followed her instructions, attempting unsuccessfully to hide my displeasure.

The back room was just beyond the last abandoned shelf of the adult non-fiction section. I inserted the key into an equally timeworn lock and jiggled the key before it turned. Flicking on a light switch on the wall to my right, I instantly recoiled in horror. Books that had not seen the light of day or felt the touch of human affection laid forlorn and forgotten in their dusty shelf beds. I longed to beat away the dust and deadness and dive into every neglected novel.

A black and white photograph of a person wearing a white polo shirt, holding a large stack of books and audiobooks. The books are arranged vertically, with titles visible including 'Battle Royale', 'Werewolf', 'Destined', 'Stephen King The Green Mile', 'Marie Lu Legend', 'Kate Brian Lucky 7', and 'Jennifer Government'. The background is a wall covered with various posters and newspaper clippings.

their mutual disdain for each other's..." Before I could finish reading, I threw the book down in disgust. Desperate, I picked up a nonfiction book, *Amphibians in Northern America*, and read from the inside jacket, "A person reads about frogs and other amphibious animals..." I dropped the book, unable to bring myself to read any more.

I felt like the books were suffocating me. I kicked the cage of books away, breaking my prison. Repelled by the ruins of my cage, I stalked over to the glistening table. The lone book remained, waiting patiently. I held it in my hands and thumbed through the pages. Each one was empty, hungry to be filled with words and experiences. Each page waiting expectantly. I made my choice. I walked out of the library that day ready to write my own story.

2019 CREATIVE CLASS CONTRIBUTORS

Cover and Back-Cover Designers

Abigail Fox, 2019

Next year, I will be attending Temple University as an elementary education and special education major. My favorite type of writing is prose narrative because it shares a story from someone's life. I encourage people to write because it acts as an outlet for your feelings and it encourages people to share their talents, stories and life-lessons.

Arianna Torres, 2019

My hobbies include art and writing, and in the future, I plan to be a wildlife biologist. People are capable of amazing works of art--sometimes they just don't know it! I would encourage people to try new things and find out what they are good at. Take a writing class or an art class, or even a pottery class! Find something that makes you happy when you do it. You never know-- It might just turn into something beautiful.



Section Editors

Emily DeMarshall, '19

I have always been driven to take science courses, because I intend to become a nurse. However, this year I decided to go out of my comfort zone and take creative writing. It has helped me to become a better writer, something that will help me immensely next year at Penn State. I would encourage people to do some form of creative writing, like journaling, because it is very relaxing.

Lauren Ems, '20

I am interested in studying either business or video production and editing. Writing takes my mind off the chaotic world for a few minutes. I was never a fan of poetry and writing, but since this year, my favorite type of poetry is the haiku because you can express a big message through three lines of poetry. My other favorite type of poetry would most likely be iambic pentameter because it makes me think differently, and I enjoy the rhythm. I would say that if you have never tried writing before, throw on some music, and write about anything you can think of—it might affect your life with so much positivity!

Jessica Keenan, '20

This fall, I will be attending University of the Arts, located in downtown Philly. My major will be creative writing. My favorite type of writing is poetry because I feel like I connect to a wider audience through it. I would encourage people to write and to maintain creativity because there is always someone willing to listen to and read what you have to say.

Julia Mayro, '20

I will be attending Temple University and discovering my major when I get there (please don't judge me!). I enjoy playing the flute, doing origami, watching Ted Talks, and staring out of car windows. I would encourage people to do something creative because we are beings created to share ourselves and not stay contained within our minds.



Illustration by Katie Overton '19

