



CREATIVITY IS POWER.

"Words have the power to change the world, and that realization inspires me every day."
-Amanda Gorman,
Youth Poet Laureate of the United States

ASTOUNDING

WRiTE

a BOUT

NOW

Hello

YOLO

I loved her for writing it,
I loved him for saving it, I loved the tent
for sheltering it and us, and I hate
myself for that other kind of dwelling
(on) in which nothing can live.



Write About Now 2024
Upper School creative writing workshop student anthology
Led by Ms. Celeste Prince



Image description: students in Write About Now pose together in Olson Hall. From left: Eleanor Cheers '26, Rose Sabalvaro '26, Ellie Reardon '25, Eddie Feng '27, and Rithvik Bogachenchu '27.

Cover art collage created by students.

Dear Parents, Colleagues, and Friends,

This anthology reflects the hard work and vision of our creative writing workshop. Over the last eight days, students worked diligently to craft and produce a variety of pieces – poems, short stories, songs – and experimented with various genres – from horror and fantasy to realism. Our time together helped them learn more about themselves as artists and, through sharing their work, more about their peers.

Our activities and lessons focused on the stages of the writing process as well, including brainstorming, drafting, and revising. They drew inspiration from the writing of Jamaica Kincaid, Bret Anthony Johnston, and Sandra Cisneros, plus exercises that offered them constraints and invited them to stretch their imagination to play within the given boundaries. Additionally, they participated in a peer workshop, in which they reviewed the drafted selections that appear in this anthology and gave each other feedback and suggestions of how to expand their work.

Beyond writing, though, the students also collaborated to construct our anthology's front cover, cutting up images and text from old magazines. This collage, much like them, is an amalgamation of colors and illustrations with one central focus: the power of creativity. I'm especially thrilled with the inclusion of a quote from US youth poet laureate Amanda Gorman: "Words have the power to change the world, and that realization inspires me every day." A mantra that sounds familiar...

This all said, creative writing is not for the weak. Creativity in general is something we can take for granted in our world filled with TV shows, movies, and music on demand. We are surrounded by artists every day! A different kind of energy, though, is required to *be* an artist, to sit down and take the time to write an original sentence, a stanza, a story. I applaud the tenacity and courage of these five students as they let their ideas run wild during our inaugural winter term.

I have personally taught creative writing on-and-off for over ten years, to middle and high school students. Each experience, no matter the grade level, reminds me how impactful words can be. We all have a story to tell; I am grateful for the opportunity to provide students with a space to tell theirs. I hope you enjoy reading their work and will continue to encourage their flourishing talent.

All the best,

Celeste Prince
MICDS Upper School English Department

MICDS

CHANGING LIVES. CHANGING THE WORLD.

Table of Contents

Rithvik Bogachenchu	5
Eleanor Cheers	8
Eddie Feng.....	10
Ellie Reardon	14
Rose Sabalvaro	16
Writers' Biographies.....	18

RITHVIK BOGACHENCHU

Baseball at Popeye's

Unbeknownst to many is that there is a location that surpasses space and time, it is a place that moves faster than the speed of light, and all that was there was a pile of space dust. Until the year 3223, humans thought of the existence of aliens as just mere myths, the stereotypical green alien, with a skinny figure, and large head was not real. When Humans saw the UFO, they were reluctant to believe, but they did.

The years went on, and aliens and Humans lived harmoniously with each other for the first couple of decades. Ever since the Aliens came, they displayed that they had advanced farther into technology than humans could in the next hundred years, so Humans got jealous. This led to conflicts rising between the two beings, thus leading to their eventual hatred toward one another.

During the many years of conflicts, Popeye's had continued their business of selling delicious fried chicken but had also taken up space exploration, in which they discovered new planets with new life, and new stars, and even found a way to make environmentally friendly rocket fuel. One day they stumbled upon this land beyond space and time and named it the Void. Popeye's had bought out the rights to own this land and decided to build the arena. Henceforth the Void was transformed into the Maximus Arena, conducting the multi-universal Olympics, which Popeye's of course sponsored.

This Olympics is said to be the toughest, the most rigorous, the most critical event ever. Every Century these Olympics would be held, but beings from Outer Space do things a bit differently than humans: instead of hosting a majority of sports in the Olympics, they host one sport and whoever wins in the tournament, is given a year's supply of Popeye's chicken sandwich from any location in the universe. So, every century, a team of extraterrestrial beings from each solar system would be sent to the Maximus Arena to represent a sport for that century's Olympics.

When the time came, this year's sport was Baseball, and the Tournament had started. Solar systems were facing each other and were having spectacular matches for anyone to see. But in the final bracket of the Tournament, there were two opposing teams: the Cardinals from Missouri on planet Earth, versus the Glorpus from the planet HD 16175 b.

Every being had shown up for the matchup, including the big red dragon, the new CEO of Popeye's, who was rooting for the Cardinals, as Popeye's sponsored their team. Despite being the CEO, he had to wait in line for Popeye's just like anyone else. He came into Maximus Arena and claimed the best seat in the house with his family.

The game began and this would finally end the conflict between the Humans and the Glorpus, by deciding who was simply the superior being. The Glorpus took an early lead, and the Cardinals looked like they were about to give up. The score was 5-0, the Glorpus, and the fans were ecstatic. Later, after the first inning, the CEO was itching for some Popeye's, so he wrote down his and his family's order and went to stay in the humongous line. While standing in the line, he talked to all the aliens around him to entertain himself.

"Soooo, crazy matchup, right," said the CEO, talking to the centaur in front of him.

"Absolutely, but the Cardinals are gonna definitely make a comeback though," said the Centaur in front of the CEO.

"What?" said the Lego man behind the CEO. "Absolutely not, not even a miracle could save the Cardinals."

They continued to discuss the probability of each team winning. Eventually, after the second inning, the score was 16-7, Glorpus, and the CEO had received the awful news: the majority of the Cardinals had become injured because the Glorpus weren't playing friendly. He finally got to the counter.

"Hello," said the CEO.

"Hi," replied the server who was a Bird.

"I would like 13 chicken sandwiches, 19 chicken nuggets, and 32 chicken wings. Oh, and 12 gallons of Sprite," said the CEO.

"Thank you, sir, your order will be filled in approximately 5 hours," responded the server.

He went back to the game as soon as he could and decided to rally some of his employees to sub for the Cardinals. This team had a variety of Aliens: for starters the CEO, then the spiders, next the honey bears, and more. The Glorpus did gain some points in the seventh and eighth innings, but those points were insignificant to the amount that the Cardinals gained. The Cardinals were now up by 9 points, and at the end of the Universal Olympics tournament, the Cardinals had won, and they had won a year's supply of Popeye's, plus the Glorpus were humiliated by doing the macarena for an ad used by Popeye's. Every Cardinal fan went home happy, and the CEO's family went home happy with their order from Popeye's.

This game had decided that Humans were superior, but after the game, the paparazzi from every universe came to interview the Glorpus, who said, "We felt bad, so we let them win."

ELEANOR CHEERS

Only Child (for Jamaica Kincaid's "Girl")

From day one you are your parent's pride and joy; have the best birthday parties; get every gift you want on Christmas and on your birthday; *but I'm not spoiled, I had no one to share with*; ask for help and mommy and daddy will always be there; cry and there will be a hug; your tummy rumbles and food will be made; go on countless adventures and vacations with you and your parents; always be grateful and write your thank you notes so you don't become the brat you are so bent on becoming; this is how to be close with your cousins; this is how to believe Santa, the Easter Bunny, and the Tooth Fairy are real; never grow up; you will always be your parents' baby; mom or dad will wake you up on Monday for school when you are little; this is how to choose what you want for breakfast, get dressed, and be ready for school; get used to lively or silent car rides: there is no in-between; this is how to do well in school: you are your parents' only child, after all; never disappoint anyone, it's shameful; this is how you take responsibility for your actions; this is how to be thoughtful; this is how to rehearse your fun facts because you do not have siblings; this is how to be ready for continuous self-entertainment: it makes you creative, not sad and a loner; this is how to find peace in not talking to others at home; your inner voice is your best friend; never tell your parents you're bored or they'll give you something to do; this is how to find what makes you happy; sing your heart out to an empty audience; find the people that make you happy; find the places that make you happy; always be happy; on Saturdays make plans that your parents will graciously take you to because how can they say no?; on Sundays do your homework or not?; this is how to master the art of procrastination, not lying; do not lie to your parents because you cannot blame anyone else for any of your mistakes; this is how to go to private school but have them not recognize immediately the brat I have told you not to be; when you get to high school, mother and father don't wake you up; this is how to deal with walking downstairs and being surrounded by darkness and suffocated by silence; this is how to remember to breathe and be thankful for the opportunities they have presented you with;

this is how to take the advice from your parents; this is how to be mature; this is how to not get upset each time someone criticizes you; this is how to respond so that you don't seem bratty; this is how to not get upset when someone calls you weird for liking school; this is how to be a part of every friend group so that you don't appear as alone as you truly are; this is how you smile and nod and push back politely; this is how to not push people away; be assertive; be well mannered; share things with others; be compassionate; this is how to never wonder why your parents had just you; this is how to not isolate yourself; be independent, but still ask for help; remember, your parents need you to depend on them because you are their baby; this is how to allow your parents to make choices for you even if you don't like the choice; this is how to never disagree with anyone; always take pride in your ability to nod your head and listen; *but what if I don't want to hear what others have to say?*; you mean to say after all are you really going to be the kind of only child who can't listen?

EDDIE FENG

The Park

Zenith State Park, five miles, the sign read. I drove in silence, heading for my new job as a fire lookout and national park ranger. I had been driving for the entire day already, starting at five in the morning from Boise, Idaho, to rural Washington State. The sun was going down and the tall trees loomed over the small two-lane road to the ranger cabin.

I had been hired on short notice for this job. I had just finished my six-month stint as a fire watch in Yellowstone State Park when I got a letter in the mail demanding that I come to Zenith State Park to fill the role of a fire ranger. I was angry but happy on the other hand because I loved the forest and nature.

Upon arrival, I parked my car in the small unpaved parking lot and walked up to the ranger check-in cabin. I walked up to the sliding glass window and gave it a soft knock. There was no answer. I knocked again, this time harder. Suddenly the window opened and a shotgun was stuck through the window and pointed at me. I fell backward, and I was about to run when the face of a ranger poked his head out of the window. "Are you a camper?" the ranger asked. "What are you doing out here so late? I thought you were one of those...never mind."

"I'm just the new hire for the fire tower in sector B," I answered.

"Really? I didn't know we were hiring," the ranger replied. "Let me check on that."

The ranger turned on the light in the cabin and his computer. "Oh yes, we are hiring," he said. "You must be Ralph. Come in, it's cold outside. Please lock the door after yourself."

I walked into the cabin. Inside was a huge map of the surrounding area, a tiny office, and a kitchen. There was a bed in the corner of the room. On another wall, a shotgun and a pistol were hung there, including a bulletproof vest. At the desk, Jack typed on his computer. A small deer skull sat by his computer setup. "Did you lock the door after yourself?"

"Oh no, sorry," I said.

“Go lock the door now,” he said hurriedly.

I went to lock the door. There were two locks and two boards I used to barricade the door shut.

After I locked the door I asked, “What’s your name?”

“Jack,” he said. “We don’t usually hire fire lookouts around this time of year, but it was very much needed.”

I stayed silent, still on edge after the shotgun incident.

“Sorry about sticking a gun in your face,” Jack said. “This late at night, you are not expecting anyone, so when I heard an aggressive knock at my window, I expected it was one of those people.”

“What people?” I asked.

“You don’t need to know about them,” Jack said.

He grabbed a box and handed it to me. “Well, it’s getting late now so you should head up to your tower. Here is a flashlight, and it should be around a twenty-minute walk up to the tower.”

I nodded.

“Here’s a map of the area,” he added. “The red areas crossed off on the map are areas restricted after nightfall. You will walk through this area to get to your tower; just don’t wander off the trail and you should be fine. Use your flashlight, though; the trail gets pitch black at night.”

I studied the map. There were six sectors in the perfectly squared map. I located where I was and my tower. Only areas in sector B were crossed off and nowhere else.

“You should get going, it’s very late,” Jack said.

“Ok,” I said as I accepted my supplies.

I took the box and flashlight and slung my bag over my shoulder. I then walked up towards the trail. “Do not go into Sector A or D,” Jack said. “There’s nasty stuff going on, bears, bobcats, and other things.”

I nodded and walked up the trail using my flashlight to illuminate the dark path. Wolves howled in every direction, and I could hear branches snapping in the distant forest.

Twenty minutes later, I arrived at my tower. I walked up the steps and discovered a small shrine near the door to the cabin. It was a deer skull and candles were arranged around it. It was like a satanic ritual. It made me freeze

in my tracks. A cold shiver ran down my spine as I picked up the skull and cleaned up the rest of the shrine. I entered the cabin, turned on the generator, and switched the lights on. I then set up all the equipment inside the cabin. Suddenly, I heard a knock at the door. I peeked through the window and realized it was a ranger. I opened the door.

“Hello, are you Ralph?” he said.

“Yes,” I answered.

“Are you new here? This tower has been dark for a while, and when I saw a light coming out of the tower I decided to come and say hello.”

“Yep, the first night here, just setting everything up and getting ready for bed,” I said.

“Oh, you are going to bed,” he said. “Well, just some information. Don’t wander off in the night. It’s dangerous and you may get disoriented or lost in the woods. Some things are not meant to be disturbed. Some things are not meant to be touched or seen.”

“What things?” I asked, crept out.

“Uh, animals,” he quickly said.

“Oh, what was your name?” I asked.

“Sorry,” he said. “Nathan, nice to meet you. You have a good night.”

He then turned and left. After a few minutes, I made another trip down the stairs of the tower to grab some firewood.

When I lit the fire in the furnace, I checked the time. It was 12:34 a.m. I decided I should head to bed. I suddenly got a radio call. “Hello? Ralph are you there?” the voice of Jack asked.

“Loud and clear, Jack,” I said.

“I see smoke coming from your tower,” he said. “I see that you have settled in.”

“Yeah,” I said. “I just met another park ranger named Nathan.”

“Who?” Jack asked.

“Nathan,” I said. “Park ranger.”

“I have no idea who you are talking about,” Jack said.

“What?” I asked, concerned.

“We have never hired a Nathan in this park in recent years,” Jack said.

I suddenly felt like something was watching me.

“You know what? Forget about it,” I said.

“No,” Jack said. “This is serious. Someone is impersonating a national park ranger, and it is a serious criminal offense. I will report it to headquarters and police now.”

“Ok,” I said. “You do that.”

“Alright,” Jack said. “You rest up.”

“Take it easy,” I said.

Before I went to bed, I went outside again to observe the surrounding area. It had begun raining heavily and I could see flashes of lightning in the distance. The temperature had dropped significantly, from 42 degrees to 35 degrees. As I observed the distance, I suddenly saw a light deep in the woods, pointed at me. When I looked in the direction of the light, the light was pointed down and shut off. I ducked back into my cabin, wondering what the light was about. I dismissed it, climbing into bed. As I began to fall unconscious, I heard a thud on the staircase, but before I could think about it, I fell asleep.

That night, I suddenly awoke, having a strange feeling. I sat up in my bed, in a cold sweat. I looked out the window and saw a figure watching me. The thing had a pointy black mask and a black gown. The thing also held what looked to be a machete. With no warning, the thing broke the window of my cabin and jumped through it. I leaped out of bed and ran for the door. I sped down the stairs and I heard the thing running after me. I ran into the pouring rain. My feet sagged into the muddy trail as I ran for my life. I raced down the trail and suddenly I stopped in my tracks. Another figure, identical to the one I just saw, stood in front of me. I had walked into a trap.

ELLIE REARDON

The Life of a Teenager

For your whole life, you have been waiting to become a teenager. It seems like the most exciting years of your life. Adults have always told you that your teenage years will be some of the greatest years of your life; they rave about every fun experience they had with friends and everywhere they went back when they were teenagers. But is it really all that it's made out to be?

When you turn thirteen, it feels like the most exciting moment in your life. You're officially a teenager now! You feel like an adult now, and you could not be more excited; this is everything you've looked forward to for so many years. You're a big kid now: you get to wear makeup, maybe get a boyfriend, and soon enough, you'll be driving and going to parties! Nothing could be better than being a teenager.

Turning fourteen feels almost just as exciting as thirteen did, except now, you are becoming more fearful. High school is closer than ever now. You've heard stories about high schoolers who are so swamped with work that they don't have a second of free time. However, you are still in middle school, so that doesn't matter quite yet. For now, you still get to play kickball outside every day, watch TV every night, and play video games whenever you feel like it. Not to mention, everyone tells you high school will be some of the best years of your life. There's no need to worry because you still have time to truly enjoy middle school.

Fifteen couldn't have come quicker. You are in high school now! You always dreamed about going to high school when you were a kid; the environment, the people, the classes, all so new and exciting. But that excitement dies quickly as you realize that you've gone from the top of the food chain to the very bottom. Everyone is looking down at you, with disgust and a hint of sorrow. It makes you wonder if high school is all that it's cut out to be. Of course, high school feels one hundred times more difficult than middle school ever felt. Some of the things that felt exciting when you were thirteen turn into burdens. You are now painfully aware of how you look and

how you are perceived, as every other girl around you has perfect pin-straight hair, lips plumped just right, lashes curled to a T, with jewelry that make their beautiful eyes pop. You begin to refuse to leave the house without using makeup to make sure that every zit is concealed, your eyelashes look perfect, your lips are shiny. It's time consuming but feels more than necessary.

Soon enough, you're sixteen. You can finally drive now! You've been looking forward to this for years; now you can drive wherever you want, whenever you want! But you never considered the rules with it. You never considered that you would be given a curfew or that you would be told that you can't go to that party or that sleepover. Plus, as an older sibling, your priority has to be driving your siblings around. Even if you don't want it to be, you have to pretend it's your number one priority. Instead of going to a party, you'll have to drive your little brother to band practice; rather than seeing your friends, you'll have to drive your younger sister to voice lessons. It's never a fun drive either, as you argue over whether you will listen to Lana Del Rey or whatever your sibling's favorite artist is at the time. At this point, it seems like learning to drive wasn't even worth it. Not to mention, your classes become increasingly time consuming, leaving you with almost no time to indulge in the things you used to love to do. The times you do get to go out are fun, but you aren't sure if the pros outweigh the cons.

And now you are seventeen. You're practically an adult. You are a junior now, almost done with high school. Should be exciting, right? Alas, the worries of college loom over your head constantly, you can never catch a break. You have to make sure your GPA stays good, but you've done that for the past few years, so it should be no big deal, right? Well, now you also have to worry about perfecting your ACT score so you can get into a half-decent college. Along with all this, you still have to keep up your social life. You constantly stress about not having a boyfriend. So many of your friends have girlfriends or boyfriends; are you falling behind? What if you never fall in love? It quickly becomes another factor of your stress, consuming your thoughts every time you see something like a cute couple on your For You Page. It starts to feel like no matter what you're doing, the back of your mind wonders if you are pretty enough, smart enough, fit enough to be liked.

So, to answer the question: no. No, it is not.

ROSE SABALVARO

Star Student (for Jamaica Kincaid's "Girl")

Bite your nails to the quick; keep a planner for the day, week, month, year and plan for the next five, ten, fifteen, twenty years; you must always know what you're going to do, what you want out of life; finish the rest of the week's homework after completing tomorrow's; skip a birthday party to study for a calculus test; ignore your friends when they ask if you ever relax; coax your friends into sharing their report cards at the end of every semester; this is how you cancel out the 85 you received on your final project so you don't look like the idiot you're so bent on becoming; this is how you cater to teacher preference; this is how you lower the curve; this is how to write a paper; think about how your peers' success is a threat to yours; don't raise your hand if you don't know the answer but also, why don't you know the answer?; this is how you take notes; this is how you ace the test on the subject of the notes you just took; breakdown in the school bathroom when you don't ace your test; is it true you cheated on your last test because you forgot to study?; this is how to pack a bag with everything you could possibly need so you don't look like the idiot you're so bent on becoming; *but I didn't cheat and I always study*; be good at every sport, the leader of every club, the recipient of every award; never pursue any passions you're bad at; ask your friends how they did after every assignment, revel in satisfaction because you did better; answer every phone call two hours late because you have to finish your homework first; lie in bed at night and as you stare at the ceiling, think about the two points you missed on last month's assessment - you could've added 0.05 points to your grade-point-average if you hadn't; this is how you build the best resume; this is how you attend a top-tier college instead of looking like the idiot you're so bent on becoming; this is how you make sure your computer is always charged; this is how you never lose motivation; never talk about feeling burnt out, wanting to break down; never settle for anything less than exceptional; charge your calculator; buy five notebooks and three binders; study with flashcards, white boards; go over your annotations before every class discussion; lead every class discussion; start every class

discussion; *but what if someone else speaks first*; you mean to say that after all you are really going to be the kind of student that doesn't start a class discussion?

WRITERS' BIOGRAPHIES

Rithvik Bogachenчу is a ninth grader at Mary Institute and Country Day School (MICDS). He enjoys playing ping pong, tennis, and video games. Ten years from now, he will be studying in college, majoring in cardiology.

Eleanor Cheers is a sophomore at Mary Institute and Country Day School. She enjoys playing volleyball, soccer, and cheering. She lives in St. Louis, Missouri but is originally from Urbana, Illinois. She loves to get her iced coffee every Monday and Wednesday before school. Ten years from now she plans to have graduated from college and will hopefully be living in another state.

Eddie Feng is a freshman at Mary Institute Country Day School in St. Louis, Missouri. He was born in St. Louis. He enjoys hobbies such as creative writing, football, basketball, and weightlifting. He plays football for the JV MICDS football team.

Ellie Reardon is an eleventh grader at Mary Institute and St. Louis Country Day School. She enjoys running cross country, skateboarding, and listening to music. She loves to hang out with her friends any time she can and loves to go out and do things.

Rose Sabalvaro is a tenth grader at Mary Institute and St. Louis Country Day School. She enjoys horror movies and romance novels, giving back, and inconsistently playing tennis. Ten years from now, she will be on the East Coast getting her PhD or attending law school.