

FIRST PRIZE

Not Ghosts, but Souls

I like ghosts

Not the eerie ones that haunt forests
Or the ones you hear about in folklore
But simply the souls
Of ones
Who have passed

I like the ones
Who once walked on the land
As we do now
The ones who danced
And laughed
And loved
Just as we do now

And when I listen to ghost stories
During campfire nights
I don't pay attention to how they scare
But to how they lived before
They left the living

I think we are mistaken
Between the grief of a ghost
And the ignorance of a human

And I prefer to think that
The dead like to linger around
Not to haunt
But to try
And live again

by Norah Liu (Grade 7)
Spul'u'kwuks Elementary School
Richmond, British Columbia

FIRST PRIZE

I'm Fine

You sit in your room
Being overwhelmed with feelings
Feelings of not being pretty enough
How no one likes you
How you are being lied to
How you aren't enough

Your mind screams at you
About how stupid you are
And how annoying you are
That people pretend to be your friend
Because they feel bad

No matter how many times
People tell you you're loved
You never believe them
You feel as if everyone hates you
So you act like the most popular kid in school

No one will find out your secrets
You just wish you could be skinnier
That you had a better jawline
That you had white teeth
Instead of butter yellow

You feel as if you're in a void
With no escape
But you can't tell anyone
Because some people have it worse

So you bottle it all up
Until your eyes sting with tears
And your throat tenses
And you weep

People ask if you are okay
"I'm fine," you echo

by Vianna Martin (Grade 8)
Regina Christian School
Regina, Saskatchewan

SECOND PRIZE

My Ocean

A river of words flows into an ocean of stories.
Millions of voices crash against the shore rocks.
Lessons scatter like fish in the ocean.
The orcas of meaning dance over the waves of trust.
I see a shining moon, bright and beautiful,
Leading the lost canoe on a safe path—
A path with twists and turns, the ups and downs of the waves.
But the canoe always knows even if it ever gets lost again,
The moon will always be there to have its back.
As the moon shines off the glistening water,
I think to myself, *Wow! This ocean goes on forever.*
Knowledge, trust, kindness, stories, and, most of all, family,
That's what being Indigenous means to me.
I take one last look, breathe it all in, and dive into the ocean—
My ocean.

by Emma Goodyear (Grade 7)

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Chilliwack, British Columbia

SECOND PRIZE

Once a Midnight's Dream

Once darkness fills through the expanse,
The moon has risen white and round.
The stars begin a ballet dance,
The rain lands slowly on the ground.

Inside these very walls of mine,
I feel the warmth of my abode
And swing around from side to side
In tune with midnight's sleepy ode.

Farewell, my worries, you won't last!
I drift away, into a dream.
I find my pace, and tied in lace,
I wander off, into night's gleam.

by Sophia Ginzburg (Grade 8)
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Mississauga, Ontario

THIRD PRIZE

We Live Too Fast

We live too fast,
Our whole day a cacophony of deadlines and headlines,
Being better than him,
Being faster than her.

We live too fast.
Our whole existence based on what we can do,
Who and what we can be for you.

We rush around,
Looking but not seeing,
Too engaged in us to see the things around us,
The people around us,
To care.

We live too fast.
What if we could just pause the picture,
Freeze the frame,
Appreciate what the world has given us,
Live for everyone, including ourselves,
And stop living so fast?

by Jenna Clark (Grade 7)
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Cambridge, Ontario

THIRD PRIZE

Autumnal Avar

What lies beneath?
The autumnal avar
Under ev'ry fallen leaf
And ev'ry sparkling star

Perhaps the graves of butterflies
And petty summer things
Roller-coaster lows and highs
And paper-thin rings

April showers replaced
With fall petrichor
May flowers laced
With poetic folklore

All the details we forgot
A train you took last spring
A thread pulled thin, and frayed and fraught
A snow-globe song we used to sing

The new moon that September night
The leaves that frolicked in the air
Before sinking to their woeful plight
Beneath a stranger's longing stare

A graceful bittersweet aubade
The carefree days of youth
The memories doomed to fade
Into somewhere selcouth

And perhaps gripping tightly
To each summer scar
Is inferior to dancing
In the autumnal avar

by Nahla Mawji (Grade 8)
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