

Carl Cherry Center for the Arts



**The Robert Campbell
Monterey County High School
Poetry Awards 2022**



"Express Train"

Melina Mendoza, Monterey High School

Third Place • Thinking Out Loud Regional Art Exhibition 2022

Cover Photograph: "Música"

Francesca Postigo, Santa Catalina School

First Place • Thinking Out Loud Regional Art Exhibition 2022

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presents:

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2022

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Blossom Tree

Translucent blossom trees, tell me, valentine flowers,
rigidity bark, hovering without sense,
an endless plummet into the unknown,
how does one keep secrets for so long?

All my life, I have stared at the blossom trees,
car tires screeching, crashing, flipping,
and now I stare at only one.
Not as much living, just an object with the wind.

What's it like to always be awake?
No eyes, but few branches that may move.
Endless days, still time must wear you down.
Like a river, flowing towards the end.

Tell me what it is to be rooted into the ground.
to be without feelings (no that's not it)
to not even have the need for feelings?
I envy; I envy that.

Sensitive Endings

I am sensitive to endings
the end of my father
the end of my mother
the fear of not knowing my ending

I am jealous of the start of others while my last step is purely dead

I am sensitive to endings
the end of my run
the end of my fun
the lament of not knowing peace after experiencing an ending

I am noticing the physical changes in my body as the grass starts to dry

I am sensitive to endings
the end of the ocean
the end of the stars
the sorrow of experiencing endings upon endings, even after my original ending
— the ending of this poem is the ending of all endings right this second

Alexander Garcia
North Salinas High School

Crooked Fingers

“Her beautiful, pale skin gleamed in the sun,”
Ms. Munzer recites
With the same blue eyes, Blonde shine
That blinded me from appreciating me.
Looked down to see my crooked fingers before me

Now these crooked fingers write
Ye, they write`
The story of mama
Mama’s Mama
And Papa’s Papa
Hard-working people

Ye, I tell you
Y estás manos, mis hermanos
Come from power

I am the first in America,
Everything behind me America
The land of the free
In which all men are free
All men ye, they forgot the disclaimer
All white men
Yes, white mighty men
That tell me everything behind me is a sin
Tell papa that his English isn’t pretty
And mama, “ahh!” your food is too exotic

I write for “prosty” that stand in the corner-walking sexy in a bikini-body stolen-
And that heart of ha’s says

“Can I have my body back?”

I write for the boy who could only hug the bullet before he did his mama.

I write for Mami and Papi whose eyes droop lower and lower
Their smiles though

Fightin’ up and up

Now these crooked fingers write
Ye, they write
The story of mama
Mama’s Mama
And Papa’s Papa
Hard-working people

Ye, I tell you

Y estás manos, mis hermanos
Come from power

The Oregon Creek

When the world pushes hard, oh what can you do?
You can not push back because it pushes you.
There lies a safe haven far from the world's shriek,
Oh let us go to the Oregon Creek, now let's go to the creek.

The creek does not push, it knocks you down not.
It offers a spot to be with only a thought.
The creek helps soothe you, it clears all your plights.
It echoes its voice, it shines its pure lights.
As the tranquil air beckons, the cool river hears,
The memories of freedom and calmness appear.
The world may not find you, it may not control you,
All that will guide you will be the clear blue.

So when you must go, please don't you forget,
Not all that the world says will be a clear threat.
Now please remember the time that was well spent.
And return to the creek. Oh let us go to the Oregon Creek.
Now let's go to the creek.

What Is Life

I lay next to the stringing melodies
of cobwebs that hum against my ears
as I inscribe my likewise tedious outings
that overfills my notebook.

I stand alone in the infinite space of my mind,
no more thoughts left to spare,
just empty motions that mimic those
from days before.

I wonder if there'll ever be a time
when I'll be able to write something new,
like the experiences and feelings that
I read in fictional books,
or the movies I watch every day
just like the last.

Have I ever truly lived?
Or just existed.

Yéndose

I'm forgetting...

Se me olvida...

Forgetting my family

Mi Familia

I'm forgetting the scent of my land

El aroma de mi tierra

Olvidando su esencia...

que tan pura alguna vez existió en mi mente

Se me olvida la voz y el lenguaje de mi gente.

I forget the calluses on my grandmother's hardworking hands
by holding the soft hands of my American friends

I mask the dryness of my own

by drowning them in lotion

Now that I can afford it

I suppose

I am one of them

I would do anything...

Haría lo que fuera

Por tomar las manos de mi abuela

Y asegurarle/assure her

that I am still Mexican

Que no me he vuelto gringa

Not yet/no todavía

Because every day my home comes to mind
tears well in my eyes
 as I think of the sunrise/El Amanecer
over the cornfields
 or el atardercer
under a bright Mexican sky

I feel them slipping away. . .
 Yéndose

So I cling to mere memories,
dear memories,
memories of my home.
Mi hogar.

In hopes
I will not forget

where I came from.

The Feelings of Letting Childhood Go

As the moon travels by every night
and the sun begins to rise
I feel the magnetic forces pushing away,
not only from each other
but from me and my responsibilities.

I feel myself becoming
distant and insecure
because I try to leave my childhood behind,
unwillingly,
like rocks along a river
being dragged forcefully downstream

Time passes,
spending the years of childhood
at pendulums pace
burning the wick '
bringing chapters to a close.

Feelings of loss.
Fill my body.
Ever growing distance
between self and the origin.
Begs my heart to trust the path ahead

But,
What is safe?
What is real?
What comes next? '

Identity not created overnight
a task that breaks the souls of many
while the weight of responsibility
looms over my head
the reaper of my youth
comes to push me forward

To let childhood go
without joy
I transition with gratitude for all of the blessings I have had.

Brown and Blue

In your spot lies a void
Instead of your paws, there are leaves
Instead of your bark, there is rain
Flooding in nothing but that one memory of pain

Never thinking this would have to be goodbye
Your black, white and gray fur stays flowing with the breeze
One by one I feel your breaths begin to slow
And see your ears no longer perk at the sound of cars passing along our street

Working to remember the best of times
From my first day home,
To you lying by my feet while I eat breakfast
You never let me out of your sight without a little joy

Your eye like a dark golden ray of sun,
Reflecting on the other of the dusk blue ocean
One for me, and one for them

No one knew where they came from
They were something unique
Your eyes gave you a special lense to see through
Glossed over like the morning dew
With one being brown, and one being blue

Audrey McAthie
Carmel High School

A Body

I once believed
I was but a body.
Soft, easily pierced, and sensitive.
Because I could feel the warmth of sand
gently creeping against my skin.

I once believed you were a body like me
A body, but impenetrable.

But you could not feel the warmth.
You only felt the grinding of grains
scraping against your surface.

I once believed we were like glass
Sand set aflame.
Because I could feel the cool transparency of our vessels

But when I took a sip from yours
I only felt the hot sting of skin,
cut and broken by glass
and we did not bleed the same.

I once believed
I was the ocean.
A body still, but of tides filled by blood from wounds.
So I believed I was the moon
controlling these tides of
warm, liquid life.

I once believed that I'd one day
soften your sharp edges

But you could not be eroded by my ocean
nor swayed by any sun's warmth.

So I built myself a mirror
out of the shards you left in my skin,
melted down by my own heat
to get a better look at who I am.

I licked my wounds
I prayed to the moon
I drank from my own glass
I peered at my reflection.

Now I know
I am a body.
A body of flesh, of blood, of water, of moon dust, and flame.

But I'll never
Be a vessel of glass.

Maybe Fate

I am here because of the free spirit of a young girl
A cheap plane ticket, and a rock and roll band
My mother in her youth was wild and keen
Keen to be anywhere but where she had already been
She expressed that through music
So when she took off to the west coast leaving the big city behind
No one stopped her

I am here because of generations
Generations that stick in the same place
A small town they love to much to leave
And a young boy who got in to much trouble for is own good
My father, a bit of a wild thing in his day
Traveled to many places in his youth
But he always came back to the ocean and high valley mountains

I am here because of two failed marriages,
A deli,
And a working man hungry for lunch,
Long mornings working behind a counter,
The blaring heat of the valley sun as it shown on the blacktop outside
And a sandwich

I am here because of immigration,
A persecuted people,
An island with a view of the green lady
The wish for something more

I am here for many reasons,
Some say accidents some say fate,
But whatever it may be it shaped me

Maggie Short
Carmel High School

Untitled

Estaré contigo siempre
Jamás te dejare
Me has envuelto
Me has enredado
Me has enloquecido
Con tu belleza
Con tus ojos oscuros
Como el mar en lo profundo
Pero detrás de esa oscuridad
Hay una luz
Es tu alma
Brilla
Tan fuerte
Que deslumbra

Vulnerability of the Protected Castle

Vulnerability
The raw thoughts,
the first level of the 20-story building,
the form in which you are served to the world on a silver platter

This is how you grew up,
Allowing your most inner shell: tears, fears and radiating smiles,
to be displayed to both strangers and acquaintances alike
Yes, you were comfortable

But one day, when an antagonizing force
Stepped foot in your unguarded threshold,
your established welcoming, lush grass-filled meadow, experienced a tornado

The havoc that it marked on your face and speech, was too much to hold
You thought you were too soft, so you decide
“I don’t want to be vulnerable anymore”

You stack up your bricks, and build your walls
Watching those sad slabs turn into 20-foot thick curtain walls, coupled with a fence of fire

Those were the times, when you wouldn’t let anyone in
“I don’t need anyone else,” you said

But within those towering gray walls,
Allowing for no entrance or exit, you miss the outside world, don’t you?

The only thing to keep you company are the little voices in your head
advising you, forcing you, to keep people out

Why does destruction always have to be the outcome?
Why does love come in a package of sacrifice?

“These violent delights have violent ends”
Then another character enters the stage,
They approach the fearful flames, with no malice to be seen.

They slowly undo every effort you put into those walls,
Like untying a ribbon on a gift as they step through the threshold, something shifts

Your layered upon layered exterior put in place for protection
Became futile in a matter of seconds
No fear was felt, but you wanted to welcome them with open arms

“This should be impossible, I’m not supposed to trust anymore!” you cried in though
As tears rolled down your cheek, as you stared them in their soft eyes, And as a
hand reached up to wipe the sparkling droplets

You heard a placating whisper, “turn soft again, you’re safe.”
And with that, you melted into the arms, practically turning into a puddle

You remembered this distant feeling, from the times before
You didn’t realize you missed it, but you finally felt at home

Alexis Pine
Carmel High School

I Think We're Just Like That

I don't want to grow up,
I don't want high school to end,
I don't want my sister to leave next year.
But I don't want her to know that,
Well, maybe I do.
I think she already does.
She has always been smarter than me,
But I don't want her to know that either.
Sisters are like that sometimes.
One minute we're sharing clothes,
and the next we're fighting.
There's always some type of silent battle
But then there are those nights in the dim kitchen light
And we talk for hours on end
1 am, 2 am, 3 am, time to sleep,
Then the next day it seems like our lives are just passing with no correlation again
But I think sisters are just like that sometimes.

Kate Bunch
Carmel High School

I Am - Yo Soy

Yo soy un imagen de mis padres
De mis abuela y abuelos
A long terrain or roots so mighty and rich
Un viaje largo y duro,
Through violent rivers and radiating deserts
People collapsing, their bodies unable to withstand the treacherous conditions.
The sun like lava and wildly stabbing their skin
Saliva in their mouth, thick and warm

Papa left his mother, brother, and sister,
Everything he knew for a land he did not know the language of
Food of
Life of
For the sake of
Of being safe
He arrived on a vast land that did not accept him, that was blind to the gentleness I saw.
Gasoline baths, and a harsh sentiment of
GO BACK TO YOUR COUNTRY

If only they could see my hero:
Sitting in silence for a while as my eyes begin closing,
Papa caressing me while hard at work maneuvering through some wires
His hands dry and craving an Avocado soak,
Humming a song lulling me into a near doze
m u u u ñ e q u i t t a a a a a a a
The moment, so serene and still
The sun, not biting, but just warm, so beautiful, placid, and slow-placed,
My heart light, warm, and singing
L u u b b d u u b b l l u u u u b b b d u u b l u u u b
Como hijo de inmigrantes es mi deber mostrar al mundo del poder mexicano.

But here I am, standing confidently until I see:

Select one:

- American Indian or Alaska Native,
- Asian, Black or African American,
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander,

Or

- White.

Emily Amador
Stevenson School

A Little Empathy

Sharp stabs of air were pulled in by my nose,
Flushed by the chill. Pupils around me rose.
Hands drag the people, their smothered
Sides brushing against one and other.
Chatter came from the sea of faces.
Buyers and sellers alike,
Feelings hiding behind their fake embraces.
But through this phrenic battle on streets of the city,
There was one eyeful oasis, devoid of all agony.

Her hair gracefully fell on her broad shoulders,
As her arched eyebrows captivated me.
The cavernous mouth this stranger hosted
Did well to transmit me out of reality.

The glee I got from her smile, I frankly can't explain.
But it made my whole day better,
And is a memory that's been sustained.

As I walk on the city streets, a mere five years later
This scene repeats in my head similar to a broken record.
Her broad grin alliterates in my brain,
Making me an investigator of why that
Small act of kindness has largely influenced my own atmosphere.

But as I spot a small girl, similar to 10-year old me,
My mind forgets these thoughts, and blithely smiles at her
Hoping she understands the effect of a little empathy.

A Forgotten Leaf

What happened to this leaf?
Amber and ivory dots scattered across your hard gripped skin
Holes, cracks and rips that line your dainty body
You seem you'd flow quietly like the drop of a pin
What were you before picked off the ground
What were you before your skin faded to a washed out brown
Were you once part of a great tree that I laid underneath
Were you once not scarred and shined bright colors of endless green
Did a swing hang from your branches once where someone swung and fell to a pile of your old
leaves
Did you turn an atomic tangerine when air turned crisp and cinnamon filled the streets with
smells so deep
When winter came were you buried in snow and froze from your stem to the spikes on your leaf
When all was washed away from the snow
When spring came and flowered everything
And you saw blossoms in every single tree
Did you lay on the ground forgotten as you watched me lay under the bright green leaves
You were once looking down from your blossoming tree
But now you lay waiting deep in a pile of leaves
For someone to come and pick you up, look at you and write a little note
A little guess
A little ask
A little wonder of your life before their hands

Lillian Lehman
Carmel High School

Under the Moon

*Together until the moon vanishes from the sky.
The eternal light we fought to obtain
Reunited at last under the vast stars I sigh,
Our happily ever after...
After the endless war we faced together
Why I'm told this; to forget, to accept, to nevermore!
My eyes burns with your image in my mind,
Our happily ever after...
Take my place under the vast sky above
I beg of you to take my place under the stars
For I rather erase our light from my thoughts,
Our happily ever after...
Such emptiness that covers the endless night
A boundless void that swallows me whole
Leaving an empty husk for the moon to watch,
Our happily ever after...
Together until the moon vanishes from the sky
I stand waiting in the cold, your moon gone,
While I stare under the vast sky with a crescent moon.
Happily ever after.*

Miguel A. Guzman
North Salinas High School

People Pleaser

I'm not tired you're fine
I can talk as long as you'd like
If that would make you happy
How am I?
I'm fine, but let's get back to you
What can I do to make you happier
I'd rather not complain about my life
That makes me look needy and dependent
I'd much rather help you, make sure you like my company
I'm sorry if I had upset you
Tell me what I had done
Please tell me
I'll fix it, I can change
Just don't leave me
I can't stand the thought of someone leaving me
I don't want to be alone. . . ever again.

Salinas, My Valley

Salinas, the great city in California's center
A city arranged into quarters, each concealing their own distinct feeling
The south side; people live the life ever so appealing
Where million dollar houses line the streets, where there is no crime or drugs or
"deadbeats", where those bound to embarrassment are corralled in Chinatown
Rejected by the rest, renounced by society
Confined to a space restricting all mobility

Immobile
Stuck in one place, unaware of the world beyond us
Like that of a child from the East side of Salinas
Where the concept of higher education, life without poverty, change in the world
are not even discussed
Instead they are confronted with gunshots
A gunshot that at any moment could be aimed at you, your mom, your dad,
your neighbor
And surrounding are people whose most onerous focus has been continuous labor

In the North and West Side bordering miles of lush green fields
Workers grow your dinner just to be ill-concealed
To work in the sultry sun for hours on end
All the while worrying whether your child will be considered blue or red

A couple miles more mountains lead you to the coast,
2 places seeming to have been juxtaposed
When asked where I'm from people often say "Oh Monterey?",
a place that couldn't differ more than
night and day

Dismissing the 400 billion pounds of produce picked each year,
the 55,000 immigrants that traveled here
with a future so unclear, the vehement hope of 150,000 people

In saying Monterey they dismiss my home as a whole
Failing to recognize the lively culture; succeeding in seeing just a place of murder

Colorful people fill the city
Different, yet the same with a high mutuality
Painting city walls formidable with murals,
showcasing triumph over strenuous battles
Driving down streets in rows of dazzling Cadillacs,
protesting with Cesar Chavez passing the first farm
labor act
Others visit from afar for the famous California Rodeo
Un Gran Circo, "In the streets there is no curtain"

This arbitrary system was made obstruct,
but the interconnection they left untouched
Despite the flaws and the reputation acquired,
a community was created, incapable of being hard-wired
Simulating a sanctuary: the south and east and north and west side are a sanctuary
The fields and mountains shaping this valley create a sanctuary
Salinas is a sanctuary
A sanctuary that makes a home; those 4 distinct sides:
the walls, the people: the nails that uphold

Given nothing; providing everything,
a phrase depicting the will of the Salinas citizen
As John Steinbeck put it, "Salinas is my valley"

Jezmarie Avila
Rancho San Juan High School

Why You Shouldn't Care

This world is dying and that's old news
It was the people of Earth that lit the fuse,
Scarred the land with an immortal bruise
Give birth to children to fit broken shoes
We burn down forests, and cut down trees
The Amazon will be gone just like a breeze
 We build factories to pollute the air
 Depleting the ozone without a care
 Mass extinction everywhere
 Because we see it uncouth to share
We could have peace, we could have perfection
But we live in a world of detached connection
 Mankind may say they're the best,
 That all in this glorious land is blessed
 But all we are is an infestation of pests
We pride ourselves on technological innovation
 Whilst living in an poverty growing nation
 And when all hell breaks loose,
 Many will be destined for damnation
 It'll only gets worse as we look to the past
With social inequality from the start in the form of caste
The Native Americans once saw a land so vast But Manifest Destiny was going by fast
And the once prominent natives had become an outcast We create, innovate, and wait
for upcoming fate Because it is too far late,
 Too far late to change our ways
And no matter how bright one may shine
Or how many nights we feast and dine
 All will fall in due time
 At old age or in one's youth
All beings face one single truth,
 That we are forged to die
So why should anyone at all try

Not a Writer

I am not a writer

I mean, I can write, but my spite for essays is light-up-on-Broadway level

My disdain for the pain of explaining my brain could smite the devil

My rage for blank page should be displayed on stage

(Or printed in a book, which would be wonderfully ironic, but)

I am not a writer

Because articulation is the culmination of all my frustrations

I think, and I think, and I grasp at ideas

I blink, and I sink, and the sparks disappear.

Don't you wish you could dog-ear your thoughts and premiere them?

The first typing of thinking like opening night?

You might flip through your pages and quip the best phrases,

But you can't.

So I am not a writer

Because my voice is vocabulary ventriloquy, thieved from a thesaurus

And my verse is rip-off rhythm, just time shown on RhymeZone

I am not a writer

Even when I'm humming to Morrissey

I tune out his eloquent elegies

And head bop to drum beats and melodies

I find bare words in a journal debonairly infernal

Each letter eternally the:

Pounding of drums just by sounding your lungs

Some riff on guitar by pronouncing your r's

That random trombone cuz your band is the tone

And I've shown that

I am not a writer

But this poem is alright

And in hindsight, somehow,

I'm now a doubtfully decent-ish poet.

My Personal Power

It all started with a joke that I made
at my mom's birthday party
About how I would kick the ass of 6-foot 3 boyfriend
If he ever tried to lay a hand on me.
But, of course, my uncle decided to take it much too literally.
He told me that I would never be able
to beat a guy that much bigger than me.

And this, I honestly couldn't believe, that him,
A guy who had never seen me do martial arts,
thought he knew better than me.
But he's like a meteorologist guessing the weather.
He only makes some educated guesses
and expects me not to know any better.

I made a little case for myself but he kept on using his one argument:
It wouldn't work, or it would miss. And, honestly, this made me furious.

I could have said so many things.
He brought up the example of some karate kid
He knew when he was a bit older than me.
I wanted to scream, "That boy is not me!"

I do not do karate, I do jujutsu.
I play with swords and do battojutsu.
I train hard, sacrifice blood, sweat, and tears.
I am not scared of any one of my peers.

I have worked tirelessly and stayed committed.
I punch bags, and people when permitted.
I get pinned on the ground,
Bruises on my body up and down
From experiencing and learning
What it means to be hardworking.

If only you had seen
The picture made by a keen
Little girl who reminds me of younger me.
She handed me the photo, smiling at me.

Words around a picture of me in my gi;
Strong, Awesome, Kind, Courageous
Is what she called me.
Looking at this, her smile was contiguous.

And this act of kindness showed me,
Do not let a bully pin you down.
Believe in yourself and the people
Who reinforce you with their humanity.
Stand up, do not stay down.

No matter your size, no matter your height,
Fight back with all of your might.

How Fast Can Time Move?

Turning the pages of our lives as fast as we can
Never missing out on an opportunity
A memory to collect
We can't say no because who knows what the day can hold?
But we can never remember it long enough to truly feel it
I count down the days
Never knowing the value of something until it's gone
I miss the days when they have slipped away
And look forward to the ones that are soon to come
But I cannot seem to keep them in my grasp
Our minds are tired from the consistency of feelings
When will I be old enough?
But when am I too old?
Waking up in the middle of the night
Feeling time move across my blank ceiling
Wondering if I have done enough for how much time I have had?
How can I know so much, so young?
But nothing now?
Turn the time to when I was barely four feet
With my mom always in the front seat
My days ended with a tuck-in
And a kiss,
Keeping the love in
Because the scariest thing back then was what was underneath my bed
But now it isn't something I can see
Just what's ahead

Morgan Mayer
Carmel High School

Roadside Pebble

Life for me
It's been a bit rocky

Tossed about every which way
Like a ping pong ball
In a game that I never asked to play

Sometimes it's a shoe, other times it's a wheel
But the one defining factor of it all
Is that no one ever asks how I feel

Sitting here on the side of the road
Feeling completely forgotten
By the entire world

It's been ages since I've seen home—or any place that felt familiar
but at this point, I've gotten used to being alone
And used to losing everything that I may hold dear

Because nobody ever cares about a little old pebble
The one on the side of the road that doesn't seem all that special

Snow Shovel

My frozen feet inside my shoes
The driveway covered in delicate hues
The sound of snow under crunching feet
I wish I could run back inside to the heat
Unfortunately for me
This is not an option here
My Grandfather will have his driveway cleared
He hands me a shovel that is bigger than a tree
Where we got so many is confusing to six year old me
My brother has one too
His highlighter jacket makes me want to puke
Like I said, no options here
Put shovel to snow so I can choose to disappear
He said he would help
But I don't recall
My Grandfather shoveling any snow at all

Sleeping in Class

The sound of Clifford's voice
The sweet ambience of the room
To fall asleep, I have no choice,
Warmth of the sun on my back
Swiveling around on a chair
Struggling to hold back a nap
Mr. Clifford's voice is a lullaby
Chairs of the room, made of clouds
Away into dreamland I fly.
I dream of nothing else but sleep
I dream of a blanket, of a pillow

This precious slumber, I dream to keep But this dream, it is all lies

Mr. Clifford stamps over,
Anger of hades in his fiery eyes

He pulls back his hand, ready to strike My head whips up, my eyes spring open But it is
too late, I have only kindled his spite I look above me, fearing for my life

He shoots me the very glare of death

His eyes, to me, are sharper than any knife Shaking in terror, WHAT DO I DO?

I pray that he will spare me, that his glare will falter, But it lingers, like the long note of a
terrible flute I will never forget such an overpowering terrair,

Mr. Clifford, the most tangible nightmare

Wandering Down the Long Hallway

Walking through this blank space,
Not knowing where I come from,
Not knowing who I am,
Like a timid caterpillar,
Trying to spring into a graceful butterfly.

Trying to fit in,
In all the places I go,
Weighs on me a ton,
Feeling like the sun trying to peek out on a cloudy day,
Got to find my flow.

Being by the foggy coast,
Waves, waves, waves,
As one falls,
Another forms,
Realizing life gives unlimited chances.

I see the joker in the deck,
Try to understand it,
Sympathize with its feelings,
Treating all with kindness,
Leads the world toward progress.

Having compassion is what I have to offer,
No change should be done for another,
As life throws curveballs,
Grow smart and stronger,
Transform into a never ending vine.

Big Sur

Lush green mountains
Cross highway 1
Meeting the glassy pacific
hawks fly from land to sea
Souring in the warm july breeze

Redwood trees
tall as giants
Branches growing outwards
provide shade for the plants below

Cold streams flow
from the tops of snowy mountains
Down to the sand
Eventually into the ocean

Monarchs
Fairies
And dragonflies
Fly amongst each other
Up and down rivers and valleys

California poppies
And wild lilac
Grow up and down
The west coast
And splatter like paint across the mountains

Hot Dog

Dark tires rolled beneath a well-worn SUV.
Eighteen months old, hungry yet carefree.
Famished and quenched, to Costco we went.

For once we entered, the search underwent.
Hours of shopping, hunger was inevitable.
Monumental in size, the hot dog was delectable.

But out of the blue, my baby throat tightened.
My face turning blue, my mother was frightened.
But she acted with haste, and jumped out of seat.

Pushing her meal aside, she was up on her feet.
Proceeding with the Heimlich, she thrust with care.
And out of my mouth and into the air.

A chunk of hot dog meat flew, relieving her despair.
Quite unvexed, I finished my meal.
And off we returned to our automobile.

The Invisible Man

The invisible man lurks in my mind
Judgemental and mysterious
He so elegantly touches my thought
He so properly forms my opinions
Effortlessly shaping love to self-doubt.
He blends in twisting my thoughts to uncertainty.
Why does he hold my head in this state, doubt
He goes unseen
And even by me
He lingers till acknowledgment
For he is a part of self who I deny empathy
For he is an unspoken part of me
Self who just wants to be seen
For he is like any human being
For he only wants to be set free

Belle Papazian
Carmel High School

Dear AP World History

Thinking a thesis
Would be like seeing Jesus
And finishing notes
Would be like a horse with some oats

But when I hear about steam locomotion
It's like when kelp touches your foot in the ocean
And biting into a sandwich with mayo
Won't ever match your speech on Galileo

And the caring I commit to Chinese silk
Is like gently pouring a cup of milk
But instead off flowing into a better grade
It decides to take off the complete opposite way

You make about as much sense
As dentists when they commence
To implore you to talk
But with their hands, your mouth they have blocked

I hope you see a spider and lose it
I hope both sides of your pillow are warm
I hope that all of your zippers get stuck
And then just maybe you'll fin'ly see through
To the sick I feel when I think about you

Hana Knoblich
Carmel High School

Growing Up

There's something about driving
Past the road you would turn down
To get to your childhood home

And something about the smell
Of your fourth grade classroom
On a warm day after recess

Or the old swing set
You used to think could touch the sky
When really now it hardly
Hangs just off the dirt

Will it ever feel like that again?
Like someone bringing you
Sliced apples without you asking
Or the soles of your feet burning
On the hot obsidian asphalt

When did we trade
Scraped palms and stubbed toes
For heavy feet
And tired eyes

When did we stop noticing the dandelions
That grew between the cracks
Of the sidewalk in the summer
Or so deeply appreciate
The ice cream that would melt on our faces

Where did all the time go?
When did we grow up?

In Darkness There Is Only Light

The waters as blue as the sky
Not fully known what's out there
A vast ocean waiting to be discovered
The sand at the feet soft as a tiger's fur
The air clean as the new white shirt from Christmas
The breath of fresh air could make you feel like you're floating
Losing all worries
And being free
As the sun sets in fiery abyss
A full moon reflects off the ocean's surface
It shows the true beauty of what to see
in darkness there is always light

Ronaldo Infante
Palma School

Under the Sun

Under the sun
The wheels turn quietly
The music plays loudly
Sand settles
And beach water
And waves
Grow mellow and calm
Easy
Dreamily
From the boardwalk
Kids scream
And wheels clack away
The music blares
The trees are dancing
People walk
People laugh
People enjoy their time
For nobody
Has much left
Life's too short
So they distract themselves
And wait
As the wheels turn
And the music plays

Untitled

Sturdy Rock, old island hard
Wet in the river, dry in the wind
But yet still so hard, so strong
Broken through time, though smoothed as well
Has been broken by others just as you break others too
But no matter how sharp it how large,
You are nothing more than a rock
The same as the rest that lie by you,
The same as the ones you broke.
Trust, All rocks carry a smile as well as a fist

I Can't Breathe

Now that the mask mandate has lifted
Will people look at me funny?
Not because I won't have a mask
But because I will
Still
Be wearing one
Nothing good
Came out of Covid
Except me for me
I could do online school
My anxiety
No longer triggered
When going out
I covered half my face
Didn't have to talk to people
I could be antisocial
In peace
Everyone so desperate
To make things go back to normal
While I could finally
stop
Holding my breath

Freeing Myself Through Writing

I see an idea go by, then two, then five.
And still on the page I see not a change,
because I know that writing takes time.

I watch the clock and take a pause,
hoping to start a new line.
But just as I was,
it feels like I am stuck,
with no proper words to combine.

Then with no hesitation, no notification, all my thoughts break free.

My passion to write has just revived,
released from where it confined.

A Collection Two Poems: Mirrored Illusions

I.

As they twirled downwards
Softly blending with glimmering stars,
The velvety sky takes them in,
Engirdling the twinkling whites
that seemingly disappear.

Hitherto then,
When they rained
Like diamonds in the ash,

Floating in a world
Neither here nor there.
Drifting in the ocean of black
With shiny starred islands

Which seemed a reflection but an infinite loop
And as the snow drifted down, they melted.
Shimmering away like stars in the eternal night sky,
encompassed by the velvety night.
Oh,
What is a reflection, a world not within sight?

Ishani Chowdhury
P.G. High School

A Collection Two Poems: Mirrored Illusions

II.

Shattered illusions melded together,
Pieced together by innocence,
Of a child, Happy, With the world.
She didn't deserve it nor was it fair, but whenever is life fair?
She sang to her heart
And wrote in illusions,
Reflecting not what she wanted
But
Fairytale glimpses.
She did not deserve it,
Those horrible truths, Harsher than that
That some may never know.
She did not deserve it,
Her silent tears,
His silent burdens,
Their pleas of silence.
But it was them that weaved
Those portraits of illusions.
Rain freckled the ground
And snow seeped through salt,
Echoes reminiscent of
The terrors that
Plagued her nights.
Memories forgotten
Which were better left
Unsurfaced,
Fell beneath those
Portraits of illusions.
Lies and hatred,
Manipulative of their own,

Her demeanor sweet
But truly was she
A monster,
Stitched together lies,
Immaculately placed,
She etched those illusions
And fell to trap by her own, lies.
But the shattered illusions crumbled,
Crashing like grains against ice.
She did not deserve it,
Her shattered hope,
But life was never fair and she
Fell to despair.
She would never know that
Perhaps she mattered.
But
For then she only
locked herself
Into a hall of
Infinite lies and
Innocent
I l l u s i o n s.

Time is a thief

Time is a thief.

Death may be devastating,
but even when you and I
will share no more memories
time will continue to take
the last of you I have with me.

Day by day time trudges on
and when I look I find
more and more of you gone
I've lost the shape of your smile
and the sound of your voice.

I remember your laugh
because I heard it all the time.
Why did you laugh so often?
Were you hiding it, even then,
what was happening inside?

I wish, at least,
I had known it was goodbye.
Maybe then I would have paid attention,
and wouldn't have to wonder
about the color of your eyes.

Did you know when you left?
I will wake up in a day, a month, a year,
and everything will have gone away.
and I will shed one last tear
when I can no longer see your face.

At least I will know where it has gone.
Because full of regret, and spite, and greed,
Even though it's nothing it wants
and everything I need,
Time is a thief.

Shayla Dutta
Carmel High School

Why I Write

Why do I write?

I write because I love the feeling of the lead grating away with each new word.

I write because I have to get things done.

Once I start I have to finish.

I like writing because it keeps our civilization together.

Without writing, neither cities, nor countries, nor empires can exist.

Why do I write? I write because my story fills the page as the lead grates away.

Writing is the glue that keeps honesty true.

Writing holds an anchor more than words or promises do.

Writing is the highway that connects me to you.

Why do I write? I write because writing distracts the mind; with the pen on the paper, it feels as though a little of that stress inside leaves you. It flows through the pen like the ink, leaving the stress on the paper, stored as sentences and words. The story is what is drained out of you, the ink just helps it fossilize onto the page.

Why do I write? At the end of the day, with each new page, there are alternating motives. There are too many reasons to list. What I can say for sure is I write to scratch an itch.

Why do I write? I write to see what I am capable of.

When I write, my emotions dictate the page.

When I write not to build a mountain but to brim a trench, I expel my deepest thoughts.

When I instead write not to fill a canal but to climb and touch the sky, my most inspirational and uplifting work is created.

When I do my best to combine my two styles of writing, I look back on my execution with a sense of pride and accomplishment.

That feeling – *That* is why I write.

I write not to build a mountain but to brim a trench.

I write not to brim a trench, but to touch the sky.

Sebastian Comacho
Rancho San Juan High School

I Wish Cesar Was Here

I wish Cesar was here
now
Someone who knows
how important
farm workers are
giving them a strong
voice
You gotta see this empire
and how it has exploited all the life
that built it
And all the money
spent to fight needless
wars
And all the reasons
why the rich invest
all their money
in stocks and bonds
And maybe try working in the fields
just for a day
And grow wildflowers and
when the honey bees come in
sing hallelujah

Mercury

Every aspiration i have
slips around in my hand like cool mercury.
It burns away the tiny bit of warmth left on their surface
as it swirls in my shaky palms
I can't let it fall
I won't, I need it

I'm drawn to its harsh metallic glow;
so daunting, yet somehow beautiful.
It stings and burns as it seeps between the cracks of my fingers
And eats away at the floorboards below,
but i continue balancing it in my palms nonetheless

The harder i look,
I begin to see myself in it
No, not quite myself.
She is different -
shiny
She flashes her value at me,
mocks me,
and casts a dazzling reflective light onto my pained features

I imitate her every move,
Filled with envy and need
A need to be like her,
and to have the virtuosity she possesses so naturally

I want to dive into the tiny pond in my hand
to break the tension of the surface
to immerse myself in it
Until it fills and burns and scars my lungs
and fills the cavities of my heart.
Then will i be her?
Can i be her?

I stare back at the girl,
yearning for something, anything, to happen
as the last of the liquid eats away at my skin and blisters my
bones. I know exactly what I want,
so why am I unable to have it?
The last drop slips from my fingers.



"Yellowstone"
Cash Eden, Monterey High School
Honorable Mention



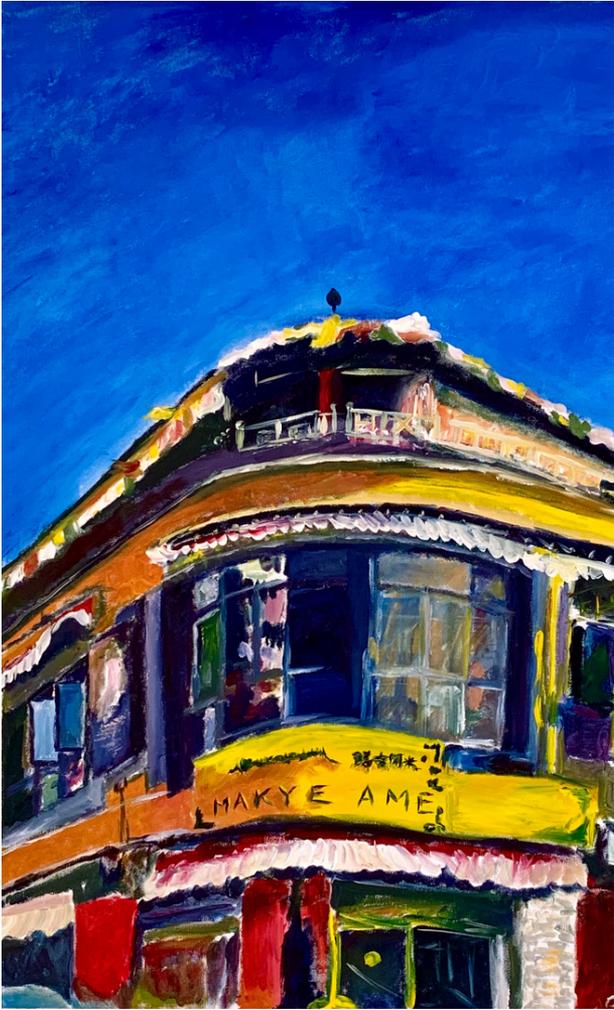
"Lucid"
Lucia Rodger, Youth Arts Collective
Honorable Mention



"Shark City"
Louisa Shen, Santa Catalina School
Honorable Mention



"Lull and Lust"
Daija Engen, Carmel High School
Honorable Mention



"Morning Light"

Hannah Xu, York School

Second Place • Thinking Out Loud Regional Art Exhibition 2022