

# Told me to run

When the world is fear  
and the sky is dark,  
just as the shadows like,  
we turn to each other.

I turn to you  
and you tell me to run.  
You tell me to run till running  
isn't an option anymore.  
So I pick up my feet  
and flee, and  
run, run, run.  
Because you once told me to run,  
and I never stopped running.

– LILY MEYER, 12, MONTPELIER

# We are not gone

We are teenagers, this is us.  
Hear our heartbeats, breathe our air,  
taste our words.  
Our lives are not at all  
what we're told they'll be.  
The pictures we are in are beautiful  
because we make them so.  
Because no one sees the battle we fight  
to make them so.  
Because we shed our armor  
before anyone can see it.  
Because we wipe away the blood  
and sweat and tears  
and hide the chainmail  
under our baggy T-shirts and say,  
*I am fine,*  
*I am fine,*  
*I am fine.*

We are teenagers, this is us.  
Dancing on coals, embers rising.  
Embrace the pain, call it pleasure.  
Overly dramatic, too much emotion,  
because chemicals are coursing  
through our brains,  
and besides,  
the world is our stage, and  
we are the actors.  
People are scared of us but  
we're scared of us too.  
We are teenagers, this is us.  
Sarcastic laughter, hugs, and high-fives.  
Because isn't life *just so funny?*  
Headphones in, drown out  
the words we hear  
and fill our minds with the words  
we feel like listening to.  
We are young and dumb  
and have our lives to live,  
and we are going to.  
We are teenagers, this is us.  
Dancing in the soaking rain...

– SIRI DUNN, 15, MORRISTOWN

*Excerpted; read complete poem at  
youngwritersproject.org/node/42312*

# YOUNG WRITERS PROJECT



“The Sky’s the Limit,” by Phi Freebern, 12, Richmond

# Sharing

The awkwardness coats us like a blanket. Uncomfortably warm, we are too close for comfort. Too close to each other and too close to ourselves. Rustling papers accent the silence. I politely clear my throat. Unfortunately I do so with a brittle-sounding gurgle, adding another layer of embarrassment to the already multi-layered, ready-to-topple cake. Our voices are seemingly ripped from our lungs. My pencil does a jig. Dancing between my fingers. Mocking my unnecessary discomfort.

The clock ticks consistently from several feet down the hall. Getting louder and louder like a horror movie scene. The tension in my chest reaches its climax. Flooding my lungs with air, I almost drown. Aggressively I push breath out my nose, with a short, shrill whistle. Resurfacing to my calm, relaxed demeanor. With newfound courage, my fingers quickly flip through the pages of my notebook, acting like a jittery, imprisoned man plotting his escape. Pulling my voice kicking and screaming from its hiding place in the dark crevice of my mind, I prepare to read. My heart pounds like an out-of-shape runner

competing in a marathon. Barely around the first corner, already out of breath and panicking.

My voice comes out short and shaky as I begin to read. My pace is too quick, and I feel my poem's disappointment in the pressure on my hands. The work and emotion poured into the writing is liquid gold. And it deserves to be read to the fullest extent of my abilities.

Grasping at the rhythm, I block out my peripheral vision. My eyes are a tunnel. With nowhere to look but straight ahead. Passion pours from every fiber of my being. My beating heart exposed for all to see. Each word resonates. I tastefully pause to let the flavor sit on my tongue. Like a young child licking their ice cream with slow precision to prolong the wonderful flavor.

By the end, only satisfaction lingers within me. As I close my notebook, the pages caringly kiss my fingers in thanks. I stroke them one last time before glancing at my crowd. The awkwardness hasn't completely left but its blanket feels more like a tender hug. Uncertain, but not suffocating.

– WHITNEY DYKSTRA, 14, MONKTON

# Decisions

As she sat down in the secluded booth in the corner of the diner, she couldn't help but stare out the window. Every person that passed by had been given a made-up story by her mind. Whether they were a writer or a dancer, they were all unique. She shrugged her coat off and put in her order, smiling at the waitress as she handed over the menu.

As more and more people passed the window, she fell into deep thought. The made-up stories of strangers got her to think of her own life, and everything that she needed to do. There were so many decisions that needed to be made and things that needed to be done that she'd kept putting off, and she couldn't ignore them any longer.

In that secluded booth where no one else could see her, she had made up her mind. As her plate was set down in front of her by the friendly waitress, she had finally decided. She took her first bite and stared down at the meal in her hands. There she was, holding her grilled cheese sandwich between her fingers and there was nothing left to worry about, because in those buttery, melted lines of her grilled cheese, she had found hope.

– NOELL KOSLOWSKY, 17,  
WELLS RIVER

## ABOUT YWP

**HOW TO JOIN:** Young Writers Project (YWP) welcomes teens, ages 13-18, to join our free, online community of writers and visual artists. Youth who are 12 may join YWP with parental permission. Teachers are also invited to join to submit work on behalf of younger students for publication. To join or for more information, go to [youngwritersproject.org](http://youngwritersproject.org).

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