





8 distortions

Hilario DeGuzman
Hightstown High School
Grade 10

Harry enjoys art and expressing his interests in it. He finds amusement in music with a conscious meaning to it.

Aspirations 2018

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The Strangeness of Strangers Not Feeling Strange

Daron Pierre

Hightstown High School

Grade 10

Amy Kathleen Szeles is an aspiring young artist who has a love of anything artistic. She works hard in school, is learning how to become an instructor at her martial arts school, and loves to spend time with her family and friends, as well as playing with her pets.

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Aspirations 2018, a literary magazine published by Mercer County Community College, is proud to celebrate and present the talents of area high school students. For decades, the literary and visual works collected in *Aspirations* have showcased students' hopes, dilemmas, questions, and insights. This year, once again, the creativity within these pages helps us see both the familiar with renewed attention and the unfamiliar with a satisfying sense of recognition.

A distinguished panel selected these works from hundreds of entries. For their discerning sensibilities and commitment to the students in this area, the following teachers and artists have earned the appreciation of this community:

Carol Bork	Mercer County Community College
Shana Burnett	Mercer County Community College
Barbara Hamilton	Mercer County Community College
Nicole Homer	Mercer County Community College
Kerri O'Neill	Mercer County Community College
Francis Paixão	Mercer County Community College
Theresa Solomon	Hopewell Valley Central High School
Roman Szolkowski	Hightstown High School

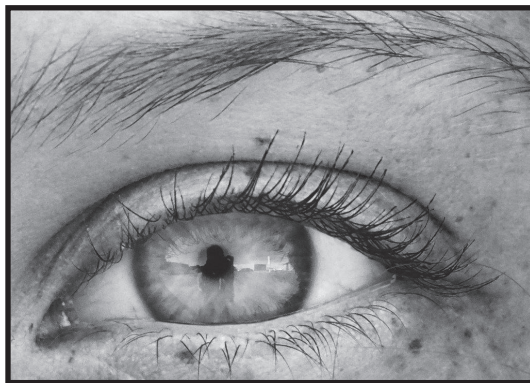
Still others have contributed to this publication in important ways. We would like to thank the parents, friends, family, and teachers who supported the development of our writers and artists. Thanks go to President Jianping Wang and our previous Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. David Edwards and current Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. J. Brandon Shaw, JD, PhD for their support; to Francis Paixão in Mercer's Publications Office for his work designing and laying out this journal; to Brad Kent for setting up and maintaining the *Aspirations* webpage; to Jody Gazenbeek-Person and his students for their dramatic interpretations of the published works; to Scott Hornick and his students for contributing their considerable musical talents to the awards gala; and to Shana Burnett for the dependable and effective way she managed submissions, contact with schools, and the many details of the selection, editing and proofing process. Finally, I want to thank Dr. Robert Kleinschmidt, the Dean of Liberal Arts, for his generous help to me and his coordination of all phases of this publication project. His commitment to the arts makes projects such as this one possible.

Nicole Homer
Assistant Professor of English and Editor, *Aspirations 2018*
Mercer County Community College



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Cover Art



Concentrate

Matthew Brink

Hightstown High School

Grade 9

Matthew Brink is a very active, kind, and ambitious honors student who enjoys doing a various amount of extracurricular activities. Some of these include playing junior varsity football and lacrosse and varsity winter track. What he enjoys doing in his free time is hanging out with his friends and family.

Disha Bharj

Lawrence High School
Grade 10

Disha Bharj is a determined tenth grade student. She really enjoys art and writing and plays tennis for her school.

Roses

The sweet red roses

Protecting themselves with thorns

Aligned in the yard

**Dark Bloom****Erin Stroz**

Hightstown High School
Grade 9

Erin is a freshman at Hightstown High School. In her free time, she enjoys playing lacrosse and field hockey.

Escape

Madeline Carleton

Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Madeline Carleton is an avid performer and lover of the arts (both literary and performance based). She is very thankful for her many teachers that have inspired this love.

You might assume that I
being an actor on the stage
am a charismatic, confident character

When in
reality

I shrink from you with the trepidation of the tiny crocus
folding in delicate petals in fear of the cold night to come
even when I can see the gentle stars in your eyes

still

I am afraid

It's sort of funny, really, that
onstage

I can portray anyone, become
the egotistical antagonist, the fearless adventurer
the blushing bride, the lost soul
the stunning young beauty, who knows her charm
and wraps stupefied suitors round her thin fingers, with the same ease
of twirling those lovely curls of hers

but offstage

I am

the one who smiles watching them rolick, even though I'm not involved
the one who wears my hair down so it hangs like my beloved red curtains
protecting me

the one whose heart and mind is racing

struggling

gasping

choking

on the words I know are isosceles triangles in a world of round holes

But, script in hand, I can swell with pride

Take flight with the careful, perfect words

I get a rush under the lights, heart hammering

not in fear

but, instead, anticipation

Suddenly I am Thespis stepping out alone from the chorus

with a fearlessness that will change history, change the world, change me

But for how long can I disappear into someone else's world?

Must I return?



Snowflakes Up Close

Jean Steele

Lawrence High School

Grade 11

Jean Steele is a student at Lawrence High School. She enjoys photography as a hobby and often captures scenes that have to do with nature.



Stick Man

Danielle Devlin
Hightstown High School
Grade 12

Danielle enjoys trying to improve their drawing skills in their free time.

Cassidy Carroll

Lawrence High School

Grade 10

Cassidy is a student-athlete who is passionate about literature. She loves to write and hopes to pursue a career in psychiatry.

I Always Wonder What It Means to be Human

My mother seems to know exactly what it means

She tells me that it's okay to make mistakes

After all, I was born out of high school "love", so

Of course

We all make mistakes

My father seems to know exactly what it means

He started his own business in construction when he was 19 and he never stopped

I see him on occasion and it humors me that he thinks his Cadillac will bring me home, I mean

Of course

We are supposed to want to be wealthy

Girls seem to know exactly what it means

The one who travels the most, takes the best pictures, and has the most friends

They remind me that photoshop and filters are what define you, and

Of course

We all need an image

Boys seem to know exactly what it means

The girl who has the best body or the guy who gets the most girls

And feelings? They're foreign

And if you have them, you ought to lose them quickly because,

Of course

We shouldn't want relationships

But I, I do know what it means

I understand that to be human you must make mistakes

But one who identifies with self-pity, selfishly, tends to blame others for their flaws

I understand that to be human you must face the temptation of material value

But a person who uses money to find themselves clearly has insecurities so powerful that they intimidate one to the point of disguising their existence

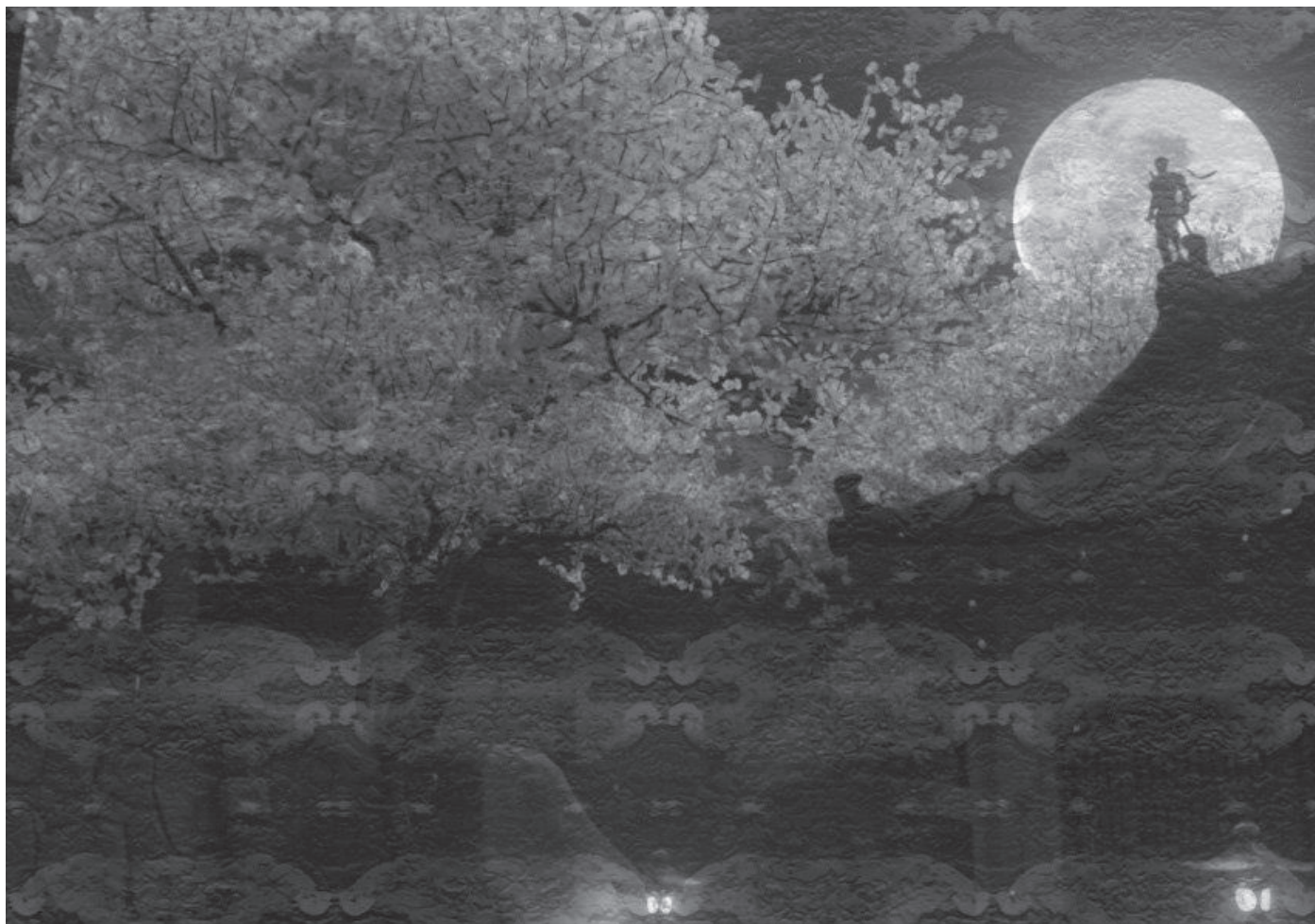
I understand that to be human you must carry a certain image
But a person who is so caught up in the way they are seen is not worried about the ethicality of
their actions
I understand that to be human you must shy away from what you want in order to please
another
But once a person finally prioritizes their worth over the desires of another, they are able to
conquer the world
I also understand that we are making a mistake
It is a mistake that we accept life as this infamous generation of beings
We exist upon unrealistic ideals of one another, but
Of course
There is a difference between existing and living

Puffin

Ragav Raman
Lawrence High School
Grade 11

Ragav is a junior at Lawrence High School. He enjoys travel and photography.





Protecting the Bloodline

Imeere D'Alessio

Hightstown High School

Grade 12

Imeere D'Alessio is often balancing work and hanging out with friends. During his leisure time, he likes to play video games and meet new people. He is a huge fan of animals and jumps on any opportunity to meet one.

Poverty in a Nutshell

Stephanie Luo

Lawrence High School

Grade 11

Stephanie Luo is a Junior at Lawrence High School. Stephanie enjoys creating art and finding inspiration through other people's art.





Persona 5: Ann Takamaki

Jenna Bissinger

Hightstown High School

Grade 10

Jenna Bissinger is a self-taught artist who wishes to pursue a career as a concept artist for a gaming company. She uses a variety of sources in order to study and enjoys looking at the progress that she makes every year.

Victoria Chen

Lawrence High School
Grade 10

Victoria is a hard working student who loves to be creative.

Anticipation

He's coming.

I know he is, he has my address.

He's coming.

He's driving here, in the red car he took.

He's coming.

He's down the block, around the bend.

He's coming.

I watch his car approaching, and I
tremble behind the door like a leaf in the
wind.

He's coming.

He's walking up to my doorstep, his foot-
falls heavy and resound.

He's coming.

He's pressing the key to make my door-
bell sing.

And he waits.

He's here.

And so is my pizza.



Rose

Disha Bharj

Lawrence High School

Grade 10

Roses Are Not Always Red

Carly Haug

Hightstown High School

Grade 12





nighttime

Rebecca Shikarchy
Hightstown High School
Grade 12

Rebecca Shiakrchy likes to sketch.

Neil Chopra
Lawrence High School
Grade 10

Neil Chopra is interested in a medical future, and enjoys running as part of the track team.

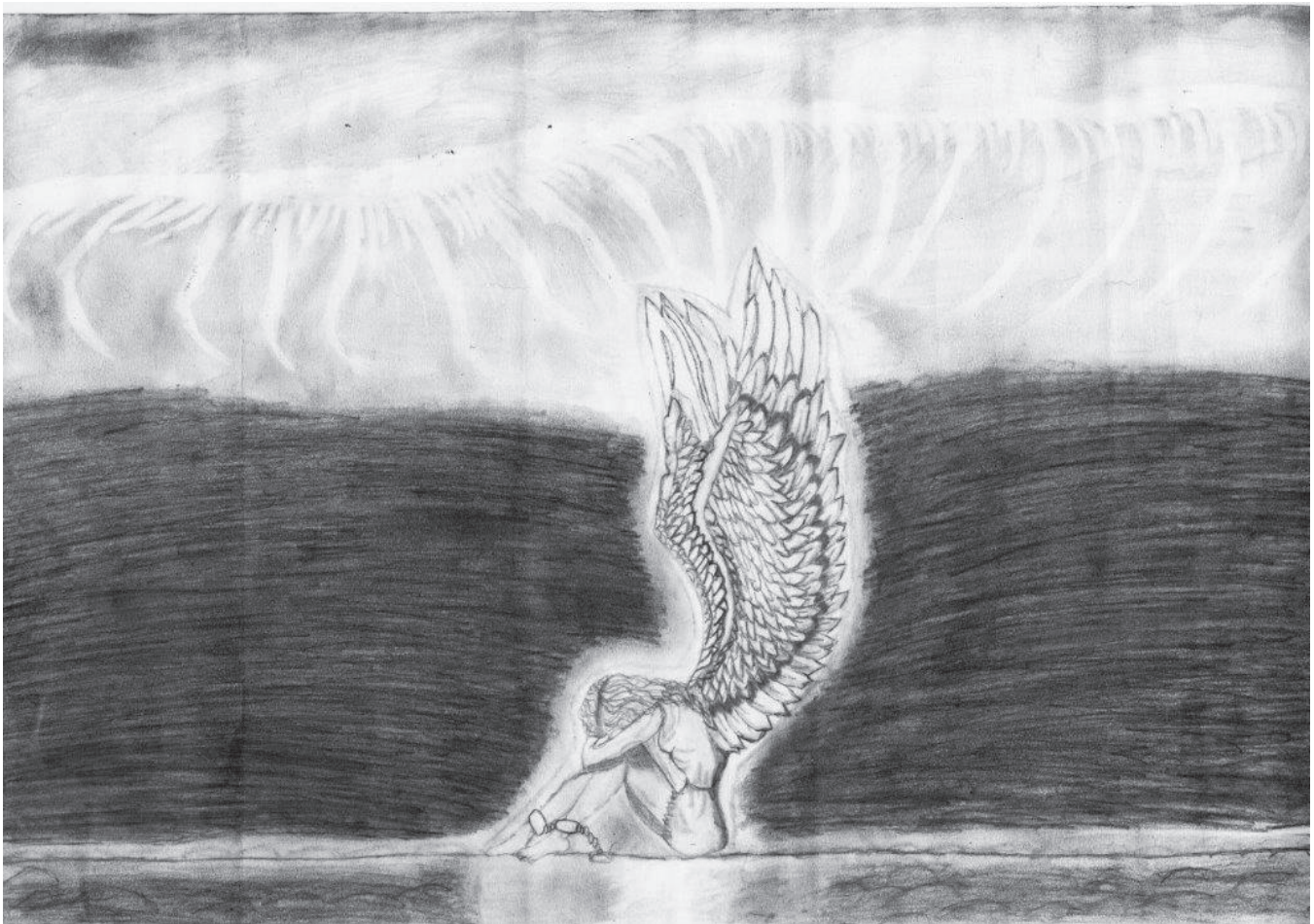
To never give up

Is to work very hard but fail,
And then to work harder.

Being Unseen and over Looked Around a Circle of Beauty

Christine Rivera
Hightstown High School
Grade 10

Christine Rivera is a sophomore at Hightstown High School





Wonderland

Valentina Moreno
Hightstown High School
Grade 12

Valentina is a senior at Hightstown High School who likes baking. She enjoys drawing and painting. She also likes to take photos of landscapes and animals.



Pinecone

Mikey Frunzi

Hightstown High School

Grade 10

Mikey is a creative, funny, and overall kind student with a heart of gold. He loves drawing and photography. His family and friends are his biggest inspirations.

Peaceful Retreat

Zoe Lang

Lawrence High School

Grade 10

Zoe Lang has been practicing photography for about a year. They enjoy soccer. Additionally, they act as the treasurer of the Lawrence High School DECA chapter and participate in Model United Nations.



Jada Collins

Allentown High School
Grade 10

Jada Collins, of Trenton, NJ, enjoys math and writing. They aspire to write a book of poetry one day in order to inspire young adults who are heading down the wrong road.

The Rolling Quarter

As I walked on by downtown Trenton,
passing by the homeless and the rebels,
the crazies and the state workers,
I noticed a little girl standing right in front of me
And my eyes didn't leave hers.
She seemed gloomy and lost.
She had two pigtails wrapped up so perfectly in pink bow ties,
they swayed back and forth each step she took.
Her skirt flared out, but her face was cheerless.
She was talking to me through her soul.
I wanted to help this child, as someone once did for me.
She stared at my hands as I fiddled with a quarter.
I gave her that quarter,
it sent some sort of magic throughout her body
and she smiled so bright.
She skipped away and into the busy street,
I turned my back proudly for what I had done,
As if my little act of kindness changed her whole destiny.
I looked back one last time to see that
ray of sunshine with the pink bowties.
My wandering brown eyes could not find that gleam of light,
and I never saw that little girl again.
Instead, all that was left on the empty street
was a rolling quarter.



Reflections

Justin Featherston
Lawrence High School
Grade 12

Justin Featherston is a Senior at Lawrence High School using photography to explore his artistic vision.

The Darkness Inside Her

Esha Keertikar

Hightstown High School

Grade 11

Esha Keertikar has been painting since she was 4 years old. She loves to express herself through her art. Though she used many different mediums, her favorite is acrylic and she enjoys painting landscapes as well as portraits.





Taste of Summer

Erin Stroz

Hightstown High School

Grade 9



What Can be Healed Will be Healed

Abby Barreto

Hightstown High School
Grade 12

Abigail Barreto enjoys spending her free time playing video games and the piano.

Jada Collins

Allentown High School
Grade 10

Who Am I?

I am a teenager of course, but most of all I am Jada.

I am also a girl.

Not too short and not too tall.

I am flesh and bones.

I am heart and soul.

I can be moody or mean.

Then shy or reserved.

You may know me from eighth grade. I was valedictorian.

To some I am not important, but to me I am everything.

I am affectionate, ambitious and eager to learn more.

I am sometimes referred to as, “talk, you freak!”

Did I mention I was shy?

Wait, and that I am short?

I don't remember, but I also forgot to state that I have a bad memory.

Any who...

I am captain of the drill team.

I am employee of the month at Burger King.

I am “sister” and I am “daughter.”

I am mature and I am motivated.

I am still trying to figure myself out.

Why did I write this poem in the first place?

Shoe Family

Emily Mah

Lawrence High School
Grade 12

Emily is a senior at Lawrence High School. She loves art because it allows for self-expression and relieves stress. In her free time, she enjoys playing music, watching movies, and drawing.





Rusted

Ainhoa Fernandez

Hightstown High School

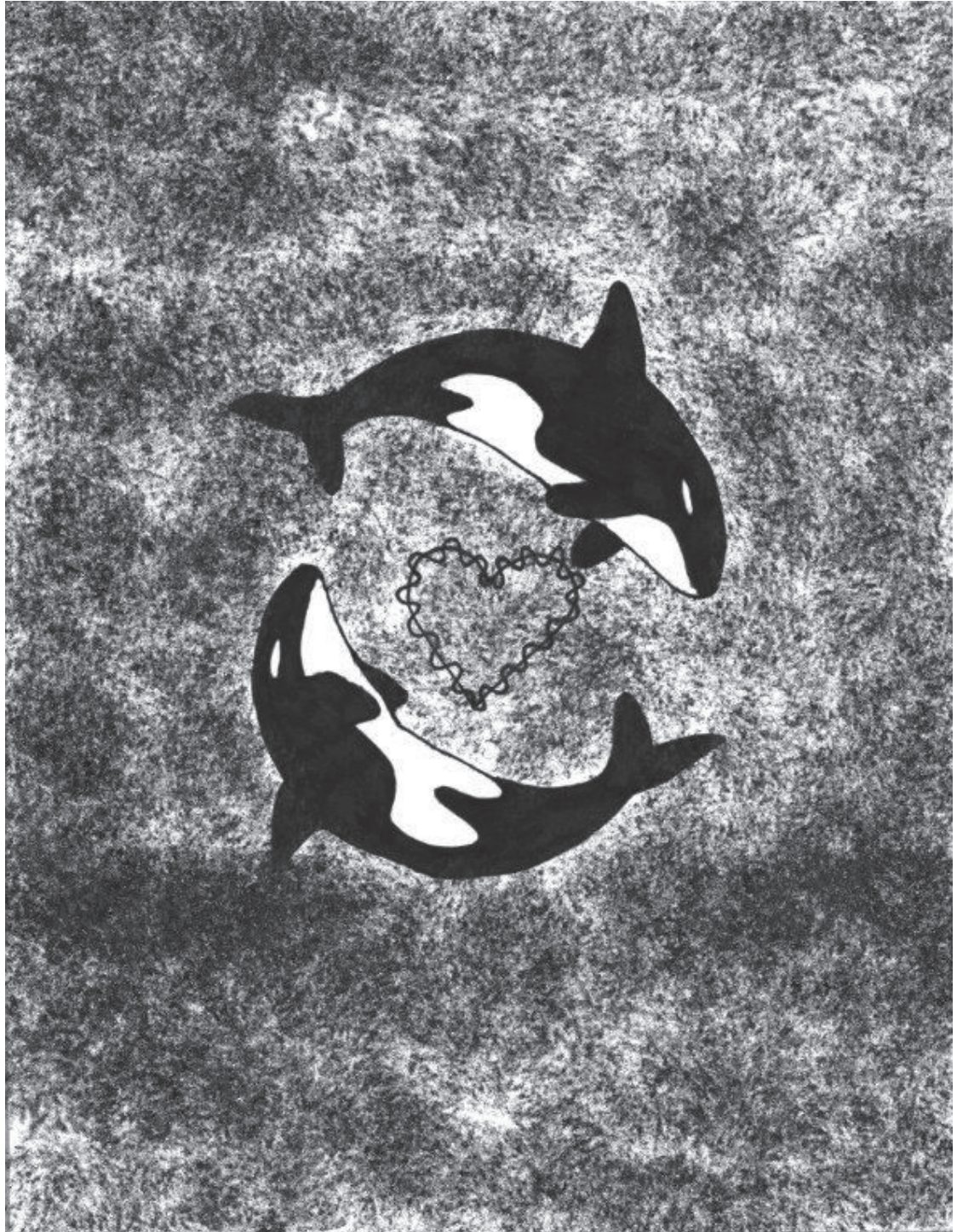
Grade 11

Ainhoa is a Junior in Hightstown High School. She enjoys hanging with her friends, long car rides, reading and going on adventures.

Killer whales

Brianna Murray
Hightstown High School
Grade 10

Brianna is a Sophomore at Hightstown High School.



Kellen Conway
Lawrence High School
Grade 10

Kellen Conway is a student at Lawrence High School. He does not consider himself much of a poet and prefers to write fiction.

History Class

The world's history
We learn it all from one man
It's Casalino

Juice

Aminah Kaba
Hightstown High School
Grade 12

She likes to draw and is a huge Tupac fan.



Weather
Shown are today's noon reading, and precipitation, temperature, and wind speed for the day.

ORCASTS
partly cloudy & drizzle; showers
rain; San Francisco, Sacramento, Lake
view
Today Tomorrow
M Lr W M Lr W M Lr W
36 32 F 27 29 54
74 67 29 79 63 57
81 61 F 71 95 6
72 59 28 78 58 5
49 33 C 20 22 28
70 59 24 72 54 24
66 56 24 67 47 51

COURT DATE by Harold Jones
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4 Northwest
8 Went up
14 Looking at
16 Where
30 Proves before
37 Year yield
Down
2 Ran shadows
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33 Linn, leader
34 Lusty desire
35 DePender's
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100 Winner

The WSJ Daily Crossword | Edited by Mike Shen

News Article 1:
The packaged-food industry is under pressure to streamline operations and boost sales as consumers eat less processed fare in favor of fresher food and simpler ingredients. Other major U.S. food makers including Campbell Soup Co., Kellogg Co., and General Mills, Inc. also have closed factories in recent years amid

News Article 2:
Kraft Heinz also said Wednesday that it plans next year to relocate its Oscar Meyer business and other U.S. meat brands to Chicago, from Oscar Meyer's

News Article 3:
Kraft Heinz also said Wednesday that it plans next year to relocate its Oscar Meyer business and other U.S. meat brands to Chicago, from Oscar Meyer's

Paper Thin Heart

Izabella Mus
Lawrence High School
Grade 11

Izabella Mus is an 11th grade student from Lawrence High School. She enjoys expressing her creativity through photography and art.



Life of a Dark Flower

Bryan Ortega

Hightstown High school

Grade 9

Bryan Ortega plays on his high school soccer team. He loves to watch soccer and root for F.C. Barcelona.

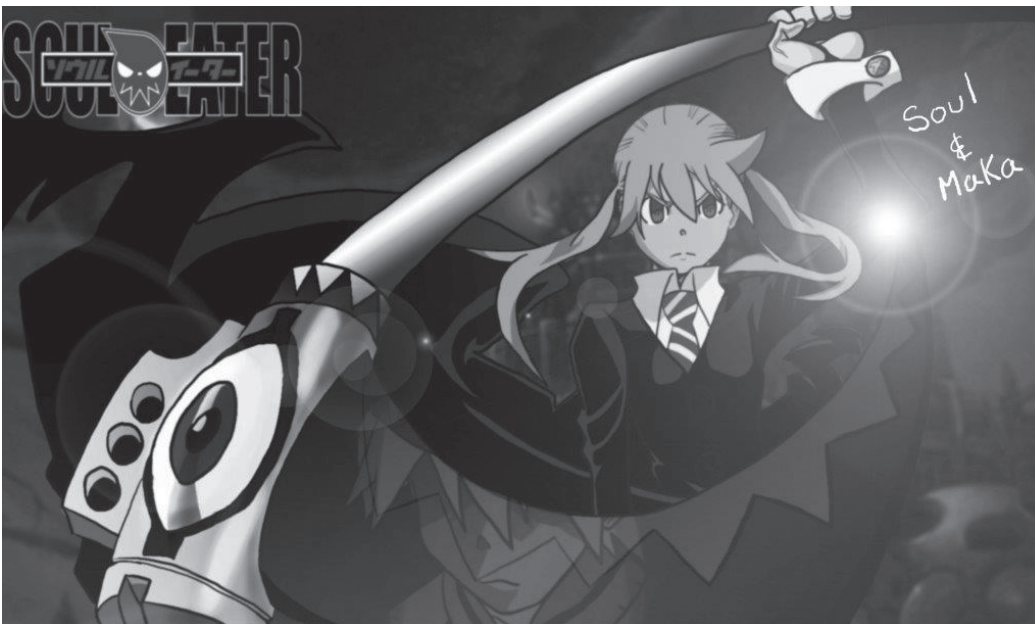
Midoriya's Punch

Anthony Marquez

Hightstown High School

Grade 12

Anthony Marquez is a senior who enjoys painting, drawing and animating which he hopes to major in during college. He is particularly interested in illustrating anime and manga.



Maka and Soul

Anthony Marquez

Leila Davis

Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Leila Jean Davis is an actress and model outside of school. Leila loves her cat, friends, dog and family.

Yard Sale

To a stranger's eye it was just stuff,
junk.
But they didn't know her.
A faded yellow cake pan,
2 dollars.
The smell of lemon cake still lingered in the air,
from springs spent slaving away over desserts for Easter dinner.
The beginnings of 3 scarves underneath a table in a small wicker basket.
Each color unique,
like the wings of a butterfly.
One deep brown intertwined with white,
like fresh snow on the limb of a tree.
One the dark blue of the Bethany Beach waves before crashing on the shore.
A vibrant red,
like the stockings hung over the crackling fireplace on christmas.
Mountains of sheet music were stacked precariously on chairs,
all ready to take flight at any moment with a gust of wind.

Slightly shimmering at the side of my vision sat a simple ring.
Grabbing it I went to stand in line,
admiring the craftsmanship until it was my turn to pay.
 "\$4.50 please."
I took out a crushed \$5 bill.
As I started to hand it to the man behind the cash box,
he looked at me.
He recognized my face from the funeral and saw the sorrow in my eyes.
"You know what, you can have it."
I thought I'd found what I wanted, but I was wrong.
 "Thank you."
I wanted her back.

Hannah Fusco

Allentown High School
Grade 10

After finishing high school, Hannah plans to attend college for music education and music performance. In her free time, she enjoys hanging out with friends, practicing her instrument and reading. Hannah also enjoys playing with her dog, Taco.

Bipolar Disorder

he is the ocean

unique and beautiful,
he wraps you in his arms
his tide so strong
you can not go back

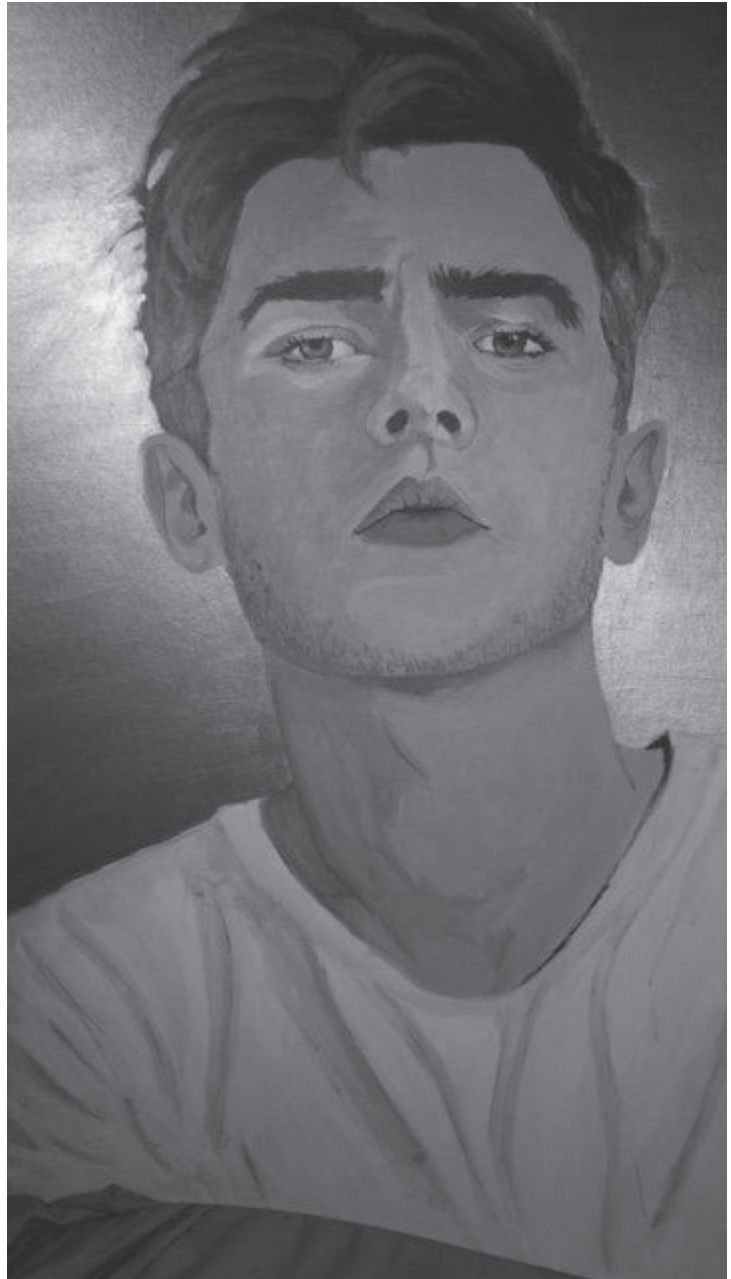
humorous and joyful,
you can float on the water
never having a fear of drowning
because he will hold you up.

sadness and anxiety,
he speaks in small waves
not strong enough to hold their shape.

excitement and smiles,
he wraps you up
makes you feel special
and wants to protect you
from all of the worlds harm.

apologetic and sincere,
all of the good and bad times
are followed by massive waves
of compassion and understanding.

the moon does not control his tides.
he is on his own wavelength.



My Art

Shakira Dessources
Lawrence High School
Grade 12

Shakira has been interested in art since a very young age.



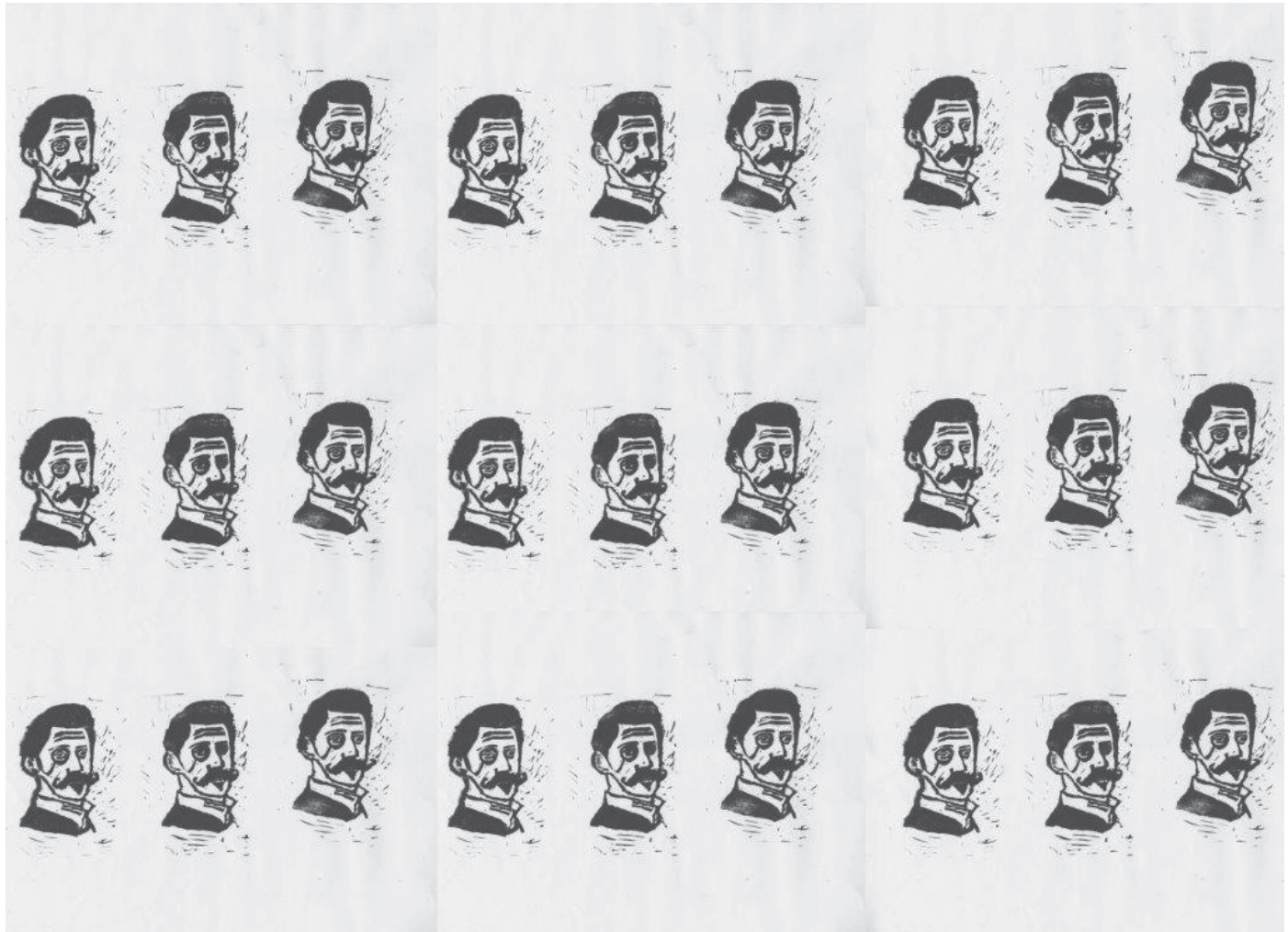
Friends by Nature

Carly Haug
Hightstown High School
Grade 12

Gentlemen Copies

Armahny Mckay
Hightstown High School
Grade 10

Armahny McKay is a Sophomore ate Hightstown High School.



Claudia Giraldo

Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

*Claudia is a sophomore in Hopewell Valley.
She likes to play and cuddle with her small
dog.*

The Choice That Made My Life

Only 18 she was
Living in a city in Lima
A religious home
With a put together life
Never said no, always obeyed

He, a 17 year old
Living in a small village in Colombia
A rebel
A risk taker who never followed the rules
Needed to make a life of his own

She took a plane
He took a boat
She landed in New York
He, in sunny California

What are the chances they'd meet?

He made his way across to the Big Apple
She, learning about the city and living on her own
Both found their way to college in Manhattan

Studying in the same computer class
From asking for notes,
To becoming friends
To moving in together,
To moving to New Jersey to start a family

What would've happened if they have never met?

If they never made that one life changing choice
That one risk to come to America
To fulfill all what life had to offer

If he never took that boat and she never took that plane
Then one thing I know,
I know that choice made who I am today.



Alien Man

Matt DeCristofaro
Hightstown High School
Grade 12

Matt DeCristofaro loves to draw.

Nature

Hemal Patel

Hightstown High school

Grade 10

Hemal Patel is shy, but friendly. They are striving to learn as much as they can.





Infinity

Jennifer Menchu
Hightstown High School
Grade 9

Jennifer enjoys going out and hanging out with her friends. She likes to travel and has been to Ecuador and Guatemala.

Sophie Gregrowski
Lawrence High School
Grade 10

Sophie Gregrowski is currently a junior and an aspiring poet/writer.

A Haiku Concerning Times New Roman

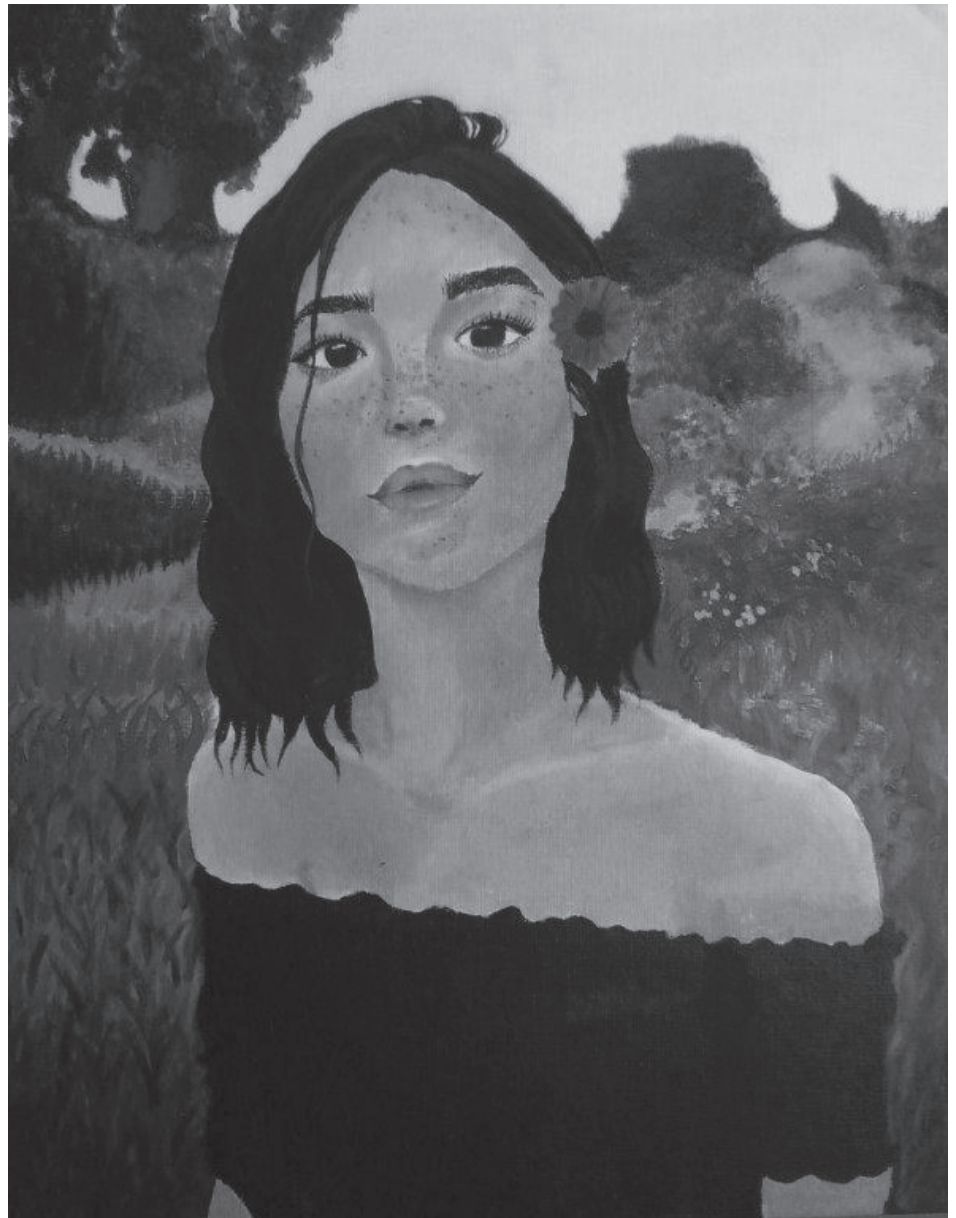
Size Twelve is my fit
People call me a classic
Read between the lines.

In the Hidden Places

Sneha Patel
Hightstown High School
Grade 12

Sneha Patel has been drawing for as long as she's known. She loves to make art in many mediums and really enjoys finding the beauty in faces so she can draw them.

When she's not making art you can find her lost in a book or badly singing her heart out while playing the ukulele.



Kya Hill

Allentown High School
Grade 10

Kya has loved to write since she was a little girl. She rediscovered her love for writing three years ago when she published her first novel online. She also has a big family and often loves to go to Disney World.

Aggression

Black

Is her favorite color

She wears

Leather jackets and

Ripped, frayed jeans

A whiff of mint

Chases after her

As she breezes by

She lives in the

Roughest part of town

She is the person you

Use caution when speaking to

Her lethal glare could drop people

Dead right on the spot

She wishes that some people

Weren't

Spineless

Brainless, fools

Nobody can

Handle her

Fear whispers in everyone's ear

When she walks by

Nobody can

Mess with her

Lyrical Lemonade™

Rebecca Shikarchy

Hightstown High School

Grade 12





Elephant

Melissa Mikalsen

Hopewell Valley Central High School

Grade 12

Melissa is a senior at Hopewell Valley Central High School, and loves to draw and paint. She can't wait to study astrophysics next year in college.

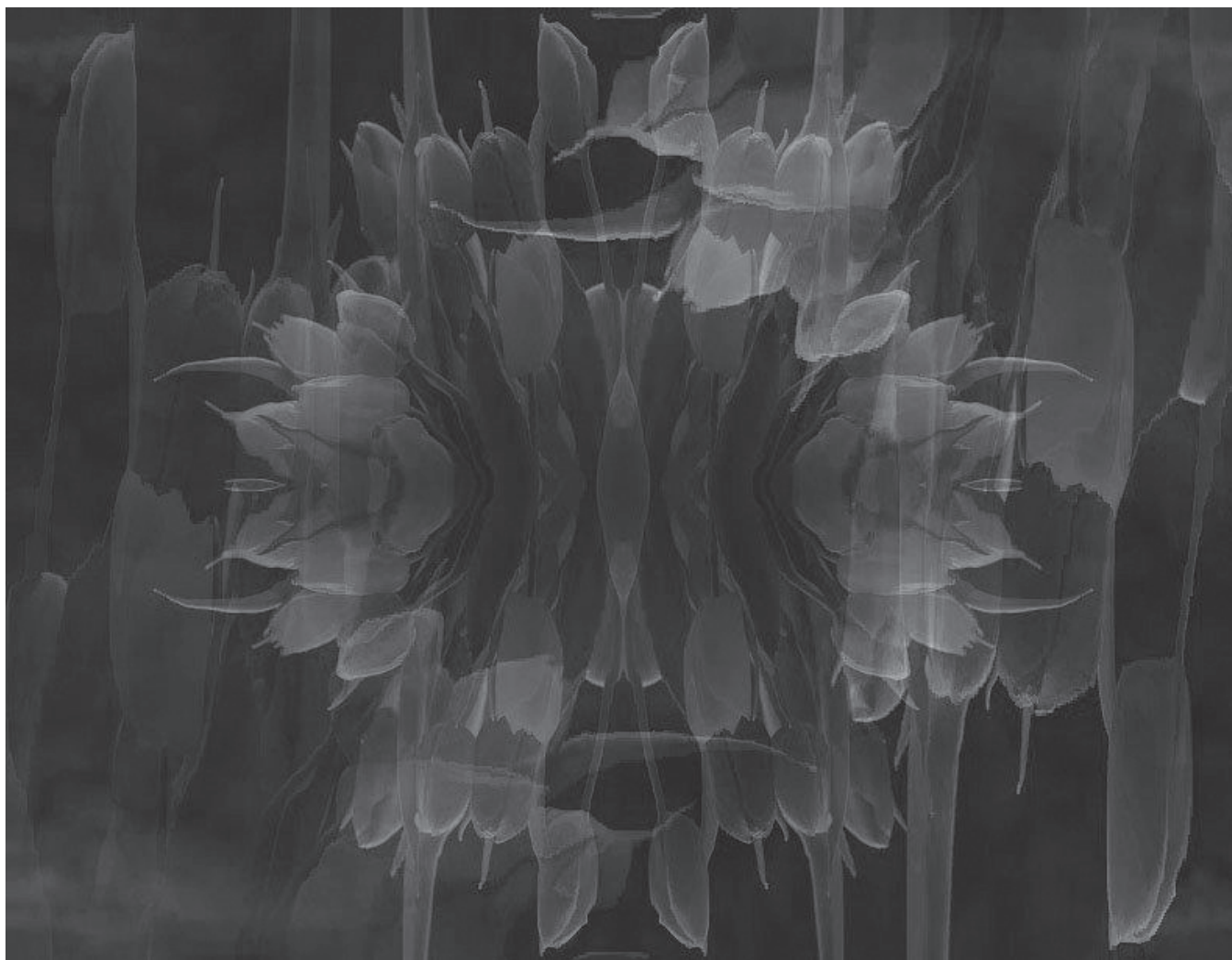
Flowers Reflating By Side By Side

Suha Shaikh

Hightstown High School

Grade 12

Suha Shaikh is a Senior who enjoys exploring different ways of aking art.



Charu Jain

Lawrence High School
Grade 10

Charu Jain is a tenth grader at Lawrence High School who enjoys the Arts and Humanities. She's been writing melodramatic poetry since 5th grade and hopes she's improved since then. Charu enjoys learning about history and literary analysis because she's a nerd.

A Nihilist Prayer

I feel so empty

Lost in a feedback loop

Carrying depression and elation

Misery loves me

So it wraps around me

Till I cannot breathe from its embrace

A smile on my face

And a farce in my head

As I grin and bear the shades near me

Each of them bearing

The tools for their future

Like heavy chains wrapped around their feet

I don't understand

I just want to escape

From this routine fluorescent nightmare

All I have is time

And no freedoms to spend

When I gain freedom, time will be spent

I'm trapped in an endless cycle

Of work to live and live to work

Charu Jain
Lawrence High School
Grade 10

Beautiful Poems

Beautiful poems

Are not written by children

Because we're blasé

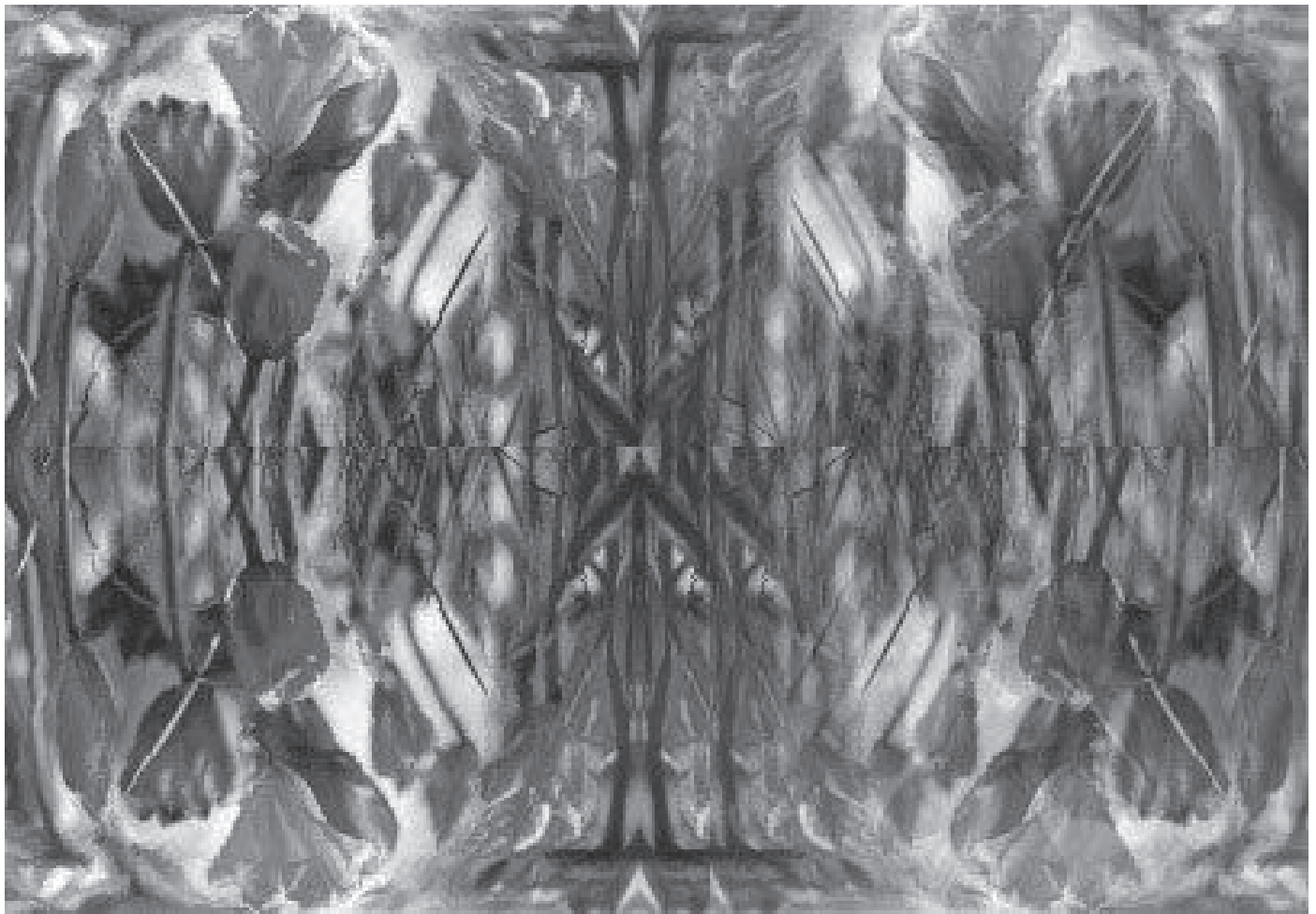


BNHA: Froppy
Jenna Bissinger
Hightstown High School
Grade 10

The Color Infusion of Peace and Darkness

Simranjot Mann
Hightstown High School
Grade 9

Simranjot Mann is a freshman at Hightstown High School.





The White Sunset

Mikey Frunzi
Hightstown High School
Grade 10

Charu Jain

Lawrence High School
Grade 10

Inevitable

I don't think I believe in the idea of souls

Or really, the idea that we have spheres of light in our chests

Or something that lives on after death

I think I could believe in soulmates

Even if they are named incorrectly

Science says that matter cannot be created

Or destroyed

So maybe the phosphorus, calcium

Iron, oxygen, carbon, and whatever else

That gives me breath

Were together when the universe began

Because we're just a mess

of chemicals and electrical signals

And maybe I'm drawn to you

Because the chemicals in my blood

have atoms that were once bonded to yours

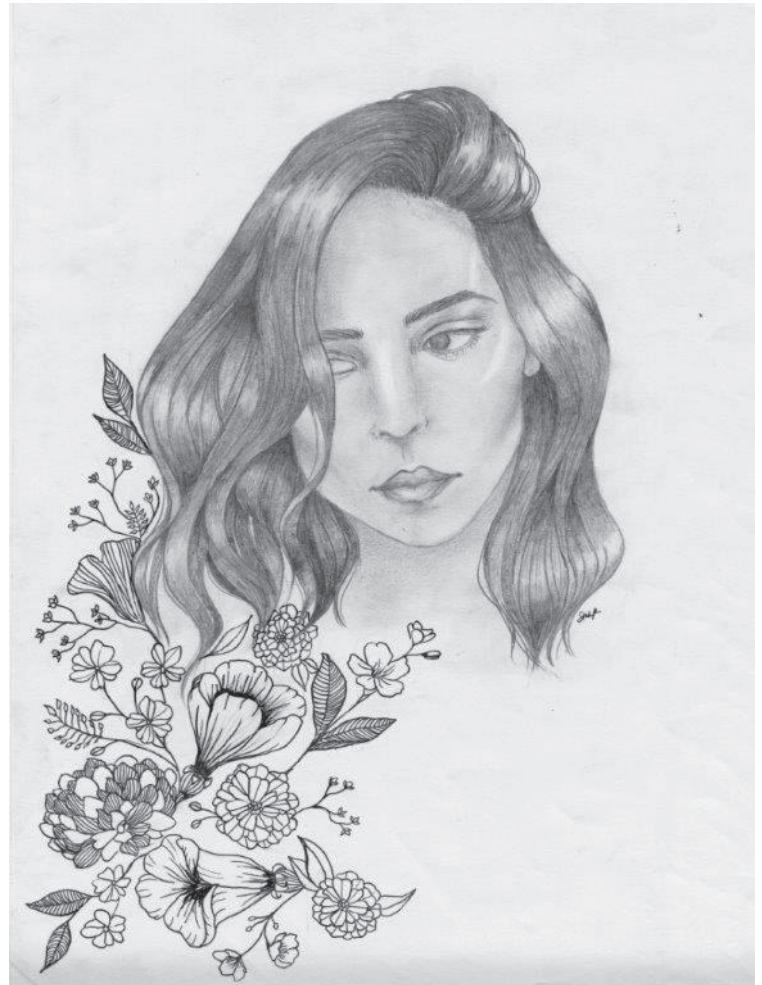
Or maybe I'm just trying to justify why I love you

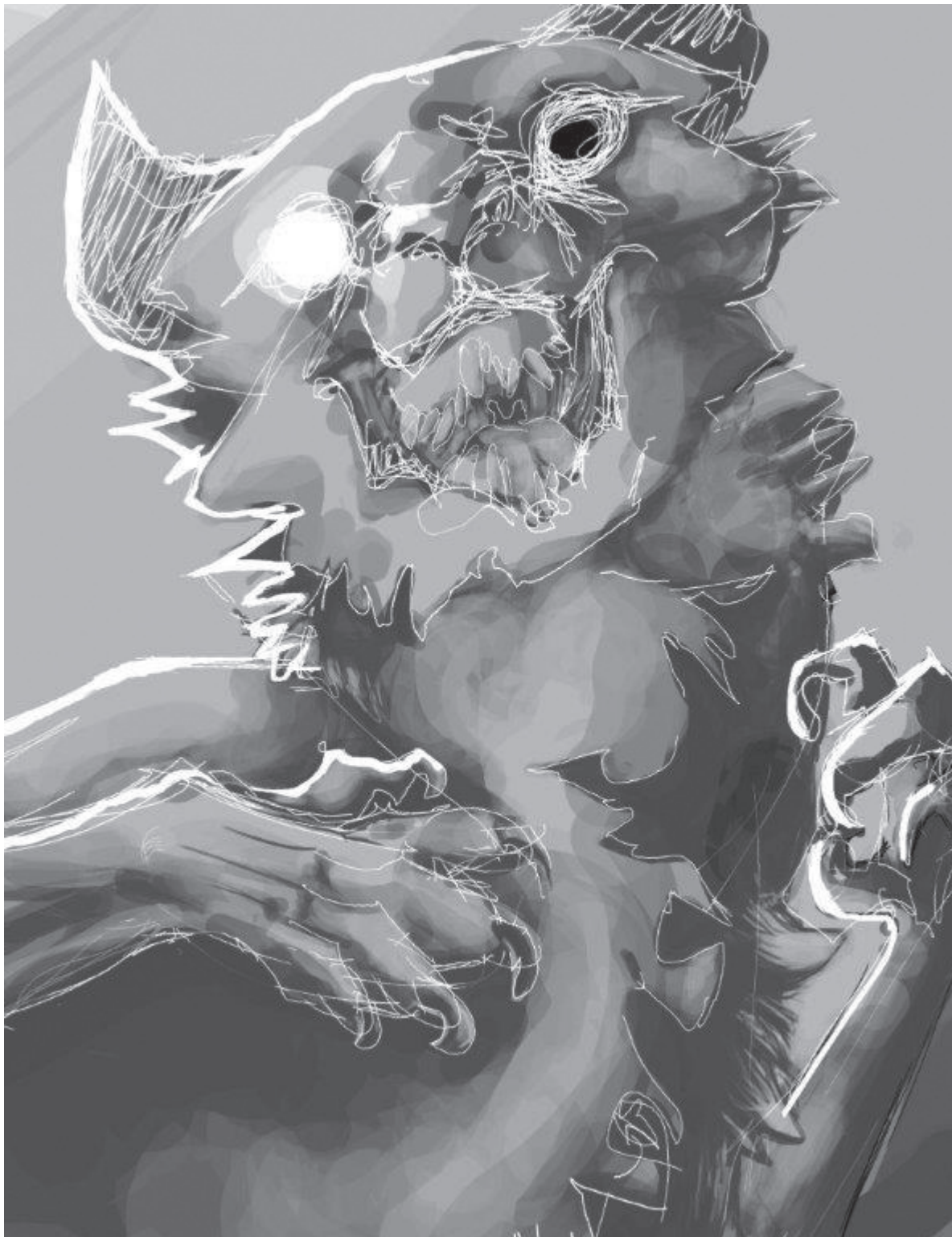
Even though I cannot fathom being with you.

Somber

Sneha Patel

Hightstown High School
Grade 12





tlger

Jillian Langendoerfer
Hightstown High School
Grade 11

Jillian Langendoerfer is a junior at Hightstown High School. She loves biology is and is inspired by nature.

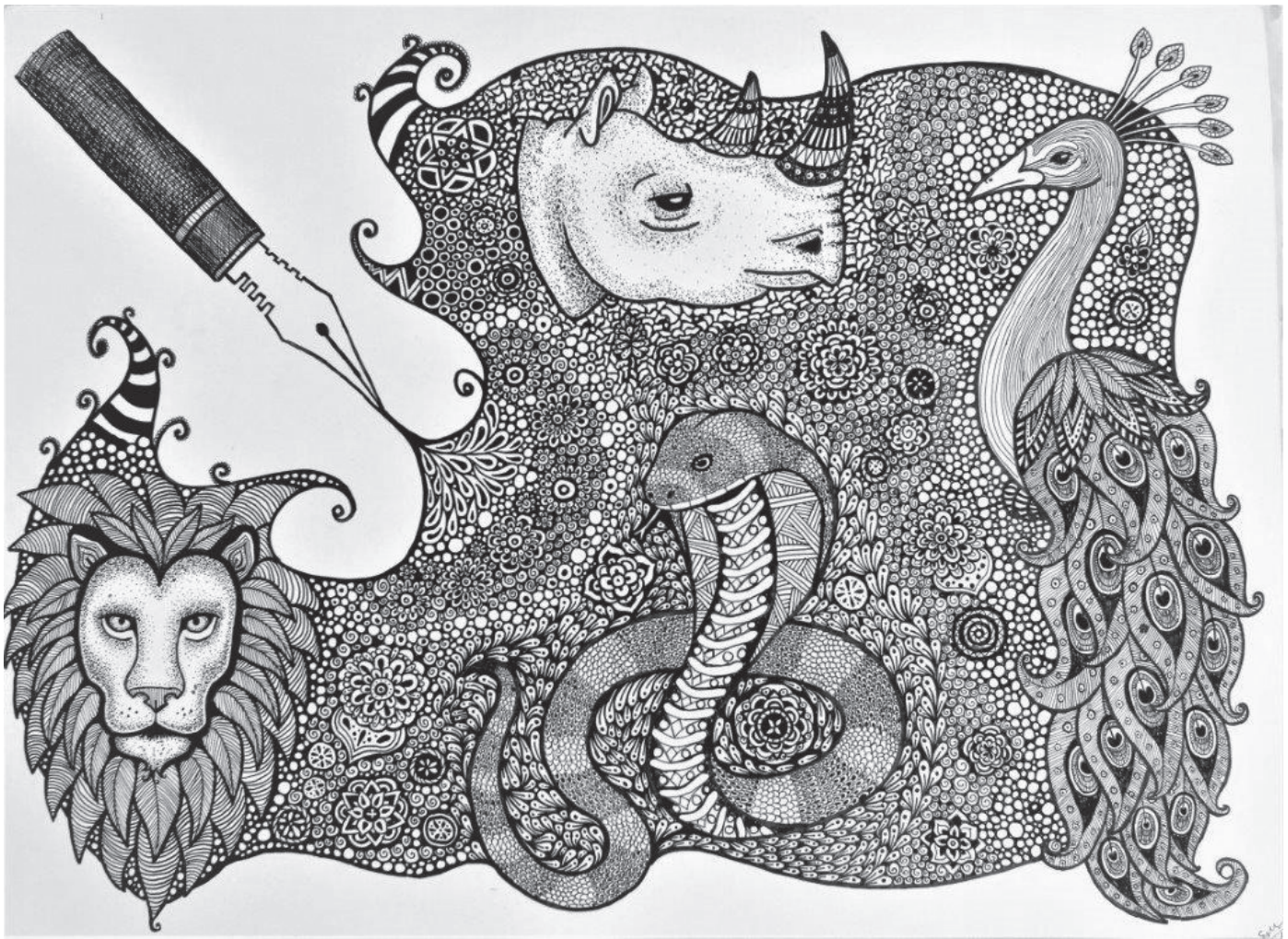


Where's the Sun?

Matthew Brink
Hightstown High School
Grade 9

Zoology

Emily Mah
Lawrence High School
Grade 12



Allyssa Jurgens

Allentown High School
Grade 10

Allyssa Jurgens is currently enrolled in the AP level English Literature and Composition class. While she excels in the math and english subject areas, she also shares singing and musicianship as a passion. Allyssa has performed with many select choirs of the state of New Jersey, and wishes to pursue music education as a career.

Petaled Beauty

Beautiful are bluebells, begonias, buttercups and baby's breath;
Forget-me-not flowers like forsythia and foxglove.
Grant me permission to parade among the pansies
And sing duets with snapdragons and sunflower choruses.
But don't dance with daisies instead of daffodils,
Because they will be just as jealous as hydrangeas.
The rose requires high regard
More than most magnolias, even.
However, among the highest maintenance flowers
Is the carried-away chrysanthemum.
Every flower has its flaws,
But I am thankful for them anyway.

Blossom

Matthew Brink
Hightstown High School
Grade 9



Mallory Keefe

Allentown High School
Grade 10

Mallory Keefe has four sisters and two loving parents. Mallory plans on going to college next year. She uses writing as a way to express herself in a positive light, through writing, making even her negative experiences worth it.

Red Door

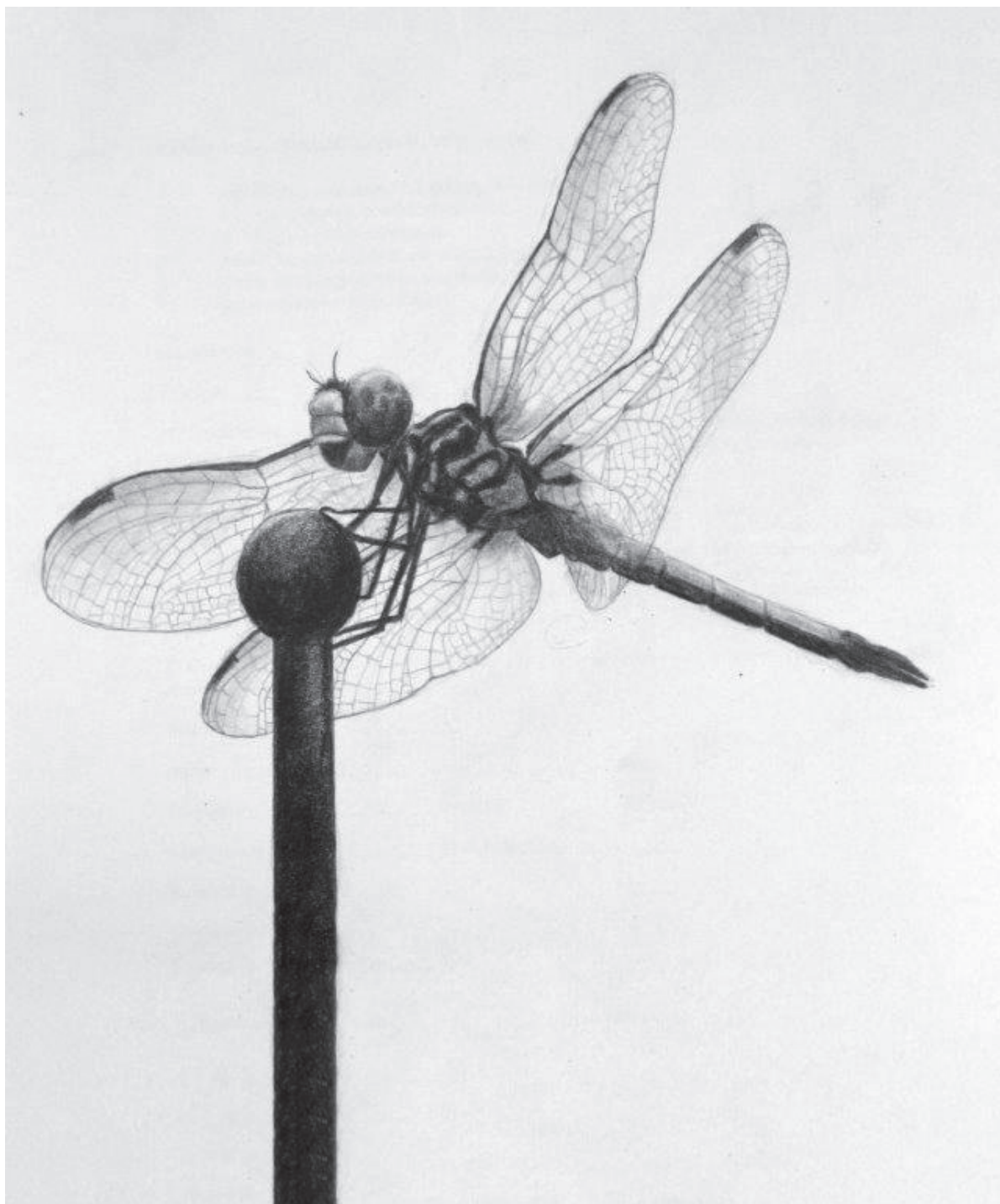
The more I tried to hold on, the faster my fingers began to slip, the more I clenched the sweatier my palms became. That is what it felt like trying not to lose the memory of her. As the days passed the resonance of her voice became faint, the shape of her face became indistinguishable, as I tried to recall the qualities and attributes that I began to forget--my fingers finally slipped. When you are a kid losing a loved one is hard, but having the memory of that individual taken from you, is the hardest part. The loss of memories came suddenly like a child slipping from the monkey bars; it had been anticipated, but when the action of falling finally took place, it did not stop the child from falling hard onto the blackened mulch. I was that child who slipped, that is how it felt when I lost my grandmother. It took me a long time to accept that it is part of human nature to forget. It took me a long time to understand that forgetting did not mean I loved her any less. There is one thing I could never forget, the smell of her favorite perfume. The bottle was thick and clear with a pink colored top the perfume was a light pink also. Red Door was the name of the perfume, the scent was pungent, it was recognizable and distinguishable. I would have much rather remembered the familiarity of the tone in her voice when calling my name. I would have much rather remembered the more important things I know she had taught me. There are a thousand things I wish my memory would have held onto instead, but I did not get to choose what I wanted to remember. Perhaps I had to get off the monkey bars anyway, maybe I was not meant to remember everything about her, and that is why the memory of her is so impactful. I was not meant to live my whole life gripping to the memories of individuals I lose, and I accept and know that now-- I am grateful for the memory I hold closest to my heart, the memory I may not have wanted, the one that still burns my nose.

Geothermal**Amanda Juan**

Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 12

Amanda Juan is currently a senior at Hopewell Valley Central High School. She plans to study engineering in college and hopes to continue photography.





Tranquility

Emily Mah

Lawrence High School

Grade 12

Free Flying

Chris Infosino

Hightstown High School

Grade 11

Christopher Infosino enjoys drawing, throwing shotput and javelin, playing the electric guitar, and spending time with his friends.



Zoe Lang

Lawrence High School
Grade 10

Zoe Lang has been practicing photography for about a year. They enjoy soccer. Additionally, they act as the treasurer of the Lawrence High School DECA chapter and participate in Model United Nations.

The Scarlet Letter A

The scarlet letter A

Burns deep in my blood.

A once admired symbol

Has fallen in the mud.

We once made a promise

To an audience of seven billion hearts,

To take in those huddled masses

Whom you now drive apart.

We once made a promise

To an audience of fourteen billion ears,

They would not hear a gunshot,

They would no longer live in fear.

We once made a promise

To an audience of fourteen billion eyes,

That we are all equal, under god,

Those you now choose to criticize.

We once made a promise

To an audience of seven billion souls,

That we would keep our land intact

Despite an agenda of destructive goals.

We once made a promise

To an audience of seven billion voices,

We are all capable of cultivating a favorable future,

An objective that is uncertain in regard with your current choices.

Now my scarlet letter A

May someday burn bright once again,

One can only hope to feel pride.

Afterall, I am an American.

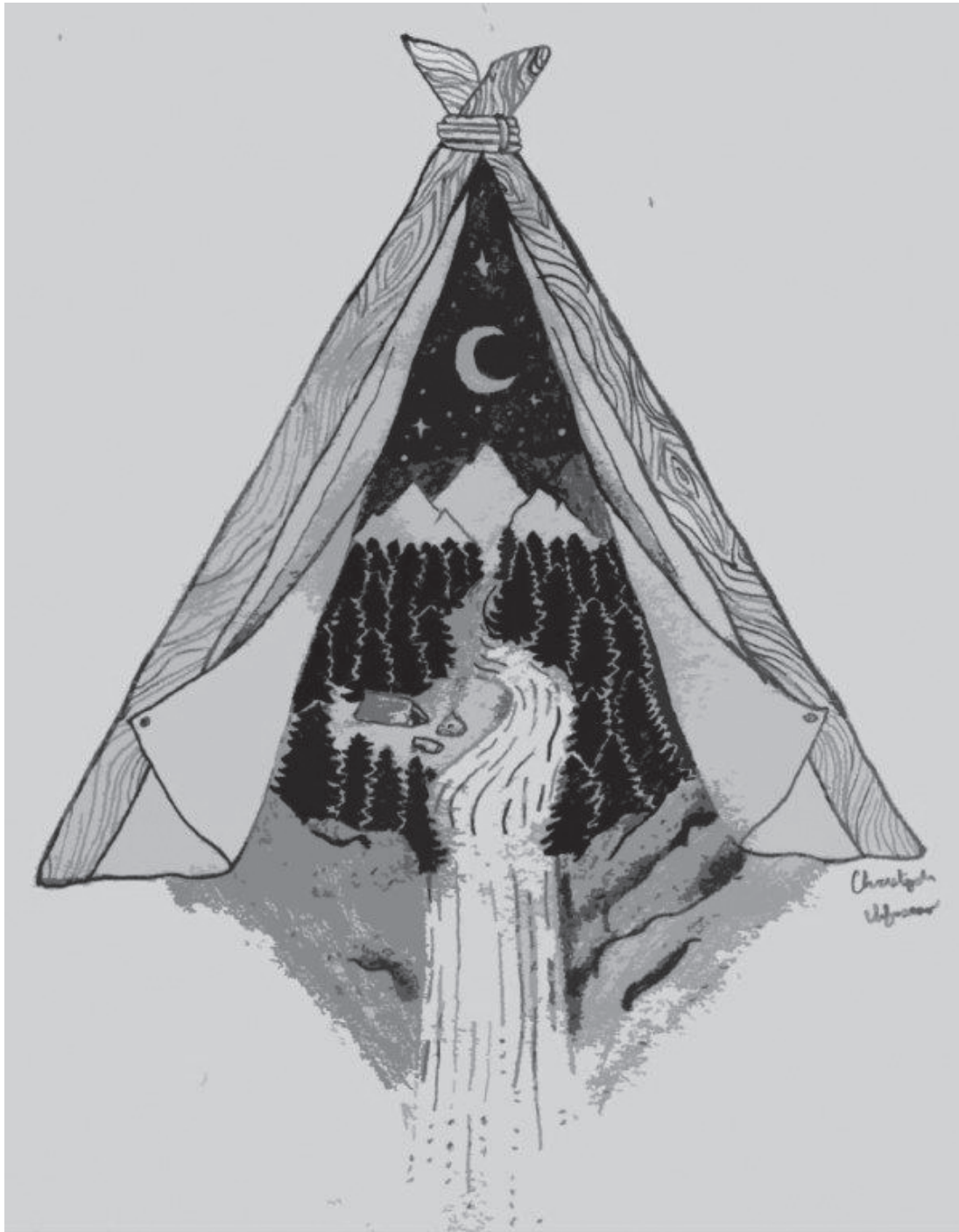


Delivery Girl

Sneha Patel

Hightstown High School

Grade 12



Freedom

Chris Infosino
Hightstown High School
Grade 11



Everyday Goes Another Petal

Mykai Russell
Hightstown High School
Grade 9

Mykai Russell is interested in photography. She also loves to run track and have fun with friends and family.



A Farewell to a World Long Desired

Peter Tran

Hightstown High School

Grade 9

Peter Tran draws as a hobby. They strive to perfect the lines they put on paper, even if those lines won't be shown to anyone.

Christina LeVach

Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Christina is a 10th grader at Hopewell Valley Central and enjoys reading and technical theater. She has been involved with her high school theater program and school's thespian troupe for 2 years.

Public Speaking

There's a stain on my paper.
Where did it come from?
It doesn't look like what I had to eat last night.
(I had mac and cheese, it was so good!)
It's brown.
Brown, as in lighter than my hair,
but darker than this podium.
Right there
in the middle of the left margin.
A little splash
About the size of a pea.
What is it?
Maybe it's gravy
or some kind of marinade.
If I try to wipe it off,
it could smudge.
That would be so much worse.
How could this happen?
Was one of my friends?
Why would they do that?
I asked them to be careful.
They know how much I hate
presenting in front of the class.
I've been up here forever.
I have to start.
"There's a stain on my paper.."

Circle Path

Isabella Moreno

Hightstown High School
Grade 9

Isabella Moreno likes to dance.





Broken Promise

Lisa Cohen

Hightstown High School

Grade 12

Lisa Cohen is a very kind, caring, and competitive person. She loves to spend quality time with her friends and family. She also enjoys playing basketball, soccer, and running.



Covered In Clouds

Ally Jacobson

Hightstown High School

Grade 12

Ally Jacobson is a self-proclaimed professional napper and dog lover. She's looking to end up somewhere in the animation industry, with eyes and heart set on Disney.

Henry McMahon
Hopewell Valley Central
Grade 10

Henry is a 10th grade student at Hopewell Valley Central High School. Henry does not study poetry, but likes to learn about the techniques that go into making a piece of literature sound good.

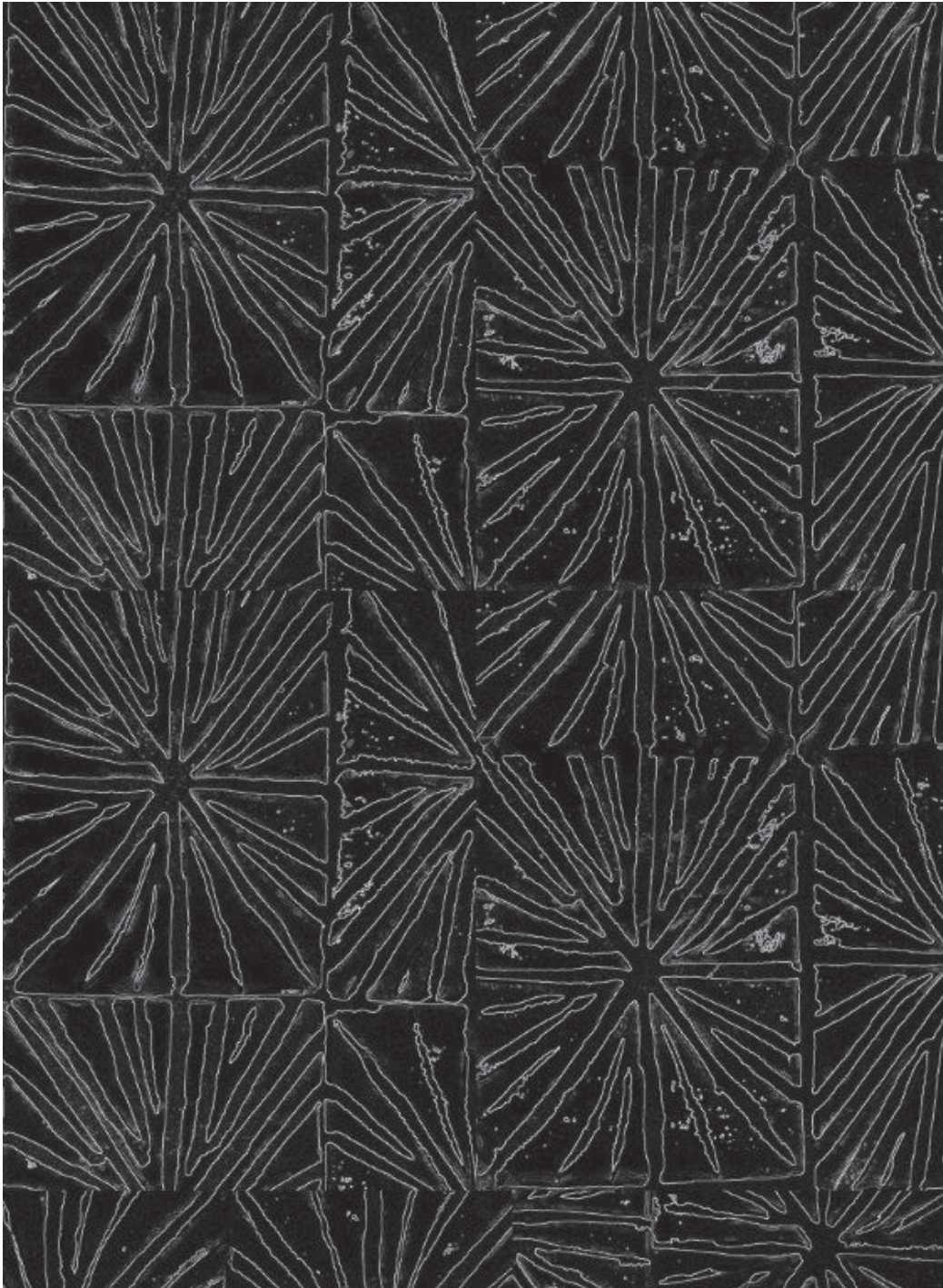
“Happy Hour”

The gravel popped under the tires
As the Suburban shot down the driveway
The long anticipated weekend had ended
Before it had set in
The breath of the hosts fogged the cold windows
Watching the entourage retreat
Time fell into slow motion
The periodic thump of the washing machine
The only noise in the now large house
Rooms shrunk during the visit, only to grow in the cousin’s absence
The warmth had faded
The same sun peered through the windows
Only to cast different shadows
With its now pale blue beams
Each room harboring new memories
The wooden stairs fell silent, lacking the rhythmic beat of shoes
The only trophy of the long weekend
The flamboyant pair of orphaned margarita socks

4th of July

Valentina Moreno
Hightstown High School
Grade 12





Different But the Same

Makayla Wilson
Hightstown High School
Grade 12

Makayla Wilson plans to attend college in the fall and study business administration with a minor in sports management



Big Predator

Matt DeCristofaro
Hightstown High School
Grade 12

Wavy Whale

Colin Dangelo
Lawrence High School
Grade 11

*Colin Dangelo is a Junior.
They used the double
exposure method to
produce this piece.*





Big Brother

Chris Infosino
Hightstown High School
Grade 11

Riley Murphy

Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Riley Murphy enjoys extra curricular activities such as winter track and baseball.

Chucky's Tree

Needles on the tree, so few

Branches weak and bent from dew

Passed over by all, both far and near

The feeling that it gives, so blue

So gaunt and sparse not worth a smear

Someone to cut it down so queer

Will it wear a strand of lights?

It's now that special time of year

A young boy comes with eyes so bright

And sees the tree, so perfect and right

He saws and saws with such delight

While the tree realizes it's unfortunate plight

Jumping Manequin

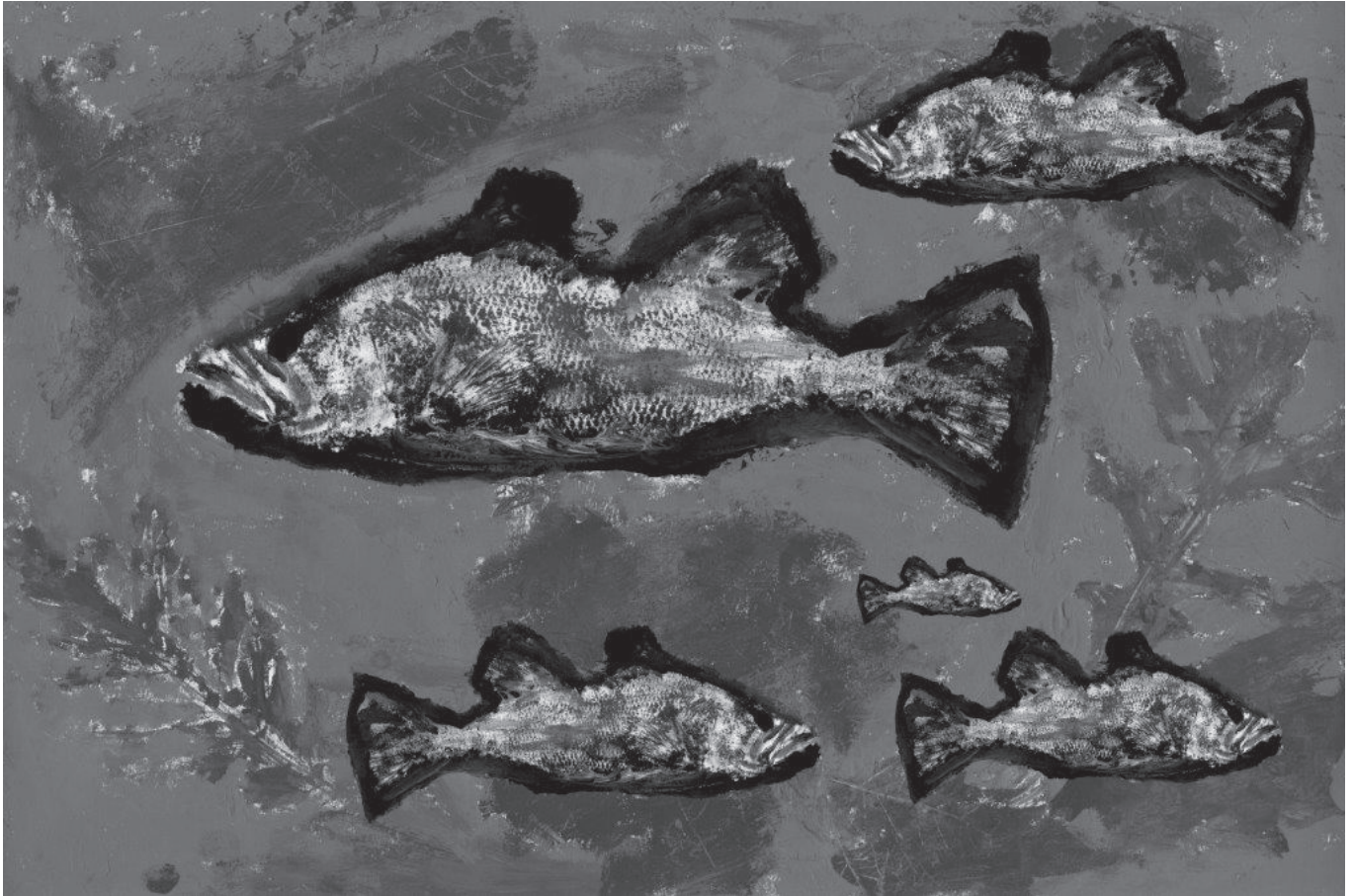
Jillian Langendoerfer
Hightstown High School
Grade 11





Kimora

Aminah Kaba
Hightstown High School
Grade 12



Too cool for School

Hilario DeGuzman
Hightstown High School
Grade 10

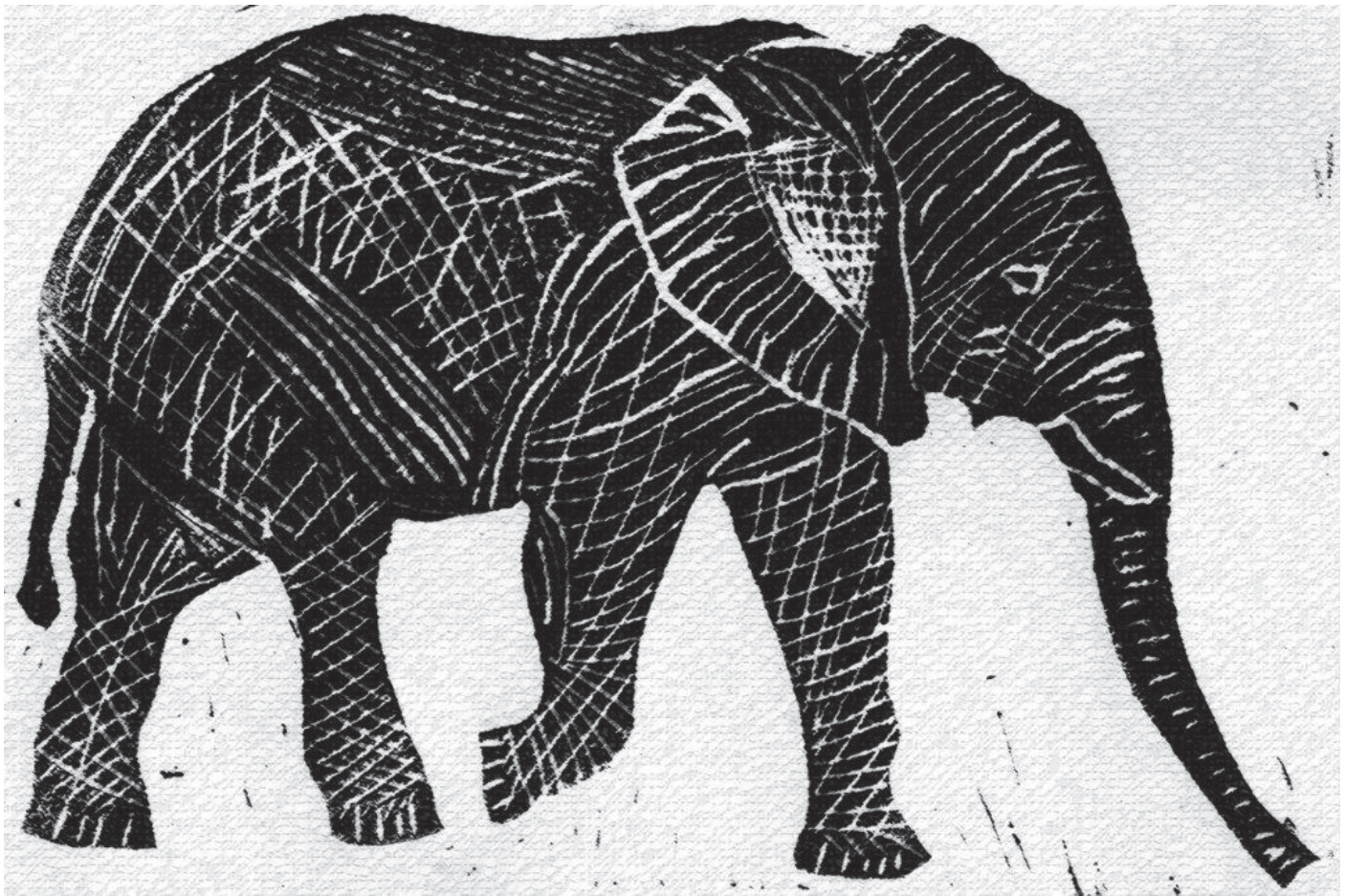
Walk of Life

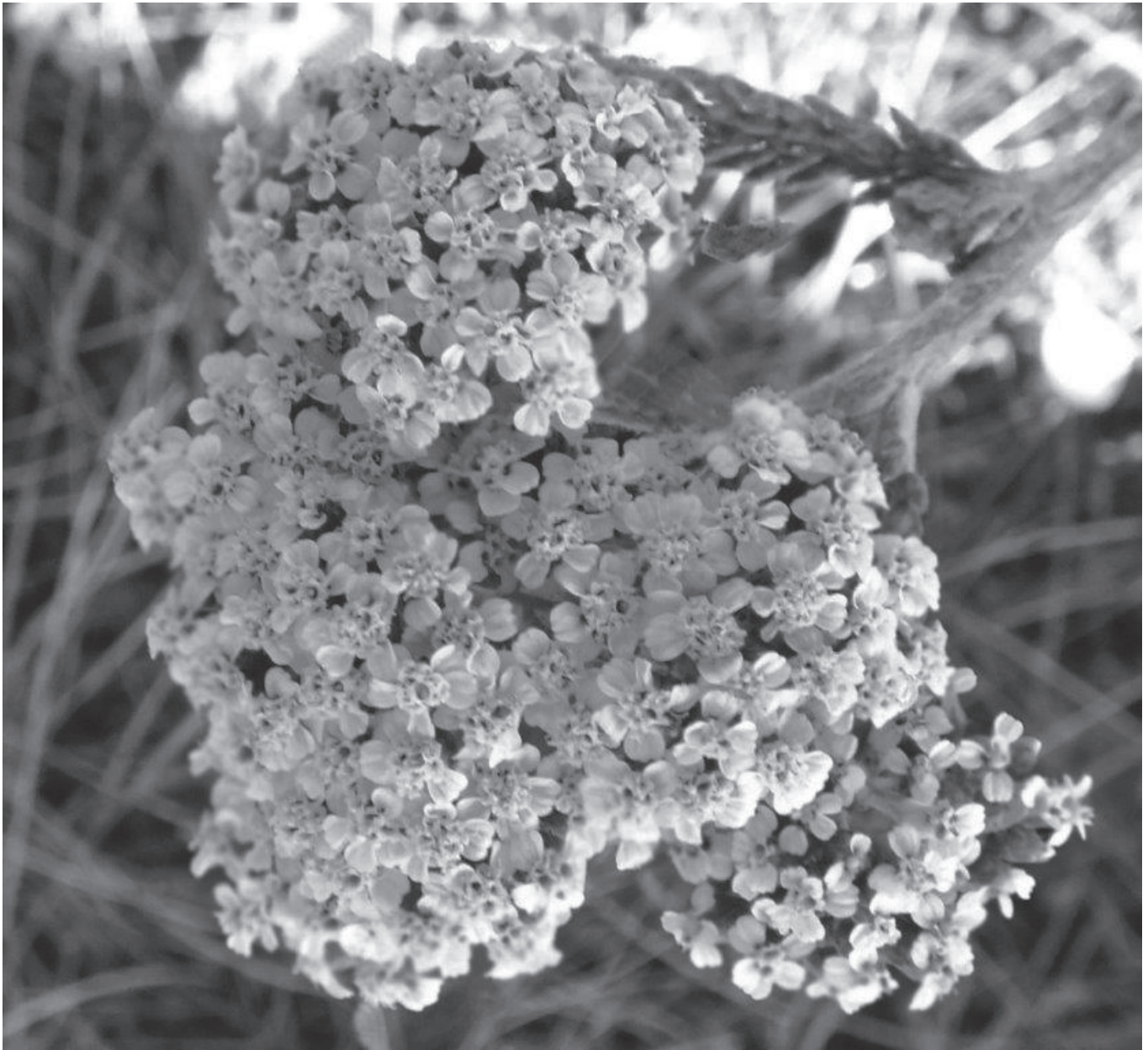
Emilie Sullivan

Hightstown High School

Grade 12

Emilie Sullivan studies at Hightstown High School, where she is taking three art classes including, projects in clay, advanced painting, and printmaking. She is a senior and hopes to continue her art career at a collegiate level.





Beauty in Bloom

Antonio Camposano
Hightstown High school
Grade 9

Antonio is a freshman at Hightstown High School. He enjoys watching football and his favorite team is the Philadelphia Eagles

Alyssa Oldfield

Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Alyssa, also known as Ally, loves to play sports such as basketball, soccer and track.

On the Free Throw Line With One Second Left in a Tied Game

I wipe the bead of sweat dripping from my lip

On my silky white jersey

Number two on my chest

Black and gold lines on my sides

The taste of salt

Heat all around me

The eek of sneakers squeaking

The cheering fans and teammates shouting

The thump and whumpa of the ball

The ref's whistle tweets

All

Suddenly

Go

Away

As I toe the foul line

Everyone panting

All eyes on me

I line up the shot

Resting the ball in my hands

I shoot,

Swoosh

The crowd begins to go crazy

We win

By one.

Olivia Rojek

Lawrence High School
Grade 10

*Olivia is currently a junior in high school.
Her favorite class is chemistry.*

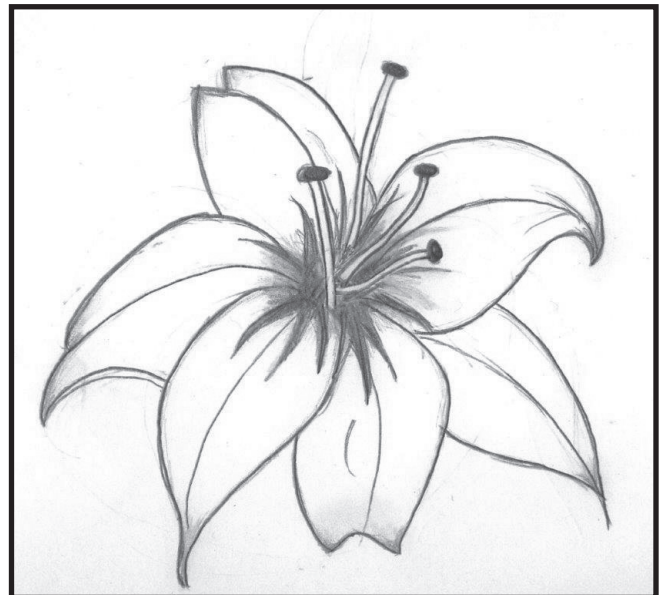
Advanced Basement

Five am; time to wake up
I need five more minutes mom!
I'm trying to do my makeup
Down five steps I rush
And take five quick bites
Oops I almost forgot to brush
I get to school
The bell rings
This is cruel
My heart stings
How can I pass?
I'm beyond tired
And this is my hardest class
I feel like I'm expired
Take advanced placement,
Or be doomed to live in your mom's basement
Is what they tell us
But do they understand
the fuss
we go through to get college credit?
I'm glad somebody said it

Lily

Allison Parkhurst
Hightstown High School
Grade 9

*Allison really enjoys creating art as a hobby.
They currently taking three art classes and
plan to take more in upcoming years.*





Rough Hands

Stephanie Luo
Lawrence High School
Grade 11

Eliza Rosenthale

Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Eliza Rosenthale likes to read, draw, do yoga, and listen to music. One of her favorite contemporary poets is Mary Oliver. She gets inspiration for her poetry by always paying close attention to the habits and quirks of people around her.

Dandelion

I am caught in the middle

Of two unmoving blocks of

Cement so stubborn and stiff

That my roots did not dare delve into such permanence

So I fell through the cracks

And that is where I have chosen to bloom.

A numbing yellow, like something lovely

That you could bring home to your lover.

But I have been classified as otherwise

Ridiculed for attempting to pull off a disguise.

What do you expect when all that have been normalized

Are fields of four-leaf clovers

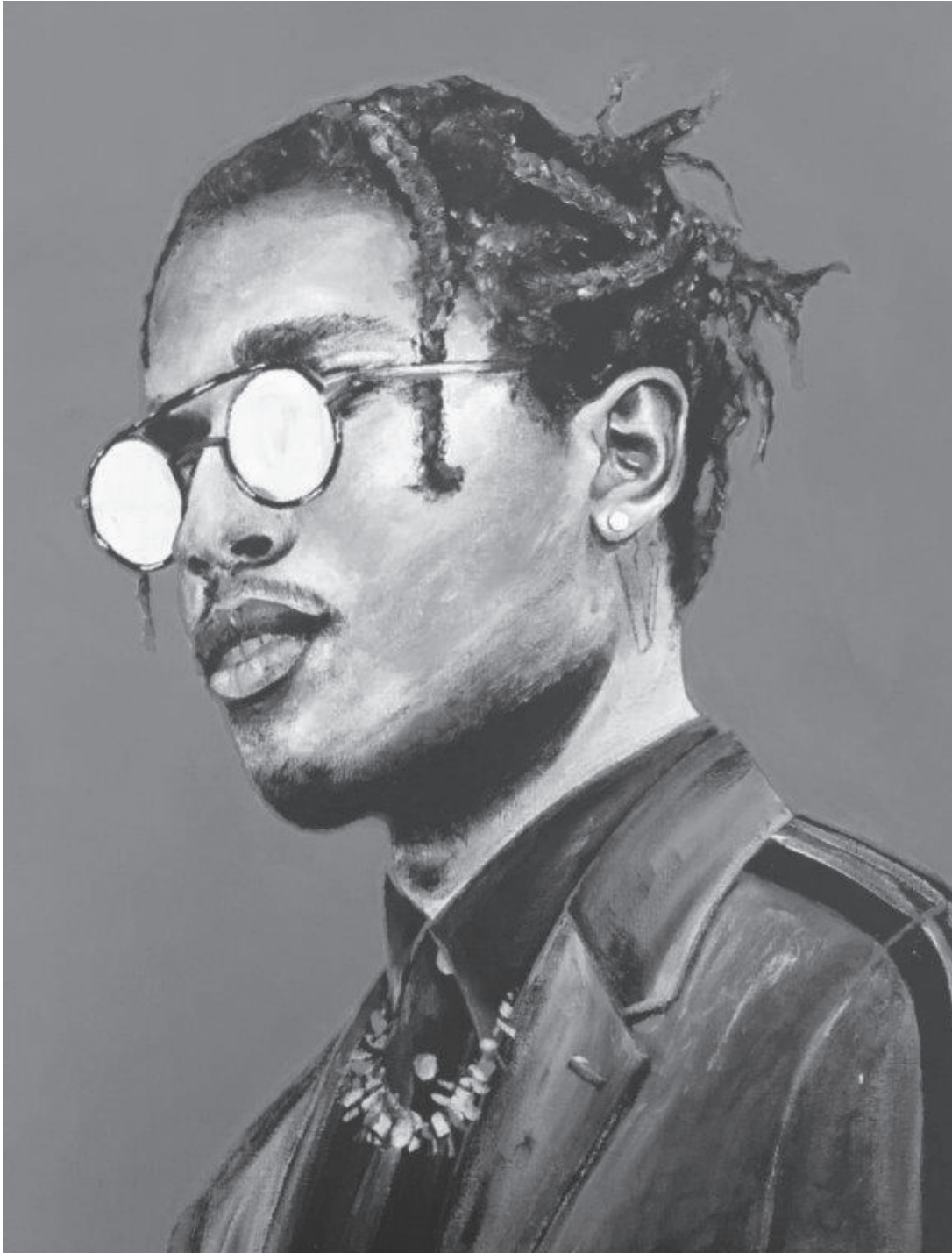
And roses without thorns?

When will wishes stop being made on my corpse?



The Evolution of Flowers Through Light Years

Esha Keertikar
Hightstown High School
Grade 11



A\$AP

Yulduz Masharifova
Lawrence High School
Grade 11

Yulduz Masharifova enjoys painting black and white portraits with colored backgrounds.

Isabelle Rybinski

Lawrence High School
Grade 10

Isabelle is a junior at Lawrence High school. She enjoys writing and the ability it gives her to express herself creatively. Outside of school, she is a part of the track team and multiple student mentoring programs.

Too Tall

Being an Amazon is no walk in the park
Or should I say jungle?
Why are you so tall?
My parents.
Genes.
Early growth spurt.
Questions I just can't answer
Or else I fear society
Will take away my "feminine" label
What's your shoe size?
How much do you weigh?
How tall are you?
Too big, too much
Too tall.
My height changes depending on who
asks
The boy I don't want to scare?
Five feet, eight inches
The New Jersey DMV?
Five feet ten inches
For all official purposes.
Oh, how a lie of two inches
Can completely alter my confidence.
Too tall.
Someone once asked me,
Do you play basketball?
Can't let those long legs of yours
Go to waste.
I laughed.
Yeah, I used to.
Trying to put away the thought
That he had summed up my worth
By the length of my legs.

My body, my stature
My presence as a giantess
Will never be wasted
My height is not who I am
Or who I choose to be
Yes, I am tall.
I am a girl
Who is nearly six feet.
I am a girl
Who wears men's sneakers.
I am a girl
Who towers over male teachers
But
I will keep my chest back
Even when the last thing
I ever feel like doing
Is standing out
I am strong.
I am beautiful.
I am not too tall.
I am enough.

Amrutha Sridhar

Lawrence High School
Grade 10

*Amrutha enjoys writing and playing music.
She works hard in all her classes and endeavors.*

Rose-Tinted Glass

Immortality

It's not all that it seems
I've spent eternity
Watching my friends leave

They promise to stay with me
even when they're gone
But I know they're lying
I've heard it before

There are changes In the world
the people it holds
In the way that they act,
the way that they dress

It changes too fast

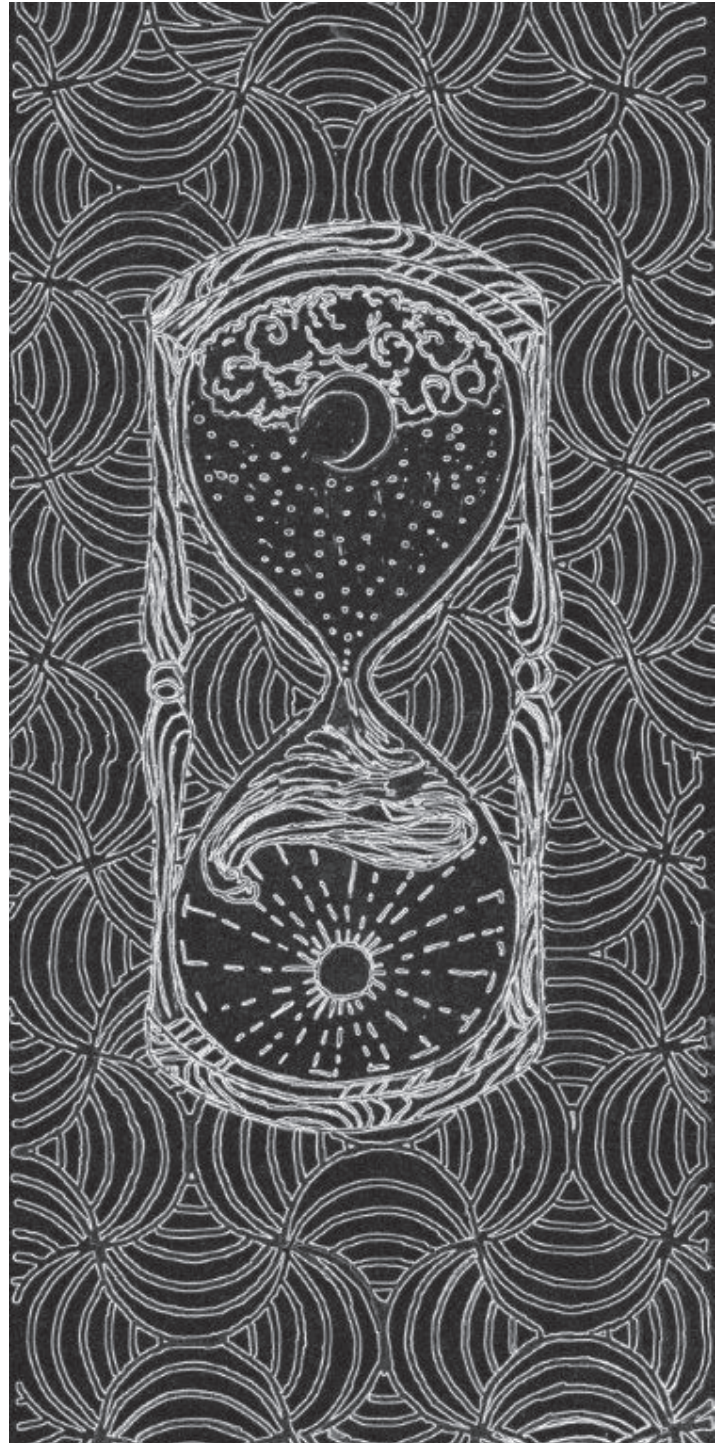
I have forgotten my age,
I have stopped counting
Birthdays are regular
Like any other day

The truth is that I'm tired
Lost many people
Years trying to find them
Wanting their presence

I know I will never get
What I want in life
Can't life love me enough
Not to treat me so

Immortality

It's not all that it seems
I spent eternity
And it spent me

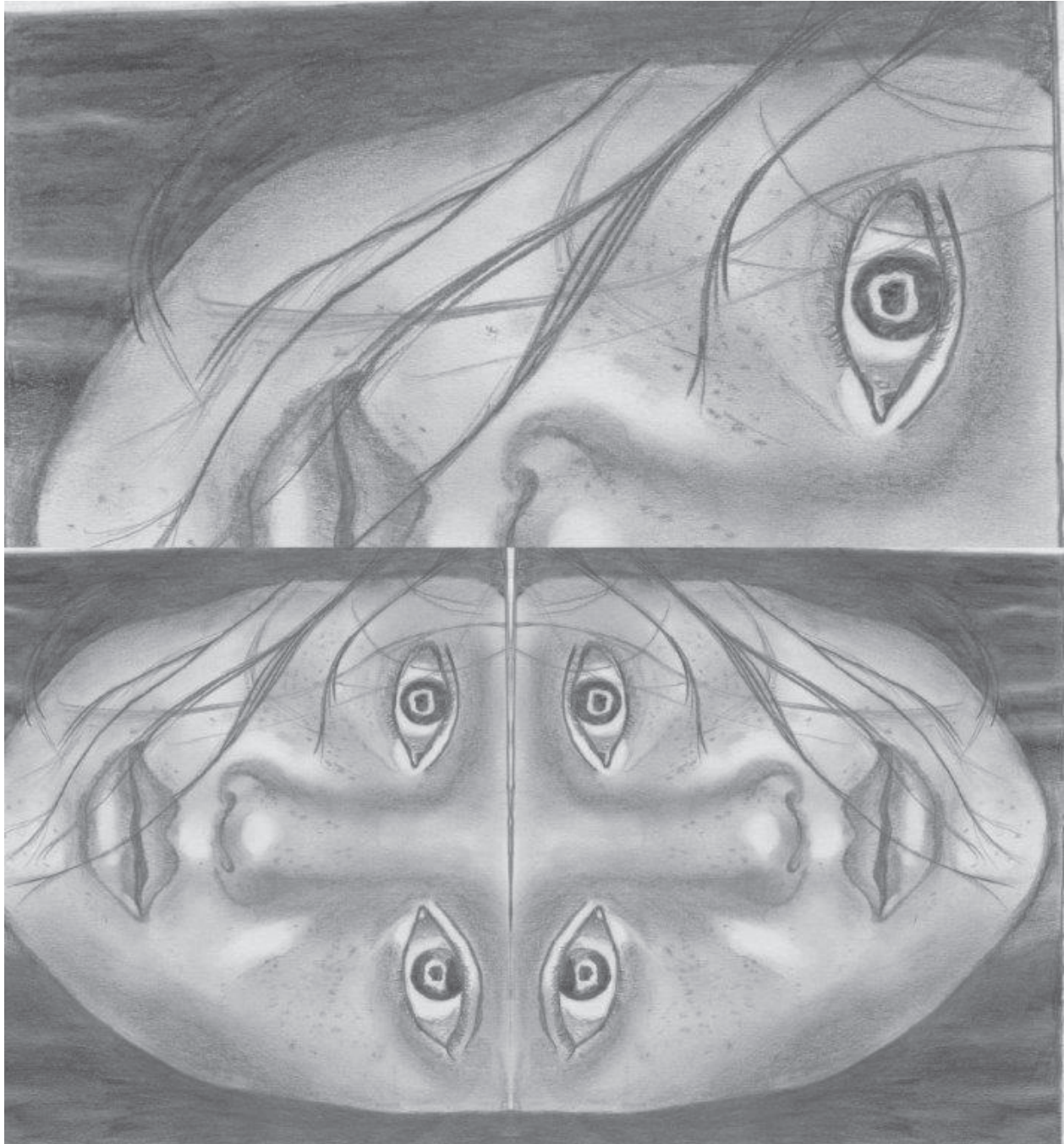


Day and Night

Kiki Taylor

Hightstown High School
Grade 12

Kiki Taylor likes hourglasses.



The Story Behind the Darkness Inside Her

Esha Keertikar
Hightstown High School
Grade 11

Cassidy Stoneback

Lawrence High School

Grade 10

Cassidy Stoneback has always enjoyed English and writing. Outside of being a dedicated student, she is a part of peer leadership, competes in National History Day, and tutors at-risk youth once a week.

Progress

He had a dream

A dream that was fought for

A dream that people died for

A dream that after years of fighting was reached

But now I hear the news

And another young black boy is dead

“He was too young” they say

But they can't even show they care

They say that progress has been made

But black girls are still scary and black boys are still threats

And once again there is a dream

A dream that black kids can walk the streets safely

She wanted girls to learn

Learn that they, like men, can be strong

Learn that they can change the world

Learn that the world is a better place with them in it

But even now I hear the news

Another girl raped, another life ruined

“He had so much potential” they say

And the girl is forgotten

They say that progress has been made

But a list of presidents still only has men

And once again they must learn

Learn that little girls can grow up and lead America

He said love is love and cannot be killed

Love can change the world

Love can bring people together

Love can bring happiness to where there was none

But even now I hear the news

Another LGBTQ teen committed suicide

“No one knew it was this bad” they say

But they did, and they looked the other way

They say that progress has been made

But a gay nightclub is not a safe place

And once again love emerges

And binds people together, forming a community of love

All this dreaming, and learning, and loving

It will take us far, but first we must let it

First we must let it create a new world

A world in which “we” means everyone



Everlasting Life

Stephanie Luo
Lawrence High School
Grade 11



LOOK MA, I'M IN THE LITERARY MAGAZINE

Sam Zappola

Hightstown High School

Grade 11

Sam Zappola is a Junior at Hightstown High School.

Caroline Tamasi

Hopewell Valley Central High School
Grade 10

Caroline is an athletic young student who formally played lacrosse but now plays lacrosse in the springtime at HVCHS. She enjoys spending time with her friends and family.

Change of Sticks

The choice was easy
But the change was hard.
Golf was a new love.
But leaving lacrosse meant
Leaving friends.
Golf was a sea of boys, and I was the scuba diver.
The boys were quiet and direct,
All business.
Lacrosse girls were off having
Pasta parties,
Tye dying t-shirts
And doing carpool karaokes on the way home from practice.
But the boys weren't strangers anymore
I started saying "hi" to them
In the halls.
They were people I could talk to.
They became teammates and they started to let me in.
They were supportive and caring.
I finally cracked them.
By the season finale
I didn't want the gold to start.
It was a new family
That I was so excited to be part of.

Alexa Sullivan
Lawrence High School
Grade 10

Alexa Sullivan is a sophomore at Lawrence High, and she is involved with the Science Olympiad team and other clubs such as Chemistry club and Engineering club. She enjoys reading and going to the movies.

A Feeling Of Insignificance

A feeling of insignificance
In the grand scheme of the universe
Fourteen billion years in the making
We will do nothing that impacts
The vastly unexplored cosmos

We live in the blink of an eye
Compared to the expanding space
If our Earth were to disappear
The other galaxies would have
Nothing to say about our death



Awaiting Brightness

Justin Unger
Hightstown High School
Grade 9

Justin likes to play football and basketball in his free time. He also enjoys being in the outdoors and in nature.



A Pair of Praying Mantises

Eleanor Nir

Hopewell Valley Central High School

Grade 11

Ellie Nir is a student with a passion for photography. Whenever she sees something interesting, Ellie just has to run inside and grab her camera.



Griffin McElroy

Jenna Bissinger
Hightstown High School
Grade 10

Hannah Tran

Hightstown High School
Grade 10

Hannah frequently writes, plays music, and photographs the world around her. Since last year, she has been third-wheeling less and less, so Hannah and the axle have broken up and agreed to a strong platonic relationship.

Out of My League

By no means is she submissive.

A wild smile

Incandescent mind

Endearing, piercing eyes

Beauty

Truly,

Maddeningly,

Deeply,

Untouchable.

Because of all the people her heart leads her to

None of them

Are women.

**The day of the
Death; between
life and death.**

Jocelyn Herrera Guerrero
Hightstown High School
Grade 9

Jocelyn Herrera likes to draw.



Life In Death

Mikey Frunzi
Hightstown High School
Grade 10

Hannah Tran
Hightstown High School
Grade 10

Home

Exasperation makes its way through my mind like a cold, tired sigh
“Where do you really come from?”

Fine.

Three countries,

The first two draped in a scarlet sky with yellow stars

Follow my father across the unforgiving seas,

There is a boat that reeks of death, carrying more life than it's meant to,

More hopes, more dreams,

And somehow, it survives.

Follow my mother out of state,

She can drive to her childhood home, of pipes and cigars, dogs and cats,

More hopes, more dreams,

The family restaurant.

Follow me home,

Take a walk around town,

Cultures crammed into shops along Main Street

This mottled town is painted like all of our faces

I breathe in the fumes.

But enough about me.

Where do you really come from?



Changing the Views

Emma Shwom

Hightstown High School

Grade 9

Emma Shwom is a 9th grader that loves to take and edit photos. Out side of school, Emma loves to play soccer and spend time with her family and friends.

Tiger at Heart

Hassina Azimi

Hightstown High School

Grade 12

Hassina Azimi. has been creating art work since they were five years old.



Hannah Tran
Hightstown High School
Grade 10

Search Results

Three in the morning is usually a quiet, often reflective hour, perfect for any sort of thinking that requires some alone time.

how to kill someone quietly

most efficient deadly weapons

regular ways people die

how to throw a good punch

sinking a body in water

There are already about seven different voices in my head screaming for attention after all, I don't need anyone else adding to the mix.

hamilton soundtrack original broadway cast

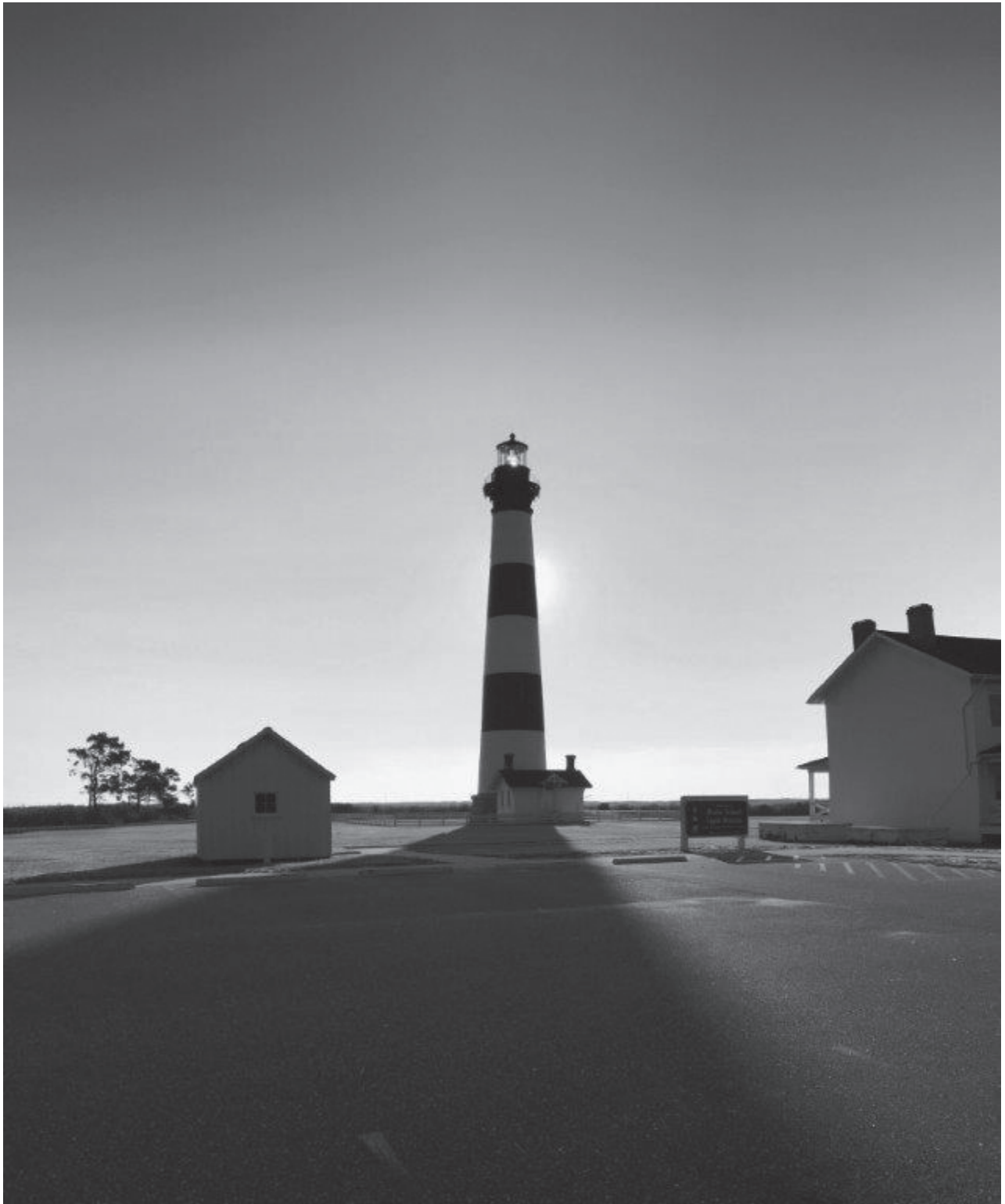
buzzfeed quiz

Usually the price of being alone and unmonitored is that my attention span wears out fast. I switch tabs to my Google Doc and stare at the glorious three bullet points of planning I've done. One bullet point per hour. It always happens this way; the big kill plays out in ravishing, bloody detail, taking up little of my time because it's almost instinctual by now. It's short and sweet, but the feeling trails into the night and echoes in the morning sky. It's a rhapsody.

Then, of course, I remember that I have to set up an actual plot. What I'd really like is to get to the point, but Remi here is telling me that would ruin her character development. Why did I make you so opinionated again?

Such is the life of a writer. After zoning out two or three times I resign myself to being uninspired, reluctantly closing the music tab and copying the links to all of my references. Just as I reach to close the lid of my laptop, a jolt runs up my arm to stop me.

I almost forgot to delete my browser history.



A Captain's Way Home

Anthony Orlando
Hightstown High School
Grade 9

Anthony Orlando loves wrestling. He also enjoys traveling and hiking.



Fire Is In Us All It Just Takes Time For One To Unlock It

Christine Rivera
Hightstown High School
Grade 10