

Week 11: Writing prompts: Performance and grateful

Dancing in the spotlight

By Julia Gilbert
MAIN STREET MIDDLE SCHOOL, GRADE 7

Our feet pad along the stage in the dark, our toes gripping the floor with each step. Finding my position I take a deep breath and the lights go on. A steady melody begins to play and we are off.

Five six, sache', ball change, pose'

The routine continues as the class grins with delight; secretly scanning the audience for familiar faces. Concentrating on every move, every stance, every position. Yet, none of us have a care in the world.

Dancing gives me freedom in a completely unique way, and as I relive the experience every year, I find even more grace, spirit and enthusiasm in the pure joy of being on the stage. Striking the last pose as the lights begin to fade once again, the applause fills me up, and I know that I belong up there on the stage, doing what I love.

DANCE.

ANGEL ON THE DOORSTEP



Photo by Taylor Dorn, Essex High School

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Grateful

By Rachel Elizabeth Malone
FAIRFIELD CENTER SCHOOL, GRADE 5

What are you grateful for? You'd probably say ice cream, chocolate chip cookies, TV, your family, God, etc. But did you ever think about how much you need the little things? Sure, you hate your smelly old socks and your half-rotten sneakers. But think about it. Your decaying sneakers are the best thing to wear in the mud. (Plus they fit your foot shape perfectly.) Without your old socks your feet would be sore. When you complain about the smelly old outhouse, you should be grateful that there even is an outhouse. When you start wishing that you had a nice new shower instead of an old rusty metal one, you should be glad about having one at all. You should also be grateful for things like jellybeans. Lots of people like them, but you never really see someone with their hands together saying "Thank God for jellybeans!" Sometimes the little things are more important than the bigger things. So think about it. What are you grateful for?

Grateful for

By Sarah Sweeney
HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL, GRADE 9

I am grateful for this mid-day solitude.
I am grateful for your eyes, bent low over a paper, agonizing, tasting words and rhythms.
I am grateful for my headphones, newly mended, and The Smiths 20 years before.
(I am the son and the heir
To a shyness that is criminally vulgar
"Oh, nothing in particular...")
I am grateful for the funk revival.
I am grateful for my jealousy, my discomfort, bitterness...
my egotistical quips in math class.
I am grateful, but I do not know to whom.

And so much more

By Maya Lazarovich
RICE MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL, GRADE 9

The gust of the wind,
The rise of the wave,
The empty shell
Of the crippled crab's grave,
The salt in the air,
and the silky shore,
I am grateful for this
And so much more.
The tide is descending,
The water does creep,
Closer to my toes,
Yet in the sand it does seep.
And for a quick moment,
I am lifted, airborne.
I am grateful for this,
And so much more
The sky is dull,
The clouds are gray,
The solitary seagulls
cease to dip and sway,
I hear the thunder,
and head indoors,
For this I am grateful:
Dinner awaits behind doors.

To my dad:

By Rebecca Valley
ST. ALBANS TOWN EDUCATIONAL CENTER, GRADE 8

I know
That sometimes
You think that I don't tell you things.
That's because sometimes
I don't.
And there are times
When you say that you love me
And don't feel the same love
When I say it back.
Just remember,
I do.
And I know
That you wonder
What I think about
When I sit and stare out the car window.
Truth be told,
Sometimes I don't know
Either.
But I want you to know
That of all the people in the world
I've always been able
To look up
At you.
So here's this poem
So that you know
That when I say thank you
I really
Really
Mean it.

Ballad of the ballet

By Shannon Page
OXBOW HIGH SCHOOL, GRADE 10

She can twist and she can turn
She's filled with lovely grace
The awards she knows she'll earn
She credits to her face
She seems so happy on the floor
She smiles at the crowd
She always gets the perfect score
Her parents are so proud
They still think she could spin faster
Their darling little girl
All the time they're looking past her
Her life's a pointless whirl
She's such a lovely, happy thing
They wouldn't have ever known
But her small heart it just won't sing
Makes sure it's never shown
She hid her quiet misery
Her longing to quit the dance
She hid it where they wouldn't see
Run if she gets the chance
But her parents kept her going
Kept her at the ballet
And she kept the pain from showing
She kept a great display
For so long she pushed on through it
No one knows what she felt
Her only dream was just to quit
Her flower starts to wilt
And foods she loved have lost their taste
Her friends no longer call
Her sing-song voice now goes to waste
She shuffles through the hall
They pushed her to be what she's not
They made her go too far
And now her pretty eyes are shot
She's now a fading star
But still she goes to all the shows
She spins and twirls so fast
She's always praying no one knows
It's clear when she gets last
Their pretty dancer's breaking down
She cries herself to sleep
Her lovely smile's now a frown
It's clear she's in too deep
But they keep her in the ballet
They think it's what she needs
But her bright shine is turning gray
And it's her arm that bleeds
She was such a pretty dancer
But it was not by choice
And the faces streaming past her
Don't hear her crying voice
One night she left the ballet
And she left it for good
In a pretty coffin she'll lay
They asked more than they should
But now she dances in the stars
She's such a pretty dancer
And no one up there sees the scars
With comets flying past her.

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.

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 waltzed 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.

Skating

By Kathryn Maurer
ESSEX MIDDLE SCHOOL, GRADE 6

I get on the ice,
Butterflies fly,
I take my position,
Wait for the music,
And suddenly I'm alive,
Jumping, spinning,
Slipping, sliding,
Gliding, twirling,
Moving to the music,
Listening to the music,
I let myself go,
Rush, rush, rush,
The wind whispers in my ear,
Don't hold back,
Let it all loose,
The music stops.
Three minutes of glory,
Of fun and enjoyment,
It's all over.
Back to practice...

Montpelier Poetry Slam

An all-ages poetry slam, organized by poet Geof Hewitt, is scheduled for Montpelier's Langdon Street Café, Tuesday, Nov. 20, 7 - 9 p.m. Slammers should bring two poems, each of which they can present in three minutes or less.

Be there, or be square.