

Ice fishing

With a jacket like a heater
and a helmet on my head,
I turn through the woods.
Crunch, crunch, crunch.
The brakes stick
as I cautiously drive out
onto the lake.
Swish, splosh,
says slush on the water.
Then I park,
put my green and black rod
in its holder,
and wait, and wait, and wait –
until the drag starts to
ring, ring, ring
like a bell
from the fish
pulling the line.
I reel, and reel, and reel,
until the dark brown-and-gold fish
flops out of the hole
and lands on the ice.
Splash, splash.
Flop, flop.
Success!
Dinner!

– AYDEN CLARK, 10, ESSEX JUNCTION

This piece will be presented by Vermont Stage Company at 7:30 p.m. on Sunday, 12/16, at Burlington's Main Street Landing Black Box Theater.

Perfectly imperfect friend

Take me away into the wind.
Hold my hand tight and
do not leave me behind.
Let's run away into the fields and
climb together to the tops of trees.
Let's go to the loneliest street
and make it full of hope.
We live without worries.
Let's peer into the expected puddles
and splash them into the unexpected.
We will have each other's back,
so don't worry
if your branch breaks –
I will be there for you to lean on.
Though I am not perfect,
I will try to be.
I will be
your perfectly imperfect friend.

– ANNA WAHLIN, 14, RICHMOND

Quarry queens

We're running up the hill, shrieking
with laughter, going to our safe place
– our haven. This peaceful, dangerous
place leaves us breathless every time.
The beautiful, jagged stone is covered in
chives and red clovers. We check to make
sure that our names are still written on the
wall, ensuring our rule over this
mysterious place. The trees and plants
are our people. The loud geese flying
south, the golden sun sinking down, and
the uneven rock jutting out are all part of
what we love about this place.

Sometimes, we stay there for hours. We
climb up the precarious ledges to the
tippy-top of the quarry, looking down on
our empire. We stand, side by side,
feeling the wind in our hair.

We are blissful, feeling like we own the
world.

– TESS BAKER, 13, BURLINGTON

YOUNG WRITERS PROJECT

Young Writers Project receives hundreds of submissions on youngwritersproject.org from students across Vermont, the U.S. and beyond. Each week we select the best work for publication in this newspaper, and in *The Voice*, on vpr.net, vtdigger.org and more. This week, we present responses to the challenges of, **Winter/18: Tell a story about your experience of winter in short, descriptive poetry or prose. Be original. Avoid clichés; and General Writing.**

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Young Writers Project is an independent nonprofit that engages students to write, helps them improve and connects them with authentic audiences in newspapers, before live audiences and online. YWP also publishes an annual anthology and *The Voice*, a digital magazine with YWP's best writing, images and features. More info: youngwritersproject.org or contact YWP at (802) 324-9538.

THANKS FROM YWP

YWP is supported by the generosity of foundations, businesses and individuals who recognize the power and value of writing.

If you would like to contribute, please go to youngwritersproject.org/support, or mail your donation to YWP, 47 Maple St., Suite 216, Burlington, VT 05401.

Special thanks this week to
**THE BAY AND PAUL
FOUNDATIONS**

PHOTO OF THE WEEK



KEVIN HUANG (YWP MEDIA LIBRARY)

Finding

You will find me
when I notice you
leaning against a brick wall,
in denial
that the things you hear are true.
I will listen.
You will find me
where the ground meets the sky,
dreaming of the impossible
(if you could ever understand that).
You will find me
when everything you have ever written
pools into nothing,
but the ink from your pen,
and your words, are nothing
but rivers at your feet.
And you will know
that seeing isn't always believing.

– ANNIKA GRUBER, 14, CHARLOTTE

Tiny write

Five years ago today, you admitted you
were tired. You threw down the blanket.
You shouted a surrender. You spat on the
flame. It's an end that is bitter and can
never taste sweet.

– GABBY SEGUIN, 16, ESSEX

This is not a story

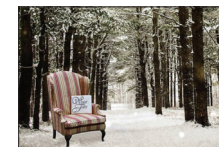
Hello reader!
This is not a story.
There are no heroes with powers,
nor evil witches in towers.
So you can leave.
Go.
Shoo.
There is nothing here for you.
No damsels telling tales of woe,
nor knights riding
with ladies in tow.
There are no frogs to become princes,
nor huge crabs that pinch.
No matter how hard you wish,
there will be no magical dish.
The dragons aren't here,
and no funky boats out on the pier.
You are still here?
Still around?
My, your stubbornness does astound!
But there is nothing waiting for you –
no secret treasure,
not even a shoe.
I am tired, go away.
I wish to rest for the day.
What's that you say?
Do not delay!
For you have got
your own story to tell.

– JULIA SHRIER, 12, SHELBURNE

YWP NEWS & EVENTS

Winter Tales!

Join us at Burlington's Main Street Landing Black Box Theater from December 12-16 to hear 12 original winter stories and poems from YWP writers, performed by Vermont Stage Company!



Weak

Sure, you are weak.
You can't shoot,
can't speak,
can't do anything right.
But hey, just in realizing that,
you can prove that you are the opposite
of what you say you are.
They say there is a beginning
to everything,
and to become stronger,
you first need to know what you want.
You first need to know your weakness.
Know the thing that stops you from being
who you truly believe you can be.
This might sound cheesy,
but hey, listen –
those we admire so much
and wish to be like...
were once just like us.
They were once in our shoes
before they became the people we know.
Take Michael Jordan, for example,
one of the best players
to ever play the game of basketball.
He wasn't always the best on the court.
In fact, he was weak.
But after accepting that he was weak,
Mr. Jordan then worked to become
who we now call the "G.O.A.T."
He turned his weakness into his strength,
turned the table upside down
with only one thing –
his knowledge that he was weak.
So stop saying that you are weak,
because that is your ticket to success.
It's like the great Fuegoleon once said:
"Being weak is nothing to be ashamed of.
However, staying weak is."

– HUSSEIN AMURI, 15, WINOOSKI

Winter song

I have never found answers in oceans.
I have stood at the edge of the water,
screamed my questions to the world,
and pretended not to notice the silence.
There are streets with empty alleyways,
lonely poets at open windows
(worrying about the future
of a pebble that falls by itself –
we're all similar, anyway),
broken lightbulbs,
a quiet child that watches it all fall apart.
Do you remember
what it was like when we were young
and could fill our emptiness together?
You would pour hot water on the floor
and I would come,
wipe it from your brow with a jacket cuff,
fall in love with your dust a little more.
We had strong feet,
dedicated to laughing at empty eyes
and sneaking quietly into ourselves.
Now my feet are only running.

– SAM AIKMAN, 15, RICHMOND