

FIRST PRIZE

Summer Waltz

We are the petals
Dancing through a summer minuet
As the summer's wrath is flung into a chorus
Of moonlight and sunshine

The drums of our hearts
Beat to the rhythm of the flowers
As their scent echoes through
The fields

The willow trees
Sway to our silent music
The kaleidoscope of colours
Swirls into a sea of white clouds

The nights of endless starlight
Dwindle in the dying time
And as we draw closer to an encroaching winter
The performers dance with renewed vengeance

The leaves are the keys to our piano
The tall grass is the strings to our violins
The earth is the skin to our drums
The flowers are the voices to our throats

Dragonflies flutter through the notes
And cotton sweeps the air
Carrying the music
Upon its back

But now we are the autumn leaves
Thrust into the river
Slow dancing to last July's
Endless harmonies

Distant and broken in our sunken breath
We long for the delicate choirs
That call us back to a
Summer waltz

by Dana Inglis (Grade Nine)
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FIRST PRIZE

Apple of My Eye

The sweet stench of ripened apples fills the evening air
Fallen, decaying fruit is strewn across the ground
Tree branches sway in the breeze and autumn leaves tangle themselves in my hair
Before I exit the apple orchard, I pause and take a final look around
I spot it out of the corner of my eye
The fruit's shiny surface gleams like a diamond in the setting sun
A perfect, intensely red apple is nestled in the branches of a tree closest to the sky
Never have I seen an apple that compares with this one
Not a scratch, nor a bruise is anywhere in sight
I can practically taste its sweet juices and I long to take a bite

My fingers just brush the apple's flawless skin as my hand grapples among the fruits
But I cannot reach the apple, so I resort to the only option left to me
I place my hand on a sturdy branch and remove my muddy rain boots
My nails scrape the bark of the trunk as I claw my way up the tree
The branches groan beneath my weight as I ascend higher
Apples plummet down to join the rotting fruit scattered on the ground
I'm quickly nearing the flawless apple I so desire
Suddenly, I hear an alarming sound
A sharp noise like the crack of a whip echoes through my ears
Branches snap as I tumble downwards and my eyes fill with tears

I attempt to wrap my arms around the trunk, but to no avail
I am terrified of landing and pray to remain aloft
I'm rapidly nearing the ground as my arms and legs flail
A scream escapes my lips and pierces the air, but my landing is surprisingly soft
Warm, strong arms surround me and I look up to meet the gaze of my saviour
My father's eyes dance with colour as he smiles down at me
I am surprised he doesn't reprimand me for my foolish behaviour
Instead he lifts me up until I'm level with the top of the tree
I reach out a hand and finally grasp the superb fruit dangling way up high
A grin spreads across my face as I take a bite from the apple of my eye

by Sophia Mannina (Grade Ten)
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Tecumseh, Ontario



FIRST PRIZE

Catalepsy

Swaying, swishing, scratching,
the trees grabbed me
as I ran through the cold winter forest.
Alone for the first time,
I caught my breath amid the rotting leaves.

The cold air, assaulting my torn running shoes,
left my body trembling.
I scanned the area around me for a dry place to rest;
it felt as if I had been running for days—
running from my obligations.

I sat there on the cold ground for hours
in a daze; until I sensed life
coming from behind the small dead tree.
A fawn peeked out,
making eye contact with me,
my gaze sending it right back.

Over the next hours,
I focused on being still, drawing the young deer closer to me.
I admired its beauty;
not many things seemed beautiful to me anymore.

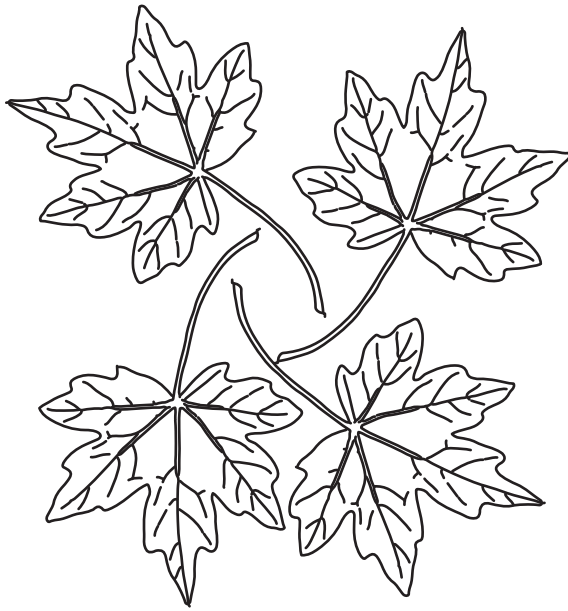
I was in catalepsy;
my gaze couldn't have been broken by anything
other than a bullet flying straight into the fawn's torso.
I looked up to see a dark man standing above me;
the smell of gunpowder was overwhelming.

I had wondered how long he had been watching me;
and why he would take a living being's life.
Instead of asking I sat in silence,
questioning the magnificence of life.

I marvelled how something so beautiful
could vanish so quickly.

by Shelby Ibbotson (Grade Eleven)
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Shawnigan Lake, British Columbia





FIRST PRIZE

Variations of Red

It should've been easy, when she handed me that map
And said, "Draw yourself. Where are you?"
But I didn't know how, because how can you draw yourself
Across two hemispheres?
If your heart can't be in two places at once
The natural conclusion is you are in one place at once
Because I was young, and I didn't understand.

So I began to wonder, and the more I thought the less I thought
Until everything became a blur of red. Not the same red.
I ran to my backyard and stood under our maple tree,
And then I knew home lay under my feet.

It was hard at first, to add *eh* to the end of every sentence.
It was hard at first, to learn to figure skate,
Because if not hockey I thought Canada demanded of
Her children to skate some other way.

Then one day my cousin called from across an ocean
Where she went to school from seven to seven.
With weary folds under wistful eyes she said to me,
"You're so lucky."

But I didn't feel lucky anymore, because suddenly I saw
Our great wall and I was trapped on the wrong side.
My voice called out in English, yet my thoughts echoed in Mandarin,
And I knew home was across a great divide.

My little bamboo shoot was wilting in the shadows
When I moved it into the sun, away from my maple tree.
Chrysanthemum tea burned its way down my throat,
But I thought, *This is who I was born to be.*

Then one day I saw two flags side by side, the maple leaf
Saluting five golden stars, and everything blurred
Until the red of ambition blended with the red of tradition,
And when I opened my eyes, they were one and the same.
I found me.

by Claire Chen (Grade Twelve)
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Toronto, Ontario



SECOND PRIZE

Anxiety

Wake up
Try to breathe
His hands are around my neck
No air

His grip loosens
He backs away
Allows me to go to school

But he is still there
Hiding
Waiting to strike

He follows me
I'm crushed under his weight
My lungs gasping for what isn't there
My heart sinks

He drags me around
I tell him we aren't friends
I don't need him

I think for a second maybe he will leave
Release me from his hold
Of trembling hands and numb skin
Of dizziness and dry lips . . .

But he looks at me with his dark eyes
And tells me we aren't done yet

by Emily Aronoff (Grade Nine)
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SECOND PRIZE

Let Me Pretend

Give me a moment, a fraction of my days;
Stop the blaze of despair, let it fade.
Let me believe I can escape my fate;
Please, just this once, let me pretend.

Let me pretend I am powerful,
On top of the world;
So I can stop the foes,
To save the bleeding souls.

Let me pretend I am still young,
With dreams so beautifully far flung.
Let me run and dance and sing and laugh,
Before life its cruel fangs does flash.

Let me pretend I am careless,
Like a lost worksheet in the wind;
Before I fall, crumpled and shattered,
Left there alone to face my sins.

Let me pretend I am in paradise,
Finally catching happiness in its flight;
Let me know I'm in a safe place,
Where no one suffocates with hate.

Just let me pretend I am not so afraid.

by Katherine Zhang (Grade Ten)
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Richmond, British Columbia



SECOND PRIZE

Destination

I sit . . . *tap-tap-tap* goes my foot and along with it the clock.
Unfortunate, the fact the clock won't tick faster if I tap my foot so
I play her music over and over and over in my head
and still, *tap-tap-tap*, my foot continues its thoughtless rhythm.
Voices around me fade in and out as I focus on the soft tick of the clock.
This torturous, tedious, terrible, tiresome, time-wasting mental trek is almost at its end,
but still, *tap-tap-tap* goes my foot along with the second hand of the clock,
waiting for the bell.

I walk . . . *click-click-click* go my feet and along with them the beat of my music.
Interesting, the fact the music and my feet seem caught in carbon-copy cadences.
I go through my day over and over and over in my head
and still, *click-click-click*, my feet continue their casual pattern.
People around me fade in and out of my awareness as I listen to the canter of my music.
This common curious crowded seemingly counterfeit commotion is almost at its end,
but still, *click-click-click* go my feet along with the music's melody
approaching the destination.

I sigh . . . *beep-beep-beep* goes the machine along with her heartbeats.
Comforting, the fact the beeps are made to match her heart.
I watch her accident over and over and over in my head
and still, *beep-beep-beep* continues the machine in precise beats.
The commotion around me fades from importance as I watch her chest rise and fall.
This basic boring bleakly burdening basis of my befuddled borderline blameworthiness
rests . . .
and I let her.

by Jocelyn Harper (Grade Eleven)
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SECOND PRIZE

Train Me for the Skies

Train me on a Lancaster
So I can take upon Mynarski's wings
And shadow the infantry down below
For peace I hope to bring

Teach me to fly slow
So my gunners's fire will strike
Victory goes not unheard
There are no two victors alike

Educate me in achieving high speeds
So I may break the speed of sound
For those who fight, once fought a battle
To live a life unbound

Instruct, I shall instruct
To furnish knowledge in command
New recruits will not strike dumb
They speak the skies, sea, and land

Prithee, allow me to fly
So I can patrol or raid from the air
And drop bombs or survey enemies
Educate me to fly aware

I beg you to let me takeoff
I shall be a pilot devoted to Alpha
With passion, poise, and perseverance
Teach me to fight battles of Gomorrah

I promise if you let me soar
Lest we forget who we once were
I shall fight for peace—freedom and peace
Train me on a Lancaster

by Ana Alarcón (Grade Twelve)
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Kenora, Ontario



THIRD PRIZE

My Polar Bears

I used to watch them play and frolic in the snow
I used to watch them laughing about how they didn't even know
I used to watch my polar bears, a mother and a son
I used to watch them, wishing I could join them in the fun

My polar bears would come back here every evening at five
And I knew they would always come, so long as they were alive
I knew my polar bears well, though they did not know me
Because I hid behind a snowdrift so as not to be seen

Then one day I went and hid behind my drift of snow
I waited and waited until I had to go
And on the way back to my cabin, I wondered to myself
What happened to my polar bears? The ice has yet to melt
They shouldn't have left me yet and travelled far away
I want my polar bears back, I want them back today

So the next day I set out and travelled everywhere
Until I found the footprints of my big white polar bears
I followed the footprints on the trail where they led
Until I saw the scavenger birds circling up ahead

Faster and faster I ran on the ice
Slipping and sliding and falling with fright
This couldn't be true, I refused to believe
My polar bears could never leave
But when I finally did reach the top of that hill
I saw two lumps of fur lying still

There in the tundras, in the great white plain
I realized my polar bears would never play again

by Camryn Trenholm (Grade Nine)
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THIRD PRIZE

The Swing

The rickety swing shook lightly as she sat down upon it
The girl whose raven hair rustled gently with the wind
And a porcelain face that rivalled the day's snow in vestal whiteness
The words fell so elegantly from her lips as we spoke
And formed rhythms to which I wanted to dance with her
We could not control our laughter
As we watched the snow twirl around us
And the trees whistle without a tune to follow
Time flew like warbling cardinals
Just like that, life's path ahead was foggy
And though we held our hands through it all
We somehow lost each other in the haze
I made the rest of the journey alone
Moving slowly, weighed down by my leaden heart
Eventually, I escaped the mist, but felt no sense of accomplishment
Because she was not there with me to enjoy it
I would trek back and forth along that path day after day
Sitting on the swing, even more worn than before
Perhaps having tied others' red strings together since then
Had it forgotten us? Had she forgotten me?
I would look up and admire the sun, the moon, the clouds, the rain, the snow
Waiting for the rusty chains to quiver
But alas, it was always just the wind
I opened a small, aged box and smiled at its contents
A grainy photo of us just below a dirty mirror under the lid
I ran my thumb across it, relishing in the grooves created by time
But would rather have had it touching her cheek
A tear cascaded downward and landed on the filthy glass
I wiped it away vehemently, wanting at least one memory of her to be pristine
A girl so beautiful as the night looked back at me with a smile
The rickety swing shook lightly as she sat upon it
And we could not control our laughter

by *Gianna Giovio-Canavesi* (Grade Ten)

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Oakville, Ontario



THIRD PRIZE

Appreciate

I always try to put myself out as a strong person,
But sometimes, I don't want to be strong;
I want to run,
I want to hide,
I want to cry,
And I never want to say goodbye.

Sometimes I feel all alone,
Like no one can hear me scream,
Like life's just a brief, sweet dream,
And I don't want to wake up;
Some days, I don't want to get out of bed.

I feel like there's no one I can tell;
How can you tell your friends you're worried you won't miss them when they're gone?
How do you tell your parents you're worried one day you'll look in the mirror and see them?
You don't.
You can't.

But I know they're there.
I know they care.
They love me when I get upset and want to be alone,
And they think of all the good times we had, not the bad ones.
And I know I can always go back to them and tell them about my problems.
And I know I always love listening to their problems.

I think I should thank them,
Everyone who stands by me.
I should stand by them,
And be the friend they are,
And love them like they love me.

How can you tell your friends you're worried you won't miss them when they're gone?
How do you tell your parents you're worried one day you'll look in the mirror and see them?
You don't.
You tell them you love them.

by Sam Bean (Grade Eleven)
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THIRD PRIZE

The Bookstore

Down a thin street filled with malnourished lives
Is a shop owned by no one, selling power immense
The gamblers who enter thrust their hands in fat hives
Swapping their here-now for adventure's incense

It's the only bookstore south of Logic and Fact
Where the homeless drape their thin frames in dust jackets
Here the starving unite to gorge feasts of prose lacked
And the scab-lipped get drug-induced thrills from wood packets

The blindness of books is a beauty-cloaked gift
For the crippled may dance while the mute hum and sing
But to touch such a land, through cobwebbed plains they must sift
Grazing true love, breathless chase, Phoenix's flaming wing

No other store sells wares of such unearthly taste
Pity the souls who breeze by in blind haste

by Julia Galt (Grade Twelve)
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