

Nantucket Book Festival Young Writer Award 2022

This year's prompt is inspired by our visiting author Elizabeth Acevedo. In Elizabeth Acevedo's Clap When You Land, two girls must face their changing identities as they deal with the aftermath of a plane crash and the revelation of family secrets. In Poet X, Xiomara finds an outlet to express her thoughts and struggles through her poetry.

Our backgrounds, interests, or talents make up a fundamental part of our identities. Tell a story that illustrates a significant element of your background, interests, or talents. Be sure to explain how it has played a role in who you are today. Since Acevedo is known for her books in verse, you may submit a poem or series of 2-3 poems that address the prompt.

WINNER

THE BOWL: GRADE 12

Sonia Dhar

The bowl was perfect. Perfectly round, perfectly sized and when I lifted it off the shelf and swiped my finger across the bottom, it was just dry enough to trim out the foot. At this point, my expertise was not in trimming, but I was eager to practice my newly acquired skill. Maybe a bit too eager. I brought it to the wheel, admiring the shape I was able to achieve in the class before, and placed it bottom-up in the center. I turned on the wheel and suddenly the bowl was taken, battering against the edges of the wheel. My foot was quick to lower the pedal and the wheel came to a stop. It was too late.

I thought I would never again forget to check the pedal before turning on the wheel. I was wrong. I carefully checked the damage, wincing a bit at my own mistake. Having hit the knots in the wheel, the perfectly round edges now rippled in an ugly way. As the embarrassment of the situation built, I was tempted to tear the bowl to pieces before my teacher had a chance to ask what had happened. Luckily, putting a positive spin on my troubles is my specialty. I took a closer look and the ripples of the edges turned to flower petals. I painted a poppy. My teacher admired it not for its perfection, but because the mistake I had made now had a purpose.

I tell myself I can never get too attached to anything. As a ceramics student, I've come to accept that my piece can be broken at any point in the process. Some breaks are fixable, others are not.

When my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer, it had a ripple effect on my entire family. At the start, she asked us to keep it a secret as she feared she would lose her business if her clients deemed her unqualified. But for me, this meant I had a secret. I remember standing in line in my first-grade classroom. My classmates and I were always honored when we were selected to be the caboose, but standing at the end of the line that day, I felt isolated with my secret. Nevertheless, with my secret, I adapted. I would wake up earlier to pack my lunch for school but was quiet when the other kids complained about what their mothers had packed for them. I stayed

quiet when I played, as noise would only make my mother's migraines worse. My empathy only grew with me, and though the ripple was big, I could still grow flower petals of my own.

My dad was driving me home from school when he told me he had broken my beloved poppy bowl. I called it a "senior moment" and laughed it off. He had given me so much, so the little mistakes never bothered me. When we got home, I secretly dug the shards out from the bottom of my recycling bin. My treasured bowl was no longer functional, but I kept a shard to tuck away in my room, to remind myself that one can find beauty even when things go wrong.

With time, my mother only got worse. Her death was expected. I was only ten and left to think for myself, to navigate the world as I pleased. Throughout the years that followed, many were quick to call me broken and though I knew I'd heal with time, I never minded the brokenness. I remind myself she lives on in half of my genes and my toothiest of smiles. There are traces of her in all of my petals, whether they bloomed as she raised me or after her death. I like to think I'll always keep a shard of her with me.

First Runner-up

We Are Sitting At The Table/Седим на Масата: 10th Grade

Anna Popnikolova

We Are Sitting At The Table

1.

We are sitting at the table, and my mother is
reminding us to speak in Bulgarian.

We are sitting at the table, my mother is
stirring a pot of soup over the stove, on the
phone with my grandparents, laughing, loud,
arguing. They're always loud.

We are sitting at the table, my mother is
setting down a plate of crepes, my mother is
setting down a plate of сирене, a jar of my
grandmother's quince jam, all the way from
Bulgaria.

We are sitting at the table, my grandmother
teaching me how to knit. I am her namesake.

My mother says I inherited her habits and
her fashion sense.

My mother teaches us how to knead
кузунак. My father never remembered how
to break bread correctly on Christmas.

We are sitting at the table, eating, laughing,
shouting. We talk about our days, we talk
about the future and boys at school. My

mother is reminding us to speak in
Bulgarian.

Седим На Масата

1.

Седим на масата, и мама ни подсеща да
говорим на Български.

Седим на масата, мама бърка яхния над
котлона, на телефона с баба и дядо, смеят
се, спорят, твърде шумни са.

Седим на масата, мама слага на масата
чиния палачинки, чиния сирене, и
бурканче от сладко. Дюолите на баба ми,
чак от България.

Седим на масата, баба ми ме учи да
плета, аз съм нейна съименничка. Мама
казва че се падам по нейните навици и
нейният китч. Мама ни учи как да месим
кузунак, баща ми винаги забравя как се
чупи питката.

Седим на масата, ядем, смеем се, караме
се. Говорим за дните си, говорим за

бъдещето и момчетата в училище. Майка
ми ни напомня да говорим на Български.

2.

We go to Bulgaria. We sit out on my
grandmother's patio, under the grapevines,
the stray cats lay in the sun, and the old dog
is asleep under the table. Her eyes are two
different colors.

We walk under the umbrellas on
main street, we go to the monastery,
to the ocean. We eat grilled dough,
soda in glass bottles, we buy ice
cream from the cooler outside the
gas station.

We go to Bulgaria, we sit in the cafe.

My mother tells me about being
young, my parents take me to a pizza
place around the corner where they
used to go on dates. My parents tell
me about their apartment building.

My parents say nothing has changed.

The dog is the same, older. The
house is the same, older. The tracks.
The people, older. The children are
all grown up.

We are sitting at a different table,
different people, eating fries with
сирене, the street is foggy, the music
is loud. At this table, we are all
speaking Bulgarian.

2.

Отиваме в България. На баба ми в
двора, под лозята седим.
Бездомните котки лежат на
слънце, старото куче спи под
масата. Очите ѝ са два различни
цвята.

Разхождаме се под чадърите,
отиваме до манастира, на море.
Ядем пърленки, содата в
стъкленините бутилки, купуваме
сладолед от бензиностанцията.

Отиваме в България, на кафене.
Мама ми разказва за младостта,
мама и тате ми ме водят на
пицарията където са ходили на
срещи. Родителите ми разказват за
старият блок.

Мама и тате казват че нищо не се е
променило. Кучето същото,
по-старо. Къщата същата,
по-стара. Хората, по-стари. Децата
са порастнали.

Седим на маса с различни хора,
ядем пържени картофи със сирене,
улицата е мъглива, музиката е

силна. На тази маса всички

говорим Български.

3.

We are sitting at the table. It has been too long since we have sat at this table together. My parents are playing their old music, they are reminiscing about high school friends. I realize I will reminisce the same way.

My mother is still reminding us to speak Bulgarian. I watch my sisters trip over their words, and I realize why she is so insistent that we hold onto this language. Someday, this language may be all we have left.

My dad never learned to break bread correctly, and I hope he never does.

My grandmother passed away, and I never managed to learn how to knit, but I haven't given up her style, and I wear her old clothes like her name.

After she is gone, I teach myself to knit. I am beginning to read and write more Bulgarian. My mother never wanted us to lose our Bulgarian. She is still reminding us. We are still sitting at the table.

3.

Седим на масата. Минало е твърде много време откакто сме били заедно на тази маса. Мама и тате слушат старата им музика. Говорят си за приятели от гимназията. Някой ден, ще си спомням аз по същия начин.

Мама все още ни подсеща да говорим на Български. Сестрите ми се спъват в думите, и разбирам защо Мама държи на Българският. Някой ден може само езикат да ни остане.

Тате така и не се научи да чупи питката. Надявам се, че никога няма да се научи.

Баба почина, аз така и не успях да се науча да плета, но не се отказах от кичът ѝ нося дрехите ѝ като нейното име.

Откакто баба я няма, уча се сама да плета. Започвам да чета и да пиша на Български. Мама никога не е искала да загубим Българският си. Тя още ни подсеща. Още седим на масата.

Second Runner-up
An Ode to Reading: 11th Grade
Sarah Swenson

I grew up lonely. Not utterly lonely; I had friends—just about two—and we shared birthdays and a sleepover once every couple months. I was just quiet, a background sort of kid. I was reliably the one already looking at the teacher when they raised a hand for silence, and I daily sagged with relief when the lights in the cafeteria flicked off.

“Mindful eating!” a teacher called out. “I want you to spend the last five minutes of lunch thinking about what you are eating, and focus on being present.”

When the lights dimmed and the cacophony of pre-pubescent screeching petered out, I could breathe again. No one noticed that I already wasn’t talking, because suddenly none of them were either. School should be like this all the time, I thought. Mindful eating, mindful breathing, quiet working time.

In sixth grade, I drafted a persuasive essay to the principal. Bring back DEAR, I pleaded: Drop Everything And Read. Independent reading is important to linguistic and cognitive development (It’s important to my sanity). Written stories improve your mental elasticity and engage a multitude of areas in the mind, not just the ones directly related to reading (It would greatly improve my mental felicity).

I just want a hushed half hour of the day to share space with the other kids and pretend we’re the same. The facade tends to fade away when I actually have to say things to them.

I grew up lonely, but I do not begrudge the quiet. Much of the time, I prefer it. Socializing is not so tiring when I can do it by just sharing a space with you. I would meet your eyes and hand you a smile in silence. Most of the time, this is taken as an offense.

Fictional characters have never pressed me to speak when I don’t want to. I know that they are not quite real—ink binds them within the soft white confines of flimsy, tearable paper pages—but sometimes I think these people are my best friends; I certainly say I love them more than I do about any “real” person.

I love Hermione! I love Will and Halt and Alyss, Alec Lightwood and Magnus Bane, Inej Ghafa and Kaz Brekker and Jesper Fahey, Samwise Gamgee and Frodo Baggins! They are so easy to love, not because they are perfect, but because they never ask anything more of you than who you are. Nancy Drew and Harry Potter were childhood friends. I grew up and I made new friends, in new pages, and I loved all of them.

As I’ve gotten older, I have found friends in movies and television as well, but they are not a part of my identity in the same way. Television is never quite like reading. I can know characters on screen, but not like I know characters in books. We aren’t friends in the same way. Books are not by necessity mired in dialogue. Thousands of words on hundreds of pages, and not a single one requires a response.

Better still, I can relate to them. Penned friends pouring out narration so rich my heart swells. No small talk required.

Movies and television, you watch; you are a voyeur, however invited. The fist of jealousy tightens in my gut when I watch, the same one clawing inside my chest when I see kids talking at lunch, unhindered. Books are different. For a short time, I have magic. I am a ranger. I am part of a rugged teenage street gang, or a stolid band of hobbits in search of peace and adventure. It's not like looking in a window at all, it's like being let inside the front door. Or maybe, it's like opening your eyes and realizing you were inside the whole time, and this is your quest.

Tonight, I open a book. I open my eyes. I slip under my covers and into Araluen or Middle Earth or Hogwarts, and really, I'm not lonely at all.

Third Runner-up

Cynefin in Orphic Scripturient, or, The Jellyfish Author: 10th grade

Goshi González

“Goshi’s a good kid....but....”

“What?”

“There is just something different about him. He’s *ostracized*, he’s like...”

“Like *what???*”

“Like an *alien*. ”

Ostracization. Alienation. Interesting words, concepts. To be ostracized by your peers, your family, everyone; but ultimately, yourself, creates the heaviest sense of alienation. To know, that you are different from everyone else, but never *why*.

How could I be a person, if I didn’t know what being a person meant? How could I make and maintain eye contact with people? How could I shake someone’s hand, and feel warm flesh grasp my own freezing cold? How do you give a smile, keep up with small talk, and feel emotions in your heart? I’d like to know. Does someone have a handbook? Hell, I’ll take YouTube tutorials. Just tell me how to be human.

Sure, people *like* me, I guess. I’m flirted with, asked out by boys and girls alike. Then, I have to explain of how, just like being gay or straight, it’s my orientation; aromantic and asexual. I’m told I’m handsome, or a pretty boy, but I can’t look at myself in the mirror, for when I do, I see someone else standing there. I’m told I have a soothing voice, but I wish I never had vocal chords to begin with.

But people don't *really* like me. They like the superficial. They like the mask they glance upon, that they can ogle. But once they see the ugly, deformed monster beneath they run away. The mask is so uncomfortable; its high voice, its animated face, its bright smile...I wear it around my family, my friends, *everyone*...

Cynefin. It means when someone is wholly where they are meant to be. I didn't have that at first. But I found it.

I find it on cold mechanical keys. I find it in a pen, dipped into ink, my thoughts bleeding onto pages. I find it on splintery docks, looking for those jellyfish I cherish. When I'm writing, my thoughts open a hideous wound and spill their gore, creating a gruesome scene--and when I'm gazing at those of the sea I covet so, I feel my mask loosen. I watch it plunge into the ink, dissolving. I watch it splash into the sea, being eaten by the digestive enzymes of the jellyfish.

Orphic. It means "beyond understanding". I find that it's a great way to sum myself up. A strange creature that is doing his best to be human.

For example, I memorized rules about how to greet someone.

1. Approach them, not too fast, but not too slow either.
2. Meet their eyes for no longer than six seconds.
3. Outstretch your hand; ensure it is steadied.
4. As you hold eye contact, state your name and that it is a *pleasure* to meet them.
5. Grasp their hand--not too firmly, but not too limply.
6. Give a tight-lipped smile, do NOT show your teeth. They see you as an animal, boy, baring your teeth is a sign of aggression.

It always works. Though, I wish it *wouldn't* work sometimes. Sometimes, I wish my perfectly curated rules would fail. But then I remember how they'll see me.

I've met few that remove the mask, and smile. In one case, I've known someone who *eagerly* removes the mask, removing his own as well. In fact, he sees the *mask* as the hideous creature, not *me*. That's been rare, but to be able to show my loveless heart, to make true friends, and to be myself...that's true cynefin to me.

So now I sit here, my hands shakily poised over my keys, eyes locked onto the blinking cursor. I may be an orphic entity, I may find solace in scripturient activities, and I may align myself more with jellyfish than I do with humans...

Hey, that makes me the Jellyfish Author, doesn't it?

Fourth Runner-up

Vicks VapoRub; Cough Suppressant, Topical Analgesic: 12th Grade

MaryAnn Vasquez-Cruz

Feeling sick? Put on some Vicks VapoRub or vaporù; that's what my mom calls it. Got a cough? Vaporù. Muscles ache? Vaporù. Broke a bone? Vaporù can probably fix that too. All ills are erased with vaporù.

I get easily sick, yet I go to the hospital maybe twice a year. Three times if it's that serious. From a young age, my grandmother taught me that you could cure mostly anything with the things that hang around your pantry (at least ours) and a big dollop of Vicks VapoRub. For any ailment I had, she had three to five recipes for curing it. Now, I never really questioned how she learned all these medical recipes, but she knew they worked, and they did. My mom follows her recipes, and I am now the next descendant of that knowledge. A teaspoon of honey with half a lime is excellent for sore throats. Make sure to put VapoRub on your neck to alleviate the sore throat. A cup of sopa maruchan with equal cups of lime is excellent for colds. Make sure to rub your whole body in VapoRub as well.

1 out of 4 times I get sick, I require medical attention and have to be taken to the hospital. According to my grandmother, the doctor "nunca sabe na" or "doesn't know anything." She always claimed that anything they prescribed to me, she could make ten times better with the natural ingredients at home. What mostly bothered her were the precise multi-step instructions she received with the medications. It was complicated, but putting on Vicks wasn't. While being sick was no fun, going to the hospital was. The white walls and marbled floors, shiny trinkets, machinery, and various monitors made me feel I had traveled 70 years into the future. The doctor would check me with a little flashlight and magnifying glass, checking every orifice like I was some foreign object. I felt like a robot being fixed for maintenance. Being a robot and, in the end, getting a lollipop? What more could a child ask for?

My grandmother definitely felt betrayed that I showed interest in listening to the doctors. As I grew up, I learned that doctors knew a lot. A LOT. And I became obsessed with what they knew. I began learning about the body from atom-to-cell-to-tissue-to-organ-to-organ system-to-organism until I decided to become a pharmacist. Pharmacology interested me the most: the study of drugs and their actions on living systems. That's how Google defines it, but there's so much more to a pharmacist.

Working as a pharmaceutical intern, I learned firsthand the importance of educating patients about their medication. Hispanic patients that walked into the pharmacy felt relief as they saw me behind the counter. Most were hesitant about using the medications they were receiving, just like my grandmother, yet always felt

comfortable asking me questions about their medications. I would translate the pharmacist's advice, and they would walk out with confidence that they always had someone to come back to and help them when they needed it.

Even with all of this, I understand how my grandmother feels. These home remedies are tradition, individual pride, and knowledge passed down for generations. With the fast advancement of modern medicine, there is cultural uneasiness. These cultural and language barriers prompted me to want to work in healthcare. Hispanics are twice as likely as non-Hispanic blacks and three times as likely as non-Hispanic whites to lack a regular health care provider. Representation is essential to provide change. I wish to help guide my community and increase access to healthcare and education on their care and treatment options.

So the next time I get sick, I will likely dab on vaporù and use my grandmother's recipes. Yet, I wouldn't mind going to the hospital to get checked up, either. There won't be lollipops this time. I'm too old.

Nantucket Book Festival Young Writer Award 2022 Entries

A piece of my life: 9th grade

Ishla Bonilla

The hot heavy air is resting on my shoulders as I sit lounging on a patio chair, in the shade on the porch, drinking lemonade as cold and icy as the arctic. It smells like Gizo de Fideo and Saltenas. I sit there listening to the crazy drivers zooming across the streets like there's no tomorrow and the only thing holding them back are the three colorful sinny lights in the sky. I see how my dog runs around the bright green grass only a few feet in front of me chasing everything that moves or catches her quick eye. The bright beautiful flowers standing tall in the burning sun. I try to take in every little detail in front of me like how cold tile is when I put my feet down, and how the birds are flying around staying far away from the little dog waiting to pounce, I also see the hummingbirds and bees going to the same purple-flowered tree they always do. I think about all the fun times here and how I'm sad to leave, but man does Bolivia have a tropical environment.

I hear my name getting called inside for lunch; as I walk into my grandparent's house people are going in and out like always. My grandparent's house is the house that everyone goes to either for holidays or birthdays, to have tea time with my grandparents, to go visit each other, for family reunions, to see the dogs, to stay in when visiting Bolivia, to see me. The first time I visited Bolivia and my grandparents was when I was 3 years old and the recession came. My parents were working three jobs so they couldn't take care of me 24/7; after a couple of bad nannies/ daycares, my parents decided it would be best to send me to Bolivia to stay with

my grandparents. This was the first time I had gone to Bolivia so my mom went with me and stayed for 2 months to see how well I adjusted to the change. During the 2 months where my mom had to go back to Nantucket, I was confused for a couple of days but was fine after. I was the little girl of the house; my extended family took care of me. I got to go out with my aunt and her friends, have makeovers, and play tea parties. They also bought me a puppy. I was living my best life. After a year at this point, my parents had been financially stable for a while and they came to get me in Bolivia to celebrate my fourth birthday.

For my birthday, I had a massive party with all my family. It was a hectic day because I had a preschool presentation that day; so while my parents were arranging everything and greeting the guest at the venue I was dancing at school. A couple of weeks after the party I returned to the states, where I would attend school and learn English all over again. After a long year, I went to Bolivia to spend the summer with my grandparents while my parents worked. I struggled a bit in Bolivia with the language because I refused to speak Spanish because I was afraid to forget English. After a month I was learning how to balance both English and Spanish. I started to do this every summer; the day after school got out I would take the boat and start heading to Bolivia. A couple of times I stayed for longer, from 3 months to 14 months, and would attend school. I think that this experience helped me to grow up in a different way; I can travel for a long time without being homesick. I can get around if needed without help, and I can see when the environment changes from a safe one to a more dangerous one. It helped me be more aware and street smart, but most importantly it helped me realize how much I love traveling and being a foreign exchange student which is why with the help of my parents I will hopefully be attending school in the city of love: Paris, France.

Family comes in all forms, but the ones that want what's best for you, and help you grow are the ones worth keeping. My close family may not look like a typical family to others, but even after all their struggles and sacrifices they raised a daughter that speaks a language not native to them, knows the difference between right and wrong, and most importantly they taught her morels, she might mess up from time to time but they will never stop telling her how much they love and appreciate her. My family is what made me who I am, and I will forever be grateful for all the memories and great experiences.

The Spy's Adventures: 9th grade

Audrey Hudzik

“PAY ATTENTION!”, my 2nd-grade teacher yelled as I stared into the abyss of my own mind. That day, it was a ninja jumping across the classroom trying to escape the teacher who was talking at us. Later, I would come up with a game my friends could play at recess, and then after that, it would be something new. I always thought of something new after recess, a new story, a new game, or a new world. I loved stories, whether it was

coming up with them, or reading them. I was entranced with the idea that I could create my own worlds with just words.

It felt to me like my elementary school teachers never really liked me; or at least my mind. I'd constantly get in trouble for "not paying attention," or having an overactive imagination. I never thought it was a problem, until I was told it was. I understood that they just wanted me to learn the subjects so that I could move on to another year, and I did. I started to push away the story-making and kept my head down. That was fine for a while, and I was good at it. That is until 4th grade. There was a writing contest we had in the school that year. Everyone talked about it. The gray halls were lit up with vibrant conversation, and story ideas for the contest. It was like an inferno consuming everyone's thoughts.

Every single class in my grade was working on their stories. I'd allow myself to indulge in this escape from the world, I just wouldn't let my imagination get ahead of me. Except, when I started to write in my journal, I found that I couldn't stop. I wrote about a spy on a mission to save the world. I wrote about his risks and his adventures. I wrote about his allies and enemies. I would put a couple of hours a day into that story, which was a lot for a 9 year old. Along with me, most of my classmates finished a day early so we could revise and edit our stories before we submitted them. We each had the stories double checked by our teacher to make sure everything was well put together.

I knew the teacher didn't particularly like me, because she told me. In sly little comments. Constantly. I was excited to prove to her that my imagination was not a nuisance. At the end of the day I gave her my story to check over, and went home. The next day, when the stories needed to be turned in, my teacher pulled me aside. I was ready for her to tell me that this was the winning tale, but she didn't.

"You shouldn't submit this," she said, in the stern voice she'd used when kids got in trouble. My heart sank into my stomach, as my throat started slowly closing. The only thing I could hear was my own breathing. I barely registered what she was saying. I could only make out, "This would reflect poorly on my teaching."

My face started to burn with heat. I wasn't angry, not with her, not with the contest. I was upset and embarrassed. Maybe I just wasn't as good as I thought I was. Maybe it was all in my head. So I never submitted the spy's adventures.

Today, I look at that story. The one I had written when I was a child. I see a bright, creative mind that was discouraged by a tired teacher. I wasn't the problem that she made me out to be. She just didn't know how to teach me, how to connect with me. I'm not angry. I just wish her words didn't live in the back of my mind.

Even as I'm writing now, I can still hear her, and feel my embarrassment. Today, she has her own space in my head, but so does that little boy who made up stories during recess, and fell in love with writing. Now, the voice of that boy is louder than the tired teacher, and I give it room to grow.

Learning to Play the Piano: 9th grade

Olivia Nascimento

In my room, looking at sheet music in confusion, it looked as if someone just randomly scattered dots, all over the page. The piano glistened and shimmered in the sunlight, waiting for me to play it. After getting frustrated, and taking a break, the piano called me back to keep playing and try again. The sheet music smelled just like a new book, the sweet bitterness of the fresh, unopened pages filled the surrounding area. I played again and again until I played perfectly, and the piano sounded like heaven. The beautiful, calm piano created a captivating sound as it echoed through my room. The piano feels smooth and clean, like a shiny new car. Once I finally got the hang of playing, it tasted like success.

As I sat down on the stool the next day, I was anxious to play again. I was afraid that I was going to forget what I learned the day before, and play the wrong note, having to start all over again. I prepared myself and took a deep breath. I placed my fingers on the cool keys and started to play. Halfway through, I made a mistake. I stopped and started over, and once again made a mistake. This cycle repeated over and over again until I eventually found myself playing till it was time to go to bed. I did not want to stop playing, I wanted to go on, but I had to sleep. It bothered me that I did not play it well, even though I was still learning. I was really hard on myself in the beginning and would overwork myself. I kept glancing over at the glistening piano that was waiting for me to play it again. The piano was as sparkly as a diamond in the rough. It was as if my fingers were connected to the keys by a string, and something was pulling them back to it again. I tried hard to not get up and keep playing, but eventually, the desire to play overtook me. I got up and continued to play. I kept messing up over and over again until I found myself playing till the late hours of the night. The moon had risen over the sun and was staring at me through my window, watching my frustration rise. The wind that swiftly came through the gap was cold like ice on my skin. Eventually, after hours of practice, I played it correctly. The notes sweetly, and softly, slipped off my fingers, and by that time, it was midnight, and a tsunami of darkness washed over my entire room, making it extremely difficult to see. I was very proud of myself and finally went to bed. I took a sip of water before I fell asleep, and it tasted fresh and crisp and smelled clean and clear. I could hear the soft rustling of the trees, rolling in the frigid wind. I finally felt at peace, after ages of frustration, and almost giving up.

The lesson that I have learned, and that I hope to share with this narrative, is to not overwork yourself, but never give up. When I was learning to play the piano, I overworked myself and wanted to stop trying; however, I persevered, tried again, and finally succeeded. Now I have a love for playing. I've learned to not be so hard on myself, to take it slowly when learning new things, and to not feel upset with myself when I mess up. It is ok to not do well when learning anything new, and take breaks often when needed. These lessons that I have learned have shaped me into who I am today, and will continue to influence the way I handle any new challenges that come my way in the future.

A Steak Basted in Thyme and Rosemary: 9th GRADE

Anonymous

The kitchen: a blank slate to make flavorful art. To create something simple or grand. A place to smell the marinara and to taste the creamy mozzarella. It feels so plain, yet looks so complicated. The roaring of the fan keeps the air moving in a steady fashion. Rapid dough rises in a mixer before falling again and again, releasing the unpleasant and strong smell of alcohol.

I didn't start in this kitchen. I started at home, far less equipment, yet still the same opportunities for art. I had everything I would need, an oven, stove, and a fridge where everything you needed was in there. I could make anything I could think of and more. So I took that opportunity to learn and create.

The best and most that I made at home by myself was a thyme and garlic butter basted steak with mushrooms and twice-baked potatoes. The room was filled with the smell of bacon, then garlic, and when the steak was done, it was cooked to perfection. The butter on the pan made a sizzling sound from the heat. The flavor was significant and everything had a different flavor that could go with each other. Other than this I make simpler things all the time. I like to learn new techniques or methods in cooking to gain more knowledge. I value knowledge over almost everything else, so when I have the opportunity to learn something new about cooking, I take it.

I came from a chef who used to work at many well-known places. Now he co-owns a well-known local restaurant with my mother. My knowledge of cooking came from him, every time I had an idea, he had a better one. He knew how to cook, and he did it very well. He gave me a job at his restaurant, and, though we would get pretty busy at times, most of the time it was manageable. I sometimes took food out to people's cars, sometimes in the rain, sometimes in the wind. At the start, I was only interested in the money I could get from working. I would work from when I got from school till we closed. I did get breaks before the rush, however.

One Friday night, I was working but my dad couldn't be there. It was just my mom and I. Murphy's law

played a major role during this one night; two of our three ovens, we had gone out, and a stampede of customers stormed our doors. Our hearts raced. Our temperatures increased. The sweat dripped from our foreheads. Both of us had to work in a hot kitchen making pizza after pizza with the occasional garlic knot or barbecue sandwich. Neither of us could stop working. Every minute we were not working we lost money. To add on to that, since we only had one oven that day, we were limited to four pizzas at a time, which created a line.

When everything was done, we were left tired and stressed. We got so busy that afterwards there was an extra thirty minutes of working to clean up so we could leave the restaurant.

When everything was done, I didn't let stress ruin my love for cooking. Even under the hardest circumstances of stressful work, flattening dough, taking out food, I still love to cook. I cook more than ever now; I learned from this experience to continue to learn under undesirable conditions. My advice is, that even when you have a stressful situation with a profession you enjoy, don't let it stop you from pursuing that profession in the future. Don't let stress mess with or ruin who you are meant to be.

Perfection: 10th grade

Marley Viselli

Every school year, the ease of getting A's slips away more and more. It is a skill that used to be so effortless for me. That perfection in my grades made me feel like I was worth something, and I never used to be able to see it going away. It never even crossed my mind, I doubt it crossed anyone else's either. In my sixth grade parent-teacher conference, while I sobbed over getting a B-, my teacher discussed reasons for the drop in my science grade as she handed me tissues. She suggested that I was purposefully lowering the quality of my work to better fit in with my peers. She never suggested that I hadn't meant to get that grade, even while she watched the tears cover my cheeks and saw the disappointment in my eyes. It was like it never occurred to her that maybe I had been trying to get back to that perfection, and I just couldn't.

Perfection is a subjective term, and for me it always applied to high grades. The pressure to maintain my grades has always been a whisper in my ear, though I've never been sure who is speaking. Parents, teachers, myself, some mix of them all. No matter who first put the idea in my head, I've been the one perpetuating it, holding on to the idea that my brain should work the same way it did when I was younger. My teachers don't get upset with me when I struggle in their class, but I still avoid getting help out of embarrassment, out of feeling like it means that I am not good enough. I am the only person who is still unsatisfied with myself.

Though my perfectionism began in my grades and performance in school, it spread to other areas of my life. When I was young, I loved art. I would draw anything I saw, any subject that I found fascinating or beautiful. I was proud of every final product. I still love creating art, but only when the result is exactly how I envisioned it. I give up halfway through a drawing if I can't achieve what I wanted, if I don't think it will end

up being perfect. I played piano throughout elementary and middle school. I enjoyed the lessons early on, but as I progressed, the pieces I was learning became harder. I made more mistakes, and I was angry at myself for them. The mistakes dissuaded me from continuing to try because I believed that I could never get past them. The teacher would point out sections where I struggled and instruct me to play them over and over until I could do it five times in a row with no mistakes. Each time I played it without any mistakes, she set a small rainbow eraser on the piano to represent me playing it through without messing up. I could get to three, then four, then mess up and restart. The keys would grow blurry with tears that I begged not to leave my eyes, making it harder to see, harder to play the section perfectly. I remember the teacher gathering the four little erasers back up over and over, but I can never remember her placing a fifth.

I draw less now than I ever have, and I quit piano in sixth grade. I think about my grades all of the time, and I let them loom over me without even trying to get them back to where they once were. I've lost the motivation to be perfect, but I'm left with the fear and shame over mistakes that used to drive me to achieve this perfection. Now it just sits inside of me, holding me back.

Everything happens for a reason: 11th

Natalie Mack

My story starts back when I was in 6th grade. My friends and I were creating some sort of act for our middle school talent show. Long story short, that ended up falling through. Still eager to participate in my very first talent show, I decided to gather some of my friends that were involved in the act that fell through, to do an act. My friend Aidan, who I'd known since pre-school played electric guitar, my friend Jeremy who I'd also known since pre-school, knew some chords on the piano, and my friend Colin who I'd met in third grade was able to find his place on a single bongo drum. A talent that I'd been keeping quiet up until this point was my singing voice. Sure, I'd done the elementary school chorus and attempted the national anthem at our fifth grade basketball game, but nothing as official as this. The four of us ended up performing Mercy by Shawn Mendes. The following year at the same talent show, we performed Wish I knew you by the Revivalists.

Shortly after the talent show in seventh grade, Aidan invited me to come sing Viva la Vida by ColdPlay, which he was planning to perform with two other boys, Hunter and Gabe, for a talent show at the Nantucket Dreamland. Of course, I jumped at the opportunity. I showed up to Aidan's house that night to rehearse, not knowing Hunter the piano player and Gabe the mandolin player. Little did I know that one rehearsal would lead me to discover my passion, meeting the greatest friends I'll ever have, and having some of the best times of my life.

After that one talent show at the Nantucket Dreamland, we went on to perform, in my opinion, the most epic middle school version of Bohemian Rhapsody by Queen, another talent show, fundraisers, parties, and so much more. We've spent hours and hours in my garage rehearsing. I've come to realize that we don't do this because we have to. We do this because we all love it. Being able to be surrounded by such talented and passionate musicians who can by the way, pretty much play any song at the drop of a hat, has been extremely rewarding, and led me to discover my passion. Throughout these past 5 years of being in this band and among other activities, I have come to realize how much I truly enjoy performing. Although I love to sing on my own for concerts and musicals, there is no better feeling than having a group of amazing musicians to back you up. Working together, creating music, belting out the notes; there is no better feeling. I constantly look back on these past 5 years and think to myself how different my life would be without all this. I will certainly never regret going to that rehearsal at Aidan's house.

Although the group talent act falling through was a bummer at the time, it has allowed me to not only discover my love for singing, but it has also brought to my attention the idea that everything happens for a reason. Not only would I have not met the most amazing people, I also would not have realized my love for performing. That brings me into the passion itself. Whether I'm singing in the shower, singing as a character in a musical, singing in chorus class, singing with the band, or singing in the car; I feel at peace. Regardless if it sounds good or bad, if it's flat or sharp, or if anyone's listening, I feel at home. Something about the notes ringing through my throat and up through my ears makes me feel like in that one moment, nothing else matters. Being able to feel this way about something is a thing I will forever cherish and be thankful for. Singing has shaped my identity.

It's the Little Things: 12th grade

Evelyn Fey

Ours is a world gone mad. The past year we have experienced massive losses caused by a global pandemic, bitter political division and racial turmoil that erupted into unspeakable violence. Yet, in the deafening commotion of the clashes, lies, propaganda and pain, I hear one voice clearly. "Appreciate the little things, Evelyn". It is my mother's voice. I realize those words have been my life long chant, my carol, the melody and hymn that causes my spirit to dance. These words uttered more times than I can count became so ingrained in my psyche, they are as much a part of me as the woman who uttered them.

I see the shells on the beach of my beloved island home of Nantucket and I stop and admire them. The prolific colorful hydrangeas and roses creeping over cottage roofs are magnificent in bloom and I am grateful. My friends and I gather on the beach often to watch sunrises and sunsets while the ocean breathes like a great sea serpent and I feel peace. Beauty is all around me and it has become a habit to take note of it and give it its

due. Loveliness and symmetry draws me in but, I have learned that the allure is not confined to the physical, it is in how we behave and think and dance through our days on this earth. My brother Gavin is dazzling. Not because he was blessed with good looks, but because of a lunch that we had in a Nashville restaurant. My brother, a stereotypical, non-conforming teenage boy, asked for his leftovers to be boxed “to go” and then proceeded to hand it over to a homeless man on the way to the car. In this moment, my brother’s goodness and kindness blazed and flared on the outside and I appreciated the spectacle for what it was; beautiful.

Ours is a world gone mad, but it is also a world that values beauty as its creator must have done, for how else does one explain the look of utter rapture on a mother's face when she holds her infant for the first time. Or the sense of renewal and hope that each sunrise brings as gold streaks across the eastern horizon. The splendor of the tiny bloom of the forget-me-not so full of abundant color, yet petite in size. The grandeur of the mountains and salty reach of the oceans tell us that our world was created to inspire us with its beauty. Like the tiny forget-me-not, its charm and delicate grace easily stepped over and bypassed, so too are countless acts performed daily by our fellow man.

The mother who works two jobs and still manages to get up and do what needs to be done for her children, the woman who's husband is dying yet she smiles at the baby in the cart behind her in line, the man who works a job he loathes years on end to provide for the family he loves; these are the little things. These are acts of beauty and grace. I have learned that beauty is transcending. It is comforting and it is everywhere. In a world gone mad, beauty tells us dear reader, that all will be well.

When Worlds Collide: 12th grade

Isabelle Moreira

At 18, I have come to realize that my parents separated for the best. The thought of them still together does not match up in my mind; it becomes a blur. I often think about the night the police came over. Their sirens continue to make me tense up and flash back to that night. I was eight years old at the time, and even now, when people begin to yell and argue with each other, I still tense up. Clearly, the divorce had a strong impact on my childhood, but no matter what happens, I know that although my parents exist in two completely different worlds, we are all still family.

For a long time, my routine was to be with my mom on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and every other weekend, and with my dad on Monday, Wednesday, and every other weekend. Gradually, I learned my parents have distinctly different ways of seeing life. My mom likes elegance and classiness. With her, it's fancy dinners, nice clothing, tablecloths, and vacation trips. With dad, it's eating Thanksgiving dinner on the living room floor and playing soccer barefoot.

Now that I'm older and can drive, that earlier routine has relaxed a bit to me being with whoever, whenever. On certain weeks, going to school has consisted of red flannel pajama pants and oversized hoodies with a bare face; on others, it has been nice jeans with a sweater and a layer of makeup. My dad always enjoys his home-cooked meals, and my mom, well, likes New York Strip Steak from Pi Pizza, or sushi from Lola 41.

Every holiday I enjoy spending time with both parents. My dad doesn't like dressing up; he enjoys being comfy in his clothes. I spend time with him in my big gray sweatpants and soft white college hoodie, or my pink oversized warm comfy with fuzzy socks. With him, everything is earlier in the day, and with my mom, everything is later on in the day. So I enjoy the beginning of the day with warm baggy clothes and messy hair, and then at 3:30, I begin to put on the yellow plaid skirt, tight brown sweater, and my velvet thigh-high boots. I begin to heat up my hair straightener to 345 degrees and apply my makeup. Those are the two different worlds I have learned to move between.

Growing up with Portuguese as my first language, I found myself in many interesting conversations where I had to switch to English so I could learn the language. Over time, the conversations with my dad become two languages in one sentence, because he took on the responsibility of teaching me English. Even today, I'll start speaking Portuguese, and he will shift us to English. At Thanksgiving, it's especially wild. All my cousins, who are all guys –and all children at heart–come over to my Dad's. My aunts (my father's sisters) take the cooking very seriously and keep guard at the kitchen door. If I even try to approach, they will stand there with their spoons and warn me: "Não entra aqui sem rede de cabelo!!!" Meanwhile, all my cousins end up planting themselves on the couch, squishing me to my last breath, and putting on soccer or football. Conversations in English quickly turn the switch to Portuguese. Later, at my mom's, it ends up becoming this whole hectic mess of loud Portuguese with my niece and nephew squeaking with their high voices in English and Portuguese.

If I could go back to the little girl who was peeking her head out the window to see the flashing blue and red lights, tears slowly inching their way down her face, panting for her breath, I would tell her, "Everything will work out for the best. They are both happy now and that is what matters. You're off to college in the fall! With your best friend! Living your best life." My parents will manage to get along and settle things about me, somehow. It will take about 15 minutes before they begin to disagree, not wanting to be next to each other. I cherish those 15 minutes where my parents are civil with one another because it makes me feel a type of peace that my inner 8-year-old yearns to feel: the time my parents are together and not arguing. Growing up with the two different ways my parents saw the world made me realize that the one thing that truly kept them together was me.

Porcelain Doll: 12th grade

Yilmin Moreno

The exterior of my being
Is as strong as concrete,
A hard unbreakable wall
Eyes shining with confidence
A kind of elegance that cannot be wavered
A smile that hides the truth behind it all.



In the interior side of all things
A fragile porcelain doll lies in silence
Cracks on her body
From all the times she's fallen,
For she's been deceived
So many times
With the ones around telling lies
Lies that once consumed her head
with such darkness,
I cried with my counterpart in silence
The negativity draining my once bright soul

I only hope
Hope for the small doll inside of me
To fix herself and realize
Only she could repair herself
Better
Than anyone else
Because she is her own toymaker.

The Spectacle of Curiosity: 12th grade

Cate Oberly

Since I was a kid I have been interested in rocks. I know that in saying that I sound like that kid you try to avoid in class. But I think I was pretty cool as a kid. In second to third grade, I would pick up a rock and smash it with a bigger rock until it was completely shattered. I might have also had anger issues as a kid but we don't talk about it. Now, this has nothing to do with who I am. I actually haven't thought of this in years. But what did shape me to be who I am is the fascination and curiosity of seeing what might be inside that rock. And to this day I still strive to have that feeling. When I was younger I used to get that feeling by not doing the smartest things I could have been doing with my time. But now the things that get my blood pumping and make me feel alive are listening to and writing music. I know you were probably thinking it was going to be some great thing, but this is one of the only things I do with my time. The fascination that developed for music was a big one. I started looking more into my life and finding things to write about, that I could sing about. I found things that meant a lot to me, things that I wanted to write and that I wanted people to hear. I stopped doing it for a while during covid, trying to just focus on school. But with that, I started learning more about the world. I would read articles on the most random stuff. For a while, I would only read about psychology, then marine biology, then the fundamentals of joke-telling. And this kept me interested and wanted to learn more. I have always been interested in the weird side of the world. This plunged me into learning after a while put me back into the light of music. I started studying music and how music on a biological level can make people feel. I kept researching and rereading and after a while, I started writing my own stories again in music. The first song I wrote after covid was a song about time, it goes like this, "Time is moving fast making things hard to remember, I'm losing my past while growing my future." Putting words like this on a page reflects how I feel about the end of high school. And how much it is affecting me. In perspective to where I am now in life and how I have chosen to live my life. I am very happy that I had that curiosity when I was so young or I probably wouldn't be who I am today. Looking to create and use my mind, and finding new ways to tell my story. I am now someone who tries to follow my dreams no matter where they take me and no matter how long it will take. I am a truly fascinated person.

Perks of The Bench: 12th Grade

Arienne Riseborough

“Sub!”

I heard the familiar voice echo across the gym. I walked off the court in shame as the crowd watched me in shame. Only silence as I made my way to the small corner. The quiet, crowded corner that I would become all too familiar with throughout that junior year season.

The first few weeks, it was heartbreakingly demoralizing to be in that awful, wretched corner. Forced to watch those around me as they were praised and accepted for their greatness and flaws. I could not understand the events around me, and fathom why they continued to occur. That season was very troubling. Standing in the corner gave me time with my thoughts. I was able to use the time to observe what was happening around me, listen to what others had to say, and understand everything that went on. I was able to reflect on myself, and understand those around me, their thoughts, and actions.

The dark, lonely corner led me to the discovery that I had a talent for watching, listening, and observing. Observing shows you the world in ways you may have never seen if you hadn't stopped to take a minute and watch. By observing you can understand what people have been through, what they're thinking, and who their true self is. You may observe someone's situation, and understand more about their opinions, personality, and lifestyle. Listening leads you to learn, remember, and reflect on your own self. You learn about people's morals, thoughts, and intentions. The simple things people say can tell a lot about themselves. You can almost always interpret people's words, and find the deeper meaning to their thoughts.

Watching and listening gives you a new perspective. You may view things differently than you ever have before. These senses push you to understand people and situations and view them for how they are. Watching and listening can change your thoughts and opinions, because you've seen and heard things you are not familiar with, and it makes you question your beliefs.

After the realization of my remarkable talent, I decided to put it to use. Nothing extraordinary happened in that gym. In the corner I just observed everything there was to be observed. My eyes and ears helped me view the crowd and everyone in that gym. I interpreted their language and actions, and was able to learn more about them. In those moments I saw each spectator, player, and coach as a special individual, each with their own background, struggles, views, and thoughts.

“Sub!”

That word haunted me each day. I knew to expect it, and all that would come with it. During those weeks, I grew to understand and come to terms with the word. I understood why the word was directed to me. I observed what led to the use of the word, and knew that it was inevitable and for the greater good of those around me. I came to see why the word was said. There were lots of frustrations during that season, and those frustrations were decided to be taken out on me. I came to see that I was viewed as disposable from the team, and was not an asset. I was not a favorite, and I understood that that was how it was going to have to be that year. I had to accept the “sub” and find a way to love, cherish, and accept the corner.

My developed skill set has, and continues, to allow me to help those around me. I see and understand what others may not. I think the experience gave me a new perspective, and helped me understand the people around me better. I came to value the power of observing and learning. They may seem like small insignificant values, but they can make the greatest difference to yourself, and the community around you.

“Sub!”

Each day that I heard that word, my soul was crushed, and my hopes were shattered like some old used glass bottle. But I am grateful, because that word gave me the opportunity to realize my talents of observation. I would have never been able to see the world as I do now without that terrible, horrid word. My personal experience led me to prioritize observing and value it greatly. The word no longer haunts me, as I now see it as a reminder of my growth, realization, and change.

No title: 12th grade

Elsy Sosa

My name is Elsy Sosa, and I am currently a senior at Nantucket High School. I have always lived on Nantucket Island with my family. I grew up in a big household with two siblings and my parents. Ever since I was younger, I have enjoyed creating colorful sketches. I would go home after a stressful day and very excitedly start using all of my markers, paint, and paint brushes to create art. I soon found that this relieved my stress and made me calm. Sketching drawings is still a powerful therapeutic tool for me today. I was always very excited to have art classes throughout my elementary to high school years. I even participated during high school in a graphic design class. I learned how to create and craft multi-dimensional images, used up-to-date software, and developed graphic design tools.

My passion for fashion came from my ambition of drawing different sketches of people and the unique expressive fashionable outfits I would create. During high school, I also took a ceramics class that had a lot of hand movements involved as well as shaping by hand. I began to watch tv shows that had to do with artistic makeup as well as models competing against each other, for example on runway shows.

Since I enjoyed the world of fashion, I wanted to become a fashion designer, however, my passion drifted from the years when I started working as a retailer for certain businesses. I felt that interacting with customers and learning about their interests was something exciting for me. Therefore I became more drawn to the business field and I understood that it was a great first step in learning about myself and the person I wanted to become. I want to be able to open a business store in a popular place and distribute amazing outfit designs.

I dedicated most of my free time to helping my small-town community by assisting at the Hospital Thrift Shop in their clothing section by pricing items and maintaining a clean store. I realized that people loved to help each other and feel welcome. I want in the future to always help my community by interacting with them not only through their interests but also by getting to know them as the small community we are.

I have been accepted at UMass Dartmouth and will be pursuing my business career. I look forward to accomplishing a bachelor's degree, especially now that I have become fascinated by owning a business.

I want the opportunity to own a business to help share more diversity in the business field. I come from a Hispanic family, therefore I want to be able to inspire future Hispanic dreamers since I come from a hard-working family that had to immigrate to the United States for a better life for me and my brothers. I hope to help motivate other families that went through the same experience and show them that although the journey is hard there is always a great opportunity to become successful. I know that many families face fear because of discrimination in the Hispanic community and feel afraid of not being able to accomplish the American dream.

I want to be a voice for the Hispanic community so that they can end up owning their own homes, have amazing careers, or create businesses for themselves. I want them to believe that there is a better future waiting for them and not give it up through all their struggles. I want to spread aspiration to women as well as give confidence to those who want to start a business. Since there are a lot of women with children they feel hopeless and scared about taking a step forward in the business field. I plan on motivating women who feel uncertain about themselves to keep trying, as well as challenging themselves, and most importantly believing in themselves.

I have always seen how my father struggled to get food on the table for us by having to work three jobs seven days a week. My father worked without rest for us to be able to have a home and shelter: and for my siblings and me to get a better education than he had as a child. My father wanted to give us a chance to excel in the future so nobody can look at us as if we were less than anybody else.

My dream now is to become the first college graduate in my family and show my father that his hard work has paid off since he has always motivated me to have a greater educational life with a great future ahead of me for that I will always admire him. I want to pursue my college degree scholarship to help me get a higher

chance of education with fewer concerns and help motivate my urge to become a college graduate in the Hispanic community.

Talkative: 12th grade

Tanjenieka Thorpe

“Tanjeneika!” My first grade teacher would call once more with the most disappointed look on her face. The entire class knew she was completely fed up with my constant chattering, and I would just stare at her sheepishly for a few minutes, fighting the urge to laugh as she begged me in a monotone voice, for the last time, to be quiet.

I have always been the talkative type. All my primary school teachers complained about it, calling my aunt every week to make a new complaint that over time she was no longer surprised by. My talkativeness never had any malicious intention; in fact, I just always felt as if I had to make a point in every conversation and so I would not stop until my classmates eventually, as always, agreed with me.

Despite my constant chatter, Miss Mckayle, my first grade teacher, had a special bond with me. She convinced me that my talking could someday make me become a journalist or a lawyer. I remember her exact words to me: “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Without hesitation, I said ‘doctor’ and she stared at me, looking right into my eyes and said, “You should be a news reporter or lawyer, because you are always talking way too much and full of arguments.” That day I went home and told my aunt. She agreed and I was not happy. My blood began to boil, because I had already planned on becoming a doctor and nothing was going to change my mind. Ever since that day, like an iron, my teachers' words have been branded in my mind.

Comprehensively, I have never struggled, not reading, not writing and even more not with grabbing attention. I credit all that to my young talking phase. However, I had a weak spot when it came to punctuation: later I realized the reason why. Sometimes I look back on that particular day when my teacher said those words to me and I realized how much I hate science and why I have no plans on ever studying another chemical molecular structure. I have also come to realize how much I enjoy expressing myself through writing, from storywriting, to letter writing and not to mention my favorite persuasive writing.

I remember every school report day when my aunt would collect my end-of-term report and no matter what other class I was failing, there were two subjects that were guaranteed to have an A+ mark: Comprehension Skills and Language Arts. I would look at my report and see the teachers' comment section expressing how disruptive I am, always talking with the most "vulgar" laugh in their class, yet, my reading and writing were above my grade level, I would just smile and look at my aunt who had the most conflicted look. She couldn't decide which was more appropriate--to be mad or proud.

Over time, my talking minimized as I grew older. Was it a case of no longer feeling encouraged with the right audience, or was it due to a need to blend in? I'm still figuring that out. I sincerely miss the talkative person that I was. Even though at times it landed me in unfortunate situations, my 'over-talking phase' is what I truly believe made me develop such a love for arts and writing. Recently, I realized that the reason I have always struggled with punctuation and ending my sentences is because I never know how to stop talking, continuously talking, not even stopping to catch a breath. That breathlessness showed a lot in my work and is something that even until this day I struggle with.

Miss Mckayle was right, science isn't for me. I used to think the only way I can help people is through being a doctor, but who knows, maybe one day my writing will change someone's life. Maybe my writing will be a daily dose of medicine that someone out in this big world yearns for. A girl can only dream big, and until then I have weighty plans of continuing to do what I love and embracing who I am. That talkative little nine-year-old girl who would give anyone an ear full before backing down, a little girl who like Elizabeth Acevedo, thinks everyone has a story, and everything is worth writing about.

Quarantine: 12th grade
Nick Feare

2020 a year many have waited for,
Not to special of course just a year
With repeating digits that is.
2020.
Like 2020 perfect vision
Nothing can possibly go -
Wrong 2020 was anything but 20/20
A year full of
Debate
Uncertainty
Change
And most importantly isolation.

A sci-fi movie on repeat.
A seemingly never ending problem.
March 2020, The First Wave
A Lot of firsts.
First Quarantine
A Record Breaking year for unforeseen temporary school closures.
But within all of that,
A little beacon of hope.
A Few weeks in, that beacon of hope was completely diminished.
Once seen as a vacation for many students.
Is now seen as torture.
Logging in every morning feeling that artificial light hit your face.
Something that became routine.
It was a time of social deprivation.
It was proved now more than ever that we as human beings require social interaction to stay mentally okay.
But at the same I would remember hitting the join button on Google Meets and seeing the white screen turn to a dark gray.
Icons but no faces.
Microphones but no audio transmission.
Only the occasional and unintentional mumbling.
Or the welcoming voice of the teacher.
This way it remained.
Day In.
Day Out.