

# THE OUTLET



Spring  
2020

Warwick High School Literary Magazine

## COLOPHON

### Editorial Philosophy:

The Outlet seek to create an outlet for people to plug in their creativity. Within writing, Spring often equates to birth and the beginning of things, and so with this being the first theme of the Outlet, it is the birth and beginning of the Literary Magazine at Warwick High School.

### Submission Policy:

We accept submissions through Google classroom and in print in Mr. Huberdeau's room. We give careful consideration to all submissions and accept high quality work that best gives people an outlet for their creativity.

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### Thank You:

All our authors and artists who submitted, all Warwick High School teachers who helped us promote, Mr. Huberdeau, Ms. Marcolini, our new readers, and the Warwick High School administration.

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Standing on the Edge  
by Rachel Anthony

I stood on the edge of the cold water ready to cast my fishing rod. My intentions were to catch the biggest fish. I moved the fishing rod at ten and two and launched the hook as far as I could into the water; it created ripples which moved across the water in its circular waves. I stared at the bobber which was floating in the water. The slow movement of the current going in different directions created an optical illusion. Staring at it, I began to think about all the things that were happening in my life; there were happy and painful things. I wondered why those things were happening; was it something I did in the past that made this scenario come to be? Was there something I could have done to forbid these things from happening?

The thoughts flitted through my mind. Some of the things happening made me wish I could choose a different path. But then another thought told me I was happy with the things I'm involved in, such as the school I'm attending, and the people I know. However, the darker events: I wanted nothing to do with them. And with the already confusing thoughts, another came along. I wasn't the happiest with myself. I'm just a timid, quiet and sweet girl. But I won't lie; I can be a little mean too. I always get mad at whatever I do. I often think I could do whatever I just did better.

Suddenly, I snapped out of the trance and looked at my bobber. It was not where it was before, it was now closer to the shore. I reeled it back in so I could re-cast it, but when I did, I noticed the worm was gone. I stared at it and made an

annoyed face. My deep thoughts distracted me from fishing. So, I carefully walked back to my teacher to ask for another worm because I wasn't about to touch one. I walked over to the picnic table where he was sitting and without me saying a word he began to put a worm on the hook.

He asked me what I was thinking about while I was waiting for a fish to bite. To be able to explain my thoughts was a bit overwhelming to me. Annoyingly, I began to tear up. I tried my best to fight them, but I couldn't. He asked me if I wanted to talk about it, and honestly I did. I was hoping I could get some advice so these thoughts wouldn't bother me.

I explained to him what I was thinking about. I told him first off I was embarrassed about crying and apologized. I always apologize for things that don't require an apology. I also vaguely explained the depressing thoughts which made me cry. I then explained that I beat myself up mentally over everything that I do. We talked for a while. He said a lot, but one thing stuck with me. He asked me what I would say to someone if they told me that they beat themselves up over what they do. That made all the other thoughts cease, and that was all I could think of. I didn't really know what I would tell someone.

After he applied the worm to the hook, I again carefully walked up to the edge of the water. I recast my rod, however, this time it didn't fly as far into the water as I had hoped. Normally I would criticize myself for not doing it right, but now I told myself, "Is the world going to end because you didn't cast it right? Is everyone going to remember you as the one who couldn't fish?" So, to answer that question, I just shrugged my shoulders and accepted it. I did the best I could, and that's what matters.

I went back to my earlier thoughts to give an answer to them. Our choices make us who we are. Would I change myself? Never. Do I wish I could have chosen a different path? No, I love the things I'm associated with. I love the school I'm attending and the friends I have. There are things that happen in life that I can't prevent, but of course, that's life. Things will happen that you won't like, but they challenge us and help us become better people. There are others around us that may be going through the same things, so if you have a lot of things on your mind, don't be too afraid to open up a little and maybe they will have some inspiring words to get you through it. Overall in my fishing trip, I learned a lot about myself. And since I wasn't too shy and opened up a bit, I got some simple words of advice which I took to a deeper meaning and helped myself change.

Cliff Hanger  
by Kierstin Stuckey

So I'm walking around things,  
Observing my surroundings,  
When I come across a cliff.

I have an idea,  
I muster up courage,  
and then my body takes lift.

As I plummet to my death,  
I am holding my breath,  
hoping someone will save me.

Then I hit the ground,  
safe and sound,  
questioning my safety.

How I am not a splat on the ground?  
I am still alive after that fall?

Oh wait I say,  
as I walk away,  
the cliff was only three feet tall.

I guess that means I'm safe after all.

Mother Nature's Song  
by Madeline Sawyer

Bouncing around like a balloon  
I skip as if I'm a feather  
The birds, they sing, the birds, they soar  
And watch the blooming heather

The petals dance around in spirals  
As butterflies join in  
The sun shines bright through the blue sky  
And reflects across the ocean

The forest's sounds are melodies  
That only some can hear  
Now let Mother Nature hold you close  
She'll keep you safe, my dear

I laugh and smile, splash in mud puddles  
The calming scent of late spring  
A dew drop, winter's lonely tear  
The wind begins to sing

Lover's Horizon  
By Austin McGhee

My fingers and toes mesh well with the warm sand. An aura of happiness surrounds me. The water is calm, the weather is fair, and sounds of chatter and laughter fill my ears. People of all ages are enjoying the fine day by indulging in the various activities that the beach has to offer.

But I am too overwhelmed to force a smile on my face. This is my first time visiting the seashore since I was a hopeless teenager. It was on this day four years ago when the only one I truly loved descended into the depths of the free world, never to be seen by me again.

I feared that day was coming, although I never envisioned it being as painful as it was. All I wanted to do was enjoy being in his presence that day; that seemed all but inevitable. I awaited the arrival of Ameer's 2006 Ford Escape while I sat on the steps outside of my house. The breeze made it chilly, so I wrapped myself with my grey hoodie. The truck pulled up as the wind grew stronger. I climbed inside to see the disappointment written all over his face.

It didn't take long for the gloomy atmosphere to consume me. It felt like an arrow struck directly into my spine. Ameer told me that we had to break up. His family uncovered some facts about our secret relationship, and threatened to kick him out if he did not break up with me. If he complied, they were going to sign him up for conversion therapy and send him to a private school for Baptists. I was more than grateful that he was able to do his deed in person, but it did no better to help mend the growing hole in my heart.

He drove us down by the shoreline just as the sun was going down. When we got there, I took a glimpse at my watch. 7:39.

Tears quickly began to fill my eyes, but I held them back. I had to be strong for him.

A sudden feeling of disbelief rushed through my body. I couldn't fathom the fact that I poured my heart out to Ameer just to lose him. He was my first boyfriend... he was the first and only one I've ever fallen deeply in love with. This was because he was the only one who understood me. Never had I met someone who could relate to my experiences. He helped me become more comfortable with myself. No one had ever shown me such affection, let alone attention.

He was willing to keep our relationship discreet until we were ready to come out to our families. The last thing I wanted was for him to leave me.

The sun was slowly but surely setting. Any beams of light left in the sky was all the hope I had left... any hope I had to make this work. But it was not feasible. What could I do? Could I lash out at his mom for threatening to punish her only son with homelessness? Or could I explain to his father that his religious beliefs were tolerable until it meant that his son was forced to follow the heterosexual norm?

I looked at Ameer; he wore his distress on his sleeve. The last ray of sunshine hit his face, and I saw the streaks of tears rolling down his cheeks. I grabbed his hand and felt his sweaty palm. When we locked eyes, I saw nothing but dying spirits. His soul was filled with pain and misery, agony and desperation. He was ten times more hurt by this than I was.

My watch beeped at the top of the hour, and the beach was then closed. He glanced over at me one last time before shifting his gear into reverse. It finally dawned on me that we sat in silence for just over 20 minutes while the sun disappeared over the horizon.

It was a star that took its place. I wished upon it, hoping that Ameer and I could dash across the water and head straight for paradise.

Nostalgia  
by Austin McGhee

Remember the first time you brought me to the seashore? That day, July 26 of last year, is a day that will live in retrospection. You told your mom that you were going to study at a friend's house, and as peculiar as it seemed she believed you.

The sky was blanketed with grey clouds threatening to let all hell break loose. But you didn't care... you said you had a surprise for me - one that was worth the risk of getting wet. And quite frankly I believed you.

We talked during the entire ride... about anything and everything. The two of us snickered back and forth about Principal Shepherd's bad hair day and how an elderly woman dropped her snow cone at Joe's Ice Cream Parlor the week prior. Remember how you nearly lost control of the steering wheel because you were laughing so hard? It took an endless amount of time for you to regain control of yourself. When you did, you said, "Moments like this are what we live for."

Remember how dumbfounded I was when we reached the waterside? I stepped out of the truck and saw nothing but the sand and the sea. You walked up beside me only to be met with a puzzled look.

"What?" you said grinning.

"So... the surprise?"

"Are you blind?" you asked jokingly, "it's right in front of you."

I gazed in confusion, wondering what was so special about the big, blue body of water that was only washing ashore as it usually does. Fortunately, you noticed my lasting perplexity.

"Still confused?" you asked, and I nodded instantly. "I suppose you need the full scope then."

"Huh? What do you mean?"

"Take off your shoes and follow me." Before I could question you once more, you slowly drifted towards the ocean. I unlaced my pair of black Chuck Taylor All-Stars and took off my socks promptly. The sand still felt warm reluctantly, but the rushing waves contracted that feeling once I stepped close enough.

Remember how astonished I was? You pointed towards the gloomy horizon in the distance. Showers were carelessly pouring from the heavens, creating an oddly satisfying appearance.

But baby it wasn't just the seemingly awkward allurements that caught my attention. It was you. You were blown away by Mother Nature's somber beauty... her depression in the face of happiness. It didn't seem right; it didn't seem like you. Why would a person who's so passionate be so in love with the darker sides of life. I chuckled when I thought of it that way.

Remember when Zeus finally succeeded in his quest to find land? He brought a steady rainfall that began to saturate us the longer we stood motionless. I looked at you... and you looked at me, a genuine smirk on your face.

"Wanna head back to the truck?" you asked.

"No," I said, "moments like this are what we live for, remember?"

Your smile widened and your right hand locked with my left. It wasn't until you leaned into kiss me when I finally got to experience what it meant not only to live, but to love.

"Jackson..." Ameer said, snapping me out of my reminiscence. I turned to face him, a look of determination on his face.

"We're here," he said, directing my attention to the house to the right.

His home.

Heart over Head  
by Madeline Sawyer

Boom, boom, boom  
My heart beats loudly  
Like the smacking of drums  
And the pounding of my foot  
As it

Taps, taps, taps  
On the floor as I'm thinking  
Shake these feelings that consume me  
Thoughts that continue spinning  
Sound like

Swoosh, swoosh, swoosh  
In my mind it never ends  
Interlock your fingers in my hands  
And let us kiss



The Path of Tomorrow  
by Rachel Anthony

The soft, pale sand sinks beneath my shoes as I gaze at the empty and darkened path. This path which stretches out before me, looks as if it has never been traveled on before, yet many students have already embarked on their own journey using the same trail. I myself, am waiting for my own cue to go. The anticipation to begin overwhelms me, and overshadows the uncertainty of what lies ahead.

Our instructions were to follow the sand path lined with a few brightly glowing glow sticks. Despite their brightness, only a small surrounding area was illuminated. We were instructed to follow this path to where one of our teachers awaited our arrival. This trail however, was to be traversed alone and without a true beacon to guide me.

Eventually, I received my signal to go, and immediately all my confidence and excitement was blown away by the cool breeze. The wondrous, elegant live oaks which had welcomed me in the light now towered over me, twisting into evil looking forms. I saw now the daunting scrubby oaks around me, and the dunes of sand that marked the path. The flora all around created illusions, such as what looked like eyes staring me down with no good intentions. I then recalled what we had seen earlier: mouse and snake tracks, and some giant wolf spiders!

I trembled with fear—fear that was fueled by the feeling that someone or something was out to get me. I was uncertain how much longer my mind could handle the cloud of loneliness and darkness. So, to relieve it sooner, I began to run.

The sand under me made my feet sink and slip with every step, challenging my muscles to work harder. The ever constant sinking of the sand caused me to tire out much quicker than I initially anticipated, and I failed to shake the thought out of my mind that what I was doing was ultimately fruitless. I stopped, gasping with either exertion or fear. I had no choice but to reduce my speed down to a walking pace.

I panted as I swiveled my head around to see what was behind me. But why did I bother? I could see nothing but a dull, fuzzy outline of the landscape. Anything could be stalking me, ready to pounce, and I wouldn't know. This uncertainty of what could be inching closer to me, or what was to come, was my true underlying fear; the thing that had been disturbing me this entire time.

So what should I do? I am alone, and in darkness. I am unable to go and ask for assistance now. It pains me to be in this solitude, and to have no shoulder nearby to rest on or a simple light to guide me. All alone, I could only think of the worst. I didn't consider relaxing or telling myself it'll be okay. It seemed pointless to tell myself that, for I think if it is from me, it means nothing.

As I continued to walk I stared at the black abyss that was the sky now. Fear had consumed me; the cool breeze whooshed by with malicious laughter. The finish line however, did finally reveal itself. The final glowstick signified the end of this seemingly interminable path. I was welcomed by my teacher and those who had already completed their trip. The fear that clouded me washed away quicker than a wave taking the sand from the shore. I smiled with relief, and was overjoyed that I hadn't given up.

I glanced back at the blackened path, the chill of loneliness still lingered. But I made it through; I made it through the storm of loneliness and fear. Why though? How did I make it through? I assumed the pain and dread of being alone was enough to push me over the edge of what I thought was possible. I knew that deep down I didn't want to be alone, and I recognized that if I continued going, I would eventually find the group.

Once our group was finally reunited, we mounted our bikes once more for the day. We pedaled back to camp, each of us processing the experience of navigating the darkness alone. This journey had concluded our final night in the Outdoor English class. The sublime wilderness was full of adventure and discovery. With that in mind, I slept that night in the tent, keeping the ocean, the biking, and the path in mind. I smiled as the few warm tears rolled down my cheek.

So, why does that matter? It matters much, for we will all encounter and be met with those lonely times throughout life. The golden brown leaves and the pale sand will not be the same every time I come, for they will change with the seasons and the breeze that comes through.

The waves will splash on the dark shore joyously. The laughter from the seagulls will fill the air. The shells will glisten once again, and that sandy path will be traveled with many different stories. The darkness will not last forever. You have to push through to see the sun rise, and once you do, it is unforgettable.

Saddened yet refreshed, I have no regrets. I think about my journeys often. I wholeheartedly thank the outdoors for letting me sit on its beach, and walk on its challenging path. It has forged the person that I am today. As I look back on

what I leave behind, I am surprised to find myself smiling with joy, and not overcome by sadness.

I cannot urge people enough, to simply step outside and sit. The beach we hiked at False Cape State Park was the wildest beach I have ever seen, yet I found my place in it. Honestly, I wish I had done this all sooner. Everything I learned these past years was connected to the outdoors. I thought I could only learn from others, but in nature I found what I could learn from within. I will find my way to you as often as I can, for you taught me, put me back together when I was broken, and walked with me even when I felt I was truly alone.



Sister  
by Madeline Sawyer

Like arms they stretch and hold me tight  
I crawl up into our tall tree  
They do not break for they are strong  
My older sister holds me

She's very old, but full of health  
I bet you'd never guess  
That she isn't even human  
Beautiful multicolored dress

Her leaves, they cover her, branch by branch  
Her roots, she stands up strong  
The animals come play with her  
Small birds perched on her arm

And the Bell Didn't Ring  
by Caroline Gorman

*For Mr. Garner and Mr. Reynolds - Thank you.*

It was cold that day. That's what she could remember. It was cold, but the bookshop exploded with warmth when she walked inside.

It was a cold day in January. The bookshop, crammed to its capacity with endless volumes of Austen, Twain, Yeats, Shakespeare, Dickens, and Poe, was bursting at the seams. The Victoria Waverly Bookshop's motto was, "We are always full, but there is always room," and that's how Lorna ran it.

Lorna and Jesse Pritchard, brother and sister, brown of hair, conducted the business of the Victoria Waverly Bookshop with pride and esteem. The Victoria Waverly was their baby, their prized possession, and they kept it running day and night, always dusting here and shining there. William, the siblings' younger employee, took great satisfaction from his work, and provided the shop with its gem and crowning glory: the bell.

It was a miniature replica of the seventh carillon in the Kirk of St. Nicholas in Aberdeen, and it hung from the window above the coat rack in tiny humility. It was a special bell, a bell that never rang in any order, or at any designated time. It seemed to ring only for itself, of its own accord, sometimes rapidly and multiple times, and sometimes quietly and simply. That's because this bell had a secret, a secret that only the Pritchard siblings knew, and would never tell. They kept it with knowing smiles and a single finger to the lips as if to silence themselves for fear of spoiling such an invigorating knowledge. Not even William was permitted to know, it was kept hidden, and contently so.

The shop, each day, was filled with the aimless twinkling of the bell, sparkling in the sun and chiming happily throughout the day. Customers came and went, passing through the endless, endless rows of books, stacks of books, miles of books. The shop smelled like paper, a reader's favorite scent. It smelled like a crackling wood fire, the scent of home and comfort. The shop smelled like earth, a quiet and simple scent for the ones who find peace in a corner, between pages.

One day, the shop changed, and was never the same again. What made it so began many, many years ago...

Richard came in often, a favorite customer. He ranked above other customers because he wasn't just a customer, he was a *regular*.

Every time he entered the shop, smiles grew wider, lights grew brighter, and the books seemed to shuffle excitedly on the shelves, hoping he'd pick them up and read them to entertain himself.

"Hello, Richard," said Lorna cheerfully, "How is Daisy?"

- *ring!*

"Well as always, Lorna," Richard replied with a grin.

- *ring!*

"Richard, hello," Jesse said, swinging around the corner.

- *ring!*

"I've got something new for you."

Lorna handed Jesse a book, its spine not yet bent, and Jesse presented it to Richard.

- *ring!*

"It's a Catherine Wood novella" - *ring!* - "by a young lady from Andover. An excellent and riveting title, just finished it myself."

- *ring!*

"Thank you, Jesse. Thank you, Lorna,"

- *ring!*

"I'm thrilled to borrow it."

"Nonsense!", Lorna cried.

- *ring!*

"It is on us, a gift from the Victoria Waverly to you."

"Oh, but I couldn't-"

- *ring!*

"You must, you are our best customer."

- *ring!*

"Indeed," Jesse chimed in, "You keep this shop alive."

- *ring!*

"Well, if you insist," Richard replied, beaming.

He clutched the book close to his heart, and the Pritchards could see the joy in his eyes. He was their favorite customer, and for good reasons.

- *ring!*

Then, a sad look crept across the face of Richard.

"I'm afraid I've come to tell you that I won't be coming back for a long while. Possibly... a very long while."

The Pritchard siblings stared at him, as if hoping to believe they'd merely imagined the words just uttered to them.

"You can't mean that, Richard," Jesse protested, "You're one of us. You're practically a Pritchard yourself. Your name is a part of ours, Richard. You can't mean to go."

- *ring!*

Richard nodded solemnly and scratched the back of his head. "I'm sorry to go, I wish I didn't have to, but Daisy's sister has fallen ill, and she needs our care."

Lorna drew in a sharp breath. "You mean Maxine? She's ill?"

- ring!

"No," Richard replied, shaking his head, "Not Maxine, she's in Paris permanently, sending money for the expenses, otherwise she'd have come. No, it's Daisy's younger sister, Loreena. She's a frail thing, only fourteen. We worry that..."

He drew in a troubled breath. "The doctor says that her heart was weakened by her childhood bout of scarlet fever, and she only barely survived that. Now, she's worse off."

The bookshop seemed to grow cold and silent as Richard uttered the mercenary's name.

"Typhoid."

Lorna gasped and held a hand to her chest, as if to ensure her heart did not stop beating.

"Dear Lord," she murmured.

Jesse asked, "I see then that you must go, you must go at once. Tell us, is there anything we can do? Is there any way we can help?"

Richard gave a weak smile, placing a hand on Jesse's shoulder. "No, thank you Jesse. You've done enough for Daisy and for me. I'm afraid this is the only compensation I can offer."

From his waist jacket, Richard drew a small sparkling item.

- ring!

"A pocketwatch?" Lorna said.

Richard nodded. "If the watch stops and I still have not returned, write a book for me."

- ring!

"Richard?"

Giving a knowing smile, he said, "Perhaps, one day, an idea will reveal itself to you. You run a bookshop, so fill it with something of your own."

- ring!

Jesse took the watch with both hands and said, "Thank you, Richard."

A glistening tear slipping down her face, Lorna embraced her friend, saying, "You and Daisy take care of yourselves. We'll miss you so dearly."

Richard nodded, saying, "Thank you, Lorna. You and Jesse will also be greatly missed."

"Write to us, won't you, Richard?" Jesse said, "We must know how you and Daisy and little Loreena fare."

"Say you will," Lorna pleaded, "If you didn't we could never bear your absence."

- ring!

With a hand on the shoulder of each Pritchard, Richard said, "I promise I will write as often as time will spare me. Please, promise me one thing."

"Do tell us," Lorna said.

Richard bent down and brought the sibling's heads close to his, whispering, "Never, ever, let the Victoria Waverly's doors close."

The brother and sister glanced at each other and nodded in firm agreement.

Richard said, "Now, my friends, it is time for me to go. Say you will remember me, I would so despise being forgotten."

"We could never forget you, Richard," Lorna whimpered.

Jesse said, "Our shop will not be the same without you, but we and William will see to it that it will always remain open."



Richard nodded, taking his hat and coat from the rack, and sparing a glance upward.

"And blessed be that bell, let it forever maintain its esteem."

And so, Richard left, and the bell didn't ring.

The day was cold. That's what she remembered.

Lorna stood by the window, the letter crushed in her quivering hands.

Lorna and Jesse Pritchard, brother and sister, brown of hair, stared at the small section of paper addressed, *To the Owners and Operators of the Victoria Waverly Bookshop*.

William had delivered the letter to their hands, in addition to the Catherine Wood novella, blissfully unaware of the news it contained.

"Read it, Jesse," Lorna whimpered, passing the letter to her brother, holding the long-frozen pocketwatch in her hand.

Jesse took a deep breath and read aloud,

*To the Pritchards of Limerick Street:*

*And so, I am alone. Loreena gone, Richard has followed.*

*We wish you well,*

*Daisy*

From the window above the coat rack, there was a gentle tinkling sound, one not heard for many, many years.

And the Pritchards watched as their beautiful bell, the pride and joy of the Victoria Waverly, fell to the ground with a nearly inaudible *clink*, one that gripped the breath of its owners in a tight grasp.

Lorna reached down and took it in her small hands, and cried at the sight of the unsightly crack, cutting down through the precious bell.

Jesse placed his arm around his sister as she cried, and he said, "It's time for the book. It's earned its place now."

Lorna sniffled and nodded, calling William to fetch the newly-bound, red velvet book, written in her own and her brother's hand.

Taking the book in her hands, Lorna walked towards one of the bookshelves, old and worn from old favorites. On it, she placed the book, the only one of its kind.

She and her brother looked at each other and nodded solemnly, returning to their work. Jesse's shoulders no longer stood straight and tall behind him, and Lorna now lacked the spring in her step for which she had affectionately been known.

The siblings walked away from that old bookshelf, and away from the red velvet book with the copper stamp that read, *The Pleasance and Perpetuity of Youth*.

Muhammad Ali  
by Lil' Ja'quirea

Look, he is the greatest, they just hating, Muhammad Ali hah ain't no debating , Muhammad Ali vs Sonny Liston, Muhammad Ali hit him with a fist and, this is his glory, we write he fights this is his story, y'all people really slipping up on y'all pimping, Muhammad Ali hit you so you can stop tripping ha so you can stop tripping, Muhammad Ali got Sonny Liston he done through thunder in jail, made medicine sick and tussled with a whale, hands so fast will make your eyes spin, he's the best no Mike Tyson, no Mike Tyson, rumble in the jungle, so just try fighting, and just try fighting, we ain't got no-one that can be like him, they despite him, jail and the law had done tried him, Muhammad Ali, going against Joe, Muhammad Ali, always goes for broke, Muhammad up in the boxing ring, they can't stop him just stop and think.

Still by the River  
by Rachel Anthony

The crashing rapids are relentless, but I am calm while sitting on the smoothed rock which the tireless waves have carved. The flow of the river, like the flow of time, has carved the rocks to a smooth surface by taking away its memories and sending them down river to a new place. I know back home the James River is wide and calm, for I have listened to its peaceful side. Hiding within it are the memories of this wild place. This is the same river, but it is as if it has two different personalities. It reminds me of myself.

I close my eyes and let the chilly breeze relax me as I contemplate where I am and what I've done to get here. I am with my class exploring the wilderness within our busy capital, Richmond. It is amazing that to the right you see towering buildings, but to the left you see a wall of rock where people are practicing their climbing skills. Within the chaos of our busy lives, there is still peace; you just need to find it. This is our hiking trip, we still have much farther to go, but right now I am sitting next to the James River and tuning into its greatness. We have prepared for this trip for about three months, hiking up stairs, endless stairs, to get us ready for this. At the beginning we struggled, but we have planned and prepared ourselves for this adventure. Now we are here, all silent and listening.

Exploring with my class has given me nothing but happiness, for I have enjoyed every moment with them. Their jokes and smiles bring me joy. That lets me know that everyone is enjoying themselves here, and that our minds are flourishing in this new setting. Their stories are developing along with mine. This cloudy day has brought only sunshine to me, but a darker cloud always ruins the day. I can't stop my mind from going to a darker place, a place of fear. I don't ever want to go to such a place when I



am enjoying myself. However, it seems I have no power over my thoughts. Even though we are having such a joyful time right now, must I be the one who doesn't? It hurts me to know that soon we will separate, after our trip, ending this entire chapter. It hurts me every time I think about it. Why must this be so? It seems to me that life is meeting people and bonding with them just to say goodbye. I am angered at the thought, for I don't want to think of such things in this way. I have learned that we wouldn't be who we are without the people we have met and parted from. But why does it hurt? I am reminded of this whenever I am here. I've made such an incredible bond; how can I part? We do not have that choice; we all must face what we fear. I am so close to them, so why can't I just stay?

I sit on the smooth rock thinking and the crashing waves are reassuring me with calming answers. I know the forests and rocks of this river will not always be here, so I will come to it as often as I can. They have become part of me. As time goes on it will change and I will change, but it will be here for me. It is only me that chooses to leave it or ignore it. I can go to it whenever I feel troubled and want to find peace and ponder on my thoughts. It will help me find the answers to my questions, because in chaos I can find nothing. James, I know you will not be like those limited connections, for you are welcoming with your trees gowned in shades of red and yellow, your soothing songs, and ceaseless effort.

You, inspire happier thoughts. You tell me that the wonderful bonds I've created are temporary, but not gone forever. They have made me who I am. I would never be here if it weren't for the friendships I've made. I wish I didn't have to leave, but there are others out there who are looking for that bond. Through time we are being shaped just like the rock; we are worn by the river and our edges are sharp. The bonds with the people we have come to know will be swept away and

the memories will go farther down the river. But we are constantly being eroded to who we are now, as time goes on we meet new people and our edges will become smooth. So we cannot stay in one place, for like the birds sustained by this river, our wings need the room to fly and discover new things. Since being with the Outdoor English class I have found a new love for the outdoors, and I will continue to explore its mysteries and tell the world of my discoveries. I thank you river, and I thank you forest, for allowing me to sit in your presence and listen to your stories and wise words. Though at times they are hard to listen to, I will always come to listen, whether I am roaring like the rapids or when I am still enough to hear.

What Should We Tell Our Children  
by River

He came into my life like a fire burning an orphanage  
When my mind was still undeveloped  
I was full of life and love  
Until he entered my world

One night in bed  
He came to say goodnight  
He took a little longer  
Before he turned out the lights

He convinced me that the things we did were all love  
With my undeveloped mind, I believed all his lies  
Not understanding that all this was a game in his eyes  
I understand now that I was looking for a man to love me  
I never had a man to show me what love is

As the years went on his "love" began to darken my light  
I never felt beautiful within myself  
I'm put together in front of others but when I'm alone I'm a  
broken self of a human  
I hide my pain from others and sometimes myself

Now I'm 19 years old and I've put an end to the wildfire of a  
man  
I'm finding love within myself  
And slowly letting go of the pain  
within me

I still have the thoughts  
I still hate myself  
But with time  
I will learn to love myself