

Balloons



BALLOONS Lit. Journal

Issue
Eight

Sept 2018

Agnieszka Filipek • Alzo David-West • Amy Karon • Ana Vidosavljevic •
Braxton Schieler • Daniel Galef • Derek McCrea • Erin Schalk • Jackie Hosking •
Jacqueline Jules • Ivy Xun • Liz Bertsch • Madeleine Roberts • Norma Alonzo •
Stephen Whiteside • Susanna Lancaster • Suzannie Leung • Xavier Barzey





“If you wait for inspiration to write you’re not a writer, you’re a waiter.”

– Dan Poynter (1938-2015)

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BALLOONS Lit. Journal (BLJ) is an independent biannual online literary journal of poetry, fiction and art primarily for school-aged readers from upper elementary school years onwards. BLJ sees it an important mission to bring the art of literature, and the creation of it, to our younger generation. The journal is freely accessible to all electronically. BLJ welcomes submissions from people anywhere in the world and in all walks of life. We love something that is fresh, surprising, unforgettable, extraordinary, mind-blowing, humorous, bold, unique, layered, witty, educational, original...etc. In short, we want something exceptionally good. For the most updated information about the journal, please visit the official website of BLJ:

www.balloons-lit-journal.com

Submissions are welcome year round. Writers are advised to read and follow the guidelines stated on the above website. Enquiries and submissions should be sent to:

editorblj@yahoo.com

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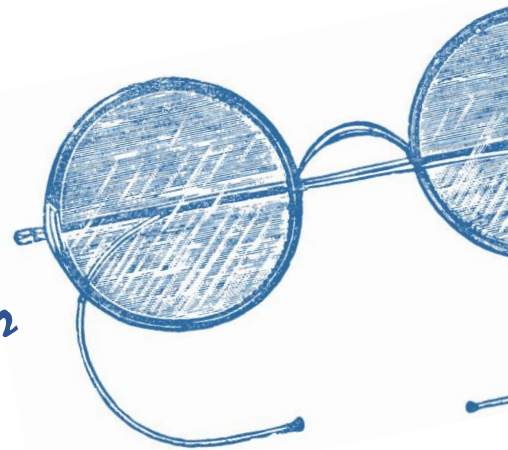
Hello Banana Boat 47

* Back Cover art

** Cover art



Words from Founding Editor



W

Writing this “Words from Founding Editor” issue after issue is like writing an award acceptance speech. Yes, it does feel like receiving an award. BLJ has been receiving fantastic submissions year after year from people all over the world who are talented in crafting literary and art works with a young spirit and witty imagination. It certainly gives me a sense of pride receiving all these wonderful presents. Even for those pieces which I have to painfully reject, I feel blessed for having the submitters’ trust and interest in this literary project. BLJ needs enthusiastic readers and writers and they are why we exist.

These chosen pieces, be they poetry, fiction or artwork, are all connected to you, speaking to you, and singing for you in a language or tone so rich in colours and layers that you will swim further and further into the realm of beauty they create – Going beyond the natural world, our poetry also paints about the intricate human relationships; our fictional pieces are musical works on children’s wisdom, courage and inspirational visions; and our art pieces are pictorial narratives or painted verses that give your eyes a spellbinding voyage of stimulating imagery.

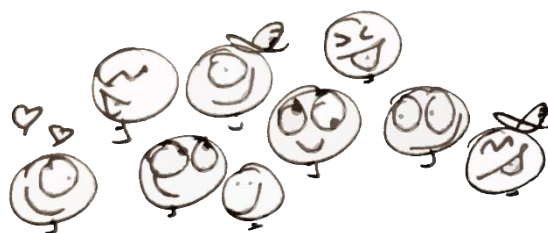
Every time when I share the works from BLJ with my students, I can see from their eyes the sparkling wonder, admiration and thirst for more. And then I strongly sense the value of teaching reading and the satisfaction of running a literary journal for the young.

Once again, I thank all our fantastic contributors of BLJ Issue 8 for their wonderful entries; I thank the very talented actress Joan McCready for writing a brilliant foreword for this issue, which you should read next.

A mandarin song lingers in my head recently having a line loosely translated as “Don’t let your story stop at Chapter Seven – the longer you write, the farther your dream reaches.” This echoes with the driving force I have for writing, sharing, and producing BLJ, issue after issue, for you.

Ho Cheung LEE, Ed.D.

Founding Editor, BLJ



Foreword



A Literary Journal – sounds academic – perhaps a little dry.

A Literary Journal for school-aged readers – maybe a publication from which teachers may set dreary homework?

But BALLOONS Lit. Journal (BLJ) is a treasure chest of delight to be enjoyed by teachers and pupils alike; a joyous potpourri of art, poetry, fiction – and balloons!

In the latest edition of BLJ, I was immediately drawn to the title “I think My teacher is a Witch,” and it is a very entertaining poem. My High School English teacher was quite simply the finest teacher I ever encountered. She taught with a passion for the material she presented and she fired my imagination with her enthusiasm. I can never look at a swath of daffodils (and I have seen thousands) without recalling her reading of Wordsworth’s great poem. My image of Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* has never been replaced by any subsequent film portrayal of that hero. To my teenage mind, he was a hero! My English teacher was not a witch – but she was truly a magician.

In BLJ, there is magic, much magic, so much for young readers to revel in.

There are stories that tell of bravery, compassion, and empathy, helping you to comprehend that life can be full of fun, adventure, discovery, wonder, and to know that you can face adversity, illness, and death.

There are poems that rhyme, poems that do not,
Poems that sort out the problems you’ve got.
Poems of nature, some short and some long,
Poems that place in your heart a song.

There’s artwork to make you think of the many different ways you can look at the world around you: the peacefulness of the sky over a beach at sunset, the warmth and fertility of a “yellow farm”, and you can reflect, as the photographer did on “unbroken sky, a sapphire-blue sea shouldered by mountain guardians.”

Albert Einstein wrote, “It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.” No one who uses this journal as a teaching aid will ever set dreary homework. Those who read it for pleasure will find much joy.

Teachers and pupils, fly off in your *balloons* to the heights of your imagination. Enjoy!

Joan McCready

Irish Actress & Teacher

Joan McCready has been a teacher of Literature and Language Arts in Northern Ireland and the United States of America. She was Head of Performing Arts at the Park School of Baltimore. She has also spent many years in the Professional Theatre, both as an actress and a director.

A Poet's Tree

Compose a poem inside your head
Etch couplets in your eyes
Plant your feet side by side and grow a poet's tree.

Roots of words and words of roots
That form beneath your pen of dirt
Are safety ropes on this turn earth.

Gather a bounty of bossy words
Your foundation for alliteration
A trunk needs direction in order to grow.

Turn a line
Extend a branch
Try to touch what you usually can't.

Stand on your stanza and raise your arms high
Iambic pentameter five feet to climb
When you get to the top, through down a rhyme.

Grow a crown of leaves like similes
Glistening emeralds for the crows
Hiding from metaphors.

You can always grow free
From metrical verse
Finding your own way to the stars.

Feed yourself with imagery
Of spindly winter branches
Perfect hammocks for the tired snow.

Revise overgrown branches
Cut away those leafy umbrellas
Blocking sunlit words.

Poet

Liz Bertsch

Climb all the way to the tippy top
Keep your footing on the way
It's important to look down and see.

Laughing children swinging
On your playful branches
Singing sweet sounds to carry you far.

The elderly couple with the memorable hands
Planting a ring of bright red poppies
At your feed.

Your motherly branches swaddling
A robin's nest
Rocking the birds to sleep.

The man with the dark hair
Decorating you with a birdfeeder
The day his baby girl was born.

See the color of your words
Feel the hands that touch your lines
Hear the sounds that echo your stanzas

Taste the hope in your verses
Fleshy red syllabic fruit
A silken robe for your seeds.

Let us all imagine
A world inside
Your hope-filled lines.

Compose a poem inside your head
Etch couplets in your eyes
Plant your seeds and grow – you are poetry.

Liz Bertsch is a graduate of Bank Street College of Education in New York, and she lives and teaches on the East End of Long Island. Most recently her essays were profiled in *EndPain* and *West Texas Literary Review*.



Destin, Florida Beach Painting

River Street, Savannah Georgia



Derek McCrea considers his work both whimsical, impressionistic, and sometimes realistic. His art can be found in galleries throughout the south-eastern United States, in private collections worldwide, and in many publications. His main focus lately has been on around 20 commissions per year from customer photos and his mid-term goal is to further branch out into licensing his artwork.

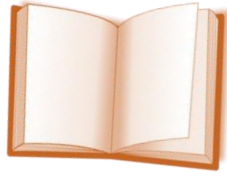
Sunset on the Gulf Coast



Derek McCrea

Artist





I Think My Teacher Is a Witch



She always has an apple on her desk—From where? And *why*?
I've never seen her eat it—Is it poison? Would she die?
The rest of it is covered in mysterious ancient books,
And some of them say "Spells"—Or was that "Spelling?"—By their looks,
They're secret, arcane lore. She reads to us from one called "History"
That's full of gruesome stories. Why she likes that, it's a mystery.
The "Science" one is worst of all, just filled with evil notions
And how to use a Bunsen burner to brew up bubbling potions.
The "brew" stuff doesn't stop there—and I know she's awfully fond
Of herbal tea—You know, a pencil's sort of like a wand!
She may not be a *witch*-witch, but she's magic-er than most.
But anyway, now let me tell you why my dog's a ghost....



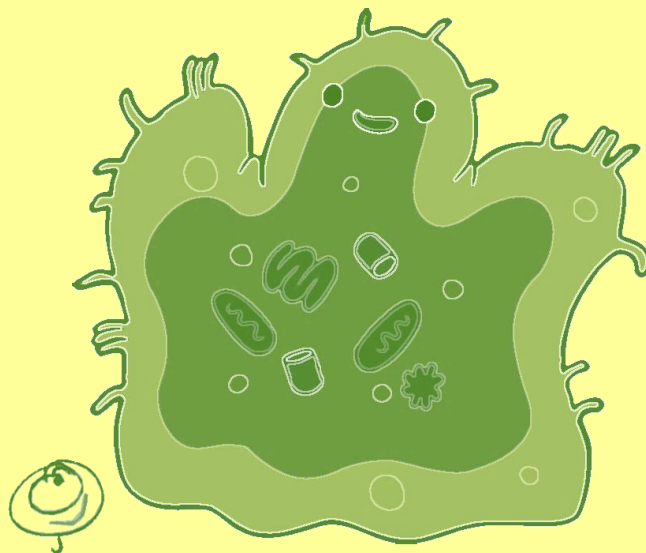
Daniel Galef

Poet

The Mysterious QWOOO

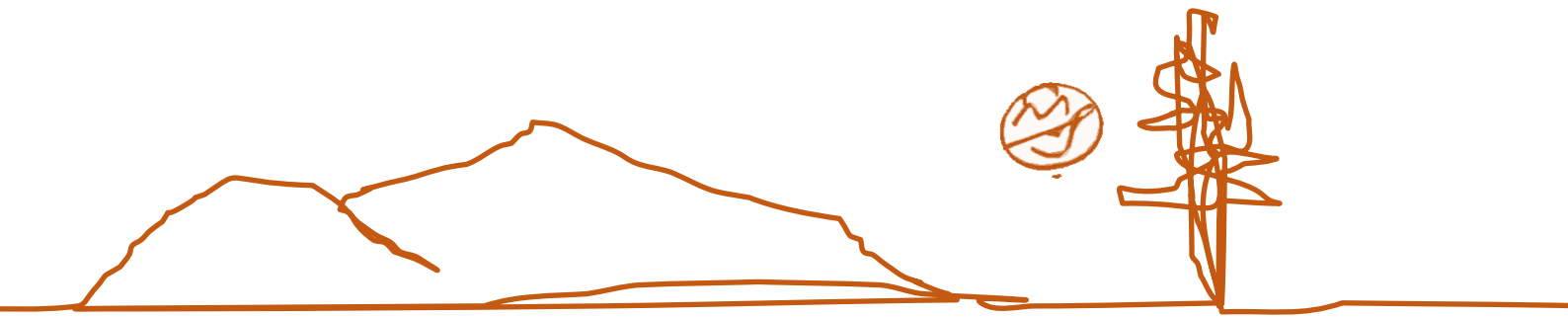
(Entry from a Nonsense Bestiary)

The **Qwooo** is odd at several points:
 Its limbs have telescopic joints
 Allowing it to change its height
 From tow'ring tall to small and slight.
 Its hue, as well, it can adjust
 From neon green to shades of rust
 And all between. Its contours, too,
 Are wholly changeable to view.
 Thus many forms it can assume:
 A bowl of fruit—an empty room—
 A ship—A shoe—Or me! Or you!
 Why, *anything* could be a **Qwooo**.



Daniel Galef writes everything from cartoons to musicals, and his children's poetry has appeared in the *BALLOONS Lit. Journal*, *Caterpillar*, *Light Quarterly*, and *Child of Words Fantasy & Science Fiction*. He is one of six featured poets in the new book series by Sampson Low titled *Potcake Chapbooks* showcasing rhyming poetry.

The Curious Object



Alzo David-West

Author



We were not exactly sure what it was. Our telescopes indicated that it originated from the Fornax Cluster a hundred million light-years away. We assumed it was an exocomet, but it emitted a curious pattern of signalized radio waves.

The object entered our solar system at an incredible velocity of eighty miles per second. It progressed in a fixed trajectory, curved under the gravitational pull of the sun, and shot back into deep space.

There was no trail of cometary debris, so we disqualified our first assumption. And since we could neither corroborate that the object was an asteroid, we dubbed it “the Fornax Anomaly” and continued to analyze the signals.

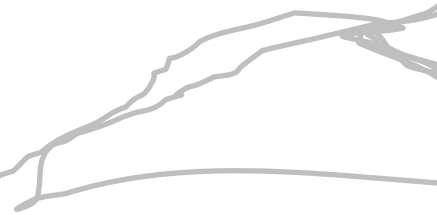
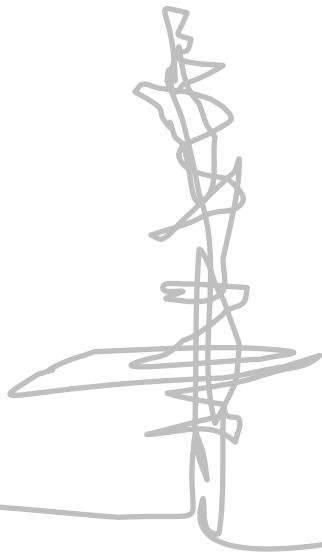
A small three-year-old girl sat at a table as we worked over the data. Her father had brought her to see what he did at our research center. She had crayons, glue, and white paper. We played the radio wave signals, which were sequenced in clicks and pauses of short pulses and long sounds.

The little child made a picture. She approached our table and held up the paper to her father.

“That’s wonderful, my girl,” he said cheerfully, and proudly showed us an ovoid emerald ascending diagonally, flecked and spangled with green, pink, and orange dazzles.

“What is it?” he asked.

“A super spaceship,” the little girl replied, with a very happy smile.



Alzo David-West is a writer, poet, and academic. His creative writing appears in *Abstract Magazine*, *Antimatter*, *Cha*, *Cultural Logic*, *Eastlit*, *Grief Diaries*, *K'in*, *Missing Slate*, *Offcourse*, *Star*Line*, *StepAway Magazine*, *Tower Journal*, *Transnational Literature*, and *365 Tomorrows*. He is also the editor of scifaiku and tanka translations in *Silver Blade* and *Star*Line*.



Tightrope Tired

Once a lithe leaper
wagtail wiggle
skyward bound

elegant fence walker
delicate
circus paws

Now
tightrope tired
wagtail
wobble
wagtail
wobble

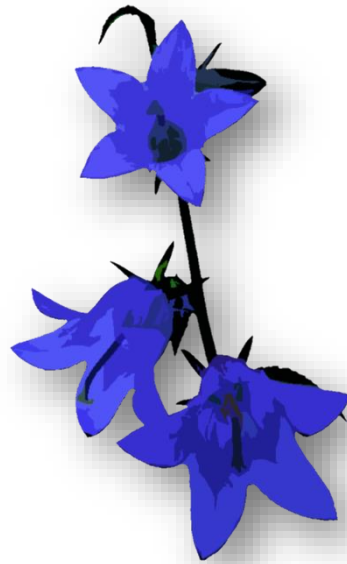
a crumbly moggy
a circus
clown

Poet

Jackie Hosking

Bluebells

Bluebell bunches
 Wildflower hugs
 Moist soil
 Soiled fingernails
 Sticky posies
 Sappy stems
 Drippy presents
 Delighted mothers
 Beaming children
 Love sharers
 Warm secrets
 Blooming marvellous
 Vase hunting
 Stem trimming
 Sticky scissors
 Sappy table
 Drippy eyes
 Wildflower bunches
 Bluebell hugs



Jackie Hosking is an Australian poet and picture book author. Her poems have appeared all over the world including such publications as *The School Magazine* (Australia), *Cricket Magazine* (USA), Educational books (UQP India) & Anthologies (little brown USA). Jackie's picture book, *The Croc and the Platypus* is a rewrite of Lear's *The Owl and the Pussy Cat* with an Australian twist. Her second picture book is currently in production.

Down by the Sea

The fresh river hugs the sea at end
as little feet smudge the soft earth.
Weaving skilled hands into the sand
and dancing until the yellow sun retired.

The scarlet ibis cast shadows above,
filling the sky in a crimson hue.
The bevy of laughter erupted in the air
so pure, crisp, soulful, sublime.

In blows the wind hitting the horizon's edge,
chasing behind us while lifting kites.
Down by the sea the memory sticks, it lingers,
it ages with time but it never goes away.

Poet

Xavier Barzey

Questions Questions

How have we come to be on earth?
Why are the stars so many?
The moon seems so full of mirth
And space so vast and plenty.

What happens when it's dark outside?
And I'm tucked away in bed.
Is there magic that resides?
And waits for me to lay my head.

Why do I walk on my two feet?
And animals walk on four.
This planet's unique, yet so discreet.
Perhaps to seek, there is much more?

How does the wind remain unseen?
And the tree becomes a dancer.
My questions often cause a scene.
Since no one seems to answer.



Xavier Barzey is a writer based in Trinidad and Tobago. She graduated with a degree in English Literature and a Bachelor's degree (Hons) in Media and Communication. She is currently working on a book of short stories that brings light to the folktales in his country. Her work has been published in the *Trinidad Express*, the *Trinidad Guardian* and is forthcoming in *Akashic Books*.

Braxton Schieler

Author

Some Day I'll Be



**An
Autobiography**

Once I was three years old. Thomas the Train was my best friend in the whole world. I couldn't read, and I couldn't run all that fast, but on the other hand, I could sing the alphabet and count to a thousand almost in my sleep. I was afraid of the dark, and accidentally getting on the wrong train in the bustling Boston train station. I hated when the toys covered the floor so that I couldn't see the worn fuzzy carpet underneath them, and I was forced to clean them up. And don't even get me started on eating my vegetables; baked, broiled and battered however dad wanted them. My mom and dad were the only people I knew, what they said was all that mattered to me. They read my books and tickled me, what was not to like about them? Mom said I was going to have a little brother and that we were going to move to a place called Indianapolis, where we could be close to family. That didn't scare me though because the sun was still shining, and life was good.

Once I was five years old. I discovered the magic of the computer, and that's where I spent every morning playing on PBS kids before I went to this new place called school. I wasn't great at art, and I couldn't jump rope very well. On the plus, I could read – sort of, tie my shoes, and solve simple addition. I was afraid of my P.E. teacher, and losing my little green folder with my name printed neatly in the top right corner. I hated homework, all the meaningless squiggles on a page only equating to less time outside and playing with my little brother. My friends were anyone and everyone that would listen to me, and play with me at recess, because I was too young and naïve to care about personalities and common interests. Mom and Dad smiled

every day as I told them about the exhilarating adventures I had at school, though they seemed to think that speeding tickets and pay cuts were more stressful than playing kickball in gym. At the end of the day though, it was hard not to smile because the sun was still shining, and life was good.

Once I was seven years old. I became obsessed with playing school, and I started to play almost every day. My teacher said I had bad handwriting and criticized it almost every day. In addition, I couldn't quite understand the order of operations, and why I always had to restate the prompt in my answer. But I could solve basic facts for all four orders of operations, and I could read, which was now a great way to entertain my little brother. I lived terrified of my teacher, who, I was convinced, hated me, always chiding me for lack of integrity, and responsibility, as well as not having a compassionate attitude toward other students, all words that far surpassed my first-grade vocabulary. There was a lot more homework every night, but at least mom always made sure it was done, neatly. My friends became more important to me, and drama became almost certain. You couldn't be friends with everyone because there were obstacles in the way, mainly gender, and who was good at soccer. I learned the meaning of the word crush, and girls started to linger in the back of my mind, though perhaps far too prematurely. Things might have been different, but not too bad, for the sun was still shining, and life was good.

Once I was nine years old. I became an established actor and enjoyed the spotlight, starring in several school musicals. I developed an intense personality and let my opinion be heard loud and clear. I was

far too boisterous and unruly at times, and I was bad at science, as well as geometry. I did, however, understand the power of figurative language and I was starting to learn to play the piano quite well. My biggest fear was always messing up in front of some girl, though I was far too young and stupid to go down that road. I drove my friends up the wall, always wanting to have a “serious discussion” contemplating how I should go about asking the next lady out. My friends always responded the same carefree way, suggesting that they’d rather enjoy their recess than throw away time debating futile females. It was important to keep hold of friends, though it was hard to do so without allowing their hollow picture of my life define my future. I certainly couldn’t be friends with everyone, but it was hard to know with whom you could be because the liars often dressed themselves like friends, and the lonely kids were often the funniest, and most caring. Nine was a difficult age because life was starting to heat up, and I was too dumb and inexperienced to fight back. All that said, it could have been worse; the sun was still shining; life was good.

Once I was eleven years old. I took on an interest in sports, constantly finding my eyes plastered to the television, instead of the mounting stack of school work that should have been completed. I was bad at group work, letting my temper get in my way of our success. I was still terrible at science and wondered why we had to understand the periodic table. I got good at writing and enjoyed journaling in my free time. Though I certainly continued to carry my loud opinion, I learned that there was a time to debate, and a time to let the teacher

be right. Grades became important, and I was always afraid of failing gym, turning a project in late, or getting a bad science fair partner. My friends became everything to me. I never wanted to disappoint them because they did so much for me, helping me through the rough patches of my life, including another move to a faraway place called Atlanta. Girls began to play a different role in my life, as suddenly I found one girl that might have been more than an impulsive crush, and we became good friends. It was a tear-filled, miserable day when I boarded the plane and waved goodbye to the city of Indianapolis, and the beloved people that called it home. But when we got to Georgia, it wasn’t all-bad because the sun was definitely still shining, and life was still good.

Once I was thirteen years old. I got better at basketball, and almost figured out how to master the spiral on the football that I could never get right. I struggled to understand biology and wasn’t too fond of algebra. I did make some improvements with my piano and started playing at church events, and I really got good at my writing, entering in contests, and writing for some magazines. As the job-security at my Dad’s work started to go down, I started to worry we might move again, heading toward another downward spiral of grief and loss called Chicago. Friends were less important – there weren’t as many of them, and few were worth trying to keep happy anyway. Mostly, I worried about high school, and then college and my future. I didn’t know where to go to college or even what I wanted to study. Though it seemed a million miles away, I was becoming increasingly aware of the scary reality that the real world

was right on the horizon. Decisions were going to have to be made, and more and more things were going to have to get done. Still, when it all got too hard to handle, I held fast to the fact that the sun was still shining, and life was good.

Someday, I'll be eighteen years old. Someday my childhood will turn into my adulthood. Someday I'll get the driver's license, date the girls, and enjoy my senior prom. Someday I'll stop watching college ball from the comfort of my living room and start watching in the student's section at the big game. Someday, the cute girlfriend will become the cute wife, and the years of training will turn into the years of working. Someday I'll buy that first home in the city. Someday the children will come, and we'll move to the sunny suburbs. We'll help them walk, take them to birthday parties, drive them to school, and tearfully watch them board the school bus when they're too big for Mom and Dad. We'll watch from afar as they play basketball in the driveway, go to summer camp, take their dates to the movies, and hang out at the parties we'd do anything to keep them from. One-by-one we'll wish them well, as they leave the safety of Dad's house, and take one small step into the terror of the real world. When they're gone we'll move to the dream house in the country and retire together. We'll spend some happy evenings cuddled up together on our couch watching the Red Sox game, as the soft orange fire glowing peacefully in front of us warms our chilly feet. We'll have the family over a few times; we'll spoil our grandchildren rotten. We'll take a few romantic vacations, and before we can blink, the basketball legs will turn into the wheel-chair legs, and the dream home will

turn into the nursing home. Someday soon, I'll look back and wish that there were fewer hours spent on work, and more with family; fewer years spent dreaming, and more spent doing. Someday so close I can almost reach out and touch it, I'll dance off into the sunset, my whole life behind me. And so right now, while there's still air in my lungs, I'll make every effort to live life to the fullest, while the sun is still and shining, and life is still good.



Braxton Schieler is fourteen years old.

He attends Emmons Grade School in Antioch, Illinois. He has a passion for writing and dream of finding a career in it someday. It is his hope and dream that with the stories and poems that he creates, he can, from his small corner of the world, empower ordinary people like him to do extraordinary things.

Orange Field



Norma Alonzo

Yellow Farm



Artist





Taos

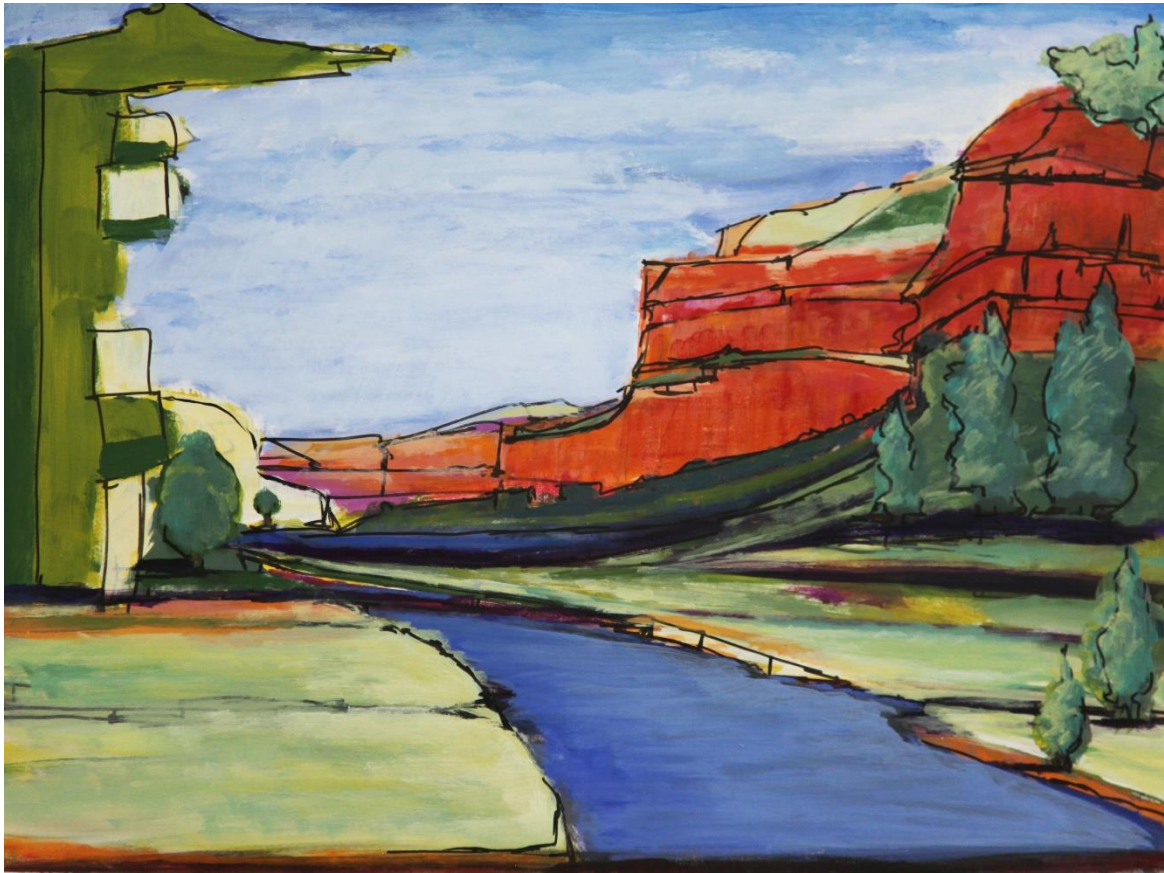
Park #1




Stones



Sedona



Norma Alonzo has always taken her painting life seriously, albeit privately. An extraordinarily accomplished artist, she has been painting for over 25 years. Beginning as a landscape painter, she quickly transitioned to an immersion in all genres to experiment and learn. Initially, Alonzo was torn between professions – the arts or a career in architecture. She chose the arts, graduating from San Jose State University in San Jose, California with a degree in Interior Design. After working in this field and ultimately heading her own design firm, her focus turned to the creation of fine art. Under the mentorship of Richard Lees (artist and art historian of Pasadena, California), Alonzo was encouraged toward honesty in her painting without judgment, without expectation, and without the confines of outside demanding interests.



an old willow tree
graces the surface of the river
like a mother's hair

Susanna Lancaster

Poet

Susanna Lancaster is an author from Memphis, TN, where she teaches English and Creative Writing at Southwest Tennessee Community College. She earned an M.F.A. degree from Lesley University in Creative Writing for Young People. In addition to *BALLOONS Lit. Journal*, her writing has appeared in *Hieroglyph*, *The Perpetual You*, *Dear English Major*, *Southern Writers Magazine*, and *Memphis Health and Fitness*. A short story of hers will be included in the February issue of *The Passed Note*. She recently celebrated the publication of her first book, *The Growing Rock*, a YA novel set during the Great Depression Era. It was published through Harvard Square Editions.

Dear Reva

Dear Reva,
Remember me?
The girl who shared her chicken nuggets
with you and whose favorite color was also yellow.

Dear Reva,
Remember when we used to play on the swings?
Our legs pumping, hands grasping
the rusty iron chains?
We held “global competitions”
for who could swing higher
There were always two competitors and
I always got silver.

Dear Reva,
During summer storms we hid
in the abandoned shed in my backyard, plucking grass arms and
folding them into friendship bracelets.

Dear Reva,
I still have mine, and it is wilted now.
An expired ray of sunshine.

Dear Reva,
Remember when you moved to different schools?
And then different states,
We were nine then.

Dear Reva,
I saw you on Facebook the other day.
Your laugh was frozen
Behind a carefully selected filter.

Dear Reva,
I press the “like” button sometimes
But it feels ritual, because
I’m doing it to keep our memories alive.

Dear Reva,
I barely know you.

Dear Reva,
Our message box is empty.



Ivy Xun

Growing up, **Ivy Xun** moved a lot: living in Henan, China, San Diego, Baltimore, and Bethesda. Ivy competes on her school’s debate team, and in her free time, she loves writing poetry, gardening, and collecting Japanese erasers.

Caught

The stars are fairies, caught in shady webs
Suspended in the heavens unobserved
By ancient spiders that misplaced their legs
In early days, becoming planets curved.

The tiny sprites endeavor to escape
And beat their wings and twinkle, mortified.
From fairy bodies constellations shaped,
Those freed at long last shoot across the sky.

Who knows how long they'll hang there, cloaked by night
And guarded by Orion's silver bow?
Or thrashing at their bonds that hold them tight,
The age-old struggle started long ago?

But same thing happens each and every day:
Gold dawn appears, the fairies fade away.



Poet

Madeleine Roberts

Madeleine Roberts is sixteen, the oldest of five, and a lover of chemistry, ragtime, Cicero, and chocolate. She resides in Tallahassee, Florida where she attends Maclay School.



Stephen Whiteside

Tonight It Is Raining on the River

Tonight it is raining on the river.
Each drop brings a ripple and a splash.
The little circle waves
Race away to early graves
While the moon illuminates their urgent dash.



Pillow Problems

Are you troubled by the placement of your pillow
When you curl up in your bed to sleep at night?
Does it push against your shoulder
Like a mighty mountain boulder?
Do you have to push and shove to get it right?

Do you feel in constant battle with your pillow?
Does it always feel too low, or else too high?
Do you roll it over double?
Does it give you constant trouble
As through the silent night awake you lie?

Do you ever lose your patience with your pillow?
Do you find it is impossible to steer?
Does it have another trick,
With the texture of a brick,
Pressing painfully against your ear?

Then the morning sun comes streaming through your window,
And your curtains with the morning zephyr billow,
And you wake, and lie at rest,
And you reflect: "This is the best!"
And softly rest your head against your pillow.

Stephen Whiteside has been writing rhyming verse for many years, inspired by the Australian bush poets, such as 'Banjo' Paterson, Henry Lawson, and C. J. Dennis. His poems have been published in magazines and anthologies, both in Australia and overseas, and won many awards. In 2014, Walker Books Australia published a collection of his poetry for children, "The Billy That Died With Its Boots On and Other Australian Verse." The book won a Gold Gumleaf award for "Book of the Year" at the Australian Bush Laureate Awards during the Tamworth Country Music Festival in 2015.

The Wild West



stagecoach trail winds down,
lit by a carmine sunset –
to stroke the lake floor.




Poet
Photographer

Erin Schalk



The Ride



caught in concrete crust,
train tracks roll down the canyon.
Oh! My stomach leaps!

Dawn



New Mexico nights –
ebony, oppressive weight
fades with plum sunrise.



Expanse (I)



unbroken sky: a
sapphire-blue sea shouldered by
mountain guardians.

Erin Schalk is a visual artist and writer based in California, but she has lived all over the United States and even in Japan. Since 2011, she has taught art & writing to students of all ages, and she is committed to opening up worlds of creativity and expression to people from all walks of life. When she's not writing, painting, drawing or taking photos, she also loves to knit, cook, and spend time with her family and sweet shih tzu.

The Wild Red Rose



Ana Vidosavljevic

Author

Maya loved the wild red rose next to her window. Her grandma often complained about its thorns and threatened to cut it but she never did. She liked it too, just didn't want to admit that.

Maya rarely left her room, except when she was supposed to see that tall man with a goatee and long white coat. He was a strange man. He pressed some cold device on her chest and asked her to open her mouth and protrude her tongue. She loved doing that, though. It was funny and made her smile. But she didn't like the needles that he sometimes left stuck in her arm and connected to some plastic bag full of water.

Those needles were the same like the thorns of her wild red rose. They were sharp and painful. She experienced both of them and somehow, she preferred her thorns. They were more familiar and homey.

She liked that man whose name she didn't know. Her grandma told her but she forgot it. She easily forgot things, especially names. She wished she could pronounce them. Maybe if she pronounced them, she would remember them. But unfortunately, she couldn't.

Her orientation in space and time was also bad. She rarely left her room, but when she did, and tried to explore the other rooms in her and her grandma's house, she got lost. All rooms seemed the same, and the only thing she remembered and never forgot was the wild red rose. That was what distinguished her room from the others. Often, she would spend a lot of time entering the rooms and checking if the red rose was there outside the window touching gently the window pane. If she saw it, she was happy. It was like coming back home after hours spent in the deep forest without paths and indication marks.

Maya was really short. Only a meter and forty-eight centimeters. She looked like a kid and she felt like one. But they told her that she was a woman. Whatever it meant.

She didn't remember that she had ever had parents, even though, her grandma told her once that she had had them. Moreover, they had taken care of her when she was a baby before all of them had had a car accident. That car accident had taken them away from her and her grandma, and had left Maya with many defects. Maya didn't know what 'defects' were but she supposed it must have been something bad.

She had only one friend: her grandma. And she had never finished school. They sent her to the regular school and even some special schools where she had her own tutors but the progress was slow, almost non-existent. She had never learned to read or write.

Not many things kept her attention, either. Maybe birds and their song, and definitely her wild red rose.

She loved watching this rose swaying in the wind. Its beautiful red flowers danced with even the lightest breeze and their movement gracefully filled the air. It was a beautiful scene that Maya watched every day sitting in her chair and staring through the window. This spectacle entertained her almost half a day. The rest of the day, she slept and dreamed the rose.

She often dreamed that she was the wild red rose, tall, graceful and beautiful. Her red layered dress swayed with the rhythm of bird song, and her red ballet shoes had a life of their own. They kept moving Maya around, elegantly going in circles and created the beautiful dance that only the best ballet dancers could perform. Maya could dance like that for hours and hours and once she got tired, she had to take them off, otherwise, they would continue its incessant dance without intention to stop. When she took them off, her dress fell off her body as well and slowly hanged itself on the hanger waiting for Maya to put her shoes on again. The shoes and the dress worked in unison. One without the other

didn't function properly.

This recurring dream was the most beautiful thing Maya had ever experienced. And she looked forward to falling asleep, turning into the red wild rose and dancing gracefully with the wind, birds, sky and trees.

One winter, the town was covered in snow. Maya and her grandma's house got a heavy white coat. The window was blurred and icy and through its frosted glass Maya saw the endless whiteness outside. Her wild red rose was freezing and Maya's grandma tried to save it. She covered it with a dry soil and compost hoping that it would make a warm cover for the rose.

That winter Maya started feeling unwell. She couldn't walk anymore and she didn't feel like eating. The food just didn't want to go down her throat. And her grandma took her again to that tall man with the funny goatee and long white coat. The man didn't smile much this time. He was unusually serious and his lips never formed the line that showed Maya that everything was all right. This time, something was not all right.

At the end of that winter, Maya dreamed her beautiful dream for the last time. That time, she managed to perform the most beautiful dance in front of not only birds and trees but her parents and grandma as well. She was so happy to see them smiling, clapping and cheering excitedly while admiring her dance. When she finished dancing, she bowed gracefully and they all gathered in a big hug. Maya smiled while dreaming.

The next morning, the grandma found Maya motionless and breathless with a big smile on her face. Maya never woke up. The grandma's eyes filled with the tears and she remained sitting next to her granddaughter's bed holding her unmoving hand for hours.

That spring, the wild red rose didn't sprout. It had never woken up from its winter sleep. Or maybe and probably, it accompanied Maya in her

adventure of endless dreaming and dancing. The two of them, in all likelihood, pursued the record of the longest dance.



Ana Vidosavljevic from Serbia currently living in Indonesia. She has her work published or forthcoming in *Down in the Dirt* (Scar Publications), *Literary Yard*, *RYL* (Refresh Your Life), *The Caterpillar*, *The Curlew*, *Eskimo Pie*, *Cold-noon*, *Perspectives*, *Indiana Voice Journal*, *The Raven Chronicles*, *Setu Bilingual Journal*, *Foliate Oak Literary Magazine*, *Quail Bell Magazine*, *Madcap Review*, *The Bookends Review*, *Gimmick Press*, *(mac)ro(mic)*, *Scarlet Leaf Review*, *Adelaide Literary Magazine*, *A New Ulster*. She worked on a GIEE 2011 project: Gender and Interdisciplinary Education for Engineers 2011 as a member of the Institute Mihailo Pupin team. She also attended the International Conference "Bullying and Abuse of Power" in November, 2010, in Prague, Czech Republic, where she presented her paper: "Cultural Intolerance".

Egret

I spot the white neck
poised in a giant S.

The tall stick legs
planted in water.

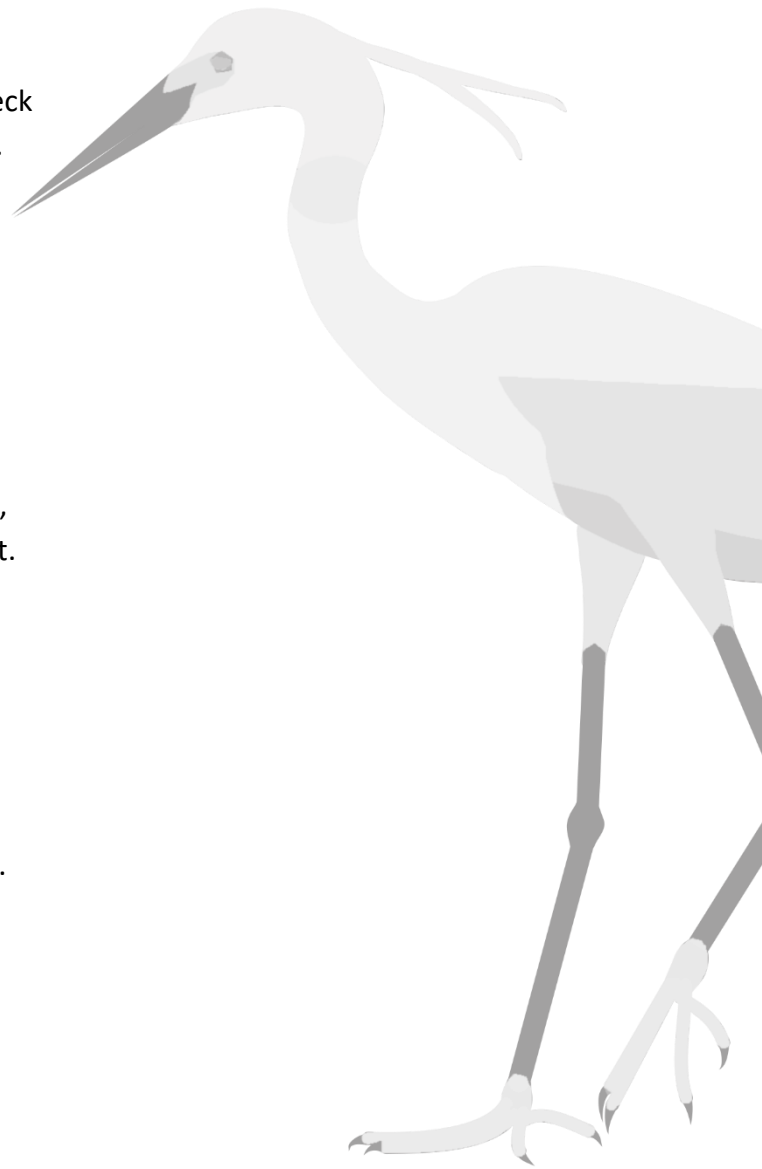
The vigilant eyes
watching.

Immobile as stone,
yet clearly sentient.

I stop running.

Become as still
and silent
as this white bird
waiting for supper.

Nourishment
is always near
if I pay attention
to what swims
beneath my feet.



Jacqueline Jules

Jacqueline Jules is the author of forty books for young readers including the *Zapato Power* series, the *Sofia Martinez* series, *Pluto is Peeved*, and *Never Say a Mean Word Again*. Her poetry has appeared in over 100 publications including *BALLOONS Lit. Journal*, the *Poetry Friday Anthologies*, *One Minute Till Bedtime*, *Cicada*, and *Cricket*. Visit her at www.jacquelinejules.com.





Crows

Two crows were sitting on a branch
talking about human problems

One was cawing about the future
the other squawking about the past

In the branch above them
a pigeon was perching quietly

He sighed deeply
and pooped on their chattering heads

Reminding them to live
in the present moment



Agnieszka Filipek lives in Ireland with Munchkin, her rescued white rabbit. She writes in both her native tongue Polish and in English, and also translates in these languages. Her work was published internationally in countries, such as Poland, Ireland, United States and India. For more see www.agnieszkafilipek.com

A stylized illustration of sunflowers in shades of yellow and green, with dark brown centers. The flowers are arranged in a cluster on the left side of the page, with some petals and leaves extending towards the center. The background is plain white.

Sunflowers

I will give you sunflowers
they will rest in a vase
as painted by Van Gogh

And you will admire them
like a painting in a gallery
which will remind you of me

Agnieszka Filipek

Poet

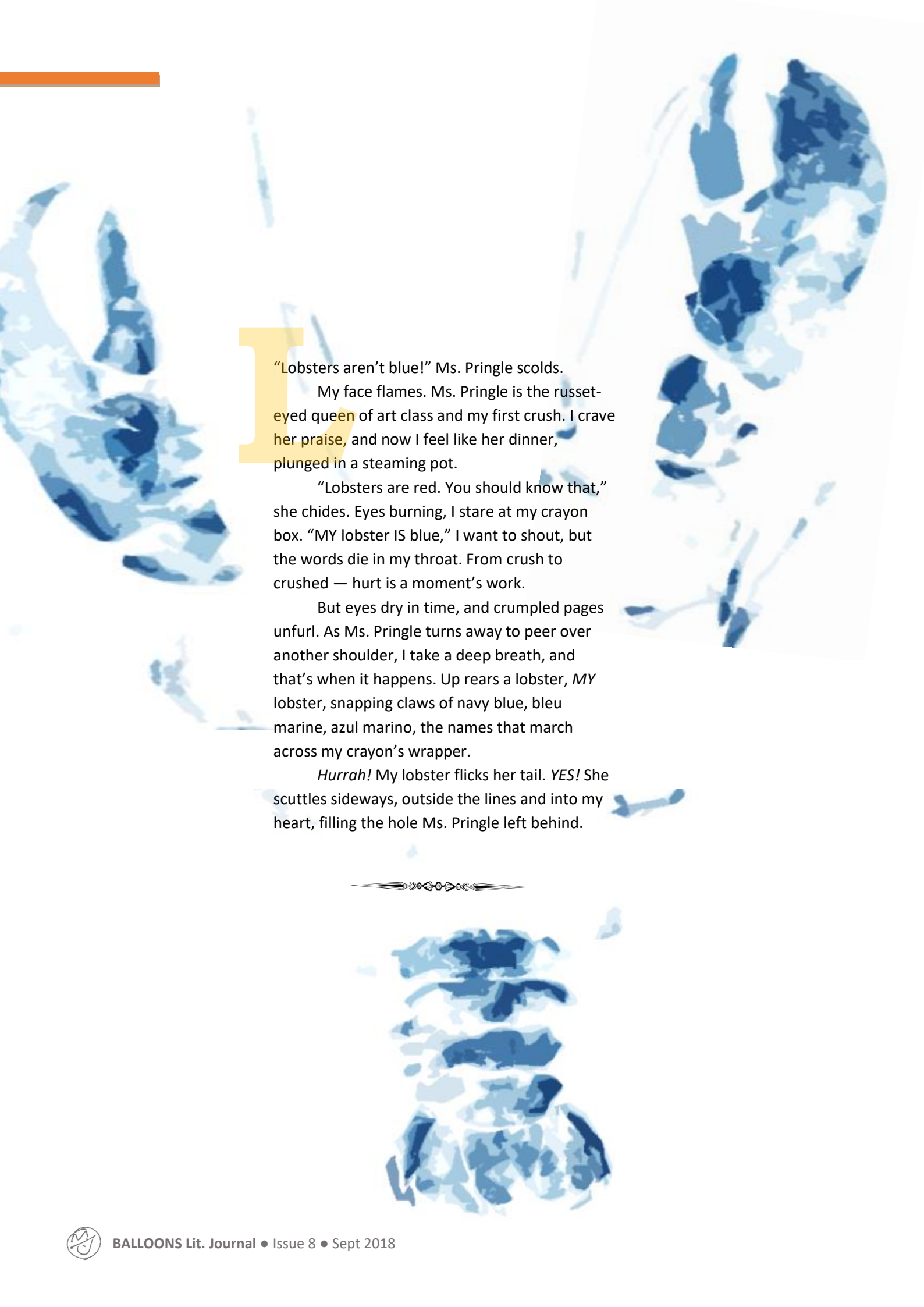


Outside the Lines



Author **Amy Karon**

Amy Karon's work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Cricket*, *Eastern Iowa Review*, *Nonbinary Review*, *Half Mystic*, *Iowa Heritage Illustrated*, and many other print and online journals. She also is a medical writer who focuses on new treatments for cancer. She currently makes her home in San Jose, California.



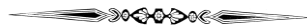
"Lobsters aren't blue!" Ms. Pringle scolds.

My face flames. Ms. Pringle is the russet-eyed queen of art class and my first crush. I crave her praise, and now I feel like her dinner, plunged in a steaming pot.

"Lobsters are red. You should know that," she chides. Eyes burning, I stare at my crayon box. "MY lobster IS blue," I want to shout, but the words die in my throat. From crush to crushed — hurt is a moment's work.

But eyes dry in time, and crumpled pages unfurl. As Ms. Pringle turns away to peer over another shoulder, I take a deep breath, and that's when it happens. Up rears a lobster, *MY* lobster, snapping claws of navy blue, bleu marine, azul marino, the names that march across my crayon's wrapper.

Hurrah! My lobster flicks her tail. *YES!* She scuttles sideways, outside the lines and into my heart, filling the hole Ms. Pringle left behind.



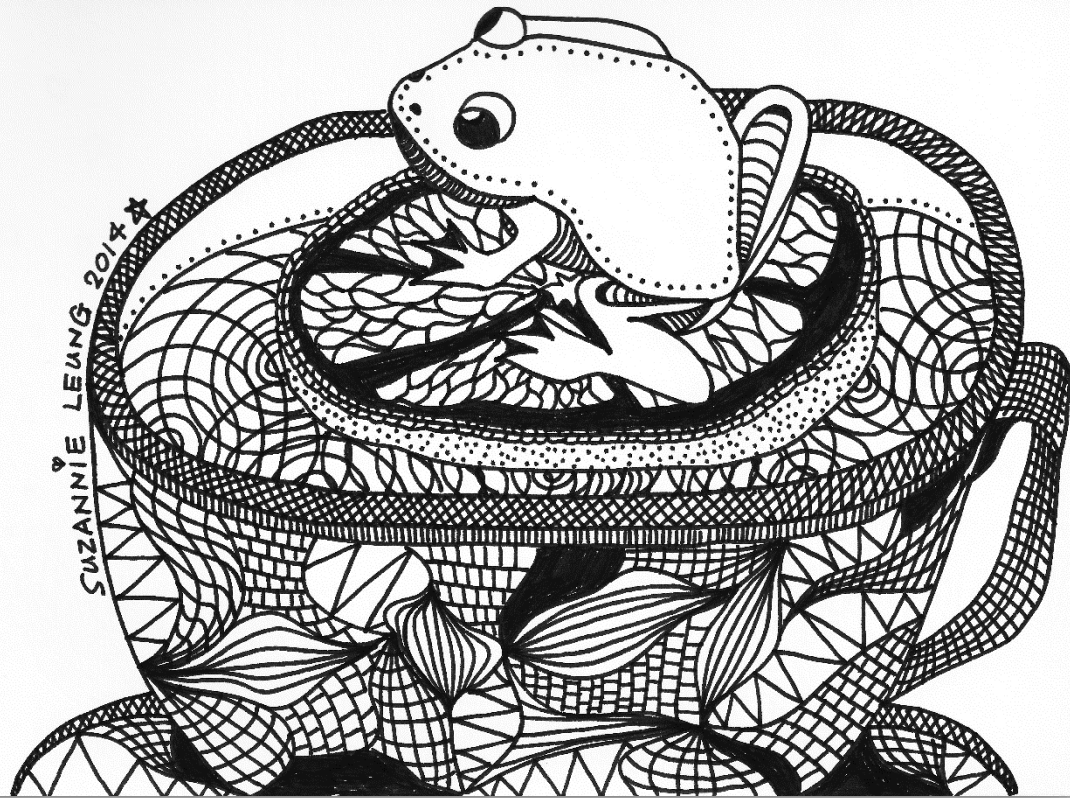
Koala and Dim Sum



Suzannie Leung graduated from City University of Hong Kong with a BA (Hons) degree in Creative Media, a Postgraduate Diploma in Early Childhood Education (on dean's honours list 2009-2010, with distinction) from The University of Hong Kong, a Postgraduate Diploma in Psychology and an MEd degree in Educational Psychology (on dean's honours list 2010-2011) from The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Her PhD in Education from HKU focused on visual arts in Hong Kong kindergartens. She was a frontline practitioner, gifted programme developer and children art exhibition curator. She is also an illustrator with her own webpage: www.facebook.com/SuzannieLeungArt

Artist

My Cup of Lemon Tea



Hello Banana Boat

Suzannie Leung



Balloons

BALLOONS Lit. Journal

“BALLOONS Lit. Journal

is a ***treasure chest*** of ***delight*** to be enjoyed by **teachers** and **pupils** alike; a ***joyous potpourri*** of art, **poetry**, fiction – and ***Balloons!***”

– *Joan McCreedy*

NOT FOR SALE