



WINTER 2025 zine
YOUTH AGES 14-19

WINTER 2025 HIGH SCHOOL ZINE

***“Be yourself. Above all, let who you are, what you are, and 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:

- Huguenot High School
- Richmond High School of the Arts
- Oak Ave Complex
- Armstrong High School

CARTA a MI, YO DEL FUTURO

Raíces y Sueños

Andy Yair Alaya

Huguenot High School



En este momento, soy un niño inocente que es feliz con la vida. Trato de mejorar y quiero encontrar la felicidad con mi familia, amigos y las diferentes personas que conozco en la vida.

En el futuro, quiero ser aún más feliz. Quiero lograr mis sueños. Quiero que mis padres se sientan orgullosos de mí y de mis logros, que sean felices cuando me vean. Espero tener una familia con la que pueda pasar el resto de mi vida y celebrar juntos todos nuestros éxitos.

Mi consejo es que no existen metas malas; siempre hay que esforzarse por mejorar. No dejes que el éxito cambie tu actitud y nunca olvides tus raíces.

El Camino Al Exito

Mani

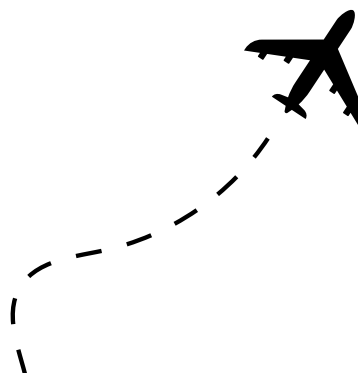
Huguenot High School

En este momento, soy un estudiante que viene a la escuela todos los días, estudia para el SOL, se mantiene tranquilo y tiene muchos antojos de dulces.

Me gustaría trabajar en el mundo del deporte y vivir de ello. Cuando me retire, quiero vivir en el campo, tener vacas y hacer lo que quiera.

Consejos para mí mismo:

- Tener disciplina en todo lo que haga.
- Trabajar con esfuerzo para alcanzar mis metas.
- Ahorrar dinero para mi jubilación.
- Aprender a escuchar consejos.
- No enojarme fácilmente.



LETTER TO MY FUTURE SELF

TRANSLATIONS



Roots and Dreams

Andy Yair Alaya

Huguenot High School

Right now, I am an innocent boy who is happy with life. I'm trying to improve and want to find happiness with my family, friends, and the different people I meet in life.

In the future, I want to be even happier. I want to achieve my dreams. I want my parents to feel proud of me and my accomplishments, to be happy when they see me. I hope to have a family where I can spend the rest of my life and celebrate all our successes together.

My advice is that there are no bad goals: you should always strive to improve, don't let success change your attitude, and never forget your roots.

The Path to Success

Mani

Huguenot High School

Right now, I am a student who comes to school every day, studies for the SOL, stays calm, and has a lot of cravings for sweets.

I would like to work in the sports world and make a living from it. When I retire, I want to live in the countryside, have cows, and do whatever I want.

Advice to Myself:

- Have discipline in everything I do
- Work hard to achieve my goals
- Save money for retirement
- Learn to listen to advice
- Don't get mad easily



CARTA a MI, YO DEL FUTURO

La Vida Que Estoy Construyendo

Yefrin Caceves

Huguenot High School

Hoy soy un estudiante de secundaria y estoy luchando por mi futuro. No he terminado mis exámenes finales y estoy muy ocupado.

Para mi futuro, quiero ser doctor y tener mi propia clínica para salvar muchas vidas. Mi mamá especialmente quiere que yo sea doctor. Quiero tener una casa y adoptar un perro. Más adelante, me retiraré a los 70 años.

My advice to myself:

1. Sigue tus sueños
2. Nunca abandones tus planes
3. Nunca pierdas la esperanza
4. Nunca te vayas si estás intimidado
5. Todo lo que pienses y quieras, lo puedes lograr

El Futuro Está En Mis Manos

Daniela Giron

Huguenot High School

Soy una persona que se encarga de lo que quiere y muestra cariño a quien lo merece, y a quien no, lo mandó a volar. A veces soy lo opuesto al mundo entero. Soy divertida y graciosa con mis amigos y mi familia. He tenido dos operaciones.

En el futuro quiero estudiar Agricultura y tener mi propio rancho y mucho ganado para darles a mis padres. Si me caso, quiero ser la esposa que tiene todo y no depende de él.



LETTER TO MY FUTURE SELF

TRANSLATIONS

The Life I'm Building

Yefrin Caceves

Huguenot High School

Today, I am a high school student, and I am fighting for my future. I have not finished my final exams, and I am very busy.

For my future, I want to be a doctor and have my own clinic to save many lives. My mom especially wants me to be a doctor. I want to have a house and adopt a dog. Later, I will retire at 70 years old.

My advice to myself:

1. Follow your dreams
2. Never abandon your plans
3. Never lose your hope
4. Never leave if you are intimidated
5. All that you think and want, you can accomplish

Future In My Hands

Daniela Giron

Huguenot High School

I am a person who handles what I want and shows care to who if they deserve it and who do not, I send them flying. Sometimes I am the opposite to the whole world. I am fun and funny with my friends and family. I had two operations.

In the future, I want to study Agriculture and have my own ranch and a lot of cattle to give to my parents. If I get married, I want to be the wife that has all and does not depend on him.



ADVICE IN POETRY

Waving Goodbye

Lah'von Bell

Richmond High School of the Arts

You open your eyes
And raise your head high
To see a stranger waving goodbye
You're unaware of what they're waving to
Which only causes the confusion inside you to arise
You've come to finally realize
That you have died
The stranger that you see is your mother
And she's standing over your casket, waving goodbye.

Letters to Live By

Dominique Smith

Richmond High School of the Arts

Always believe you're number one
Be the best you can be
Change something to make it better
Determine every choice you make
Embarrassing moments are the most memorable
Friends are forever
Gossip is the way to my heart.



ADVICE IN POETRY

What Friendship Takes

Avaceli Cardenas

Richmond High School of the Arts

Although people will always do something like this, to be mature about it.
Be aware of how your friends are or act so you don't do something they don't like.
Clear things up with your friend, don't be afraid to talk to them
Dedicate time for your Friend to check if they are alright.
Even when you think they are fine, anything can be happening.
Find a way to find out what can be the problem.

How to be There

Anna Harris

Richmond High School of the Arts

Always think of the possibilities
Be true and say what you feel
Check in on them
Distraction, you're choice
Explain your thoughts
Focus and what you're trying to succeed
Guide them to what you understand.



ADVICE IN POETRY

A Letter to a Distant Friend

Samira Adli

Huguenot High School

Sometimes I feel you are distant. What happened?
We look for a solution, but I don't want to lose your friendship.
How can I help you feel better?
Tell me what happened, and we can resolve it so we don't lose our friendship.
I was thinking that you are only looking for favors from me, but I know the value that our friendship can have if we talk about it.
Let's facilitate things and talk about what happened to our relationship.

How to Speak with Heart

Abraham F.

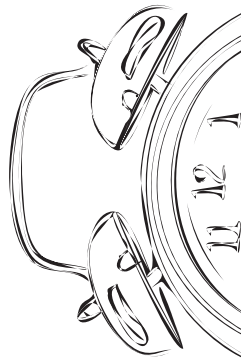
Huguenot High School

Discuss without profanity, in a way that is kind.
Listen to both sides and offer solutions.
Accompany my friends when talking with professors.
Look for a way to listen to feel more connected.
Communicate my discomfort about the topic.
Promote a response to everyone.





WORD ROULETTE



In this section, students were tasked with composing a narrative utilizing a set of randomly generated words to encourage creativity, linguistic flexibility, and spontaneous storytelling

LIST A

LIST B

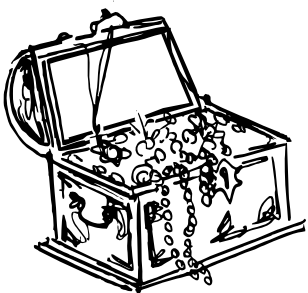


Lantern
Whisper
Mirror
Thunder
Journey
Puzzle
Shadow
Treasure

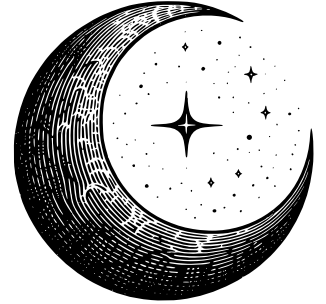
Moonlight
Secret
Clock
Storm
Escape
Whisper
Guardian
Map



Check out some of our students & original narratives and see how skillfully they integrated these randomized words into their stories!



WORD ROULETTE



Escaping His Dark Past

Seth Turner

Oak Ave Complex

List B

Once upon a time, it was a dark night. The **moonlight** was shining, **guardians** guarding. There was this kid, Eugene. He was not an ordinary kid; this kid had **secrets**, dark secrets, but he was trying to **escape** his dark past. To be continued...

Boston Ripper

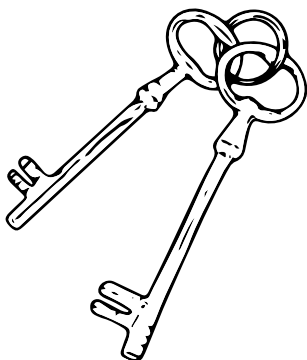
Kam

Richmond High School of the Arts

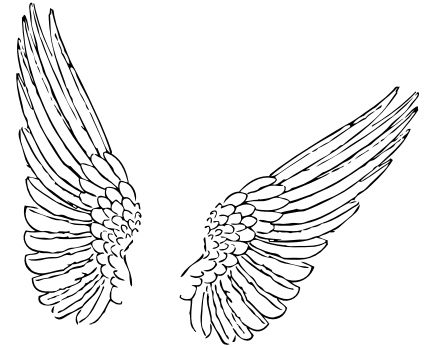
List A

Thursday, October 31st, 1997. I was around 15 years old, in my freshman year of high school. It was the end of the day, and everyone was rushing out of Ms. Johnson's math class. But I, Kam, stayed a few more minutes to study, and my friends pressured me to hurry. After we left, we decided to go trick or treating. After all, it was Halloween.

A few hours passed, and we finished trick or treating. But my friend Zach didn't want to end the night without a bang, so we went to explore the graveyard. We walked around laughing about our experiences that happened earlier that day. Suddenly, a black crow began to caw behind me. I was startled, and my friends teased me. We continued with our **journey** when, after a while me my friends and I heard a strange **whispering**. I tell Zach to cut it out, but as I look at him, I see genuine horror on his face. Behind me, where he pointed out, was the Boston Ripper.



WORD ROULETTE



The Day She Walked In

Emmanuel Spruill

Richmond High School of the Arts

List B

I live in a small apartment. I keep to myself most of the time, I live a boring life. The only time I go outside is when I'm drinking with my friends. I went to my Job expecting an ordinary day, a day when I drive to my job, a day when I work my life away, and a day with another masquerade.

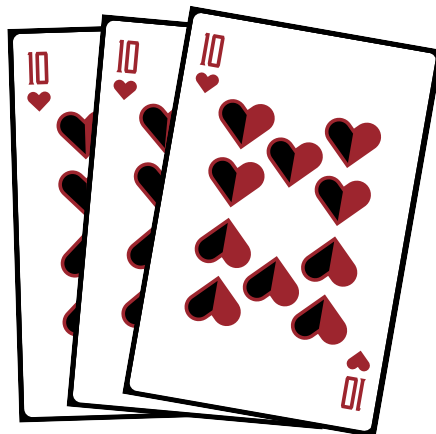
Until I saw her, she walked into the store and my heart skipped three times. A girl with the looks of an angel and exes of empathy. To see her must have been a gift from god. I thought it was meant to be she walked up to me and said with glee and said what's your name! I Stuttered. To be continued...

Ten of Hearts

Anna Harris

Richmond High School of the Arts

"Pick a card, any card," she said as she looked at me. "Ten," I said simply. She looked and smirked, "Ten what?" She asked as she flipped through the deck of cards, "Ten of hearts." She smiled and flipped the card over to me, and looked at me with much empathy. "Looks like a death card." My eyes widened in shock. "What?! No!" I said in anger, "That's not fair." She then spoke in a soft tone, "Someone you know will drive and get into a car crash!" I look at her in confusion. "They would just be getting off their job carrying a little gift." My heart stops for a second as I realize who she is talking about.





CHARACTERS IN FANTASY

Summer Kindness

Aiya K.

Oak Ave Complex

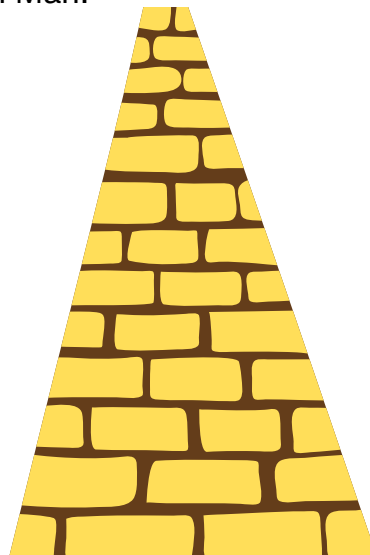
Pitter Patter, The sounds of children running and playing could be heard from miles from town on hot summer days like these. The marketplace was bustling, not uncommon on days like this, where even just putting on your shoes felt like a chore. The water was being sold for 50 cents, and the ice cream was being sold for 1 dollar. “Could you get me that one?” a young child inquired, tugging on the bottom of my shirt. “Sure”, I responded, handing the money to the woman selling the ice cream for 2 dollars. “Do your friends want anything?” the child’s eyes lit up, running over to his friends to gather them back here “Generous, aren't you” the lady said to my gesture, a smile in her eyes, “it's so hot out, I feel it's only right” I said with a chuckle.

Soulless; A Wizard of Oz Story

Sierra Morrow

Oak Ave Complex

Nick Chopper had an argument, saying that they are not in love anymore because of the Wicked Witch of the East. The Wicked Witch of the East put a curse on his axe when he chopped his arm and legs were chopped off, so he went to the tinsmith to get some new arms and legs. Then, after that, his whole body was chopped off, so the tinsmith gave him a new body, but no heart because the tinsmith was out of tin. Soon after, he became the Tin Man.



CHARACTERS IN FANTASY

The Redemption of Marcella

Joshua Mukuye

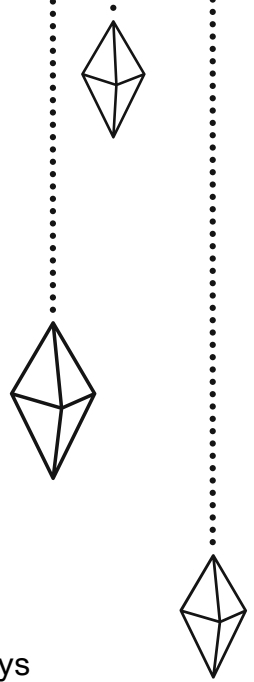
Armstrong High School

For two years, a young witch named Marcella has spent most of her dark days casting spells on anyone she believed was standing in her way. She was never alone, as her other evil creature allies would assist her in making others' lives miserable.

But as of late, she and her allies haven't been seeing eye to eye. This happens to be the case because Marcella's intimidating demeanor started to get under the skin of her allies, as they felt like she was being selfish and bossy towards them in recent weeks.

The two ended up getting into a heated argument with the young witch, and this led to the latter storming out of her lair. One hour later, Marcella witnesses an attempt by the duo of evil creatures to attack an innocent civilian. She rushes to the civilian's aid.

This drastic change of heart is not taken kindly by her former allies, as they would later on launch a plan to extinguish Marcella once and for all. Still upset, Marcella strolls around the village when suddenly a heroic trio of a shy elf, a fierce dragon, and a trusty human knight encounter and warn her of the evil plan. They offer to help her overcome her evil allies once and for all. With a newfound protagonistic attitude came a new alliance, that they young which accepted.



WHAT MAKES AN EXPERT?

Built to Lock In

Kahrell Hightorrer

Armstrong High School



I know the most about locking in. In comparison to others, I am the most expert. I know so much because I need it to pass my classes. It is also a necessary life skill. I got the ability to lock in so well through hard work and learning how to focus.

Inside the Ring

Joshua M.

Armstrong High School

I know the most about professional wrestling. Knowledge in that subject doesn't compare to other sports, but it is widely considered as a sports entertainment category. I happen to know so much about this topic, and the time it takes to become highly skilled in the moves demonstrated. It takes time to set up a match, book an entire show, and gain profit from the show's success.

More Than a Game

Taleah Williams

Armstrong High School

I know a lot about basketball. My knowledge is on the skills, rules, and the history because I have been trained on a massive data set about sports. Especially basketball, in order to access details about its history.



DEFENSA SOCIAL

La Otra Cara de la Migration

Samira Adli

Huguenot High School

Las noticias influyen en cómo las personas ven el mundo, las sociedades lejanas y los diferentes grupos de personas. En general, las noticias que he visto sobre los inmigrantes son sobre cosas negativas que han hecho. Por ejemplo, siempre hay noticias sobre asaltos, asesinatos u otro tipo de crimen. Lo mencionado anteriormente perjudica al resto de los migrantes y crea un estereotipo negativo general, cuando en realidad hay personas que están haciendo las cosas correctamente para encontrar una mejor vida para ellos y sus familias para generaciones futuras.

Viviendo con Miedo: El Impacto de las Políticas Migratorias

Andy Yair

Huguenot High School

Lo que pienso sobre el gobierno de Donald Trump es algo complicado, especialmente por cómo las leyes de inmigración comenzaron a deportar personas sin considerar su estatus legal, edad o color de piel. Esto crea una situación difícil para quienes sí cumplen con las leyes del país y contribuyen a la sociedad. Al mismo tiempo, también hay personas que no apoyan al país pero aún esperan protección contra la deportación. Muchos inmigrantes viven con miedo de ser deportados, lo que los lleva a evitar salir en público por temor a ser detenidos por la policía. El miedo se volvió tan fuerte que incluso llevó a una huelga.

SOCIAL ADVOCACY TRANSLATIONS

The Other Side of Migration

Samira Adli

Huguenot High School

The news influences how people see the world, distant societies, and groups of people. In general, the news that I have seen about immigrants is about negative things that they have done. For example, there's always news about assaults, murders, or other types of crime. What was previously mentioned harms the rest of the migrants, and they create a general negative stereotype when there are people who are actually doing the correct things in finding a better life for themselves and their families for generations to come.

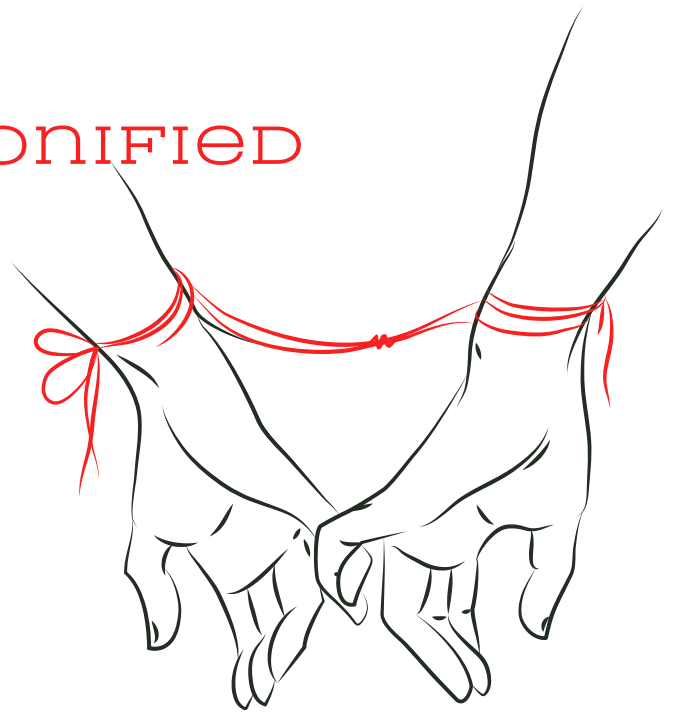
Living in Fear: The Impact of Immigration Policies

Andy Yair

Huguenot High School

What I think about the government of Donald Trump is something hard because of how the laws have already started to deport immigrants without looking at their status, age, or skin tone. This makes it hard on the people who comply with the obligations of the country. However, there are people who don't support the country and don't want to get deported. Immigrant people are afraid of being deported, which makes them not want to go out to the streets out of fear of being trapped by the police. This made it to the point where they started a strike.

LOVE PERSONIFIED



Bound by the Red String

Shyla Scott

Richmond High School of the Arts

My love embraces our deepest connections and provides you with guaranteed protection. So please, my love, let me paint an image of you that symbolizes my yearning. Because this feeling is timeless and blinding, we have been bound by the red string of fate ever since our first date.

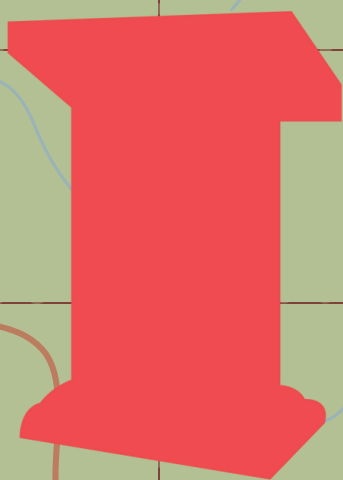
So please, my love, let our reward for our happiness be gifts and glory, and let us create a new chapter of our story. That leads to two never-ending loops and an egg for a new creation, even if this just shows my level of desperation.

Protons Don't Connect

Christopher Smith

Richmond High School of the Arts

All night to what it took
The Paper was carefully folded and handed off
Her gaze filled with appreciation and sympathy
But mines like a begging dog
Hours spent on double the work
But no matter how much Chemistry
Our Protons won't connect.
As she walks off, her eyes fall upon another dog
Looking at them with the same eyes as she did with me.



@PodiumRVA

