

Spring rain

It's spring and it's time to have some fun, but rain splatters down from the gray clouds above. That silly rain is ruining the spring fun, but for the plants, worms, and trees, the fun has just begun. They think the rain is great as can be, but when the rain stops, everyone is free: Kids jump in puddles, worms squirm in mud, plants dry off in the after-rain sun. As they play, a rainbow forms above. They all look up and see something they love. When everyone is tired and ready for slumber, they now remember why they don't like summer. Now they are happy that the rain came along, but now they are sad that spring won't last long.

– ELOISE KNOX, 10, ESSEX JCT.

Yellow to gray

I painted my room yellow to combat the gray. To wash it away, to stare at it blindly without being blighted. It stares back at me. Unexpectedly – to be honest. Instead of warmth, the feeling matches the weather up north. I feel its isolation, and worse, it's from my own creation. Painting the walls bright doesn't affect the windows, doesn't bring in more light, doesn't mask the gray areas, the ones that encompass our lives. I painted my walls yellow to forget it all. Now all I can do is sit and stare and remember. Lesson learned. Opt for gray in times of disarray.

– MARIA BEAULIEU, 15, MILTON

Maurice II and Dakota

“On one of my shoulders sits a demon named Maurice II. On the other sits Dakota. She's supposed to be my angel, but instead of a glowing ball of light shining from within, smelling like a mother's pride and autumnal wind, I found her in a puddle of beer next to Three Times the Charm Casino on the side of the freeway. I guess that's why I'm here.” The detention officer stares at me like I'd said I've started attending synagogue. I ask for a lollipop but not the orange kind that makes my tongue fuzzy. Maurice II says demons only like orange lollipops, and I am going to do very poorly in hell. Dakota says she's not doing sugar now, and that I will also have to buy celery and stevia and cranberry juice when I finally get out of here. Once I explain all this, I am checked for a concussion. Twice. My glabella is poked and prodded and pinched, until Maurice II asks me to leave before he starts screaming and Dakota says she may take up Irish step dancing on my head unless I walk out of the door right now.

– ZOE BERNSTEIN, 15, JERICHO

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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, *Morals. Write about making a tough decision between right and wrong;* and *General Writing.*

PHOTO OF THE WEEK



ALDEN BOND, 13, MIDDLESEX

I challenge myself Opinions on worlds I've yet to see

I challenge myself to write. To write about something surreal. Or at least express how I feel. To try to find a solution. Or at least write down resolutions. To change myself for the better. Or at least write a hopeful letter. To lift my head and grin. Or at least play some violin. To read the local newspaper. Or at least put pen to paper. I challenge myself to write. For it will shine light.

– EVEY SLAVIK, 14, BURLINGTON

Pineapples/ tell me a story

“Tell me a story,” she says, eyes shining. I smile, smooth my hand over the sand that lies rippled all around us. “What would you like to hear?” Wind twists through her hair and she tosses the licorice strands impatiently from her face. “A story where butterflies glow and you can see the ribbons that keep the stars hanging in the sky. Fish that have two tails, and... Tell me about popsicle stands at the bottom of the ocean that you can only get to by riding a blue whale.” “Are you ready?” “No. I want a story where you can taste the wind, blue raspberry or watermelon. And form it into shapes, like llamas, maybe. And turtles. Something with flavor, I want a sweet and spicy story.” “How about now, now can we start?” “I wasn't finished. Tell me about ice that looks like stained glass and fairies who drink nectar from acorn cups. I want to hear about rivers that run green, emerald green. And blue grass and purple skies. And—” Here she stops and looks at me. “And?” “I want a story about pineapples.” “Pineapples?” She nods decidedly. “Pineapples.”

– SIRI DUNN, 15, MORRISTOWN

Beige

Beige: a yellowy color with undertones of brown and a consistency like butter, soft and soothing like a bike ride in the summer. It's a bummer that beige is such a boring color.

– MIA MARINO, 15, HINESBURG



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

Windows, glass, and missing the past

You never think about windows when you have the option to go outside. But lately, windows are all some people have. This pandemic has everyone trapped, and inside each window is a different view. Some are filled with family, and laughter and light pour out through those windows. But some are alone, and silence slips out through the glass panes. For some, the only connections that happen are with a glass barrier in between.

We see all our neighbors, we know all the birds, we have memorized everything outside the window. But we struggle to see beyond. It is hard to see the end of the pandemic and the isolation, because every time we try to see where the pandemic ends, our noses bump the glass. It doesn't matter how many times we clean or fix our windows, because we won't be able to recreate what we are seeing on the other side.

The nice thing about windows is that they are always constant, even when the world is in chaos around them. So we will continue to look out the window with our noses pressed to the glass, waiting for the chaos to fade...

– PAIGE DUBUQUE, 17, ESSEX

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Thank you!

Cookies

Will I really allow myself to be pulled instead of pushed? Am I not strong enough to at least try to fight the temptation to take, even though I am so frequently given to? And for what? Temporary validation, sweetness? And what will become of those who don't receive? Who am I taking from? Just one, maybe? But oh, one turns to more so frequently, and can I really control myself as the road grows darker, and my bravery is no longer present? Where does my control stop and their control begin, what is control? Who's to blame, my upbringing, this sweet tooth given by generations craving an ephemeral encounter with a treat previously restricted? As they push, I pull away from my own values, but who am I really pulling from? Should I be pushed? *Should.* Who created the word *should*? Who are you to say what is right and what is wrong? Am I wrong to listen to you? And how is your influence adjusting the words of the little voice in my head, the one who has told me that I am able to *control*? And the second you say *should*, I begin to doubt, so please just leave, leave me to be on my own. But please, no, when you are gone I might give in to the temptation to steal, steal from the innocent, from those who need it most. Steal from my own self? Because, somehow, I owe it to myself to be the person who allows others to feel joy, as then we could share this feeling of contentment.

– STELLA EWALD, 16, SHELBURNE

– THERESA CHRISTIANSEN, 17, RICHMOND

When I'm in the woods

When I'm in the woods, I feel free, like all the weight that's been on my shoulders has been lifted off me. I can build a fort with my friends, or maybe just go exploring. I know my place in the woods: not at the top, not at the bottom, maybe somewhere in between. The woods seem to hide secrets – not bad ones, just... peace. When I'm in the woods, I feel relaxed and energized, like I can be anything I want to be, fictional, or real to only me. Whenever I'm in the woods, I find inner peace.

– MOLLY MARINO, 12, HINESBURG

Call me by my name

My name is not just a word. It is many words combined into one. My name describes me – my personality, my problems, my life. My name is me and I am my name. Two halves, together we make one. Do not call me by something that is not me. Do not call me a nerd, a “little miss perfect,” a teacher's pet. Do not call me a crybaby, annoying, or boring. Call me by my name. I know my name, but do you know it? Call me by my name.

– LUCY PODUSCHNICK, 15, MIDDLEBURY