

some appearing in national publications

As She Left (excerpt)

She discovered blood on her hands, but when she wiped it away, she couldn't find the place she must have cut herself. Disregarding this abnormality, she sought out her cards for protection. Clinging to them, she closed her eyes and tried to think of something comforting. As Amelia counted her cards absentmindedly, she realized she was missing one—the ten of clubs. Amelia was trying to remember where she may have left it when she got off the train.

Natasha Derenzinski-Choo, freshman
Phoenix Festival: First Place Fiction

Insomniac

The toll of those sleepless nights
Begins to find purchase in these days,
Just as you feared.

These days have no dates.
Surely, you think,
This wasn't meant to be your fate.

Frivolous dreams you seek
Of daisies and daffodils,
Though. Instead you don't sleep
For weeks and weeks.

The moment the alarm clock sounds,
You feel a weight
Of pounds and pounds.

You know it started slow
It didn't start so bad.
The days were unhurried.
No foul moods, no time to brood,
And no pressing weight.

And you hope as you
Try and try to sleep
That this wasn't meant to be your fate.

Natalie Shelton, sophomore
Published in *Poetic Power*

Confused

Thoughts lost,
and thoughts tangled,
thoughts confused,
mixed and mangled.

I'm confused,
I don't know
which way to turn,
which way to go.

So I will try
to think about
a way to escape,
a way out.

So now I plan
to clear my mind,
and when I do,
I seek to find.

A way to keep,
confusion at bay,
so I can keep
things going my way.

Courtney Bartley, senior
Published in *Poetic Power*

Somewhere over the Rainbow (excerpt)

Startled by the sound of heavy, uneven footsteps walking downstairs, Allison awoke. She heard shouting rising up from her mother's room. A gut-wrenching feeling came over her; usually these bouts of rage between her stepfather and mother escalated and produced purple patches all over her mother's body. Their mother tried to shield them whenever she could, but sometimes it wasn't enough. The purple patches often appeared on the bodies of her and her sister, as well as periodic burn marks. Alison could hear them struggling, and then a faint clicking sound. A terrible scream sliced through the air, then the sound of a gunshot, and then everything was silent. The sound of the gun had woken up Lizzie, who was half-dazed. In a hushed whisper, Allison said, "Liz-Biz, we have to go. Follow me as quickly and as quietly as you can." Lizzie nodded her head quietly, although she was unable to grasp the reality of the situation.

Sarah Peragine, senior
Phoenix Festival: Second Place

Of Broken Streets and Boulevards (excerpt)

A cold, grey dawn greeted him as he drearily but steadily walked through the dusty streets. Wind-carried ash whipped past his face, burning his eyes. It's another dead day in the city. Signs of neon angels and cardboard heroes littered the streets. The sky was as lifeless and empty as ever, which wasn't very surprising as Jim knew there's never been a sunrise in this town. The shadow of a stray dog darted around the corner looking for spare scraps of meat. "I'd be lying if I said that this town's seen better days," Jim said aloud to himself. The dog was disturbingly similar to all of the politicians who previously ran the town and chased after their wealth. The similarity made him chuckle to himself. He then began to reminisce about what had run down this town in the first place: greed.

Sam Tucker, senior

Crayons (excerpt)

All of a sudden, there were stars falling on the City. At least, they looked like stars, but I knew they really weren't because stars don't actually fall. Daddy told me that.

The radio lady said something really weird then. She said, "I love you, Robert." I didn't know who Robert was, but I never got to find out because as soon as she said it, the radio went dead and the stars started exploding.

I thought it looked really pretty, and I guess Momma thought so, too, because she made this quiet noise and held Daddy's hand, which was nice because I didn't think she liked him all that much. I even drew it later with my new crayons, but Momma made me take the pictures down.

Audre Sylvester, junior

With pen in hand...

Creative Writing returned as a course this year with Mrs. Jennifer Wilson as the instructor. Meeting fourth period, students in the class strived to improve their writing skills in all four grade levels. Wilson began the class with a short story unit in which she exposed students to love stories, mysteries, and tales of suspense. Close reading involved deep analysis of the story components, which the students then imitated in their own prose, especially with the development of their characters.

Journal writing is another component of the course, and students have written approximately 60 entries at the time of this article. They write about past events in their lives, favorite memories, and random topics Wilson provides or the students suggest. Free writing is also an option for those writers who cannot relate to the given topics on a certain day.

Students wrote poetry at the start of the year because several writing contests have early deadlines in the fall; however, they continued to write poetry throughout the winter and spring. They are learning the differences between conventional and unconventional poetry and the author and speaker. Additionally, students spent time annotating poems for figurative language, thematic content, and structure.

"I really enjoy the course because I never feel judged about my work in there. We students often have such deep discussions that we have grown very close to one another," said senior Kat Elliott, who is in the Creative Writing class. "Mrs. Wilson is an awesome instructor, but more than that, she is such a great role model that many of us see her as another mom."