

# Up

The stars don’t watch with judgment,  
and the moon doesn’t shine  
to tell you what to do.  
Nobody’s seen the clouds fussing  
over who said what to whom.  
Sometimes the only way to escape  
this dramatic social hullabaloo  
is to look up.  
Up  
from the table  
at which you are bound by strings  
of compassion.  
Up from the screen  
that you feel trapped in.  
Up from the tissues  
and cough drop wrappers.  
Look up at the sky,  
look up at the rafters.  
The walls of this house  
don’t whisper with envy.  
The soft sway of branches  
don’t scream in a frenzy  
of first world issues  
and problems so petty.  
Am I your friend  
or am I your enemy?  
It’s never been clear,  
though I want to be friendly.  
I’m lost in this world  
of teen drama and distractions.  
Somebody please  
give me directions.  
All I can do is look up,  
up at the sky that could be the sea,  
tempted to make the next line,  
*I wish you could be here with me.*  
But I just look up.  
Up at the ceiling that traps me,  
but traps me safely.  
Up at the atmosphere being created.  
Up at the clouds  
and up at the constellations.  
Now I worry  
I’ll fall over my own feet,  
but I keep looking  
up.  
The feeling of freedom  
is worth the scraped knees.

– **IZZY O’DONNELL, 14, HINESBURG**

# Winter oxygen

We walk the brisk winter field,  
following the steps  
of those before us.  
I doff my aired-out mask  
and inhale the frosty draft.  
The animated air  
greeted the roof of my mouth  
and travels through my throat.  
My lungs fill  
as the air hits my inner self.  
It feels nice.

– **RIORDAN ADAMS, 11, ESSEX JCT.**

# Foggy

Seeing herself reflected  
in the windows of her dad’s car.  
She has heard she is beautiful,  
but does she believe it?  
*She blows at the window.*  
*I don’t need to be happy all the time.*  
I’m not perfect.  
She wipes the fogged area.  
*I’m not perfect.*  
*I’m me.*

– **RUBY HOFFMAN, 12, ESSEX JCT.**

# Ache as kind

A bowl of dust is but a  
sore lip to you.  
If all were weighted by  
the touch of your fork,  
I wouldn’t have a breath;  
I’d be ice deep in it.  
How softly do you walk up the stairs?  
Is your step a body or a train?  
Am I a wrist or a woman  
(or a current)?  
Is your ache as kind as mine?

– **SASKIA GORI-MONTANELLI, 16, MIDDLEBURY**

# Word magnets

Love and death and life,  
hand in hand in hand,  
playing together  
beneath us,  
above us.  
They whisper and watch,  
for all things must go,  
yet how sweet it is to live.  
To watch and cry and dream  
and be,  
and one day  
to die.  
How achingly gorgeous.

– **ROSE LORD, 15, CHARLOTTE**



# YOUNG WRITERS PROJECT

Young Writers Project’s mission is to inspire, mentor, publish, and promote young writers and artists. We select the best writing from hundreds of submissions to our website, *youngwritersproject.org*, for publication in this newspaper and with other Vermont media partners, and in our monthly digital magazine and annual anthology. This week, we present responses to the challenges, ***Haiku.** Closely observe an aspect of the natural world to convey in a Haiku poem;* and ***General Writing.***

# PHOTO OF THE WEEK



LILY HUTCHESON, 14, MANCHESTER

# It was a rainbow

It looked unbelievable.  
It was the black and white I saw when  
you gave my favorite mug back to me.  
It was the yellow I saw when  
I broke that painting of the daisy.  
It was the red I saw when I was vexed.  
It was the clear I saw when  
my eyes flooded with tears.  
It was the blue I saw when  
I gave you your old sweater.  
It was the green, purple I saw when  
I gave my necklace back to you.  
It was the orange I saw when  
you replanted the bell peppers  
at your house, and it was  
the rainbow of colors  
that fluffed my vision.

– **DAHABO ABUKAR, 16, ESSEX**

# Our bodies

Our bodies  
are nothing more than flesh and bone  
held together with knotted chunks  
of cartilage and rubberized tendons.  
Muscle and fat laced  
thoroughly with nerves and filled  
with blood from an organic pump.  
Organs are just tools  
stuffed inside a sack of skin,  
like rusty gears inside a clock that  
ticks itself to death.  
We are flesh  
controlled by a lump of gray Jell-O,  
trapped in its brittle prison.  
We are born, we live, we die.  
We are machines. Right?  
Except there is one crucial detail  
that elevates us from  
the mechanics of our bodies,  
that allows us to dream, to play,  
to sit around a fire and contemplate  
our brains, our thoughts,  
and our beings.  
Point to the organ in your body that  
makes you smile when a baby laughs.  
That flutters and quakes  
when you’re waiting in the wings,  
about to go onstage.  
Find the muscle or lump of flesh  
that longs so deeply for love  
and hurts so badly when it is absent.  
Our bodies may be mechanical,  
but we are not our bodies.  
You could piece together each  
and every organ of a human body,  
fully functioning  
in the proper places,  
and it would not be a human.  
To be a human is  
to be a sperm and an egg,  
to grow inside your mother,  
to be funneled trauma  
and pre-digested nutrients directly  
as you come into existence.  
To be born into a world of light  
and confusion, to take your first step.  
To love, to hate love.  
To have crises and struggles,  
to realize you won’t be alive forever.  
To witness death  
and be unbelievably terrified,  
and then accept that one day  
you will die, so you should  
make the most of your life as it is.  
To be human is to sit in a field  
on a sunny day, look around you,  
and breathe a sigh of contentment.

– **JADE EDWARDS, 16, LINCOLN**

# Winter’s truth

Skeletons of trees  
cracking against paper skies  
as wind irks frail bones.

– **MADELEINE CONNERY, 15, SHELburnE**

# Snow day!

My eyes flutter open and dart  
to the windowsill. My lucky wooden  
spoon is still there from last night.  
I leap out of bed and nearly fall  
sprinting to the window, feeling  
the excitement start to rise as the  
snowflakes begin to fall. I watch  
each individual snowflake dance  
through the spiraling winter air.  
I shoot down the stairs and rip  
open the door to be greeted by  
a gust of wind that carries the  
delicate snowflakes inside. I don’t  
even notice the freezing air and  
feel only the humming warmth of  
excitement inside myself.  
It’s the day we’ve all been waiting  
for. There is nothing that can smother  
my feeling of adventure in this fresh  
powder and the euphoric feeling of  
the elusive snow day!

– **MAEVE MACAULEY, 16, COLCHESTER**

# Silent evolution

The more words I have,  
the less there is to say.  
Thinking has become an act of  
meditation in which I run my  
fingers through my hair,  
ruining the curls and forcing  
them to become straight, limp tendrils  
that try to crown my face. My new  
silhouette is unnaturally natural.  
Maybe I started with a base of two  
and that’s how we got here. How do  
you do it?  
Speak so eloquently,  
I mean.  
Never quieting down.  
Always walking along a  
comprehensible path of paragraphs.  
Do my words still make sense?  
I’m fearing they sound strange.  
Do you know what I mean?  
See, this is why my dictionary  
might be better off  
tucked away in a storage bin.

– **CHARLOTTE DODDS, 16, BURLINGTON**

# Record

A vinyl record.  
It spins and it spins around,  
a beautiful sound.

– **LEAH KOWALSKI, 12, ESSEX JCT.**

# Fantasy

Within fantasy,  
anything is possible.  
Prince Charming awaits.

– **WHITNEY DYKSTRA, 14, MONKTON**



# SHARING THE VOICES OF YOUNG VERMONTERS ON THE ISSUES THAT SHAPE THEIR LIVES

# Home

Hold up my head, hold my hand,  
because I am falling.  
Hold me together  
with tape, with glue.  
Prayers aren’t enough anymore;  
nobody’s listening.  
Hold up my head, hold my hand,  
because I am falling.  
Letters written, stamped, then sent.  
Apologies aren’t enough anymore,  
and they are refused.  
I’m looking for a future, hoping  
I’ll be free when the rules are bent.  
Hold up my head, hold my hand,  
because I am falling.  
Asking a simple question:  
*Am I to be refused too?*  
Running from my home isn’t  
enough anymore,  
for I am not safe here.  
If all I am is a problem,  
what can I possibly do  
to show you that you are  
my promise land, a promise of  
a better place, where I can be safe,  
where my family can be safe,  
and yet—  
Hold up my head, hold my hand,  
because we are falling.  
*Is all lost?* I ask, because the country  
I was told could be our home  
has turned us away.  
Hope isn’t enough anymore.  
We need a promise, a contract,  
or we’re fractured.  
We are people,  
and all we ask for is a home.  
*Are we all alone?*

– **ELEANOR FREEBERN, 14, RICHMOND**

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# A lost moment

Summer days stretch on and on  
like the sun drifting  
across the blue sky.  
They are filled with  
laughter and boat trips,  
blue lakes and campfires.  
But these days also pass by quickly,  
and the sun must sink  
below the mountains.  
Part of a beautiful sunset,  
yet gone before we know it.  
Sometimes I find myself in a moment,  
a small one in  
the ticking clock of time.  
But I’ll remember it.  
I’ll stop and think,  
*How sweet it is,*  
as my Gramps always says.  
When I am bored of the  
monotonous repetition of life,  
enveloped in a dark winter with  
a silencing blanket of snow,  
I’ll wish to be here.  
This moment is so precious.  
I want to stay here forever  
yet know I’ll never return to it again,  
no matter how many summers  
lie ahead of me.  
It’s somewhat melancholy  
when I dive into the cool water,  
and in my blue underwater world,  
everything slows down.  
This moment is one of the waves  
blown by the wind,  
individually beautiful, but  
it slips underwater and disappears,  
flowing and weaving  
back into the lake,  
lost in the waves of time.  
I swim to the surface,  
once again exposed to  
a world of light and air,  
a world of loudness and movement,  
and the moment is forgotten.  
Another moment I’ll wish to  
return to, and I’ll wish I’d been  
more grateful to be here.  
But alas. A perfect, lost  
moment of the summer.

– **ELLA CISZ, 13, WATERBURY**