

Week 11: Writing prompts: Performance and grateful

Performing

BY JESSI PIRKEY

Woodstock Union High School, Grade 12

perform for me, World! do a trick
show me the covered sky with clouds so thick
I want to see the rain fall, I want to see a tree grow tall
perform for me one of your marvels
show me hail bigger than marbles
show me the sun behind the moon, let it be dark at noon
I would like to see the wind blowing a blast
show me a wave crash then crash then crash
against the sand
perform for me the shaping of land
make me a mountain with your entangled plates
let the stars awake early and the sun stay late
perform for me a rainbow and a tornado, too
show me the sky orange with sunset no longer blue
I want to see what you can do

The pool

BY MADDIE GILBERT

Woodstock Union High School, Grade 10

Sigh of relief, the school day's done.
Reach the blue car outside,
Sling my backpack into the trunk
And with it all the stress
Lifts off my shoulders.
And we drive,
It's not too far
To the place
Where I can forget about life
And let my mind slow down.
We pull in,
And eagerly get out of the car.
The wall of chlorine hits us
As soon as we approach
The door.
It's a familiar scene,
That greets me every day,
After school.
That's reliable and consistent,
Siempre.
As we enter,
Time slows.
And my mind unwinds,
Takes a break,
From racing all day long.
Through that test,
Through the essay
And research.
But now I'm where I belong.
In this building
That provides stability
And comfort
Siempre.
It's there,
After the worst day.
It's there,
After the stress,
It's there, never changing.
And now we're inside,
Hit by a heat wave.
The handle to the locker room
Is cold metal, and sends a shiver up my spine,
Como siempre.
And the pool is there,
Blue, and filled with swimmers.
Water is rippled, and churned white
As the clock hand hits the 60.
Como siempre.
The common routine
Of getting ready
Gives me peace of mind.
Another wall of heat,
As we enter the room housing the pool.
Como siempre.
The team stretching program
Starts with arms,
And after we finish,
It's time to swim.
Como siempre.
Dive in, feel the crisp water
Surround my body.
Warm up is finished,
We start a set.
Como siempre.
And soon we start to get tired,
But we're all there for each other.
In between, we laugh, and tell stories,
And support each other.
Como siempre.

Stepping out of the shadows

BY NOELLEN NEISNER

Woodstock Union High School, Grade 10

He stood in the shadow for most of his life
Scared of the light
Afraid of the embarrassment
Fearful that he would make a fool of himself.
Today he stood in the light
In front of his class
He felt his ears heating up
His face in return
Sweat droplets formed across his brow
But today he was ready,
Ready to face the world head-on.
He looked to the ground
Then to the sky
Shook his shoulders
Placed his feet
Picked up his paper
And read.
The class sat in silence
The poor boy's life flashed before his eyes
"This is it," he thought
"They hated it!"
Again his face turned three shades of red
But then the class cheered
The teacher was stunned at his writing
Amazed at his proficiency.
Today the boy woke in the shadows
And learned to sleep in the light.

ANGEL ON THE DOORSTEP



Photo by Taylor Dorn, Essex High School

To submit writing to the Young Writers Project, go to youngwritersproject.org, register or sign in, create an "entry" and submit. To submit art, e-mail jpg-format (200 dpi) to YWP's editor, Geoffrey Gevalt, at ggevalt@youngwritersproject.org.

Just music

BY MISHA KYDD

Mount Mansfield Union High School, Grade 9

She said we were supposed to move to the music; standing there in front of the class, a blissfully hopeful smile on her face as she waved her arms around in time to the beat. We all stared at her, insanely apprehensive.

She laughed at our doubtful faces and then swayed some more. The music dipped and swung in never-ending loops and swirls, weaving in and out of my mind like a half-recalled memory. It teased the edges of my consciousness, calling my attention to its less-than-graceful melody.

I didn't like it. It was embarrassingly loud and showy, as though trying to overcompensate for something. It reminded me of a wobbling child, taking their first steps and then falling down in tears, then trying again, with help. I hate sappy stories like that.

Our insane teacher hemmed and hawed at us to focus on the piece. My mind tried to avoid its lilting harmony and instead became trapped inside its "Alice in Wonderland" inspired curves. It rose and fell, guiding my mood and turning my head with its jingle bell-reminiscent call.

I drifted on notes of glory, falling and rising again with gracious feeling. It was like being on a merry-go-round. Each rise of the horse sends you higher, and then turns you downward just as you reach to touch the ceiling.

I jerked out of the coils of the lyrical snake with a start and tried vainly to clear my mind of the last remnants of its taunting noise. It was futile. The waves of music caught me up again, and I resisted the urge to weave along.

Somewhere in the distance, figures were waltzing with sweeping dresses and robes. They drifted gracefully and then comically, falling in one moment, ascending speedily in the next. My eyes stared blankly ahead, but my mind gazed, startled, in front of me, wondering at the crowd of dancers who enacted this elaborate play before me.

The music wafted in a gleeful crescendo, rising to its highest, most blazing point yet, then falling with swift gravity, to a halt at the bottom of the musical scale in my head.

I reconnected my mind with my eyes and blinked at my teacher who now stood solemnly, looking at all of us. She seemed to be expecting approval or applause of some sort. The room was silent as we all gazed back. She wilted and sighed.

For a moment my hands felt drawn together as though by an unseen anchor, they yearned to touch, to meet in one loud burst of congratulations. But the moment was soon over, and I shook myself. It was only music.

Music

BY NATHAN CALLAS

Rice Memorial High School, Grade 9

music is calming and aggravating
loving and hating
welcoming and defiant
loud, quiet and silent
it's always changing and always stays the same
it's organized and improvised
and it made Charles Manson insane
it's all so similar and contradicting and stupid and wise
and anyone can listen to it
that's why I'm grateful for it

Performance

BY HALLEY PETERSON

Woodstock Union High School, Grade 10

I stand on the stage
The lights in my eyes
Wondering how I got up there
Knowing that before me
Lies an expectant audience
Waiting for the first ringing note
I raise violin to shoulder
Put the bow to the strings
(Please let me be in tune)
I take a deep breath
Exhale slowly
Then begin the journey of a song
Melodies swirl around me
Lifting me up like the wind
I fly through the song
Enjoying every moment
Every note, half-note, and sixteenth
The melodies of eras past
Of composers long gone
Of traditional and contemporary alike
Until the final note lies behind me
I am in a world of my own
Once again I look up,
The spell has been broken
The fear of performing is back
And yet in front of these strangers
I know that out there
Are hands clapping solely for me.

All is lost

BY TAYLOR BENSON

Rochester High School, Grade 9

Walking onto the stage
bright lights,
massive crowds
way too many people to count.
Standing alone
on the stage
all alone
staring into the blinding lights.
Nothing to say
all is forgotten
like a deer in the headlights.
Feeling sick
the worst feeling ever to be felt.
Ever forgetting,
never remembering.
quickly going through the thoughts in my mind
trying to remember,
or bring something back.
But nothing comes back,
Just standing alone,
all alone.
Nothing to say
nothing to be remembered.
All is forgotten.

Performance is

BY MATT EATON

Woodstock Union High School, Grade 10

Performance is key.
Performance is necessary for life.
Performance is what we need to be better than someone else.
Better your performance and win.
Never lose.
Never give up.
Always try your best.
Better your performance.



YWP is a nonprofit that helps students write better and gain an audience for their best work. YWP offers writing ideas (prompts), special projects and a safe Web site, youngwritersproject.org where students share their writing, comment on each other's work and receive feedback from YWP's college mentors. YWP is indebted to the generosity of the Vermont Business Roundtable which is funding the YWP's core work for the second year. YWP depends on individuals' generosity to do its work. To donate, click "support" in top menu on: youngwritersproject.org



To my mom

BY SAM STOCKWELL

Woodstock Union High School, Grade 10

Thank you for all years
Thank you for everything
It was never easy
You lost your best friend
He's in a much better place
What were you left with?
Three kids to raise all alone
No one for support
Except for the Lord
And you depended on him
Thank you for being there every time
A problem
A scrape
It never mattered
By yourself you raised us three
From the bottom of my heart
Thank you
Thank you

You will be remembered

BY BRANDEN TAYLOR

Mount Saint Joseph Academy, Grade 9

You helped me day by day.
In any way you could.
And not because you had to but because you thought you should.
I was afraid to get close to you.
All because I have been betrayed before.
But as I got to know you it turns out that you are only here to help me.
You always tell me that I can go far.
You tell me that I should be given a chance.
Not only did you give me that chance you make sure I'm OK.
And every day I pray to God you live a long and happy life.
For you are a good person and deserve the best.
If it wasn't for you I wouldn't be here still.
I would have given in and gave up.
But you wouldn't let me give in.
You may not be my father,
but in many ways you would be the perfect dad.
And I wanted you to know that you made a difference not only to the world,
But to me.
You are my role model and a good one at that.
And right off the bat I will tell you how much you mean to not only me but to the world.
And you will be remembered forever.
Maybe not by the world but by me.
Because you made a difference.
And because you believed in me and gave me the chance.
Thank you.

How to submit

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Paradox

BY DUSTIN FINER

Woodstock Union High School, Grade 10

"What are you grateful for?" Such a common question, so blasé; the answers always appear to repeat themselves.
"I, John/Jane Doe, am grateful for: family, friends, home, dog/cat, country, peace, lip-gloss, computer, sunshine, happiness and/or health, and/or other items/concepts that bring varying joy and/or fulfillment to my life." What if one considered that maybe being grateful goes beyond that which is "good?" What if those experiences which many view as "bad" and which they are ungrateful for, could be just as rewarding?
"What are you ungrateful for?"
"I, John/Jane Doe, am ungrateful for: loss, destruction, poverty, war, when I lose my lip-gloss, sadness, strife."
"Yes," one might say, "those are all things that you should wish never happened. Wouldn't life be easier without them?"
Yet, life would be less fulfilling, less interesting and meaningful, without them. I am grateful for every challenge and hardship I have every faced. I am grateful for every joyous, wonderful, inspiring moment that has ever existed. But without one, the other could not exist. Living through and growing from experiences that at first seem "bad" deepens the soul and broadens life experience. I am grateful that vinegar makes honey taste ever more the sweeter.