

YOUNG WRITERS PROJECT



Photo by Max Wilson, 18, Windsor

Making new friends

It is hard sometimes
to talk to you,
'cause it's not like I know
what you've been through.
But you don't know me
either, just yet.
And both have to give
for either to get.
I try to listen, while you don't talk.
I try to follow,
when you don't walk.
I open my heart
and give you the key.
If you never unlock it
you'll never know me.
Sometimes you're open
and welcome me in,
to hear your secrets,
stories, and sins.
And for those people,
I'm forever grateful.
I hope you know,
I will always be faithful.

— GRETCHEN FITZGERALD, 15,
BURLINGTON

Birthday cake

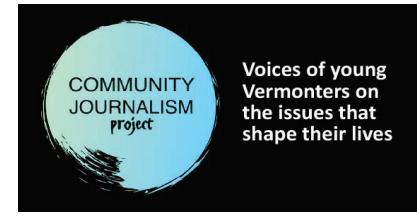
I've been thinking of you lately,
and for the past four years.
I've been thinking about that time
you stood with your neck bent
back, staring at the sky,
counting its emptiness,
how afraid you were.
It took you so long
to love me like a black hole:
The way they collapse,
how the seconds fall off
the horizon and
are gone forever.
What happens after we grow
too old for hopscotch?
Will we still hang
our hands out car windows?
Will we remember 17
when we're 40?
I keep telling myself:
We are much more than
our own light,
our own gravity.
Will you still call me on the nights
when my voice echoes off
the atmosphere?
Will you remember
the way you are
memorialized
in my eyelashes, and my walls,
and the letters under my bed?
How old before
we realize change is born
from pain?
Forget the insecurities,
forget the old mistakes,
and the times we crashed the car,
and said the wrong things,
forget that we never said goodbye.
Just. Just
turn around, see me,
tell me this is the start.
Here I am,
on the edge of this cliff,
looking down
at all the years we gave up on.
Blow out the candles for me, okay?

— SAM AIKMAN, 18, RICHMOND



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. 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!



Hot room

(*I cross my legs.*)
Two chairs
facing each other
is my greatest fear,
trying to fix my hair
without seeming petty,
trying to fold my arms
without nervously tying
them around my torso.
My fingers are a hot mess of worms
sweating along the creases,
but I'll deal with them later.
I keep track of the words
I have said,
because I can only use them once.
(*I uncross
and re-cross my legs.*)
I stare right into your blue,
hole-punched eyes,
and I feel a sense of pride
when you break first.
I ball my fists,
cool fingertips
and heated palms,
and count the times you flinch
as you lift your face again
and find me still staring.
It is my only victory in this
hot room.
(*I uncross
and re-cross my legs.*)
I tuck my shoulder blades
behind me
like falcon wings.
I hope I look like
an apex predator.
I hope you can't tell
how tense I am.
I hope you can't tell I am running
out of words.
But most of all,
I hope you feel small,
very small.
I try untangling my fingers
and forming a pyramid,
but it crumbles into two neat piles
crisscrossing each other.
I am fine with that.
The room is too hot now
but I make no sign I am
uncomfortable,
because I am already feeling larger,
and you look quite small
over there.
(*I uncross
and re-cross my legs.*)
You conclude in a hurry
and thank me for coming.
About time.
I was just beginning to lose track
of the words I have said.

— AVA ROHRBAUGH, 16,
CHARLOTTE

Red picnic table

Red picnic table dusty
with loneliness,
the dry breeze blowing back
the pieces of chipped paint
hanging on by a speck.
There are red fence posts, a barrier
from my empty surroundings.
Their color is harsh against
the neutrals of Wyoming,
sticking out like a sore thumb
amid the expansive wilderness.
Mountains emerging
out of the ground in the distance,
like a plant blossoming
out of the ground and into the air.
They're far away,
down a long
and monotonous road,
calling for those around them
to come and conquer
their tallest peaks.
They are hot with the heat
of the sun beating down.
I smell dust whip off the ground
as a car pulls out of the lot,
the waft of gasoline,
and the sound of a gas pump.
It will be a while before another car
accompanies me in this lot.
The only sound I hear is the dust
twirling around in the road,
and the hushed sound
of the country radio station
inside the gas station.
I hear the twangy guitar
and the rhythmic beat.
It makes me feel happy.
I feel content here.
The emptiness brings me
an eerie comfort.
And the mountains make me
feel small.
Breathing in deeply the warm,
dusty Wyoming air,
I continue my journey
farther West.

— NINA PIKE, 18, HINESBURG

Home

The trees smothered in fog,
clumped into a forest,
remind me to breathe,
breathe.
Because I'm surrounded by
the splatter painting of mountains,
and the insignificant brush strokes
of road wind in every direction –
connecting apples to their trees
when they've landed a bit
too far from home.

— MIA MARINO, 16, HINESBURG

Slippery slope

The way is harsh, the light is dim,
and we forget to celebrate love,
instead condemning
faultless faults and forged sins.
We sit in silence,
festering in our lack of empathy,
or we stand and scream because
still we are not heard.
Sometimes we yell too loud
because we forget
what we are fighting for,
and we cry far too many tears
for those lost, afraid,
wise beyond their years.
We cry and pray and fight
and play pretend,
our anger fierce,
our anger so very tired,
our rivalries so deep that
they may never come to an end.

— KATIE BRENNAN KEECH, 15,
CHARLOTTE

Recognition

She dreamed of someone who
couldn't quite be placed,
blond hair upon her shoulders,
multiple hoops
spinning around her waist.
She was small and thin
but stood strong,
a smile beaming
from cheek to cheek.
This person was her.
Many years had passed
and the difference was immense.
She was the same little girl
with hula hoops,
but different all the same.

— TAYLOR ROCK, 16, HINESBURG

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SPECIAL THANKS THIS WEEK

