



POETRY
&
MUSIC PROJECT



2020-2021



POETRY & MUSIC PROJECT

Now in its fourth year, the Poetry & Music Project connects student poets and their words with composers to create original music and explore the connections between poetry and music.

In Fall 2020, Opera Omaha and the Nebraska Writers Collective invited students in grades K-12 from Nebraska and Iowa to submit works of poetry on themes of **Emotion, Connection, Uncovering History, Stuck in Place/Getting Un-Stuck**. Over 500 elementary, middle and high school students across the state took part in Poetry & Music writing workshops facilitated by NWC teaching artists and project composer Frances Pollock.

Opera Omaha received 69 submissions from 59 poets in grades 2 through 12, across 9 Nebraska counties: Burt, Cedar, Cuming, Custer, Douglas, Hall, Lancaster, Otoe, Sarpy plus Anita County, Iowa. All poems submitted to the project are featured in this book.

There were many outstanding poems submitted to the project, and after a blind review project composers Frances Pollock and Matt Browne, alumni of the American Opera Project Composers & the Voice program, selected 11 poems to set to music based on what inspired them.

In Spring 2021, poets and composers gathered virtually for music workshops. These workshops were a time for poets and composers to collaborate on the original pieces of music with Head of Music Sean Kelly and Opera Omaha's Holland Community Opera Fellows.

The Poetry & Music Project pieces will premiere with a virtual concert on May 16, 2021. The concert will feature the 11 original pieces performed by HCOF Fellows Jared Hiscock, Gwenna Fairchild-Taylor, and Nicholas Davis, hosted by Fellow Fernando Antonio Montejano and Nebraska State Poet Matt Mason. After the concert, recordings of the pieces are available on Opera Omaha's website.



The Poetry & Music Project is produced in partnership with Nebraska Writers Collective and The American Opera Project.

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Untold History

Lily Barry

History is selective
 Tells of horrible stories
 Yet forgets the most damning details

History is selective
 Tells of rich queens and kings
 And of poor people affected due to where they live
 But they don't tell of organizations that could've helped them
 And were too selfish to give them the time of day

History is selective
 Tells of strong men and women who have children
 They go on to change the world for everyone to be equal,
 However some old men and women who have seen terrible injustice
 Say shame on them for wanting a better future
 Due to their upbringing filled with a need to bring separation and shame



Mom :)

Harper Burgert

Looks at puppies online with me
Calls a friend
Eats dinner
Arrives home at 6 p.m.
Continues directing cardiac care unit
Eats brunch
Directs cardiac care unit
Wakes up at 4 a.m.
Nursing Doctor

To: Happiness

Connor Callen

I hope you keep me happy all day long...
Happiness makes me feel so strong.

You help me have fun with my family and friends...
I hope it never ends.

It is really good to have you around...
Happiness makes a lot of sound.

Dear Grandpa

Heidi Donegan

Dear Grandpa,
With lockdown they won't let me in to see you.
I understand that it's for your safety,
but I haven't hugged you since before quarantine.
It's been nine months of solitude for you.
You won't talk on the phone anymore
and I'm worried we are slowly losing you.
Today was Veterans Day, and they said your name.
I cried because I can't see you to thank you for your service.
I miss talking to you about sports and school
and I'm not worried about you getting sick.
I'm worried that you'll go from loneliness and a broken heart.
Until I see you again, I love you.

Ode to 2020

Brooklyn Grandgenett

Oh 2020!
I can't wait 'til you're over
From a pandemic to
Returning to school wearing masks 24/7

Oh 2020
It's been a roller coaster
Sports getting canceled
To not getting to cheer

Oh 2020
It's been a rough year
My dry cracked hands from the washing and hand sanitizer
I will not miss you!



On the Inside

Kyson Lammers

When happiness is full, my blue is gone.
When my blue is tipped, my mad is also up a bit.
When my mad is entire, my happy is done.
And when my joy is complete, my mad is split.

When my love is packed, my hate is away.
When my hate is brimmed, my love is out.
When my stress is quite, my calm is astray.
Yet when my calm is crammed, my stress is about.

When my confusion is bursting, my calm is feared.
When my smarts are jammed, my dumb is squished.
When my fright is filled, my brave is deared.
But when my nervous is packed, my courage is wished.

The Lovers of Modena

Ava Larson

I remember the palm of your hand
Just before our lives were to end
Looking back at the quagmire
And the destruction and decay
My only thought of solace
Was you beside me that day
The 11 others wept
as realization hit we must accept
To die in vain to hatreds hands
13 bodies entombed in clay and sand
I met your eyes and my life thread was severed
By Atropos's hands, soul and body, untethered

Whether they tell our story truthful is really the great dilemma
Buried hand in hand, the lovers of Modena

Emotion

Zane Maltas

Inside my dream, I faintly could see
A man who looks so much like me
I called to him; he spared me no glance
He dared not give me half a chance
I pleaded, "Please, I just want to help!"
And he recoiled with a shrill yelp
As I approached, I saw on his face;
A visage lost in fear and disgrace
My arm reached out to help the poor man
And a horrible darkness soon began
My eyes glaze over
My heart is racing
My body feels cold
My ears are ringing
I can't see
I can't hear
I can't think
I wake up
My heart slows down, but my mind still races
I think of the man and his sad wincing faces
That loathsome creature that won't let me be,
Who taunts me, torments me, harms me,
Is me

Human Connection

MacKenzie Painter

Human connection,
Humans are like bees
Sometimes they come into your life to sweeten things up
Somethings they sting you and leave

Nothing comes perfect in this life
We must hold on to the people that we are able to create a connection with
We must learn to let go of the ones who sting us

We can feed from the honey people bring
But we cannot take it all for ourselves
As they need to eat too

We must learn to share
To make the connection stronger
And become a better person ourselves

Human connection,
It keeps us stabilized
It can tear us down
It's what drives us.



The Seed

Beckett Pinder

Out of the bag they come. Raining down from the sky into the patch. In the summer it is skyscraping into the picking season, time to harvest. The new green combine inches closer with a roaring sound.

Un-Stuck

Brooklyn Westlund

Trapped here
All alone
But there are many people around me

I feel trapped inside my own mind
That if I share anything
People will just ignore it

So I think
And I think
And I think some more
Until my thoughts trap me in

And then I cannot escape
The constant anxiety
The episodes of dissociation
Myself

I feel trapped in my own mind
If only I could put my emotions
Into words
I wouldn't feel trapped.



Pandemic-Perplexion

Cade Bacon

Why do I have to be one,
One of the billions
Who has to endure this?
I never desired this uniqueness,
I never wanted to live this
I suppose I don't have a choice
Pandemic-Perplexion

Our world is taking a blow
we have to live through this
deep in absolute trepidation and dubiety
Why does this complexity dominate our society?
Pandemic-Perplexion

I would rather see this in a history book
With old crumbled pages, a crispy yellow
Whispering information to my eyes
Coronavirus just another word for pain
A pain long lost in history's library
Pandemic-Perplexion

I wish to see the faces of my classmates
Rather than masks of rainbow fabric
I wish to not worry
About social distancing
I wish to not worry
About if my hands are sanitary
I wish to see my friends face-to-face,
Not digitized on a screen, or hidden with a mask
I wish to see this rampant evil vanquished
Vanquished from my life, from the world's life
Pandemic-Perplexion

And it confuses me
Fairy-tales always have
A triumph over trouble, a final solution
But this tale only seems to have frustration
That lasts a vexing eternity
It plagues the world from the inside, destroying
It feels as if humans die and fall, beaten
It seems like evil reigns everywhere
But we have yet to find our final ending,
To find a conclusion to this abnormal irregularity

But still, why did this have to happen
Pandemic-Perplexion



Cemetery Secrets

Eleanor Beiser

I cannot tell you why I picked today of all days to come to the cemetery
Alone and unseen in an ocean of concentration
Maybe the thought of death is on my mind?
That is how it would appear

But really,
I wanted to see the beauty
The carefully carved stones, each with their own unique names
Sometimes there are two names, often followed by forever together with God
The beauty in this is indescribable

As my gaze hovers over the simple letters,
I see Jane and Frank dancing on their patio by the calm pool, surrounded by the floral fence mural
I see my mom and dad teasing each other in the kitchen while cooking dinner
I see best friends, like the ones often felt by my side
I see loved ones together for their entire lives
And in death they remain

The commitment is admirable and frightening
The commitment is strong and brave

Death is a grieving period
One that could make us stronger
Could this strength help us to get to the level of promise those who lie in a grave have reached?
Promises of love for us all?

Death is simple
Life is complex
We must live through the complexity to allow ourselves the desired simplicity

Frank is surrounded by whizzing and buzzing and words of death
He had one hour to live
He was not ready
My mom held tight to my father's skeleton
He was not ready
They did not see the simple before them

They saw only the ones with desire and emotion, holding them to this lonely world
We hold ourselves to this barren land
Convincing ourselves it is our brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, and lovers who do so
It is clear the path that must be taken

I let you go Frank, as your time is now
I continue to feel the presence of your soul and love your very being
But most of all, I wish you luck as you enter a new door
One belonging to a beautiful journey
One of a simple love full of past promises and commitment

So, maybe I do know why I am here today
Sitting along the side of the perfectly paved road shaped by smooth cut grass
But I think, just maybe, I'll keep it a secret
Not everything needs to be explained
Another simple way of death you can choose to comply with
Leaving the explanation to the inanimate beauty.

Beauty Inside

Hayden Blaney

I say I'm fine, but am I really?
Am I too short, too fat, not pretty?
I smile, I wave,
but it isn't the same
I fix my hair,
say I don't care,
but deep down that isn't true.
I'm a mess of mixed emotions,
I just can't seem to please.
I try my best to be the best,
but it does not come with ease.
They tell me I am good enough,
that I should never worry,
But deep down I'm afraid that they just feel sorry.
When I look in the mirror, all I ever see,
Is someone I don't wanna be and that someone's me
Every single action puts me in a maze,
Trying to find myself in every single day.
I want to make mom happy,
And my dad too.
I want my friends to like me
Even though I'm through.
If I don't impress them, will I feel any better?
Better to be myself in every kind of weather?
In storm or rain if I change,
Will I finally see?
Maybe if I look harder, then I'll see the truth,
That true beauty isn't outside,
But inside deep in you.

The life of being handicap

Natalia Bonertz

When the virus started my legs stopped, it was so sad because I couldn't play with the others, I couldn't play my favorite games or sports, I couldn't go to the pool and I felt so sad seeing the other jump and play about meanwhile I was inside crying about how I couldn't do the things I loved anymore so my lesson is that you don't think that you have more than others until you lose the things you have now. So be grateful for what you have now because others have no idea how it feels like to have that thing that you have.



Untold History

Joshua Booton

I found a home in the tales of my grandfather, the way he would tell them as he grew frail. The stories he had told and the glories he had happily sung. A blurred line between father and son was the only one he had never sung. Hopping on the one-way train counting one by one, grandfather eventually lost his lungs when an irreplaceable person decided it was time to be done. Grandfather never took it well, I could always tell when his tears began to swell. He grieved away until all that was left was a lonely heart and a headstone titled "Loving father" but without the son. Years grew on, but I eventually found a new home like a little bird does after a storm, my new stories laid in this I hoped not alone. Memories of old bones surely would be outshone, by the new memories I found in a place with my brothers, I thought had started but was already gone. Never willing to offer forgiveness for actions done but willing to offer a look into the future that was pondered but not done. Stories were shared, some surely mother had not known. Like a growing pain, it continued to rain, but the sun gradually had shown a path to the third, who knew he was destined to never run. Embrace the things you've done and never run from the mistakes you've made in tons. The brothers eventually decided to fall into an addiction without diction leaving the little bird back to the light of the guiding sun. Tried to find a new home in its mother little bird had no other. Although the home was short, the little bird learned of kings and lords who had passed on. Yet their legacies lived on. One last thing for the little bird to embrace before it stretched its wings and learned it had grown, coming out of an oppression it could finally fly on its own. Where little bird's wings would take him he did not know, yet the guiding sun had left a path that tore through mountains created only in wrath. The little bird did not fly his last.

Let the Tears Fall

Katherine Carpenter

When tears fall
they cleanse the heart
they pour over the mind
collect bitter thoughts
and carry them out
on a cascade of tears
Like rain washing away poison
tears prepare a bleeding heart
to grow new love.

But sometimes
the ship of grief
carries us far -
to the Land Beyond Tears
It is numb
if there is scenery,
we cannot see it -
vacant eyes gaze past
into space
Thoughts are trapped
unshed tears circulate
festering
The tears grow heavy
swollen storm clouds
dragging down
Deadweight

Let the tears fall
let them rush from your eyes
let them roll down your cheeks
let them mingle with the rain
Let the tears fall
let them cleanse your heart
let them free
let them fall
Let the tears fall.



The Loon's Call

Katherine Carpenter

I lie down, encased in wool and pine
The curtains billow in the cool night breeze
The breeze that weaves the moonlight
Into the apparition of my thoughts
Drifting through the window
To rest in my hapless ears
Sending shivers up my spine
In the form of the loon's call.

Some call them a demon, but I'm not so sure
The only demons here are our dreams
And those dreams are reflected
In those red eyes, lined with black feathers
And those reflections echo
Across the still lake
Until they reach their owner again
In the form of the loon's call.

It will find your heart, you can't escape
It will haunt you until you face it
Look it in the eye, in the red, red eye
Reflecting your dreams, your hopes, your fears
In this call you may find yourself, or lose yourself
And become another of the spirits
Who wander the Earth, trying to find
The meaning in the loon's call.

BFFs

Marianne Caskey

When you are lonely
When you are down
A friend is always around
Keeps you company when you are alone
The only person that calls your phone
The rush to your ocean
The sound on your phone
The knock to your door
the Photo on your phone
the one above the rest BFFs



My Mirror

Marianne Caskey

If I looked in the mirror
What would I see
A broken heart inside of me
Straight and tall I would stand
Beneath the promise lands
The world is shattered
But I shall not be
I shall be happy
I looked in the mirror
What do I see
I see happiness Inside of me.

Once You Were Gone

Diana Cervantes

Before you left
I felt alone
I kicked you out
Didn't talk to you

I ignored you,
And knew that I
Was doing wrong.
It began as one day,
Went to a week
A month

By the end of the month
I hadn't realized,
I had a week left
Before you were gone.

You were leaving me.
I cried every night,
But no one knew
I seemed happy
And no one knew
I was hiding the truth

By the time you were gone
I got into depression
No one knew

I got worse and worse
A month later I lost
My special someone
I wanted to end my life.

I didn't want to keep going
But I remembered you
Went to protect me
And the country

Thank you my soldier
You saved my life.

But I have so much regret
Forgiveness is all I need
But I won't accept it.

You were so sad because of me.
You left the house due to family problems
Both got called worthless by
Our very own father

Got body shamed
You just needed me there.
But I left you out,

Once you were gone
I realized,
I had messed up

You were alone, and I let it be.
I ignored you for months,
And in a snap of a finger
You were gone.

Impressions of India – Haiku

Reeya Chundury

Bharat - India
ancient country of Sanskrit
with 28 states

beautiful temples
farms, gardens, and mosquitos
very rich culture

Ganga and Sindhu
Yamuna and Narmada
old holy rivers

nearly all Hindu
some Buddhist, some Muslim too
land of ancient faiths

the three supreme gods
Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva
we respect them all

The cow - Gaumata
gentleness, non-violence
sacred and selfless

colorful Holi
goodness wins over evil-
major festival

festival of lights
cleaning, diyas, rangoli
Christmas for Hindus

Bikes, trains, and rickshaws
Cities are populated
traffic and honking

festive occasions
colorful decorations
Indian weddings

women's silk saris
young girls in pretty langas
veils teasing, tempting

men in sherwanis
boys in kurta pajamas
looking elegant

spicy, diverse food--
Biryani and samosas
with lots of hot rice

jump, twist, up and down
lively Bollywood dancing
squat, clap, up and down

concept of zero
arithmetic, algebra
All from India

first to mine diamonds
holds the oldest religion
India -- the great!

Gods of India – Haiku

Rishi Chundury

Gods have lived for years
creators of universe
In Hinduism

Vishnu, protector,
Through avatars brings the peace
Toward enlightenment

Slayer of demons,
A spectacular dancer--
The holy Shiva

Krishna the strong boy
Lifting mountains with pinkies--
Stealing the butter

The strong Prince Rama
Wed to the Princess Sita
A tale of strong love

Indra the mighty
Claims to be god of the gods
Wields his thunderbolt

The great Hanuman
With his mighty, holy mace
Serving his master

He has a sweet tooth
And a big elephant head--
The holy Ganesh

Durga the mighty
Destroyer of the evil
Our good protector

Within white temples
Saraswati, arts patron
Plays her instruments.

Lakshmi, Vishnu's wife
Known for beauty, wealth, and love
Holds her white lotus.

In arts and sculptures
Seen in all aspects of life
The almighty gods



Causes

Ta'Tiyona Copeland

Imagine waking up in a world of darkness.
You were alone all that was there were demons from hell
A hell that you couldn't escape.
Imagine feeling like you were constantly under water
Trying to come up for air but constantly being pulled back down by this creature that tells you
Horrible terrible things.
It's Constantly behind you telling you to end it hurt it.
But wait how did this all start
Well it started in the 3rd.
The 3rd world of life but was it something it did

No it was a cause from an outside battle
A battle that did not concern it
But it somehow got trapped in this battle of demons
There were daggers of hate thrown
Words of his or hers
Explosions of tears and anger
Civilians taken down while
While the two demons fight to the death
Walls were put up to protect
All but one

Maybe if the it had spoken
Maybe if it was brave enough to tell
This battle could have been vanquished
But no the it did nothing it just stood there
And let itself be consumed by darkness
But was it the its fault all the it was a child
A child that just wanted to be happy and make others happy
But no instead they were consumed
Consumed by the demons of hell
But were they really demons of just a common diagnosis

Depression that was all it was
Just plain old depression or was it
No it was something far more greater that depression it was
Bipolar depression
The feeling of going up and down like a roller coaster in a snap
But the downs being worse and longer than the ups
Why why did this happen to an innocent child
The child had always wondered but nothing would have the answer
So what did this child do

Walls this child put up walls
Walls that were made to protect the soul that no longer wanted to be hurt
But by putting up the walls they also kept the demons with them
Along with the demons they also lost something
The lost the ability to be able to trust
Trust something so precious to this child but lost it so easily
She lost some trust in her family
But it wasn't her fault it was cause she got stabbed
Stabbed by someone she trusted and would have done anything for
But what did this being stabbed do to the child

Causes (Cont.)

It left them emotional
So emotional that it hurt
Hurt to the point to where at night she would cry
Cry tears that were hard to stop
Not only that at night she would have a dream
No a nightmare of everyone she ever loved or cared about
Leaving her
Her who was weak but wanted to be strong
Strong like them who were always strong

But it took years for her
Years for her to notice what she finally had to do
She finally realized she needed to speak
But she didn't just realize it out of the blue
She realized it after trying to end it
Ending it by turning the water on and letting it fill the tub
She played music so loud that she couldn't hear the thoughts in her head telling her to stop
So loud that no one could tell what she was doing
With shaking hands she wrote the note that could explain it all
She was about to step into the tub when

When it played the one song that stopped her from ending her dear life
She froze her eyes beginning to water
Her legs became weak as they spoke the two words that were hard
Hard for her to even attempt to achieve
Love Yourself
She fell to her knees bawling her eyes out
They did it they actually stopped her
The people she knew she would never know her story
Stopped her from doing the one thing she could never take back
Death

She drained the tub and tore the note in half
Threw it away wiped her eyes and got her hair wet
Combed it and walked out like all she was doing was showering
And no one suspected different
Which made her upset that nobody ever knew or
Or just looked in her eyes and realized something was wrong
Oh how much she wished that could happen
But it never did

It wasn't until eight months later she finally told someone
Told them the way she has been feeling
Feeling for the past two years
Their faces she felt like they were full of pity
But were they really

No they were full
Full of the feeling understanding
Understanding and thankfulness was all that was in their eyes
Thankful that she finally told and sadly understanding
Understanding the problems that she was going through
So they helped her get through it all

Then finally finally she was able to see the sun and come up for air
And those demons
Well those were just a thing of the past
So she was thankful
Thankful that she finally had seen the light and that the demons had been vanquished
But all she needed now was to love herself but that's
That's a story for next time



Freedom

Madelyn Davenport

Glancing out onto the open sea
The flaring waters stare back, their pull enclosing any free thoughts-
I search for the hopeful freedom, looking for a time to flee
The taxing burdens,
The constant worry,
Of a life on the mainland-
I took the haul for too long
The persistent drag of an unseen force
The fear and concern of failure
Was drawing my line to an end

Glancing out onto the open sea
The yearn for the clear water pulls me towards a being of sovereignty-
I call out for a chance to meet the freedom, hope surfacing
A cry to liberty
To liberation of the steady toll
Of work on the mainland-
The mist bounds itself
To the weakening ropes
Of a distraught seine
Tearing under too much weight

I close my eyes,
A soft whisper of the ocean drawing near
Weaves the threads of my distress back together
Until the strength is reunited with my hope
A desire to leave

Glancing out onto the roaring waves,
A call for me to follow draws me close
To the possibility of a new independence
Free from the persistent
tugging liability
Of a life on the mainland-
My fears begin to fade
To a shadowed hum
Of the yearning desire
To leave



The Adventure of a Life

Chad Dishman

From top of the mountains down to the seas.
Rivers flow with millions of dreams that will never end.
Adventure is something you like to enjoy
To see the sun rise and the sun fall.
To climb a mountain to see a view you will never forget.
Hike in the woods that brings you endless joy.
Explore a cave where light never shines.
Walk in the desert where no tear lies because it evaporates
underneath your eye.
Cut down tangle vines and humongous leaves.
See a waterfall you have never seen.
Shoes filled with sand, water and mold,
Shirts wrinkled and worn.
In the coldest places when snow falls
Your heart will never freeze. It is always warm.
Sail the seas with an open view
To see nothing but the big beautiful blue.
Thunder comes louder than a million roars.
Seas rolling back and forth that have no end.
Lightening flickering on and off ready to strike.
To risk your life for something you want
Do it another time when your life is not on the line.
To hear folktales and stories full of lies and greed.
You have to see it to believe it.
Adventure is something once in life
Snowflakes fall, but never rise.
To tell your children and grandchildren your great adventures
It is the best adventure you will ever have.

Communication to us

Chase Dishman

Connection is the thing we cannot live without
From signs to symbols to
Screens to scratch, every word matters.
Connection is the world around us
From time, space everything connects.
Connection is everywhere
It saves lives
Connection to others is like a friend in me
The world will never be the same - past, present, and future
A bad connection is a couple breaking up
The world in darkness without a single light
The world in life without a word will light up the world for all of us to speak.
A choice, a thought, words inside minds is a single movement of connecting in our minds
Connection is a word of art, a poem, or a story of two is for me and you
Writing this poem is the feeling of communicating without a single word on this paper of poetry
From the world around me life is communicating every word in an hour, a minute, and a second across space,
time, and place
Covid is rising
All we need is to communicate
Six feet apart is what we need,
Communication is evermore
So let us communicate



I'm fearful

Sophia Doyle

I'm fearful
Scared, terrified
Afraid
Whatever you want to call it
The future is frightening
What's to come?
Will this rollercoaster ever come to a stop?
What lesson am I being taught?
Should one live her life in terror?
Of hurting her friends, her family?
No contact, no contact, no contact
That is law
That is the rule
I will not lie
It's one easily broken
"Shhh, it'll be okay"
How would it feel
If I myself were the cause
Of spread of an illness
Without a cure
I'll tell you how I feel
Merely thinking of it
I feel scared
Beyond words
Beyond explaining
That is truth
And the truth
Is *terrifying*

New Normal

Sophia Doyle

It's a weird feeling
Not being able to leave your own home
The outside world acting as a temptress of sorts.
It's like
Being on an island
The waters teeming with sharks.
So disconnected from friends
From family
From school
From society.
What was it like before?
Before masks and precautions?
Before everything changed?
What even are facial expressions?
I hardly see them anymore.
But alas,
Now is the new normal
And it's something
For us all to adapt to.

Dance Among the Stars

Anna Fitzgerald

I find myself staring into the night,
basking in the starlight.
Still my song to be sung,
in the stars, I'll be among.

Launch me into the atmosphere.
I can see everything from here.
Leave this world behind,
the universe all intertwined.

Fly me up to Mars.
Watch me dance among the stars.
I leave behind all my scars.

Watch me fly, watch me soar,
not a part of this world anymore.
I give you my heart, I give you my hand.
Come with me and you'll understand.

Fly me up to Mars.
Watch me dance among the stars.
I leave behind all my scars.

When you look to the sky,
you'll see me way up high.
I stream across space,
gliding with such grace.

So fly me up to Mars.
Watch me dance among the stars,
and I'll leave behind all my scars.

As I stare into the night,
lying in the moonlight.
Still my song to be sung,
in the stars, I am among.



Lone Star

Landis Frank

He a dwindling light
Only turning on when needed
Drifting through space
Through rift and void

The on a lone space drifter on a ship
With no company besides myself
Days blend
The only crew member he had left a while ago
On a distant planet the he'll never access again

No prime evil defeat
No legend
No name
Nobody

Just a drifter
A hero with a legacy that was never told
An achievement that he never spoke of
Because he never thought he needed to

His old crewmate is the only one who called him
A hero
For a deed he didn't even know he did
And a thank you that he never knew how to receive

I am this drifter
My achievement not none
And not boasted
Because it wasn't one that needed to.

She had left without saying goodbye

Evelyn Freeman

My heart sunk as I heard that she had gone.
At the time I didn't know what my family was going through.
At a young age I never knew.
I thought it wasn't true. But now at an older age I mourn
I wish she was here with the family and me
She had left without saying goodbye
So the love was lost in the sadness of night
I pondered the day when she would have to go away
But now she had gone.
My family was overwhelmed with depression
knowing she would never come again
Happiness blown away in the wind of the day
But with every death comes a new life

Stuck

Kaydn Gowe

I feel stuck. Just stuck.
My sisters, they don't really care.
They hang with their dolls and play with bouncy balls.
OOF
But I have my way.
I play my games but I am still stuck

I feel stuck. Just stuck.
My life is mostly great.
I go to school and learn new stuff.
But life to me is a little tough.
I've got video games.
I've got a tablet.
All I need is company.
I am still stuck.

I just feel stuck. Just stuck.
My mom is a lot of the time busy with jobs around our super dome.
That is why I sometimes wait for dad to get home
I am still stuck.

I still feel stuck. Just stuck.
I don't really hate my sisters.
They are just annoying.
You wouldn't believe what they have done.
I just feel stuck.

It seems I got one thing right.
Making friends to accompany me through this.
My life seems so hopeful and bright.
I'm getting unstuck and I have gotten this right.

With hope you can too.
Have hope for your life and just be you.
Enjoy the good things and think positive.
With happy thoughts come good feelings.
And the things you think can be revealing.

I think 2020 is really quite something.
It ruined my life and left me alone.
But it allowed me to see the good in my friends.
I no longer feel stuck.



Traveler

Claire Hayworth

I am not a traveler and I don't go to big cities or places
But if I did I'd go back to the past
Where we'd laugh over stupid things, & yeah
I know it's a fantasy & I know it's a daydream
I know it just hurts me to believe
But if a thought like this ever comes into play
Maybe I'll travel around with you someday

'Cause you'll knock on the door after quite a few months
But somehow we are right where we left off
'Cause if you're the words then I'm the tune
If I'm the dance then you're the moves & mmhm

I am not a traveler and I don't go to big cities or places
But if I did I'd go back to the past
Where we'd laugh over stupid things, & yeah
I know it's a fantasy & I know it's a daydream
I know it just hurts me to believe
But if a thought like this ever comes into play
Maybe I'll travel around with you someday

We'll be driving around our small town
Seems like both our problems have turned around
'Cause if you're the sun then I'm the moon
If you are happy, I'll be too & mhmm

I am not a traveler and I don't go to big cities or places
But if I did I'd go back to the past
Where we'd laugh over stupid things, & yeah
I know it's a fantasy & I know it's a daydream
I know it just hurts me to believe
And if a thought like this ever comes into play
Maybe I'll travel around with you someday

music

But you're out in the world & I'll be home
Sitting right here on my phone
But just know you're not alone
Just know I'm ready to go



Crossroads

Lillie Henry

I am stuck.
I have been stuck for quite some time.
Stuck at a crossroad,
Never knowing what direction to go in.

So many directions.

My mind is puzzled with the possibilities,
None seeming like the right one.

Where should I turn to?

Follow the road that my parents have laid out,
With structure and poised.
A plan and support that I need.

Follow the road that my teachers plan,
With college and debt.
Making life defining decisions.

Follow the road that my friends have taken,
Finding lovers and losing self-dignity for "love."
Feeling pressure to fit in, when I don't want to be their friend anymore.

Follow my own path,
When I have no idea where to go.

Passions,
Responsibilities,
Rules,
Society,
And Love.

What do I pursue?

What direction do I turn to?

What road do I take?

What life do I want to live?
I don't know...

My parents, my teachers, my friends, my peers, my society
Expects me to know,
Expects me to have my life planned at 16.

I don't know...

I just want to be where I am.

To live as I am.

To be young, to try new things, to relish in my passions, to invent my style, and to find me.

I might be "stuck" to you, to society,
But to me...

I
Am
Free.



The Game

Cooper Hochstein

When we were driving to the football field I felt the butterflies,
but when I saw the field outside my nerves somehow inclined.
My nerves didn't pass through warmups, pep talks, or my parent's cheers.
Next thing I knew coin toss, kickoff, and the game is finally here!
They put me in at runningback the one that has to really run,
Then there I was out on the field, and I wish I hadn't come.

What comes next is so crazy, I thought I found a \$10 dollarbill on the ground,

I smiled wide, a really big smile, as I walked into the touchdown!

Chameleon Persona

McKaylee Houg

I'm trapped in a jungle,
Trapped in a place of judgment
That place is society
I alter my persona to what it "should" be
Like a chameleon who changes its color to its environment
I change my skin
But really, aren't we all the same on the inside?
The cloak I've draped is like a veil of darkness
I'm lost and can't find my true self in the obscurity
Covered in scales,
Like a chameleon
Pressing into my heart,
They swallow my true self
But at least I'm no different from anyone else
I ~~should be like everyone else~~, no, I *have to*
I *have to* blend in with the jungle
Or else I may be hunted

Do you know?

McKaylee Houg

Do you know?

Do you know what it's like
To have your toes go numb
To have your heart beat so fast that it may break your ribs
To have your palms go sweaty with adrenaline
To have your legs shake, so much that you can hardly walk
To have fear slice through your chest
To shake like you're cold, but in reality it's warm
To blink so fast you can't see
To feel like all eyes are drilling into your soul, seeing every action you make
To be so scared you start fearing for your life
To feel so hopeless and small
To watch people walk past you, molding into a blur
To have noises surround and collapse on you, suffocating your lungs
To not be able to breathe, even though there is a plentiful amount of air
To have this unknown pressure painfully build in your chest
To feel like you can never turn you back or else something may attack
To feel like you can't trust anyone?

Do you know what it's like
To be denied
To be told
"Shake it off"
"You're fine, it's not a big deal"
"You're being dramatic"

Do you *really* know what it's like?

Longing

Grant Hrupek

I've found myself longing for something more
Something better than I had before
To let my spirit be unbound
And go where myself can truly be found

I want to breathe that mountain breeze
And in that moment have time freeze
I want to listen to the quiet flow of nature's lonely creeks
As the sun rises above Heaven's peaks

I want to hear nature's whistling whisper of wind blow
As the ground is covered with soft white snow
I want to witness the first quiet flower bloom
Under the pale light of the first full moon

I want to walk through the hidden meadows
As the lonely hawk's call echoes and echoes
I want to witness a storm as lightning strikes
No terror, no fear, just beauty alike

I want to be there with the change of seasons
Why go there? I have reasons and reasons
Being here doesn't feel wrong
I just know that this isn't where I belong



Courage

Grant Hrupek

Courage is not full of bias
It doesn't care about your social status
Your looks don't matter no matter how dull
It depends on the purity of your soul

Courage is the willpower of the mind
It's waiting and waiting for you to find
That it is not lost but found inside
That's where courage shall reside

Courage is a lighthouse in a sea of weakness
Its light still shining in a world of bleakness
It stands strong through the tide's rise and fall
Battered and cracked it still stands tall

Courage is a bright solitary light
Shining with glory in the darkest of nights
It draws your heart further in
Until your light shines from within

Courage is your strength to go against the flow
The journey is tough and it might be slow
When you've hit a wall, begin to climb
Trust me, it's worth your time

Connection

Alex Humphress

We wander the halls.
We wander the streets.
All going to the same place.
All helping each other.
Again and again like the ticking of the clock.
We pass each other.
Going to help someone.
Going to improve ourselves and others.
We do this every day.
All to create a better society.
All to create a better world.
These are our unknown connections.
The connections that exist and bind us together,
Without us even being able to see them.



Dear imagination

Natalie Jenkins

Dear imagination,
Come to me like a lightning bolt,
Sail me away on a sailboat across the seas to seek the path I shall take,
Fly me to the Black shining galaxy, and I shall watch the ravishing stars,
Set me back to the nightfall, where red and orange sky glimmer upon the senile sun.
May you see me floating away to the horizon.
Let me bathe through the river in the wintry waters.
Lead me through the black damp caves, with the calming crystals.
Hike me through the towering and far-reaching mountains.
Seek as I shall take, Take as I shall receive.
Dear imagination, There is no place on Earth, that I'd rather be.

Acrophobia

Karina Jennings

Fear, why do you show up
And make me an anxiety filled cup?

You are not needed
In your own way you have succeeded
Into tearing up my well being
I fight you without any way of persevering

You come to me while I am high up
Making my blood run cold and my legs go limp
With one wrong step I go as still as a stump
Feeling the horror of taking a big fall

I may have not conquered you
That time will come due
Till that day you shall be my demise
I am not hoping for you to reprise



Lost Connection

Lauryn Johnson

Detached and dangling
Poor connection
Reloading
Stuck in the middle of the beautiful country
That I just want to leave.
I never thought I would say that
Wishing and praying to leave
When was the last time I saw my friends?
Will I ever get to see them again?
Canceling event after event
Online school was horrendous
I don't ever want to go back to that
Who knew how much we took for granted?
Back to school but not to normal
No emotion can be seen
Masked up, stifled
Things may never be the same

Fear Under the Spotlight

Lauryn Johnson

Fear, you are there, with every memory I make
I enjoy your presence most days
The fear of messing up causes me to shake
You are an unpleasant emotion
Surprisingly you cause me great happiness
I stand proudly in my black flapper dress
I present myself to a crowd of peering eyes
FULL of excitement
Smile on my face scene after scene
Fear, you can be a beautiful thing
You keep me from being full of myself
Thirty minutes that I get to be someone else
The curtains close, back to being me

Eye to Eye

Megan Lambert

Now that your every word
Doesn't seem to oppose me
That you can't say I
Turned out all wrong
Because you chose me
Except you waited around
And let other people raise me
And you can't find anything
Good to say or praise me
Why can't we see eye to eye?
You are so quick to ask
What, where, when, how and why
But you dismiss every answer
That you don't like
You don't care to see me now
Because then you'd have to see how
You've slipped up as a parent
While you were ignoring my messages
And demanding my compliance
I was here, miles away, growing up
And battling my defiance.
No matter how hard we tried
Through therapy, medications and silence
We never could reach a lasting alliance.
Despite all that, I still hope
That we will have a relationship rebuilt on mutual love, compassion and reliance.
Right now it seems like you got the last word
But it's just another chance for my voice to be heard
So I gather my thoughts and look up at the sky
And pray that one day we can see eye to eye

I'm Stuck – In My Own Anxiety

Megan Lambert

I'm stuck
Confined to the four walls
Of my brain.
Peaceful thoughts knock
On the door
But they have to wait
Because sometimes
It's hard to let them in.

I'm stuck
And the hum of frustration
Strikes monotonous chords
In my ears.
My muffled emotions
Blur my vision
And I struggle to breathe.
The air is stuffy and stale
As my lungs compete with the forces of nature
For something I otherwise
Take for granted – fresh air.

I'm stuck
My hands surface
With beads of sweat
Equivalent to that of raindrops.

I'm stuck
My legs are immobilized
By a nervous wave
And as I recover
I take slow, shaky
Steps toward the
Door.



Wall of Steel

Morgan Leth

No one says what they feel anymore
It's like they all keep their emotions behind a titanium door
Now I understand, you don't want to be humiliated
Or maybe you just don't want to be hated

This train of thought, it rushes inside of me
Everything that I think, it comes alive in me
I'm spewing and spitting everything that I feel
Maybe it's time I should put up a new wall of steel.

If I don't say what I think, what am I?
Another little puppet waiting on her strings?
I don't think so.
Take me or leave me, I couldn't care less.
Maybe it's time you take a guess.

I'll take a hit, maybe I'll even take five
I just know I've never felt so alive
Then when I finally break out of my shell,
And out of my mouth, I release all hell.

You can ask anybody, hell, even ask me.
How do you feel, when you finally set yourself free?
From the wall, you've been building since you were no older than five.
How do you feel, when you take your new self on a test-drive?

I feel like I've finally found my new norm.
I feel as though I could even take this whole world by storm.
If only everyone could see, how awesome we would be,
If we all just released our inner *me*.

If I don't say what I think, what am I?
Another little puppet waiting on her strings?
I don't think so.
Take me or leave me, I couldn't care less.
Maybe it's time you take a guess.

Guess again.
You think that I care what you say?
Now that's a conversation for another day.

I hear all these rumors,
floating around
People get so high on them,
they're nowhere near the ground.

I wish they would come back down
Let their feet meet the earth
I just hope they can see
Their real and true worth.



I just want everyone to finally be free
From the status quo that keeps us behind a door with no key
If we could all just say what we think, without hurting
Just focus on the words you say, without blurting

It just hurts so bad
To see everyone go
Down that road
That nobody ever seems to know

They get to the end
And they end up trapped
Then we have to save them
Can you guess what's next?

Damn right.
We get stuck in that hole of hell
And there's no way out,
No one can hear you yell

You scream
And you cry
And you shout and wail
But there's no way out
It's an infinite jail.

A World That Will Care

Anna Lindstrom

Look I say to people 'round
Those who are and who are not renowned
They say since I'm too young to know
I should turn my head away, but no,
Those grown ones who assume too much
Don't understand themselves enough
My quiet self, having been told so
Knows the them they wish to know
I see the greed that people mask
As if Hallows Eve is all but basked
Around so many like a thick, black fog
While I never stay for much too long
They scratch, they bite, they yell, they cry
As if they assume they never will die
I try, I love, I hate, I mourn
For the fact none of them are happy they're born
Plotted against every one of their own
While I see the nature that's inevitably shown
I was told grown ones are great and grand
Until I realized that they never try and understand
I saw tears from the weak and those who have none
While the ones who were stronger just loaded a gun
I had thought they would know from their own lives of strife
That there's no way to happiness when you're holding a knife
Meant to build up is what people should do
But no one finds that it right to be changing their view
But the view young ones have are different than theirs
So we'll make a new world where everyone cares



The Object of Discovery

Gavin Luthi

The wind whips in my face as the sun hangs low
The leaves wisp on by as the tree's branches shade the ground below
There standing on the corner big and boldly
The local Library there behold me

I'm left to wander the endless maze of shelves
The pouring of pages and squeaking of shoes fill my ears
So many books to choose; A magical world with many realms
A tragic war filled with gore or a mystery where the answers are always unclear

That is why instead of being stuck
Instead of being blind
I will seek knowledge through books
Inform you of something new
Show you a different perspective
They can do it all

So many places to be; So many worlds to see
But it's just the turn of a page away
Let them open your mind and set it free
Knowledge for all lets goodwill
Crossing entertainment and discovery they are the best gateway

So if you're ever out of ideas and free of time
Go find a good book letting reality disappear
A great way to enjoy your downtime
An activity for all times of the year

I know I would do the same

Emiliano Eliu Mancilla Jr.

Emiliano Eliu Mancilla Jr.

What's wrong SON? Those THREE words awoke ME.
I felt just like Earl in CHUM, I couldn't SEE.
Felt like standing outside with no RAINCOAT
Saw some true colors but ain't know RAINBOWS
Secretly SCARRED, can't get these thoughts out of my BACKYARD
Explaining my problems, well that's HARD
My MIND scrambled like the inSIDE of HIVES, and like my eggs
Just TRYing to get BY, trouble saying HI
Grades SLIPPIN like a wet CLIFF,
Wanna get them in Scotty PIPPEN, but just standing STIFF
Body elastic promise I won't break
Been STRESSED, body STRETCHED, always happens NEVERTHELESS
Am I okay?
Well I GUESS
That's a LIE, happiness went and said BYE, as I lied on the bedSIDE
MIND'S creative like TYLER, (so COLD, BRR)
TOLD MYself ID be BOLD, butterflies in my stomach, unLIKE a TOAD.
Soul felt torn.
It couldn't be SOWN.
Depression what I OWNED.
Slumped OVER NO, Ski MASK,
like Big Sean wanna bounce BACK.
Sorta did when I planned my ATTACK.
But I still feel WACK, as bad as Nick Cannon RAPPING.
Hated my present tried to put back the WRAPPING.
That hit harder than Ganon. Coughing up my sins like Corona.
I felt so alone, felt HOMELESS, but now I hate my HOMELESS.
Now BLESSED, never STRESSED, defeated the beast.
Wanting to SING, and wheNEVER I feel DOWN.
I remind myself I'm a KING, now never forgetting the CROWN.

Untitled

Matthew Mannon

Straight rows all around
east and west
acres and acres
of corn
waving in the wind.
I love it because of the
freedom out in the sun
breathing fresh air.
In a tractor from dawn to dusk
working, cultivating a field.
Stuck here?
No other way to live.

Love is...

Anna Mayes

Love is blind,
And you don't realize
Who they truly
Are until
It slinks past unknowingly, disturbingly, endlessly.

For love is confusing.
You say that
You want a
Girlfriend just like
Me;

Yet I am not good
Enough for you.
Love is terrifying.
You've been hurt.

You've been hurt
So many times
Before and so
Have I, so
Pardon me if
I can't let
You in as
Easily anymore.

Now love is dead.
And honestly, I
Don't think it
Was ever alive
To begin with.



Untitled

Anna Mayes

The rain fell from the sky
And so we shrank in fear.
Of all the things I remember,
I was glad you were so near.

You took me on a ride
On your flashy motorcycle
I only laughed with joy,
Hands turning to icicles.

A peach come forth---
From me to you---
The possibility of hope
Dramatically ensued.

On the sixth of October
I finally asked you out.
Friends passed by smiling,
Excitedly knowing, no doubt.

Through all of the good times
Shared between us,
I feel the need to keep quiet
Lest hateful people see us.

Yet, every day we'll work for it,
A statement so true,
Because you're here with me,
And I'll always be with you.

Stuck in 2020

Jillian Narber

We're Stuck in 2020.
In December 2019 the first case of COVID was diagnosed
Because of the food market in Wuhan.
Consequently, cruisers had to quarantine at sea.
Doesn't seem like a very good vacation to me.
Citizens got forced into lockdown, making our lives a lot more introverted,
I wish this pandemic was actually preconcerted.
The sneezing and coughing now make me cringe.
We were once at the point where new faces are like gold in a treasure chest, rare, and irregular.
I go to the store for toilet paper, but as I walk, aisle after aisle, the place dedicated to toilet paper bare and vacant.
In the account of quarantine, staring at a screen was the only popular thing.
Moving on, with the life of George Floyd, the first life taken that caused riots & protests.
The amount of joy; devoid.
Nevertheless, just the beginning of 2020 was off to a bad start.
Swarms of protestors raging through the city streets, like clouds rolling in overhead.
2020 will never end, I swear.
Even the dying koala bears can tell you that.
46.03 million acres burned in Australia.
Orange flames blazing near the blackened trees.
We now remember our losses of the year, They are all so very dear.
Kobe & Gianna Bryant,
Ruth Bader Ginsberg,
Eddie Van Halen.
These special people's lives gone, gone forever.
Can we handle any more of this?

Beauty Beholder

Lyric Nevins

They say beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so why can't anyone see my beauty?

Am I too skinny?

Too short?

Are my eyes the wrong color?

Do I look like no other?

But is no other a bad thing?

Or a blessing?

Why is it bad to be different?

Is it a punishment?

Is different the limit?

For the beautiful are fake.

Because they fix their bodies' mistakes.

To be pretty

You have to be itty-bitty

But not too small

And of course not too tall

You must please the man

Where your life's in his hands

Either you're the perfect wife

Or you're a dike

Where is my beholder?

Disconnected from You

Sullivan Newring

Disconnected from friends,
Like disconnected from life
Ever so painful and agonizing

Disconnected from you.

Friendships are shattered

By this pandemic

Disconnected from you.

I feel like dying,

Rooms flooded from crying,

Disconnected from you.

Disconnected from everything,

Disconnected from you

Other people are special

But it is still horrible

Disconnected from you!



History

Sawyer Nieman

That man upon that steed,
hoped that colonists might be free.
It started with the Boston massacre.
Five people died even when others came to their aid.
And on that day, Washington swore that we would be free,
if it meant war. We goaded them on with the Boston tea
party and then England said be ready to see your maker
the Almighty. Through seven long years we fought in the
war, and most of the people from England went to Heaven.
We finally did it, we finally won and somehow we did it with
the help from a gun.

If Only You Were Here

Kaden Paulsen

Being here is a little tough,
It's been a little rough.
Without you here life is painful and hard,
Part of my heart is chipped off in a shard.

I will always be happy that you were here,
I can often hear you whisper in my ear.
My spirit is always lifted when you come to mind,
In reality you left me behind.

I cry myself to sleep thinking about what I will do without you in my life,
But I know you will always be happier in the afterlife.
The day I got the call that you were gone
Reminded me of a swan.
One day here, the next day gone.

My love for you won't ever be lost
You'll always be the one I've loved the most.
One day I will be up there with you,
And we will feel good as new.

Kiss

Garret Peterson

You texted me
"How are you?"
You must feel guilty.
So here
Let me turn off my emotions
And write you a song
Based on what lingers in my mouth.
I'll create a detached median
To represent how I'm doing
For the sake of your curiosity

Or

If you truly wanted to understand me
We could kiss
While the emotions are still fresh
So that you can taste the heartbreak on my lips.
I'll let you taste the cold knife you drove into my heart.
I'll let you taste the furry filled desperation
Mixed with the relentless throbbing
My brain is experiencing.
I'll let you taste my shaking hands
And blurry eyes.
I let you taste the damage you did to me,
And it will be unlike any kiss I have ever given you.

If you really care how I'm doing
Come here and take the poison off my lips
Indulge in a kiss
And cure your curiosity.

Rain Dreamer

Garret Peterson

If I sat down,
In the middle of the storm,
Would you stop and sit down with me?
To escape the constant parade of life around us,
Would you look up,
And watch the gods tear up the heavens,
With flashes of light?
Would you lay here and let the rain drain us of our worries?
Would you brave the gloomy overcast,
And get trampled by a stampede of H2O surging down on us from above?
Would you let the heavy clouds unload their burdens upon us?
Would you let the sky wash away your mask and let your true face gleam?
Would you close your eyes and listen to the sounds?
The sounds of the frogs searching for love.
The sound of thunder echoing through our rolling hills.
The sound of rain splattering the ground around you.
Would you let the storm drown out the intense chaos of all your thoughts?
Would you let the peace of the storm soothe your mind,
And spend an eternity rain dreaming with me?

Here,
In the storm,
Thought unbraids itself,
and the mind becomes single.



I am me

Layla Ramsey

Why must you always come at the worst of times
You tell me I can't and I believe you
I try not to listen but I can't sometimes
Why can't someone else tell me what to do
You make my good days bad, you make my bad days even worse
I feel like a locked door, missing a key
I feel like I am drowning in my own words
With you around
Then I start to panic
I'm all fidgety at the slightest sound
I think I might need a mechanic
To fix me up
You make my good days bad, you make my bad days even worse
I feel like I want to go home
I feel like I am not welcome here
I am so much more than you think I am
Never going to play the role as your fan
You know in your heart, I will never be like you
You make my good days bad, you make my bad days even worse
You think you've won, but the underdog always comes out on top
I know I always need to be absolutely, positively me

Dear, Happiness

Jennika Reinhardt

Dear, Happiness
I like to say that I'm okay but sometimes I'm not.
Sometimes things fall apart.
Sometimes things shatter.
And yet there I am with a toothy grin pretending I'm fine
When inside I feel broken
And lost.
Dear happiness,
Where have you gone?
I long for those days where I felt the sunshine,
The grass on my feet and the wind in my hair.
I long for those days that bled into endless nights
Swimming in the stars and painting the constellations.
I long for those days where my smile felt real
And right.
But the dark clouds always seem to come
When we least expect.
And they linger longer
A life-lasting fleeting feeling
Of sadness.
So dear happiness,
Can you come home soon?
Can you break through the clouds with some light
And sing a happy tune?
I don't want to sit here in the rain forever.
Sincerely,
Me.

Rock of Worry

Ella Ridge

Worry is the rock in the bottom of my heart
Every beat sends a shockwave through my blood
A piercing wave of fear takes over
I long to take it off like a glove

Throughout the day, worry plays its game
Every fiber is fringed with fright
I hold my breath as fear passes by
And sticks around every day and night

It sometimes feels like the light is gone
Like the switch of reality has been flipped
I want to escape from this brutality
But I mustn't abandon ship

Although there is no end in sight
And the world seems so selfish
A spark beckons at the end of the road
I vow to keep hope until the finish

The Darkness

Thalia Ruiz

The darkness can make people go insane
And make them feel inhumane
It swallows you whole
Making you think that there's a hole
Inside of you
Wishing there was no new
Wishing, hoping that out of the blue
Everything would go back to normal
But now everything just seems too formal
And I don't think I can deal with it any longer

I feel so cold yet in the warmth
Of those who love me back and forth
I don't understand why I feel this way
It's just what I experience everyday
That's what the darkness does to you
Sucking you inside its issue
Making you wish you were in the past
When everything was normal and you didn't feel like an outcast
But now we have to focus on the new
And what it will do to me and you



The Darkness (Cont.)

I feel that it'll get the better of me
Take me away from being free
But I can't stop thinking about the past
And oh how bad I feel harassed
Yet I'm afraid
Of what the future lays

I feel like if I make one wrong move or step
I'll come crashing down, along with the other people of our world, like a cobweb
It's sticky and insecure at first
And then you feel like you're trapped, even kidnapped
Gasping for breath
While you have no control of yourself

You feel like the bad side of you is winning
And you suddenly feel like you're boiling
Under the sun's viscous heat,
Thinking, "It's finally got me."
It's too much to take in, too much to understand
You are too dismayed and battling

You feel like someone is taking the air out of your lungs, leaving you with your breath swept away

You've been taken under the spell of the darkness
You taste the salty, unsatisfying smell that closing in on you
You hear the whispers of the spirits, pulling you into their mind illusion
You feel like you're going crazy, even insane

You seem lost
You are confused
You have no control of yourself anymore
And you have no idea where you are or how you got there

Everyone has this sickening feeling at least once in a while
You feel like you have no one, even when you're surrounded with people
It's strange
And you wish you could exchange it with any other feeling, any other emotion

This darkness, this pain, it's powerful
And I'm left being powerless
It'll stop eventually, hopefully
But until then,
I'm left alone uncertain



Good Day

Luke Schmit

I like to play with my friends and. I like to see you every day because you are such a good friend and because I really like your big smile on your face and I see you're enjoying this poem when you lose a game I will be by your side then I bet you will win the next do not be sad be happy love one another and they will love you back be kind to one another and they will be kind to you. When you can't see me I am still there so don't be afraid if you are mean to your friends they will be mean to you so don't be mean to your friends so be nice to your friends say please and thank you and they will say you are welcome so always say please and thank you and you will feel good go do what this all says and you will feel really really good so be good. All you have to do is have a good day. if your Dad or your Mom says to help them go and help them so every day you will be happy. say what you want for your prayers and God will make them what you wanted so always pray to God maybe it is your brother's birthday say happy birthday or give him a present and a hug. good day

Lost in my Head

Annika Srivastav

Six feet away from everyone, but no space to breathe
So much to do, so little gets done
Too much time, not enough gets used
Mountains of stress, not enough relievers
Not enough space to think, but so much to think about
The capacity of my thought shrivels
No longer do I feel like thinking, talking, moving
Don't know how much I can take
Nothing is left, it's as if I was blank
Rome wasn't built in a day, they say
But it was torn down and then built back up again
I can't build back up right now
I don't know what to do, or who to talk to
People say to look for good
But how do I see with everything blinding me



Staring at me

Leah Wisdom

As I comb my hair
All I can see is my deep dark eyes,
Staring at me

At school I see
Different colors
Different looks
Different eyes
Staring at me

I look once again
Before I have to leave,
Making sure I'm as pretty as can be
For when they
Stare at me

All those eyes grinding into me
Final print
Isn't as lovely as it seems
All those eyes
Staring at me

I don't want it to bother me
But deep down I can see those eyes,
Staring at me

I hope you enjoy it.

Uncover the Past

Leah Wisdom

As we go through the past
It's like we are traveling through time so fast

Hold on tight
For you'll want to see this sight

Picture after picture
Year after year
Memories after memories

It's all found right here
Let's Uncover the past

That's my mom right there you see
Holding on so close to me

Now I'm three and look at all that I could see
My imagination running wild and free

Hold on tight I'm about to put up a fight
Nine the teenage years, not me of course but worse
My sister oh the fear

As I go through my photos
I want to say this was my life
But it wasn't

Because a photo isn't a moment but only a part of a moment
that we thought was special enough to capture a single piece in time
to look down upon in further years to come

Let's uncover the past

About Poetry & Music Project Partners



The Nebraska Writers Collective fosters self-empowerment and community-building through creative writing and performance poetry. Nebraska Writers Collective provides interactive workshop-based programming throughout the Midwest and provides paying work for more than 50 local writers and poets each year, helping to sustain and retain them right here in Nebraska. Founded in 2008, Nebraska Writers Collective is an Omaha-based 501(c)3 non-profit organization that unleashes the power of writing at schools, businesses, detention facilities and other organizations throughout the Midwest, supporting writers at all stages of their journey.

For the Poetry & Music Project, the Nebraska Writers Collective helped identify themes and created prompts, and NWC teaching artists designed and led writing workshops for over 500 elementary, middle and high school students across the state. The Poetry & Music Project concert was co-hosted by NWC Executive Director Matt Mason, who is also Nebraska State Poet.

Visit www.newwriters.org for more information.



The American Opera Project's mission is to develop and present new and innovative works of lyric theater, provide a creative home to emerging and established artists, and engage contemporary communities in a transformative operatic experience.

Based in Brooklyn, AOP has been at the forefront of the contemporary opera movement for over thirty years through the commissioning, developing, and producing of opera and music-theatre projects, training programs for student and emerging composers and librettists, and community engagement.

Returning for a second year, Poetry & Music Project composers Frances Pollock and Matt Browne are alumni of AOP's Composers & the Voice opera writing fellowship program.

Visit www.aopopera.org for more information.



Opera Omaha, the only professional opera company in Nebraska, began in 1958 as the Omaha Civic Opera Society, a volunteer association, and with tremendous community support became fully professional by 1970. Opera Omaha produces a season of original mainstage productions, presented at the historic Orpheum Theater, and smaller productions and musical events throughout the community. Opera Omaha is internationally known for its productions of eight world premieres and four American premieres of classical masterpieces and is highly regarded regionally for extensive community engagement and education programs. Opera Omaha also produces ONE Festival, an innovative spring festival, and facilitates a groundbreaking civic practice initiative, the Holland Community Opera Fellowship – work that is key to Opera Omaha's ongoing transformation from a performing arts organization to a cultural resource for the community.

Visit www.operaomaha.org for more information.

Opera Omaha's Poetry & Music Project is produced in partnership with



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