

# YOUNG WRITERS PROJECT



“Sunspot,” by Penelope Zygarowski, 14, Burlington

## The outside world

Walking around on the trails,  
some of them easy and straight  
and others hard, steep,  
and all over the place.  
But still either way,  
always trees surrounding the areas,  
rocks and boulders in the way.  
Colors like no other:  
reds, yellows, greens, and browns.  
Streams of water along the sides,  
not like you would see  
in a city or town.  
The nature around us is  
so beautiful,  
but some don’t see it.  
It’s what makes this place  
so different –  
so peaceful.

– RILYNN LAFOUNTAIN, 13,  
MONTPELIER

## Calliope

Calliope,  
strike me.  
Send your arrow through my heart  
and out my ribs, strike me.  
Calliope, break me.  
Leave nothing in my mind  
but claws on a chalkboard  
and empty corners.  
Calliope, starve me.  
Take away my words,  
my beautiful, precious words, and  
leave me hungry and bull-angry.  
Calliope, if you can hear my voice,  
drive me mad.  
Fill my brain with adjectives,  
drown me in nouns.  
Bring everything out  
twisted and gnarled, let me only  
speak in antonyms and rhymes.  
Calliope,  
wear my tongue down to a nub  
reciting twisters and prophecies.  
Burn through ink and scrolls  
and charcoal, to leave me penniless  
and numb.  
Calliope, crawl through my ear  
and fester in my memories.  
Leave them dark and heavy and  
ready to be read.  
Calliope, be my muse.  
Soak my poems in emotion  
so the first vowel leaves them  
thirsty and weepy.  
Calliope, score the bottoms  
of my feet, so I must stay  
at my desk writing,  
always scribbling away, writing.  
Calliope,  
visit me.  
Calliope,  
help.

– ZOE BERNSTEIN, 16, JERICHO

## Poem to the frost

Looking through the cold window,  
staring at the powdery snow:  
“Can I please, please go outside?”  
But my parents both say no.

– RICHARD JIANG, 13,  
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!

## Waking up: A memoir

Hazy, hot days when the early morning dew disappears long before sleepy eyes open, the sun peeking through the window far too early. For me though, it is the perfect alarm clock. The baby pink of my walls looks orange with the yellow of morning sunlight. My legs are too short to reach the floor, dangling carelessly from my bed, toes painted iridescent blue. Eight years old, not yet tall enough to reach my toothbrush from the shelf, only able to watch my own eyes alert and curious in the mirror.

So instead, as most my age would do, I run, feet against the cold wooden floor, swinging dramatically around the doorframe and onto my mother’s bed. Her bed feels safe, perfect from its bedtime stories and midnight songs after nightmares, but now it is a trampoline – the most effective way to wake her up.

I discover that she is not alone. The 5-year-old body of my brother is curled up beside her, peacefully asleep, or until moments ago. Looking at him is like looking at myself despite being three years apart. We are mirror images of each other: our father’s curly, dark-brown hair and our mother’s deep-blue eyes. I stand 7 inches taller, a point of accomplishment.

Our mother turns to face the commotion I have created, finger over her lips with a gentle, “Shhh,” pointing to the white crib beside her bed. Inside is my sister, barely two months old, a stark contrast to her siblings with scruffy, black hair and hazelnut eyes. My warnings come too late and my sister crows sharply, disrupting the yellow of the morning, the sunny warmth gone as her cries fill the room.

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The sun streams blindingly through the curtains; even my blackout ones can’t seem to stop the summer sun. I struggle to open my eyes, last night’s mascara caked onto my eyelids making them heavier than usual. The shouting from downstairs has awoken me. I’ve yet to find out whether they’re cries of happiness or anger...

– GRACE ORVIS, 15, LINCOLN

Excerpted; read complete memoir at [youngwritersproject.org/node/42382](http://youngwritersproject.org/node/42382)



## When I write

Writing. I feel smart when I write, I feel intelligent. Academic confidence has always been a stranger to me otherwise. Writing is expressive and powerful – the words you choose to write can shift one’s perspective on a story or show them a hidden truth. Writing poems, writing stories, writing essays, I enjoy it all. To write is to think on paper, for my thoughts to see their bubbling as they overflow out of my sullen mind and onto the paper. Each word is unique: happy and joyful, angry and stubborn. The letters convey a perspective that infects the mind and pulls you in. Lost in the jumble of words and the puzzle pieces that don’t always connect, there is a story, and stories are meant to be shared.

Writing is like a lure that pricks your mouth and pulls you up from the cloudy water onto the surface of creativity and expression. The way I feel when I write is different than any other mere emotion – it is something special. Words paint the blank canvas, except the paint is dark and morbid, while hues of fuchsia and pastel-spring yellow still seep through.

Writing has a contrast unlike any other art medium. The happiness or gleeful nature in a poem about fresh autumn leaves can all be forgotten when you explore the barbaric and doomed path ahead. The darkness expressed in writing is chilling and unforgiving; it rattles you and leaves you aimlessly wandering like a writer’s lost pen. That’s what conceals the truest forms of literary beauty.

Words, words, words. They always find their way out and onto paper. The need for written expression and the overwhelming need to see my thoughts on paper is what I surrender to...

– ROMA VALLABHANENI, 15,  
COLCHESTER

Excerpted; read complete essay at [youngwritersproject.org/node/42449](http://youngwritersproject.org/node/42449)

## Fall mornings

The streetlights are just turning off, the ground is wet, Vermont is soaked to the bone. A light wind that dares to disturb the otherwise still morning runs gentle hands through my hair. Any leaves still on trees are holding on for dear life, not wanting to make the plummet. The cold air tries to encompass us as we walk. Rotting pumpkins sit sadly on front steps, ready to be thrown in the trash. Rotten smiles and decomposing eyes watch as we walk in the early morning.

The ground is littered with shades of red, orange, and brown. Not many colors to look at. The beauty has faded. The earth is getting ready for sleep. Not even the geese that fly overhead make a sound.

We tuck our hands into our jackets, trying to hide them away from the cold morning air. Our quiet mummers and timid laughter seem to stand still in the crisp fall morning air. The fog is thickest in the morning. Like a curtain keeping us from moving on with the day. It makes it seem as though the world has been put on pause all around us.

Some snow may fall during the day, but it never sticks. The earth is not ready to go to bed yet. It seems like it still needs a bedtime story. The sun has taken a day off, letting the dark clouds hang above our heads, threatening us with even more rain. We can’t hear the birds’ songs anymore. All that fills the air is fog, chilly air, and the rustle of leaves from a critter trying to stash an acorn. We get ready for the earth to be blanketed in snow, but until then we settle for frosty mornings and blue, cloudless skies.

– ROMAE MARTONE, 13,  
WILLISTON

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## SPECIAL THANKS THIS WEEK

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