

# FEEL FREE

**Standout Submissions from the  
Writers in the Schools  
Elaine Wetterauer Writing Contest  
2018-2019**



## The Elaine Wetterauer Writing Contest

Announced in November 2018, Seattle Arts & Lectures' **Writers in the Schools** (WITS) program held a writing contest that was open to all students, grades K-12, attending a WITS partner school in the 2018/19 school year.

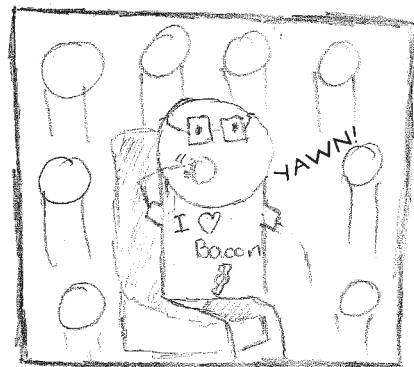
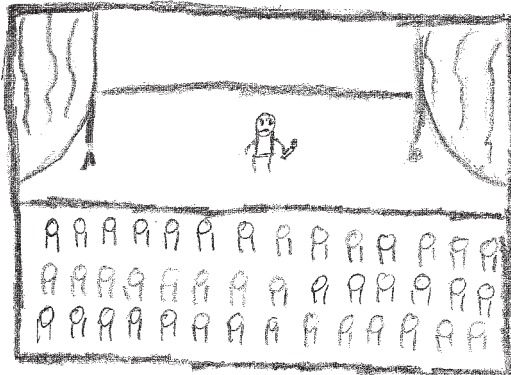
Contestants submitted an original poem, story, comic, or essay of 1000 words or less, based on the title of SAL author Zadie Smith's essay collection, *Feel Free*. The theme "Feel Free" allowed students to explore the subjects of art, history, culture, and their impacts on the world we live in, and to reflect on what makes them "feel free" through their creative writing.

Two finalists and one winner were chose from the submissions. This year's winner is ***Madeline Lee***, whose piece you can find published on SAL's blog, *SAL/ON*, and in the WITS Fall Anthology. This year's finalists are ***Sophie Anderson*** and ***Vincent Ryser***, also published on *SAL/ON*. Compiled in this chapbook are other outstanding submissions from student writers.

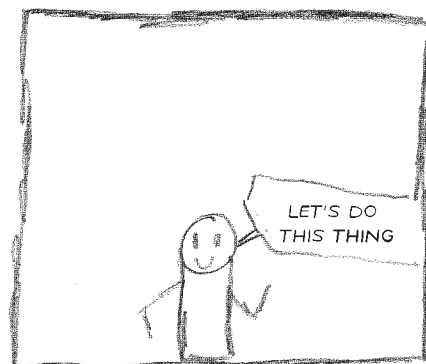
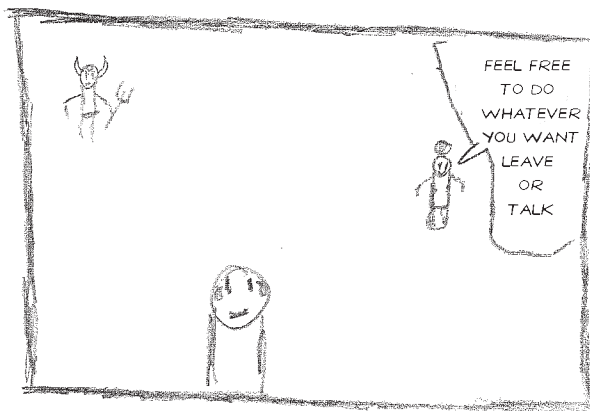
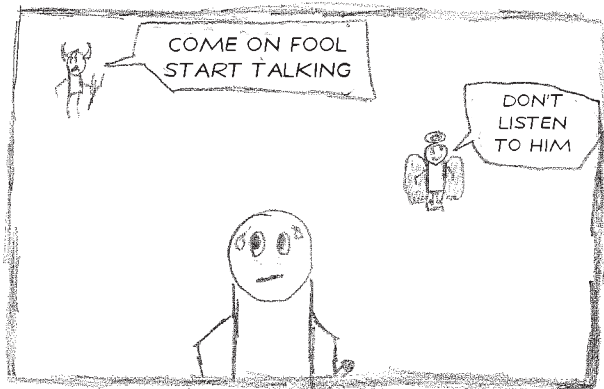
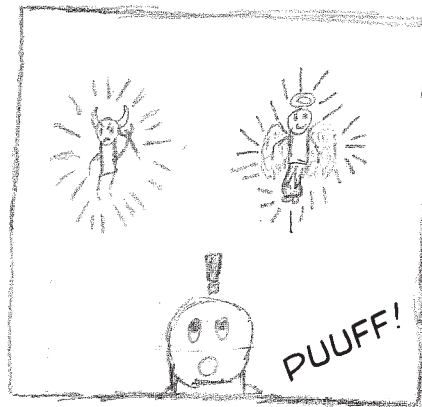
# Feel Free

*by Senet Borgmann*

Contest Winner  
Puesta del Sol, 4th Grade







# **Inexhaustible Abundance**

*by Helena Goos*

Contest Winner

Nathan Hale High School, 10th Grade

Sarah walked across the barren earthscape, oxygen mask covering her face, goggles fogging as she exhaled. It was spring, (according to the calendar in the bunker) but the sky was still choked with the dust and smog of everything. Watery sun filtered through the particulates, illuminating the landscape in a cream-coloured light. Even though it had been almost 90 years since the last bomb had fallen, the earth still hadn't recovered. This fact was evident in the perpetual skeleton-like state of the trees and shrubs around the area. The surface of the earth was predicted to never flush itself clean, at least not to the point of hospitality for humans. Sarah, however refused to accept this fate and had dedicated herself to hypothetical plants. A botanist it was called. She herself had never seen a plant before, and she had been told that she never would. They never needed plants in the bunker. All her vitamins that would come from plants were stuffed into a convenient little pill that she took daily before breakfast. Al, Sarah's wife, had always found laughable irony in the fact that Sarah was a plant scientist in a plantless world.

"You don't study what is," joked Al, "You study the theory of what is." Sarah always laughed along, and though there was an irony of a plant scientist in a plantless world, Sarah had always felt sad at the thought that she would never see the organic colour green with her own eyes. She was so desperate to find something, anything, to prove that one day humans could re-habit the earth again, that she frequently brought dead samples home to study them, half-convinced they were alive. Often Al would come in at 12 A.M. saying, "I'm sorry... but honey... it's getting late. Come on to bed." Sarah would reluctantly put down her magnifying glass and tweezers, turn off her microscope and do so. So many times, Sarah had collected what she liked to call 'False Alarms' that she was surprised she even bothered to come outside anymore. Depressed by this train of thought, Sarah took a rest on a pile of rubble. She had often stopped to ask herself why she did come outside. Why try to find something in a world that was so obviously dead? It was a waste of time. And yet, and yet, there was something, some small sliver of hope that drove her out of bed each morning to watch the sun rise, and to search to find any life. Sarah had been born after the Hydro-wars had destroyed the planet's surface, in a bunker marked #KC84. There she had been raised, gotten married, and lived. The bunker had been her whole life, and would continue to be in the future. The one distraction from the monotony of grey below the earth was her morning walks/searches for life on the surface.

As she swept her gaze over the desolate earthscape, something caught her eye. Sarah did a double-take and whipped her head back around, trying to pinpoint the colour. There, there it was! Among a group of dead plants, an entire bush, sickly and brown, sported yellowish leaves. Sarah stumbled to the plant, her heart accelerating as she did. Could it really be? She knelt beside the thing in silent awe. The silence surrounded her like a blanket, covering her senses and all she could hear was her own breathing.

"It was the strangest thing," she would later say. "I'd never seen anything quite like it."

It was beautiful, and ethereal and eerie all at the same time. As Sarah watched it, the small bud gently supported by her hand, she realized something was wrong. You didn't have to be a botanist to tell something was wrong with the plant. The leaves were yellow and sickly, with brown spots speckling them. It was pale and yellow, though the wood of it looked a healthy brown colour. The small bud had petals peeking out, looking grey and poisoned. The flower looked familiar somehow. Sarah racked her brains for identification for the plant and pulled up a memory of a page in her history textbook with a large image of the shrub. The plant was a... 무궁화 . Or Korean Rose. It was a hearty plant that produced pale pink buds, with a long pollen stem in the middle. It was the national symbol of Korea, and that day, Sarah's class had glossed over the section. Sarah observed the embryos before her. So fragile, so tiny, yet strong and courageous at the same time. She remembered that during the Japanese occupation of Korea, there had been an official order of destruction of all these plants, and that people sometimes hid them in their gardens and houses; rebelling in one of the few ways they could.

Sarah remembered her grandmother telling her stories of life before the H-wars, and of the 무궁화 plants she kept in her backyard. "They didn't just represent my home," she'd said, "They come back each spring, and they bring their blooms with them. It is a cycle of death and rebirth. They represent eternity, hope that life will come again; inexhaustible abundance." As she watched the 무궁화 , Sarah felt a smile spread across her face as she recalled her 할머니's words. It seemed fitting somehow, that the very plant that was a representation of abundance should be the first to emerge from this toxic world. She felt tears spring to her eyes at the realization of what the plant before her meant. Life wasn't just theoretically possible, life is possible.

Sarah had never felt so freed by the possibility of something before. If life was possible for plants then life would be possible for humans. Al would never believe it. She turned from the plant still grinning, eyes filled with tears. Behind her, as she hurried back to the bunker, the 무궁화 blossoms spread their frail, thin, petals to meet the pale light.

# Freedom Feeling

*by Audrey Anusaga Lonise Lefono*

Contest Winner  
Seattle Children's, 5th Grade

Soaring through the sky  
feeling free like you can do anything!  
You can travel places.  
You can do this.  
You can make things happen.

When I hear the word "free"  
I picture you soaring through the air,  
free, nothing holding you down.

Faith and hope help me feel free.  
And love. And blessings.  
Everyone who loves you for who you are.  
My family. Jesus.  
This is my list of things that help me to feel free,  
to know that I can do this.

If someone was feeling not free,  
I would tell them to not lose hope  
and not lose faith. If they fall down,  
to get up again and just keep trying.  
Because one day they'll meet that goal.

The color of my free is gold,  
real and super shiny gold.

The sound of my free is birds chirping,  
singing a perfect little melody on a tree branch.

The taste of my free is sweet and juicy,  
the sweetness of a piece of candy,  
the juiciness of a fruit.

The smell of my free is the caramel  
you smell in the air at the coffee bar.

# Red Dust

*by Sarah Pattison*

Contest Winner  
McClure Middle School, Teacher

What is in my blood?  
The poetry of clay.  
Red dust in my lungs,  
coats my insides.  
Sifted and strained  
through the fingers of my family.  
Gnarled and blistered,  
sun-spotted,  
worn skin.

I grew up in a desert fortress.  
Its bones welded together from scraps  
formed from native granite and concrete.  
The walls were built  
one by one.

This, in my mind's eye,  
stands in harsh contrast  
to the velvet quilting of the Jodhpur.  
Tiered and embossed,  
soft yet effective.  
An open-air palace,  
this wealth makes a show of having no walls.

Cyclical notes stir my insides  
in a spiral.  
Seated close to the ground, my hips ache.  
Time and custom move in continuity.

The rusty color of fortune reigns here too.  
Lucky in heritage,  
there are invisible boundaries.  
We wear this hue  
like dust on skin.

Luck is in the ground and you plant it there yourself.

My incubator was hard against the elements.



It protected me, then  
set me free.

I count my blessings like  
fine beads on embroidery.  
Offered every instrument  
as my brother.  
Taught to use them well  
by my father-  
hammer,  
wire-cutter,  
welding irons.  
Re-fashioned tools,  
made to be used again.

# **The Rain**

***by Lars Kowalczyk***

Honorable Mention  
Alki Elementary, 5th Grade

The rain falls in  
a cave making  
an echo that can  
be heard for miles.

The rain falls over  
the world to put it to sleep

The rain falls on my  
roof to put me to sleep  
with great dreams like  
a caterpillar in his cocoon  
dreaming his big dreams of  
wings

# Sappho's Song

*by Doug Sylver*

Honorable Mention  
Nathan Hale High School, Teacher

That night  
in a strange bed  
Sappho  
kissed me  
on the forehead  
whisper-singing  
in my ear.

“You are meant  
to enjoy this beauty  
in all its many forms,  
the endless fields  
of grapes  
of olives,  
the endless waves  
of sea  
of sky,  
the endless beauty  
of your love  
her eyes  
her smile  
her heart.”

That day  
Sappho's song  
as promised  
came true  
the sun-drenched beach  
black olives, dates and figs  
white wine  
laughing in a  
new language  
floating to the edge  
just as the cerulean sea  
gets kissed on the forehead by  
the cerulean sky

enjoying all this beauty  
Sappho  
my love and I.

## **Stand-Out Contest Submissions**



# **Feel Free**

*by Lincoln Choi*

Puesta del Sol, 4th Grade

I wake up. It is just a wonderful day.  
I want to go somewhere.  
Like the mountain, the lake,  
nature or somewhere that is free.  
I want freedom.  
I hear the birds calling me.  
I want to be free as a bird.  
Fly where you want.  
I feel free.

# **Feel Free**

***by Sophia HONG***

Puesta del Sol, 4th Grade

Feeling free can be a valuable feeling. Like a bird out of its cage or a dog out of the house. To feel free means to have liberty to do anything, to run around your house. To push boundaries, extend the limit, to feel you can run outside and sing along with the birds.

I feel free when I am with my dogs. I enjoy taking care of them, and cuddling, and feeding them. Many people say that dogs are a lot of responsibility, but I would agree to disagree. In my opinion, it is really fun to take care of dogs. Dogs are cuddly, fluffy, and sweet. I feel free when I am walking my dogs. The fresh breeze, trees swaying are a peaceful place for my thoughts where nobody is watching me. my dogs help me feel free.

Nature feels free. Climbing trees, feeling the grass. It is calming to me. many people use the expression “I need some fresh air.” The outdoors helps you relax. The animals outside are free. I like to watch as the rabbits hop around in the grass. I do not dance in the rain anymore but the rain is still relaxing. The nature helps me feel free.

Many things make me feel free and I enjoy feeling free. If more good things happen in this world, we can all be free.

# **Feel Free**

*by Brooke Lell*

Puesta del Sol, 4th Grade

Try to pull me down with sadness and sorrow only to be washed away tomorrow. Cause I have something that you can't see. It's called feeling free. You can't see it but it's not invisible. It's not fake but it's not real though. It looks like running through a golden meadow and tastes like smores under a campfire's shadow. It sounds like birds at the crack of dawn and feels like swimming in a crystal clear pond. It smells like pollen of the prettiest flower and is soothing like a soft rain shower. Now you know what feeling free is like. So, you can go and tell everyone tonight. It's not the sound or the sight that makes feeling free so magical and bright. It's that you believe in something that you can't see even though it's right in front of me. Which is feeling free.

# **Feel Free**

***by Kenneth Li***

Puesta del Sol, 4th Grade

It is a regular day, just a regular old day. Same schedule, 1. Wake up and eat breakfast. 2. Go to school. 3. Go home. 4. Go to soccer practice.

1. It is the usual. It is hard to get out of bed. You always want to stay, that is for most of us.
2. Going to school is crazy. Your dad rushing after breakfast. Your brother being late. It is always the same.
3. Right when the bell rings, everybody is running in all directions. I like to walk.
4. Soccer practice.  
I just feel right.  
It refreshes my mind.  
I feel free.

# Homework Problem

by Mae

Lowell Elementary, 4th Grade







# Once

*by Eliot Rose*

Alki Elementary, 5th Grade

Once there was a boy  
sliding down a water slide,  
glancing at his dad. Then,  
the boy looked and three crows flew  
right over him. Those birds are made  
out of water and life that came  
from heaven. Soaring like a plane.  
The boy was delighted and grateful  
for seeing this wonderful  
thing. He was as happy as a  
kid getting free toys. Then the  
boy plummeted in the water.

# Trapped

*by Azhar Samatar*

Alki Elementary School, 5th Grade

There is a place where people  
fight over land, a place where  
people starve, a place where they  
are silenced.

We are not silenced,  
we are not hungry,  
we are not silenced.  
But we are trapped.

They call and call  
helpless, unfed, ripped  
clothes, but begging,  
begging for our  
silence.

I cry and cry for  
our people, scared for  
them, angry for them,  
but not enough, not  
enough for this war  
to end.

And day by day  
they are killed except  
us, except us, is it our  
turn yet?

Knock, knock, knock,  
trapped, trapped, trapped,  
found, found, found,  
run, run, run.

# How the Dream Feels to the Living

*by Mia Taab*

Alki Elementary School, 5th Grade

Like the soft blanket  
that wraps you up warm.

Like the spark of light,  
first hint of imagination.

The dreamers ask, “What  
is it like to be in a  
dream?”

“Like the endless possibilities  
and places to go.”  
“But what is it like to live?”

The dreamer scrambles for  
an answer. “I don’t know.”

A dream is like all the  
things the things that  
dreamers could do

like the trigger  
to imagination

Like the rain drop that  
sets you free in a dream.

# Of Sounds Like That of Joy and Sorrow

*by Jared G. Stern Rogers*

Nathan Hale High School, 10th Grade

Through the doors,  
Automatic and new-  
They,  
the procession went  
As uniquely able.

Some hobbled, some rolled.  
While,  
Full eyes looked me over,  
And aged faces went by.

Always wont to do  
Voices never silenced.

Not least by  
Perturbed desk clerk  
Nor by rings of red  
By jeering crowd.

Sounds fluttering-  
Hardly rasp.  
Came to not I, nor the others;  
But to the people and events,  
Long gone by.

Of neighborhoods full of faces,  
Still always empty-  
Save one;  
Of Ms. Stein,  
Who ran the best deli  
In that part of town;  
Of working in Buddy Squirrel's Nut Shop,  
All those years ago.

And further back,  
A winged history:  
To crusades mislead,  
Of the accusatory glare,



Of scapegoats,  
And then of pogroms,  
Of Worschels and Seidels,  
And sailing seas;  
And of the parents,  
With gunpowder on their shoes.

And still they went on,  
Of menial things:  
Of striding through the trees,  
Behind a family home.  
And fasting away  
All of the holy days.

Then came they to speak of simpler things,  
Of sounds like that of joy and sorrow,  
Of love and loss,  
So profound.  
The lives of friends,  
Gone too soon.  
And of grandchildren like I-  
As eyes turned to here and now.

“Nonsense,”  
Grumbled those around-  
To dismay of mine.  
Could not they hear,  
The same lovely sound?

But the voices payed no mind,  
And at last,  
They passed me by,  
And I could no longer see their encapsulating eyes.

Yet then,  
After I find peace  
In the well and done,  
I hear one voice trill,  
Above the din of silence:  
A last remark,  
Chastising the dinner menu  
Before it hobbled and rolled right away.

Dedicated to my lovely grandmothers.

# **Liberation**

*by Amy Young*

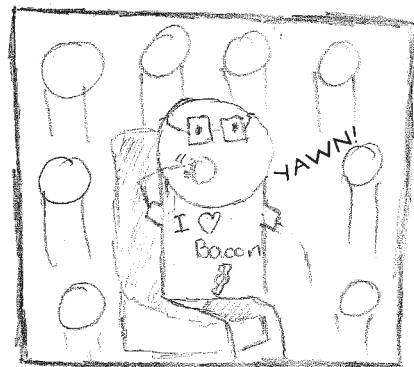
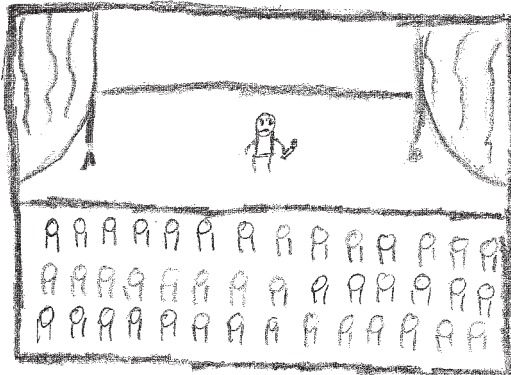
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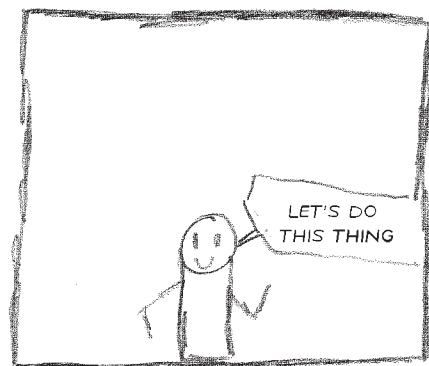
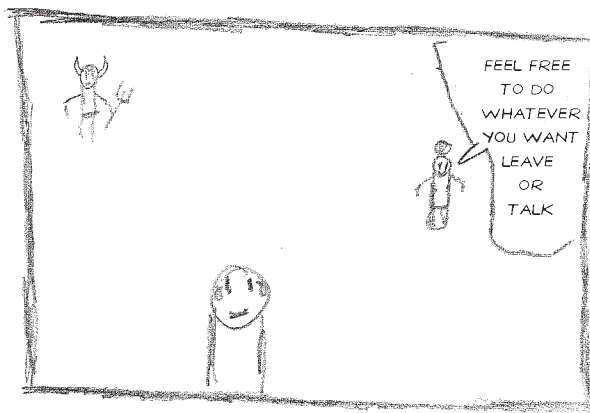
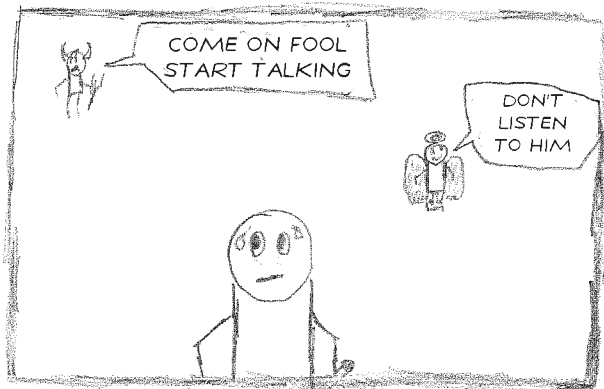
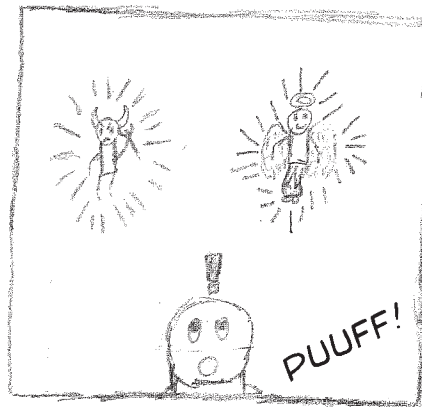
I feel the most free when I see people be liberated  
As they're escaping from the troubles of the decades.  
To me, feeling free is like victory  
as people go by feeling proud to be liberated.  
Feeling free sounds like PASSION.  
Feeling free is the color of yellow.  
Feeling free is the texture of being happy for being themselves.  
Feeling free tastes like delicious and incredible.  
Feeling free smells like a ball of fresh air.  
Feeling free reminds me of being on the Titanic  
and feeling the breeze of the air.  
When I liberate, I feel free because  
I feel proud and passionate for what I dreamed.  
If you don't feel free, you could never give up  
trying to fight back for civil rights.  
When I feel free, it feels like I'm angered but successfully.

# Feel Free

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welding irons.  
Re-fashioned tools,  
made to be used again.

# **The Rain**

***by Lars Kowalczyk***

Honorable Mention  
Alki Elementary, 5th Grade

The rain falls in  
a cave making  
an echo that can  
be heard for miles.

The rain falls over  
the world to put it to sleep

The rain falls on my  
roof to put me to sleep  
with great dreams like  
a caterpillar in his cocoon  
dreaming his big dreams of  
wings

# Sappho's Song

*by Doug Sylver*

Honorable Mention  
Nathan Hale High School, Teacher

That night  
in a strange bed  
Sappho  
kissed me  
on the forehead  
whisper-singing  
in my ear.

“You are meant  
to enjoy this beauty  
in all its many forms,  
the endless fields  
of grapes  
of olives,  
the endless waves  
of sea  
of sky,  
the endless beauty  
of your love  
her eyes  
her smile  
her heart.”

That day  
Sappho's song  
as promised  
came true  
the sun-drenched beach  
black olives, dates and figs  
white wine  
laughing in a  
new language  
floating to the edge  
just as the cerulean sea  
gets kissed on the forehead by  
the cerulean sky

enjoying all this beauty  
Sappho  
my love and I.

## **Stand-Out Contest Submissions**



# **Feel Free**

*by Lincoln Choi*

Puesta del Sol, 4th Grade

I wake up. It is just a wonderful day.  
I want to go somewhere.  
Like the mountain, the lake,  
nature or somewhere that is free.  
I want freedom.  
I hear the birds calling me.  
I want to be free as a bird.  
Fly where you want.  
I feel free.

# **Feel Free**

*by Sophia HONG*

Puesta del Sol, 4th Grade

Feeling free can be a valuable feeling. Like a bird out of its cage or a dog out of the house. To feel free means to have liberty to do anything, to run around your house. To push boundaries, extend the limit, to feel you can run outside and sing along with the birds.

I feel free when I am with my dogs. I enjoy taking care of them, and cuddling, and feeding them. Many people say that dogs are a lot of responsibility, but I would agree to disagree. In my opinion, it is really fun to take care of dogs. Dogs are cuddly, fluffy, and sweet. I feel free when I am walking my dogs. The fresh breeze, trees swaying are a peaceful place for my thoughts where nobody is watching me. my dogs help me feel free.

Nature feels free. Climbing trees, feeling the grass. It is calming to me. many people use the expression “I need some fresh air.” The outdoors helps you relax. The animals outside are free. I like to watch as the rabbits hop around in the grass. I do not dance in the rain anymore but the rain is still relaxing. The nature helps me feel free.

Many things make me feel free and I enjoy feeling free. If more good things happen in this world, we can all be free.

# **Feel Free**

*by Brooke Lell*

Puesta del Sol, 4th Grade

Try to pull me down with sadness and sorrow only to be washed away tomorrow. Cause I have something that you can't see. It's called feeling free. You can't see it but it's not invisible. It's not fake but it's not real though. It looks like running through a golden meadow and tastes like smores under a campfire's shadow. It sounds like birds at the crack of dawn and feels like swimming in a crystal clear pond. It smells like pollen of the prettiest flower and is soothing like a soft rain shower. Now you know what feeling free is like. So, you can go and tell everyone tonight. It's not the sound or the sight that makes feeling free so magical and bright. It's that you believe in something that you can't see even though it's right in front of me. Which is feeling free.

# **Feel Free**

***by Kenneth Li***

Puesta del Sol, 4th Grade

It is a regular day, just a regular old day. Same schedule, 1. Wake up and eat breakfast. 2. Go to school. 3. Go home. 4. Go to soccer practice.

1. It is the usual. It is hard to get out of bed. You always want to stay, that is for most of us.
2. Going to school is crazy. Your dad rushing after breakfast. Your brother being late. It is always the same.
3. Right when the bell rings, everybody is running in all directions. I like to walk.
4. Soccer practice.  
I just feel right.  
It refreshes my mind.  
I feel free.

# Homework Problem

by Mae

Lowell Elementary, 4th Grade





# Once

*by Eliot Rose*

Alki Elementary, 5th Grade

Once there was a boy  
sliding down a water slide,  
glancing at his dad. Then,  
the boy looked and three crows flew  
right over him. Those birds are made  
out of water and life that came  
from heaven. Soaring like a plane.  
The boy was delighted and grateful  
for seeing this wonderful  
thing. He was as happy as a  
kid getting free toys. Then the  
boy plummeted in the water.

# Trapped

*by Azhar Samatar*

Alki Elementary School, 5th Grade

There is a place where people  
fight over land, a place where  
people starve, a place where they  
are silenced.

We are not silenced,  
we are not hungry,  
we are not silenced.  
But we are trapped.

They call and call  
helpless, unfed, ripped  
clothes, but begging,  
begging for our  
silence.

I cry and cry for  
our people, scared for  
them, angry for them,  
but not enough, not  
enough for this war  
to end.

And day by day  
they are killed except  
us, except us, is it our  
turn yet?

Knock, knock, knock,  
trapped, trapped, trapped,  
found, found, found,  
run, run, run.



# How the Dream Feels to the Living

*by Mia Taab*

Alki Elementary School, 5th Grade

Like the soft blanket  
that wraps you up warm.

Like the spark of light,  
first hint of imagination.

The dreamers ask, “What  
is it like to be in a  
dream?”

“Like the endless possibilities  
and places to go.”  
“But what is it like to live?”

The dreamer scrambles for  
an answer. “I don’t know.”

A dream is like all the  
things the things that  
dreamers could do

like the trigger  
to imagination

Like the rain drop that  
sets you free in a dream.

# Of Sounds Like That of Joy and Sorrow

*by Jared G. Stern Rogers*

Nathan Hale High School, 10th Grade

Through the doors,  
Automatic and new-  
They,  
the procession went  
As uniquely able.

Some hobbled, some rolled.  
While,  
Full eyes looked me over,  
And aged faces went by.

Always wont to do  
Voices never silenced.

Not least by  
Perturbed desk clerk  
Nor by rings of red  
By jeering crowd.

Sounds fluttering-  
Hardly rasp.  
Came to not I, nor the others;  
But to the people and events,  
Long gone by.

Of neighborhoods full of faces,  
Still always empty-  
Save one;  
Of Ms. Stein,  
Who ran the best deli  
In that part of town;  
Of working in Buddy Squirrel's Nut Shop,  
All those years ago.

And further back,  
A winged history:  
To crusades mislead,  
Of the accusatory glare,

Of scapegoats,  
And then of pogroms,  
Of Worschels and Seidels,  
And sailing seas;  
And of the parents,  
With gunpowder on their shoes.

And still they went on,  
Of menial things:  
Of striding through the trees,  
Behind a family home.  
And fasting away  
All of the holy days.

Then came they to speak of simpler things,  
Of sounds like that of joy and sorrow,  
Of love and loss,  
So profound.  
The lives of friends,  
Gone too soon.  
And of grandchildren like I-  
As eyes turned to here and now.

“Nonsense,”  
Grumbled those around-  
To dismay of mine.  
Could not they hear,  
The same lovely sound?

But the voices payed no mind,  
And at last,  
They passed me by,  
And I could no longer see their encapsulating eyes.

Yet then,  
After I find peace  
In the well and done,  
I hear one voice trill,  
Above the din of silence:  
A last remark,  
Chastising the dinner menu  
Before it hobbled and rolled right away.

Dedicated to my lovely grandmothers.

# **Liberation**

*by Amy Young*

Seattle Children's

I feel the most free when I see people be liberated  
As they're escaping from the troubles of the decades.  
To me, feeling free is like victory  
as people go by feeling proud to be liberated.  
Feeling free sounds like PASSION.  
Feeling free is the color of yellow.  
Feeling free is the texture of being happy for being themselves.  
Feeling free tastes like delicious and incredible.  
Feeling free smells like a ball of fresh air.  
Feeling free reminds me of being on the Titanic  
and feeling the breeze of the air.  
When I liberate, I feel free because  
I feel proud and passionate for what I dreamed.  
If you don't feel free, you could never give up  
trying to fight back for civil rights.  
When I feel free, it feels like I'm angered but successfully.