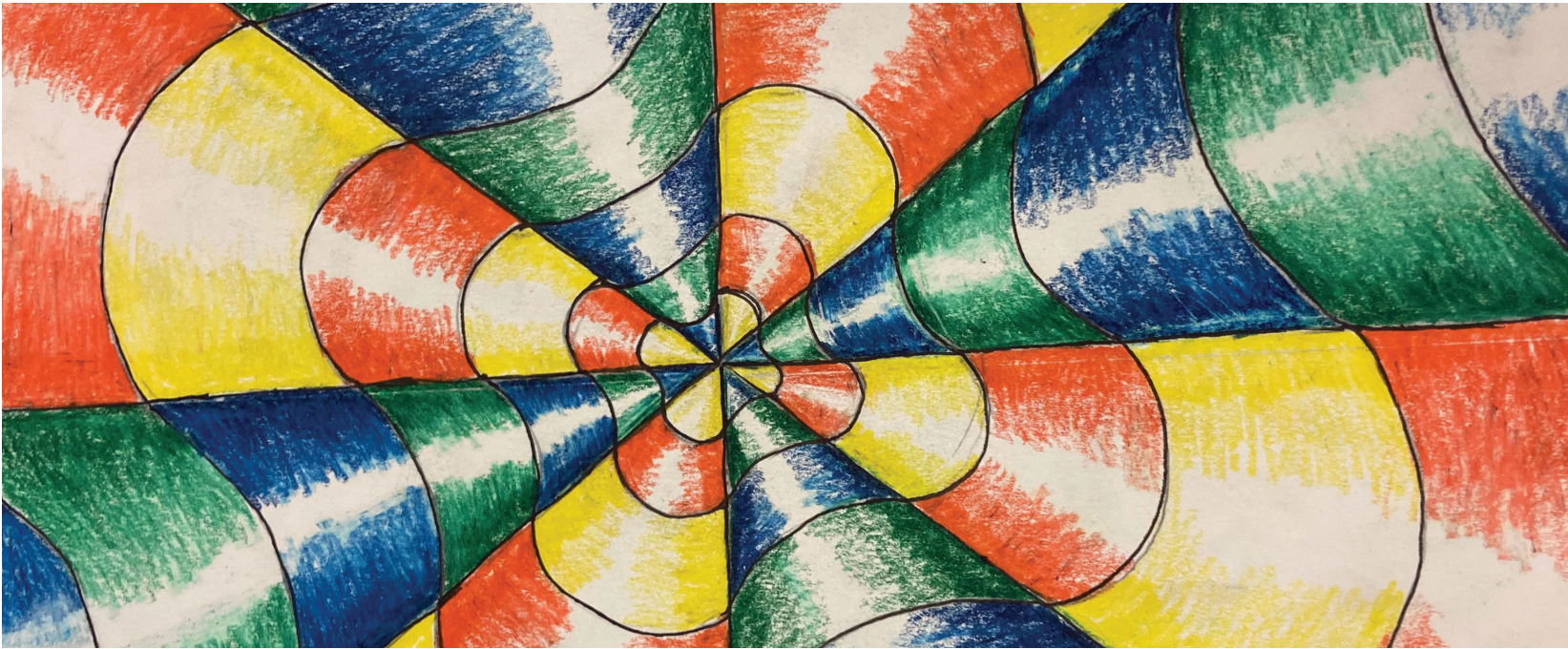


# YOUNG WRITERS PROJECT



“Ridges,” by Amelia Van Driesche, 16, Burlington



## Sorrow

Sometimes,  
it feels like all that is left are  
the deep, dark folds of feeling  
that are breaching through  
the barriers in my mind,  
the ones I worked so hard to set.  
Like I’m floating in a void,  
a void empty of happiness,  
that feeds off my  
regrets,  
sadness,  
scars, failures,  
my sorrows.  
And the little, tiny  
whispers of doubt  
worm through the walls around  
my place of silence,  
the only place I can escape to,  
until there is no place to retreat.  
Fractured cracks in  
my defenses allow the slivers  
of sorrow through, until all seems  
dark.  
But then I’ll notice the little  
pinprick of light,  
the last bit of hope,  
fading in the distance –  
and I’ll reach for it.

– ASTRID LONGSTRETH, 13,  
JERICHO

## The argument

One crisp October morning,  
while the Fitz family were still  
counting their sheep, snug in bed,  
two exercise machines were  
having a heated argument (or at  
least the thermostat said so).  
“Everyone has more fun with  
me!” the trifling treadmill boasted  
proudly.  
“They go faster on me!” the  
petty Peloton shot back, to the  
brim with contempt.  
“I’m bigger!” the treadmill  
shouted back heatedly.  
“I’m prettier!” the Peloton spit,  
full of venom.  
The drowsy couch just then  
woke up from a fulfilling nap, saw  
them discussing, and shrank back.  
However, the Peloton was on him  
quicker than her wheel spun when  
someone was riding it.  
“Which of us is better?”  
implored the Peloton breathily.  
“Um... you?”  
“See? I’m better!” the treadmill  
and Peloton said to each other in  
unison.

As they ranted and argued, an  
alarm sounded upstairs, and the  
machines reluctantly drew a truce  
(they were different and couldn’t  
compare to each other) and went  
back to their places, frozen once  
again.

– CAILIN FITZGERALD, 11,  
SOUTH BURLINGTON

## ABOUT YWP



Young Writers Project is a creative online community of  
writers and visual artists, based in Burlington since 2006.  
This page features highlights of the writing, photos, and  
art submitted each week to YWP’s website. We invite all  
youth, ages 13-18, to sign up for a free account on [youngwritersproject.org](http://youngwritersproject.org). Youth who are 12 may also join with a parental permission form  
found on the site. Teachers of younger students are encouraged to  
open accounts and submit work on behalf of their students. Join us and  
experience the YWP community: Create and connect with other young  
writers and artists, be inspired, and get published!

## Hold music

Her hands clutch the cellphone and  
fiddle with the corners of the case.  
Feet fidgeting under the desk,  
stuffed into socks and shiny flats.  
She did not ask her phone to bring  
her an orchestra,  
did not order its overture for her  
office or invite it in the door.  
It is somehow blind to the colorless  
room and the fine print and the  
*Do Not Disturb* sign.  
It’s not like she even wants this call  
to start, really,  
but it feels strange not to be  
working,  
to simply sit at her desk and be  
serenaded by some forgotten  
symphony.  
She counts the minutes of focus  
this will lose her and the lost time  
begins to weigh on her like  
drying cement.  
She can’t shake it as it suctions her  
into her seat and plants her eyes  
on the screen.  
But her ears are elsewhere.  
The notes are kind of soft and  
pensive and it sounds like  
her mother’s whisper or maybe like  
a cat. Gentle.  
It feels risky to compliment a  
distraction.  
She opens a document on her  
computer, but  
the clicking covers up the cellos.  
She pulls out a pencil to plan  
what she’ll say,  
but its scratching is offbeat,  
out of place with the percussion.  
She tries and tries to focus, but it  
forces her to forget this  
unfamiliar tune, so she just  
closes her eyes and  
listens.  
The guilt comes, but she ignores it.  
It doesn’t match the melody.

– JULIA TODD, 15,  
SOUTH BURLINGTON

## Silence turned to gas

What was once bellowing in silence  
is now screeching in gas.  
The trees I once knew  
have turned to ash.  
And the birds that once talked  
have no words left to say.  
And if they do,  
they know they might be killed  
anyway.

– ANNA O’REILLY, 15,  
SOUTH BURLINGTON

## Sanctity

I flew to the clouds,  
and wings sprouted from my back.  
I am above all.

– PENELOPE ZYGAROWSKI, 15,  
BURLINGTON

## Fleeting dreams

In my dreams, the blades of grass  
under my feet are the waves of an  
ocean, and I am a ship sailing the  
sea. The sea is a glass of water that  
I am drinking in a field, the leaves  
reaching up above my head into the  
stars becoming the hair of a great  
beast, old and ancient.  
But when I wake up, the grass is  
just grass. The water comes from a  
tap, lukewarm and metallic, and I  
have not seen the sea in many  
years. I live alone on a busy street.  
The window in my bedroom doesn’t  
close. Angry car-honking creeps in  
through the crack as I drift off to  
sleep, replaced by the sound of a  
train pulling into a station. The  
brakes hiss, and I stand alone, small  
and afraid. My mother stands next  
to me, holding my hand. I am  
gripping her tightly. She pulls out a  
handkerchief and kneels down in  
front of me, wiping a smudge off my  
face with her gloved hands. She  
looks into my eyes, smiling slightly,  
and says something, but I can’t hear  
her over the bustle of the station.  
She says it again, shaking me  
violently. I open my eyes. My  
mother is gone, replaced by an old  
man in a windbreaker and  
orthopedic shoes. He stares at me,  
concerned, with his hands on my  
shoulders. He looks at me with  
wrinkled, tired eyes, and I look back.  
My feet touch the cold ground,  
and my skin bristles in the morning  
chill. I’m sitting on a wooden bench  
in a park. The dream is over, and I  
am alone again. I feel a tear force  
itself down my face as I wonder  
how something so fleeting can feel  
so real.

The blades of dead grass crunch  
under my feet, and water pools  
around my toes as I walk, searching  
for something I recognize in this  
strange, unfamiliar place. An old  
dog hobbles toward me across the  
park, its brown hair matted and  
dusty, something about its deep,  
black eyes appearing ancient.

– CLARK CLARK, 14, SHELBURNE

## Goodbye season

I don’t think we realize as humans  
how hard goodbye season is.  
Not only for those who are leaving,  
but for the people who will still be  
here when they’re gone.  
We forget that with every goodbye,  
there may or may not be  
another hello.  
So, consequently, you’re stuck in  
their rearview mirror,  
watching with teary eyes  
as they leave,  
because they might not come back.  
Or when they do come back, they  
won’t be the same person who left.  
So we stay here  
and turn into ghosts  
who haunt the wrong houses,  
because the people who leave  
are rarely superstitious.  
So we have to accept the phase  
we’re in of knowing it’s no longer  
going to happen  
while holding onto the hope that  
it might,  
because things like this seldom  
make it past goodbye season.

– GRACIE BATSIE, 16, JERICHO

## YWP NEWS & EVENTS



YWP’s annual anthology of the  
best writing and art from the  
2021-22 school year is coming soon.  
Watch the YWP website,  
[youngwritersproject.org](http://youngwritersproject.org),  
for details!

## HOW TO SUPPORT YWP

Young Writers Project is a 501(c)(3)  
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Or mail your gift to:  
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Director, [sreid@youngwritersproject.org](mailto:sreid@youngwritersproject.org);  
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## SPECIAL THANKS THIS WEEK

