

# Fall 2021

## Letters From The Heart



A compilation of youth  
authored pieces

**Fall 2021**

“Be yourself. Above all, let who you are, what you are, what you believe, shine through every sentence you write, every piece you finish.”

– John Jakes

You cannot be a writer unless you see yourself as one. Each program begins with an exploration of ourselves as writers, creators, and communicators. Some work is developed by the individual, and some work is a collaborative effort.

***Enjoy youth pieces from Podium partners at:***

Henderson MS

Next Up RVA

Southside Metro Richmond Boys & Girls Club

East End Metro Richmond Boys & Girls Club Teen Center

John Marshall High School

George Wythe High School

Armstrong High School

Chester YMCA

## **Heat of Hell**

**Amica M.**

**George Wythe HS**

When I go home,  
she puts on the heat.  
You are sweating.  
You need a shower.  
Put on some shorts, or be naked?  
I can't sleep,  
It's way too hot.

## **A Bite of an Apple**

**Nijel P.**

**John Marshall HS**

An apple, quite safe and sound,  
You pick up the apple- it seems juicy.

One bite,  
Two bites,  
Three bites,  
Four bites, and more.

Twenty then forty, then it's no more.

# The Perfect Day

Sierra King

Albert Hill MS

Never distress just  
overcome oppression and  
stay alive because soon  
you will thrive and people  
will flourish you with applause.

They ask how you did it, and  
you say just keep moving forward.

They aren't satisfied with your answer.

People think you lie.

Now you face the adversity,  
all over again,  
but it's ok.

You just let it flow off  
like rain.

People are the storm, and  
lies are the lightning.

You never stay,  
so you remain alive.

Maybe someday you can thrive again  
but, but for now,  
you're just alive and  
that's fine.

You go to sleep dreaming of that day,  
the perfect day,  
but it was never really perfect.

People blinded by hatred  
only wanting to hear something that will help them.

These selfish people.

They haunt you,  
but that's ok.

It doesn't bother you.

They didn't go through this with you.

They haven't suffered like you,  
with you,  
for you.

They are just the cause of it.

You hope they one day see the light,  
but you will not force it upon them.

So, you hum to yourself  
and watch the sunset,  
the swirl of colors.

Just like the inside of you.



## The Dangers of Social Media

**Unicorn**  
**Kavon A.**  
**Henderson MS**

One day, there was a girl named Clarice, and she had schizophrenia. She was on social media when she saw an ad saying, "Come buy this unicorn for \$100,000!" Of course, she did. But, when it came, it was just a toy rocking horse with a stale ice cream cone on the top. Since she used the last of her furniture and money, the rocking horse was the only thing she could sit on, and with nothing to eat, she hallucinated until she met her maker.

**The Vlogger**  
**Jalyn C.**  
**Henderson MS**

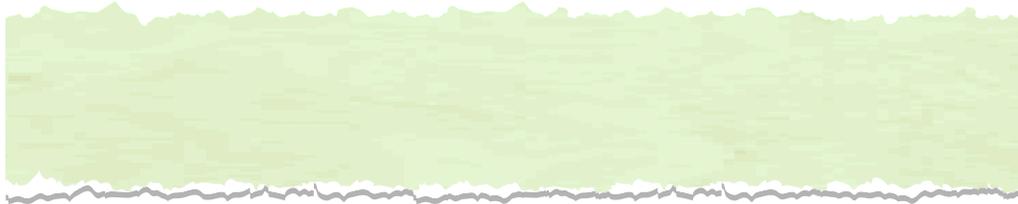
One day, there was a vlogger with 100 vlogs. She made a live vlog and someone in the comments said, "I will give you a dollar per vlog short you do." The vlogger saw this and thought to herself, "Wow this is going to be good."

The vlogger made video after video after video, and spent money after money after money, not knowing what was going to happen. Then one day, the vlogger went to the place where the person said to meet them, and the man stole the vlogger's money and left. The vlogger stopped vlogging and remained sad all her life. The end.

**Watch Out**  
**Devonte D.**  
**Henderson MS**

Once upon a time, I bought a 0.99¢ add-on for a game called Avakin Life. The add-on was actually a subscription, but I didn't know it was a subscription. My mom wanted to know why it was taking 0.99¢ from her account, so she called Apple Services, and they told her it was a subscription from Avakin Life. She unsubscribed from the scam of 0.99¢. Everything went back to normal, and her money was safe.

P.S. That's why you don't trust sketchy apps, kids.



## **Personal Statements & Moments of Importance**

**Enjoy reflections of student experiences used to start off their college personal statements!**

### **Personal Statement**

**Josh H.**

**East End Boys and Girls Club**

I go to an alternative school. Countless black and brown kids and teens are pushed into alternative schools because of common mistakes and racist school policies. I was one of those kids. But I've learned to take help when it's given to me, positive ways to control myself, how to ask for help, and how to talk about my feelings. As a result, I've taken a lot of help from others and learned from them, especially how I can do better when going back to public school. I will have better relationships with teachers, help around the house, and be a leader on my football team.

### **Personal Statement**

**Shyla S.**

**East End Boys and Girls Club**

My name is Shyla. My skills are drawing, writing with a focus in poetry, story-telling, wood-working, playing the saxophone, and planning events. This year my accomplishments are getting good grades and being a member of the S.G.A. My goals for the future are passing the ninth grade, getting a new computer, and finding my style of art.

### **My Brother**

**Jmyra K.**

**John Marshall HS**

One day, during my fall weekend trip, I accomplished creating a strong bond with my brother. It was amazing because I got to meet new people and get closer with my brother. This was the first time I ever spent away from my family. When I was younger, I really wasn't allowed to do anything. Now that I'm 16, I can do certain things and make certain decisions by myself, and I want to show my family that I can do things on my own.

## Home With My Family

Tyvell M.

John Marshall HS

I like to be home with my family. I feel safe with my family, and they always make me smile. I don't feel safe on the street because a black male like me can get shot anywhere. The dogs in the street are scary too. I don't like the street because my cousin died in a robbery when he was just walking home. I don't go in the street because I don't want the same thing to happen to me or something worse. Going back to my safe place, my home, makes me feel good inside. I spend time with my family. They're very supportive of me. They take me to friends' houses and school events. I love them.

### Let's Talk about Love:

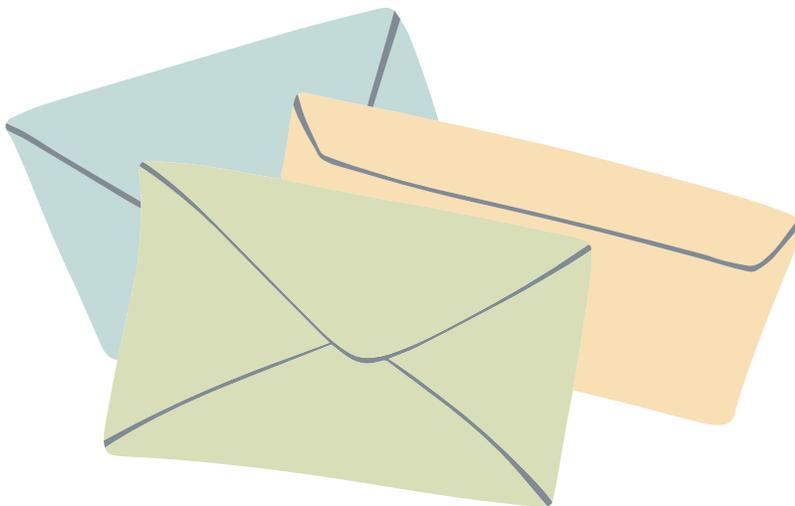
Poetry written about love or for our loved ones.

## Give Me the Key to Your Heart

Amauri D.

George Wythe HS

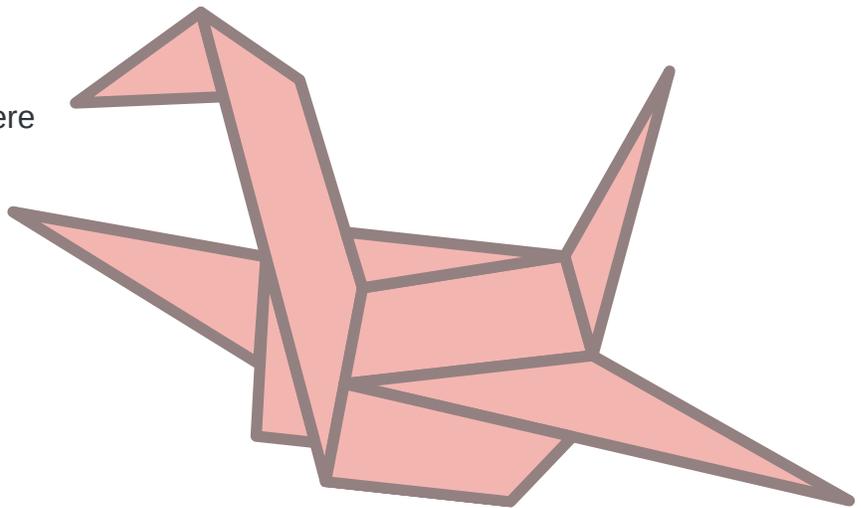
You laughed at  
my jokes, couldn't  
tell if it was sarcasm  
or if you liked me.  
I caught you staring,  
can't tell if you like  
me. Give me a sign,  
will you be mine?  
Your smile lights  
up the whole room.  
Do you notice me?  
Give me the key  
to your heart.



**Until We Meet Again**  
**Ariyana T.**  
**George Wythe HS**

Those special memories of you  
will always bring a smile,  
if only I could have you back  
for just a little while.  
Then we can sit and talk again  
Just like we used to do.  
You always meant so very much  
and you always will.  
The fact that you are no longer here  
will always cause me pain.  
You are forever in my heart

until we meet again.



**Anti-Love**  
**Shaniece G.**  
**George Wythe HS**

Love, I've never felt it.  
It's just four letters, one word  
That comes out of people's mouths  
That usually doesn't have a meaning -

When someone walks up to me and says  
"You know I love you,"  
I cringe and ask, "Do you really?  
Because I know you don't."

You're just saying that.  
Have you ever seen a couple say their first I love you?  
Their partner usually says it back  
So they don't feel awkward knowing they don't mean it.  
They're just saying that four letter word  
L.O.V.E.  
Like they mean it.

## Leaves Falling Off a Tree

Davina J.

George Wythe HS

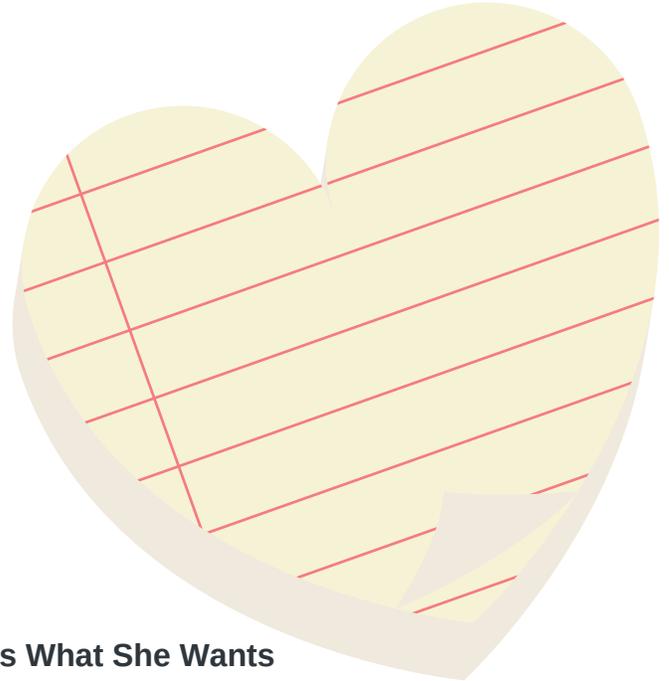
It started off as the most beautiful thing ever.  
We used to laugh and smile, and  
I used to love when you were around,  
but now, our bond is like leaves falling off a tree.

## Creme and Spice

Shavon B.

Armstrong HS

There once was a guinea pig, and  
Her name was Creme. She was so beautiful  
But time wasn't in our favor.  
She died on the first day of school. I cried  
Until I fell asleep on my grandma  
And woke up to a new guinea pig.  
I named her Spice.



## A Woman of Quality Knows What She Wants

Alana H.

Armstrong HS

You don't need to be exact,  
You don't need to be abstract.  
You don't always have to know,  
In your heart you'll find it.  
And when you do, it will be especially  
Divine.

## Girl and Me

Devale J.

Armstrong HS

One day I was playing in my football game,  
When this girl called me over and told me she liked me.  
I told her, "Let me take a shower first."  
Then I came back to the football field  
And told her, "Let me get your number."  
That's how it all started.

**My Eyes Never Lie**  
**Darnesha S.**  
**Armstrong HS**

My eyes never lie!  
Doing me is what I do best.  
The flowers, trees, the sun, and the birds in their nest.  
Knowing the difference between doing okay and feeling good,  
Growing up in a neighborhood with crime.

My eyes never lie, whether it's love, or it's not,  
Seeing my future or being something I'm not.  
My eyes never lie because you're looking in them.  
My eyes won't lie from beginning to end.  
The eyes will last, but my heart will never mend.  
My growth will never die, not even if you try.

I tell you a million times: my eyes don't lie!

**Life**  
**Adrian W.**  
**Armstrong HS**

Why am I always on defense?  
It's like your life may change  
for the better;  
you may develop feelings, and  
you may give your heart,  
but vulnerable may be  
an understatement.  
Pain is everlasting.



**Roses are Red**  
**Aniyah R.**  
**Armstrong HS**

Roses are red,  
Violets are blue,  
I wish my love  
Came true.



**Love is Just a Word**  
**Zakiya S.**  
**Armstrong HS**

Love is just a word.  
The word is just a  
title; some people  
mean it and some  
people just say it.  
Love has a meaning, and  
the meaning depends on  
who it comes from.  
Sometimes you feel  
the love, while other  
times you just know.  
Some love makes you  
feel happy, other love  
makes you cry. It  
all depends on where  
the love is coming  
from. Love is  
just a word.  
L.O.V.E.



**Heaven: For My Dad**  
**Bre W.**  
**John Marshall HS**

When you feel the world is getting colder  
And the night grows darker,  
You think of where the afterlife passes on.  
You look into the sky and see the clouds passing by.  
Our trip to Heaven all comes at a time.

**What's Mine is Yours**  
**Anonymous**  
**John Marshall HS**

I love your energy, and  
I hope you love mine.  
What's mine is yours.  
You opened the doors  
The day we said  
Our first words.

## **I See Your Monsters**

**Andrea J.**

**John Marshall HS**

I see your monsters,  
I see your pain,  
Tell me your problems,  
I'll chase them away.  
I'll be your lighthouse,  
I'll make it okay,  
When I see your monsters,  
I'll stand there bravely.

## **Puppy Love**

**Kimari S.**

**Armstrong HS**

You make me feel happy.  
You make me show all thirty-two of my teeth.  
You make me happy when you stand on  
Your four feet. You make me feel loved  
When you give me licks on my face.  
I love you.

## **I Went to His School**

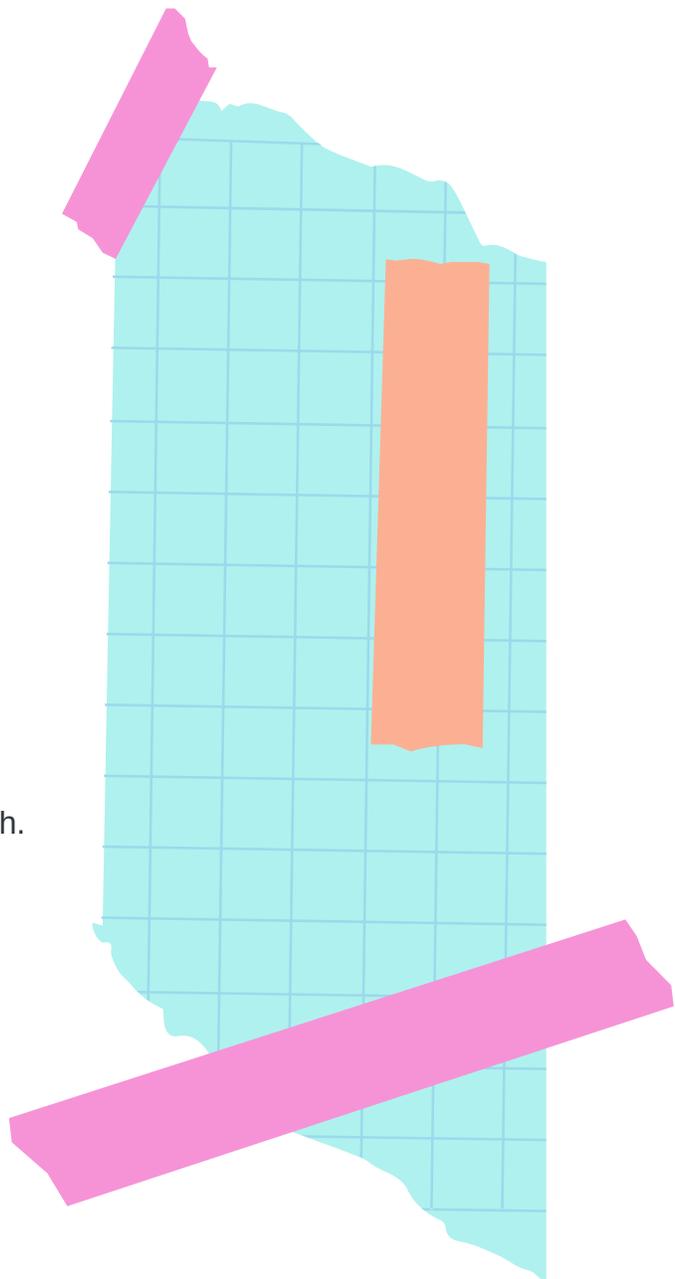
**Oktoba G.**

**Armstrong HS**

I went to his school,  
and he was kind-of cool.  
I saw him with a fool.  
Tears fell like a pool.

He always gives me hugs,  
and his jacket feels so snug.  
But I have self-respect,  
and I cannot take neglect.

He still calls my phone,  
even when I'm not at home.  
If he keeps playing with me,  
I'll hit him upside his dome.



**I Like to Eat**  
**Caleb S.**  
**Armstrong HS**

I like to eat, how about you?  
I always go to the drive-thru.  
The burger will always be my boo,  
And you know that will always be true.

**My Girlfriend**  
**Timiya R.**  
**Armstrong HS**

Roses are red,  
Violets are blue,  
My girlfriend is mine,  
And she say period pooh.

My girlfriend is mean,  
but she's beautiful too.  
I don't know when she's mad  
Nor when she's sad.

She's really cute,  
But her attitude is poop.



Enjoy meditative pieces on the way students view themselves and how they show up in the world.

### **The Real Me**

**Roselee B.**

**George Wythe HS**

It's hard living life when I don't know myself. I'm trying to create a persona in their image of wealth. A lost soul and an empty shadow.

But what do I do it for?

I do it for my peace and my well-being, to be motivated and driven in control of me.

I do it for a reason to get up and a reason for tomorrow.

I do it for my confidence, my passion, my love.

It's a challenge to be and experience the real me.

### **You Can't Get Rid of Us**

**James M.**

**Armstrong HS**

Peace? Love? Happiness?

Where is that?

I don't see it, only sadness and anger.

Teenagers getting talked down to,

Or cursed for being gay.

They can't control who they love or what they are.

The only one who can judge them is God,

Not their family and friends.

The Bible is a lie when it comes to sexuality

Because being gay is not a sin.

You're not going to Hell for loving the same gender

Or for identifying as a different one.

I still don't understand why it's such a big deal.

They're not hurting anyone by being themselves, and

I keep hoping that the world will get better soon.

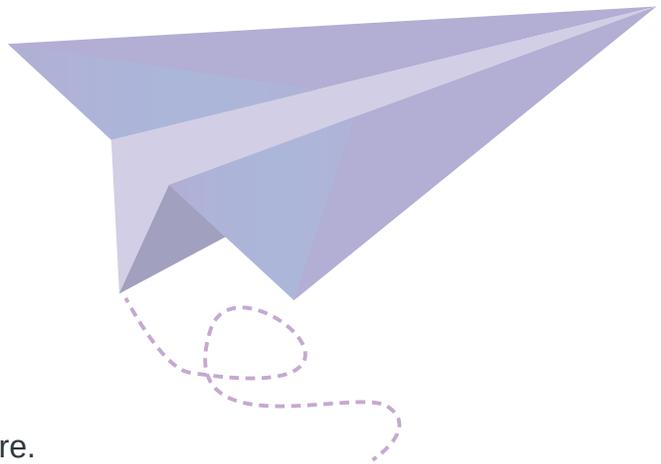
To the homophobic and transphobic people who are hating on gay people,

That want us dead or for us to get help

So we can be straight again.

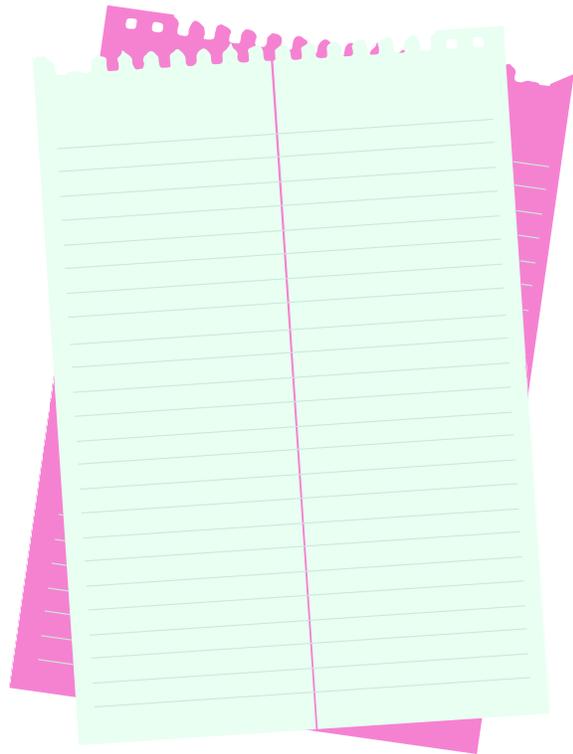
They even ask God to forgive us for "going through a phase" and "sinning," but

You can't get rid of us.



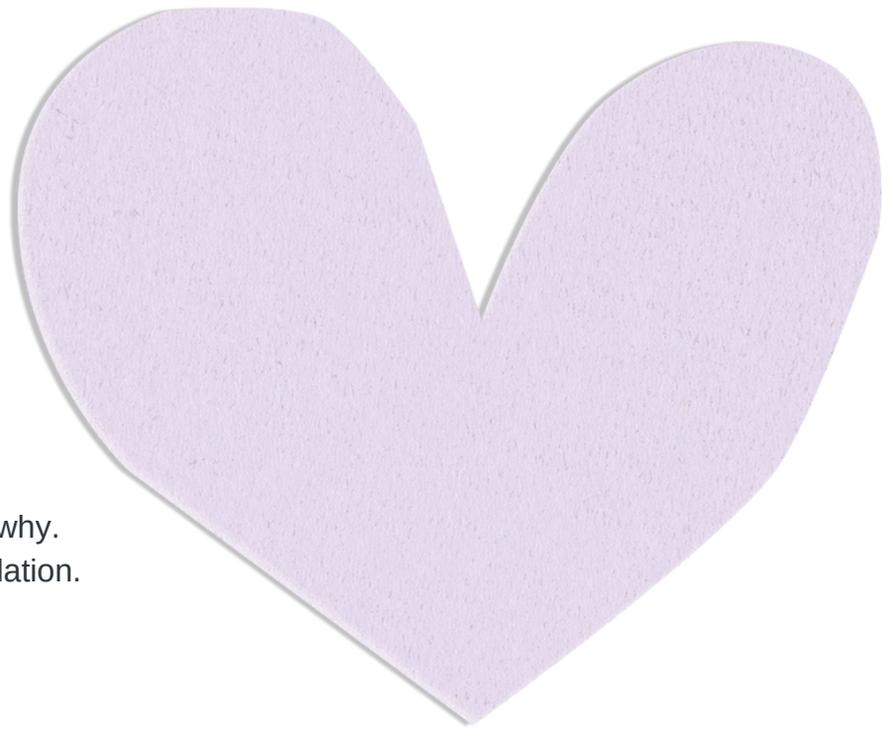
**I'm Happy**  
**Amauri D.**  
**George Wythe HS**

“Why you mad? You weren’t invited to the parties.” Said I’m not Black enough with my hair all nappy. I sat awkwardly with my ‘fro the size of a bush. I’m sure you won’t believe this when I say I’m happy, but I’m not playin; this story is called I’m happy. I stopped and saw my reflection instead of looking past the Black girl in the mirror. I realized she was beautiful, just not happy. So I blossomed alone, and I can now say I’m happy.



**Two POC in a PWI**  
**Jay W.**  
**Armstrong HS**

Two POC in a PWI  
Felt out of place and knew exactly why.  
Found each other and fixed the isolation.  
Became best friends  
So close to each other,  
Now I look at him as a brother.

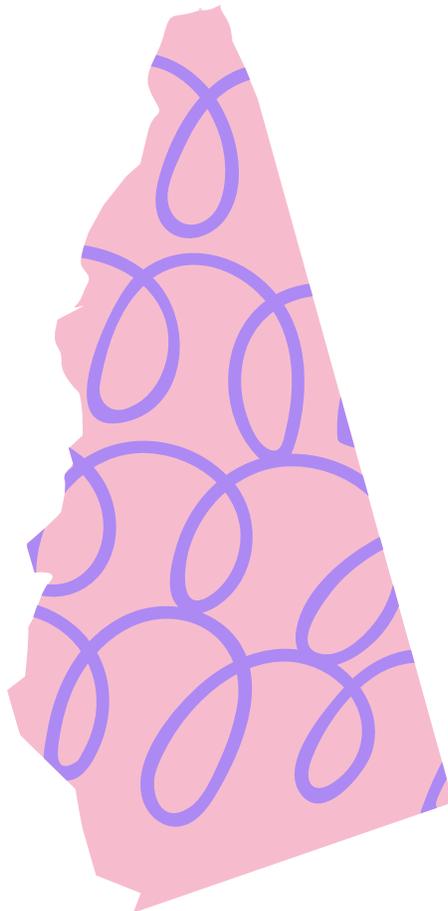


**Lonely**  
**Najah W.**  
**Armstrong HS**

Loudest in the room,  
yeah, they assume  
that they're weak.  
I often find myself  
disagreeing with  
this. They just seem  
lonely to me.

**Liam's World**  
**Liam D.**  
**John Marshall HS**

When I zone out,  
I go to my little hideout  
island called "Liam's World,"  
where I can create or  
imagine anything I want.



## Who Am I?

Letters and reflections on our present, past, and future selves.

**Who I Was, Who I am, Who I Want to Be**  
**Shavon B.**  
**Armstrong HS**

Who I was:  
A lonely girl.  
I'd keep to myself  
Until I met my  
Friends who took  
Me out of my shell.

Who I am:  
I am a girl  
Who loves to bake,  
To sing, loves  
To dance, and be  
Free. To be myself  
Is immaculate.

Who I want to be:  
Someone who  
Is strong, who is  
Brave, who stands  
Up for the right  
Things and the right  
Reasons.



## **I Was, I Am, I Want**

**Adrian W.**

**Armstrong HS**

### **Who I was**

Two years ago I was a 15 year old, immature boy, who was always joking around. Then a year went by, and I realized life is precious, and I can better myself. I became a mature young man over time. I even grew a little taller.

### **Who I am**

My name is Adrian. I am a young man now at the age of 17, and my life has changed. I'm the kind of person who is very into sports (Dallas Cowboys 5-1, by the way) and video games. I'm trying to finish school and start my enterprise business.

### **Who I want to be**

I want to be a successful multi-million dollar international businessman who sells exotic, super, and import vehicles and rims. I want to buy my mother a house and a car.

## **I was, I am, I will**

**Nikki J.**

**George Wythe High School**

**Who I was:** I was a kind-hearted child who was very nice and fun to be around.

**Who I am:** I am a person who gets annoyed fast. I'm not fun to be around anymore. I have a lot of problems that I don't care about solving.

**Where I want to be:** I want to be a more likeable person again.

**Sincerely, Leonardo**

**Leonardo T.**

**George Wythe High School**

Hey, Leonardo,

I am writing this because I know, by my faith in God, that when you read this, you will start to remember how God helped you. Remember when you started to learn English in your first year in George Wythe High School? Remember all the things that you learned helped you get where you are. Also, remember that if you keep thinking about big things in your future, you can achieve it. Work hard and never give up.

Sincerely,

Leonardo

## Group Poetry

Students used a popcorn method to collaborate on these group poems.

### **Happiness Follows**

**Amauri D., Nikki J., Shaniece G., Miyah M., Ariyana T., Jaedon B., Tristan C., Caleb H., Kelvion T., Kavon W., Tashan W., Trevion B., Tilwon G., Christian B., and Aueya W.  
George Wythe HS**

Love, sadness, happiness,  
Beauty, and goodness  
Are things honesty moves within.

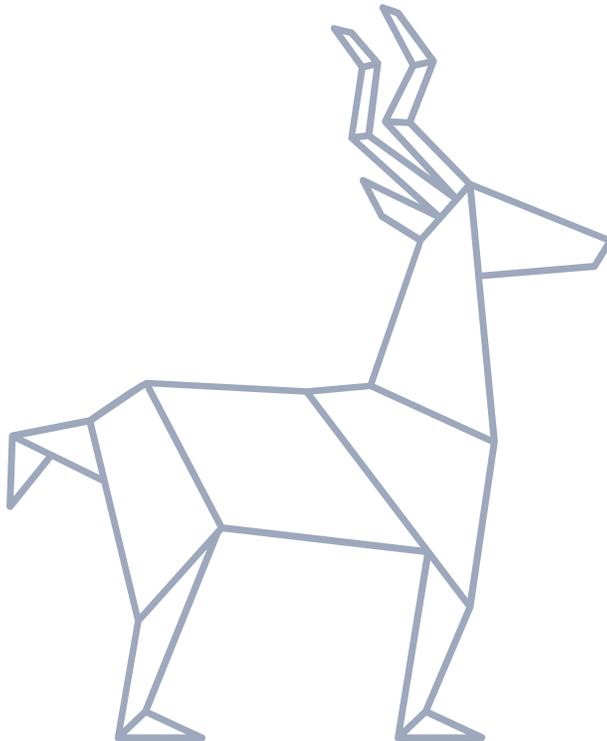
My soul aches with pain for love and security,  
It's heartbreak.  
Better things come when you find yourself, and  
Happiness follows when there are loving people surrounding your pain.

### **Time Flies Like an Arrow, Fruit Flies Like a Banana**

**Kameron B., Shavon B., Kevion C., Jamian H., Devale J., Zion L., Darnesha S., Caleb S., Najah W., Adrian W., and James M.  
Armstrong HS**

Brave and intelligent  
The bald apple fell asleep  
Clock, tick-tock, stop...

New time starts dribbling.  
The bodacious banana  
Muscles radiating heat.



## Poetic Storytelling

**Subset Null**  
**Kelsean K.**  
**John Marshall HS**

Enter poetry [here], in this blank anything goes, as far as the outermost bounds of your mind and powered by the fuel tank that is your inspiration for writing. This blank [here] can fit anything from a couple of letters to an entire book's worth of words. This poem [subset null] is a poem of your own imagination. Wondering about the story? Just imagine one. Theme? Imagine one. Author? You! But all you need to start is this: [enter poetry here] to begin your journey to my poem [subset null] and the concept of [enter poetry here].

**La Historia de un Sapo que llora Enel Rio?**  
**"The Story of a Toad that Cries in the River"**  
**Osman G.**  
**George Wythe HS**

Era un sapo que ilaraba todas las noches por el motivo que extraña su family. Porque una noche como estas ellos decidieron cross the street so I can eat food in the swamp. Para poder me alimentarme y al regresar paso un camion y terminaron muertos.

And that's why I stay in tears.

There was a toad that cried every night because he missed his family. One night, they decided to cross the street so they could eat food in the swamp. When they were able to feed themselves, a truck passed, and the family ended up dead.

And that's why I stay in tears.

**Now Scream!**  
**Ja'Chaun T.**  
**George Wythe High School**

POP! POP! POP! POP! POP! POP! POP!

"Can't wait 'til this popcorn is done!"

A girl home alone at 10PM is definitely not scary at all, until – RING! RING! RING! The girl runs to the phone, she picks it up. "Hello-"

CRASH!

She turned her head to the direction of the loud noise - "MOMMAA--"

## **La Hierba or “The Grass”**

**Erick N.**

**George Wythe HS**

Hace mucho tiempo avia una planta de grass.

What cresio in a rock se veia beautiful and mud poco of crees.

What creciera act and code prosper in a very good.

A long time ago there was a grass plant that grew in a rock. It looked beautiful and there was much less than you'd think. What grew there prospered.

## **Have to Keep Going**

**Miyah M.**

**George Wythe HS**

A cat was born.

Mom leaves the cat lonely in this big world.

Can't see, can't breathe, alone, sad, lonely, and depressed.

But still, they have to keep going.

Crying at night, but not too loud. Don't want people to hear me.

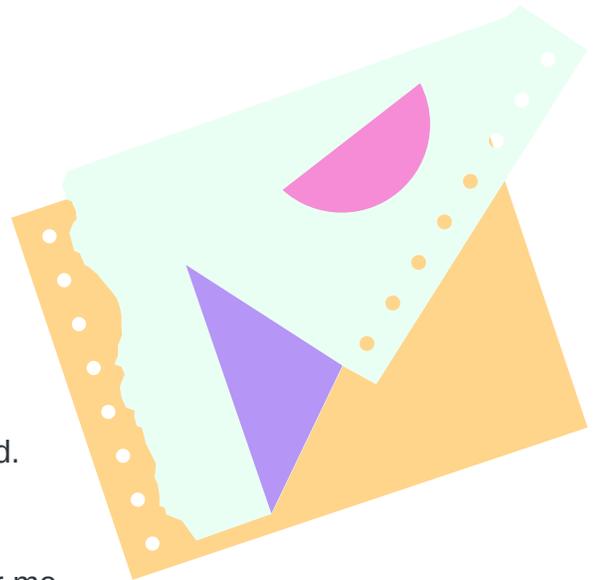
Cry! Heartache in my heart, screaming on the inside like a baby trying to get out.

But I still have to keep going, can't stay for too long.

I have to keep going, afraid of this world, scared to go outside.

Lonely, hungry, and sad, but I still have to keep going.

Alone, heartbroken, but I have to keep going.



## **The Cat Named Terry**

**Tyrell M.**

**John Marshall HS**

Once there was a cat who slept on a mat.

When the cat was finished taking a nap, he sat on his owner's lap.

The cat took a rest and did his best.

The cat liked a girl who rocked his world.

He was walking along the road, and he saw a toad.

Then he saw another cat who was so fat.

She said her name was Berry, and

He said, "Oh, my name is Terry."

## Self-Esteem Poems

Enjoy pieces from students during our Chester YMCA Open Mic night!

**Dear the Beloved**

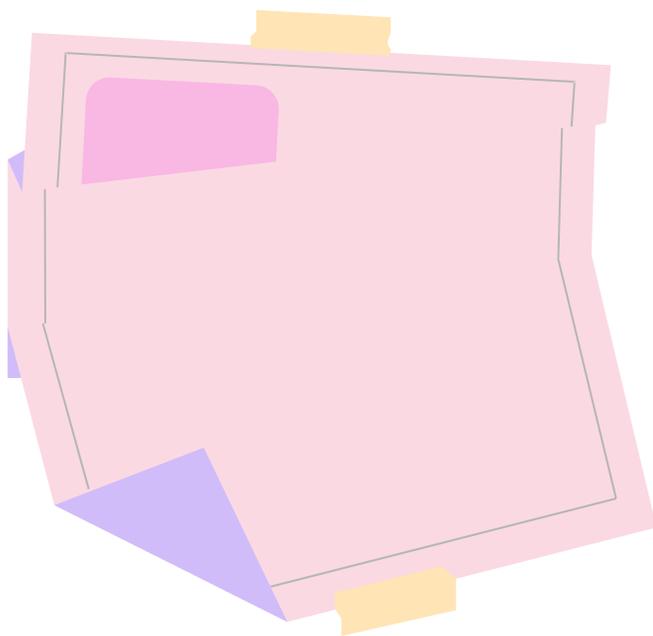
**Anonymous**

**Chester YMCA**

I know the figure said it would taste sweet, and it took some convincing to get to eat, and at first the figure was right, it tasted sweet...the nice things it said. But nevertheless, it some-time started to turn sour. Like a spoon of watered down lemon juice becoming more potent by the words that dripped out of its mouth. Suddenly, it became dry, potent cinnamon that you swallowed. It caked your throat, making it almost impossible to breathe, no less talk. And with no defense from letting the figure's previously sweet words that you had trusted so much...slip by...soon almost no good thoughts could get out And all the good thoughts had Turned to stone.

So, don't let the honey-sweet words affect you darling...trust what you think, and not the words of the figure. Be brave, be strong, and Don't doubt your words that are sweet just because they are nice. Let yourself be happy, the universe has a good plan for you guys. Trust it love.

-Stars



**Dear, Hugh**  
**Hugh A.**  
**Chester YMCA**

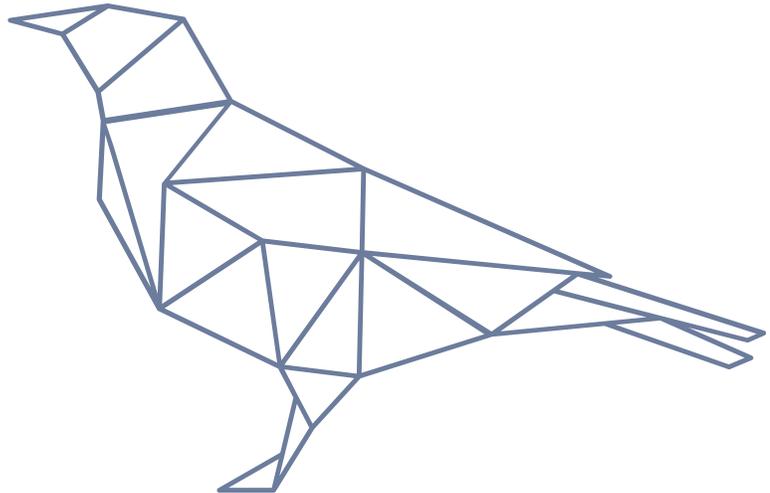
Dear Hugh,

How are you? I hope everything is well in the future. Maybe in the future, the pandemic will be resolved. Did you ever get to go on vacation?

I tend to compare myself to others constantly, and hopefully I'll stop in the future. The confidence in myself depends on the task and whether I like it or not. Maybe in the future I'll be a lawyer or something I'm interested in. When I do get a permanent job, I will hopefully study it for sometime. I don't have enough confidence in myself to start a family, maybe I won't, maybe I will. Confidence is key for me.

Love,

Hugh



**The Perfect Shatter**  
**Abby F.**  
**Chester YMCA**

Dear Abby,

You will never be the book definition of "perfect." There will always be stereotypes and the desire to fit in. There will always be daily reminders that you can do better and be better, a different person, a false image. You look in the mirror every day and see an unknown person, the false image.

Is this who you want to be? No? Shatter it. Break it. Now, put it back together. No instructions. No reference. No starting point. You can't put it back together the exact same way. Rough edges, missing pieces. Exactly how is it supposed to be? You have made art, my friend. You have made beauty of the broken: the beauty of yourself.

Kintsugi. Break what is bland and old to create what is unique and new. You will never be the book definition of "perfect," but rather, the definition of your perfect.

Love,  
Moi

**The Key of Forgiveness**

**Elijah D.**

**Chester YMCA**

I am frozen,  
Stuck here  
In this prison I locked myself in  
With many regrets,  
Many mistakes,  
And many fake personalities  
In the shackles of self-worth  
And bars that are made of comparisons and expectations.

But...  
There is a key,  
A way out.  
An escape from this personal prison.  
What is this key called?  
The Key of Forgiveness.

**Letter to Myself**

**Violet F.**

**Chester YMCA**

Dear V,

Don't pressure yourself. No one is holding the back of your shirt except you. Stop asking what your gender is, who will accept your true self, and rushing to label your gender and sexuality. Some stuff takes time, and some stuff might take less than three minutes like cooking cheese roll-ups. If you can't accept that some things take time, no one else will. It's your inner thoughts holding you back, nothing else. You don't have to ask yourself, "Are you nonbinary? Are you a girl? Are you a boy?" It doesn't matter how people look at you; it only matters how you look at yourself.

Love,

V

**Who am I?**

**M E.**

**Chester YMCA**

Dear M,

Who is she? Who is he? Who are they? Who are you? You've spent all this time self-reflecting, and yet you have no idea who you are. How do you perceive yourself? That is the question you can't answer without asking your mom or closest friend. You ask someone else because you know if you'd ask yourself, all you would end up with is a blank slate. There's a line with an impossible question expecting an answer. Yet no matter how long you think about it, the line will always be left blank.

Love,

M

**Dear Future Me**

**Violet F.**

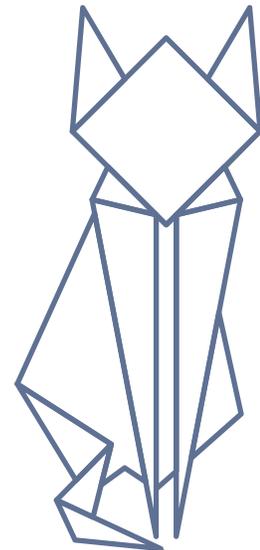
**Chester YMCA**

Dear Future Me,

Are you happy? That might seem like a pretty straight-forward question, but it's what I want to know. Have you accepted the mistakes you made in the past? That you may not have a specific gender? Some of these answers you may not know just yet, but I hope you do soon, if you don't now. I would go over more questions, but I would be writing for hours. I hope you're happy.

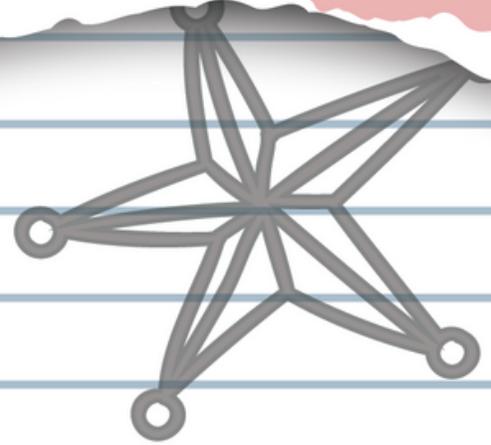
Love,

V



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