

PA Writing and Literature Project
Youth Programs



Gothic,
Fantasy,
and
Science Fiction

Harriton
High School,
2014

Student's name:

Gillian Bobnak

Pennsylvania Writing & Literature Project
Creative Writing for Teens and Gothic, Fantasy, and Science Fiction Writing
Summer 2014

This summer, on the 30th anniversary of West Chester University's Young Writers/Young Readers program, two groups of students who have completed sixth through tenth grades assembled at Harriton High School as a community of writers. Not only did they experiment with different genres and styles of writing, but they also explored various literary techniques to enhance their own individual composition styles.

Our general program goals include inspiring young writers to enjoy quality reading and writing, introducing them to essential tools that will render them better writers, gathering writing ideas and inspirations inside writers' notebooks, and expanding their abilities in writing.

Students developed skills necessary for pursuing the writing process by focusing on various prewriting activities, editing skills, and revision approaches. They shared their ideas and their writing in groups and paired, and they opened themselves to suggestions from peers and their teacher. They took intellectual risks that further inspired new writing ideas.

Hearty thanks go to the following individuals: Mary Buckelew, Ph. D., Director of the Pennsylvania Writing and Literature Project and Summer Administrator Karen Pawlewicz for their support and encouragement in all aspects of sustaining and supporting the Lower Merion site. Thanks also to Barbara Giorgio, Secondary Director of Humanities, Lorraine De Rosa, Ed. D., Lower Merion Supervisor of Literacy, and Lauren Marcuson, Summer School Principal at Harriton High School, for supporting literacy enrichment in our community. We offer special thanks to Harriton's fantastic secretaries: Mary Anne, Janet, Kim, and Lynne plus fabulous custodians Rick, Brian, Chester, Henry, Frank, and John. Librarian Pam McGlone deserves special thanks for her encouragement and literacy support each and every day: high praise!!

A very special thank you to all parents and guardians of the students enrolled in the program, for their support and encouragement. We appreciate your interest in your children's literacy development, and we encourage you and your children to remain lifelong readers and writers.

Kathleen S. Hall Scanlon, *Lower Merion Secondary Site Coordinator and Teacher*
Rachel Nichols, Ed.D., *Lower Merion Site Teacher*

PA Writing and Literature Project
Youth Programs



30th Annual Young Writers/
Young Readers Program
Harrison High School

Student's name:

Rowan Bradley

Gothic, Fantasy, and Science Fiction Writing

Teen Authors

Benjamin Aronson, entering grade 9, Pennsylvania High School, Pennsylvania School District
Gillian Bobnak, entering grade 10, Harrison High School, Lower Merion School District
Rowan Bradley, entering grade 9, Radnor High School, Radnor SD
Sam Caccamo, entering grade 8, Friends School Haverford
Rowan Collazzo, entering grade 7, Shipley School, Bryn Mawr
Marcus Curlee, entering grade 10, North Penn High School, North Penn School District
Molly Cutler, entering grade 8, Bala Cynwyd Middle School, Lower Merion School District
Isabel Dieterly-Malone, entering grade 8, River Valley Waldorf School, Upper Black Eddy
Max Elderfield, entering grade 7, McKinley School, Abington School District
Isabella Gaudioso, entering grade 7, Haverford Middle School, Haverford Township School District
Amritpal Hatton, entering grade 8, Friends School, Haverford
Colin Hitt, entering grade 11, Friends Central School, Wynnewood
Kathy Wei, entering grade 8, Bala Cynwyd Middle School, Lower Merion School District
Max Wolff, entering grade 9, Koholet Yeshiva High School

MY ANTHOLOGY PAGE

BENJAMIN ARONSON

Lightning struck the ground and the wind bit my cheek, I could hear chains rattling not far off. It was a stormy night. The walls creaked and rats scurried around my feet, all running to where I had come from. They were escaping someone, or something. I took one step forward and a black mass rocketed into my face, ripping my skin and flesh apart. I finally managed to grab hold of it and get it off my bloodied face. The bat fell to the ground, flapped vivaciously, and propelled itself into the darkness. It seemed possessed by some greater power. I heard a noise, and owls dropped dead in front of my feet. I tapped them with the tip of my leather boot. Dead, yet their eyes still moving. I took another cautious step towards the 20 foot tall door. It wasn't open before. I took one step into the threshold and was sent into a frisson of fear. A large, yellow eye had just opened, the size of the door itself, and its large, black pupil, was staring directly into mine

My eyes fluttered open to the sound of the lift ascending. *What happened? Who grabbed me? Where's the pendant?* I slowly leaned forward to find a tall, lean shadow standing before me. I searched for a weapon. My hand met a porous, light, and fist sized rock. I bent my arm to throw it at him, but before I could move another muscle, he extended his arm and something shot from his gauntlet in the blink of an eye. The rock disappeared from my grasp and bounced around the lift, creating a ringing noise. The man said, "I'm not here to hurt you. In fact, I intend to do the opposite. *But*, if you do attack me again, I *will* hurt you."

I only wanted it back. My father had given it to me when he was sick. That was my last memory of him. The only memory of him. Never a dream of his contagious laugh or enthusiastic charm. *I'll get it back. I won't let these men take all that I have left.* It isn't just valuable. My father told me to keep it safe when I received it. *Why? What hidden powers can that petty thing contain? Why would a man ever wear a pendant?* I dozed off trying to conjure a plan of escape, but my mind was a void. I woke up to the startling sound of my cell door opening. "Dinnertime," The sentinel stated, "someone left a gift for ya too." I wolfed down stale bread and warm, mucky water. I opened the paper box and to find a burnt pie. *Who gave this to me?* Turning the thought away, I gratefully took a slice, which fell out of my grip, and dropped to the floor, upside down. I bent down to go throw it in the corner, but something caught my eye, and I was compelled to take a closer look. There were words baked into the crust...

Benjamin Aronson enjoys to read and write, play the oboe, cook, hang out with his friends, play ping pong, badminton, and volleyball. -

The White Feather (excerpt)

The old man had not changed much. He was writing, as usual, with a black fountain pen at a polished mahogany desk. He was wearing a shirt illustrating some obscure punk band and dark jeans. Regardless of his wealth, the old man had never been a slave to fashion. He was always wore clothing which gave him the appearance of a broke lead guitarist from an old, unpopular band. Ink covered his long, tapered fingers, which resembled the tall, thin candles carelessly scattered around the small study. Despite his dilapidated appearance, he carried a distinct air of wisdom and musty old books about his person, and had small creases on his forehead. His hair was now white, and he had a long, droopy mustache. His cropped hair stuck out in small tufts around his small, pale ears. I knocked on the doorframe, and he looked up and looked into my eyes with his piercing grey eyes.

"Have you found it?" he said.

"Yes. I have it with me."

"Give it here." His eyes gleamed and I produced the feather from my inside coat pocket, which I placed up on his desk. He picked it up with the vigor of someone much younger and brought it closer to his eye with a swish.

"This will do nicely," he said. With that, he stood up and left the room. I followed him, unsure what to do. "S-sir, should I go?" I said. I was surprised at how nervous I was. It had been over 10 years since I set out on this quest, and...this is how it was ending?

"No...no. Stay here. I want you to see this." He walked quickly down the hallway, until we both exited into a cloister garden. In the middle of the yard, there was a brass sundial casting a shadow towards the north. The old man placed the feather on it. Suddenly, the summer sky darkened and leaves began to blow in the increasing wind around the garden. The feather, however, was laying still on the sundial almost as if it was a magnet. The old man had his eyes closed, and his long mustache was blowing around his face. "Sir!" I said. "What is going on?"

"Everything," he replied serenely. I gazed slack-jawed at my surroundings. This could not be real. Was I dreaming? I kicked the sundial. Ow. There was now a mark on my black high-tops. Ok...this was real. I wasn't dreaming, I wasn't hungover, and I wasn't in the hospital in a coma.

"You must get your reward from Darvish," continued my employer, referring to his assistant. "I have also added you in my will. You have shown me extreme dedication."

"Th-thank you sir," I sputtered. I turned my head away from the swirling vortex of the sky to look at him. He smiled, and his forehead creased. Suddenly, I was blown off my feet by a powerful blast of wind, and my head crashed into the sundial. The last thing I remember before the inevitable darkness was the old man, dissolving like a misty rainbow into the stormy surroundings. That was the last time I ever saw him.

The next thing I knew, I woke up on the sofa in Darvish's office. A small man, he was completely bald and had little round glasses which sat low on his nose. He was busy typing away on his tiny laptop. However, when he sensed me stirring, he looked up with his bright little eyes over its screen and scurried over. Leaning over me, he made a peace sign over my face.

"How many fingers?" he said with a hint of an accent.

"Two," I said. He breathed a sigh of relief. "Are you feeling any pain?"

"It's just a faint throbbing. I'm just at pains to know exactly what the old man was up to. Is he here?"

Darvish darted his eyes nervously around the well-organized room. "Mr. Telwin has not returned," he finally said with a bow of his head. "However..." he continued, "he did leave something for you."

I straightened myself up. This was the moment I had been waiting for. Darvish scampered back to his desk and rooted around in his desk drawer, until he produced two white envelopes which he brought back to me. "Would you like to open them?" he prompted. I ripped open the first one. Inside was a check. Storing it carefully inside my pocket, I opened the second envelope. There was a piece of white card stock. The old man had written something on there. I reached to the coffee table for my glasses, and the script became clearer.

"Now you must find me" was written in loopy script. I should have known. It was another test. "I should go," I told Darvish. "Thank you for helping me." The little man nodded, and then procured a business card from his shirt pocket. "Call if you need anything," he said. I gave him my card in return, and left the office. There was one more thing I must do.

I walked briskly, past the old man's office, and back into the cloister garden. The sundial's shadow was now pointing towards the East. I edged closer, and then felt a ripple of joy wash up my spine. The feather was still there! Not all was lost. I picked it up carefully, for I expected the wind to start up again. Instead, the feather began to glow in my hand. I dropped it in surprise, because it increased in temperature also. The glow faded as it lay motionless on the grass. I picked it up again, and resolved that I would persevere through whatever this mysterious feather would put me through next. The glowing was intensifying, and the feather was becoming as hot as the sun which was reflecting off the mysterious sunlight. Soon, all I could see was heavenly whiteness, despite the hellfire I was still gripping tightly. I stood there for what felt like hours with my eyes tightly closed against the overpowering luminescence, until I collapsed to my knees in exhaustion. When I opened my eyes once again, I could not believe what I saw....



About the Author: Gillian Bobnak is going into 10th grade at Harriton High School. She enjoys playing the oboe and is a member of the Delaware County Youth Orchestra. Outside of PAWLP, Gillian writes for her school literary magazine, *The Corinthian*, and her school newspaper, *The Harriton Banner*. In her free time, she likes to obsess over *Doctor Who* with her fantastic friends, explore nature, or curl up with a good book.

Excerpt: The Cave

By Rowan Bradley

"As I flicked my head around wildly, I caught a glimpse of my wrist. The bone was jutting out at a horrific angle. I was too tired to feel the pain. To feel anything for that matter. I was just numb. But then some giddiness bubbled up inside me. And I heard a giggle. No, a laugh. Wait, was it a cackle? Whatever it was, it echoed over and over, the snorts of laughter, the contagiously uncontrollable giggles. I was laughing. Because I had no food, no water, and I was going to die here alone in this cave."

Death Isn't All That Gloomy

By Rowan Bradley

"Where had he gone?" the young beautiful woman had thought. I quickly answered her question. "He's already been taken, my dear." She jumped at the sound of my voice, spinning on her heels.

"Who are you?" she asked hesitantly, suspicious of my sudden appearance. Everybody was. I never bothered introducing myself or they'd just run away. "Were you the one driving that car?"

"No," I replied calmly. "I wasn't. There was another man who'd hit you, causing a fatal car accident." I paused. "He is dead, and so are you."

Shock crept up her face. But I had prepared for this. It was my job, after all. Reaching my hand into my coat pocket, I pulled out my business card, and handed it to her. She took it, reading in disbelief. "The name's Deceasile, but I'm more commonly known as Death. I'm here to escort you to the Angel's so that they can decide your fate." With a click of my pocketwatch, the wormhole whirled us skyward.

FEAR THE UNKNOWN

By Rowan Bradley

The greatest fear mankind has ever endured is the fear of the unknown. We are too afraid of continuing on our daily lives without the comfort and support of our safety net of knowledge. We cling to it like a life raft as we drift off into sea. We let it control us like marionettes on strings, defining our boundaries and our fate. But who is to say it should hold us back. Imagine the opportunities, the discoveries. Would you continue floating of that raft, hoping you'll be saved soon, or would you be the one to jump into the vast and empty sea of the unknown?

About Rowan Bradley

Rowan Bradley is currently a rising freshman, attending Radnor High School this upcoming year. She loves to play basketball and softball with her friends. She lives in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania with her two brothers, Aidan and Colin, her mother, her father, her stepmother, Lisa, and her step brother, Ian. She can often be found watching tv with her cats Smokey, Lupe, and Lily all flopped on top of her face. They may look annoying, but truly, it keeps her nice and warm.

He is taller than any other man. The armor he wears mirrors his personality like identical twins. Cold, dark, cruel and yet sophisticated. Though it is not visible under his dark mask, he wears the smile of a snake. His voice cuts through you like a knife cuts through butter, and his eyebrows are as sharp and as thin as a razor. The sight of his unforgiving eyes makes even the bravest of men bow in fear. And the sword. The sword that has slain so many heroes. The intricate designs washed out by the ancient simplicity of darkness. Just darkness and oblivion and DEATH!

darkness....

oblivion....

death....

He is coming, Orthos is coming!

I feel my heart pounding in my chest and my breathing is heavy. There is a man standing in front of me. There is a gun pointed at my chest. The more information I take in, the more nauseated I become. I fear that this is the end. I hear someone scream my name, but I am not able to match a voice to a face. The man with the gun yells something at me but I can't understand him. I look blankly into his face and remain silent. He yells again and punches my face in frustration. I feel warm blood on my face, but I don't feel pain. My body has just given up, and so has my mind. I have faced my fear of death and I don't mind it now.

"Just kill me," I manage to croak. The man with the gun replies with a smirk, but I don't listen. He lifts the gun to my forehead and pulls the trigger.

Now I realize my fear of death was never of death, but rather what comes after. The oblivion.

My name is Sam Caccamo and I am 13 years old. I have no siblings except for my dog Cody if you would count that as a sibling.... I enjoy reading, climbing trees, playing video games and riding my bike. I also (of course) love to write.

A Rock Like I Have Never Seen Before

By Rowan Collazzo

I held in my hands a dark, black rock. It felt nearly as light as a feather, and it looked about the size of a *Chips Ahoy!* Cookie, but what bothered me about this rock were the holes. How did they get there? Did anything lurk in these small black holes? How did they appear on the rock? I must know! These questions would keep me from falling asleep at night! My mind spoke to me almost as if it were another human; telling me there's something peculiar about these holes. Sweat was running down my face. Is it just me, or did the heat just go up? I didn't know if I should scream or throw up, but something was trying to come out of me. It's not every day I find a rock flowing down the stream that looks as if it doesn't come from our galaxy! I'm acting crazy. Maybe this trytophobia thing I have (or whatever they call it) may just be driving me nuts. Suddenly, I hear a voice nearby. "Rex, Rex! Where are you?!" I see a little boy walking down the street scanning everywhere for Rex, whoever he is. The boy stares at me with raging eyes. "Hands off Rex!" I look down at the rock in my hand. Was this his little "Rex" he has been calling for? "Why are you holding Rex? Did you kidnap him?" "No, I just saw him flowing down the stream and I thought that he looked interesting-" The boy rudely interrupts me. "Hand me the rock, NOW!" I put it in his hands. "Now listen, you probably know the secret to these holes by now. Well, don't tell anyone! This is our little secret now! If everyone gets their hands on it, it could cause an apocalypse!" The boy sprints away with "Rex". One thing's for sure; I didn't know the secret. Another thing. I wasn't going to fall asleep tonight.

About the Author

Rowan (R.L) came to life on September 15, 2001 in Bryn Mawr, Pa, and has grown up in Media, PA. Rowan has one sister (15 years old) and one cat (c. 5 years old in human years). Rowan enjoys history, animals, books, writing, and science fiction movies. Rowan hopes to be a writer once he reaches adulthood.

The Sorceress Servant

I knelt before the crumbling tombstone as I always did at exactly midnight. It had become a sick ritual, but my mind was now accustomed to it. The moss and tangled vines enveloped all of the cemetery, except for this spot, providing a moist and grimy atmosphere. perfectly suited for *her*. All of the plants had stopped dead in their tracks more than a foot away from this particular tombstone, as if nothing living could touch it. I had tried before, and I learned why they stayed away.

This stone had no engraving, but the angel standing upon its base had a cracked halo, and scar-like marks running down its otherwise angelic visage. Thunder boomed in the distance, warning of her arrival.

"I brought what you desire, my master," I declared, staring down at the feet of the angel. "One rock, broken in half, taken from the home of a small boy." Then she appeared. Dark mist erupted around the base of the statue, gradually enveloping the grave in mesmerizing chaos. Her body began to take form. I dared not look.

"You were slow this time. I expected better from my oldest servant," she hissed. I was many centuries old, but I didn't look it.

"They resisted-"

"No excuses!" my master yelled, echoing the crack of lightning nearby. She began to approach me, her movements vaguely serpentine. Suddenly, I felt an unspeakable pain within my own skull. I couldn't suppress my screams.

"I have suffered much agony for you, my queen. I have been loyal," I pleaded. My vision began to blur, and the pain was excruciating, moving across my skin and into my bones.

"You will not be so foolish again, or I will show you **true** agony," she finished, lashing out with her claws at my face. This sure felt like true agony already, but she could always make it worse. Always.

With one last flash of lightning, the pain was abruptly stopped, and was replaced with a feeling of pure...bliss. It was then that I realized just how much under her control I was. She came closer and met my gaze. I never dared look into her eyes before, but now I realized that she was quite beautiful. Hazel eyes, long shining hair, a deceitfully innocent face. And red lips. Only I would know that the enticing crimson came from blood. She kissed my cheek, and I awoke in my bed with another assignment on my desk.

About the Author:

Marc Curlee resides in North Wales Pennsylvania, where he enjoys spending his time playing video games, competing in soccer and tennis, and of course writing. While his skill-set usually lends itself more towards fantasy and similar genres, he recently found an interest in gothic writing.

Excerpt from *The Hex of Redkey Hill*

It was a dark and stormy night.
But actually.

It was one of those storms that never happens, that waits on the brink, with deafening thunder and all the makings of a nightmare without ever arriving, wind crying out from afar, but rain holding off. I had just been booted out of my family's house. Again. This time for accidentally emptying the salt carton into the meatloaf, and forgetting to mention it until after my father had taken a bite. Huddling into my sweatshirt, I made my way through our village, Redkey, which now seemed like a ghost town. Everyone but me was cowering inside, waiting for the clouds to break. And sure, I could go into an empty shop and wait for this quasi-storm to pass, but if I was going to be kicked out of my house, it was going to be worth it. I barely knew this town, having no friends and rarely going anywhere but Tinuviel's General Store and school, but even I knew where the so-called sorceress's hut was.

Picking my way across the quiet street, I crossed through the underbrush and over a series of hills until the dilapidated cottage came into view. I was hoping to pull some goofy prank on the sorceress. I didn't believe in witchcraft then—thought the "sorceress" was just an old kook—but even so, there was some aura about the hut that made me take a step back. Intricate circular inscriptions covered the outer walls, wild and tangled brush enveloped the doorstep, and bizarre smells wafted through the cracked windows. It was very small—could only possibly hold one room. I knocked, the sound echoing into the crumbling hut. Then I forced open the door. The first thing that struck me was that what should have been a tiny shack was, in reality, a huge mansion. Someway, somehow, it was bigger on the inside! After getting over the shock of this, I noticed something else that turned out to be much more important—signs of a struggle. The sorceress was gone. The only hint to her disappearance was a scrawled "Help me" on the wall, and a halved rock with both parts pressed together, spinning in midair. For a moment, it was unbelievable.

Then I reached out to grab it, but it snapped apart, crystallized insides facing out to me. A bright orange light shot out from the center, dipping like sharp fingers into my eyesockets. A hoarse cackle emanated from—somewhere, dragging out the words "Emergency automated security service has been activated. Unknown visitor detected. Identify yourself." I gasped out my name, completely shocked. "Searching memory banks," the voice said. "Please wait." I wiped sweat off my face. What was happening? "Aha!" croaked out the voice, at last. "Activating transport." Darkness poured around me, and I felt as though everything in the universe was latching onto me with spindly, clawlike hands, and twisting and grabbing to yank me apart. "Stop!" I managed to moan before the universe got the better of me and the last of my consciousness fizzled away....

Excerpt from *Dragon Hunters*

There was only one time that I remembered when I was not running away from the Dragon Hunters. It was when I was a little hatchling, with smooth red and black scales just starting to grow in over my hairless skin that hasn't since reappeared from underneath. My cave was warm, smelling of wet rocks and soil, and my mother, a fearsome looking but loving emerald dragon, was asleep on the ground. I remember snuggling my head under her wing, and breathing in her scent, and feeling safe. And I remember looking around our cave at all the relics my mother had collected. They were not a typical dragon's hoard of gold and gems. They were a traveler's collection of beautiful, but often worthless, found objects. Glass flowers, a pile of shimmering blue pebbles, a leather piece carved out in the shape of two suns. All sorts of things. And I remember asking my mother, before she had fallen asleep that night, what all of the different relics were and where she found them. And I remember she told me. The glass flowers she found in a dragonmarket in Aesthent, the pebbles were from a riverbank in Caveraine, the leather suns from the mountains of Tereiad. But there was one thing that she refused to tell me about, and to this day, I don't know why. It was a wooden carving of a beast, long nosed and broad bodied. Carved holes covered the figure like lace, and inside of it there was a smaller but less intricate version of the same beast. I had always wondered about it. And that night, as I lay under my mother's wing, I created stories for the creature and what I had decided was its child, until I fell asleep. And that was the end of my peace.

The next week, when I woke up at last, my beautiful mother was dead, Dragon Hunters were invading the cave, and everything was doused in cold water to keep me from lighting it on fire. Dodging the wet blasts, I was able to grab the mysterious carving in my claw, evade the Hunters, and take to the skies on my small,

unsteady wings. I was 72 years old then, the equivalent of about three years as a human. And I was lost and terrified without my mother.

The dragon that killed my father was a fearsome beast, a shining emerald green monstrosity from deep in the mountains. We were building ourselves a new home, that's all we were doing. Minding our own business. We hated other humans, which is why we wanted to get away from them, into the woods, but the dragon didn't care.

I was handing my father a brick when it happened. The dragon swooped down over us. My mother screamed and ran into the half-completed house. The dragon's wings beat fearfully overhead, and it roared at my father and I, ivory teeth glinting in the sun. My father heaved the brick at it, grunting with effort. The dragon bellowed with fury, rage twisting up its spine, and spat a cascade of fire out at us. We were lucky that we were using bricks instead of logs— they burn less easily. The flame singed us, but didn't light us. Embers crackled in the grass by our feet. The only sound was the dragon's heavy breathing, as we watched the fire spread through the grass and waited to see if the dragon would leave. All of a sudden, it dove down from the sky at us. I managed to hide in the house with my mother, but my father wasn't so lucky. The dragon raked its claws over my father's body, leaving open wounds, then, with its reptilian battle cry, opened its wide-toothed, terrible mouth, and hissed another, more controlled burst of heat out at my father. The fire ignited his exposed blood, and that was that. He fell to the ground, wailing in agony, then his eyes rolled up into his head and he lay still. The dragon, not content at his pained death, ripped off his head, swallowed it whole and with one last menacing glare and one last heart-wrenching roar at us, flew off into the mountains.

It took my mother and my uncle, newly arrived from Tereiad to assist us, two weeks to finish the house. I was too broken inside to be of any help.

My uncle, Aberforth, started a new branch of Dragon Hunters for our area, all us outsiders living in the Mynyddlow Woods. He was a conformist, unlike my parents and me. I hated to go the way the whole world of vicious, disgusting other humans had, but I wanted so badly to be happy again, to avenge my father's death, so I joined the Dragon Hunters. And I am ashamed to admit the companionship I found there, among those angry and vengeful men. Angry and vengeful, like me. But in the end, when we stormed the green dragon's cave, it was Aberforth and I who poured the cold water on the dragon to prevent it from catching us on fire, and it was I, alone, who shot the fatal arrow through the dragon's gut. I felt a rush of pride, a rush of happiness at last, until I noticed a much smaller red and black dragon, skillfully escaping the Dragon Hunters, with tears in her gemstone eyes, and a wooden sculpture of an elephant clutched in her claw. The green dragon's daughter. I had killed a protective, loving mother. My head spun with regret, and I retched violently when I reached the cave's opening.

I resolved to find the dragon's daughter, to make it up to her somehow. Perhaps she might even trust me as a friend. I hoped desperately she would. So I have searched and searched for the red and black dragon, using clues from the wooden elephant and stories from the more experienced Dragon Hunters, and today I finally found her....

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Molly Cutler, 13 years old, is an avid writer, clarinetist, corrector of typos, and reader (particularly of The Lord of the Rings.) She loves Latin, chocolate, watching Doctor Who and Sherlock, and just sitting somewhere and thinking. Molly has a cat named Oz, who sat around either sleeping or watching bemusedly while she wrote this.

August

"There used to be a town called August." The voice is cracked and husky and filled with urgency.

"Excuse me?" I say into the phone receiver. "I think you have the wrong number."

"No, no I don't. You don't know me but I just really need to tell someone this. There used to be a town called August and I know you won't believe me, but please, please listen."

I take the phone away from my ear. My finger hovers over the red *end* button, but then I pause. I don't know what it is that stops me; something in the tone and tempo of the voice, maybe? So hoarse and earnest and desperate and thickly choked with emotion. I put the phone back up to my ear. "I'm listening," I say.

"It just happened one day," she says. At least, I think it's a she, it's hard to tell over the phone. I settle into the plush, lavender armchair facing the window. It looks over turquoise skies and rolling, green forest hills. My fat, ginger cat slinks up beside me and takes advantage of my unprotected lap, needing his claws into my legs as he curls up and starts purring.

"I woke up, and they were gone. Everyone. There was nothing out of place in my house, everything was spotless, perfect. I couldn't find any signs of a struggle. I thought maybe I would find a note on the refrigerator telling me where they went, but there was nothing. My parent's beds were made. My little brother's red shoes were tucked away in his closet. There were still magazines on the coffee table. My dog was missing too. There isn't even any of her hair left on the carpet.

"I started to panic. I ran to my neighbor's house and went in, their doors were unlocked. Same thing. No one there. Food still left in the fridge, I went back to my house and got on my bike and went around town. I checked everywhere. Everywhere. But everyone, every living thing was gone. /s still gone. I went back to my house. I kept waiting for...I don't know, something. Some one to pop out and say 'surprise!' Or something like that. Because things like this don't happen in real life." Her voice cracks and she takes a breath and keeps going.

"The next day I tried to get out of August. I took my bike and rode out onto the street. But I couldn't get to the road. It would just take me to the forest, and when I tried to walk through there, I would always end up back on my street in front of my house. It was like the woods had swallowed us up.

"There is no electric. I have a whole pantry full of imperishables; but I don't know how long that will last. I can always raid the grocery store, but I'm so worried. I'm about to go crazy. I just really, really needed to tell someone about this and I know you won't believe me and that you probably think I'm crazy but there used to be a town called August and people lived in it and now it's gone and they're gone. It's been four days. I tried to look us up on my phone, but I couldn't get any connection, it's like we've been wiped off the grid."

I hear the rising panic in her voice, and now I really do want to hang up the phone, not because I think she is lying, or because I think she is crazy, but because no one is this good an actor. No one is able to convey terror this well and truly. And it's scaring me to death.

"What's your name?" I ask. My voice is smaller and weaker than I intended it to be. "Penelope Bun-" She doesn't finish. The line cuts dead.

After a minute, I take the phone away from my ear and hang up with trembling fingers.

It has been two months since I got the phone call from Penelope. I was a mess for the first week afterwards; but then I started to realize how impossible it all was. I looked August up and there were no hits, but how would she be able to call me if there was no service? Slowly, I began to relax.

I'm driving back from my cousin's house in the country and am a little lost but not worried. I'm mostly looking at the scenery.

I wind down a small road cutting through some unnamed woods when I see a sign. It's half covered by weeds and vines and thorns, but the letters are clearly visible.

"Welcome to August!" They proclaim. My blood turns to ice and I feel my skin crawl all the way up my arms. I've stopped the car. I'm frozen, stuck.

Finally, I keep going, slower, this time.

The town is small, pretty. The pastel coloured Victorians are immaculate, but vines have started to crawl up their sides. The gardens and lawns are becoming over grown.

There used to be a town called August.

There used to be a town called August and people lived in it and now it's gone and their gone.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: my name is Nina Grace Isabel Dieterly Malone. My general likes include cat's, strong coffee, lumpy sweaters, and writing and reading gothic, science fiction, and fantasy. So this class was pretty perfect.

The anchor dropped, as did my heart. They were here to kill us, I knew. The British Royal Navy was at the command of a corrupt and rich monarchy and their skyship was powerful enough to blow ours out of the air. "Prepare to repel boarders!" exclaimed the captain. Five of their mages began chanting as they lifted over their crew, and our pirates drew cutlasses. I hefted my staff, and as the scar on my face glowed blue-white, I fired a bolt of power. It struck their wheel, and they swung around in the air. I called over Rogers, the first mate, and he guarded me as I began my next spell. My scar was shining brightly, I knew, and the spell took effect. I flew over as a giant eagle, searching with raptor eyes for their captain. Seeing mostly fleeing enemies, I struck at mages, until a bolt of power hit me, and I fell to the deck as a human. The captain stood over me, gauntlet glowing with sorcerous energy. He was not a magic user, so the glove must be the source of the power. I leapt to my feet, ready for a duel. He attacked with a ram, I blocked with a wall. He swatted with a hand, I dodged as a heron. We went back and forth, until a lucky lightning strike brought him down. Him dead with; I changed shape again, and made for our galley. With my energy spent, I collapsed on the floor. The captain, Kalvin, rushed over with a glass of water. I accepted it gratefully. We flew on through the clouds, ever vigilant.

About the author: Max Elderfield is an avid writer, reader and comic book aficionado (nerd).

I woke to the sound of screaming. Fire was everywhere. I ran to the nearest exit only to find it infused with flames. I searched the room looking for a way out but my efforts were in vain. I was trapped. This was it. After all this time running and hiding my past finally caught up with me. And no amount of lies and half-truths could save me. I was going to die. I've always knew there might come a time when I would mess up, make a wrong move or let something slip and it would all be over. Just like that. But I've never thought of how. How it would happen. How I would die. I have always known why it would happen. And not just "Oh, everyone dies; it's part of life" type of stuff. It's because of who I am, who I chose to be. I sealed my fate years ago when it all started. But I've never thought fate would get caught up with me so soon. But it looks like I was wrong and fate had finally found me.

About The Author

Isabella Gaudioso is going into 7th grade at Haverford Middle School. She loves to read and write and has a dog named Harley. She hopes to become a marine biologist or an epidemiologist when she grows up.

Gideon

In a little town outside Lukith in Morides, a man named Gideon sat on a fencepost waiting for something eventful to happen. His three pronged whip sat beside him itching for use. His friend Wynnerack wanted to decimate the Archdemon of Selkenor and of course Gideon was going along with him. He was only doing this because they were both broke and had no lives. Gideon had bought a crude map with the route they would take outlined in red. Having to cross through hostile territory as well as stealing a boat were only two of the problems Wynnerack and Gideon would have to face. His thoughts were like a whirlpool, knowing he being sucked into this plot. Wynnerack had packed enough food for three weeks. This probably wouldn't be enough. With these supplies, they set off for their quest.

For those of you unfamiliar with Selkenor, it is the only inhabited area in the unknown regions. The Archdemon there is using a gold ashtray to a plague around the rest of scalitia. But for some reason Gideon was immune to it. He was with Wynnerack to help kill the demon.

"Gideon" Wynnerack started.

"What"

"Shouldn't we grab a ferry in Lukith."

"Why not."

"Fantastic, but just letting you know that'll it will cost the last of our savings."

"Great." Gideon ended the conversation very sarcastically.

While in Lukith, Wynnerack walked into a shop to buy a little bit of food if there was any free. A gang charged in with their bows drawn! They shot Wynnerack as well as the dwarven shopkeeper. Gideon was ready to strike back.

About the Author

Amritpal Hatton enjoys video games and reading. He has two dogs, but is really a cat person. Amritpal has had a very fun time at this course.

My Anthology

by Colin Hitt

A Warlock's Apprentice

Davin was only eleven when he accidentally set the roof on fire. This was the beginning of a drastic change in his life. Within an eightnight, his parents had sent him off to Vaeron to become the apprentice of Aldrik the Warlock.

The journey east was uneventful, but Vaeron itself was unlike anything Davin had ever seen before. He had heard only descriptions from merchants and sailors, and all of them failed to do the city justice. The grey stone walls towered overhead, and the streets were more crowded than seemed humanly possible. The smell was... unique, to say that the least, but that was to be expected.

Unfortunately, Davin's actual study of the arcane arts was underwhelming. This was not helped by the fact that half of his "education" seemed to consist of antagonizing other mages. He had no interest in the intermagi politics of the city, but they turned out not to be optional.

In particular, Aldrik seemed to have a grudge against one of the local sorcerers. Such rivalry between sorcerers and warlocks was not uncommon; the two schools were oppositional by nature. This feud, however, appeared to be far more personal. And as Aldrik's apprentice, Davin ended up serving as a pawn.

About the Author

Colin is 16 and entering his 11th grade at Friends' Central. He was born February 1st, 1998 in Bryn Mawr. He has two brothers: Andrew (18) and Calvin (5). He also has two dogs and a cat. Colin enjoys playing water polo, and is on the water polo team at Friends'. He also swims during the summer on the Conestoga Swim Team. He likes to read both science fiction and fantasy. His favorite authors are Terry Pratchett and Lawrence Watt-Evans.

GOthic STORY IN A BAG

The room was entirely made of cobblestone, everything a damp, dismal gray. No light shone through the two grimy windows, barred with sturdy iron poles. The only glow in this dungeon came from a melting off-white candle clutched tightly by a battered pewter candelabra. Wax dripped steadily on the floor as rats scurried afoot. One unfortunate rodent shrieked in agony as scalding wax dripped on its face. "Vermin," a woman's voice scoffed, "No better than you, Author. Why, the stench of you combined is enough to make anyone faint." A glassy skull illuminated in the back corner, lighting up the entire room. Two figures stepped in from the shadows, and could not be more different. The woman was tall, elegant, and graceful. Her dark hair contrasted her pale skin, shimmering gown and gray eyes. She held a resplendent silver wand, encrusted with incandescent gems. The "author" was a wrinkly old man, bound in chains. He was malnourished, unshaven, and dressed in rags. The chains attached themselves to a splintered wooden stool. In front of it was a metal table laden with mysterious objects. A brass owl held a pot of onyx ink. Next to it lay a sheaf of parchment beneath a dusky black feather. The man lifted the quill in shaking hands but began to write with surprising fervor. A solitary flame lit his work. He told the tale of the king he once was, ruling over a mining kingdom. Merchants from all over would haggle for the precious gems and metals at his markets. All was well, until he began to fall into greed, hoarding the gems for himself. His subjects cried out in hunger and pain, desperately turning to a powerful sorceress to rid themselves of this tyrant. She gave him a beautiful ruby apple, but as soon as his fingertips grazed its polished surface, he began to wither. What once was mighty now is nothing. Dropping the quill, he slumped down and awaited his prisoner. In her hands was a filmy shawl, scrawled upon with words, His words. His memories. She draped it over his shoulders and he fell to the floor broken. The weight of guilt is the heaviest weight. None will survive.

IMAGINE A WORLD

Imagine a world where everything is black and white. Everything is varying shades of gray until you find your soul mate. Maybe you were walking down a road and bumped into a stranger. Startled, you both look into each other's eyes and suddenly, everything explodes in a surge of beauty you've never seen before. Imagine talking to a friend and seeing that suddenly, their eyes aren't the same anymore. Shocked, you realize that this must be color, he is the one for me. But imagine going through your daily routine and abruptly, your world is bleached of color again. Horrified, you rush back home, praying that it isn't true, it can't be true. Still, deep inside, you know that fate never lies. You fling open your front door and you see the body of your beloved, unmoving and broken. They're gone now. You are left to face the miserable world alone.

Kathy Wei is entering eighth grade at Bala Cynwyd Middle School. She enjoys reading, writing, drawing, or listening to music in her spare time. She also appreciates reading fanfiction and Tumblr. Her favorite word at the moment is lemniscate, the word for the infinity sign.

I clicked the lighter, and a quiet flame flickered forth. All was still for a moment, during which there was a sleepy feeling that something powerful and ancient was stirring. Then the moment vanished, as did the lighter, replaced by a violent inferno, struggling to escape its confinement in my gloved hand. The fire was alive with a fierce desire to consume everything. It took more energy to control it than to summon it, as these types of things normally do. I turned my attention to my quarry, all the while maintaining the unseen orb that contained the blaze. Contrary to popular belief, one does not throw a fireball as you would throw more mundane objects, like snowballs, or food. Rather, you direct the fire, channeling a path through the air, giving nowhere else to go other than the destination you have in mind. It becomes second nature after a while. So does fighting huge monsters. Those types of things go hand in hand. It's hard, though. The monsters don't just stand there while you, let's say, narrate a story. They move. A lot. And this one was no exception. It charged, forcing me to leap to the side. I released the fire, creating a torrent aimed for its head. As the fire made contact with the elephant-like creature, the air was rank with the smell of tar. The creature was unscathed. A couple of seconds later, something exploded. Blinded by the fire, I was thrown into a wall. Spots danced in front of my eyes, and the only thing I could hear was a dull ringing. My mouth tasted oddly like a mixture of burnt toast and sawdust. I recovered quickly, and flung myself away as the elephant charged again. Shaking my head cleared the ringing, but the spots seemed to have merged at the sides of my vision. I felt like I was looking at the scene through a picture frame. Strangely, this made it easier to focus. The creature struck again, this time its scythe arms slicing a considerable cut in my arm. It was bleeding heavily. Something also appeared to be leaking from my arm. I needed time to think. The orb I held in the other hand flared and bit at its invisible container. I smiled. Hurling the orb against the wall I was leaning on, I ran. It wasn't an explosion in the normal sense. For one thing it was silent. But that was worse than if there would've been noise. It was an unnatural silence. Then there was the fire, consuming with an indiscriminate, ever-present hunger. Buildings gave way, and rubble rained down only to be enveloped by the strange crimson void. It expanded at an impossible rate. That may have not been a good idea. All I could do was to keep on running. This didn't succeed in buying more time. Ugh, why do I have to be so impulsive? The heat licked the back of my shirt, which promptly caught fire. Panicking, I turned a block, and got hit in the face with a tree branch. Blinded by leaves, I had to swerve to avoid a fire hydrant. Wait, a fire hydrant? I had to beginnings of an idea, but I didn't know whether it would work or not. I had no time to do anything else. Another fire hydrant was coming up ahead. Without stopping, I burst the hydrant. Water spewed in geysers from every nozzle. I channeled the water, and concentrated on what I needed. Just as the water conformed, the wall of chaotic fire closed over me. My sigh of relief was harmonious with the steam, the result of the fire making contact with the bubble of water that encased me. Opening my eyes, I found myself clutching the fire hydrant, like it anchored me to reality. At the moment, I guess it did. I hadn't noticed I had my eyes closed. Releasing the fire hydrant, I looked around. Surrounding me, past the water, was the fire, ravaging the entire city. Good thing it was evacuated. I think.

Max Wolff was born on November 24, 1999. He currently resides in Pennsylvania. He enjoys reading and writing, as well doing stupid, impulsive things, like writing this sentence. He hasn't published anything, or won any awards, although he hopes to in the near future.

Gothic Library Pantom

Nestled among stacks of mighty dark tomes
Savoring ancient leather, yellowed paper, faded ink
She escapes reality
Spirited away by words

Savoring ancient leather, yellowed paper, faded ink
Seeking transport to past and future
Spirited away by words
They infiltrate her psyche as she turns each fragile page
Seeking transport to past and future
She escapes reality
They infiltrate her psyche as she turns each fragile page
Nestled among stacks of mighty dark tomes



Kathleen Hall Scanlon loves writing, reading, and teaching creative teenagers such as those who produced this anthology. She collects books, cohabits with cats, views films, absorbs history, and travels. She also gets to paint violet sparkles on her eyelids and wears dead black rat earrings every summer while presenting this program.

Four brass and pewter hummingbirds ricocheted off front and back windows, as the feline assassin lay dormant across the writer's lap. Murky, fetid gold-olive vapors spewed beneath the sugar eaters buzzing from bush to tree, their sinuous beaks dripping with viscous lavender nectar. Summer blazed.

Purrfect, mused the assassin displaying lazy, glazed cornflower blue eyes. He shifted his weight slightly, stretched a huge silver and bronze striped paw toward the sun, mewling with innocuous ennui.

The writer kept typing. She swilled her artificially sweetened creamed coffee, tasted, and grimaced.

The assassin, blinking, nuzzled her.

Six more aggressive hummers returned to the feeders, then eight. The air outside the little cottage sounded like a buzzing helicopter pad.

The assassin blinked. Slightly annoyed, he flexed his sharp claws involuntarily.

The metallic birds began to arrive in miniature squadrons, minutes apart, chirping, whirling, buzzing, and chortling toward each other as they rappelled the windows.

The wooden building featured a studio room with a single tiny lavatory. The writer and her companion dined together, twice daily, post writing. The only inside sounds were mews, purrs, and an occasional belch – mostly his. She seldom spoke, except to muse, "My blue-eyed wonder boy!"

The assassin knew better. He glanced out the window at the murky, ethereal fumes, which had turned a glaucous shade of grim. Chatterly squabbling propelled him to full attention: there were now about fifty hummingbirds, their brilliant rubicund gorgets resplendent in the afternoon sun. Glittering, the small army paused, thin glass separating them from their deadly enemy. They hovered, poised to attack.

The assassin snorted – and pounced full throttle through the windowpane, shattering it into glinting iridescent fragments. An explosion of radiance shook the foundation, as the writer finally looked up from her laptop ... then resumed her story.

Forever Feline Flash Fiction



Frankie

Excerpts from Student Prompt-Inspired Sketches

It's all I can offer you," the tiny creature sighed. Rubbing the oily celadon scales on its face, it raised one claw aloft. The **opalescent heart-shaped pendant** sparkled emerald and citrine, then gold. Iridescent, it glinted and glowed from within the musty dark corridor. Suspended from an ebony cord, it swung toward the astonished astronaut.... [Kathy]

The group assembled around the pinkish campfire snickered, leaning forward. Their youngest peer had reached into the bottomless sack and struck out....

"You know," sneered the oldest, "that **colorless feather** shows your soul." The others began murmuring and whispering.

She wanted to disappear; that, however, would seem cowardly. If only she could have a second chance, but no. She rose to face her tormentors.... [AP]

Rock. Not ice or sulfurous gas. Just rock, a massive sculptured **geode**, luminous and dazzling.

Solar system date: July 14, 2015. Touchdown on Pluto, formerly the ninth planet, newly designated dwarf planet. "We have breached the walls of our own Bastille!" Michael Ferris chuckled.... [Max]

She wanted to escape, but she was fastened to the wall. Two **iron hooks** pinned her against a granite slab coated with damp odious slime. Links of ancient copper, olive with age, pulled her arms and legs tightly, like clamps inside the decayed cellar filled with cobwebs and rotted organic remains.... [Sam]

... I opened my eyes to the brilliant cosmos, stars shining on this seashore like nowhere else. Abandonment and isolation might feel surprisingly good, I reasoned, as I picked up a **porous dark rock** and tossed it into the river. Ripples circled the place of impact as the stone sank to the depths.... [Marc]

A brisk scissors kick propelled the mermaid as if she were a cannonball toward the rushes. Tall and willowy, they parted as she swam under violet moonlight. At last the scrumptious delicacy appeared: **two meltingly beautiful water lilies**, mauve and creamy vanilla. The perfect dessert.... [Gillian]

Robert lifted the **burnished coin** from within the sandlot with two deft fingers. Its weight was surprisingly heavy, its imprint holding the entire profile of Minimus Maximus, the same emperor Robert had sworn to resurrect for the history books.... [Rowan C.]

...The copper and silver **vessel** beckoned her to open it; it held five glimmering gemstones sparkling from its domed lid.... [Molly]

... Hundred Step Tracker lifted his **feathery bundle** to his chest, inhaling the fragrant sage and heather burning beneath his feet inside the sweat lodge. Opening one amber eye, resolved, the warrior headed out.... [Isabel]

Inside a stonework chamber, upon a tiny chestnut table sat the **magical creature**. Glowing yellowish ochre, it wheezed twinkling particles from within its lacy hide, where a miniature self waited for its exit cue.... [Rowan B.]

... Henry knew the combination of **snowflake obsidian** and copper, along with topaz quartz, fueled his concealed sorcery. He gasped: it just had never happened to work so quickly before. Thank goodness he was alone! [Max W.]

... The moment they both halted, the **wooden visage** began to spew a thin indigo smoke stream. Emerald illuminations appeared from its eye sockets, and slowly, delicately, its puckered lips whistled low, softly.... [Isabella]

His grin was a shimmery rose-colored lake. I found myself jogging to keep up with the 6'8" **Viking giant** striding as tall as a standard door. This blond Norseman seemed flattered that I'd travelled to Denmark to determine why the Danes are the world's happiest people. "I didn't know that," he'd confessed.... [Ben]

...One lowered its beak and squawked "Crook," not "Caw." It gazed at me superciliously, as new knowledge dawned: **ravens**. My bird-watching guru's voice sounded in my head: "When it's the real thing, you know it." Finally, here at Mount St. Helens, I understood the difference.... [Colin]

** Kathleen Hall Scanlon, a very inspired teacher, with gratitude to fourteen creative, motivated teen writers: may you never run out of inspiration and drive!*

PA Writing and Literature Project
Youth Programs

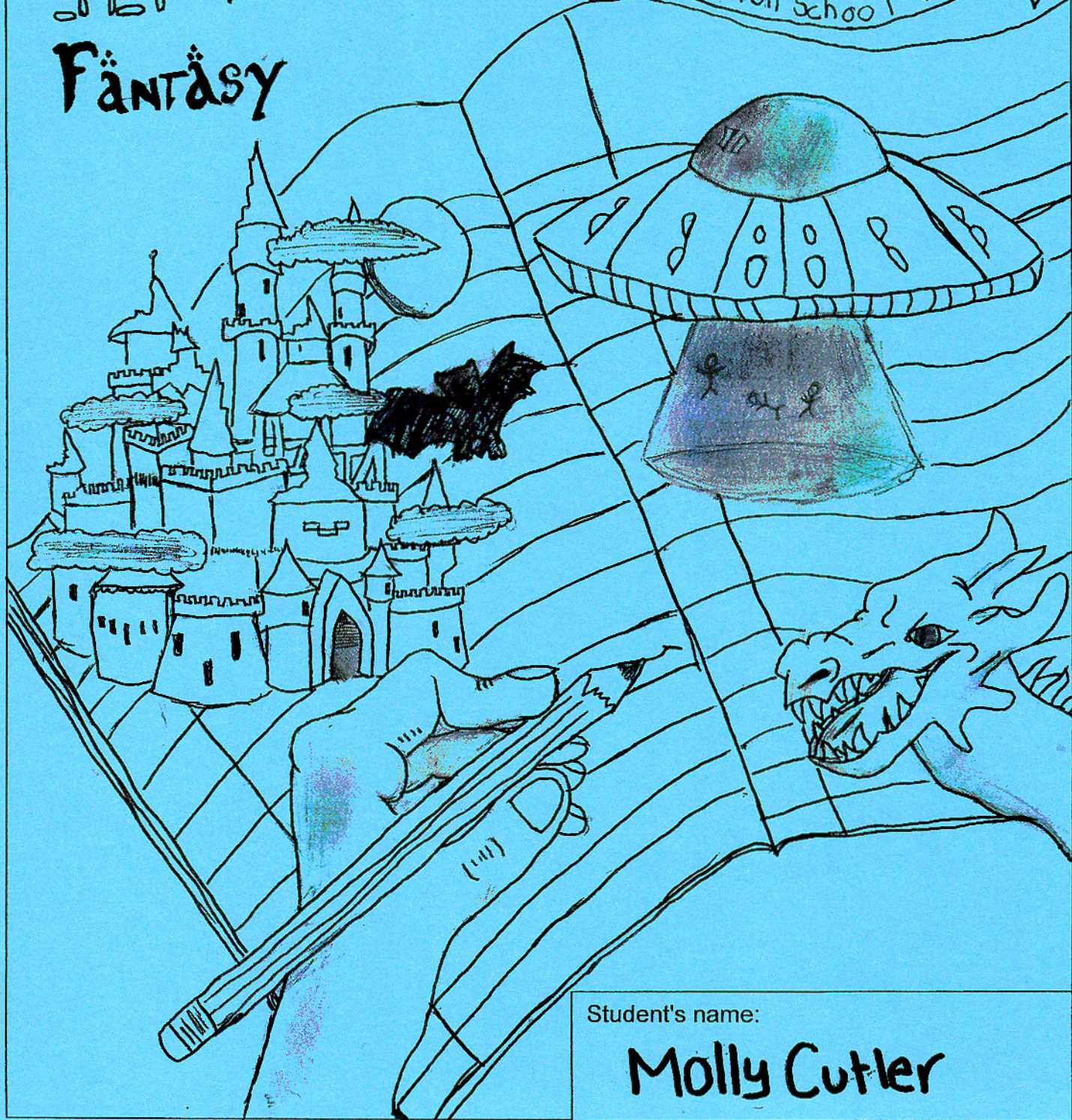
GOthic

Sci-Fi

Fantasy

30TH ANNUAL
YOUNG WRITERS/YOUNG READERS
PROGRAM

Lower Merion School District



Student's name:

Molly Cutler