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Mount Laurel  
Library

# JUVENILE & YOUNG ADULT LITERARY MAGAZINE

SPRING 2025  
EDITION

Read the first installation  
of our new Lit Mag!

## EMERGING YOUNG CREATIVES

Thirteen artistic individuals share their  
talents with the community!

WANNA BE  
FEATURED?

Keep your eye  
out for Fall 2025  
submission  
requests!

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# **PART 1:** **JUVENILE** **(GRADES K-6)**

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Photograph by Alexa S., 3rd Grade



Art by Virginia S., 6th Grade

# Excerpt of The Tale Of Penny Tarole

## Short Story by Anvee D., 5th grade

A towering figure looms over me. I can feel his presence. Suddenly I open my eyes. Phew! It's just the coronation master. He's holding an elaborately jeweled crown and a scepter with a large shiny orb on top. I almost reach out for it, but hold back. I must act queenly. The coronation master places the crown on my head, and everybody cheers. I am now Queen Penny of Corneria! I must admit, Queen Penny has a nice ring to it. Instead of handing the scepter to me, the coronation master starts poking me with it. I sit rigidly, unsure what to do, but he keeps on poking. My eyes flutter open and I sit up to see Rena, the head cook, poking me with a broom and shouting angrily. My heart droops to the very bottom of my stomach. So I was never queen at all. I am still a thirteen-year-old servant girl in the Rivelen household. I should have known that it was a dream. All my attention goes back to Rena shouting at me, and I finally understand what she is saying. "Get up, Penny! You're going to be late for roll call!" She gives me one final prod and storms off. I sit up and survey my surroundings. I must have fallen asleep in my work clothes last night, so I don't bother to change and tie my hair in my usual bandanna. I walk into the kitchen, and Rena slides a bowl of cold porridge towards me. I chew on the tight porridge and think about my life. My name is Penny Lily Tarole, and I was sent to work at the Rivelen household at age seven. My mother disappeared when I was four, and my father couldn't take care of me, so he sent me here. My family now is Rena, Dean, the servant, and Morine, the seamstress. Having finished breakfast, I climb up the servant stairs to Madam's room. Her real name is Athelde Rivelen, and she is the wife of Manchester Rivelen, who owns the household. Madam is waiting for me, half dressed. The rest is my problem. I powder her teetering wig that sways heavily on her head, and scour her dressing tables for her finest jewelry. Since Madam is going to a party today, I have to make sure she is looking her best. Finally, I pick out an elegant hat and place it on her wig. Madam carefully turns, so as not to make her hat drop and nods at me. "Good job, Penny," she says, and puts a coin on the table. I eagerly scoop it up and put it in my little bag that I keep for tips. I hold onto the rim of her dress and follow Madam down the grand velvet main steps. Master Rivelen is already standing at the bottom of the steps. Dean, the servant, smoothly takes the skirt rim from me and helps Madam get in the carriage.

As all the fuss is happening, I skip a flight of stairs and use my little cellar passageway to get to Morine's work room. Morine is sitting on a little rickety stool, sewing one of Madam's dresses. She looks up with a friendly smile, but it immediately turns into an inquisitive look. "Is something wrong, Penny?" she asks. I snort and walk over to her. "Nothing's wrong, Morine. There's just a tear in my dress." Morine immediately whips out her sewing kit and stitches the tear up. "Perfect!" Morine says and leans back to survey my dress. I am wearing a knee-length dress with leggings, boots, and a bandanna. Everything matches, thanks to Morine. She pats me on the head and continues sewing. I go downstairs to the kitchen and ask Rena what my next job is. Apparently, I have to go to the local well to get water for Rena's carrot soup. Yum! I grab a pail of water from the storage box and head out the back door. The town is bustling today, with vendors selling everything from kazoos to firecrackers. The Day of New Time is coming soon. I spot the well in the midst of the crowd, but right beside it are the Follon sisters, Brienne and Beaurelle. They are the most notorious, thieving, and cruel girls in the whole town. I try to slip past them, but they catch me just in time. Their eyes land on the little pouch I keep my tips in and I gulp. "Whatcha have in that little pouch, Penny?" Brienne sneers. "Yeah, we'd like to see it!" Beaurelle follows. I scan my surroundings and spot the oldest Follon sister, Bayliene Lianabeth Olandianina Werienoania Sayarabella. And that's only her first name. Her full name is Bayliene Lianabeth Olandianina Werienoania Sayarabella Prislinaite Morylnenee Garblinearmona Follon. She has on beautiful butterfly earrings and a matching dress. I point straight towards her and her earrings. "Look! It's Bayliene. You should steal those shiny aurulent earrings she has!" Brienne and Beaurelle scratch their heads. "What does aurulent mean?" Beaurelle asks. I sigh. What idiots. "Aurulent means golden and shiny. Now do you want to steal them or not? Now's your chance." The sisters nod and immediately sneak towards Bayliene. I take my opportunity and creep towards the well. Once I am out of sight of the Follons, I start to fill my bucket. The water wells up on the bucket and slowly spills out of the sides. I quickly pull the bucket away and head up the hill. As I head up the small dirt path, I come across my best friend, Lilou McAllen. She is sitting on a stone bench, hunched over a sketchbook and is drawing noisily with a pencil. I gently place the bucket on the earthen stool next to the bench, and pad over to Lilou. She looks up at me, and I see how her golden blond hair perfectly complements her beautiful purple dress. She grins madly and pats the seat next to her. The moment I take a seat, Lilou starts ranting nonsense. I place a hand on her shoulder and whisper in her ear. "Lilou, slow down! I'm right next to you!"

Lilou immediately stops and takes a deep, calming breath. "I have some really exciting news, Penny! Madame Jacoise's School For Girls is offering a scholarship for any five girls ages eight to thirteen! All you have to do is submit a drawing and a work of embroidery!" She showed me a faint drawing of herself with her hair in a swirly bun topped with a cherry blossom-shaped pin holding it up. I smiled. "That's a great drawing, Lilou! Sorry, I have to go. Rena is waiting for me." Lilou waves as I continue up the hill with my bucket. After ten minutes, I am finally pushing open the door to the kitchen. Rena snatches the pail out of my hands and gives me a list of instructions. I clamber up the ladder leading to the main door. I sit on the floor and examine the list. Number one: Feed the chickens and cows. I head outside and pull a rope dangling from the cowshed. A bucket of feed comes down and perfectly pours feed in the feeding troughs. Dean is a great engineer, and he designs pulley systems, levers, trapdoors, and all sorts of things to help us do our work faster and more efficiently. After I feed all the animals, I head for the shade of a pennantia baylisiana in the Rivelens' garden. The next thing on my list is... relax? It says to do whatever you want, as long as you don't go out of town. I shrug and walk towards the public library. After I cross the main road, I open the creaky door and carefully step inside the library. The bulletin board is covered with posters and letters, and I find the one I was looking for. I tear down the paper, fold it up, and heedfully place it in my bag. I then survey the fiction fantasy books and swim through all the creative and imaginative stories there are. I finally choose one called "Outcast." It is about a girl exiled to the forest for going to school, and I want to sit down right there and start reading the book. I would, but I have more important things to do. I slide over to the nonfiction section and sidle over to the drawing section. Aha! The perfect book. It is called "The Art of Sketching and Drawing Beautiful Things." It has a very long title, but it will do. I need something to help me with the scholarship, because it's been my dream to go to school. This book will assist me in creating the perfect drawing for the entry, and Morine can just teach me how to sew beautifully. The problem is, I don't have a proper pencil and sketchbook to make my drawing, so my next destination is the market. It is just as a jostling crowd as the morning, but I manage to thrust myself through the chattering groups of people and find an arts supplies vendor stand. The woman in the booth takes one look at me and hands me a pack of pencils and a big sketchbook. "Two silver coins, please," she says. I check my little purse. I have twelve silver coins and one gold coin, so I hand her two silver ones and immediately leave. The market is still overcrowded, but I find a quiet corner to sit and start my drawing. I open the drawing book from the library and find a charming picture of a woman holding a

girl who looks a bit like me in a lavish dress and jewelry. There is faint writing at the bottom of the picture, and I squint to read it. It says: Eliara Monice Tarole of Corneria, holding her daughter, Penny Lily Tarole. I can't believe my eyes! The little girl is me. I can barely remember my mother. All I can remember is her soft soothing voice, and how I used to call her Mani because I couldn't say Mama. I look so young in the picture, maybe three or four. I slowly wipe a tear away from my cheek and close the book. I wonder if Mama is still out there, thinking about me. No matter, I can think about that later. I have to help Rena with cooking now. Tomorrow is Master Rivelen's birthday, which is Christmas Eve. I can't wait for Christmas! The crowd of the market has cleared, so I skip heartily down the road. Rena ushers me in and tells me to start making torlenne. Torlenne is a dish where you hard-boil an egg, smush it, and add a spoonful of milk and two teaspoons of ground peppermint candies, and smear it on a cooked chicken, then stuff the chicken with potatoes and four cups of mixed salt and ground rosemary. It is Master Rivelen's favorite dish. Rena already has the chicken roasting on a spit, so I head down the dark, dank cellar stairway to the refrigeration room. As I jump off the last of the winding steps, the ice of the refrigeration room sparkles in my eyes. I blindly manage to crawl over to the dairy and find a jar of milk which clinks against the metal strap on my dress. I get back up the stairs, and rub my eyes the moment I enter the kitchen again. I get to work, eagerly smushing the egg Rena made and adding the necessary ingredients. Since the chicken is not ready yet, I excitedly tell Rena about how I found a picture of my mother holding me. Rena listens carefully, nodding at every point. Just as my breath goes out, the chicken starts to sizzle, and Rena rushes over to the fire and douses it. We smear the torlenne sauce on the chicken, and while she prepares the stuffing. I set to work on the desert, a crunchy and creamy custard. The milk, sugar, and eggs make a velvety texture around my spoon, and I sprinkle in a little shaved chocolate and crumbled biscuit. Rena finishes with the stuffing and puts in the fruit she chopped beforehand. The torlenne and custard are done, so I head up the stairs to the servant's quarters. I flop down on my bed and pull out the flyer from the library. In small print it reads: Scholarship for Madame Jacoise's School for Girls. Please apply before the night of December 23. December 23! That's today! I stuff the flyer in my bag and sprint out the back door. "Goodbye, Rena!", I shout, and before she can object, I am flying out the door and across the road. I skid to a halt in front of the library and slam open the door. A girl is signing the sheet, and I nearly bowl her over and snatch the pen from her hands. I scribble my name on the sheet, and hand it back to her. By now, she is standing and glaring at me with a menacing look on her face." Who do you think YOU are to push me over?" she growls.

Thinking fast, I say the first thing that comes to mind. “Me, because this is a free country,” I smirk. The girl’s face turns into a smile and she grins brightly at me. “I was just kidding. Don’t you remember me, Penny? I’m Starla Drarin!” I gape at Starla and all my memories of her come rushing back. Starla used to work at the Rivelen household, but she moved to Centeraria three years ago. She claimed that she could read minds, but I never believed Starla. She was the older sister I never had, and she was back after all this time! “Starla!” I cry, “You’re back!” She smiles at me and pinches my cheeks like I was still a toddler. “I know, Penny, I know!” I look at the sundial outside of the library. It is already seven o’clock! I hug Starla one last time, and then rush out the door to home. Rena turns towards me with a stern look, but I sidestep her and twirl up the stairs to my bed. I have to get started with my drawing, and Morine can teach me how to sew tomorrow. I pull out my sketchbook, and start drawing.



Art by Hannah G., 1st Grade



Art by Maddie G., 3rd Grade

# The Fiery Decision: A Choose Your Own Ending

Flash Fiction by Anvee D., 6th Grade

It was Friday, the single day that I dreaded, not because it was a bad day, but simply because it was test day (and yet again I didn't study). I got to my school and, knowing the test was last period, I waited till 4th-period lunch when I could cram the useless knowledge into my brain. But first, I wanted to see my two friends, Joe and Marisa. Joe was a close friend of mine. We've known each other since second grade, and he lived close to me. He usually makes good decisions, is cunning, and has fast reflexes due to gaming and sports. Marisa was a student who recently moved to town two years ago. We welcomed her to our group because she brought a balance with her calm mood and reasonable thoughts (though she was still fun to be around!).

I headed over to their table, like an average day, except today wasn't average. As soon as we sat down to study, we heard the fire alarm blaring through the school. We all assumed it was a drill, until we saw smoke coming from the other side of campus through the large windows overlooking the courtyard. To my surprise, the old STEM lab was in a raging fire, and it was tunneling toward us. While the cafeteria turned into straight-up chaos due to everyone being overwhelmed by the tragedy unfolding, I surveyed the scene. Some people ran, some stood still in shock, and some grabbed fire extinguishers to start fighting. My best friend, Joe, grabbed a fire extinguisher and gestured for me to join him, but then as I reached for it Marisa urgently exclaimed, "Are you crazy?! Come outside! Get to safety!" My mind was racing. I was torn, and time was ticking as the fire was now less than ten yards from the cafeteria. I wanted to get out as the smoke was now seeping into the cafeteria through the H-VAC and not giving much visibility. What do I do?

### **Go with Joe...**

I join my friend Joe, and we go into the fire. We make it across the courtyard and into the STEM lab, me carrying the fire extinguisher and Joe holding 10 water bottles we had gotten from breaking the vending machine. We would need them for those who were injured, dehydrated, or trapped. Once we are in, we hear a loud bang, realizing that the entrance immediately collapsed behind us. I use my phone as a flashlight and secure it to my hat using a zip tie I find in the teacher's desk. We are also lucky to find a small first aid kit. I stop at the sight of a wall of fire. I put most of it out, being we need to save as much stuff in the fire extinguisher as possible. Just then we hear a scream for help. We sprint toward the sound and find the STEM teacher trapped by a wall of flames i put out the fire, and Joe hands her a water bottle and a bandage from the first aid kit. We search and clear the rest of the lab. Luckily, only our STEM teacher, Mrs Sparks, is inside the building at the time. The three of us escape through the side door, the only exit that hasn't been engulfed by flames or collapsed. We immediately head to the street where police and EMTs are there to check on us.

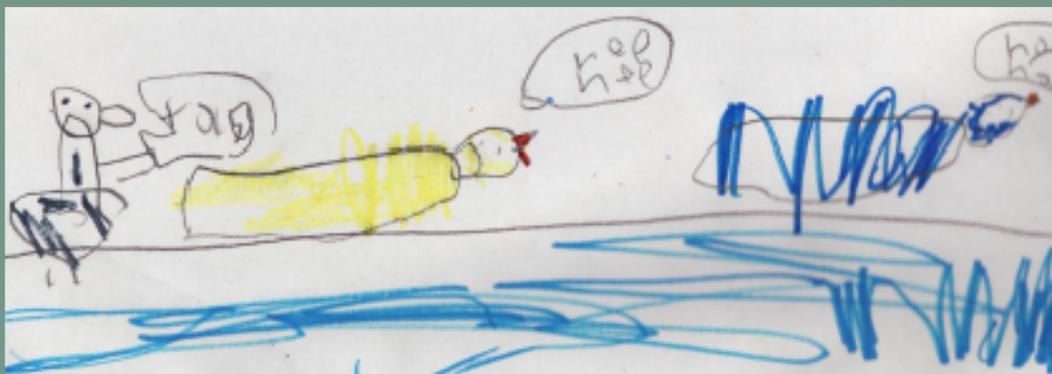
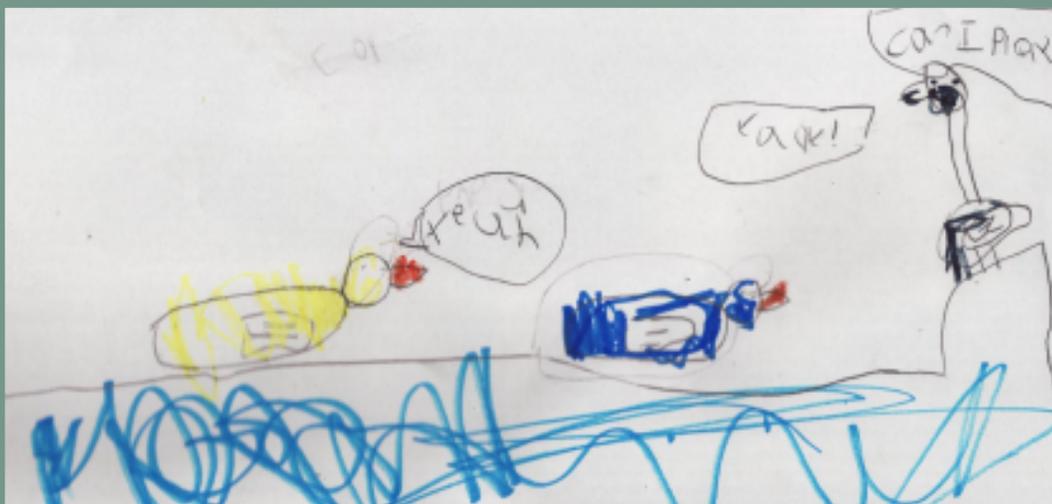
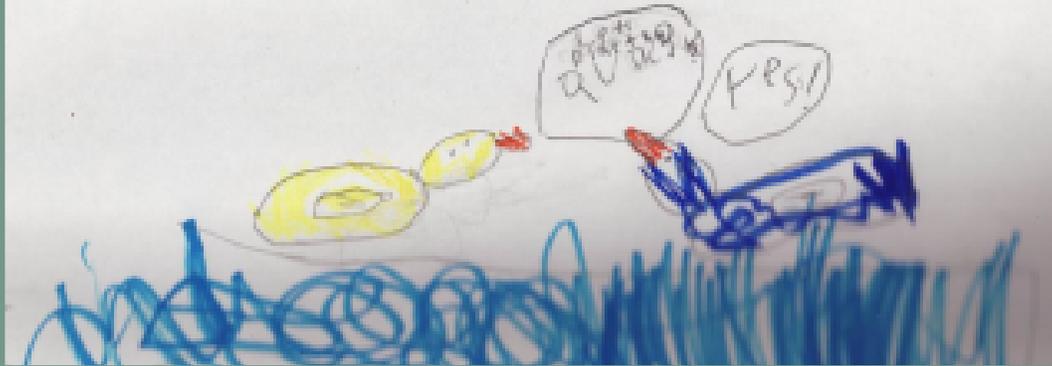
### **Go with Marisa...**

As Joe friends to the vending machine, I join my friend Marisa, and we immediately start running to the main entrance of the high school. Some of the supports above us break, leaving us with no power. Without power, the door wouldn't open. Marisa and I run for the stairwell across the school. As everyone from the second floor rushes down the stairs, dashing for the main entrance, we get caught up in the stampede of teenagers, most bigger than us since we are only freshmen. Eventually, we get out of the crowd. However, we are already facing other chaos, as we are checked by police and EMTs. We are bombarded by people with the local news who are curious about what happened and what we experienced. After we answer their questions, we are offered food and water, and we wait all day on the streets which are now closed. As I worry, my mind gets more clouded. I am worried for Joe being he left so long ago. My mind is racing. I think as rationally as I can. "Maybe he got caught in the other end of the crowd," Marisa says optimistically, "We made the right choice."



Art by Alexa S., 3rd Grade

# DUCKS: Let's Play + Dig



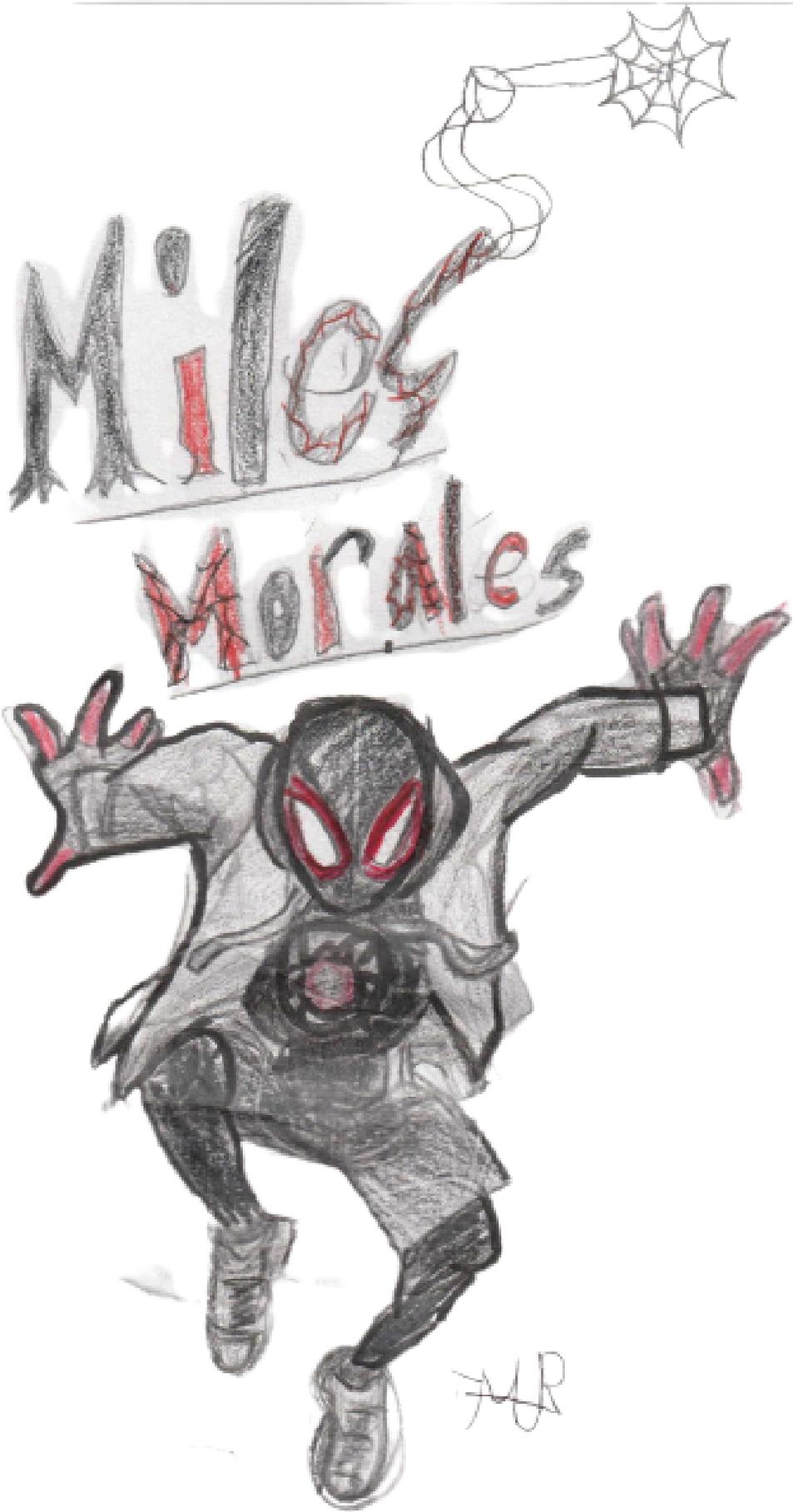
Comic by Jakob S., 5th Grade



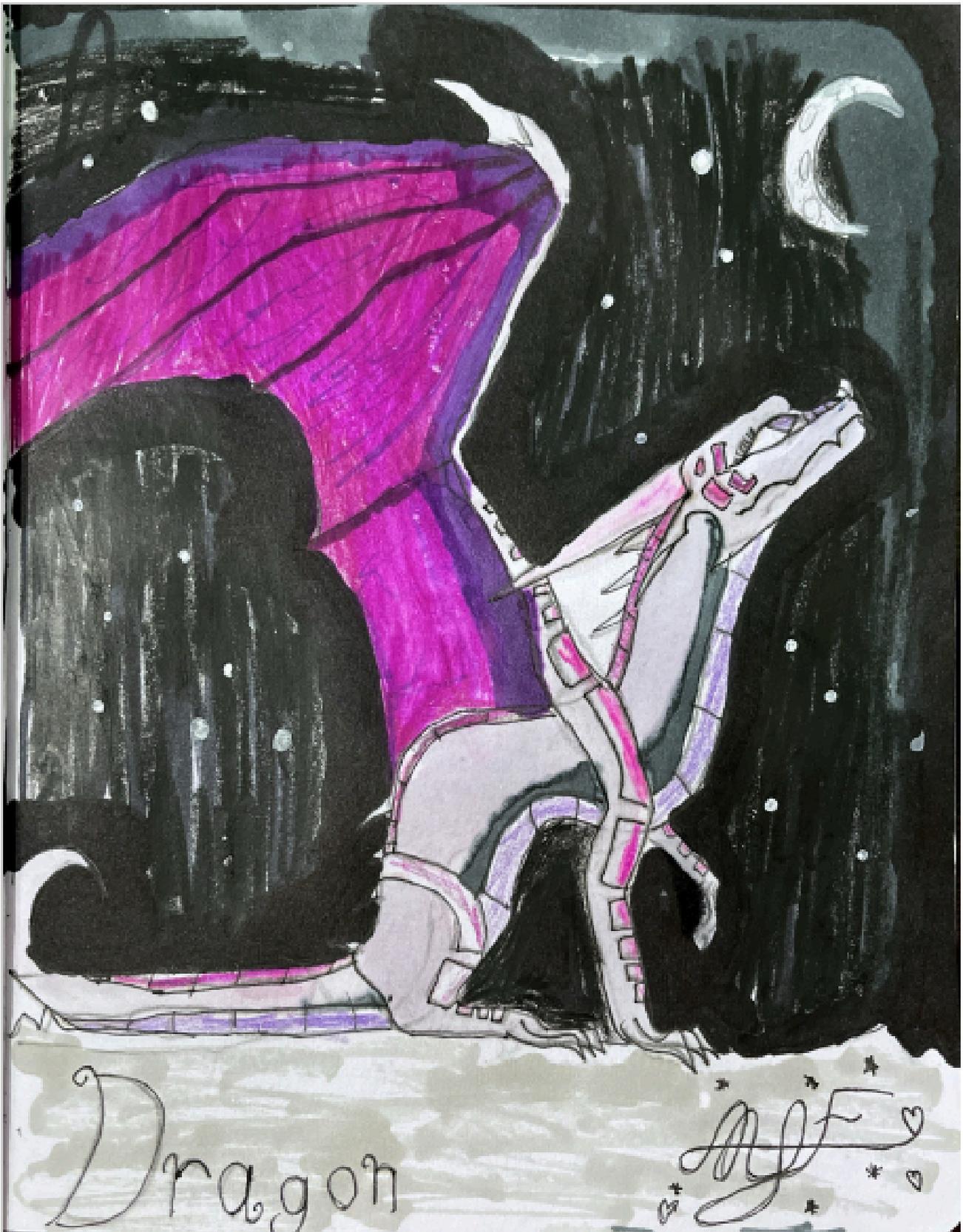
Art by Eleanor E., 4th Grade



*The Attempt* – Art by Jayce D., 6th Grade



Art by Marc R., 4th Grade

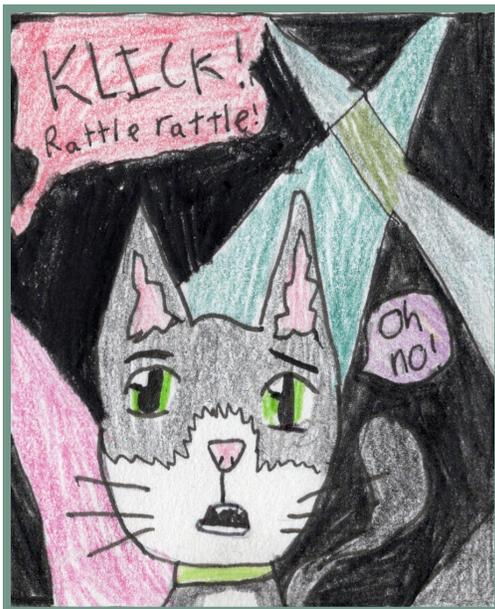
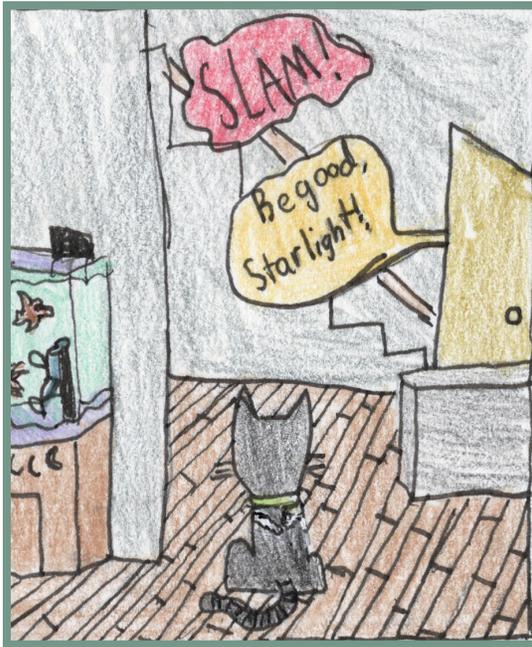


Art by Mary Jean F., 4th Grade

# **PART 2: YOUNG ADULT**

**(GRADES 7-12)**

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*Mandala* – Art by Gracie C., 9th Grade

# Color

## Poetry by Lucas H., 11th Grade

color it's amazing isn't it  
but for people like you and me it's been sucked dry  
for as long as i try  
nothing helps  
no i'm not color blind  
but it's been taken from me  
for the vibrancy of my youth is long dead  
foods run bland  
colors become dull  
the hot shower runs cold  
the wounds start to scar  
how do i get the color back?  
can i get the color back  
all of the questions  
no answers  
all these doors  
no rooms  
all these fears and insecurities  
no closure  
i don't deserve it  
i wanna see what i used to

# How Do Colors Affect Children's Learning Potential?

Essay by Anika T., 11th grade

Have you ever wondered why things are specific colors? Or have you ever noticed that things are in color for a reason? Children prosper with color. Not only children but any learner prospers. Their learning potential grows when presented to colors because their memory and attention levels increase and improve.

In today's world, when we are overwhelmed and are almost always looking at some sort of screen, we don't realize how much amusement we are getting from all the different colors. We also don't realize that we are only attentive when this array of colors come into play. When you really think about it, this takes a toll in learning. Because of screens, anything without bright colors isn't as interesting. When children start learning, they are given material in black and white. This makes your learning boring and you won't retain the information well. So many studies were performed to show the importance of color. But one thing that all these studies had in common was that they all proved that things in color grabs people's attention. One study showed that ads/commercials in color are more noticed and read up to 42% than the same ads but in black and white. Many psychologists have also announced that when you are alert, your short and long term memories get enhanced. Looking at something with colors definitely gets you more alert than just looking at plain, non exciting black and white. Grabbing students' attention is important because the more they are involved and the more they observe, the more they pick out and learn. Colors can be used to strengthen clarity, indicate something, get attention, and differentiate items. All these somehow or another make you notice more. When you notice more, you can learn more. Not only when using colors to give prominence to a particular piece, it can subconsciously increase the attention levels and spans of learners, but it also increases your memory capacity.

Again like previously, many tests were also performed to see how colors can improve memory which improves learners. One study showed that students who were shown color images executed around 10% better on a memory test when compared to others who were given black and white images. Another test showed that student performance aggravated when things were presented in color and tested in black and white, and conversely. For example, if students learn something in color, if they are not tested on it in color, they may perform poorly, and vice versa. Color is used to develop pattern recognition, absorbing new information and memory, of course! It can also conspicuously conduct you to compare, understand, pinpoint and recall information faster. Did you know that even Alzheimer's patients show that color cues increase memory! This shows what a strong influence color can have on people. In addition to color improving memory and attention levels on students, it can also improve on children with special needs.

A test showed that between 5-20% of children experience visual stress while reading. This causes reduced reading speed. Another study reported that when students with autism used colored overlays for reading, they had a 35% improvement in their reading speed. Color can also be used to help children who are partially sighted. Colors that provide differentiation between items can drastically help learners with the perception of them. All this shows the importance of colors and how using colors in the right ways can improve and benefit students.

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# The Savior

## Poetry by Olivia G., 9th Grade

There's a reason they tell you to put on your own oxygen mask before helping another.

You first need to breathe and feel relieved before easing your father, mother, or brother.

If it were me though, I would be the one to suffocate, donating my oxygen for others to appreciate.

There's a reason the teacher makes you finish your work before helping your classmates.

Complete your own assignments and then help those in need with their equations and essays.

If it were me though, I would be the one to answer my peers' questions, giving up my time to work, so I could provide my peers with lessons and suggestions.

There's a reason you put your phone on silent each night.

Click "do not disturb," so you can nod off like a baby after putting up a tired fight.

If it were me though, I would leave my ringer on through the darkened hours.

Sleepless nights to respond to the ping of a text reading, "I need help, something's the matter."

There's a reason you go to therapy instead of coaching others through their mental battles.

Work through your personal problems to find peace, comfort, and be less emotionally rattled.

If it were me though, "let me help you" is what I would say.

The "therapist friend" is what I'm labeled anyway.

Except if were me, I would be the one to slowly perish away and decay, because you can't survive without air or have an education by completing your work halfway.

You can't function while you're restless,

or live a happy life if you feel useless, hopeless, and helpless.

My struggles started to strangle me, and so slowly I caved.

Too busy being a savior that it was too late for me to be saved.

# Kid Again

Poetry by Erin L., 10th Grade

The fresh, afternoon breeze in my hair  
A draft lighter than the flowers dancing under my feet  
My stomach filled with pop tarts and candy hearts  
I closed my eyes.

I whistled along with the birds,  
Who whistled back, smiling at me  
The laughing gale tickled my tummy  
The laughter of others filled my ears-  
That sound of pure, endless joy.

As I walked toward a swingset and took a seat,  
the swings swayed slowly above the sleepy sand  
I felt my bare toes graze the warm grains  
I swung gently, gazing at the pale, unbounded sky.

Soon, we would all hold hands and hopscotch around the  
playground,  
The chalk faintly rubbing at our feet, the color slowly fading  
There was nothing to slow down our hasty feet; nothing to stop us  
from running free.

We squealed as friends chased us in tag,  
Too hyper for anyone to feel sad  
No worries, no stress, except the buzzing excitement and the cool  
spring air

We'd tumble into the rich green grass,  
Feeling our skin yelp as the blades nicked every inch of our bare skin  
The pointy tips tickled our noses as giggles bubbled up our throat

Sometimes I wonder,  
Where did it all go?  
From writing on sidewalks with colorful chalk  
That stained my fingertips and dusted my clothes,  
To biking a block or hide-and-seek,

When did it all end?