HARTWORKS

Summer 2005 • $5

Featuring Guest Author: Aristophanes

The Charles Hart Middle School Literary Magazine
The hArtsworks Editorial Board

Writers-in-Residence: Ruby McCann, Marla Melito, Nancy Schwalb, and Jamila Wade


Cover, l-r: Jamal Williams, Candace McCoy, Markus Johnson, David Brown
Welcome to hArtworks, the nation’s only inner-city public middle school literary magazine, written and edited by the students of Charles Hart Middle School. hArtworks is published through a collaborative effort between the school and the D.C. Creative Writing Workshop, an independent non-profit working to create a literary renaissance in Southeast Washington. Now in its fifth year, hArtworks gives our young writers the opportunity to exercise their creative energies, speak their minds, and be heard by an audience throughout the city. The 2005 edition of Poet’s Market recognizes hArtworks as “an outstanding example of what a literary journal can be (for anyone of any age).”

As another exhilarating school year draws to a close, we have many new triumphs to celebrate. Our students have finished writing their fifth original adaptation of a classical Greek drama, this year updating another of Aristophanes’ plays to create “Lysistrata 2K5: Sistas on Strike.” Our students have again excelled in several writing competitions, fielding more winners than any other school, public or private, in the Parkmont Poetry Contest. Congratulations to Parkmont winners Kristina Bourn, DeAndre Britten, Shaka Brockenberg, Erik Butler, Jessica Carpenter, Rhia Hardman, Raekala Middleton, and LaJean Pratt. Congratulations also to Lisa Thompson, who won second place for Youth Poetry in the Larry Neal Awards. And congratulations again to Rhia Hardman, whose poem was selected from over 1,400 entries for publication in the Washington Post’s “KidsPost” section. Our students have read their work at many venues this year, beginning with the “Fall for the Book” festival at George Mason University, continuing with Olsson’s Books, Karibu Books, Bush Hill Elementary School, the Lincoln Theater, and a poetry slam against college students at American University, and culminating with a stunning performance at the black-tie PEN/Faulkner Awards at the Folger Theater. To top it all off, they have now published their fifteenth issue of hArtworks!

We have many friends who have helped to make hArtworks possible, and we would like to express our gratitude to them. Our sincerest thanks go out to the Herb Block Foundation, the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, the Commonweal Foundation, the Community Foundation of the National Capital Region, the D.C. Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, the Fannie Mae Foundation, the John Edward Fowler Foundation, the Philip Graham Fund, the Harman Cain Family Foundation, the Hitachi Foundation, the International Monetary Fund, the Junior League of Washington, the Rotary Club of Washington, the Wendling Foundation, the friends and family of Anna Su, Michael Joy and TSCJoy/Monterey, LLC, Sarah Booth and Bloomberg L.P., Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, Karibu Books, Free Hand Press, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Arena Stage, the Shakespeare Theatre, McGuire Associates, Joyce Page and Ms. Printing, Tollefson & Gustini Investment Management, our friends at Popeye’s on Malcolm X Avenue, Ms. Shin’s 6th grade class at Bush Hill Elementary School, Gregory Auger, George and Lenore Cohen, Fritz Edler, Tom and Carolyn Grey, Mark Hollinger and Kathy McNeil Hollinger, Frances Horn, Betsy Karel, Gay and Charlie Lord, Paul Mandelbaum, Judene Slaughter, Raina Rose Tagle, friends of the late Meyer Saul Taubman, Juanita Wade, Vera M. White, and Martin Youmans.

Special thanks for the hard work and dedication of the D.C. Creative Writing Workshop Board of Directors: Lee E. Epps, Andy Fogle, Dr. Susan Gerson, Bernie Horn, Kathleen Huston, Joan Kennan, Bill Newlin, Nancy Schwalb, and Kirsten Tollefson.

We would also like to thank the following administrators, teachers, and staff who are our partners in this endeavor: Principal Willie Bennett; Assistant Principals Yvonne Davis and Shelton Wilson; Ms. Randa Alhegelan, Ms. Tameka Brown, Ms. Gloria Fergusson, Ms. Carolyn Jackson, Mr. Jarvis Massenberg, Ms. Gina McKinney, Ms. Megan Merklinger; Ms. Eleanor Seale, Ms. Pamela McKinney, Ms. Ann Brogioli, and Ms. Maevern Williams.
# hArtworks presents guest author Aristophanes

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My Four Corners of Success

In my first corner, I have me
as a famous basketball player
because that’s my dream.

In the second corner, I have a gun,
because that can take my life away
before I achieve my goals.

In my third corner, I have the color gold,
because that’s the color of my
first official basketball trophy.

Finally, in my last corner, I have pride
because I believed in myself
that I would become a professional basketball player.

Richard Pratt

The Lesson

The child in school
Was like a baby in a crib
Quiet, so quiet.
He didn’t say a thing
The only thing he liked to do
Was sing
But then he started doing bad.
He stole a diamond ring,
His career was over,
And he never could sing.

Javon McPherson

I’m on Mercury

The dark night,
The starry sky,
It hurts to look out.
The darkness is stronger and
No one knows noise
Just silence.
As I am stamped into the light
It burns my eyes silver.
Gravity takes over
As I fall softly to the ground.

Darrell Brather

Love is the Sky

Love is to sky as hate is to the ground
The more I learn the less I master
If I learn more from my mistakes
I won’t do them again
Love is the sky
If you learn.

Alexis Ford
Neptune

Sitting alone,
My eyes burn.
I gaze at the stars.
A bird flies by in the darkness,
The only noise as I sit alone.
I want to sleep and there is only silence.
I turn out the light.

Daeshawn Brown

Shhh, She is Sleeping

Shhh, she is sleeping,
but for real.
She is dreaming deeply.

He said it was time to go:
no more pain,
hurt or sorrow.

Looking and crying,
knowing I will never see her again
until the end of the road.

Six feet deep
she lies covered in mud,
love and tears.

Knowing that this
is what I fear;
Dreaming deeply into the light.

Mariah Moorer

Make Believing

I was born in a castle,
and I walked on a carpet of gold.
I built a car that a comet couldn't blow up.
I sat on the throne, drinking wine with Jesus.
I ran out of clothes,
so I sent a gator to get me some skin.
Playing baseball with my son got me thirsty,
so I drank until the ocean was a desert.
I am the most handsome man in the world.
I am so rich that whenever I get hungry
I blink, and there's a restaurant.
I am so quick, I can make a gazelle
cry while sitting in dust.

Chris Beckham
Pain

It's a shame a young woman's got to die.
Her life shot down before she got to fly.
Dang, it's a shame, a young woman with a big old brain
Little haters left her family with a heart full of stains.

Every day in these streets, it's always raining bullets,
A young woman saw her chance and she took it.
On her way to college, she was brought down,
Now she is about to be buried six feet underground.

All of the tears, all of the pain,
All of the sorrow,
This is a lesson— you are not guaranteed
To see tomorrow.

Now can we please get a moment of silence?
And it's my place to say, “Stop all of the violence.”

Jamahl Jenkins

Sagittarius

I am driven to do
Anything. I am truthless
And restless as a lion.

Colletta Paylor

Tomorrow

The world's going to implode, there's no tomorrow.
But if there's no tomorrow, what's the meaning of today?
Because what is today, but the explanation for what happens tomorrow?
What should I do today if there will be no tomorrow?
Maybe I should sit here and wait to see what happens.
But wouldn't that be idiotic, to just sit here
Looking at men taking my TV, while thinking about no tomorrow?
Maybe I should run to the edge of the world and jump off.
Nah.
I'll do it tomorrow.

Shaquiel Jenkins
Dancing into a New Year
I am dancing into the New Year
Like a wind in the sea
You think it might be a hurricane
But know it is me
I am going from a year of hope
And twirling into a year of fame
Trust me when I say it is not the same
I have to find revolution
And add it to my new year’s name
It is like going from 40 to 20
Come with me
It is funny how you can go from broke and
in the hole
To a whole lot of money
But I am not stingy, I’ll share
SO please dance with me into a New Year.

Tonisha Gamble

Joy Inside My Tears
I see brick tears
that flow like dark waves
flowing through warm grass
going away like faded justice
they are loud like elastic screams
broken like shattered blues
hurting like my inner wounds
crazy like blood stained hallucinations
all alone like a lonely birth.

DeAndre Taylor

Planet Keishawna
On a planet called Keishawna
It is a wonder
Everybody is floating
Because I hate gravity.
Up here it is always light
And no night is ever silent

Keishawna Simms

This is a Poem About...
Mountains—the smell is intriguing
They are so high
Like a sigh of relief.
For a brief moment
I lose track of the air
And the sky promises beautiful aromas
This is my poem about the mountains

Donald McCann

On a planet called Keishawna
It is a wonder
Everybody is floating
Because I hate gravity.
Up here it is always light
And no night is ever silent

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Donald McCann
Brianna’s Planet

My planet is like a floating star
It has no gravity
I can walk, drive, run, and fly.
School is easy
No teachers can come near me.
I could go anywhere I want
Without permission.
And when I go to bed
I can turn off the whole planet.

Brianna Price

At Seventy

When I looked out the door
I saw children playing
and started crying
but now I know I am over that.

I used to like riding my bike,
playing with my best friends,
going places where I don’t have to pay.
When I was 12 years old, a cute beautiful little girl.

I stop and then start thinking,
just for a moment
then a spirit comes and says,
“To be young is a privilege;
To be old, just close the door.”

Tiffany Nelson

Me

I am as sweet as a kosher pickle
when all the others are sour as a crybaby.
I am as intelligent as an encyclopedia
when all of the interesting books are rotten.
I am as steady as a table
when the stove continuously falls down.
I am as strong as a lion
while everybody else is as weak as a rubber duck.

Erik Butler

June

It is hot and summer has begun
The room is like a hornet’s nest
I feel like an outsider
The day is dull, but as the bell rings
I become human again.

Ja’Quan Williams
**Outside, Outside**

I am outside in the park on Alabama Ave
And all the trees are red and yellow
They are turning colors for me
In autumn and the spring
They turn for me.

*Lamont Bullock*

**A Thin Line**

The flame of truth gets crazy
The streets burn with a passion
like I have never seen
Gunshots, like atomic bombs
killing all in a certain distance

In those flame-red times
I find refuge in corners,
bide my time
Until it's my turn to strike
I'll strike quickly
and return to the shadows
The line was crossed

Mornings, tired of you
waking up and smiling
while another brother takes a fall
for trying to do something with his life
You're tired
but this is no matter of sleep

Enough, rings through my head
as the blood-curdling adrenaline rises
pow-pow-pow
Eats your soul
That's for Ricky, John, and Tony, you scream
pow-pow
Two more ring out

I got my justice, you say in court
The line was too thin for you to see
Would I see it with glasses? Maybe.
But just like the gunshots took your life,
it took my bifocals from me
His name was Willy.

*Shaquiel Jenkins*

**Befuddled**

Befuddled lives in three different places,
doesn't know which one.
Befuddled doesn't know what to eat
when he wakes up.
Befuddled doesn't know why he's dropping tears.
Cause befuddled looks around
for more than a minute when he wakes up.
Befuddled doesn't know whether
to drink out of a bowl or a cup
He doesn't know which thing to choose.
because he's confused.

*Christopher Ledbetter*
Look

Look at the sunshine
It never looks behind
Look at the sky
It is saying hi
Look at the clouds
They look like cotton
Look at the stars
They are like gold bars
Look at the moon

Cori Tindle

Walking to Hong Kong Delite

I look and see a big crowd of boys
They are cute
One is asking for a quarter
But I say “no”
I walk toward the great aroma
Chicken and French fries and say
That’s my place

Jasmine Clee

Imitation

The moon drops one raindrop in the field
The dark grass listens.
Be still.
Now
There they are, the moon’s tears
Between the trees. A slender goose
Lifts up the lovely shadow of her face
And flies into the air.
I stand alone by a cloud
I do not dare to talk or move
I listen.
The grass leans back towards the ocean
And I lean towards the land

Elijah Benbow

Everything was Silver

My eyes were looking at the stars
Glowing in the sky.
As they were floating by
The darkness blinded me.
There was no noise,
No light,
And it was silent.
So very silent.
The night sky fell
And everything was silver

Arlene Gibson
Mother Like Daughter

This mother is just like her daughter
And this daughter is just like her mother
The mother loves her daughter
Like a father loves his son
The mother loves the daughter
Like shoes love your feet
Clothes love your body
The mother and daughter are like the sun
Rising and setting in the sky
There is brightness in their faces.

Shandace Barnes and Tamekica Heckstall

I didn't know

I didn't know
How to write this poem
I cannot compare myself
To many things
Because I cannot see how
To compare me to
Something else.

Ashley Clark

The reason I don't want to write

I feel weak
I feel sick
I don't want to be bothered
My hand hurts
My head is killing me
I do not feel like writing at ALL.
I don't want to write this poem.

Joenelle Curtis

Being the Thunder God

The easy part is sprinkling the rain
The hard part is finding the right spot
But when I am mad, I always bring Thunder.

Franzel Willoby
Like the Shadow of Sudden Clouds

Like the show of sudden clouds
Like a car moves sudden miles
All that I am hangs by a thread tonight.
I hate the light and wish the clouds could be yellow
So they could shine right above my pillow.
I wish I could be
Just pretty eyes that beam.
You swim up from the past
While someone runs
through the bright green grass.

Martanisha Dew

My Reflection Is Not Me?

What, where, who?
Where am I?
Dreaming, I'm dreaming
I think
Who is that lying down, dreaming?
I wonder what he's dreaming about.
I hop in his dream
He's dreaming,
he's dreaming about
dreaming about himself
Jumping into someone else's dream
He's nosey
I move left, his right flies up
The road breaks down, into dreams of dreams
that can only be interpreted
by the next dream
But he who does not rest, does not dream
Yet, he who sleeps only knows half
of that which he dreams
Maybe the dream you do not remember
you were not supposed to dream

Shaquiel Jenkins
**Untitled**

You listening to music  
As the memory of breezes pass by—  
lying down as we travel  
Hearing people cry  

Heavenly precious,  
Shining through private busses, moments as if—  
You know.  
Wrinkled clothes, a magic wand, the air  
Shining down, splashing water,  
as if we didn't care  

History, feather, glimpses of sleep  
Sorrow flutters, glory, lonely distance,  
All sweet.  

*Martanisha Dew*

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**Night Sky**

I wonder what is in the sky  
When everything is dark,  
What is it when the stars say  
“yes”  
To the night  
With a silver lining.  
I wonder if I will ever fly  
Into a night sky  
So ice cold it burns.  
I dream that I am floating in the  
blackness  
I am a small glow.  
Get closer, get closer.  

*Marquis Greenwood*

---

**Nichelle A Beautiful Name**

Nichell your name sounds like  
a flower, your name has lots of  
power, like the tulips growing in  
the garden, all pink and blooming  
tall and slender at the bottom of the  
large oak. Nichelle, your name is  
honey, it's sweet and thick and  
whole.  

*Nichelle Kee*
A Painting of a Lady by James McNeill Whistler

She has on a dress
Has a flower in her hand and
Some fell on the floor.
Her hair is long.
She stands on a bear rug.
There is a bow on her long dress
She has on lipstick
And has big bushy eyebrows.
She looks sad.

Shannon Jackson

Nothing Has Changed

Nothing has changed with me
I am still the same person
I will never change
I am cool
Like a newborn baby
Nothing has changed
I am like snow that never melts
I am like a flower that is always blooming
Or the star in the sky

Michael Smith

Anger

Anger eats bricks and cigarette butts.
He lives in the cracks of the sidewalk.
He lifts weights in the fire
of steel mills in the southern states.
His boss treats him like
the bunions and corns on his feet.
His brain has cooked on powerful heated
temperatures.
His hair has fallen out, because he is always angry
and he has veins that burst in his arms.

Steven Reed

Light-years

To look at constellations as I fly
Through space with amazing gravity—
The glow of the stars, darkness with silence,
Stars that burn in the sky melting
The ice of space
You hear the screaming “Beep! Beep!”
Of light blasting from the sun.

Donald McCann
Rushing Blood

I see the color of destruction
It makes me cry
It sounds like a massive drop
you see the tear in my eye
It’s moving fast as the rushing blood in my head
It’s bigger than the earth as it’s turning red
As the earth used to be round
now it turned square
The hard, old ground was fuzzy
like a stuffed bear
It smelled like the deep
ugly pits of hell
And it tasted like the ringing bells of heaven when he fell.

Aaron Brooks

Spicy Chicken

It rumbles and tumbles
In your mouth
It is so hot it makes you
Want to scream and shout
The spicy mouth
From DC’s number one carry out

Chris Willis

Rain

The raindrops hit my window one by
One.
Singly.
One by one.
I listen to the hail and rain
On my window
Each new raindrop sounds different
Some low, some high, some you can’t hear
At all—
Just silent,
No sound.
Some raindrops are good sounds
Like a music beat
Hitting the ground and bouncing.
Crackle.
Bump.

Jasmine Harris
Why Anger Is Always Alone

Anger is a girl named Susie.
She wears pants all the time
and eats hotdogs, basically.
She drives a Jeep,
she has no kids,
and she’s very lonely.
Nobody likes her
because she doesn’t like them.
She lives in an apartment,
she doesn’t pay her bills
and doesn’t have a job.
All of her power is off,
she doesn’t have a phone
so she has to walk three miles
to use the pay phone.
She doesn’t have any friends,
she can’t even get in touch
with her family.
And when it’s all over,
she still doesn’t have her dignity.

Bridgette Johnson

Black Rainbow

My galaxy
is enormous
it always twirls
quiet
a spiral shape
is in the air
beautiful sight
tastes like nothing
like air
it smells like nothing
a Black rainbow

Nickelly Newman

You

Your feet are as crusty
as dry leaves.
Your mouth is as big
as a pig.
Your ears stick out
like an elephant horn.
Your head is as wide
as a balloon.

Jonte Tucker

Aquarius

Today you will learn a lot from people--
There are a lot of secrets.
You will have all eyes on you
Because you are an eye catcher.
You will have fun and will be OK.
You are truthful, worthy, faithful, beautiful, and happy

Breawayna Norris
Money

Makes me happy—
I get silly because
Boot cut blue jeans are on sale now
Buy them
(Right away
They won’t stay!)

Quanice Walters

Tomorrow

If there was no tomorrow,
I’d blow over anger like a steam kettle
If there was no tomorrow,
I’d float around like a ballerina
If there was no tomorrow,
I’d make myself as tall as I want to be
If there was no tomorrow,
I’d jump off my roof and land in a swimming pool

When the world ends,
I will dye my hair red and yellow
so I can see the sunset all the time
When the world ends,
I will dance with the sky
When the world ends,
I will become the rain and thunderstorms
and fly away.

Rhia Hardman

U Go Girl!

U go girl,
strutting in your heels
walking down the street
switching side to side
with your bad attitude.

U go girl,
getting into your 2005 Ferrari
after coming out of that big building
you work in.

U go girl,
walking into that big house
that you own and let
your husband live in.

Kyia Hill
A Tribute to My False America

My tribute's out to you, America, land of the free
Yes, my false America
My righteous America
Yes, the same America that told my ancestors
that they were inferior for their race
The same America that puts people in jail for years
for stealing a car
But puts Martha Stewart in jail for five months
for laundering millions of dollars
You go, America
Yes, my America
The same America that spends millions of dollars
killing innocent people who just want their country back
But not enough money to give the homeless
a shelter and some food
Go, America
An America that would talk about liberation
and getting others to obey laws we don't obey on our soil
An America that buys gold watches and platinum chains
but would give you a license to carry a firearm
My America, so rich they'll give the baseball stadiums
all the money they need
America says we don't need schools.
Thanks a lot, America.

Shaquiel Jenkins


America is like the whole world
I think.
I think about how people die
People are born
People try to make it
Day by day.
This is America.

Shavontee Harmon
**Sleep, sleep**

I always go to sleep in class  
I always go to sleep when I’m tired  
I want to sleep all day  
from morning to night  
Oh, how I dislike poetry

I’m sitting here, tired as can be  
Can I go to sleep?  
I can’t wait until after school  
I can go get a cold drink  
and change my clothes  
I’m so tired. This is boring.  
Oh, how I hate poetry

I’m still sitting here,  
doing it for a grade  
but it’s a shame, it’s a shame  
I don’t like this class  
I’ll just finish this page  
I’m so tired  
I want to sleep  
Oh, how I despise poetry

_Betrece Jackson_

**Some People**

some people come into our lives  
and quickly go. Some people  
make our souls dance awakening  
us to new understandings  
with the passing whispers of their  
wisdom. Some people make  
the sky more beautiful to gaze  
upon. They stay in our lives for  
a while, leave footprints on our  
hearts and we are never ever the same.

_Tyrone Jackson_

**Me**

I want to laugh till I’m crying  
I want to run through a field  
of flowers  
I want to be graceful like a  
ballerina  
I want to be sweet like honey  
Most of all I want to be me.

_Remy McLeod_
Nature's Friends

I am the world's smallest person
I like to help mother nature. Today
I was in the tall, tall grass helping it
grow and I climbed on a flower.
A bee was flying around the flower
I thought it was trying to sting me
so I jumped onto the next flower,
a dandelion, I missed and fell into
a big hole, the home of a worm.
The worm dug a tunnel so the soil
can help the plants grow. Then an
army of ants came through. They
asked me to move out of their way
so I grabbed a can of bug spray.
The ants ran so fast so I finished
my work and the grass grew taller
than a wall. I was happy at last.
Next thing you know someone
came along and cut the grass.

Kenneth Bundy

Don't Want to Dream

I wouldn't jump into the new year
I would want to dance
With 50 cent, because his music is real and
I want the new year to be real
I don't want it to be a dream
I want it to be real

Ronnard Williams

Latina

I like to say the name Latina
because it reminds me of the
the ancients who spoke Latin

I like to say the name Latina
because it reminds me of dancing
I like to say the name Latina
because it reminds me of Lady
Latina who takes good care
of her kids

I like to say the name Latina
because she's my Mother.

Evelynn Thompson
Colored Vowels

A is blue like the ocean flowing, the sky or the air in a balloon floating.

E is green as the grass, a grape, a tree and the Hart Middle School pants as you can see.

I is red like a clown’s nose or a garden filled with roses.

O is black as the night or maybe pen ink when you write.

U is orange as a ball, a harvest sun, and the Florida trees filled with fruit.

Kenneth Bundy

The Furious Woman

Furious is a woman who eats cold waffles for breakfast. She has five nasty, mean kids, aged 2, 4, 6, 8, 10. Her man leaves her with those mean kids and goes to a club to party. Her boss treats her mean, makes her do double shifts. And guess where she works? At a school for grown little kids with bad attitudes. She drives a dirty-looking Taurus with no gas. She comes home from work, the house is a mess. She lives in a little house with only one bathroom, And a small dining room with no windows. She sleeps on cardboard boxes, With a tissue box as her pillow and her coat as a blanket. And that’s how a furious woman’s life is.

Saviya Brown

Lady Bug

If I was a ladybug I would like my color to be red. I would like to fly around a lot and land on people to give them good luck. If I am tired I will land on a flower or a leaf and take a nap.

Renita Williams
In Praise of the Watermelon

Fairest of all God’s fruit the watermelon grows and grows and grows.

Commanded by Him to grow here on this earth for us mortals. So green and beautiful in patterns and shades of light and dark green. Inside is red and white with black seeds that make it grow and taste heavenly.

Shaina Jones

Stephanie

When I think of your name I think of your sigh, when you pass me by in the summer time going to the pool, your name sounds cool, you are out of school and you don’t have tools. Your name sounds like a cook-out in my back yard the burgers not quite ready and in your pocket book you have credit cards.

Corey Rogers

Your Name Nadine

Nadine, I want to say your name, It sounds like Paris city lights, fast cars and beautiful people. Nadine your color is buttercup yellow in a garden filled with buttercups. Nadine, your name smells like strawberry shampoo, soft and sugary Nadine, your name feels like something deep inside of me.

Nadine Tucker

Fear

Fear would wear black clothing and a black hat covering up her eyes. She would work with wild animals and endangered species. She would wake up in the morning and eat raw steak with frozen French fries. Everywhere she would go people would stop and stare. But Fear would never take part in slaughtering one of God’s creatures.

Lisa Thompson
Summer Days

Oh those summer days going to block parties and having cookouts
Oh those summer days going swimming with my friends
Oh those good old summer days with lemonade stands and signs saying 25c yummy!
Oh those summer days wearing your best summer clothes
Oh those summer days
Oh how I wish summer was here

Tairese Brown

The Grass Speaks

While I walk on the grass I hear someone speaking. I’m not sure who it is. So I go on. I stop and hear that voice again and I ask, Who’s there? The voice answers, “How could you not know who I am, you’re standing on me.” I looked down, then I sit, as I sit, I put my head to the ground and listen, I realize that the beautiful green grass is speaking. And so the grass speaks.

Marche Shields

My Dark Room

In my four-cornered room, there is a black hole for empty promises.
My father, for a person, the color black, for darkness and hate, for my hatred for him.
I got in this room by being bad and not doing good in school.
I’ll get out by being myself.

Damon Kee
Consequences

The things you get for not knowing
You search for that path
But you never find it
Trying to find what was lost
Scared to ask a simple question
Pretending to be the smartest queen
But half of the time you just don't know
A frown on your face from shattered dreams
Is not somewhere I want to be

Shavon Osborne

Family

Family is like a tree
That grows from love,
From my very soul.

Colletta Paylor

Do Your Work and Try Your Hardest

Darling, happiness is right around the corner
Do your work and try your hardest.

All A's on your report card is right around the corner
Do your work and try your hardest

Honey, success is right around the corner
Do your work and try your hardest

Talent to get the best job is right around the corner
Do your work and try your hardest

Sweetie, an eternity of respect is right around the corner
Do your work and try your hardest

Remember my wise words because
Everything is right around the corner
Do your work and try your hardest

Patrice Rouse
I Want to Sing Your Name Shaina

I want to sing your name Shaina
I want to wrap your name in rainbows

Shaina your name smells like the
beginning of spring when rose
butterflies change

Shaina you taste like ice cold lemonade
popsicles on a hot humid day

Shaina your name feels like the
breeze from the ocean cooling you
down under the hot sun on the beach.

Shaina your name is pink and shines
like crystals high in the night sky.

Shaina Jones

Untouchable

When I write
I feel like
I’m untouchable
Like burning down houses
With my thoughts
No one can touch or top me
Me and the words come together
My words reflect what
I feel on the inside
No one can stop or top me
No one is like me
No one can be me

Shavon Osborne

Free World

Around my neighborhood I don’t
hear anything at all
it’s so quiet
it feels like I am in a very free world
by myself
the only thing I really hear
are my footsteps

Tyrea Jackson
If I Say Your Name Mary

Mary, if I say your name, I taste blueberry pie and I love it. Mary sounds old and ancient like music from another place, another time. Mary is a beautiful name, all pretty, red and black surrounded with a rainbow of colors. Mary, if I say your name my world becomes light and when I follow the rainbow I reach you.

Mary Holsinger

my teacher dreamt I was a poet

my teacher dreamt I was a poet
even I know I probably couldn’t
my words are not strong, it’s like
paper in the air, but my mind shines
even I don’t know why.
people are quick to shoot a speeding bullet
and I think why is it that easy for a person to die
my teacher dreamt I was a poet, but what do I dream
I dream me as a king, but I wish my words were
as royal as it seems.
I thinks it’s all good
sooner or later
they will call me the little engine that could

Joshua Steele

Braiding

looking good
feel the pain
of your fingers
burning, turning
dered, turning purple
getting paid
10’s, 20’s, 50’s
taking your
time for it to
be neat
hearing the customers
say “thank you,
it’s beautiful,”
sitting in a chair
braiding hair
braiding my sister’s
hair, my mama’s,
my friend’s
getting paid
getting paid
makes me braid.

Nickelly Newman
Child

Well girl, I’ll tell you of the day
I tried to become what I dreamed of.

I dreamed of being a shepherd for the Lord
for all the days I’ve been bored

I wanted to become a fisherwoman
it didn’t work because I wasn’t that good at fishing.

Then one day I became a mother to a wonderful
daughter, you my child. So live your dreams
and be what you’ll be. If you believe in what you
want to be, then you know my child, you’ll be
just like me.

Nicole Diggs

A Leaf

A leaf is a symbol
of my school colors
green for Hart Middle School
A leaf is as soft as my pillow
or the green soap I have
in my bathroom, green can
be mean and symbolic of
love and hate but leaves
turn brown or yellow in
the fall, they wither and die
leaving young buds for spring to fly.

Xavier Leale
HARTWORKS PRESENTS GUEST AUTHOR ARISTOPHANES
Aristophanes (448–335 B.C.) lived in the ancient city of Athens, where he was known for writing such comedies as *The Birds*, *The Frogs*, and *Lysistrata*. He wrote at least 30 plays, 11 of which still survive, and his plays are the only surviving examples of Greek Old Comedy. Many of his plays were political, and often poked fun at the well-known citizens of Athens.

*Lysistrata* is a political satire that speaks out strongly against war and violence. Written in 411 B.C., during the Peloponnesian War, the play revolves around the women of Athens, who finally tire of losing their sons on the battlefield and go on strike against their husbands until they make peace. The revolt is lead by Lysistrata, whose name means “disbander of the army.”

*Lysistrata* was produced when Athens’ situation looked utterly bleak. Thousands of Athenians had recently been killed in a terrible defeat at Syracuse. Later that year, even the cherished democratic government—which had been so hard won over past century—would be abandoned. While *Lysistrata* is a very funny play, behind the humor is the sorrow and loss Aristophanes felt at the senseless loss of so many lives.

Here, Hart Middle School students David Brown, Markus Johnson, Candace McCoy, and Jamal Williams discuss the challenge of updating Aristophanes’ classic work and setting it on the streets of D.C.

**MARKUS:** It’s hard to read the original play, because some of the words are too long and too hard to understand, and there are so many words that mean a whole different thing to me. Writing the play was even harder, because you had to figure out how to rephrase it so that people could understand it.

**JAMAL:** This play was written more than two thousand years ago, so the way people talk in it is really different than the way we talk. We made it so other middle schoolers could understand it by using the words we use, and making the characters talk like we talk.

**CANDACE:** There’s a lot about the play that makes sense today, because we still need to stop the violence in the streets. When you think about it, women really do have the power to change things. If the men don’t have women’s support, they’ll get real mad and try to find a way to fix it.

It’s the same thing with the war in Iraq. It’s the women who have their sons (and some daughters) and their husbands over there, and they don’t know if their family is going to come home or not.

**MARKUS:** The play is really funny, too. *Lysistrata* is funnier than *The Frogs*, like in the scene with Myrrhine and Cinesias, we made it really good.

**CANDACE:** I think *Lysistrata* is a better play than *The Frogs*, because *The Frogs* is in an imaginary place. It was fun, but, if you think about *Lysistrata*, with the way D.C. is, especially in most parts of Southeast, it’s violent. When you turn on the news, all you hear about is shooting. So *Lysistrata* is really relevant to the way things are now.

**MARKUS:** My favorite part is at the end, when the crews are trying to make peace, so they can get their women back.
Jamal: I really identify with my character, the Athenian. He just wants to make peace with his neighbors and stop the violence so that he can get back together with his wife. He misses her cooking and he's tired of eating Oodles of Noodles, because he's getting fat.

Candace: Men think the women are supposed to cook, clean, and be under their command. But if you think about it, women have more power over the men than the men have over the women.

Markus: I'm nice to women, I want to treat them right.

Jamal: I'm the type of person who doesn't want to cause a whole lot of problems. Instead of fighting, I'd rather be chilling with my girl and doing what I'm supposed to do, taking care of my family.

David: I'm like my character, the Magistrate. You can't give in and let the women run things.

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AN EXCERPT FROM LYSISTRATA 2KS: SISTAS ON STRIKE!

Lysistrata: I bet if they were invited to an Usher concert or a slammin' Avon party, the streets would be unpassable. But you know what, my neighbor Calonicé always comes. As a matter of fact, I see her right there…. What's up Calonicé? What's crack-a-lackin?

Calonicé: Nothing much. Lysistatra, you look a hot mess!

Lysistrata: Girl, my heart is beatin'. I'm so angry and embarrassed. These men only think we're tricky and sly.

Calonicé: And you know they're right.

Lysistrata: But look. Why when we ask our sistas to meet at the most important time, they stay at home in bed instead of coming.

Calonicé: Oh, they will come. You know it ain't easy for them to leave the house. One is busy rappin' with her man, another is getting' a makeover, another one is cookin' and the other is puttin' her brat to sleep or washin' or feedin' 'em.

Lysistrata: I know it's hard but this is more important than any of those lame excuses.

Calonicé: Why are we here anyway? What is this all about?

Lysistrata: This is about a huge strike against the husbands at war.

Calonicé: Is it that important?

Lysistrata: Yes, this is very important. More important than changing a diaper that's been sitting for 15 hours.

Calonicé: And those women are not here yet.

Lysistrata: Oh girl, if it was what you thought, a woman would never show up. There would be no meeting, which can't happen cause I have thought about this so hard that I haven't even paid my light bill.

Calonicé: It must be something serious, if you let your lights go out.

Lysistrata: So serious, it means if our husbands come home to us, we women will have saved our country.

Calonicé: Saved by women! Lysistrata you know this idea is skatin' on thin ice.
LYSISTRATA: The money and future of our country depends on it. It is within us to utterly undo the men.

CALONICE: That is a wonderful idea, yes indeed.

LYSISTRATA: We will not lose, especially if the Wahler Place and Trenton Park women fight with us. Victory will be ours.

CALONICE: How's that?

LYSISTRATA: Don't worry, no man is going to raise his gun to another . . .

CALONICE: In that case, hold on, let me go and get my negligee from my house.

LYSISTRATA: . . . or use a shield.

CALONICE: I'll run and put on my fuzzy slippers.

LYSISTRATA: . . . or take out his knife.

CALONICE: I'll go and buy a silk dress.

LYSISTRATA: Now, shouldn't the women have showed up?

CALONICE: I know one thing, they will be here at daybreak.

LYSISTRATA: Girl, you see those ghetto women do everything late. There's not a woman that will come from Oxon Run or from Maryland. And the women from Virginia, I thought they'd be the first to come.

CALONICE: Look, here come some women! What part of town are they from?

LYSISTRATA: They are from PG County.

CALONICE: Dang, it's practically all of the ladies of PG County.

MYRRHINE: Are we late Lysistrata? Tell us please, say something.

LYSISTRATA: I cannot say much for you Myrrhine cause it seems you don't care for such urgency.

MYRRHINE: I could not find my bootcut jeans in the dark. However, if the matter is so important, here we are, so speak.

LYSISTRATA: Nah, wait, hold on. Let's wait for the women from the Farms and Parklands.

MYRRHINE: Yes, this is good. . . . Oh, here comes Lampito.

LYSISTRATA: What's up Lampito. Girl, you look good. What a good looking suntan, have you been workin' out? You could body slam a grown elephant.

LAMPTO: Yes, indeed. I really could. It's because I do tae bo.

LYSISTRATA: Girl, you're handling your hips real well, they look good.

LAMPTO: Thanks, chile.

LYSISTRATA: And this woman, (pointing at a woman approaching) what part of town is she from?
**Lampito:** She is a super woman from Mississippi Avenue.

**Lysistrata:** Ah, my girl from the Ave. You lookin’ good to be growing up in the hood.

**Chorus:** Yeah, girl, where you get your hair and nails done?

**Lysistrata:** Now, who is this?

**Lampito:** Oh she’s honest, please I represent my faith. She comes from Wheeler Creek.

**Lysistrata:** Oh, honest for a woman from Wheeler Creek.

**Lampito:** But who called us together – this wonderful council of women.

**Lysistrata:** I did.

**Lampito:** Well, what do you want?

**Lysistrata:** I’ll tell you girl, dang.

**Myrrhine:** What is this most important info you want to talk to us about?

**Lysistrata:** I’ll tell you. But answer my question first.

**Myrrhine:** What is it?

**Lysistrata:** Are you mad cause your baby daddies are off fighting each other? I’ll answer that one--not one of you has a husband who is not in the streets at this minute.
Calonicé: For the last five months mine has been in looking for the thug who shot his cousin.

Lysistrata: It’s been seven months since my husband left with his homies.

Lampito: Well, let me tell you bout my man. He comes in from the streets, and the next thing you know he’s back at war again.

Lysistrata: Now, as for my husband, since the day someone shot out his windshield, I haven’t spent quality time with him. Now, if I know a way to stop the war, will my girls have my back?

Myrrhine: Yes, I will do anything to stop the violence.

Calonicé: I will even cut off my hair and donate it.

Lampito: Girl, I’ll walk all the way from southeast to the top of the monument and back.

Lysistrata: Then, in that case, I’ll tell you that in order to stop our husbands and make peace, we must... Myrrhine: We must what... c’mon, you’re killin’ us!

Lysistrata: No matter what it is, will you do it?

Myrrhine: Yes, of course.

Lysistrata: We must not accept our husbands all together. Make them ask questions like: Why do you sleep on the couch? Why do you stay out until 2 and 3 in the morning? Why do you suck your teeth and smack your lips every time we speak? Are y’all still in? Don’t hesitate.

Myrrhine: Naw, can’t do it, forget peace.
Snake School

I am a snake
I live in the grass
I hissssssssssss
through the jungle with my friends
I am the boss and all the other animals
work for me. I run snake
school for bad snakes, they don’t
like it. But everyone knows it’s
good for them to learn. We’ve
got restaurants in our snake
world where I eat chicken and
drink snake flavored sprite

Tywone O’Neal

Ronnika

In the midnight hour of wine
Ronnika was a champion
By morning, Ronnika became a hero

But that’s not all:
Ronnika was a competitor
No one could beat her
Ronnika was the fastest, slimmest
and the most courageous
When Ronnika stepped in the ring
everyone stepped out

You say to yourself
I want to be just like Ronnika
Fast, courageous, street smart,
gorgeous and perfect

Yeah, sure.
There was no one Ronnika couldn’t beat up
until she met “Mr. HIV.”

Anita Foster

Listen

R&B, Jazz
Rap & Hip Hop
I love music
It makes your
body bop
Music has your
club bumpin’
parties jumpin’
Lil’ Wayne, Big Pun
Aaliyah, Left Eye
Tupac, Biggie
Music made Will Smith
get jiggy

Jiavoni Williams
My Words Grazing in My Mind

These words are like tears that burn in the blazing fire.
These words are like ice getting ready to burn by that fire.
These words are like lonely people in the dark.
These words cut through my heart and my mind giving me bad ideas.
These words are like rage that I can't get rid. These words are me.

Markus Johnson

Powerful

My words are powerful like guns.
I am the man.
My words have people hiding in the sand.
I wrote this poem today.
My words make me feel big like I am standing on 50 stacks of hay.

by Antione Griffin

Ordinary Pain

The ordinary pain I feel everyday the burning tears down my face
the cry of the people inside of me the dying of the very soldiers
I see all this pain rages every which way, the world cries out all day.

Tashae Brown
It's Negativity, I Don't Want People Dead

So many tight rhymes come to my head
but it's negativity, I don't want people dead.
So many people wearing white Ts that end up red.
It's negativity, I don't want people dead.
Fake wanna be soldiers are selling dimes
but just like I said, it's negativity,
I don't want people dead.
Look at my cousin, he's wearing dreads
I'm going to the kitchen to eat some wonder bread,
why do so many people want others dead?
It's negativity,
I don't want people dead.

Daron Holmes

The History of Life

Life is magic, but its tricks
are in disguise

It's worth more than bronze and
shines like it's silver in your eyes

As smoky as dust, and as dark as dawn,
the visions vanished straight from your arms

As brutal as a tornado, as stuck as a dilemma,
life can pull a muscle and make you become a sinner

The current is too strong, it reminds me of a knight
I can't give up this easy
I must put up a fight

Torii Williams

Hey You

reach for the stars
be you
run
jog
skip
jump
feel the fire
take a dive,
plummet and
embrace yourself
build
don't
destroy
take the time
and
live
live
live.

Kristina Bourn
Their Eyes

My mother’s eyes are paused like a concrete stare. My brother’s eyes glare with collected thoughts. My nephew’s eyes boil like a splashing waterfall. My niece’s twisted fate glares in her eyes.

Mercedé Monroe

Don’t Be Afraid, Face Your Fears

It is painful when you cannot see it. It is painful when it’s your fear. It is painful when you cannot hear it. But don’t be afraid, just face your fears! Look into the darkness, the strange and deep fear. Just think that you are dreaming and face your fear. Don’t be afraid, pretend it’s not here. Don’t be afraid, just face your fears.

Daron Holmes

Ebony Eyes

Ebony eyes look like the pretty clouds that vanished in the dark. When she cries, warm tears fall down her eyes.

Siedah Bagley

Untitled

I’m as cool as a popsicle while everyone else is melting.

Christopher Ledbetter
Poetry Is the Color of My World

me? the poet
I feel cool and calm sittin’ back and relaxed
workin’ so smoothly words back to back
flowin’ like a stream of water
but as fierce as the ocean.
Poetry is the color of my world
like the wind on a crisp whirl
a mystical rush like a royal flush.
I won’t stop ‘till my paper overflows
like a joyride of the blue ocean tide.

Kristina Bourn

They Call Me

My real name is Larry
Yesterday my name was nails
Today my name is Shadow
Inside, my name is keep it gangster
When I fight, they call me the greatest
When I am invisible, my name is can you see me now?
In my dream, my name was the young one

Larry Pinkard

Morning

I poured coffee down my throat
As if I was drowning in a pool.
It was cruel
I was about to cry
But love was in the sky
And hate was about to die.

Deirdre Johnson

Songs in the Key of Life

Every day is like a stained classic
we all swim in an elastic stroke
down the age of streams we swim along
the lonely edge in a still absence
as if we were a sweet eclipse
burning in an emerald fire trapping
the time lily of our lives in shattered
screams in a season rush.

Kristina Bourn
Closed Doors

Every night I sit in my room.
Thinking about what happened today.
I try to make a way to think
my thoughts through.
I write them in my diary to remember
what I went through.
I realize that there were closed doors
to what people were keeping from me
but now they are open

Parris Robertson

A Million Given Dreams

My words in a poem make
me feel scrumptious.
While I'm saying or writing a poem
I feel it in the air.
I can blow out my poetry
just like people spray out perfume.
When I say my poems
I have a great expression on my face.
The things I say in my poems
can be true or false.
It's just like the things
I say are so complicated
But at the same time,
my poetry will brighten you out.
As a poet, I feel
lovable, emotional, and expressed
only because my poems are all positive.
The words in my head just pop
into my mind and I just write them down.
While being a poet, it takes time and energy.
But don't forget to be a poet
just always use your mind and
your poem will be more
than a million given dreams.

Sharae Greene

Faded Youth

faded youth
warm spark
a cloud of screams
classic rage
the final hallucination

Kevin Jackson

l-r: DeAndre Britten, Jamal Williams rehearse
“Lysistrata”
Ten Questions of Love

Why is there love?
   To keep the population, and hope, alive.
Can hope be love?
   Hope is love, the mic of the heart.
Why does the heart beat?
   To symbolize eternal greatness.
What is love?
   Love is the key that separates greatness for others.
Can hatred love?
   Yes, it can only love to hate.
What is love about?
   Love is about the feeling for someone else,  
   you just can’t stop thinking of them.
How do you detect love?
   You sense it, your heart pounds faster 
   when you feel it, you’ll know.
Why not love?
   You can’t not love, some day you will have to.
Why do you become weak?
   Because love renders your body senseless,  
   you have no care in the world, but them.
Can you be loved?
   That question you must answer on your own.

Jawara Johnson

On my way . . . almost there

Seeing it all  
crazy determined  
thinking to climb  
but not really prepared  
feeling really scared  
trying so hard  
not giving up  
to the top, on my way  
almost there

Delonté Morrow
Look at Yourself

Look at yourself
skipping running jogging feeling happy
Look at yourself
what to dream
be a star dancing on stage
Look at yourself
feeling down up
and all around
don’t know if you
are burning fire
or cool water
Look at yourself
feel free speak free
sometimes feel crumbled
thinking the walls are
coming down on you
But know this,
you can be happy and
smart too

Donnelle Kelley

Survival

Survival is a struggle
watch your back left and right
survival is pain
people tryin’ to take your life
Survival is tryin’, working’ to have a good life
survival is not worrying who’s going to take your bike
survival is the tsunami
all those people dyin’
survival is not worrying about stray
bullets flyin’

DeAndre Taylor

I’ll Do It

I’ll play, I’ll jump, I’ll run, I’ll cry
I’m set, I’ll flip, I’ll yell, I’ll lie, I’ll dance,
but I do not smoke, I do not steal,
I do not hook, I do not fight, I do not kill,
and what does the world think about today,
they think about killing, drugs, joyriding,
but I go to church and Sunday School
I’m a young man.

Edward Tonic

l-r: Danny Govan, Rhia Hardman at Karibu Books
Common Nightmares

I dreamt I was harassed by
the most unblossomed thing
waiting for a call and the
phone didn't ring. When it did
ring it was the boy from the landmine
he asked me how I felt and
unhappily I said fine. He said
he would buy me everything
gold, he called me pretty, which
I've always been told. He talked
me to death so I walked
to my mirror as his voice changed
I trembled in terror. My heart was pounding
in my ears, my stomach felt like it was
going to fall out my butt
it was the voice of my common nightmares
and I felt stuck.

Britany Austin

Free as the Wind

It's about time you learned how to be free
scream, shout, let it out, jump, hop, skip, run
be yourself, be free, dance, flip, fly like the wind
I don't care be free, free, free, free
rap, sing, hope, dream, be free
that's all I ask of you, feel, be alive, trust in me
be free, create, date, make a cake
be free free free

Kimberly Holloway

Hip Hop Poet

I am a hip hop poet
you don't even know it
I can make my words
turn into birds
I can make your girl
be my world
I can make you die
and don't know why
But I have to use my words carefully
before I have your man
shoot at me
My words are hip hop
I turned your Reeboks
to flip flops
I can make you play ball
for alcohol
I can make you throw 'bows
for Domino's
I can make you sing
for string beans
I am a hip hop poet
and now you know it.

Danny Govan
**My Life**

I live the life of a superstar on the last day of earth.
I make all of my enemies re-experience birth.
On the last day you can do a wild thing,
like buy a stranger an engagement ring.
On the last day, I will be the greatest rapper,
and for all the haters, you will never see my dreams shatter.
I will make people like off love and not good looks,
I'll help scientists with bugs and get the school brand new books.
It will be a great time when the world ends
because after that a new world will begin.
And when the world ends, I will see the great Jehovah,
and blow the devil right off of my shoulders.

*Jamahl Jenkins*

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**If there was no tomorrow**

If there was no tomorrow,
I would play with a torch
and blow things up with fire.
If there was no tomorrow,
I would run away from home.
If there was no tomorrow,
I would stop being nice.

It would be fun day, all day
I would kick teachers to the curb
I wouldn't do any work
and I would wear anything I wanted
No more teachers, no more parents
I can do anything I want
and y'all can't stop me.

I hope there will be a tomorrow
because I'm not that type of person.

*Bridgette Johnson*

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**My Words**

My words are powerful going through your mind, soul and spirit
so powerful the world quakes
making your heart beat like drums
beating to the beat like a thunderstorm pounding over your
head my words can be evil, good or funny
this is what makes me a powerful and wise poet.

*Donnelle Kelley*
Tornado Full of Dirt

so much dust
flying left to right

I wonder should I bow down and cry
should I flee before my very eyes

I wonder should I get
down and die

or should I run as fast as I can
There's nowhere to run and
I cannot stand

so much dust in a tornado
full of dirt

as the tornado goes by
I thank the Lord for clearing my eyes

so much sun and a little
bit of shadow

Donnelle Kelley

Goofy

When I was a child
I laughed like no other
Birds were flying wild
like rock and roll
I loved to play tricks
on things with no faces
I was goofy,
like in a child's play
Goofing around, I had no personality
funny, as if I had some talent
Retired from being a comedian,
from the streets, now ending up
Writing my poem,
and with flaming heat

Tierra Parks

How to be

How to be heartbroken like a
criminal going to jail.
It is like you lost your memory
in a hand of time.
It is like a nightmare
that shows you weeping
because you can't hear
your heartbeat.

How to be hurt like an
unseen baby dead at birth.

Angelica Pratt
chilled, cooled and relaxed

Cool breeze, swift across my cheeks
Wiggle wobble in the lawn chair
Beep beep, honk honk, as the cars go by
Wait 4 me, as the bus passes a guy
Hey what you doing, yells my friend
Nothing, just chillin’ I’m cool and relaxed
No screaming, fighting or unnecessary language
Just me and falling leaves
Slam slam, car doors close
Sizz as the sun sizzles
Click clack as people pass
Swoosh as a bottle hits the trash
Sniff sniff I smell a home cooked meal
Scratch scratch, my cat is at the door
She must wanna chill
I’m chilled, cooled and relaxed
Like in the club sax
I’m calm and engaged like
Snapping fingers at a stage
Snap snap snap
I’m quiet like an afterschool nap
I’m chilled, cooled and relaxed

Girl Blue

Girl Blue, girl red
God has picked you to rest your head.
Girl Blue, girl green
you are a little light in between.
Girl Blue, girl maroon
you are the sun and the moon.
Girl Blue, girl powder
you are a very lovely flower.
Girl Blue, girl pink
your hands feel like sheer mink.
Girl Blue, girl pocket
soar in the air like a rocket.
Girl Blue, girl never
I’ll think about you forever.
Girl Blue, girl silly
you are just like a blue lily.

Kailah Monroe

dark halo

dark halo
the plastic phantom
shattered silence
still waves
the wound moans
chain classic
a blistered stallion
me

Chrisean Elie

Karina Brown
Weather I am not used to

I am in the cold.

The moon is trying to come out.

There's at least 4 inches of snow.

There's nobody around.

It is very quiet.

The wind is blowing real hard.

I will never come here again.

Antonio Dorsey

What Is Ugly

What is ugly?
Ugly is a mean looking thing, many are dirty, some smell like onion rings
the face is terrible, scared
the haircut looks like the barber did a part time job
some are scary, many fight.
I hope I don't see that person tonight.

What is ugly?
Ugly is a person that’s all messed up
breath smells like they ate off 8 Mile's lunch truck.
Now I’m finished, have no fear
get the ugly people out of here.

Danny Govan

My Words

My words are so firm in standing
The tallest building couldn’t knock them
The rush of my words could tackle the best football player
The mixture of my words is so insane
The best unscrambler couldn’t unscramble
My words are so raging
It's like the meanest thunderstorm
My words are so high and wild
Riding them would be your best joyride
My words, my words, oh my words. . . .

Raekala Middleton
I am a Poet

I woke up one morning and decided to write
I wrote and wrote till my pen choked
To my amazement I was writing fiery words
that burn through the soul and thousands
of starry lines with a royal title that deserves a bow
Scary lines that roar and roar
Words that are bright and loud
The ending has the crowd cheering with a rush
My rhymes will have your mind spinning and bending
Words with exotic twists and twirls like a joyride
Keep on reading there might be a surprise
inside I am a poet, at least I think I am
I just grab some paper and pen
Put words together, some rhyme and some don’t
Some are sad and others are bad
Some are lies and some make you cry
’cause I am a poet

Karina Brown

Visions

My eyes see through her uptight pocket
especially the way they ride her fire hips
she walks with an eclipse switch, I mean bold
her pride is also rainy pride
she’s mad and uptight
I try to make her laugh but time
strokes darkness in and around her pocket
her secret life of tears reveals and she
doesn’t know that it shows
I just hope one day she unzips
her pocket and comes out

Raekala Middleton

Hating Fear

As I lie here I think
I am facing my fear
taking the pain
facing my fear
making me more afraid
I am terrified
I see a flash
I try to close my eyes
but I see it more clearly
and to this day
I hate my fear.

Jasmine Johnson
Leave Me Alone

Can’t you see the scorching label?
It’s loud and clear
I want it silent and left alone
You are breakin’ the last bone,
Keep it up, you will turn into a hideous stone,
so just leave me alone.
You are always making me feel down
so that’s why you are around,
just leave me alone
because an exploding bomb is about to go off,
so just leave me alone.
It’s tough with this headache
that leads into a sharp popping pen hitting a balloon
with so much pressure,
just leave me alone.
I want it quiet
so that I can hear my shiny new voice.

Angelica Pratt

Thanks Mom

Dive into my soul, feel what I feel, see what I see, do you hear me?

Yell at me when I’m doing wrong, scream for me when I’m improving.

Burn my love letters
save me from any distractions,
raise me not to lie
God, I’m going to miss you when you die.

Your smile, your brave-ness
I’m going to miss
I’ll miss you like your name was Tom
with a lot of heart, thanks Mom.

Ke’Vonna Harrison

Summer Soft

Summer soft gravity
is just so warm.

Sometimes I think is it me or has the weather just been torn.

Winter colors have faded and summer colors have just been created.

Shaquita Bland
**Death's Door**

I was knocking at death’s door,
when I opened it there was
a bright light,
when I walked in
I fell out and while I was
lying there,
I was scared to get over my fears,
then suddenly, the sun shined
through the bright blue light,
and I arose on my feet and
I didn’t have anything in my heart,
but love, there was no shame,
there were no fears,
the only thing I had for people
was love.

*Jasmine Mickey*

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**The Doors to Success**

Knock on these doors
you might be surprised to see
the success, the things
she conquered inside.
Being a friend, godmother,
daughter, sister, aunt, niece,
granddaughter, and best of all,
a mother.
She was there for her children,
working a good job,
working eleven hours a day,
and even overtime.
She is an amazing woman
doing the best she can each new year
to get a promotion the next year.
As you stare through the door
you realize she is all you’ve ever wanted to be
and more, because she’s a success.
She’s your role model,
But she’s my mom.

*Jessica Carpenter*

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**About me**

I am as cool
as the wind blows on a cool day
I am as smooth
as the day goes by
I am as wild
as a hurricane in a storm
I am sweet
as a baked strawberry cake
I am super
as a hero on a cartoon
I am shiny
as a freshly waxed car.

*Brittiney Sweetney*
Questions

Why is a voice as lovely as a hummingbird?
To see the feelings in words
without seeing them.

What is envy?
The feeling you get when your heart
has been stolen by your worst enemy,
that used to be your love.

Why do you cry?
Because the tears bleed happiness.

Why do you continue to frown?
Because if I smile,
it might kill me.

What is love?
The feeling you get when you
throw up and your mom or dad
holds your hair back.

What is passion?
Desire for your fantasies.

Why did I ask these questions?
Because I had to.

Jessica Carpenter

If It's Magic

If it's magic
I am happy to know your absent name
If it's magic
you must be raining tears inside
I can see you are tryin' to hide it
but you cannot deny it.

Kimberly Holloway

My Role Model

Walking around in my momma's shoes
Click-clacking on the floor
Happy to see her home from work
Smiling as she walked through the door

I wanted to be just like her
Until I started to see
Even though life was good to her
It could be better to me

I'm growing up now
I have a sister and brother
But they have me to look up to
As well as a successful mother

Everyone has a dream
With their head up in a cloud
But my dream has already come true—
Making my mommy proud!

Dayna Hudson
Lost Within a Dream

Night comes silently like the killer
inside of the lost wonderer
Then I rest
at the counter in the kitchen
As I sleep
I open my eyes, and I'm in some place
As I walk I see withering trees crying
with tears from the ocean
The wind stops
and the creatures come up
from under the ground
and my heart stops
and freezes with the chill
of haunted Christmases past.
I walk to the door
and see the future of the lost souls
inside the torturous mind
of the child demon,
Of the demonic mind of the lost soul
found by the one lost person
within a dream, which is me.
I continue toward the end of the road
and see the building lost within the woods
surrounded by holy words
used by the loving angel, lost within its mind.
I see the wind coming forward
and the withering trees coming forth
from out of the ground
and I run into the lost house
fall onto the chair, and look up at the sky
and think to myself
How could I become lost within a dream?

DeAndre Britten

The Great

I was forged in light
I floated the streets and built a star
I designed a world so great
that it glows
every six years, bringing light and joy
I sat on the star, eating pizza
got mad and made the schools explode
to calm my anger
I am a cool man.
I gaze at the canyon and it pops
like popcorn out of the oven.
With a handful of jaguars
and a change of shoes
I am a pair of wings
So fast, you can't see me

Jamal Williams
A long silent street

I walk a long silent street
where I walk in darkness and I get dizzy and weak
my feet step on silent sticks and dry grass
somebody behind me is also stepping on sticks and grass
If I walk he walks
If I jog he jogs
everything is dark and quiet
and turning and turning among these dead ends
which lead forever toward the road
where nobody waits for me, nobody is following me
I found a man walking dizzily around
who rises and when he sees me says nothing.

Aneka Cox

Something inside you

Something inside you makes me smile.
I cannot stop smiling.
Every time I look at you it is like
I am looking at a star far away.
You are a nice young man.
But I can see how you act,
lonely, I can teach you respect.
You would be a smart, young man
if you tried to go to school instead
of being on the corner.
What does your mother say
or does she know what you do.
I can help you if you let me.
Now when I look at you,
it’s like you’re not that star anymore.
But something inside of you
makes me smile.

Kaneya Barber

Answers

What are fingers?
Wiggly things, connected to your hand.
What is a mother?
Someone that brings new life.
What is a son?
A person that is brought into the world
by a mother and father.
What is God?
He created the earth.
What is the earth?
A place that is corrupt and
out of control.

Clayton Armstrong
My world

My world bends, folds,
like people on my street,
flames burn black
as I look back at the past.
Doors crack high—
You’re tired of bad potato chips,
the food never ends.
The long road is tired of moldy blue flames
Someone tries day and night
to shake the earth
Sometimes you think it’s a curse, but it’s not
People run in fear
to sleep, creep and turn blue
Morning’s mad at you,
the bright reflection.
Think about love and hate
and the hero.
The earth trembles and shakes.

Jamal Williams

Am I Afraid . . . I Think Not

Am I afraid . . . I think not
My body doesn’t run when
someone is chasing me
My chest doesn’t skip a
beat when someone jumps
from around the corner
My mind doesn’t race 550 mph
when a teacher tries to challenge me
Am I afraid . . . I think not
I don’t stay back when
everyone goes to the ten feet end
I don’t back down when
everyone gets in the superman line
I don’t stay in the car when
we pull up to the sight of all deaths
Am I afraid . . . I think not
When I see that eight-legged freak
I don’t run
When my day comes
I want to try to escape death
Now do you think I am afraid . . . I think not

Raekala Middleton

Gone

Today, the sun is above me
like a redwood with leaves
The crows screamed at each other, and
angry like Haleem,
the hurricane lashed the coast
A thought crept into my mind
like somebody robbing a bank
As quick as you were here,
you were gone.

Haleem White
**Answers**

What is light?
Something to build the walls
with unimaginable feelings.

What are words?
The eternal shoes of the
universal lips of lively special things.

So what are coats?
Things that control the distance
in which two is multiplied by four
then changing into the road
walked upon, covered by the horizon.

What is hair?
What should I say? Something that controls
the way that each of us think:
into anger, then into feelings
which walk upon the neverending
chairs of forever.

Okay, now be serious.
What is love?

The feeling in which careful thoughts
are placed, all to surprise and please
your soulmate
to always be there with you
until the gun shoots and separates the flags

How is this poem made?
By the hands, no feet,
controlled by the evil wind all in order to…
to make you or me more comforted.

I asked you to be serious:
Now once again,
What is love?
Love is the feeling in which you will
do anything to be with a certain person
to please her, to always be together.

Now I have a question for you:
Why did you ask these questions?
All in order to get your answers.

_DeAndre Britten_

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**Simile Poem**

Your lips are shining like mercury.
Your shirt is white as a pair of gloves.
The air is fresh as my clothes.
My hair is as straight as a ruler.
Your nails are as pointy as a sharpened pencil.
My house is as clean as my mom's teeth.
I am finished, just like my hands.

_Shaneeka Jones_
The World

The world was on your side
but now it’s fighting against you
The flame of truth gets crazy
your love for adventure gets hazy
But you don’t know why
Now you know why—
the world wasn’t on your side

Your temptation is weighing you down
your friends and loves are nowhere to be found
You’re tired of death and life along with it

Your world is ready to crumble
the floors are about to rumble
Heaven trembles and the earth shakes
the world is drowning in an intoxicating lake

The world was on your side but now
it’s fighting against you
But it’s not just you,
your friends are fighting too
Now you know the world is not on your side
as you ride along this crazy ride
The world is not on my side.

Rhia Hardman

Untitled

Rest by day, travel by night
Why must there be secrecy?
Can that help me in this
cold heartless world?

Think about love, feel like dying
but there is no reason for you to be crying.
Help yourself, because you have no boundaries.
You are the reason that we have escaped
so now we are free.

Where heaven trembles and earth shakes,
this places causes the volcano to erupt
in my heart.

This poem has no title for a reason,
because not one word can describe how I feel.
No thoughts, no sentence, no drawing,
only my heart,
The reason I’m writing this.

Jawara Johnson
Lucky questions

What is hair?
The stringy brown lines of softness
that hide a bald head or wrinkles
from pilgrims a long time ago.

What are the class expectations?
Working your fingers and hands
until they're red like strawberries
on Valentines Day

What is life?
24 hour birth of a hardheaded
hyperactive little brat, a spontaneous child

What is death?
Forever torture that comes to an end

What is song?
A continuous beat, bumping
jumping in my hear
a continuous song in my ear
always humming an anthem

Who will be my prom date?
A broken down want-to-be
who will never amount to nothing

No, who will be my prom date?
A chocolate Denzel,
Who is seen near a bluejay

What will I wear?
A high yellow outfit

Oh no, what will I wear?
A sparkly black dress
that reveals the sun and moon

Why is love blind?
Because people don't see what's in front of them
or better yet,
the love is in you.

Rhia Hardman

Today

As wet as precipitation
As metaphysical as an abstract
painting
Cosmic like the heavenly skies
Laden like a fat pillow
Tedious like an old TV show

Troi Stevenson
Thanks for You: A Tribute

To the oldest branch of my family who was still alive until March 13, when she said goodbye: She left the world, leaving her family behind wondering how they can accept the fact that she died. I visited her in the hospital March 6, 2005; She saw me and smiled, and she was very much alive. I saw her and could believe what I was seeing— She was hanging in there, like the soldier she was being. When she died I couldn’t stand to go back to her house. It was too creepy, and quiet as a mouse. So I didn’t go;

I went to church instead and let the preachers pray over me and anoint my head. She loved the children and told me how beautiful I was and I’ll always remember when we visited her, just because. I can’t believe that she is gone but I’ll always remember her, because she acted exactly like my mom. She was my great grandmother on my mother’s side— my mother’s father’s mother who filled us with pride.

But I will always remember how she smiled at me and told me I was pretty as can be. I will always miss her as crazy and odd but I know I can talk to her through God.

Markita Bullock

Change

You can sit here and read the paper and the words don’t change; But when you write on a clean sheet of paper, things change.

It’s clear— See what changes and see what doesn’t.

Eric Baken
A Light of Midnight

Ticked off, like a timer on a bomb
although I know what the problem is
Now I can see it
there is a light, now there is midnight
sometimes I can predict
the time of death coming
toward the death of death
At the speed of leaves, falling slowly
like in the time of autumn
The day now comes for something to turn
into something that isn't something
that won't change to anything
This pen moves across the pyramid
at the speed of light
to go somewhere alone, like a place of darkness
inside a corner, like a bad young child.
As I say Now to the floor, like a crazed man
And the floor comes together
to grow eyes and say,
“Say what, now?”
Although the parts of speech may be all screwed up
toward the point I feel like destroying
everything that comes my way
Not only to destroy, but start ticking
like a timer in a bomb.
Until I explode, looking into nothing.

DeAndre Britten

Some Hero

…and you’re like some hero
everbody looks up to you
wants to be just like you
But why?

You say to yourself
different shorties, same day
Why can’t they see it?
Maybe they don’t want to

In the midnight hour of wine…
your homeboy just got shot last night
you move on with your life
he was fake anyway

But why?
Everybody looks up to you
wants to be just like you
and you’re like some hero

Dayna Hudson

Fairies

If I were to be a small person
I’d be a fairy and fly around
and put fairy dust on everyone
so that they too can fly just like me
When everyone is sleeping, I put
dew drops in flowers.

Remy McLeod
Crazy

The flame of the truth gets crazy
in this world of death, and killing with pain.

It’s warm and then it’s cold,
it’s hot, then just right.

The bright mirror’s tired of words and phrases
you couldn’t think of this world, it’s crazy

The earth and heaven, it’s two different generations
but all have people, just like me

Michelle Brown

My Mom

My mom: I bet she was wonderful,
I bet she sang songs to me as a baby,
Every time I would cry, she would be there.
My mom had to be real smart;
She was pretty, no she was gorgeous.
My mom passed 4 months after my birth.
I have no clue what was going on back then.
I would have been crying if that time were now.
But now I know my mom was wonderful, smart, and gorgeous
And you know what else?
I still lover her, even though
I can’t exactly remember her.

Candace McCoy
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l-r: Steven Brown, DeAndre Britten, Jamila Wade, Shama Better, Jawara Johnson, Danny Govan, Candace McCoy, Markus Johnson, and Jessica Carpenter waiting to see "The Piano Lesson" at the Arena Stage