

Celebrating WORDS

Fill your paper with
the breathings of
your heart ...

—William Wordsworth



English Language
Arts Council
of the Alberta
Teachers' Association

2015

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Editorial

It has been an awesome and rewarding experience to serve as the editor for the *Celebrating Words* contest this school year. So many young writers submitted poetry, personal essays and short stories on all topics.

This year's contest received submissions from students at all levels of public education and from teachers. Thank you all for sharing your imagination and passion. With 96 submissions, the participation was amazing!

Five judges, teachers from all levels of K-12 education, volunteered their time to review the submissions and confer with their partners to generate the winning submissions using a supplied rubric. Entries were numerically coded and provided to the judges to read independently with no knowledge of the contestants' names. I appreciate and am thankful for their time and effort in supporting this contest.

Thank you to the ATA publications staff for preparing this issue for distribution. Also thank you to the English Language Arts Council executive and membership for your support.

Each contestant who submitted an entry will receive a complimentary copy of the publication. Each winner will receive a Chapter's gift card along with a complimentary copy.

Thanks to all the contributors and to all who helped make this year's *Celebrating Words* successful.

Carey Klassen

Editorial Note

In editing the pieces in *Celebrating Words*, we have corrected simple spelling and punctuation errors but have left in word choice, paragraphing and sentence structure to reflect the age and development of each author.



A Magical Day at the Beach

Allison Samm

It was a nice summer day at the beach. A nice day for a boat ride, thought Emma. Emma jumped into a rowboat even though she was only seven. She didn't even bother to put on a life jacket. Though she wasn't 100 per cent sure how to swim. She started paddling. The first part of the ride was quite smooth. Just then it began to get dark. But Emma didn't notice. Then three drops of water landed in the rowboat. Emma thought it was a fish splashing its tail. Then the calm water began to get rough. Just then the boat began to tip! Then Emma fell out! At first the ocean seemed dark. But then all colours of fish came out of nowhere. It was a beautiful sight! Just then, a dolphin came speeding forward and did some sort of dance. Then another dolphin came and a mermaid, who had been riding it, came off it. Then another dolphin came and a merchild got off it. Then another dolphin came. Quickly the mermaid set to work. Soon Emma was riding a dolphin. Then the mermaid pushed a rock to the side. The mermaid and the merchild got off the dolphins. The mermaid picked Emma up off the dolphin she had been riding. She brought her into a little cave.

"I am Crystal," said the mermaid.

"I am Lilly," said the merchild.

Then Crystal shut the rock door. Emma took a breath and said, "I am Emma." Crystal disappeared behind a seaweed curtain. When she came back, she gave Emma a jewel necklace with a shell at the front. "Now," Crystal said, "this isn't just any necklace." She continued, "If you wear this necklace in the ocean. . . ." Emma held her breath, waiting for her to finish. "As soon as you are under water you will turn into a mermaid." Emma said, "It was nice to meet you Crystal, and Lilly, but I think I will have to go. It's really late." Then a little tear went down Emma's cheek. She gave hugs to her new mermaid friends and said goodbye. She picked up her necklace and pushed the rock door aside. She swam up to the shore. She went onto the shore and sighed happily.

Allison Samm is a Grade 2 student at Hardisty K-9 School in Edmonton (Sam Belony, teacher).



Harlow's New Friend

Lainey Bracuk

Hi, my name is Lainey, and this is my dog Harlow. Harlow is a medium chocolate coloured labradoodle. Harlow loves to meet new people. She is really silly. You should meet her. Harlow loves to play with her little orange ball and football. She just goes crazy when I throw it over the bushes and through the muddy dirt. She also loves it when we take her to the off-leash park. When she sees another dog, she goes psycho. She jumps on the dog and plays and plays and plays with the other dog. One other time, I went to the off-leash park with my mom, my sister Annika and my auntie's dog Dash. We were walking and suddenly Harlow saw something in the distance. Then she took a few steps forward. "Harlow, don't you dare do it," I said. But it was too late. She did it. She chased the animal. Before we knew it, she vanished into the woods. My sister Annika was freaking out. She yelled, "Where is Harlow?" We searched the high cliffs and by the low rivers where she usually plays. We kept on calling her name, "Harlow, come here girl." We searched and searched for her. Mom said she can't be far. But then we heard a very unusual voice. I whispered to Annika and my mom, "Did you hear that?" They answered, "Yes we did" they called out. Then we said, "Hello, who are you and where are you?" We turned around and that's when we saw it: a talking squirrel! It said, "Do you folks need to find a little chocolate-coloured puppy?" "Yes, we do," we said. "Have you seen her?" we answered in surprise. "As a matter of fact I did see one chasing my nephew," said the talking squirrel. "Can you show us where she is?" we asked. "Yes, I will help you find her, just be nice. She is right there behind that bush," said the squirrel. Then the squirrel vanished further into the woods. We looked behind the bush and called out, "Harlow, there you are. We missed you." After that we went home.

Lainey Bracuk is a Grade 2 student at Hardisty K-9 School in Edmonton (Sam Belony, teacher).



A Magical Adventure in the Rainforest

Willow Stogrin



Alexa was on the airplane with her mom, dad and brother, Mark. Alexa is seven. She is very scared of being alone.

“Alexa,” said mom, “we’re almost at the rainforest so buckle up your seat belt!”

“OK mom,” said Alexa. She looked down at the window. She saw the trees and felt the moisture of the rainforest. Then the plane landed. They were at the airport. Alexa was so excited! They went out of the airport. Alexa could feel the moisture and see flowers and a waterfall. Then she saw a beautiful plant. She went to go touch it. Then she came back and her family wasn’t there! She was very scared. She never liked being alone. Then she started looking for her family. She called for her mom, dad and brother, Mark.

“Is anybody there?” she called out.

Mom said, “Alexa, where are you?”

Then mom, dad and Mark started calling for her. Then it got dark and her family stopped calling and Alexa started crying. Then she heard a voice! It said, “Don’t cry, it’s all right.”

“Mom, dad, is that you?”

“No, it’s not your mom and dad,” said a voice. Then, a panda, two koalas, a monkey and an elephant stepped out of the trees.

"I am Carrie," said the panda. "This is Lilly and Milly, the two koalas. The monkey's name is Moon, and the elephant's name is June.

"Hi," said all the animals. "Go go good," said Moon.

"What?" I asked. "Oh," said Carrie, "Moon likes being funny."

"What is your name?" said Carrie. "Well my name is Alexa, and I'm lost."

"You should stay with us for the night," Carrie said. Alexa did.

In the morning they ate breakfast. Then they went to look for Alexa's family. While they were searching for her family, Alexa's mom, dad and brother were also searching for her! Along the way they bumped into each other.

"Mom, dad, Mark! I missed you so much," said Alexa. "Now Alexa, don't ever run off like that again," said mom.

"I really know now," said Alexa, hugging her family. Then she turned to the animals and said, "Thank you so much."

"You're welcome," said the animals. Then the animals told her that they wanted to give her a bracelet. Lilly and Milly took out a bracelet made out of flower petals.

"Thank you," said Alexa. Then a tear dropped from her eye. She was sad to see her friends go. Alexa waved as they left.

"Wait," she said. "Will you remember me?"

"We will," said Lilly and Milly.

"Bye," they all said. Then they left and Alexa started crying. Then her family turned around and said, "You can talk to animals?" Then I laughed and said, "What an awesome adventure!"

Willow Stogrin is a Grade 2 student at Hardisty K-9 School in Edmonton (Sam Belony, teacher).

Puppy

Kaylee Campbell

They have fur as soft as silk.
Sharp sharp teeth as white as milk.

Brown or white they lick your face.
Long and tight their tail they'll chase.

Barking is how they try to talk,
to tell you that they want a walk.

When you sit down in any way,
at your feet they will lay,
sleeping all the hours away.

The food they eat is brown and hard.
Then they leave "presents" in your backyard.

The water they drink is cold, fresh and blue.
Oh no! They just chewed a brand new shoe!

Green and soft is the grass where they lay.
Because they're tired from their long day.

They walk inside for a bite to eat,
then lay down and fall asleep.

Their favourite bone has a lot of marrow,
you sigh because you're doing it again tomorrow.

You stroke their fur and pat their head.
Then you say, "It's time for bed."

They follow you into your room.
Where their sleep will resume.

They dream about the day they've had.
It was the happiest one and not at all sad.

You wake up and get out of bed.
They follow you and it is said.
that you do that day over again.

They follow you out the door.
What a good day it's been so far.

Kaylee Campbell is a Grade 5 student at Evergreen Elementary in Drayton Valley (Barbara Gregory, teacher).



Clouds

Makena Veitch

I can be white
I can be grey
Occasionally, I ruin your perfect picnic day
I am always joyful as I watch you play
I even shade you so you can be gay

I can rain
I can storm
I can even turn myself into the shape of a unicorn
I am what your beautiful imagination turns to shapes

At me, you sometimes gape
For the weatherman's predictions were truly a vast mistake!

*Makena Veitch is a Grade 5 student at Evergreen Elementary School in Drayton Valley
(Barbara Gregory, teacher).*



Rain

Hailey Kotyk

Falling fast and rapidly,
Coating the leaves in fresh water,
Puddles in the springtime weather,
Stormy rains pitter-patters on the streets,
Refreshing splashes on my face,
After a storm a rainbow forms,
It catches my eye,
Sparkling in the sky,
Raindrops on the dewy grass,
It shimmers and glitters,
The sun shines brightly and makes the grass dry.

Hailey Kotyk is a Grade 5 student at Evergreen Elementary School in Drayton Valley (Barbara Gregory, teacher).



What Changed Everything

Pakeeza Mushtaq

I sat on the crumbling wooden bench nervously twiddling my fingers. The air was crisp and a subtle wind ruffled my new pink dress. It may not have been pristine, but it was to me. You learn that fast after living a life as an orphan in rags. Now even second-hand seemed like it was made for royalty. Miss Kyra had given it to me this morning as a going-away present. “Here, it’s something to remember me by,” she said, her big brown eyes welling up with tears.

I shook my head trying to get rid of the image. This morning the weather was stormy, though now the sun was seeping through the cumulus clouds. It was warming my skin that had been scrubbed raw. The air smelled like flowers, though there were none to be seen. The lawn before Mrs Rosa’s orphanage consisted of dead grass and debris. The whole orphanage was falling to pieces. Floorboards creaked, walls plunged and doors desperately hung on their hinges. Miss Kyra had tried her best to fix things up, but to be honest it was in desperate need of a renovation.

Today I was to begin a new life and be adopted. Beads of sweat gathered on my forehead. I felt like a bundle of nerves. “What if they don’t like me and give me back?” I thought. I looked around desperately for something to distract me from the feeling in the pit of my stomach, a mix between nervousness and hunger. I couldn’t remember the last time I had a proper meal. It was most likely before the earthquake.

The earthquake that changed my life forever. Thinking about it caused my mind to flash with images, and blurry visions played in my head. I distinctly remember the walk to school. It was a beautiful morning like today. Birds chirped in trees and sunshine danced in shadows. Everything seemed impeccable. I remember I had a fight with mother before leaving. I made it clear that I had to wear my new yellow buckle shoes to school, but mother said they would get dirty in the mud. I looked over at my father who was reading a newspaper in the living room while sipping his coffee, hoping he would take my side, but he paid no attention. I stormed off not listening to mother’s calm voice telling me to wait. I slammed the door behind me and stepped outside. My life was so unfair.

For the most part walking to school wasn’t that bad. My imagination and the crowded streets kept me busy. Cars passed this way and that. Nothing stopped people here. Rickshaws filled with cranky passengers bumped away on the pebble road. Vendors called out to each other in vociferous voices.

A few other children from my street walked ahead of me, looking like little specks in the distance. They seemed to be in a hurry. I took my time skipping along and stopping to look at ants scrambling around on the sidewalk. It was at that moment a life-changing event took place. It started with the ground slightly vibrating. Then the pounding became stronger. I knew in an instant it was an earthquake. I stopped everything and stayed still, concentrated, feeling the ground, hoping for it to stop. But it didn’t, it became more ruthless. Windows shattered around me sending glass everywhere as the ground fiercely shook. Soon it seemed as if the whole world was falling to pieces. Everywhere people were running in chaos, hands on their heads. I didn’t dare get up, for everything seemed to crumble and shatter underneath my feet. A hopeless cry escaped my lungs. I meant it to come out strong, but it was weak and shaky. I felt panic rushing through my veins. Parked cars began rocking back and forth crashing into buildings. I looked up long enough to see a building collapse in the distance striking an electrical wire. Next thing I knew the whole street was set ablaze. Shrieks fill my ears. I wondered if this would be the big one and if my time had come. I desperately clung to a rolling car and curled up into a ball trying to block out the horrific sounds of destruction. Then a crash

Division III Prose—*First Place*



came from above splitting the air. I felt isolated before everything went black. The last thing I remember was thinking of my parents.

When I woke up I found myself lying in the middle of a massacre. Debris was littered everywhere. Few buildings stood. I moved a large wooden plank off my stomach with great difficulty. My head throbbed and my vision was blurry. I felt blood trickling down my cheek. I reached up

sending a piercing stab through my arm. The wound stung as I touched it; it was still fresh. I braced myself and tried to get on my feet. I regained my balance for only a few seconds before collapsing to the ground, too weak to hold myself up. I saw a soldier come from nowhere. When he realized I was alive he slowly walked toward me. He hoisted me up over his shoulder sending stabbing pain throughout my body. I didn't say a word, I was afraid I would begin crying. My parents, they were still at home, though it was probably a pile of rubble now. I wondered if they were alive or not. I felt a sharp pain in my chest. My breaths came out gasping. I couldn't imagine them living without me. Their laughs filled with an emptiness, their eyes always red. My vision was blurry and my head hammered. I didn't even realize when I nodded off into a world of darkness.

When I woke up again sunshine seeped through the cloudy window on the other side of the room lighting up the faces of many victims. I was in a small hospital room with many people scattered on the ground close to dead. I wondered how long I was to survive. Looking at others I realized I was better off than many people here. A girl lying beside me struggled to breathe. I lifted my hand to touch my numb cheek. I felt the roughness of sloppy stitches inserted into my cheek. It ached and I felt lightheaded. I diverted my attention to a tall figure standing in the doorway. I strained to see her face. It wasn't until she swiftly moved toward me that I realized who she was. She was Kirat, a good friend of mother's. I remember when she used to come over on Sundays. She and mother would knit laughing happily. She would often bring her daughter Alesha along so I would have someone to play with. I remember hearing their muffled laughs from the living room while Alesha and I played with dolls. Now Kirat's face is covered by sorrow and pity. She came in slowly and sat down on a brittle stool beside me. Her face was pale and bags surrounded her eyes. "Fatima dear, I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but. . ." I closed my eyes bracing myself for the daunting news ahead. The way she talked told me something horrible happened. I knew it. "Your parents died," Kirat said, her eyes filled with tears. "They fell down along with your house." A blank, emotionless expression swept over my face as realization of the moment gradually seeped in. The shock seemed to rise behind my eyes. Like a caged animal, I lay there. Paralyzed by the tragic feeling of isolation, I closed my eyes and gazed into fields of desolation. I felt tears creep out of my eyes. Something inside me collapsed. My chest was so tight I couldn't breathe. I thought about how my life would be after I was released. Would I be living on the streets, begging for food, or die of starvation? We both stayed still, not saying a word, my muffled sobs filling the emptiness.

Now here I am on a sunny afternoon, sitting outside a rotting orphanage, waiting for my fate to be decided by whatever couple miserable enough to adopt me. Miss Kyra made sure I was looking stunning for a good first impression. My hair is neatly swept back into an elegant bun and my skin feels like it's glowing even though it isn't going to make a difference. They're going to return me anyway. I can't do any household chores, I am horrible at sewing and break at least two dishes every time I attempt to wash them. Mother would always laugh when I tried mopping the floor. I spilt all the water onto the carpet once. I quietly cry remembering all the beautiful times my parents and me had together. When I look up I notice a couple looking down at me. My adopters, but their faces look familiar. Then it hits me, my parents didn't die in the earthquake.

Pakeeza Mushtaq is a Grade 7 student at Brooks Junior High School in Brooks (Tyler Wardrop, teacher).

Happiness and All of Its Mystery

Sophia Pawelko

The most important thing is to enjoy your life—to be happy—it's all that matters.

—*Audrey Hepburn*

I thought that I knew the true meaning of happiness as the state of being happy, but it is much more than that. After watching *Happy*, a compassionate film about finding happiness after a tragic event, I realized that I had found happiness after a life-changing moment.

That moment was when my parents decided to get a divorce and put our family through years of frustration, sorrow and change. At that time only pockets of happiness emerged between the moments of people asking, "How are you? What's it like? Do you want to talk?" On the inside I did want to talk, about the devastation I was going through, but to accept that, I would have to subject myself to judgment. And that was the one thing I feared most, because I would have to let people to see my emotions and my values.

My younger, eager cousin asked me if I had a dad, so I replied with a sincere yes, and then I tried to explain that I see my dad every other week. She did not quite comprehend and it seemed like she just stared right through me like I was a window. A window was what I felt like whenever I talked about my parents; that people could see all the emotions that I had been pushing down and all the secrets that I never told anyone.

Two years after my parents divorced, both of them found happiness in their new separate lives, but for me I was still adjusting and trying to find my footing. It felt impossible. My parents' divorce has changed my values and life goals. Now I think my happiness comes first, and before I make a big decision, I need to consider different perspectives. When making a life-changing decision I need to stop and think about what I am about to do, or what will make me happy.

To this day I still feel like a glass window and I still am afraid of judgment, but the years of hard work taught me to love my life and the path I am on. Now my whole family has found happiness. Even so, my parents' divorce is still like a fresh wound, and each time we talk about it is like putting salt on it. Even though there are still some bumps in the road, all that matters now is that we are all happy. I am not writing this so people can take pity on me. I am writing because it changed me, and I wanted to explain how I found happiness after a tragic time in my life. In the end I look forward to all the other turning points that I will come face to face with in my lifetime.



Sophia Pawelko is a Grade 7 student at F E Osborne Junior High School in Calgary (Carole Ellis, teacher).

The Last Smile

Arnan Kabir

I have never had a feeling that the darkness would rise so quickly, so suddenly, so unsurprisingly, so unmercifully. From the bright sky suddenly rain started to fall. What happened in my life that broke me to tears? Having a feeling that someone was rapidly stabbing my heart? I was regretting why I did not do the things I should have done, but it was too late for regrets.

It was the summer of 2011 my family and I were going to Canada. When we were going to the airport, my grandfather was there to drop us off. We were in the immigration room, and it was time for him to say goodbye. He knocked on the glass and waved his hand. I waved back to him. I did not get the chance to feel his touch.

It was a good journey to Canada and we stayed at my uncle's house. I woke up in the morning and it was time for breakfast. We were happy and we liked Canada. Suddenly, there was a phone call and it was my other uncle. He said that my grandfather had collapsed and they had taken him to the hospital. The hot tea I was drinking burned my heart. It felt like all of a sudden a bullet hit me.

The next day we heard that he was recovering. The rain falling from the sky had stopped and a colourful rainbow was formed and it was smiling at us saying everything was fine. I thought that God had listened to my prayers. The warmth of the sunlight touched my heart. As everything was happy, my uncle took us to Niagara Falls. Everything was fine and the beautiful, glazing, flowing water took my sorrows away. All of a sudden there was a phone call from my uncle. He said that my grandfather was in a coma. I heard the news and the heat of the sun burned my heart into ashes. I was shocked. It was dusk. The sun was sinking in the west.

The next morning I woke up seeing my father broken into tears. I asked him what happened, and he said my grandfather had passed away. I was gasping for air. After that I felt that why is God so unmerciful, and ungrateful. Why didn't he let us be with him for his last moments? I was regretting why I did not feel his touch. I thought that he passed away for good, and at least he does not have to smell the dirty world full of crimes. He is at rest. After his death every neighbour came to our house and said he was a good man. He used to teach me how to be good. My grandfather never cheated on anyone or anybody. He was honest. After his death, I didn't want to hurt his soul. I did not want to disobey what he taught me. I became more honest and learned to respect. I learned to love.

Arnan Kabir is a Grade 7 student at F E Osborne Junior High School in Calgary (Carole Ellis, teacher).



Gone, But Not Forgotten

Sukhraj Kang

We'll have to accept that some people will stay in our hearts, but not in our lives.

—*Anonymous*

Have you ever known anyone whose life has been changed thanks to death? I have. It taught me life can change at any moment. It was really weird for me because I didn't know what was going on. July 2010 changed my life forever.

My life was perfect; good school, excellent grades and amazing friends. I would never be bored for a minute, because I could always go to the school park and play with my friends or to my cousin's house, but everything changed in the summer of 2010. We got a phone call that our uncle hadn't come back one night and he hadn't taken his cellphone either. We thought he was at a friend's house partying and forgot his phone. The next day another phone call. My mom picked up the phone. A minute later she looked sorrowful. We found out our uncle didn't come back and my aunt filed a police report. We were all worried about our dearest uncle. We waited and waited for news as the night went by, but we got nothing.

The next morning I was awoken by a horrified shriek. It was my mom. We found out my uncle had committed suicide. Not knowing what that was, I thought it was some sort of party. We went to my aunt's house and all the adults sat in the living room mourning and howling in pain. My aunt was screaming, "Why?" We kids had to go upstairs because we were little. There was one person as heartbroken, maybe even sadder than my aunt. It was my cousin. My cousin was crying so much that her shirt got soaked. She was so crying so much I started crying. I felt really empathetic and just did not like the sound of her crying. At that moment I felt it was my job to make her feel better. As much as I tried to console her, she wouldn't stop crying. She kept remembering our uncle since he was really funny. After a while, she went into my uncle's room and went through his things. Out of all the items, she finally chose a golden hat with skulls and crossbones. She picked it up and rested it on her head. She never took off that hat. It was like a special memento to her. It seemed to me that all of a sudden she matured.

After that day she would not play and she would only be focused on helping our aunt. Five years have passed, but to this day she still wears that golden hat to remember my uncle. She never takes it off and never lets anyone touch it. My cousin has been transformed by this event, but I have also changed. This taught me that when people die they don't go away, but instead they stay in our hearts.

Sukraj Khang is a Grade 7 student at F E Osborne Junior High School in Calgary (Carole Ellis, teacher).



Families Obliterated

Cassandra Fillion

Gone
Nevermore will a father come home to
His little girl
Dead
Disdain for one's thoughts ended the lives of
Fourteen
Pain
Hundreds left in the wake
Of religious hate
Terror
They enter the office
Holding their weapons of ultimate
Censorship
Pain
A bullet forever lodged
In the heart of the city
Dead
Human life wasted
For the satisfaction of one's
Beliefs
Gone



Cassandra Fillion is a Grade 11 student at Fort Saskatchewan Senior High School in Fort Saskatchewan (Karen Wilson, teacher).

Aftermath

Maria Choi

Veins of red-hot lava trace blackened paths,
scarring a desolate wasteland
— irreparably fractured.
Icy embers, once blazing brightly,
exhale their last breath,
cloaking the land in a deep
and impenetrable darkness.

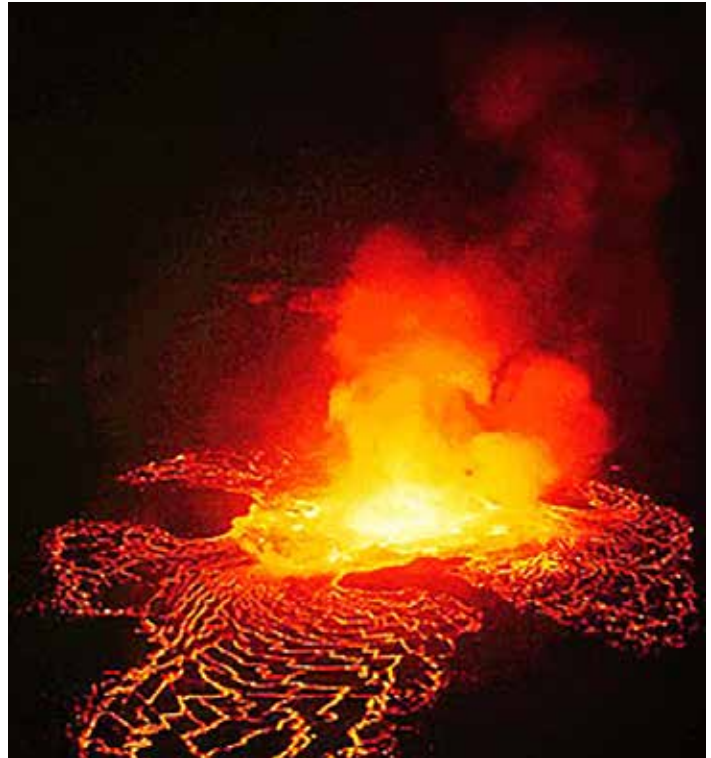
Intangible shadows of soot
streak the heavens,
Withering embers plummet
into the bottomless abyss.

Dawn?
Only a mere fool's blind faith.

Hope?
Not a vestige of light lingering within.

Intangible shadows of dreams
sink into her eyes:
flecks of light silenced
by the bottomless abyss.

The acrid taste of failure
smolders in her mouth.
Burnt embers tinge closed eyelids
— a wasteland of silenced wishes.
Tears trace blackened paths down her cheeks
— irreparably fractured, their warm glow long lost
to a deep and impenetrable darkness.



Maria Choi is a Grade 12 student at Old Scona Academic High School in Edmonton (Lynn Preece, teacher).

What If ...

Christian Keenan

What if there comes a day when love begins to wilt?
Will war and hatred rule the world?
Or will peace flourish?
For the war in Troy was caused by love.
All wars are caused by love.
Love of freedom . . . love of pride?
The love of selfishness and greed?
I say to you, if there was no love in the world, we would all be in a strange peace.
But at the same time, there wouldn't be peace
For we would have no sense of accomplishment. No sense of happiness
Love is what keeps this world going.
Love causes terrors, but it also creates beautiful things
The love of a mother, the love of a brother, the love of a wife
If there was no love, there might be no wars
But the world as we know it would come to an end



Christian Keenan is a Grade 12 student at St Paul's Academy in Okotoks (Jacqueline Harnish, teacher).

Are You There God? It's Me

Kristen Kokura

Hey God. It's me. So, Kate just announced she's pregnant. That's what . . . five this month? Five babies. Five. No wait, six. Jenna is having twins. And how many babies do I have? Zero. This is so not fair. Don't get me wrong, I am happy for all of them, but, I mean, I know I decided to wait and make sure I finished my degree before having kids, but I assumed it would come easy after that. Degree, house, dog, kid. It's supposed to all happen so quickly.

I always thought Mark and I would be one of those couples who get pregnant just passing each other on the stairs. I never thought it would come to this. I dread every month telling him that he hasn't been called up to the daddy team yet. I mean, it's been what, fourteen months? Fifteen? I know it did happen once, but that only lasted six weeks. I hadn't even told my best friend or my mum before that dream disappeared. The doctor's tests all came back fine, so I know I am capable of having a baby. When will it be my turn? Why isn't it happening for me?

My mum keeps telling me to trust you. She keeps quoting scriptures at me like "God is my refuge, in Him shall I trust," or "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord" and "Rejoice in the Lord always. I say it again, rejoice." Well, you know what? I don't damn well feel like rejoicing right now. I feel like cursing. You did give me that baby, but you also took it away. If you really cared, you would help Mark and I get pregnant. What are you doing up there? Hello. What about "with prayer and petition, present your requests to God." Well, I'm requesting. Are you going to get around to it?

Are you even listening right now? Because this relationship has felt pretty one-sided lately. I mean, I read my Bible and pray and go to church and do all the stuff I am supposed to do, but you kinda have to hold up your end of the bargain too. Maybe you aren't even there. Maybe I am wasting my time with all this God stuff. Maybe I should just give up on you like you have on me.

Kristen Kokura is a student teacher from the University of Alberta in Edmonton.



Frangible Essence

Patricia Marie Budd

Frangible essence, orb overflowing
With humanity's burgeoning presence.
Allotment tips, powder keg pulsate brings
Swelling waters bursting calescent.

Ripple waves erosion; giving slightly
Softly caressing cliff height's sandy shore
Aggressive breakers shatter human psyche;
Travail regardless all who may abhor.

Oh, humanity's ally! Occasion
All man. Vouchsafe commitment. Artisan
Logic, desiderata's nucleus:
Antecedent plenary devotion.

Recognize preservation is no crime.
Offensive forces one must needs defy.



Patricia Marie Budd teaches English at Father Patrick Mercredi Composite High School in Fort McMurray.

Barnett House
11010 142 Street NW
Edmonton, AB T5N 2R1

