

# A word on special projects, students on all sorts of things



The Young Writers Project is a grassroots nonprofit that aims to help students write better and gain an audience for their best work. YWP offers writing prompts each week – including special deadlines for general work. To submit work, register on [youngwritersproject.org](http://youngwritersproject.org), a safe site where students share writing, comment on each other's work and participate in group discussions. YWP is made possible by the generosity of the VERMONT BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE.

## 2007-08 Special Projects

The Young Writers Project has a host of opportunities for young Vermont writers this year. More information about each project is available on [youngwritersproject.org](http://youngwritersproject.org)

**SYMPHONY POEMS.** The Vermont Symphony Orchestra is seeking poems written in response to “The Skater’s Waltz” by Emil Waldteufel. (Download or listen 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. Five poems by students in each area will be chosen and read at the students’ respective area concert. Winners will also receive two tickets to the concert. The poems should be about skating and, if possible, about sleep dreams, another theme of this year’s concert. **Deadline Oct. 26.**

**ORAL HISTORIES.** Ken Burns’ latest epic, “The War,” is underway on Vermont Public Television and will be shown several more times this fall. The multi-part series focuses on World War II through the eyes of people in four communities. VPT, the YWP and other organizations are encouraging students to seek out World War II veterans -- or people who were alive during the war -- to get their oral histories. YWP encourages classes to watch the series for background and interview relatives or people in their towns. Special field guides and other materials can be obtained through YWP and VPT.

**“MY LIFE” radio commentaries.** YWP is partnering with Vermont Public Radio for an ongoing series for radio broadcast. We are looking for conversational stories or commentary on events or moments in your lives. Focus on one topic that engages you, where you feel you have something to say in which others would be interested. VPR will record, produce and air the selected writer reading his or her piece for the morning news shows!

**WINTER TALES.** This is the third year for this special partnership with the Vermont Stage Company whose professional actors give dramatic readings to students’ work in each of their shows in early December. About a dozen pieces will be chosen. 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: Oct. 26.** Selections will be published in the newspapers on the week of Dec. 4, the same week Vermont Stage presents its shows.

**FARMING.** Each spring, the YWP sponsors a special writing contest and prompt on farming -- a story, poem or essay. There will be a cash award for this prompt. Go to the Web site to see past winners’ entries. **Deadline: Mar. 5.**

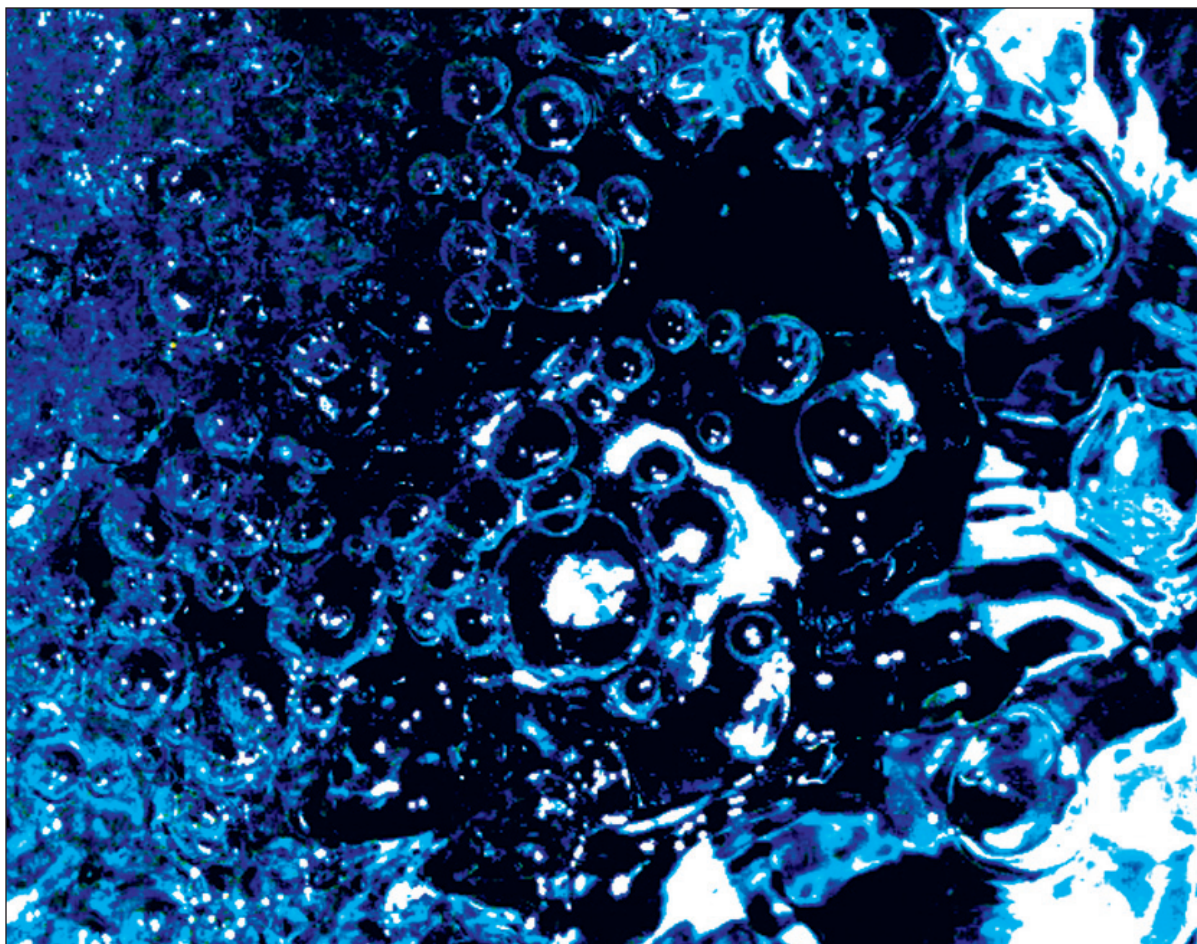
**YOUNG SONGWRITERS.** Is your writing the stuff of music? Send in your lyrics for the special Young Songwriters Project prompt. Professional musicians will come to the classes of those selected to help put music to the words. Some songs may be performed at a concert in May. **Deadline: Mar. 19.**

**SENIOR WRITERS.** We are seeking strong writers -- in any grade -- to focus on a topic, story or project. We will provide some guidance and will showcase your work on the YWP Web site. The work of two Senior Writers -- Zoe Senecal and Camille Bower -- is featured on this page this week. YWP Editor Geoffrey Gevalt, a veteran of 33 years in journalism, will work with the students.

**JUDGING.** Do you like writing and reading? Are you a critical thinker? Help the YWP choose the best student submissions for publication in newspapers and on the Web site. All work submitted to YWP is judged by students online under the guidance of Lee McIsaac, the YWP’s content coordinator. This year, YWP also will have **Judging in the Classroom.** We will come to your classroom and have students read the finalists and choose which ones should get published. Contact the YWP through its Web site if you are interested.

**COLLEGE MENTORS.** Top students from St. Michael’s College, the University of Vermont, Castleton State College and Middlebury College will be providing feedback on most of the student entries submitted this year. If you are a college student and are interested, go to the Web site for more information.

## WATER BUBBLES



By ALMA HARTMAN

Essex High School, Grade 11

I take photographs to express different messages and emotions. Colors and lighting are my inspiration; they help convey what I am feeling. I created a theme using water; I came upon it unintentionally after exploring other themes and after taking photographs of other objects. Water is the source of life and essential for everyday living; it can be a metaphor and has historical and religious importance as well. I wanted to show its beauty and simplicity, to convey calm, cool, relaxed. I mainly used different shades of blues and greens in my photos (see others on [youngwritersproject.org](http://youngwritersproject.org)). I used lighting to make shadows and highlights. Working with this theme really helped me explore other simple things of life we take for granted.

## PEOPLE WATCHING

### Oh, that beautiful beach boy

By ZOE SENECAI

Burlington High School, Grade 12

People just pass you by on the street, and you never stop to think of what could happen. What if you looked up at the same moment or if you all reached for the same lucky penny on the ground? Could that sketchy man you just passed become infatuated with you and stalk you for life? Scary, but not boring. Could that little old lady ask you to help her with her groceries and then turn out to be a millionaire and leave you her entire fortune as thanks for your one kind deed?

It’s strange to think that people want to remain isolated, heads to the ground looking for stray coins when the real treasures are behind the faces above.

I spent this morning on North Beach in Burlington. It’s kind of a smelly place, with the occasional hobo camping out, no romantic landscape to be sure, but if you keep your eyes out on the water and concentrate on the wind, you can pretend well enough. There were only a few others there since it was so early and too cool to swim.

I made sure to wear my red flowy skirt so it would fly in the wind as I waded half up to my knees in the water, and I could pretend I was from a Victorian novel. Later I would lean against one of those beautiful knotted trees and look pensive and turmoiled.

Before I get to the tree part, though, I’ll tell you about the rather magnificent boy there. He himself was leaning on a tree, looking out over the water. I don’t want to gawk him up and say he was looking out determinedly, or desperately, or hopefully, because I really couldn’t tell from my dis-

ance. All I knew was that he was tall, and much too skinny (almost goofy); his hair was straw colored, and had gone a little wild. He was too freckled to be devastatingly handsome, but “dashing” might do it.

To me, he looked like the sort of person you could trust not to hassle you. He looked like he would say things that needed to be said, even if they were uncomfortable or awkward, and not bother you with things like Halo or parties, or cars. If anyone could convince me to run away with someone, this would be the boy. He seemed a gentleman in exile. I don’t know what it was about him, maybe the way he held his head up high without seeming arrogant, or the way he smoked his cigarette in a half committed way, but it seemed like he could be persuaded to dance.

I wanted to run through the boiler room of the Titanic with this boy, I wanted him to teach me to smoke (no no, I know, smoking is bad), and I wanted to show him to waltz. I wanted him to tell me dirty jokes that I would inwardly appreciate, and I wanted to get close enough to be certain that his eyes were the green color they seemed to be.

I walked past him as I made my way to the grove of trees. I hoped to look out of breath and carefree, with my skirt damp on the edges and still blowing a little.

I was victorious this morning when I looked up to see that he did have the carefulness to look into people’s faces, to look into mine, if only for a second, and that his eyes were exactly the green I had guessed.

## BOXING

### A memoir

By CHRIS ADAMS

Lake Region Union High School, Grade 12

It was two years ago. I enrolled in a gym over in Barton: Strong Heart Boxing was the name. Only a handful of guys were there, ranging from 14 to 23 years old. A couple friends of mine talked me into it. Reggie was the owner, Reggie Norris. He was big. Nice guy though. He talked me into doing a tournament down in Claremont, N.H. I was pretty hesitant. I really wasn’t sure if I was ready for something like that. It was winter my freshman year when I started boxing. Cold as hell and no heat in the place. All of Reggie’s equipment was in the attic over the old candlepin bowling place. Two hours a day, every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

The tournament was in July. I had decided two months earlier to give it a shot. I figured what the hell. I wasn’t the only one either: Each of us had a fight. Reggie ran us into the dirt for those two months: Sprints, sparring 3-4 rounds a night, heavy bag work. As time drew closer, I was ready, physically, but I had a hard time keeping my mind from wandering. “What if I lose? What if I screw up and embarrass the gym? What will people think?” July came. We took a road trip. We were pumped. I was ready. At least that’s what I thought. When it got right down to it with the shorts, the hand wraps and the gloves, I realized just how scared I was.

I had been told the kid I was to face was one year older, had two fights under his belt and weighed five to six pounds less than I did. Before the fight, on my way to the judges’ table, I was told he actually was four inches taller and weighed close to ten pounds more than me; also that he was two years older than me and had fought four times. And, oh yes, he was undefeated. It freaked me right out. But I was curious to see just what I was up against.

I climb into the ring. I didn’t even know it’s customary for my trainer to lift the ropes. They announce my name, and I raise my gloves into the air and quickly return back to my corner. I try to keep my composure; my opponent’s name is called. There is a huge roar from the 200-plus fans in the crowd, all cheering for the hometown fighter. His name escapes me; I am too focused on tracking his footwork to get some sort of clue on what I am in for. The referee calls us both to center ring, and we stare each other down. I am surprised, but not intimidated — as he wants — when he puts out his gloves for me to touch and instead slams mine down. He is trying to psych me out. I know that much. The thought comes to my mind that earlier my father had told me to do the same thing. I turn back toward my corner. I hear Reggie in my ear: “Just stay cool alright? Stick and move. Just stick and move. You’ll be fine.” Just as he finished, the clang of metal on metal pierces the air. Ding ding.

Instinct tells me to walk towards the center, kind of like a man telling his dog to “go get ‘em.” We touch gloves and start circling clockwise around the ring. I’m nervous. Not sure what to do. Focusing too much on keeping my foot-work and not enough on my combinations. I keep a steady, left hand jab out in front of me to hold him at bay. The kid is fast. I have a hard time keeping up with his combinations. Left, right, double jab. I can’t keep up. I can see every punch coming but just can’t move myself out of the way. It’s like my feet aren’t connected with my brain. The first round ends.

Delirious is as good a word as any to describe my state. Not confused. I know exactly what is happening. I just can’t control any of it. I go out for the second round. This time I focus more on staying away from that right hand. It is stiff and fast. He knocks me for a loop a couple times. My left hand comes down, and he pounds my temple. I feel a dull pain and then my vision goes blurry, stars in the darkness. The ref steps in and gives me a standing eight count. The bell rings two seconds after he finishes.

I regain my composure in the corner. The last round. I come out with a plan. He comes at me with all he has, and I give him an opening for that right hand. He sees it and, like a good fighter, loads up. That’s just what I was hoping. I dip, side step to my left and hit him with a stiff left hook to the temple. He turns around and gets a solid straight right to his nose followed by a double jab and a right hook to his body. He’s off balance and on the ropes. This is the chance I’ve been waiting for.

But I back off. I don’t know why or what makes me do it. I don’t know if it is pity or reflex; whatever it is, it costs me the match. I lose.

I realize now that it’s just not my nature to be violent and it gave me a new outlook on who I am, who I really am. It was a learning experience and even though I lost, I wouldn’t trade it for anything.

## YWP SUBMISSIONS DUE EACH WEDNESDAY FOR PROMPTS AND INFO: WWW.YOUNGWRITERSPROJECT.ORG

### If I had known

By EMMA REDDEN  
Leland and Gray High School, Grade 10

If I had known  
Last night’s sunset  
Was your last  
I would have been  
Different  
I would have  
Said goodbye  
I had no way of knowing  
My intuition didn’t run  
That deep

I wish on all the shooting  
Stars  
Four leaf clovers  
Heads up pennies  
That was different  
Nothing  
Could make me  
Ready  
Saying goodbye  
Could have made  
It easier.  
My eternity now  
Lies in the hands  
Of absence.

### The voice I can't quite fill

By RACHAEL D. SANGUINETTI  
U-32 High School, Grade 10

The music that comes out when I open my mouth and let the air rush out, Everyone says it is beautiful “What a great voice,” they say “Thank You,” I reply with a shy smile I am not usually shy but when it comes to my voice I crumble at the slightest compliment Sometimes some days my voice is bigger than me it fills the room and is pretty, people love it and appreciate the music i can make Some days, as weird as it sounds, I wish I could be as big as my voice makes me look I wish I could be as big as my voice makes me feel inside

### Hey, sweet thing

By CAMILLE SAGE BOWER  
Mount Mansfield Union High School Grade 9

Hey,  
what’s up, Sweet Thing?  
You look stunning:  
hair grown long  
and dyed  
platinum blond,  
tight clothes gripping your  
cold  
fair skin,  
nails nicely manicured,  
face made up so that  
I can barely recognize you.

You’ve grown so much.  
Sweet Thing,  
how’s life?  
How’s the family?  
How are the friends?  
Is school going well?  
Studying hard,  
getting A’s,  
I hope.  
(laugh.)  
Of course you are.

Hey, Sweet Thing,  
I noticed a couple of cuts  
making patterns on  
your ankle.

Are you all right?  
It’s from your cat,  
right?  
(It must be.)

It’s OK,  
you’ll heal.  
People get hurt  
all the time.  
Accidents  
happen.

Sweet Thing,  
lately I’ve been trying  
to look in your eyes,  
but they’re too cold,  
Sweet Thing.  
The black eyeliner you use  
is a wall, pushing me away.  
Where’s the fire,  
where’s the warmth?

I try to see the child  
that used to live in your  
eyes,  
the child that  
made them smile.

Sweet Thing,  
you’re stunning,  
but you’re empty.

Where’s the girl  
who believed in fairies?  
It’s been such a long  
lonely time  
without you.