

## Speak of the dead

By Moya Cavanagh

BROWNS RIVER MIDDLE SCHOOL, GRADE 8

In the darkened  
Cloak of night  
I hear their voices  
Speaking.  
They gather in a halo  
Around my bed  
As if healing  
Me  
From the infirmity of  
Living,  
In the blackness  
They graze my face  
With lifeless hands  
Of jealousy  
Five points  
Of contact  
Where the tips  
Of forgotten fingers  
Linger  
Turn numb and cold  
Against the touch of the  
Ethereal presence  
Which haunts me.  
Some nights,  
They quiet and leave  
And I return to sleep.  
Others,  
They stay and start to  
Speak.  
And with their words,  
My heartbeat begins to  
Increase.  
I curl myself up  
Under pale blue sheets  
With a quilt to protect me  
I pray for sleep.  
I have heard  
Their stories,  
In hushed tones  
They speak  
With fear,  
Murmuring  
Tales in my ear  
They tell not  
How they died  
But of the passion  
That was their lives  
They say simple things  
Words from souls  
Keening for life.  
Of food and  
Warmth  
The beat of a heart.  
Some nights their  
Longing  
Tortures me too much  
I force my self to sit upright,  
And with trembling  
Hands,  
To turn on the  
Light.  
There is a disembodied  
Giggle of a small girl  
“You’re It!”  
Then I quickly  
Flip the switch  
The light beats  
The dark away  
And hems of  
Shadows  
Flee the  
Light,  
Voices fading,  
The Dead have  
Walked tonight.  
Faces shielded  
By my  
Not wanting to see.  
By my not wanting to  
Believe the  
Dead have  
Walked tonight.

## 'Til death do us part

By Shannon Page

ONBOW HIGH SCHOOL, GRADE 10

His head is bowed and he sits alone  
He lingers here even when no one is home  
All alone, he simply stays  
Sitting still for countless days.  
The children pass him without a glance.  
The sad-eyed daughter stares past but, by  
chance,  
His hazel eyes stare through to her soul  
He sees things that others don't know  
He knows her pain but doesn't have a  
word to say  
He takes her hand and she shivers away  
She stares through his invisible face  
He begins to cry as he's stuck in this  
place  
Her small, sad eyes look toward the sky  
A smile crosses her tear-streamed face  
and he wonders why.  
Slowly her soft lovely lips open so slightly  
“Thank you,” she whispers oh so quietly  
Suddenly it's not so bad being stuck in  
this place  
It's not so bad that she can't see his face.  
“I miss you my love,”  
She whispers while still looking above  
“But now I know that you're still here  
I know now what I need not fear.  
I thought I had lost you  
And I didn't know what I should do.”  
He cries as he listens and shouts out to her  
“I miss you too, I can't explain how close  
we were.”  
Though she doesn't hear  
He leans in and whispers in her ear,  
“You are everything to me.  
You are everything and you always will be.  
I said 'til death do us part  
But now it has and you still hold my  
heart.”

## ZEPHYRTREES 07



Alicia Cerasoli, of White River Junction and an eighth-grader at Hartford Memorial Middle School says this about her picture: “When I made this piece, I didn't have much in mind. When you look at a fall tree, you see a blur of orange, red and yellow. I took those colors and made little marks and then blended them together. It turned out better than I thought it would.”

## Blue Lights By Celsey Lumbrá FAIRFIELD CENTER SCHOOL, GRADE 8

“Oh man, my mom's gonna kill me! We should have left earlier; she said I had to be home at 9 since it's a school night.”

It is Sunday night, and I am walking home from Brady's house. We'd hung out all day, playing video games and making prank calls. My house is in walking distance from Brady's, a mile or so down a mostly abandoned dirt road. To be honest, I am a little skittish about walking home when it is dark and the only light was the moon. I almost called my mom to come pick me up but quickly disposed of the idea. I did not want to do it in front of Brady. He would think I was a chicken. And besides, Brady is walking with me. There are two of us. I would hate to be him and have to walk back home alone in the dark. Ugh, just the thought of it gives me the creeps.

“Hey, relax man. It's only 9:15; you'll be there in five minutes. Only twenty minutes after curfew – not bad.” Brady says.

“Five minutes? It takes a lot longer than five minutes to walk a mile dude.”

“I know a little shortcut.”

“What do you mean?” I ask, puzzled.

“You'll see, just follow me.”

“Brady, I don't think this is a good idea. We might get ...”

“Just relax, will you? I'm pretty sure I know where I'm going.”

“Pretty sure? Brady, lets just go the normal route, OK?”

“Why, are you too chicken to try something new? Come on man. You gotta live a little. Try new things once in a while.”

“New things? I thought you said you were pretty sure you knew where you were going.”

“Mostly. Anyway, the path should be coming up pretty soon.”

“Path? What path?”

“There's a little footpath somewhere that connects to Dead Road,” Brady says, scanning his eyes along the edge of the woods.

“Dead road? The road with the old cemetery? Brady, I don't know...”

“Just come on. Would you rather take the long way and get in trouble with your Mom, or go on an adventure with your best bud and just break curfew?”

“Umm, to be honest, I would rather get in tr—”

“Just hurry up, or you will get in trouble with your Mom.”

My stomach flips upside down, right side up, left side over and right side down. Every possible way it could. Of course, I would never admit that to Brady. I don't want him to think I am chicken or anything like that. I would rather stick a needle in my eye than have Brady think I'm a chicken. I went him to think I'm a real man, not afraid of anything.

I don't know why, but my legs start moving swiftly in the direction Brady is going – down a little path in the woods filled with dark, distinct shadows of all different shapes. I start walking slower. It

## Teko and the ghost

By Teko Wilson

J.J. FLYNN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, GRADE 2

Once upon a time, there was a ghost. The ghost's house was scary. A little girl named Teko came to the ghost's house, and she was scared. She screamed because a ghost said, “Boo!” Then she ran home. Then a thunderstorm came and scared everybody at Teko's house. They locked the door so the water wouldn't come in their house. The ghost was scared, too! The ghost ran to Teko's house and knocked on the door. He asked if he could come in to hide with them. They were not scared of him anymore so Teko said, “Yes, you can hide with us.” Then the ghost said, “I know how to stop the thunderstorm!” He went to the thunderstorm and threw ice cream on it and then the sun came out. Teko said, “Do you want to play with me?” The ghost said, “Yes, I do want to play with you!” So they went to the park and played hide-and-seek. Teko was not afraid of ghosts anymore!

seems like the branches are reaching for me, reaching out their long, rigid, scraggly arms to grab my body, take me, shred me and cut me into pieces with the sharp ragged points of the twigs. The shadows fall over Brady and me, making us dark figures, like one of the shadows themselves. We are invisible to each other.

My gut is throbbing; there is a sharp pain with each heartbeat. Something is wrong; I know something is going to happen. This was a bad idea, a very bad idea.

“Brady, I got a feeling this was a bad idea,” I say, hoping he'll take me seriously.

“Why?”

“Dunno, it's just this feeling I'm having. I don't know what it is; it's a bad feeling. Something bad is going to happen.”

“Yeah right, like I'm supposed to believe that. Take a chill pill, man. Everything's gonna be OK. You don't want to turn around, go back to my place and call your mom, do you?” His mocking voice makes me feel like a second-grader.

“No, of course not.” I say, uncertain.

As we walk, we make disturbing noises, like twigs cracking, leaves crunching – things a person would do on a normal walk through the woods during the day. But the noises seem amplified and scarier at night. And, you can't see what you're stepping on.

We walk for about two minutes down the path when I start to see the clearing where the path ends. Thank the Lord. The moon, shining brightly in the night

sky comes into view as we near the path opening.

“I never knew this path was here, how did you find this shortcut?” I ask.

“I rode my dirt bike through here the other day,” Brady replies.

The throbbing in my gut ebbs as we step onto Dead Road. We're finally out of the mob of attack trees, so the hardest part is over. Deep breath. Breathe in. Breathe out.

“Okay, now we take a right,” says Brady.

Shoot, the old cemetery. Great. An old cemetery at night. Just what I want. The throbbing starts up again.

We walk about 50 feet up the road until the woods end. The throbbing gets harder and stronger with each step. Finally, I start to see each little individual grave sitting there in the light of the moon.

The throbbing stops. My breath stops. My heart stops. Every part of my body stops. I just stand there, transfixed. Above each grave is the cause of my immobility: Little round blue lights, each the size of a fist, but growing. Growing rapidly with each passing second.

“Wh-what are th-th-those b-b-blue things?” I muster, surprised that my vocal chords still work.

“I don't know,” Brady says, his voice in a high pitch I hadn't heard before.

The blue lights have grown into spheres the size of beach balls. They are paler now, only a tiny hint of blue.

“Gh-ghosts?” I mutter, hoping it isn't true.

“Maybe,” Brady squeaks.

With no warning, I start to run. I glance once over my shoulder and see Brady following me. I also catch a glimpse of the pale orbs, now emerging into human-like figures. I run faster, hoping “they” aren't following us. I keep running. I hear Brady's footsteps behind me. They are comforting. It is comforting to know there is someone between me and the ghosts.

We don't stop running until we are at my house. We are gasping for air when we enter.

“Hi boys, you running to make curfew?” My mom asks when she sees us.

“Mom, I can explain,” I say, catching my breath.

“OK, so what's your excuse?”

“We were walking home, and there were ghosts, so we ran,” I say quickly, keeping it as short as possible.

“Sure, yep, I really believe that!” my mom says sarcastically.

“No, it really did happen! It did!” I say, my voice raised, frustrated that she didn't believe me.

Brady goes unnoticed as my mom lectures me about the importance of a curfew on school night, until he finally blurted out, “Mrs. Coleman, could I please get a ride home?”



YWP is a grassroots nonprofit that helps students write better and gain an audience for their best work. YWP offers writing ideas or prompts, special projects and a safe Web site, [www.youngwritersproject.org](http://www.youngwritersproject.org), where students share their writing, comment on the news and each other's work, participate in group discussions and work on projects. YWP is indebted to the generosity of the Vermont Business Roundtable which is funding the YWP's core work for the second year.



## This is for you

By Liz Spier

MOUNT MANSFIELD UNION HIGH SCHOOL, GRADE 11

each star blossoming with a sullen rose, the smile melts and fades into pure light, twisting and turning about the flesh, each thorn pricking the memories swirling above your head, and you, dancing peacefully in the floating fashion, your hair whipping around in a laughing shower of rain, beckoning me for more, for the inside of everything I cannot keep close to me, closing my eyes, I sink into this abyss, the blissful smell of forever wrapping into my nostrils, tangling my fingers with yours in this land of Never-more falling into silence we canter out of sight, across the fields of cotton candy and dreams, this place of starlight and moonbeams, and cantaloupe rinds covered in sticky sweet juice, running down our faces with grins like jack-o' lanterns children once again wrapped in our imaginations, reluctant to believe in anything more than the magic that surrounds us, a sunshower melody of love.

## Magic land

By Briana Patten

MOUNT SAINT JOSEPH, GRADE 9

It was the middle of the day and class is a bore. Jimmy Jones is entertaining but I wanted more! My attention span was running out and drool ran down my face. The next thing that I knew I was staring into space. My mind wandered aimlessly like a bum without a cause. It drifted from place to place like a bandit breaking the laws. Soon it made a final stop to a place called 'Magic Land'. As cheery as the name was I decided to try my hand. I entered through the arches and splendor I did see lollipops and sugar plums and loads of other candy! In the courtyard sat Santa, and the Easter bunny, too discussing matters over tea what an extraordinary crew! Civilians of this land flew through the air with glee. Captain Hook was taking a stroll with his loyal companion, Smee. The cats and dogs discussing the weather and politics. Even the birds and butterflies were doing funny tricks! Suddenly, an alarm rang out, but why I could not tell. And then I came to my senses, “Oh no! That was the bell!”

## YWP Special Projects New deadlines

We've extended the deadlines for two special prompts:

**SYMPHONY POEMS.** Write a poem in response to “The Skater's Waltz” by Emil Waldteufel. (Listen to piece on [youngwritersproject.org](http://youngwritersproject.org).) Selected poems will be read at the Holiday Pops concerts in **Barre, Burlington and Rutland** on Dec. 7, 8 and 9 respectively. **Deadline Friday, Nov. 2.**

**WINTER TALES.** The Vermont Stage Company's professional actors give dramatic readings to selected student winter tales. VSC's shows will be in early December. This year additional presentations will be made at First Night in Burlington. The prompt: Tell a story about winter; it can focus on the holidays or the season – the weather, the outdoors, the emotions. **Deadline: Friday, Nov. 2.**

For more:  
[youngwritersproject.org](http://youngwritersproject.org)