2008 Pluralist

Artwork by SHELBY STRONG, Essex DHS
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Greetings from the Director of Education

The artist Henri Matisse said: “Creation begins with vision.” As we celebrate the introspective student writing and illustrations in this publication of The Pluralist, I applaud the creative vision nurtured by parents and by the staff of the Greater Essex County District School Board. With the ever-changing face of technology, the theme of vision is a necessity as our students strive for a future of hope and innovation. The generous support of our community sponsors, the Rotary Clubs of Windsor and Essex County, allows for the bonus feature of a CD of many of our prize-winning pieces read by the writers themselves. What a wonderful gift to our student writers! We thank our local Rotary Clubs for their generosity. Back from British Columbia, the familiar voice of Paul Vasey is heard again in the prose notes of the judges, along with Lenore Langs, who has been a long-standing judge of the poetry entries. Thank you for your commitment to our writers. In a new challenge to our student writers, this year’s prose entries were limited to fifty-five words, honing the focus of the stories even further. Thank you to the co-editors, Darina Sleziak and Dorothy Mahoney, along with the many others who continue to promote the proud tradition of The Pluralist.

Congratulations!

— Mary Jean Gallagher

Notes from the Judges

Fifty-five words, hm?
Sounds impossible.
Reminds me of a challenge someone put to Ernest Hemingway: write a story in six words, or fewer.
Here’s his story:
Baby shoes for sale. Never used.
Sometimes it’s not what you put in, but what you leave out, that matters.
Bravo writers. Loved your stories.
Job well done.

— Paul Vasey

When I read poetry, I appreciate the subtlety, the irony, the meaning lurking beneath the surface, which is what gives to poetry its mystery and depth. On the surface, we see the images and the obvious meaning, but by the end of the poem, there can be the “oh” moment, when we sense the deeper levels. These poems frequently produced the “oh” moment!

— Lenore Langs

A Message from the Editors

This year’s theme of Vision encouraged writers to explore the world with inner eyes and outer. Glancing at others, and seeing others glancing, holding strong to convictions for the future and seeing truth, in the repetition of pantoums, lyric poems, or restrictions of 55 words, we congratulate all of the writers who wrote. Well done!

— Darina Sleziak
and Dorothy Mahoney
A Youth Always in Love

Bombs dropping, hurtling shrapnel over a thousand unknowing victims
You can’t always return what you’ve been given, so you hold up the white flag and surrender.
Sometimes you just have to pick up the pieces, try and make sense of what’s left.
Terror grips some, and they live, never allowing themselves to participate in such a barbaric ritual

There are the politicians, who hide their true faces, as if they were at a masquerade ball.
Professing one thing to you, and another behind closed doors.
Putting on their best suits for you, in hopes that this may make them worthy candidates.
Bearing gifts that aren’t needed, and aren’t always appreciated.

Some throw themselves wholly into the battle, proud to show every scar.
As the opposing side fire their bullets, and bombs, their carefully built up armor gets worn down.
Trusting completely in your fellow human with something so precious is either a true blessing, or a great curse.

And then we have the wounded.
Ones who have been so completely battered and broken, that their lives may never be the same again.
And those, who even after they have suffered great injuries and peril, have the ability to hope.
And wish

Love really is a battlefield.
Break and Enter

Yesterday
my heart was strong
unclaimed and independent
well-guarded, hidden away
locked up like a precious jewel
Still I was searching,
always longing for someone
but afraid, afraid of losing
Expecting rejection but
secretly wishing,
dreaming of love
and acceptance

Today
I saw you
and with one glance
one simple word
a gentle touch, a warm smile
I began to fall
away from the safety,
the security I had created for myself
In an instant I was exposed
defenseless, vulnerable
unprotected and fragile

And there you stand
waiting,
waiting for that moment
Here it is
You are breaking in
ever so gently
Calm, careful
wait...silence
You take a deep breath and
grab hold
gently pulling, drawing me in
And I cannot,
will not resist

You have stolen my heart
Or have I given it to you?
Chasing A Dream

The stage is dimmed,
The light shine on the star,
Her face aglow,
She’s Chasing a dream.

She lifts her microphone,
And takes a deep breath,
The music plays delicately,
She’s Chasing a dream.

She opens her mouth,
She sings strong and clear,
The audience is astonished,
She’s Chasing a dream.

Her song brings peace,
And comforts many souls,
She’s showing others,
How to chase a dream.
Gone

Looking down I see him
Laughing with his friends
Moving on with his life
Trying to forget.

Laughing with his friends
He smiles for the first time
Trying to forget
Letting memories fade and die

He smiles for the first time
But my happiness is not complete
He is letting memories fade and die
Making my life disappear.

My heart is breaking for,
Looking down I see him
Forgetting me
Moving on with his life.
Among scalpels and surgical knives they tell you,  
"We can fix you."
Their white gloves and masks; a beacon.
A separate existence awaits.

"We can fix you."
They reassure you over white tables and bright lights.
A separate existence awaits.
Your flaws and limitations soon forgotten.

They reassure you over white tables and bright lights,
They can perfect you.
Your flaws and limitations soon forgotten,
Under a mask concealing identity.

They can perfect you
Among scalpels and surgical knives they tell you
"Your flaws and limitations, soon forgotten."
Their white gloves and masks; a beacon.
Over Breakfast

I am not happy as I should be.
I do not know what may become of me.
I thought about this over breakfast.
Not of the man of my choice but an unknown man who could choose right.

I do not know what may become of me.
I have cried many nights, thinking about the men who have tried to take my hand in marriage.
Not of the man of my choice but an unknown man who could choose right
I was glad when they failed to do so.

I have cried many nights, thinking about the men who have tried to take my hand in marriage.
They have all come to call on me.
I was glad when they failed to do so.
I hope and pray that the right man will choose for I could not bear life otherwise.

They have all come to call on me.
Today I will take a gondola to a dress shop.
I hope and pray that the right man will choose for I could not bear life otherwise.
The days feel never ending as I wait upon a gentleman
to choose the right casket.

Today I will take a gondola to a dress shop.
I am not happy as I should be.
The days feel never ending as I wait upon a gentleman
to choose the right casket.
I thought about this over breakfast.
No Consent to Publish
Leamington District
High School
Sky Eyes & Chin Hair (a poem of regret)

Regret? Only one thing to write about; can’t get the words out fast enough
Spent August under sheets
(that was sweat on my cheeks – not tears)
waiting.

Claims of “I’ll be back soon”
curdled into blatant lies in the summer Heat.

“Wait,” you asked, demanded.
“No,” I replied.

Love blooms into hate so quickly
“#%?@, *&#!, %&*#?” you shouted with tears in your voice.
I disconnected the phone cord that holds us together and strangles me.
(You didn’t have a heart to break)
You were never what I wanted,
So I tried to make you anyway,
A perfectly blank canvas,
To create the idea in my head.

You fit the frame quite well,
Though constantly bursting at the seams.
The costume you wore quite obvious to the world,
Wearing, tearing.
I always stitched you back up.

You were very good at acting,
But you were never real,
A figment of imagination turned tangible
That constantly required polishing.

Your words were never good enough,
But I melted for them anyway,
Always changing them to fit the context in my mind,
Hardly capable of making sense otherwise.

You were never what I wanted
Even after years of crafting,
With hands tired from sculpting,
My masterpiece complete,
And once your finished image left my head for good,
You still tried to fit the frame,
That no longer suits you.
The Mystery of Tomorrow

All that lies ahead is uncertain,
the tears, the joy, the surprises undefined.
A knot of mystery waiting to unwind
as the clock ticks down to graduation.

The tears, the joy, the surprises undefined,
the memories forever in my heart.
As the clock ticks down to graduation
I struggle to mask my fears.

The memories forever in my heart
As if the moment had never passed.
I struggle to mask my fears
while looking into the future.

As if the moment had never passed,
I look back to yesterday, and forget about tomorrow.
While looking into the future,
the puzzle I have yet to solve.

I look back to yesterday, and forget about tomorrow.
All that lies ahead is uncertain,
the puzzle I have yet to solve,
a knot of mystery waiting to unwind.
Excitement...
Where is it in the world anymore?
Everything has been done.
There is nothing left to discover.

Where is it in the world anymore,
the danger and adventure?
There is nothing left to discover,
yet still we search.

The danger and adventure,
It’s all gone today;
yet still we search
for something new.

It’s all gone today;
no matter where you look
for something new,
you’ll never find it.

No matter where you look,
everything has been done.
You’ll never find
Excitement.
The Punch Line

They stare.
I am the victim of their glares.
They laugh.
I am their punch line.

I am the victim of their glares.
They look at me through criticizing eyes.
I am their punch line.
I walk quietly through the whispers.

They look at me through criticizing eyes.
Here comes the punch line.
I walk quietly through the whispers.
They see me as a joke.

Here comes the punch line.
They stop.
They see me as a joke.
They point.

They stop.
They stare.
They point.
They laugh.
Perfect

There it was. That perfect shirt on the perfect body of the perfect manikin. It was the perfect colour. A light, olive green which would match perfectly with my eyes. It swam in my mind like perfect fish in a perfectly clean pond. Wait, what’s that?

A sign:

“SOLD OUT”

Well, it wasn’t that perfect.

Iraq, Future and Present

I envision a time when people can whistle tunes, children scream with delight and the birds fly. Until then, the bullets whistle funeral marches, American ten-ton bombs scream with fury and the blood and limbs fly though a hazed sky, while my family remains buried underneath the wreckage of our house, here in Iraq.

Deer in the Street

I saw deer in the street on my way home from my cousin Julie’s wedding. We saw around ten deer on the side of the street, on a patch of grass, just walking around, eating and laying down. They were not scared of the cars or people. I thought it was the strangest thing ever.

Abdul-Karim Kawsara
Forster Secondary School

Kimberley Macdonald
Essex District High School

Meaghan MacPherson
Riverside Secondary School
The Fortune Teller

I walked into the fortune teller’s tent. She had bangles and dangles and her hair was long and tangled. “Sit here young man; let us look into my crystal ball; the next woman you meet will be your wife.”

“Ha! I’m already engaged,” I said leaving the tent. Suddenly I bumped into Loveliness…my fiancée?”

Friday Night

A girl walks alone down a path in the forgotten old woods. She is unaware of the asylum breakout, or the man with his blade. Dragging her feet, she hums a mournful tune. He watches her, sitting in the shrubbery, waiting. She screams and he slashes. Gwen snickers, holding the remote. “Scary movies are idiotic.”

He Calls Me Cowgirl

The computer chimed as a message popped up. Loverboy565 says: Goodnight cowgirl. She giggled at this new nickname, staring at the picture of her G.Q. model boyfriend; they would meet soon, he said.

Carl leaned back in his chair. Sauce from the burritos his mom had made stained his shirt. Cowgirl, he chuckled, how clever!
The Electric Kool-Aid Vision Test

A group of manic renegades somehow recognized me as a kindred spirit. Miles from home, lost in darkness, they guided me. We ate squares of paper and wandered the city at night. We felt like a group of beat poet philosophers, reincarnated with nose rings and spikes. For a moment, I saw with their eyes.

"Who You Gonna Call?"

Gasp. 2:02 Am. Bluntly interrupted slumber.

ALARMING. Terrifying
Complete silence. Don’t look away.
Flannel sheets used for protection.
Heart sinking, Pounding.
Veins flowing full of terror. Darkness.
Please end. It’s not really happening.
Eyes clenched shut. Gulp.
Chills running down my spine.
Visions, frightening visions of her.
Blurred face.
White dress.
Long dark hair.
Grandma.
The Everlasting Search

I looked along the shimmering coast, searched in the depths of the ocean and in the darkness of the woods. I checked every hiding spot, darkened corner, even under the bed and in the closet. I looked as far as the eye could see but I just could not find, I could not, find me.

Wandering Through No Man’s Land

4 am. Eerie light shone into the next room. Enveloped in khaki camouflage, he stood silent- his face a shadow, muddy boots motionless. His Ross Rifle hung against his bleeding leg- a harsh contrast to the family photos displayed behind him. I stood paralyzed, watching him sink into the trenches of our living room floor.

Judging Hal

H al was still begging for money when I saw him. He looked like the type to be spending the money he got on booze and cigarettes. As I walked by I thought he was disgusting. I noticed a man spit on Hal, who was doing nothing wrong. I was not the only one to judge.
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"Deceitful Perception"
"Foresight Folly"
"Omniscient and Almighty"
"Vision Found"
"The Stone Procession"
"The Mystery of Tomorrow"
"A Stagger Through The Woods"

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"Balance"
"The Most Amazing Thing"
"When You"
"The Lucky One"
"The End"
"Forest"
"Dan, My Hero!"
"Missing Pearl"
"Chasing a Dream"
"Deer in the Street"
"Jessica"
"In the Dry Season"
"Yellow Lines"
"See Me"
"Dawn"
"A Place I Call Beautiful"
"What Do You See?"
"Cold Swimming"
"Over Breakfast"
"A Good-Bye Whisper"

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"Fading Skies"
"Hunger for Technology"
"What She Saw Was War"
"Blurred Vision"
"That Old Picture"
"Wreckage of the Future"
"My Reflection"
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"T he M ourning of D reams"
"T he W alk of D esper"n
"B lindness, S eeing in a D ifferent Way"
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"N ight M an"
"R ush"
"T he U ndertow"
"A ssassin"
"T he B oring W orld"

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"C omm ot P artner"
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"W hat B eauty is G ray"
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Emily B.  "Skating"
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Candice C.  "Who You Gonna Call?"
Ronnie C.  "Déjà Vu"
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Lara G.  "He Calls Me Cowgirl"
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"Looking Back"
"Blind" 
"Strawberry Juice"
"What My Little Brother Cannot See"
"Astronaut in Disguise"
"A Youth Always in Love"
"Our Vision"
"All Knowing"
"Technology, You've Failed Me"
"Old Man"
"Undying Love"
"No More"
"The Hunter"
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"Destined for Royalty"
"An All Hollows Whirl"
"Cottage Maldies"
"You're Infiltrating My Bubble"
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