



Seaweed

a journal of
poetry and prose

by Farber Hebrew Day School's

Creative Writing Classes

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Poetry
(High School)

“What They Don’t See” by Leora Schottenstein

People think she’s perfect and popular.
People see an unhealthily skinny girl
 with dark red hair and silver green eyes.
They hear how she’s different and how subtle and
 quiet she is.
They assume she’s gone crazy.
They assume she has everything
 and gets what she wants.
They assume she’s got a good group of friends
 and supporters.
People think she’s perfect and popular,
 but she’s not.
She is afraid and in danger.
She is just an average person
 who tries to do the right thing.

People think she’s perfect and popular.
They assume, but she’s not.
She pretends that
 everything is okay.
She worries that she will get caught
 and be found.
People think she’s perfect and popular.
But she’s not.

“The Snow Poem” by Bayla Greenstein

Snow is white and cold
Snow is wet and slushy
Snowflakes are

F
A
L
L
I
N
G
D
O
W
N

From the sky

Sometimes
in
little
flurries

Sometimes
IN
HUGE
CHUNKS

“Cats Are the Best” by Bayla Greenstein

I
love cats
because they are
cleaner than a pack of
rabies-filled rats and dogs. They
are calmer than puppies, and
they are neater
than pigs.

I
love cats
because they are
softer than those loud
noisy feathered seed-eating birds.
They are cuter than those ugly moles.
they are more sophisticated than mice.
They are as sneaky as ninjas.
They are as
regal as
lions.

**“It Will Be the Best of Times,
It Will Be the Worst of Times” by Yael Keyes**

To put it simply, Alex’s day is going to be
both good and bad.

Horrid, but magnificent.

A tragedy, but magnificent. And *definitely* not normal.
A normal day for him would just be:

wake up, get ready for school,

go to school, go home, work on homework.

The same thing every day, over and over.

That’s the way he liked things.

A perfect schedule,

always focused on his grades. But today,
his organized life is going to be thrown off,

leaving him just *confused*.

One minute he’ll be putting on his uniform,
gathering his books,
his driver ready to drive him
to his high school.

The next, he’ll be putting on a wizard’s hat
and sneaking through the halls

of a powerful witch’s castle

in order to find some old mage

who had been kidnapped.

How is this going to happen?

“When the Night Falls” by Leora Schottenstein

When the night falls, and the world becomes black,
and the sun has fallen
 and remains hidden,
and when it seems like there’s no way out,
the moon rises, lighting the sky with the stars by its side,
a beautiful glow to remind you
 that even in the darkest moments,
even when hope seems lost,
there is still light.

And while one might think that it’s not, well,
nearly as bright as the sun,
 it is just as powerful.
The sun lights up a day that is already lit.
The moon, while its light may not be as strong,
pushes through the dark and gives light,
 even in the darkest of times.

“Black Widow’s Confession” by Bayla Greenstein

People think I am untrustworthy and disloyal.
They see me fighting. They hear rumors about me
that are not true.
They assume that I am mean. They assume that
I am cold-hearted.
They assume that I am soulless.
People think I am untrustworthy and disloyal.
But I’m not.

I am caring. I am loyal. I am trustworthy.
People think I am untrustworthy and disloyal.
They assume that I am soulless.
But I am not.

I only pretend that I am mean, cold hearted, and soulless
because that is what I have to do if I am to act like a bad guy.
But I do not act that way when I am not at work.
I worry that I might accidentally act that way
when I am not at work.

People think I am untrustworthy and disloyal.
But I am not.

“Simple Words” by Leora Schottenstein

Simple words on an empty page
Inspired by the most random things
It can turn into a sold-out stage

Lyrics unfold in the most mysterious ways
Put together in your dreams
Simple words on an empty page

Hearing your created symphony play
Anxious about letting the world hear and see
It can turn into a sold-out stage

Making history just from performing on stage
Letting the whole world hear your story
Simple words on an empty page

Spending time writing all night and all day
Letting your heart and mind go free
It could turn into a sold-out stage

The sound putting smiles on everyone’s faces
The chance to leave a legacy
Simple words on an empty page
It can turn into a sold-out stage

“Work, Work, Work” by Yael Keyes

I don't know how I'll make this work, work, work.
There's no rest in between ... what happened to breathing?
That's something I'll miss. I don't get how to go through with it:
work, work, work. There's no break in between.

All I have is this uncomfortable desk at which I sit.
I've got no sleep these past days; I think I'm going insane.
“Work, work, work,” they tell me. At least it won't be in vain.
But why do I have to do this when I don't even know

what I want to be? “Work, work, work,” they tell me,
“and the work will make it easier to see.”
Now the clock strikes twelve, and I think I'm ready to drop dead.
“Work, work, work.” It's calling, but I think it's all in my head.

How many more of these hours must I work,
drilling these facts into my brain?
“Work, work, work.” I'll be forcing it; I'm all out of power.
It's overwhelming me, so please, help soothe this pain.

“The Commoners” by Naomi Silow

Everything was good;
they were all the best of friends.

Everyone was successful;
their bank accounts were practically
their own personal goldmines.

They used hundred-dollar bills
to roll their cigarettes.

Then things changed.

The commoners stopped trusting
their kings and queens.

Days became colder
and longer.

People took sides;
people lied,
stole,
and deceived.

“Summer” by Naomi Silow

Blue skies

The feeling of sand in between your toes

Spontaneous late-night drives

The sun giving you small kisses all over your body

The sweet taste of watermelon,

the cold sensation of that first bite,

the sticky juice running down your chin

The sound of the ice cream truck,

awakening the inner child in all of us

The smell of freshly cut grass

Summer

“Interrogation of a Muscle Head” by Yael Keyes

You claim you were in the gym when this all happened, right?

It was after school, and you went to your locker to grab your things, but realized you had forgotten

your homework. So you headed back to the classroom, stopping to talk to Amy on the way—who, by the way, was wearing a really weird shirt today and you should have *said something*—

and then you went to your desk to get your homework.

Your desk happens to be *very* close to your teacher’s desk, which is where the answer key was sitting.

As you walked out, you bumped into ... who was it again? Kyle?

Anyway, after that, you went straight to chess club, right?

But Kyle claimed he was at basketball the whole time.

So ... who could have done it?

“The Clowne” by Bayla Greenstein

Hell’s angels have the necessary KOALAfications,
but your KOALAfications are irrELEPHANT.
Don’t listen to him; he’s LION, and

this argument is becoming unBEARable.
A good cook could cook as much cookies
as a good cook who could cook cookies.

And a good cook is as playful as a kitten
who passed away ... who departed instead of died.
“BOOM!!” went the dynamite. She was so still

I thought she was a statue.
“Oh, go jump in the lake,” she said.
What she meant was, “Give me a break.”

Now I’m as mad as a hornet and so punny I could die.
It is so sappy I could lose my lunch.
It is as mysterious as a ninja.

It is as colorful as a rainbow.
What is it?
I DON’T HAVE THE FOGGIEST IDEA!

I am so confuzzled. It is as dark as a night sky.
It is as silly as a clowne. I am so confuzzled.
It is as scary as a clowne whose name ends with an e.

“Nothing Lasts Forever: A Horror Poem” by Bayla Greenstein

Sometimes we don't get to choose
Who we are related to or who we live with
But we have to realize that
Nothing
Lasts
Forever

Sometimes we have to realize that
Things may happen for a reason and that
We have to accept the fact that
Nothing
Lasts
Forever

Sometimes we can't hide the fact
That we can't always expect things to
Go the way we want them to go but
We have to accept the fact that
Nothing
Lasts
Forever

Sometimes we have to realize that
We may not be able to accept the fact
That our lives are about to end and that
We need to accept the reality that
Nothing
Lasts
Forever

“Seaweed” by Bayla Greenstein

When I used to live in Houston
my parents and I used to go to the beach
every Sunday

When we got to the beach
my mom would sit in a chair
while my dad and I would go play in the water

One day, while I was in the water
I noticed that there were these gross-looking things
that had leaves sticking out of them

When I asked my dad what they were
he said they were called SEAWEED
Ewwwww!!!! I thought

When we got home
I looked up the word SEAWEED
in the search engine and found out

that in some countries there are people
who eat SEAWEED. *Yuck, how disgusting!!!* I thought
“Why would anyone eat that stuff?” I wondered out loud

“Stage Fright” by Leora Schottenstein

You are getting a panic attack. You feel like you can't breathe;

you feel like your body is on fire and you

start to feel sick. You are so dizzy, you feel like the room is spinning.

You feel like you are falling through

a never-ending hole in the ground.

You take a deep breath in, and you close your eyes.

You think about how hard you worked to get here. You think about how everything will be okay

and that there is no reason to be afraid.

You think about how this will be the start of amazing things.

You open your eyes, and you take a deep breath in

and smile. You throw your guitar on and walk onto the stage.

You feel calm

and excited and happy, and you hear the voices of the sold-out audience

in front of you,

cheering you on.

“The Next Order” by Yael Keyes

You took a deep breath and slowly head for the counter,
nervousness suddenly striking you.

Even though it was just your brother,
a lot could change in a month.

What if he was more serious now?
What if he wouldn't talk to you

because you haven't sided with him
during the fight with your parents?

Should you have sided with him,
especially after you too had argued with your parents?

That *was* the reason you were here anyway.
You swallowed your fear and forced yourself

to keep walking. You reached the counter;
your brother was finishing up the last order.

You watched as the customer
took his drink and left. Finally,

Zack was heading back to the counter
for the next order.

“Text Exchange: 3 AM” by Leora Schottenstein

Dude!! I remembered it!

What is wrong with you?

Huh? I was just going to tell
you that I remembered the
name of that song that was
stuck in my head all day

It’s three o clock in
the morning!!!

...So?

I was sleeping! What
the— why aren’t you
sleeping?

Lol. Chill bro. I don’t sleep.
Anyway- wanna hear what song?

No, I don’t care about
your stupid song!
I want to sleep!

Ouch.

Sure, leave me on read, see if I care. go
get some sleep or whatever the heck ur
doing. I’ll just be here listening to THE SONG
YOU’LL NEVER KNOW NOW

Did u block me, dude?

Dude?

Damn I think u blocked me

Ur loss

Prose
(High School)

“The Holidays Through Alien Eyes”

Purim by Leora Schottenstein: There’s one time of year that seems pretty strange. People go and sit into rooms and listen to someone yell out a strange language for a few hours, and at certain points, people start making loud sounds and stomp their feet. When they get home a little while later, people start dressing up in crazy outfits. They put on makeup and masks. They bring out bags and buckets filled with candy and food and stuff it in their cars, and they trade these gifts with their neighbors. Toward the end of the day, they all go home and eat huge feasts, and people drink this toxic liquid and act like maniacs, screaming and singing in some gibberish sounding language.

Hanukkah by Yael Keyes: They stand around a skinny silver tabletop tree, eight branches with little cups full of oil. They light them, adding one each night, singing to the dancing flames from a book read backwards, a chant of strange and foreign words. Then, they must wait half an hour before they can leave—maybe the chant won’t work if they don’t stay? In some of the homes I’ve stayed in, they give each other mystery items wrapped in fancy paper. Afterward, they play with small strangely-shaped things that spin, which look like cubes with handles that have been sharpened on the other end.

Passover by Bayla Greenstein: On a certain day, the Jewish people sit around this rectangular thing that is held up by four smaller rectangles that are made out of this substance they call “wood.” On top of this thing, there arises these round hollow things that have this dark-colored liquid in them. After they are done raising these round hollow things, they start to dip their pinkies in the dark-colored liquid. Are they drinking this liquid with their pinkies? Sometimes they spit out the liquid. I am guessing that they do not like the taste of the liquid.

“Road Trippin’” by Leora Schottenstein

The ground was covered in snow, and it was very disappointing. We traveled all this way to sightsee some beautiful Japanese land, but here it was, just looking like a winter day in Michigan. And to add to it, it was so cold. Some might say that the weather was snow bad. We decided to move on to the next place, because this one was a big let-down.

The next place we went to was a really nice garden. There were a bunch of nice flowers. It wasn't that interesting to look at, but I guess it was a good place to chill or have a photo shoot. We didn't want to stay too long either way, because the clouds looked as dark as night. It was going to storm. It started to drizzle so we ran to the car for shelter.

And suddenly, everything went weird. There was some graphic design, that was the only thing I could see. I woke up suddenly, the design's motion making me feel sick. I was spinning in circles I was so dizzy. I woke up to not being in a beautiful garden or a snow-covered Japan, but in the trunk of my stupid car. I yawned and went back to sleep, using a sweater as a blanket and a half-eaten bag of chips as a pillow.

In the morning, when we all woke up, none of us were in the mood to drive more. We were tired and lazy, just snacking and playing on our phones until they died. We only had one charger in the car, so we charged my phone and watched some Chinese nature and arts documentary. It was the only free movie that we could get without Wi-Fi for some reason, and we were bored enough. It was actually really cool to see the beautiful scenery and artwork. The sun shining on the scenery and the sparkling sea were breathtaking. I would have never watched it on my own time, but I'm glad we did. Holy crap we were bored.

After we watched the movie, we started to drive again. After a couple of hours, we had stopped at a restaurant, a cheap-looking fast food place, to grab dinner. We were starving and sick of grocery store junk, and we all agreed to split the money. The place was sketchy, it was connected to this rusty old gas station, and there were only two other people in there. The lighting was dark, and there were creepy paintings on the wall. There was this one painting of an orange girl and a guy with a beard and mustache, and it was only their heads. Sketchy. We ignored it until a rat ran from under

the table. We quickly ran and ended up eating Oreos and Doritos for dinner.

We were driving for a while before it started raining cats and dogs and nobody felt safe driving. We pulled over into a hotel that was called “Picasso Inn,” and the whole place was based as on Picasso’s art. We went into our room and it was themed “the blue man and the guitar,” so everything was blue and music-themed. There was even a well-working guitar in the corner, which was really cool. We all played with it even though nobody knew how to play, but stopped when someone accidentally popped off a string.

While waiting in the hotel, we were watching the news on tv. There was some movie out there about a chimp in space and the chimp that starred in it had passed. Everyone was sad and freaking out, but to be honest I wasn’t that depressed that a monkey died.

We went out of the hotel when the rain stopped, and we saw thousands of umbrellas outside, without owners. Apparently, whenever it rained, people decided to make some kind of art statement. I was kind of confused but I didn’t really care because we ended up having a fun mock photoshoot with all of them. The photos didn’t come out great though because everyone was arguing over who would pose where, which seemed kind of ridiculous to me. Everyone was getting along like Jacob and Esau.

We stopped by this farm for fun while driving through a rural area. There was a beautiful lake, and the owners recreated the floating Italian pier on the lake. Although the view wasn’t as amazing, it was pretty fun because we got to ride horses along the pier. Mine kept neighing the whole time, I think it had a fear of water. I couldn’t really enjoy the ride that much because I was paranoid that the horse was upset and would throw me into the water, so I definitely want to do the real thing one day—just in Italy—and not on a horse.

“The Ruins” by Yael Keyes

“... That’s him.”

“I... *what?*”

That was all I could get out. I was feeling a million different things at once. Shock? Guilt? Pain? Sadness? All of those were in me at that moment. I had tried so hard, went *so far*, and all that was left of him was a decaying torso and head. Just a rotting corpse and no answers.

That was all that was left of my dad.

We had traveled around the world, every corner, all the way to the bottom of the ocean.

And all that was left were ruins.

The city lay in crumbled bits, but there was one thing still intact. An enormous gold face sticking out of the seabed, and around the head the surface went on and on, for miles and miles, intricate designs carved deep into it.

After that, we had found a note that looked as if it were frantically carved into the wall of the remaining temple, as if someone was hiding when writing it. All it had said was “starlight.” *What could that mean?* I had wondered.

But there we were, and I was feeling hopeless. Had I done all this just to find a dead body? How could that be it? Not only was my father, who was supposedly all-powerful or something, dead, but we had no idea where to find the key.

Leaning against the wall of the cave, I fidgeted with my flashlight, feeling defeated.

But then I spotted something on the wall. A painting.

“Look at this!” I called Damian over.

He silently strode over and we studied the wall, a picture of a warrior fighting a monster with multiple heads.

Walking along the wall, I kept studying the painting, the sound of my boots echoing on the hard ground. My foot hit something, and I screamed. Damian ran over, ready to help me.

“It’s fine, it’s just a head,” he said, rolling his eyes.

Following his gaze—though it was more like a glare—I spotted the thing.

It indeed was a head.

And not a human head.

Some reptilian-humanoid-looking thing with slit eyes and a snake tongue, human-like ears that had sort of fin-looking things coming off of them.

You know at this point, am I really that surprised?

This is probably the least terrifying thing I've seen this past month.

Sighing, I turned my attention back to the cave painting.

The cell was cramped and dim, and Athena had to wait a moment for her eyes to adjust. The only light came from the small barred window, but there wasn't much to see in the dark of night. It smelled of something else, something she didn't want to know. Something dark stained the back of the room near the rock-solid bed.

Goosebumps raced down her arms and she huddled against her bed, hugging her legs to her chest. She wondered what they would do to her. What they wanted from her. Would she die here? Would her life end as an experiment, strapped to a table being dissected? Tears made their escape, stinging her eyes, running down her face.

Damian groaned, reluctant about leaving the couch. It was only seven in the morning and already his dad was bugging him, telling him to get up. He had ten minutes until it was time to leave, and he hadn't even had breakfast. He had so much to do, but so little time. And this was on a *Sunday*.

He slowly slid off the couch onto the floor, taking the blanket with him. Finally, he forced himself up, picking up his blanket and book. After changing his clothes, he wandered downstairs to find the hotel breakfast, grabbing some coffee and lemon bread then headed out to meet his dad.

“Seaweed” by Leora Schottenstein

It was a gorgeous day outside, the sun shining bright and the temperature eighty degrees. It was the only nice day the summer had yet, so everyone in town decided to go to the one small beach. A bunch of friends and I all went, and when we got there, it was so crowded we couldn't find a spot to sit on the sand. We put our things down on a muddy patch of grass and all ran to the water.

The water was freezing cold, and I felt like I was going to get hypothermia. We started to swim deeper and deeper; we were all just having fun. We didn't care that we were turning blue and purple from the cold, and we didn't care that there was a bright red rope warning us not to go any further. Everyone just swam right under, and we were right in the middle of the lake, laughing and splashing.

All of a sudden, a loud engine sound echoed off the waves. One of my friends screamed, “Boats!”

And there, right before us, were a bunch of boats coming right at us incredibly fast. Everyone started to swim away as fast as they could—all of us in a huge panic. I swam as far as I could, but my feet were tired, so I decided to run as fast as I could in the water. *Oh God, save my soul.* Seaweed somehow wrapped itself around my ankle, and I was trapped to the ground. I kicked and I pulled and I tried everything I could, but I was stuck to the seaweed. I started panicking; there was nothing to do. The boats were right behind me, I yanked my foot so hard I felt blood gushing down my leg. I swam as fast as I could, fighting the pain, and I finally made it back to the sand. Then, everything went black.

“Black Widow’s Journal” by Bayla Greenstein

Hello, my name is Agent Romanoff. I am an agent of S.H.I.E.L.D and also an Avenger. Today was a day like any other day. I was just looking at some classified files when ... sorry, hold on a second; sorry I had to help someone. Where was I? Oh yeah, I was just looking at some classified files when I heard something that sounded like an explosion, so I decided to find out where that sound came from, and it turned out that it came from Tony Stank’s lab ... sorry, did I just say Tony Stank? I meant to say Tony Stark. Anyway, so as I was saying, the explosion came from Tony Stark’s lab. (Anyone who knows Tony will know that he is always coming up with new inventions that will sometimes backfire.) When I asked Tony what he was up to, he said that he was making a new IRON MAN outfit ... yeah right, like he needs a new one. Seriously I think that he has way too much time on his hands.

Anyway, enough about Tony. After I left Tony to do whatever he was doing, I decided to go back to my office to finish looking at the classified files. I was on my way back to my office when someone ran up to me and told me that Agent Hill wanted to see me ASAP. *This must be serious*, I thought to myself as I headed in the direction of Agent Hill’s office.

When I got to her office, I immediately noticed that she was not in her usual calm mood. *Uh-oh*, I thought, *this is not good*. As soon as I stepped into her office, she started telling me about something that I cannot repeat because it is classified info, and just in case this journal ends up in the wrong hands, I don’t want whoever is reading this to find out what we are working on.

After the meeting with Agent Hill, I went back to my office to finish looking at the classified files.

But when I got to my office, I noticed that my office door was open, which is weird because I remember closing it when I left to go find out what that strange noise was that I’d heard earlier on. When I went inside my office, I noticed that the classified files that were sitting on my desk were GONE. “DER’ MO!” I muttered under my breath, realizing that I was going to be in big trouble if someone found out that I had lost those files. *There has to be a way to find those files*, I thought to myself, trying not to panic. Just then I heard a knock on my office door.

“Who is it?” I called.

"It's me, Steve," said Steve.

"Come in," I said.

"What's up?" he said.

"Nothing much," I said. "What's up with you?"

"Not much. Just decided to see how you are doing."

Typical Steve, I thought to myself, giving him a shy smile. "I'm doing fine," I said.

"Really?" he asked. "Doesn't look like it to me."

"I'm doing fine!" I repeated, almost shouting.

"Calm down," he said.

"Calm down?" I asked. "I am calm."

"Doesn't sound like it to me," he said.

I decided that it was no use fighting with him.

"Fine, something is bothering me. There, I said it. You happy now?" I asked.

"I knew it," he said. "What's bothering you?"

"Do you promise not to tell anyone?" I asked him.

"I promise," he said.

Taking a deep breath, I began telling him what had happened.

"Hmmm, that does sound serious," said Steve when I finished.

"If I don't find those files, so help me I am going to—" but before I could finish what I was saying, I heard another knock on the door.

"Who is it?" I called. "It's me. Nick."

“My Opposite” by Leora Schottenstein

“That was such a good movie,” Ally said as she drove out of the theater parking lot. “I think it’s my new favorite.”

“Really? It was so awful,” Jess said, rolling her eyes. “The book was way better.”

“Ugh, I’ve never read any of the books. Books are boring and so long,” Ally responded. “In movies, you can see everything. You don’t have to be trying to figure out what shade of green the monster’s eyes are or whatever.”

“They didn’t even make the monster’s eyes green in the movie! They were orange. Movies leave out all the details. They also leave out some of the most important things.”

“Yeah, right. Name me one thing.”

“In all the movies, they don’t include the jellyfish. It’s such a funny character and plays a big part in the books. There’s no reason why he couldn’t have been in any of the movies.”

Jess realized that Ally probably had no clue what she was talking about, since she never read the books. She was about to explain when Ally cut her off, saying, “At least all of the actors were pretty good. And I’m sure the producers did the best that they could to make the movies and the books similar.”

“The actors might have been okay, but they still change a lot of details about them which kind of ruins it. Like how hard is it to make a writing contest last longer than ten seconds when it was like five chapters in the book?”

Ally just sighed heavily and muttered under her breath, “You’re taking this way too seriously; it’s just a movie.”

Jess rolled her eyes and mumbled back, “Well maybe if you actually read the book you would understand.”

And with that, Jess opened the car door and walked up the driveway to her house.

“Lament of a Pocket Computer” by Leora Schottenstein

Okay, waking up super early sucks, but I think today is going to be somewhat exciting. My human keeps telling everyone that today is going to be the best day, and I'm hoping that's not a lie. First, we get in the hot and stuffy car and all she does is shove me in her backpack. For one whole hour! Not cool, literally. I'm overheating. Finally, she gets out of the car and I'm excited to come out, but then she starts walking! For twenty minutes! Is she not aware that it's one hundred degrees, if she took me out of this freaking hot bag, she could check me and see the weather. Suddenly, the bag opens and I see light! Yay! Only to be put down in a plastic box. She put me down! She never does that! She pushes this box under a scary looking machine that's being worked by someone my human calls 'security'. I hope my human doesn't lose me because wherever we are is insane! We're walking all over and going up a huge escalator. This place is so hectic, and I'm getting hot again. All of a sudden, the whole room turns black and I hear screaming, I'm feeling like I'm about to fall out of her hand! But suddenly she picks me up! She's finally using me! Suddenly I see all of these bright flashing lights and cool people on a stage, oh my god, it's that band she's always making me play! This is so awesome; I get to record this whole show! Even though now, four hours later, and I'm about to die, despite going through all of that trouble today, it was still awesome being her phone.

“You Mustn’t Kick Me Around” by Naomi Silow

So, let’s get something clear; I’m mad. This little girl has the audacity to wake me up at 6:30 a.m. What happened to 7:30?! Now she’s putting water in me and throwing me onto this dreaded bus again. I close my eyes to take a nap... three hours later, I’m getting shoved into her big backpack again. Where are we? I see something ... everything is kind of orange and pink ... are those mountains? Wait. I just saw a sign. Are we at the Grand Canyon? I thought this was gonna be some boring hike, but I’m at one of the 7 Wonders of the World. Wow, what a lucky water bottle I am.

She fills me up with some gross well water and starts walking with her group and that hippie tour guide. We’re only like 20 minutes into this, and she’s already drinking from me all the darn time. While she suffers, I’m gonna look at this view. Wow, these are some pretty rocks. I’m so blessed I get to see this.

“I’m literally dying.”

“It’s like 115 degrees.”

“Oh my God, look how sunburnt I’m getting.”

Can she shut up? She and her stupid friends keep on talking, and they’re all so annoying. I don’t even have a brain, and yet I know that I’m losing brain cells.

For the next two hours, all she’s doing is drinking out of me and taking pictures. I really hope she falls down the Grand Canyon and never comes back.

Hours later, we’re finally done, and now she’s being her obnoxious self in the gift shop. Who cares about stickers?! Now we’re on the bus again, and I’m exhausted.

So that was my day. Goodnight, idiots.

—The Water Bottle

“Detective” by Yael Keyes

She watched his graceful fingers work, expertly wrapping the seaweed around the vegetables, then putting the bamboo mat around that. After he finished adding the rice and cutting the one large role into multiple smaller pieces, he transferred them onto a plate and handed them to her without looking up.

“Thanks!” she called, her eyes following him as he left the counter and headed back into the kitchen without a word.

Jason had only given her the sushi because he had no choice, working at his family’s restaurant. But other than the quick “may I take your order” and an obvious attempt to avoid eye contact, they hadn’t really interacted since the incident two days ago.

She thought back to the meeting with the principal, when he had been accused of stealing the answer key to an English test. Then she finally decided to speak, trying to act as his detective—hoping that he’d let her help. It was the least she could do after all the drama. Why was he even mad at her for it? It wasn’t like *she* framed him.

“Jason,” she called as he returned from the kitchen.

He looked up without a word.

She took a deep breath, then said, “why don’t we try to recap what happened and where you were, then maybe we can find a plot hole in this story.

“You said you were in the were in the gym when this all happened, right? It was after school, and you went to your locker to grab your things, but realized you had forgotten your homework. So you headed back to the classroom, stopping to talk to Amy on the way—who, by the way, was wearing a really weird shirt today and you should have *said something*—and then you went to your desk to get your homework. Your desk happens to be *very* close to your teacher’s desk, which is where the answer key was sitting.

As you walked out, you bumped into ... who was it again? Kyle? Anyway, after that, you went straight to chess club, right? But Kyle claimed he was at basketball the whole time.”

“So who could have done it?” Jason had finally spoken.

“*That’s* the part that requires a little ... *research.*”

It was just after school when she headed to the coffee shop, hoping to find someone familiar and safe. Someone who could help her until all this drama smoothed out.

“—with ice.”

“Super. It’ll be ready in minute,” replied the warm but interfering voice of none other than Zack, her twin brother.

Taking in the chatter of customers, mostly college students, the earthy tones of the room and the aroma of warm coffee.

Everything about him was the same as when she saw him about a month ago, from the mess of short curls and the way he fidgeted with his glasses. Before the first fight.

She took a deep breath and slowly head for the counter, nervousness suddenly striking her. Even though it was just her brother, a lot could change in a month. What if he was more serious now? What if he wouldn’t talk to her because she hadn’t sided with him during the fight with her parents? *Should* she have sided with him, especially after she too had argued with her parents? That *was* the reason she was here anyway. To get away. She couldn’t face her parents after what she has done. They pressured her so much, that she had broken, did what she thought she had to do at that moment to meet their expectations ... *what had she done?*

She swallowed her fear and forced herself to keep walking. She had reached the counter and her brother was finishing up the last order. She watched as the customer took his drink and left. Finally, Zack was heading back to the counter for the next order.

“How May I help—” he paused when he saw who he was talking to.

“Hi,” she said, staring at the floor.

She looked up to see his face, but couldn’t tell if he was irritated or relieved. His face held no emotion except for his eyes, which held a million different thoughts at once. He hadn’t said a word.

“One, Two, Three, Quack” by Yael Keyes

Goodbye, I think, watching the hand reach for me. I ready myself, knowing I've reached my end. It was going to be this way since the day I was brought to this hotel room. Bracing myself, I wait for the hand. For my end. For it all to come crumbling apart.

One. I feel myself pull apart.

Two. Farther and farther away.

Three. Wait. We're going outside?

I'm brought down a path. There's this big brown and green thing protruding from the ground. I think back to when one of the boxes at the bakery was telling me about his life before the bakery. What did he say he was? A ... tr ... tray? No, it wasn't from a bakery. It was a...tree!

Ah, yes, a tree. Before he was cut down. What's that? Is that water? That's the biggest sink I've ever seen! And what's in it?

Quack.

Huh?

Quack, quack.

What is that?

It's not human, that's for sure. I've seen plenty of humans. This thing is different. It has a head...but the head has this weird...oh! Is that a nose? And those are weird little webbed feet! I think a cake I knew had one of those things on it. What was it called?

Oh look, there are more of them.

They're getting closer.

Quack. Quack. Quack.

Why are there so many?

Okay, now that's too close.

Quack. Quack. QUACK.

THEY'RE WAY TO CLOSE.

Human! I think desperately. *Get us away from those things!*

The human is leaving. Good.

QUACK QUACK QUACK.

Aaaaaaand they're running. The things are running. Toward us.

THEY'RE RUNNING TOWARD US?!

WE'RE RUNNING TOO.

The human is climbing onto something. I'm not sure what, but at least we're safe. The weird little *things* are surrounding us.

Now what?

That's when it happens. I'm being broken and tossed at the snapping little creatures. I knew this day would come, but like this? This is disgraceful! I can't just go like this—

“An Open Letter to the Avengers” by Eitan Bluth

For those of us out there who have grown up with Iron Man, Captain America, Thor, Hulk, Black Widow, and Hawkeye, a chapter of our lives has now reached a close. Whilst a new chapter begins, it would be wrong not to thank the heroes who started it all.

Thank you, Bruce, for showing us that embracing every part of yourself, even those not so *incredible*, can lead to things extraordinary. Thank you, Clint, for showing us that even those of us who may seem unimportant can end up soaring to heights beyond our wildest dreams.

Thank you, Natasha, for proving that there’s a hero in all of us, no matter what the world may think. Thank you, Thor, for showing each and every one of us that we’re worthy of creating our own destiny. Thank You, Steve, for proving that a man is not measured by his height or weight or brawn, but by the strength of his character and the power of his will.

Finally, thank you, Tony, for showing us that even men of *iron* can have hearts big enough to start a universe, hearts that grow with every beat.

We could do this all day, but in the end, we simply want to show our gratitude.

From the bottoms of our hearts, we,
the true believers,
the Quip lovers,
the Meme makers,
the Spoiler stoppers,
the Pre-screeners,
the Fan artists,
the Cosplayers,
the ones who will never grow up,
want to say thank you for all you’ve done.

Sincerely,

The fans.

“Elana in the City” by Yael Keyes

Elana stumbled through the forest, panicked. She had been walking for *ages*, and still no sign of the park. Everything looked the same. It was just branches and leaves and sometimes the occasional squirrel. She let out a worried sigh, feeling hopeless.

Pushing a branch out of her way, she spotted something on a nearby tree.

Is that ... ?

She kicked at the fallen leaves of the forest floor, frustrated. It was the tree with *N+L* and a heart carved around it. She had passed that tree before. *Three* times. She was going in circles.

How did she even end up lost in a forest in Hell, Michigan? Her parents must have been worried sick. She had been heading to the gift shop to meet them, but she got distracted by some shiny thing at the edge of the forest and then ...

Elana spotted something large from the corner of her eye. She turned to see a deer fawn, frozen, its big eyes wide with fear.

“Hello there, little friend,” Elana said, scooting closer to the deer. She put out her hand, meeting the fawn’s eyes, thinking, *just a bit closer, just a bit closer.*

But the fawn bolted off, leaving Elana behind.

“Wait! Come back!” she shouted, running after the poor little fawn. It kept running, and so did Elana. “I just want a friend!”

She tripped over a rock and stumbled, defeated. Sighing, she stared up at the canopy of trees, wondering if she’d be stuck here forever.

Eventually she got up and found a path back to the park near the store and was filled with relief. There, she found her family, who *had* been worrying about her the whole time and were about to call security to find her.

“The Jewel Cave Robbery” by Bayla Greenstein

It all started when I was sitting in the school lobby getting ready to record a voice note on my phone. I had just pressed the record button when out of nowhere I heard someone say, “I heard that there are two books about Black Widow.”

I looked over and saw Abby sitting next to me. “I also heard about it,” I said. “I’m actually thinking about getting both books, and—”

“I don’t even think that the books are going to be good because I think that Black Widow is not even that good of a superhero. She doesn’t even have her own movie yet. I don’t even think that the Marvel Universe would even think about making a movie about her because I think that Black Widow does not need her own movie,” Abby said, cutting me off before I could finish my sentence.

“I happen to disagree with what you said,” I told her. “The reason why I disagree is because Black Widow is a very badass superhero with all of the fight moves that she does. I wish I could fight like that. Another reason why she is a good superhero is that she is always ready to fight for what is right—like in *Captain America: Civil War* when she helped both sides instead of choosing a side. As for the books, I think that the books are going to be amazing. And about whether or not the Marvel Universe is going to make a stand-alone movie for her, I hope that they do, because I think that she needs her own movie because—”

“The reason why I think that Black Widow doesn’t deserve to have her own movie,” said Abby, pausing dramatically, “is because I think that she is not a very good role model for girls.” *How dare she say that about Black Widow*, I thought to myself.

“She is a GREAT role model for girls to look up to!” I said, trying to control myself, because she was being annoying as @*#\$. “The reason why is because she stood up to those who do bad and to those who think that they are better than everybody else and think that the rules don’t apply to them. Another reason why I think that Black Widow is a good role model for girls to look up to is that she teaches us to be loyal to each other and also to stand up for ourselves and one another. And not to mention that she also teaches us to never be afraid to fight for what we think is right.”

“Whatever,” muttered Abby under her breath as she walked out the door.

What a jerk, I thought, gathering my stuff.

I was just about to get into my car when suddenly I heard someone popping a bubble. *Oh no, not again*, I thought, thinking it was Abby, but when I turned around, I had to hold on to my car for support because it was not Abby who was standing there but the Black Widow herself, calmly chewing a piece of gum.

“Wh—” I started to ask but stopped when she, calmly, held up a hand.

“I wanted to thank you for the compliments you gave and also to compliment you on how well you did defending me against that girl,” she said.

“You’re welcome, but how did you know I was talking about you?” I asked.

“I happened to be walking around outside the building when I heard the girl you were talking with mention something about me.”

“Oh, but how come I didn’t see you?”

“I was standing in the shadows.”

Duh, I thought, realizing that that was a very stupid question to ask.

Then an awkward silence fell between the both of us.

Suddenly, Black Widow asked me if I wanted to join her and her friends on a mission since school was over and summer vacation had just started.

“Sure. What time should I be ready?” I asked.

“How about I pick you up at 7:30?”

“Ok.”

And with that, she was gone.

When I finally got home, I quickly gathered the things I would be bringing on the mission. I was just about to sit down on the couch when I heard a car horn. When I checked the time, it was already 7:30. *Oh, snap!* I thought as I quickly gathered my things and ran out the door and got into Black Widow’s car, which was parked on the side of the street.

“Cool car,” I said as the car door closed all by itself.

“Thanks,” said Black Widow, walking over to stand next to me.

Then, without warning, the car gave a violent lurch, which caused me to almost fall flat on my face, but luckily that did not happen because Black Widow caught me before I could fall.

“Thanks,” I said breathless.

“You’re welcome.”

“Those were some fast reflexes,” I said after a few moments.

“Thanks.”

When we got to Black Widow’s house, which was located somewhere near the Jewel Cave in South Dakota, two bodyguards came out to greet us, as well as lots of fans and news reporters and their cameramen. *Wow, this is actually happening*, I thought as I followed the Black Widow into her house.

“Where should I put my stuff?” I asked.

But before Black Widow could answer, the alarm went off.

“Der’ mo,” muttered Black Widow under her breath; then she turned to one of her bodyguards and told him to take my stuff to her room. Then to me she said, “Would you like to help me?”

I was so shocked that I just nodded yes. And with that, the Black Widow, motioning for me to follow her, turned on her heels and walked over to a door that was the same color as the wall.

When I followed Black Widow into the room, I noticed that there was a satellite map of South Dakota projected on a giant screen in the middle of the room.

There is a lot more that I want to tell you about, but I can’t because I promised Natasha Romanoff, aka Black Widow, that I would not tell anyone about anything else in that room. So yeah, sorry ‘bout that.

After figuring out what the problem was and getting the equipment we needed for our mission, we were ready to go out and fight crime. *I can’t believe this is actually happening!* I thought looking out the window of Black Widow’s car, which was on autopilot mode, which I thought was pretty FREAKING AWESOME!!!! Pardon my language.

After a while I decided to listen to some music on my iPod, with headphones of course. I decided to listen to Iggy Azalea’s “Black Widow,” which is my all-time favorite song, along with AC/DC’s “Back in Black.” The list goes on and on and on. But, anyways, where was I? Oh yeah! I was listening to Iggy Azalea’s “Black Widow,” which

was blaring, but not too loudly, because I do not want to lose my hearing, when I suddenly realized that Black Widow was sitting right next to me. *Oh crud muffins!!* I thought. Hold up—did I just say CRUD MUFFINS?! Good grief! That’s embarrassing. My bad. Sorry about that. Now where was I? Oh yeah, while I was listening to Iggy Azalea’s “Black Widow,” I had the sudden urge to draw.

I was in the middle of sketching the outline of the person I was drawing when suddenly I had a sudden feeling of déjà vu because [*AHEM*] the person who I was drawing was right in front of me [*AHEM*]. Sorry about that. I just had to clear my throat.

Where was I? Oh yeah, I was in the middle of drawing a picture of Black Widow when I suddenly realized that she was standing in front of me, but with her back facing me, which was a good thing now that I think about it because I don’t even want to know what would have happened if she was facing me. Anyway, I was about to continue drawing when suddenly I noticed that Black Widow was about to turn, so I quickly turned to the previous page, which had a drawing of Captain America.

Hold up. Sorry for the interruption. I know you guys are probably wondering, “Why is she drawing so many pictures of the Avengers?” The reason why is because I have been a fan of them since I was in 4th grade.

Anyway, as I was saying, I quickly turned to the previous page which had a drawing of Captain America that I drew a few weeks ago but did not get the chance to finish ... *until now*, I thought to myself as I began to finish coloring the picture in.

“That’s really good,” said Black Widow.

“Huh?” I said, looking up. “Oh, thanks.”

“I’m guessing you like drawing.”

“Yeah, I like to draw different things,” I said.

“What kinds of things?”

“Well, I love to draw pictures of superheroes,” I said.

“Which superhero universe do you like better, Marvel or DC?” she asked

“Marvel,” I answered without hesitation.

“I had a feeling you would say that,” she said with a hint of a smile. “Now, which Marvel superhero team is your favorite?”

“The Avengers,” I said, again without hesitation.

“I knew it,” she said. “You want to know how I knew?” she asked. “The reason why is because I noticed that your sketchbook has the Avengers logo on it.”

After a few minutes of awkward silence, or should I say *hawkward* silence, Black Widow asked, “So, how long have you been a Marvel fan?”

“Since I was in fourth grade,” I answered.

“Wow.”

“I remember the day I first saw your team’s movie, *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (I think that’s what the movie was, but I forgot) at someone’s birthday, and I also remember watching you guys defeat Ultron,” I said. And then I added after a bit of a hesitation, “But I actually was more focused on you fighting, rather than the rest of your teammates.”

We finally arrived at the entrance of the national park in which the Jewel Cave was located. Our mission was about to begin.

(TO BE CONTINUED ... next year)

“City Solitaire” by Leora Schottenstein

September 10th

Dear diary,

I just moved to the city. I’m all alone, in this crappy apartment that is right between a bar and a graffiti-covered alley. I can’t sleep—maybe it’s the nerves for my new job tomorrow, maybe it’s the motorcycles and the shouts of the gang in the alley. Maybe it’s the fact that I can’t talk to my mom anymore. God, I miss her so much. I really should get to sleep, I have to get up at five in the morning, and it’s already midnight. Maybe I’ll go for a short walk to clear my head. I’m feeling sick already.

September 11th

Dear diary,

Today was a crazy day. I went on a short walk and got lost—that was terrifying. I ended up getting a ride home from a nice stranger, which sounds sketchy, but he was actually really nice and taught me how to say some words in Slovak—for example, cheese (it’s “syr”). I got home at around one, so I forced myself to sleep. I woke up, forgot to brush my hair, put on two different-colored shoes, and drank three cups of coffee. I spilled the third cup on my shirt, so I ran to change. I thought I was putting on a plain black blouse, and when I walked into work, I realized it was my One Direction T-shirt from high school. I work as an assistant for some fancy event party planners. That was embarrassing. I would write more, but my pizza just came. Priorities.

September 12

Dear diary,

Today was freezing! It’s not supposed to be that cold yet—it’s only mid-September! I didn’t know the weather would suck, so I wore a sleeveless shirt (it wasn’t a One Direction shirt) and walked outside and froze to death. My Uber was waiting though, so I had to suck it up. Work sucked; I don’t think I’ll ever get the hang of this stupid job. I wish my mom were here. It’s really hard without her. I guess I still have my uncle, but talking to a guy who you met only twice and who only speaks Western Frisian (what the heck is that language anyway? Is it a real thing?) doesn’t sound as good as talking to my mom. I need to stop writing about her, it just makes me sad. I think I

need a puppy to cheer me up. Maybe two. Three wouldn't be too much to ask for. Four would be better, but I can deal with three. Four might be excessive.

September 13

Dear diary,

I didn't get a puppy. I did get a letter in the mail though, and at first I thought it would be some exciting letter telling me I inherited millions, but it was a bill. Very disappointing. On the bright side, apparently there is a bakery that is right down the street. I'm thinking of quitting my awful party planner assistant job and just working at the bakery. Not actually, but that would be nice. I think I might look for another job for real, though. My boss is evil, I'm telling you. In that closet that I'm never allowed to go near, he has a broomstick and cauldron. I think I'll check jobs out tomorrow. Where's my mom when I need her?

September 14

Dear diary,

Today was probably the worst day I've had in a while. I tried to be nice to myself and make pancakes. I ended up burning my hand (and the pancakes). I had to go to the ER. I can't use the hand for at least a month, and that's the hand I write with. (I'm typing this with my left pointer finger. It's taking a long time.) Since I can't write, I'm no longer assistant to my witch boss—now I deal with the phone calls. That just means I deal with angry customers. Yay. My birthday is tomorrow. I'll have nobody to celebrate with. I'll be all alone in my apartment that smells like dead rats. My mom won't be there to make me her famous birthday cake. UGHHH.

September 15

Dear diary,

Today was my birthday, and let me tell you, it was one hell of a birthday. Where do I even begin?! Turns out going to the bakery for junk way more often than it's healthy to do so has its perks! I went there this morning to get some sort of breakfast, and the owner gave me a free cupcake in honor of my birthday. Diet starts tomorrow, right? I then got to work, which didn't really make me happy, but whatever. Then I got home, and this is where it gets interesting. There was a huge box with a card on it waiting outside of my door. I

don't know anyone here, so it was weird. I brought it inside, and I opened it. It was from my mom. My first reaction was, "How is this even possible? She died four months ago!" That's when I called my uncle. He didn't answer, so I'm waiting for him to call me back. I didn't even open the gift yet.

September 16

Dear diary,

Jesus, my life is just full of surprises! So my uncle called me back, and we had some difficulties understanding each other because of the whole West Frisian issue, but it was all good in the end. Apparently, before she died, my mom put this last present together for me. This sounds so ridiculous, like from a movie or a show, but it literally happened to me. How cliché. Anyway, I then got so curious what was inside, so I opened it, and I literally almost passed out. It was keys to a car. I can't believe it! Mom, wherever you are, thank you. I love you so much. I miss you. Thank you.

“Climbing Clouds” by Yael Keyes

“Ugh, it’s so *cold*,” I complained as we trudged through the snow, my fingers feeling like they were going to fall off.

“Be quiet, we’re almost there,” Damian said, watching Kaapo skip past us, eyes filled with awe and wonder with every step he took in the snow.

Over here.

Where was that coming from?

Over here.

“Damian, do you hear that?”

“Hear what?”

...nothing there...

“We have to climb *that?!*” she cried.

The view at the top was beautiful. The clouds looked like they had been painted, graceful strokes of paint across the sky in oranges and pinks. In the distance was the faint silhouette of mountains reaching for the sky. Below, the *whoosh* of the ocean waves crashing against the shore, bringing back memories of warmth and sunshine with it. Days when she’d head to the beach with her grandparents as a little girl, screaming as the waves tried to touch her.

We followed the path, Damian leading us into a small room filled with what seemed like *thousands* of pieces of jewelry and gold.

She was beautiful and unnatural, definitely not human. She had a long, slender neck and towered over us, the top of her blonde updo almost brushing the ceiling. Her skin shimmered pearly white in the firelight, and she wore a long sleeveless dress, the skirt flowing around her as she gracefully walked toward us.

“Oh, my poor boy. What have they done to you?” The lady gently placed her fingers on his temple, but Damian pulled away.

“Who are you?” He asked, backing away.

“Oh darling, you do not remember me?” Offense rose in her voice, circling him. “Well, maybe this’ll help. Remember the night of the car crash?”

Damian froze, eyes wide with recognition.

“You...you were the one....”

That overly sweet smile stayed plastered to her face as she nodded.

He started trembling, and I put a hand on his shoulder, not sure what else to do.

“You...you were there....”

The lady stood there, waiting for his words to form.

“You’re the reason my mom may never wake up again,” he pushed got out, releasing a shaky breath.

“Now, now, let’s not jump to conclusions. Did you *see* me crash into your mother?” She continued circling him, pausing to add, “I certainly can’t fit in one of those things.”

Her smile had finally changed, but it had gone into a dark, cruel smile. The torch light reflected in her eyes, mirroring the cracking flames, making her look all the more sinister.

The beach was empty except for a lazily dressed man who was gently strumming his guitar, eyes on the sunset, mind who knows where.

“Tales would be told about this night / When chaos ran free and started a fight / Many men and many more / Some were rich and some were poor ...”

“And there were *thousands* of people chasing us! Armies!” Aaron exclaimed, and the kid’s eyes were as big as saucers, filled with wonder.

I watched from the side, smiling at his retelling of our much-less-exciting adventure.

**7th-Grade Pieces Emulating
Sandra Cisneros's
"My Name" Vignette from
*The House on Mango Street***

Ezra Mizrahi

My name is Ezra. In Hebrew it means *help*. In English it means getting teased by my brother about it. It means being called nicknames that you don't like by certain classmates & teachers, but it also means being named after someone special, special to my dad, special to him like raindrops to grass & trees, like nectar to bees, like the sun to flowers, & like grass to animals, such as zebras.

I'm named after my dad's dad. My Chinese zodiac symbol/animal is the dog, & while I hate dogs, it is very accurate. I do have a hard time forgiving people, I'm honest (most of the time), & when I want to be, I am loyal (too bad I never really want to be).

But here's the crazy thing: even though I hate dogs, having the dog as my Chinese zodiac animal actually means a lot to me (though I'm not going to say why). What it means is a connection to people (my Jewish ancestors) who may have been not Chinese but Jewish like me but were also born in the Chinese year of the dog.

Something that I want to inherit from the person I'm named after is his wisdom. Something that I don't want to inherit from him is the bad back he had for a month or so. Well I don't know much about this person, but I do know that he was in Egypt (possibly born there) when the Jews were enslaved (well, close to the end of it, at any rate), but they did leave after the whole Yetziat Mitzrayim thing actually happened.

My name has been mispronounced/teased. My brother calls me Ezee. So did (for a week or so) a certain teacher of mine. I have no interest in changing my name whatsoever, but if I was forced to, I would change it to Oscar like my brother & my mom's grandfather or great-grandfather.

Ma'ayan Vanderhoek

My name is Ma'ayan. In Hebrew it means *water spring*. In English many can't pronounce it. To me it means *beauty*, and it means *grace*. Spring's relaxing and peaceful—just like me. My name sounds like a soft wind in the early morning. A beauty to say.

My name is a movie. A near death experience. Made just a few days away from terror. I want to stay away from terror just like the movie did. In China I'm a dog. A dog that will run away if something terrible is going on. Safe. Like me.

The movie. It would have been great if I saw it. Unable to control the people, so he turns to his leader for help. Just like me. Trying to help others in need. Listening to God, my leader, every day. Relying on Him to save me. Helps me through all my troubles. When I'm in need, I turn to him.

Maayan, the brave person in the movie. I will usually turn to an important person for help. I recognize that God is there no matter what. The movie was made so close to terrorism. It could've been destroyed. Therefore, I feel very grateful. Lucky. Safe. Like the movie.

In public places, people pronounce my name *Mayan* or *Mariyan*. It sounds like a loud, annoying, sad, and muddy sound. Makes me feel sorry for my name. In Hebrew, it sounds like the soft sound of water trickling from a fountain. A soft breeze. A soft name. A great name. Unlike my sister Carmel. Her name sounds beautiful like a whispering noise. Although, it reminds people too much of a food. People ask if she is named after a food. No. But luckily, I'll always be Ma'ayan.

I would like my name to be Summer. Summer. Something more like myself. Bright, intelligent, funny, nice. Just like Summer. Making people's day with brightness. I feel it's strange, changing my name. But I have a brilliant idea. Wait. I can name my child Summer, hoping she will have those characteristics and make other people's days. Summer. A beautiful name.

Eli Schwartz

My first name means *my G-d*. My last name means *Black*. My middle name is David. My first name is like a Cohen Gadol. My last name is like someone with dark hair or dark complexion. My name is like the number 9. A happy name.

I am named after my Grandpa Dave. That is why my middle name is David. My Chinese zodiac sign is a dog. It means I am lovely, honest, and prudent. My grandpa's Chinese zodiac sign is a goat. It means he is tender, polite, clever, and kind-hearted. People that I share my first name with include Eli Manning, a football player; Eli Whitney, an American inventor known for inventing the cotton gin; and Eli Broad, a philanthropist and entrepreneur. People I share my middle name with are David Chappelle, a writer for *The Chappelle's Show*; David Tennant, an actor on *Doctor Who*; and David Duchovny, an actor on *The X-Files*. A person I share my last name with is Stephen Schwartz, a musical artist.

My Grandpa Dave was born in the year 1919. He was the owner of a glove company. He lived in New York state. His hobbies as an adult were playing golf. He used to make stained glass for wall hangings or windows. He also built a ping pong table from scratch. Growing up, he liked bowling. He went to New York University and graduated in 1939. He was married on Christmas 1946 to Sonia Schwartz.

Something I would like to inherit from my Grandpa Dave is being the owner of a company. I also like golf, building stuff, and bowling. A cool fact about my Grandpa Dave is that I share a birthday with him. I think making stained glass is really cool, but I don't think I would be very good at making it.

My name has been mispronounced Eli (Ee-li) and Ali (Ay-le). Whenever I go to my first practice for hockey or baseball and my coach asks my name and I say "Eli," he says back, "Ali?"

People have also mistaken my name for Elliot. Nobody mispronounces my brother's name. His name is Jonah (Jo-nah). My sister's name is Kayla (Kay-la). Her name is not mispronounced.

Same thing with my parents, Brian and Jenny (Jennifer). I am the only person in my family whose name gets mispronounced.

If I had to rename myself, I would rename myself Henrik. I would rename myself Henrik because I really like the name. I would change my name if I was running from the FBI. If I was a movie star, my name would be SuperEli because I would be a superhero.

Matthew Shamayev

The name Matthew means gift, as in מתנה. My middle name in Hebrew means *happy*. My middle name is Asher. My name is like cool. I like the number 3, 4, and 9 (because those are my “lucky” numbers from the zodiac sign). It reminds me of rosh chodesh ‘cause my bar mitzvah was on rosh chodesh.

I am named after my grampa (from my mom’s side). His name was Mattiyahu, my Hebrew name. I was born in the Chinese year of the dog. I find it cool how my favorite animal is a dog, and it’s what my zodiac animal is.

My grampa was a train conductor in the USSR (Soviet Union). When my grandpa and his family grew up, they moved to Azerbaijan, specifically Baku (after the USSR collapsed). My grandpa’s life was very different from my routine life. First, back then there was a lot of anti-Semitism. Kids couldn’t go to school because they would be taken and sold back to their parents for a lot of money.

I would like to inherit my grandpa’s working abilities and his braveness. There was nothing like his kindness. My grandpa liked to smoke, and that’s something I would not like to inherit—he died of lung cancer because of it. My grandpa also had wide feet, which made things uncomfortable.

My friends call me Shamis for a nickname. I have no idea how it came up, but I don’t mind it. I feel that most people’s friends give them nicknames. For example, Eli Haddad’s friends called him Shoogy, and then he started calling his dog that. My Hebrew teacher called me Mati for short. My mom calls me Matilda when it’s my birthday or she is happy with me.

If I had to rename myself, my name would be Stewrut. I would change my name if anti-Semitism became more popular or worse than it is currently. I would need to change my name to change my identity. If I was a celebrity, I would name myself Bob Tucker because it’s cool and funnyish.

Ruty Aron

My name is Ruty Aron. Simply looking at my name brings joy to anyone's face. It's as beautiful as me. My name has no definition.

I am not named after anyone. My Chinese zodiac is a dog. One of my fortunes, according to this, is that I will have wealth and a love life this year. Neither of those have happened, and I am not looking to start a love life at this time.

There is this person named Ruty Rutenberg. Ruty is an American writer, model, filmmaker, and voice actor. Ruty started his love for cinema at a young age. Before graduating high school, the whole 9/11 ordeal happened, and he joined the US army as a combat medic. I also want to work in the cinema industry. Someone made a GIF of him with pointy elf ears jutting out. That's something I don't want to inherit from him. He worked in the army, so he was kind of like a Spartan; he was a warrior.

Ruty is a boy, and I don't want to be a boy and never plan on that. I do want to be an actress and work in the cinema field. He doesn't seem to be a sassy person, and I don't want to be sassy. In some of his pictures, his cheeks have a little fuchsia tint. Ruty lived in Florida for some time. Florida's currency is the US dollar, and I like it the best. It just makes sense to me and isn't so confusing.

Most of the time, my name is pronounced correctly. People associate my name with rudeness since they think it rhymes. It's really annoying. My brothers' names are Edmund Meshulam, Amos, and Sason. My sister's name is Miryam Simha. I like my name perfectly fine the way it is, and I don't want to change it.

I don't want to change my name under any circumstances. If I had to, I'd pick Andrée. The first name I got from the name generator was my own name, so I tried again. Andrée was the next name I got from the name generator. It is a pretty name. I could use the name for myself when I'm acting in a movie.

Ari Schon

My name is Ari. It means *Lion of God*. It is smooth like songs in a jukebox. It is a happy word like the number four. It is happy like the song I listen to in the morning. Song that are like happiness. My last name Schon in German means beautiful, like me.

I am named after my great-grandfather. Sadly, I never had the chance to meet him. Just like me, he was a great sports fan. He and my grandfather went to many baseball, basketball, and football games together. Now my dad and I go to sports games together all the time. My Chinese zodiac sign is a dog, which means I am lovely, honest, and prudent. I don't believe in the Chinese zodiac.

My great-grandpa is a major sports fan. He is on my mom's side of the family. He is my mom's dad's dad. He likes the same sports as me (basketball, baseball, football, soccer, and golf). And a funny story: he always sat in the same chair, and it always had a pin in it, and they could never find it.

My great-grandpa was a pharmacist. He owned his own pharmacy. I wish to inherit his trait of owning his own store/business, and I wish to inherit his sense of humor and his being a great sports fan. But I do not want to inherit not being able to meet his great-grandkids. I hope that one day I can meet my great-grandkids.

My name has been mispronounced by like a million people. My first name, which is Ari, has been mispronounced so it sounds like airy, air, oury, and arowy. Every time I play sports, they mispronounce or misspell my name. And my last name, which is Schon, has been mispronounced so it sounds like skon, skan, skoan, shoen, skoen. And everybody spells it wrong.

I don't want to change my name. I want to keep it the same. I like how it sounds and what it means. I wouldn't want any other name, but if I was a wrestler, I would want my name to be The Amazing and Awesome Ari.

Micah Adler

My name means “Who is like God?” I have many names, but my full name is Micah Adam נחמיה Adler, but I think Micah is the most unique. I think it is a very scarce name and a nice name, like an okapi. My middle name is just a random name. I think my parents just liked the name, so that’s what they named me. All of my names are from the Torah. All are different but all important.

I am named after multiple people but most famous is the navi מיכה or my Hebrew name נחמיה. My great-grandfather ... I would’ve liked to know him. He was a funny man, my parents have told me. It’s ironic because I think I am a funny man too. I was born in the Chinese zodiac year of the dog, and there they might eat dogs. Isn’t that bizarre? But here we adore them. I have a dog. He is the cutest thing. When he gets a haircut, he is just like a pillow, fluffy and soft.

My name is נחמיה. My great grandfather’s name was נחמיה, and now it is mine. I would have liked to know him, to talk to him, to play with him. But that didn’t happen. I am the youngest of five. Born last, and so I was never able to meet him.

I share my name with a navi, and people say you are what your name is. I mean, I would love to be a navi, but I think I’m just a little too late for that. I would NOT have liked if I was living in his time. The Jewish people were not serving God, and they were worshipping idols. But Micah the Prophet ended all of this.

Micah can be spelled many different ways: Micah, Micha, Mica, Michah, and even Micaha. When we have a substitute, it is very common for them to say my name Micha or mica. All of my siblings have common, simple names like Aaron or Ethan. My name is definitely the most uncommon name in our family, but that might be the reason I like it. It’s unique, different. It stands out from theirs.

If I had to rename myself, it would be something nice, like my name now. Something nice but sassy. I think I’m a bit sassy. Something strong like a Spartan. But I would not change my name. My name is unique, and I like it like that.

Meir Rosenthal

Meir Simcha was born in Lithuania to a wealthy man named Samson Kalonymus. According to family tradition, his later success in learning Torah was because of two blessings his parents got from a few Rabbis before he was born.

He learned Torah in the town where he lived and managed to avoid the regular drafting of Jewish boys that was happening at the time. After 23 years, he finally, after turning down a lot of requests, became a Rabbi in Devinsk, where he served as the chief Rabbi until he died.

My name means *the bringer of light, happiness, joy, and love*. It speaks of a desire for good or greater meaning in simple lives. It means all the things you want and more, like the tide of the ocean that is ever moving, ever flowing, ever giving.

Famous men have shared my name, a name of truth, and live to their full potential. I wish to some extent to live up to them. One prime example is a man that goes by the name “Reb Meir Simcha of Dvinsk,” a man of learning and Torah.

Meir Simcha was born in Lithuania to a wealthy man named Samson Kalonymus. He served as the chief Rabbi until, with great sadness, we watched him go. My name comes from the root words “or,” which means *light*, and “sameach,” which means *happiness*.

If I had to pick a new name, it would be “Refael Chaim” because I get called “Chaim” (which means “life”) a lot, so it resonates within me. The reason I chose “Refael” (which means “Hashem has healed”) is because it has a similar translation to “Chaim” and because it has a smooth sound to it, like the soft tinkling of a piano!

Shakked Ziv

Hey. My name is Shakked Ziv, which means *almond* in Hebrew. My name is like me because it means nut, and I'm kind of crazy and sassy. My name does not go off your tongue like descending a chandelier across the room or velvet. It is like the number 9, my lucky number, according to the Chinese zodiac. I have brown hair, brown eyes, and dark skin, just like the outside of an almond.

I'm not named after anyone, but I searched up Shakked on the internet and found Dr. Shakked, a board-certified orthopedic surgeon specializing in the treatment of foot and ankle disorders. I don't want to be a doctor. What she does is cool, but there is just too much blood in her job. According to the Chinese zodiac, I was born in the year of the dog (2006), the 11th year in the 12-year cycle. The dog is described as a man's good friend who can understand the human's spirit and obey its master, whether he is wealthy or not. In a way, I am like this, but it's very hard for me to obey my parents ... and sometimes my teachers too.

Since there is not much I know about Dr. Shakked, I will talk about my last name and the people I share it with. My last name is Ziv, which means *brilliance* or *charm*. My grandfather is Eli Ziv. He fought in the Six-Day War and is currently the president of Keshet at the age of 72, even with a limp. We both have chutzpah and work very hard to get to our goals.

From my grandfather I would like to inherit boldness, the ability to work until an old age. I would like to have many grandchildren like him, and be diligent. There is only one thing I don't want to inherit from him: the need for too many kids. His wife, aka my grandmother, has gone through 10 pregnancies, and 2 of the babies didn't survive. I want to have 2, possibly 3 children, but my mom and dads' families don't have a limit. So that's the one thing my grandfather does that I would not want to imitate.

The amount of times my name has been mispronounced cannot be counted. It's happened too many times. Sometimes by

accident, like the time in pre-K where the principal called me Shaked in front of the whole entire school. Or on purpose, where half of the middle school called me Sharked or Shaked for half of the school year. Personally, though, I honestly think that out of my family, I have the best name. I mean, Noa is a guy's name, Ronnie is sooo unoriginal, and Miriam is just not a good name for a tweenager.

Now, if I wanted to get renamed someday, it would be for one reason: the modeling business. I would either go with Kesha, Kourtney, Kimberly, Kris, Kendall, Kylie, or Khloe because they're all very catchy names. But my favorite would be Caitlyn because it's such a beautiful name that most people love.

Ariella Leib

My name's Ariella. It fits. In English it means lion of G-d, which, if you look at me, makes sense. The frizzy and poofy sea on my head is like the sizable mane surrounding a lion's face. My name's the kind of name you hear and tilt your head in a sort of puzzled way, trying to remember if you've heard of it before. It's the soft tinkle of the crystals on a chandelier as it sways and glistens in the early morning sun.

Where a person is from tells a lot about them. The definite things, like citizenship, and the not so distinct traits almost shielded away like a content but fierce mother bird protecting her young. In my case, I can't say there's much. I only lived in Jerusalem for a little bit while I was young. Although I long to live there, I could never compare to the average Israeli you see walking on the street. My name is derived from the related name, Ariel, which is another name for Jerusalem. As I grow older, I hope to enter the threshold of meaning behind my ties to the place where G-d let me into this world.

I wish I was more like them. I wish I could call myself Israeli, but I just can't. There's something about it that makes me feel sorrowful and distant from the rest of them. Especially their Hebrew accent. The way their lips move in a soft yet swift manner as if on cue. In a way, they're slightly intimidating. Their walk. Or I guess I should say their strut. They're so confident. I'm definitely American! I like football, Thanksgiving, and movies. But In a way, I am kind of like them. I like history, Jewish culture, and Israeli food. I wish there were more similarities, though.

I would love to move to Jerusalem. I would feel much more native. Maybe even get the tan skin, or the mysterious accent. I would learn the language fluently, not just the snippets of speech I've picked up in school. Have everything so close by, walk everywhere, and breathe the fresh air of baked bread at the marketplace. It would be great, though you hear about all the terrorist attacks in Jerusalem

daily. It would be terrifying having to be vigilant every step you take, even just going to the neighbors' house.

People just can't seem to pronounce my name right. They say it as if the first two letters are pronounced "air" instead of "are." I don't understand why. It isn't so hard. One of my teachers used to say my name wrong and I was too embarrassed to correct him. He said it wrong for five years! I guess I just need to remember to correct people. My sister's name is Shayna. I can't say she has it easier. People often call her "Shana" as if the "y" doesn't even exist! I guess I just won't ever understand people.

I think I like my name. I mean, I couldn't imagine it any other way. If I absolutely had to pick another name, it would be something cool. Something fresh. Something like Stav, or Lily. Something that reminds you of the cool wind bristling through the trees. I guess it would be fun to switch my name up. Have something different for a change. But for now, my name isn't too bad.

Poetry
(7th-Grade)

“Albert Einstein from Beyond” by Ezra Mizrahi

Hello. My name is Albert Einstein. I was born
on March 14 1879 ... or 3/14/79.

I am known for my famous equation: $E=mc^2$.

I have received multiple awards
for my services as a scientist ...
and as some say, a genius.
But don't worry. I'm not
self-centered.

If I had been, I probably wouldn't have helped people
with the things I'd discovered. I'd probably have kept them to myself.

I also enabled the determination of Avogadro's number,
which showed the exact size of molecules.

The last thing that I want to do before I leave
is to explain my famous equation.

$E=mc^2$ means energy = mass x the speed of light.

And finally, though I regret to say it,
I died on April 18, 1955 ...
or 4/18/55.

So that's just about it.
If you have questions,
I'll gladly take them,
but don't make them:

“If you're supposedly dead, how are you talking to us now?”

“Love the Dove” by Shakked Ziv

I love the dove that ate my gate; 'tis fate
he's swallowed up by geese ... nowhere to sleep.
The goose runs confused; he's such a creep.

He ought to walk to my exclusive gate;
he was not keen toward his foresty fate.
He faces difficulties up his path.
We dare not guess, save from the goose's little slap.

He must seek who would undo his song.
He sees it, many trees behind him, and wood.
He's far but near, he stands, and it's gone.
He wants to call; the pang, it costs him good

to tell you that I saw it. Still, I bawl,
for the wood wakes that this I dwelt aloof.
But 'tis not true, for you are here for proof.

“The Time for Change” by Rutu Aron

The leaves are hidden in a pile
Of really pretty snowy flakes
That flaky forest makes me smile

We put away the rusty rakes
Those dreamy days, they flew on by—and now the days have
 changed
I’m driving to the western park, and all I see is frozen lakes

I jaunted through a snowy trail, the prints I left, they make me
 shamed
I walked onto the frozen lake, my feet fell through and now I’m cold
The fish jumped through the hole I made, and now its tail is sprained

Winter’s story might be cold, but it always must be told
The warmth of spring will always put the snow on trial
For all I know, the snow is just like gold

I went outside and put some snow inside a vial
So that the snow could make me smile

“The Merry-Go-Round” by Ariella Leib

The merry-go-round spins me

but still

I might be feeling ill

And yet I am crying with glee maybe

I am scared of what they will think of me if

I don't seem happy but seem hard or stiff

Now I shall go

For children are waiting for their turn to ride

Swaying and spinning about

It won't subside

My mind cannot focus; I stare out to wonder

What that merry-go-round has done to me

“My GTA” by Shai Brown

GTA is the original shooter
For when I get on
To my computer
I launch the FPS *

But someone calls my phone named Ron
Trying to sell me guns
But there's a con
So I try to make a pun
But instead I run

* First Person Shooter

“The Field in the Dark” by Ari Micznik

I'd rather spend my time in a quiet field;
Some people just prefer it to be peaceful.
I don't want to have to be protected by a shield.
There are some thoughts that need to be reeled.

To be honest, some thoughts are better than others.
Maybe one day, I'll find a perfectly quiet place.
Most people think I'm lucky to not have brothers.
Truth is, I think brothers take care of each other.

I think being quiet is good; I think it gives you more grace.
People just want to be all that, but in the end,
they just end up like rats.
They always fall face-first—splat!

Trying to be another person will always just be
a dumb trend. I don't mean to burst all of your bubbles,
but being loud is just asking for trouble.
My efforts to be quiet and proud I will redouble!

“Teacher’s Wrath” by Aliza Hennes

When the teacher works against us in the class
And pelts us hard
The class as a whole starts to subside
And whisper with a sort of nasal tone
“The beast,
Come out! Come out!”

It costs no inward struggle not to go
“Ah no!”
We count our strength
Nine and a dog
Those of us not asleep subdued to mark
How the teacher’s wrath and his cold strength
Make a sort of fog
That masks the silence
Of our unspoken words and beating heart
And we all have a doubt
Whether ‘tis in us to arise and start
To save ourselves in silence

“Dawn of the Light River” by Ezra Mizrahi and Dawn

The river runs so very deep,
and the sun sets and shines with so many leaps.
The river extends 360 degrees,
and the sun feeds the leaves and is the life of trees.

In November sometimes the river freezes and burns you, but mostly
your skin.

And in November the sun braises and bronzes you from the outside
in.

Either way it's a win-win (for nature anyway).

Well, we don't know about you, but that is what we say!

Dear river, can I ride in my boat when the sun does set?
Oh, alright. Oh, very well, but the sun has not set quite yet.
A fishing trip really sounds so very soothing and so nice.
Sprinkle me with light, dear sun, just like falling ice.

Oh, dear river, great river, you remind me of a horse.
With such great speed and light and life along with you on your
course,
You depend on your friend the sun for evaporation.
The sun releases energy, and that's the end of our contemplation.

“Horses” by Ma’ayan Vanderhoek

I know a little girl who loves horses.
If she had one, she would groom it nicely
and treat it with respect.

I really would trust her with the horse.
She would be very happy.
Even if the rides were bumpy,

she would ride it like she was a true horseman.
She’d stay with this horse until it died,
and I’d be very sorry.

I would visit the grave with her sadly,
and then I’d go home
to think about the little girl who loves horses.

I’d drift off to sleep until I saw the horse,
and at that time, unfortunately,
the horse, the little girl, and I would end.

Prose
(7th-Grade)

“How the Ghost Was Scared Away by a Cat” by Ezra Mizrahi

This is an imaginary tale about a cat scaring ghosts. Some of the features our imaginary cat has will be something you might find in a fairy tale. This cat has wings and is white with rainbow spots (each spot is a different color of the rainbow). By the way, the cat's name is Rainbow and she's not afraid of anything because she has rainbow magic. The ghost will later find out—as the story continues—that this cat is not to be messed with or angered ... nor should you touch her without the permission of her owner, Ezra the Rainbow Musician, who also plays great, fabulous, and unique music. Ready? Okay, let's start.

Once upon a time, long ago, in the land of Rainbow Music, there lived a cat and its owner, Ezra the Rainbow Musician. (It was called the Rainbow Village because there were a lot of rainbows.) They had plenty of water too because there was also a lot of rain. But what neither one of them knew was that there was a poltergeist roaming the land, who was always very thirsty. He scared everyone to gain access to water.

One day, the cat was meowing and pacing the floor, as well as circling its owner because it wanted to go outside and visit with other Rainbow Cats. (They were the common pets of Rainbow Village.) There was a turn of events, however, when the poltergeist got sick and tired of water; literally every time he would drink water it would give him the ghost version of chicken pox, and he would get very sleepy. So he started pestering others for milk. Once, he approached Rainbow Street and tried to convince the cat to give him her milk. But she hissed and said no. He became jealous and tipped the milk over and got the cat mad. Then he stuck his tongue out at her and wagged his rear at her.

Now the cat was even madder, and she hissed louder and summoned the Poltergeist Rainbow Snake, who was an old friend of hers. The ghost called upon other poltergeists, but they did not recognize him because of the pox. They were afraid to catch the

disease and ran away. The cat's milk, which he had spilled over, would have saved him. His stupidity and bulliness and jealousy had doomed him to ghost chicken pox forever. Then the Rainbow Snake bit him on the behind.

In conclusion, the ghost became very, very sick and was not seen ever again, but he still is out there somewhere moaning because of his various diseases. Please be careful; he may want your milk!

“Subject: 2145” by Ari Micznik

He was in a white, blank room. About 20 feet away was a black outline of a humanoid figure, with its shadow-like head down.

“W-w-where am I? What’s my name?” he sputtered.

He didn’t know what his name was, so he had to come up with a name. He wasn’t very creative, so he just simply called himself “H.” H looked at the humanoid figure in the distance and walked up to it.

The black entity finally looked up and said in a weird monotone, “It’s time.”

“Time for what?” H said.

“The time has come for freedom.”

And the shadow figure raised his head and looked at the blank, white ceiling. H heard a loud pop and some crackling sounds, and all of a sudden he was in a completely different place—a dim, grey office, H looked behind him and he saw some sort of hibernation cell. The cell read: “SUBJECT: 2145.” And under it it said: “DO NOT, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, OPEN.” H was offended by this and kicked the cell. H found a door and opened it. H came to a dark and falling-apart hallway; he got to the end of the hallway and saw a sign painted on the wall pointing toward the room he was just in.

The sign read: “SUBJECT: 2145 CONTAINMENT CHAMBER.
DO NOT ENTER
UNLESS PERMISSION IS GIVEN.”

H walked past it and came to a hallway with a set of two doors on each side. The one on the right said: “CEO OFFICE. DO NOT ENTER.”

H attempted to open the door, but it was locked. He found a staple laying on the floor. He picked it up and picked the lock with it. The door opened and revealed a black, metal desk with newspapers all over it and the floor. H picked one up and read it: “VANCEN CORP

BECOMES PART OF GOVERNMENT, HUMANS RIGHTS GROUPS CONCERNED.” H looked up from the magazine and decided to go to the other rooms. Another door on the left read: “Head of Marketing.” H entered the room and saw on the wall a projector screen with the projector still working and on. The projection was of a presentation showing how much Vancen Corp stock had gone down over the past years. H was surprised that a company could lose that much money.

H went back into the hallway and went to the door at the end. He saw a sign painted on the wall that read: “SUBJECT CONTAINMENT CHAMBER, STAFF ONLY.” The sign pointed toward a black, metal door. There was a keypad on the door. H knew what to do; he broke open the keypad and rewired the circuit. There was a monotone voice that said, “ACCESS GRANTED, SUBJECT CONTAINMENT CHAMBER DOOR OPENED.”

H entered and saw a huge room with the walls covered in hibernation cells, filled with blurred humanoid figures, similar to his. There was a control panel in the middle of the room, and right dead center in it was a button that read: “RELEASE ALL SUBJECTS (DO NOT PRESS UNLESS CEO).” H pressed the button, and a loud hissing sound emanated from all of the cells.

The people stepped out of their cells. After one awkward moment, there was a flurry of “THANK YOU!!!” and “WE’RE FREE!!!” One subject in particular gave a firm handshake to H and said, “Thank you, old friend.” And with that, for the first time in a long time, everyone was happy.

“Witches’ Cauldron at Lunch” by Hodaya Ellis

It was a typical day while my twin Alex, my best friend April, and I were walking to the cafeteria for lunch. We had just come from English class and were assigned to write a short horror story.

“Alex?” April said.

“Yeah,” we both answered.

“No, Alexis,” she said, rolling her eyes.

“What are you writing about?”

“I guess you’ll have to wait and see.”

I don’t think my parents are that smart because they named their twins with names that both start with Alex (Alexander, my brother—and me, Alexis) so our nicknames are the same. Anyways, back to the story. So we were walking to lunch and saw what looked like a witches’ cauldron.

“Ew!” shrieked April.

And at the same time, Alex exclaimed, “Cool!”

I just stared at the purple substance bubbling out of the pot.

“Maybe Mr. Baxter put it there for inspiration,” I suggested.

Then I noticed that the cafeteria was strangely quiet, like everyone was in a trance. Everyone except for the lunch ladies, but they had transformed. They had longer noses, they were wearing purple robes, and their warts were more prominent. First, the witches turned to us with a startled look on their faces. Then everyone else turned; their blank faces were kind of very creepy. And the lunch ladies/witches started arguing about why we weren’t under the trance, but it was cut short because the cauldron started smoking.

Suddenly a bigger, uglier, and more muscular version of Mr. Baxter came shooting out of the bubbling purple goo. The three of us all screamed! If you ask Alex, he’ll deny it, but it’s true. Anyway, the new and improved not-Mr. Baxter started babbling on and on about

how he was going to take revenge for the witches because they'd had to hide that they were witches most of their lives, and they were amazing chefs but were forced to make terrible food for annoying adolescents. But the last part is what scared us the most.

He said that he was going to destroy the school and "Do something terrible to the staff." Those were his own words. The first part I didn't really mind, as long as everyone was out of the building. He started stomping toward the door, which was also toward us, since we hadn't moved at all. The mutant English teacher was a few feet away from us when, all of the sudden, everything was back to normal. The cauldron disappeared and so did the witches, and Mr. Baxter was back to normal. The end.

So, April, now you know what my horror story's about. I don't know if it counts as one, but I got full credit. By the way, this actually happened. No one but April, Alex, and I remember it. But Mr. Baxter said he had a dream like that. So Mr. Baxter likes contests, and I won first place for my story. Two other kids from my class won second and third place. April wrote her story about a nail polish thief or something, and Alex wrote something about a video game becoming a reality. I wasn't really listening. I could always read it later. April and I practically live at each other's houses, and I literally live with Alex.

“Zombie Babies Attack New York” by Ari Schon

Once upon a time in Central Park there was a bunch of parents and their babies. At that moment, gamma rays shot down from the sky and zapped the babies. The babies’ parents were going crazy and crying and yelling. And then they drove their babies to the nearest hospital. They were in comas for six months, and then one day they were just gone.

One year later, the babies’ families were still looking for them. The next day, this guy named Jeff, who just got a girl, was in a meeting with this thing that looked like a zombie. The thing jumped on him, and he screamed, “MOMMY!!!!” The zombie thing bit him and injected some type of poison. Two days later, he died in the hospital. And he was buried two days after that.

Then Jeff’s girlfriend, Miranda, was mourning for Jeff. Then a zombie thing jumped on her. The zombie thing bit her neck and injected the poison thing. She died in the hospital two days later. They got video proof and found out that they were a gang of zombie babies. They hired a hit team to kill the babies, but they got the same symptoms and died two days after being injected.

The babies got smarter every day. They made a poison and were going to spread it to all of New York. Then one day this crazy mad scientist found a cure. But it was too late; the babies had just launched the poison. But the scientist made a protective suit that protected him from the poison.

The poison was starting to affect people, but they are not dying. They were somehow under the babies’ rule, and the babies told them to kill the scientist. But right before they killed him, he sent out a cure, and all the people were back to normal.

The scientist made a special cure just for the babies, and they turned back into regular babies—but super smart. And they reconnected with their families, and everyone lived happily ever after.

This story teaches us that that even if you are one man, you can make a difference. And it shows how brave the scientist was by facing the babies, and how smart he was by making a cure for them.

“The Haunted House” by Aliza Hennes

“So what should we do Saturday night?” I said, casually tossing a little blue-colored ball up into the air and catching it.

“Something good cuz it’s Halloween weekend,” Josh replied.

“Thanks for the help, Josh. We really needed that,” Kathy said sarcastically, rolling her eyes.

Josh and Kathy were always arguing playfully.

“What about bowling? What do you think, Hannah?” Andrew asked me.

“Ummm ... bowling is booorriing; besides, we can do that anytime. We need to do something unusual, something we’ve never done before.”

I couldn’t think of anything, but I was hoping Josh, Kathy, or Andrew could.

“Skydiving, waterskiing, jumping off a bridge—” Kathy began.

Josh cut in, “Whoa whoa whoa, wait a minute. Where in the world did you come up with these ideas?! We are trying to have fun, not kill ourselves!”

“I just looked up ‘fun, adventurous things to do when bored,’ and these things popped up. Blame it on Google,” Kathy replied.

“Oh my God. I have the best idea ever!” shouted Andrew excitedly. “There is this Haunted House that I know of! I know some guys who work there, so I just gotta pull some strings, and we can get in there for free.”

“Thank God someone here has brains.”

“Yeet” and “Finally!” were the replies.

“All right, I’ll go ahead and make the reservations for 8:00 tomorrow night,” Andrew announced.

I frowned; I thought I had seen him smirk slightly. Whatever, it’s nothing. I’m imagining things. We said goodbye, and my friends left for home happy and eagerly awaiting our night out.

The next night, Andrew, being the only one who had his license, picked us up in his sleek, black Audi at around 7:30.

“Y’all ready fer dis?” Josh bellowed, once we had all been picked up.

“Of course, predictable stupid comment from Josh,” Kathy said.

I looked at Andrew so we could roll our eyes together, but his eyes were directed toward the road, his face deathly pale. His knuckles were turning white from gripping the steering wheel so tightly.

“Aww, are you scared to go to the Haunted House?” I teased him.

He chuckled nervously.

“More anxious than scared, Hannah. It’s gonna be one intense night.”

I felt like something more was implied, but it was probably just me overthinking things again.

After a fifteen-minute drive of Kathy and Josh arguing, me trying to intercede, and Andrew being uncharacteristically quiet, we finally got there. We rolled into the parking lot.

“It looks empty to me,” Kathy said with a confused look upon her face.

“Who cares? Come on, let’s go inside!” Josh said enthusiastically.

We ran to the entrance to hide from the bite of the cold. There was a huge sign that said: “Beware. Enter at your own risk.” It had been hastily scribbled in scarcely readable blood.

The rundown building was surprisingly hot.

“These the little minions?” a voice said viciously.

Josh and I screamed.

“Oh, come on guys, this is all fake. You can’t tell me that voice honestly scared you?” Kathy said.

“Voice is the greatest thing a man can have,” Andrew stated solemnly.

“Wow, that was profound. Let’s go further in. I wanna meet some scary people in fake costumes with chainsaws and fake blood.”

Kathy urged everyone into the small room beyond.

“There will be none of that tonight. Just justice,” Andrew intoned.

We all laughed nervously at what Andrew said.

“Your starting to sound like a wiser version of Josh,” Kathy laughed.

Flashing lights turned on and we all jumped. An alarm started blaring. Eeeehhh, Eeeehhh, Eeeehhh. I turned around, grabbed Kathy, and held onto her arm as hard as I could.

“I’m more likely to die from loss of circulation than of fright right now, Hannah,” she said pointedly.

From somewhere up above us, we heard Andrew: “All must die eventually; it’s just a question of when.” He chuckled knowingly. “Time’s up.”

“Kathy, Kathy, where’s Josh? Kathy?! Kathy, where are you?”

“They are waiting for you, Hannah. Come, join them.”

“The Cliff” by Ma’ayan Vanderhoek

“I’m so bored.” said Apletta with no enthusiasm. “There is literally nothing to do right now, Jeff! Make this day interesting.”

Apletta and Jeff lived in a small village called Village of Hobo Devotees, which meant village devoted to hobos. The name of the village might make the village seem interesting, but really, the only interesting thing about it was the name.

“You know, Apletta,” said Jeff with excitement, “we’ve never been outside this village. Maybe we should go adventure to the Village of Fowl Devotees.”

Jeff was really excited now. Apletta thought for a moment.

“That’s a great idea,” she said after a few seconds.

So the two siblings put on their shoes and walked quickly to the Village of Fowl Devotees. After hours of walking, Jeff and Apletta reached their destination. They reached the town hall of the village and knocked on the door. Turns out, the people were in a meeting but the townspeople let them in anyway.

“What are you here for?” one of the ladies in the meeting said harshly.

“Um, we want know what adventures we can go on here,” said Apletta timidly.

“Well there’s cleaning the fountain, or there’s taking the cliff hike,” said the same lady.

“Okay, thanks for your help. We’ll do the cliff hike. Bye,” Jeff exclaimed.

When they exited the town hall, Apletta whispered, “That was scary; let’s go now.”

Jeff agreed with Apletta, so they went on the cliff hike.

It was probably about 8:00 p.m., and Apletta and Jeff were really tired from climbing up the cliff. Turns out, that was what the cliff hike was.

“I really want to call mom and dad right now,” said Apletta.

“Me too,” Jeff agreed.

Suddenly, just as they wished that, a telephone booth appeared in front of them. They entered the telephone booth and dialed their home phone number.

All of a sudden, they heard a message on the telephone saying, "I'm gonna get you. I haven't gotten you yet, so consider yourself lucky," in a creepy way.

Jeff and Apletta were terrified. They tried to run out of the telephone booth, but the door was sealed shut! They looked at each other for a moment and then screamed in unison, "Help!"

Jeff and Apletta realized nobody was coming to help them. Suddenly, in the distance, they saw a black figure. As it got closer, they noticed something strange about the figure. He was shorter than most men but taller than most chipmunks. His face looked like a chipmunk's face, and he was carrying a saw. Jeff remembered that just about two hours ago, they had heard a weird message.

He whispered to Apletta, "That guy—I think he's the one who gave us that creepy message."

The siblings were so scared. Meanwhile, the chipmunk guy got closer until his chipmunk face was right next to the glass wall of the telephone booth. He shattered the glass and took Jeff and Apletta and laughed, "Who's the smart one now, Bozo?"

Jeff and Apletta cried.

The townspeople of the Village of Fowl Devotees heard them and came running, but it was too late. Jeff and Apletta were nowhere to be found. Little did the townspeople know, it would remain that way forever.

“The Ghost” by Ariella Leib

“BANG.”

I paused. “What was that?” I asked Lily nervously.

“Umm..... A ghost?” She tried to come up with an answer.

“You!” I half laughed half cried.

“Fine.” She smiled. “It was me.”

She revealed a switch behind her back.

“Your pranks are getting really old,” I told her.

“Whatever.” She shrugged. “They’re still fun to make.”

Lily is very creative when it comes to pranks. She’s obsessed with squeezing one into every part of someone’s day. What she isn’t the best at, is what to say after the prank actually happens. Her pranks are starting to get really old. And I mean really old.

“BANG,” We heard again.

This time Lily froze. We were home alone on a Friday night babysitting my little brother. How much more creepy can you get?

“Lillyyy... Whyyyy ...” I asked exhaustively.

“Nina, it wasn’t me this time, I swear!”

She held up both her hands. I eyed her suspiciously.

“I’m dead serious.” She said dead seriously. “Dead serious.”

She said again. “Dead serious.” She stared behind her in a trance.

“Dead Serious.” She said again, hypnotized by this unknown being behind me.

“Lily, what the heck?” I poked her. She didn’t react. “Lily!” I said louder and nudged her harder.

She lost her balance a little bit, but steadied herself, still in a trance.

“What are you looking at?” I screamed in frustration.

Lilly slowly turned her head towards me.

“Lilly, I-”

“Go,” She said to me in a voice that got me thinking about the possibilities of her being possessed.

“Go where?” I whispered.

“Go,” She repeated.

“What-”

“GO!” She screamed at me. She collapsed into a large heap on the floor. “Carter!” I screamed my brother’s name.

“What?” He came running into the room. “Nina? Are you okay?” He asked me.

“And what happened to Lily?”

“LEAVE!” I screamed.

“What, Where,” he stuttered.

“LEAVE!” I screamed again.

“CALL MOM AND DAD AND GET OUT OF HERE!”

Carter grabbed my phone and ran out the front door.

I turned to look at what Lily had been looking at behind me in the other room. “Ugh...” I stuttered. Then I too collapsed.

“All It Takes” by Ariella Leib

“No!” I cried. “How could they?” I sobbed into my hands.

Simon quickly turned off the news. “Relax, Naomi.” He rolled his eyes. “It doesn’t even affect us. We live in California, remember? And besides, one small shooting isn’t going to do much harm.”

I looked up through my hands and at my brother with pure hatred. “One small shooting? Is that all it is? One small shooting? This is how things like the Holocaust started. Little by little, one by one, Hitler started coming after innocent people. People who were different. Now, it could be one small shooting. But five, ten, years from now, it will be much more than that.”

Simon sighed. “Whatever, Naomi, but don’t get yourself worked up about something that happened halfway across the country.”

“You’re right.” I sighed. “Just because some random guy in New York killed some Jews doesn’t mean there will be a whole world war.”

“See? Nothing to worry about.” Simon smiled. “Everything will be fine.”

I sighed. “I hope so,” and walked away.

As I was lying in bed that night, I couldn’t help but feel unsettled. Was this really just a little shooting, or was this the beginning of the next world war? Either way, it’s not okay for people to go around killing others just because they feel like it.

“I’m being ridiculous,” I reassured myself out loud. “Whatever it is, doesn’t concern me. I’m perfectly safe.”

“Yeah, you are,” grumbled Molly, my sister, from the bed across the room. “Now go to sleep!” She picked up an innocent stuffed bunny and chucked it at me.

I laughed. “Okay.” And I threw a stuffed bear back at her.

“I just couldn’t help but get that feeling, ya know?” I explained to my best friend Rachel the next day in class. Mrs. Krandoler was busy telling some meaningless story.

“I guess...” Rachel pushed her big brown glasses farther up her nose. “But don’t you think your theory is just a little bit far-fetched?”

“Rachel, Naomi, what could be so important that you have to talk about during my class?” Mrs. Krandoler interrogated us.

“Nothing.”

“Good. Now may I go back to my teaching please?”

I nodded.

“Okay class, as I was saying, the Rabbi was shocked when he opened the barrel. There was nothing in it but water! The Rabbi looked at the town, embarrassed. The bride and groom looked confused. Everyone had the same idea. Everyone thought it wouldn’t matter whether they put wine or water in the barrel. The Rabbi looked at the bride and groom, and then the floor. ‘I’m terribly sorry,’ the Rabbi began. ‘I asked each townspeople to contribute a bottle of wine in honor of this wonderful occasion. It seems, though, that there is nothing in this barrel but water.’ The Rabbi looked sadly at the townspeople. ‘I can explain,’ a poor shopkeeper piped up. ‘Well, I’m far too poor to contribute a whole bottle of wine. I thought that it wouldn’t make a difference if I gave water instead of wine, but I see I am mistaken.’ ‘Me too,’ another shopkeeper said. ‘I had the same idea!’ said another person. Soon, the whole town was confessing that they had given water, and not wine.”

“Wow!” Suzy exclaimed. “Is this a true story?”

“Does it matter?” Mrs. Krandoler replied. “I just wanted to teach you guys an important lesson. No matter how small, in the end, what you do always matters.”

Everyone rolled their eyes.

Mrs. Krandoler laughed. “I’m not just trying to be cheesy. It really is true. It’s true for both good and bad.”

“It’s a sign,” I told Rachel as we walked out of class.

She looked at me blankly. "Okay, Naomi, now I think you're taking this a little too..."

But I was already sprouting an idea. "Gotta run!" I called out, already halfway across the hall. "Catch you later!"

"Naomi, what a surprise!" Mr. Smith, the principal, turned in his desk chair. "I never thought I would see you here!" he chuckled.

I've always loved our principal. He's always so positive and makes everybody feel like they belong. We need more people like that in the world.

"Don't worry," I laughed. "I'm not in trouble."

"Well, that's certainly a good thing."

I smiled.

"Well, if you're not in trouble, then what brings you here?"

"Well, umm... I was thinking..."

I told Mr. Smith about everything that had happened. First, how the shooting affected me, and how I felt like I needed to do something about it. Then I explained a little bit about the story we were told in class and how I felt like it was a sign from God. I had an idea that could help society and maybe help people stand up for others. Okay, that does sound really cheesy. But I really feel like people need to stand up more for what they think is right.

"Naomi, that's a great idea!" Mr. Smith exclaimed.

I blushed. "Could we maybe start as soon as possible?"

I took a deep breath and stared at the audience.

"Last night, as you may have seen on the news, there was a shooting in New York. Jews were murdered just because of who they were. Do you guys really think that's a good way to go about living your life? Hating on people because of their religion? I don't know about you, but I personally don't think so. People should be able to be proud of their religion, not be afraid of what might come of it."

A few kids snickered in the audience.

"Yeah, it does sound corny." I admitted. "But it only sounds corny because you tell yourself it sounds corny. That's the way the

world works. When someone starts to think something, soon the entire world is thinking it. That's all it takes."

Uh-oh. Maybe this wasn't such a good idea.

But soon, a thunderous applause arose.

Huh, maybe middle schoolers are smarter than I thought.

“Learning from the Past” by Ma’ayan Vanderhoek

Imagine you’re walking on a path and you end up at a crossroads. One sign says *Follow the Journey of Anne Frank*, and the other sign says *Change the Past*. Where will you go? On one hand, you don’t know who Anne Frank is, and you’re curious about her. But on the other hand, you want to change the past. Deciding to go on the path that says *Follow the Journey of Anne Frank*, you learn very sad and disturbing things.

Anne Frank was born on June 12, 1929 in Frankfurt, Germany. A few years later, she moved to the Netherlands. Before World War II started, life in the Netherlands was nice. She had many friends, she went to a nice school, and she was able to be Jewish. But when her 13th birthday came along, and she got a diary, things started to change. Anne’s father decided they should go into hiding in the secret annex of Prinsengracht 263 in Amsterdam after her sister received a letter saying that she had to report to a work camp in Germany right away. Little did she know, things would be getting worse.

Anne went into hiding with her mom, her dad, her sister, the Van Daan family, and Albert Dussel. The people hiding her were very trustworthy people who did everything they could to help them. Every night, the Franks, the Van Daans, and Mr. Dussel had to keep quiet so nobody would know they were in hiding. During her time in hiding, Anne became well acquainted with Peter Van Daan, Mr. and Mrs. Van Daan’s child. Anne loved Peter and she felt that she could pour her heart out to him. It is great that she had a good friend during that hard time. Sometimes you need a good friend to understand you and care about you.

Sadly, Anne Frank was found by the Gestapo, the German police, and was sent off to Bergen-Belsen, a concentration camp in Germany. She was on the last train of Jews deported to that concentration camp. Think of that—she could have survived. Edith Frank, Anne’s mom, died in Bergen-Belsen along with Anne, who died in March 1945 right after her sister Margot. Her father survived

and went back to where the family had hidden. He received Anne's diary from Miep Gies, who had been hiding them, and published it. Anne Frank could have survived World War II, but instead, she perished among six million others.

You think for a while to yourself about how Anne Frank's life was horrible and how you could have changed it. You think that it was a good idea for the Franks to move to the Netherlands because they escaped Germany, but somebody should have told them that things were going to be bad for them there too. If everyone, including the Nazis, had rebelled against Hitler, maybe the Holocaust would have ended earlier. You realize that it's too late—you already followed Anne Frank's life and can't go on the path to change it, so all you can do is think and think about the many things that could have saved Anne Frank's life.

Today, the Jews in the United States are much safer. We should feel very lucky. We have good food to eat, nice homes, clothes to wear, etc. Unfortunately, many of our ancestors perished during World War II, and we can't change that. But what we can do is learn from the past. We can make sure that our world remains safe for any type of people. That's how we can make a change in today's world.

“ _____ ” by _____

“ _____ ” by _____