

# Wander

**By Braeden Hughes**

*Mount Mansfield Union High School, Grade 9*

*(Excerpt: Full story at [youngwritersproject.org](http://youngwritersproject.org))*

... The bus’s abrupt stop jolts me roughly into the next seat. My haze of quiet is punctured, and shrill giggles burst around me like balloons popping against the ceiling. The mousy girl sitting next to me shouts something through the pandemonium and I answer distractedly, wishing I were anywhere but here. As the rain slows outside, I drift off again, finding my fantasies more comfortable than reality...

Salt-flecked waves caress the shore of the island, whispering along white and gray stones littering the shore. Vibrantly green marsh grass trims tidal pools brimming with ocean life, and the thick border of tiny, striped shells is dotted with creamy white crabs. Seaweed wraps around my ankles with the tide, and my hair, knotted with salt and wind, whips around my pink cheeks with the abandonment of a dervish.

The sun unexpectedly bursts through the cloud barrier, sending streaming rays of brightness onto the soggy earth below. The morning is briefly illuminated and for a moment, I’m blinded by the intensity. Blinking against dilating pupils, I watch a water droplet trickle off a leaf. ...

I’m alone, deep in the woods, following a path only I can see. The leaves rustle overhead and their pale undersides flip forward, the wind a last remnant of the passing storm. From far above, a droopy maple leaf bends with the weight of a raindrop, struggling under its burden. The water slides to the folded edge, pauses as it reaches the tip, slowly gathering bits of light within its depths. The seconds, weighted with hesitation, crawl by leisurely. Then finally, the tear drips off, plummeting almost to the musky forest floor, disturbing the mist beginning to gather in the sunrays. My hand unfolds and the droplet sinks into my palm, shattering tiny jewels across the creases of my skin.

## Next Prompt

**Sibling rivalry.** Write a story about how you compete with a brother or sister. Or write about what it’s like to be the lone child. *Alternate: Anger.* Rant about something that really ticks you off. **Due Friday.**

**Winter Tales.** Tell a story about winter — the season or the holidays, the weather, or the emotions. Top selections will be given dramatic presentation by Vermont Stage Company in early Dec. **Due Nov. 13.**

**Submit at**

[youngwritersproject.org](http://youngwritersproject.org)

# Senior privilege

**By Angela Wood** | *Colchester High School, Grade 12*

Ah, the infernal school bus.  
 I stagger aboard, only half awake  
 And force a friendly smile as I utter a  
 “G’morning Molly”  
 To the bus driver, because I like her and  
 she likes me  
 And there are distinct advantages to  
 being on her good side.  
 Then I shove my stuff out of the way  
 And trudge to the back of the bus to flop  
 into my seat  
 (number 18, third from the back on the  
 right).

There are perks to being a senior. Such as  
 Having my own bus seat, and knowing  
 That everyone knows better than to sit  
 there.  
 Because that’s my seat. And I’m a senior.  
 Tragic though it is  
 That I still ride the yellow contraption,  
 At least I can ride to school in peace,  
 No one messes with a senior.

The hum of the engine lulls me nearly to  
 sleep  
 (whose idea was it to have the bus come  
 so early, anyway?)  
 But I’m lucid enough to be half aware  
 of the buzzing conversation floating  
 around me  
 So I hear the high-pitched voice snicker-  
 ing from the seat in front of me:  
 “This is that new girl’s stop. I wonder  
 how long  
 She’ll stand there looking for a seat, looking  
 Like an idiot.”

My temper flares. My eyes snap open

To glare at the speaker of these words  
 Whom I know spoke only out of spite and  
 cruelty  
 Because she doesn’t even know the girl  
 boarding the bus.

And sure enough, the poor freshman  
 is looking uncertainly from side to side.  
 Righteous anger coils within me, directed  
 at the junior  
 Who thought she was so cool, so superior  
 To boldly mock a younger student for no  
 reason but that she could.

I don’t stop to think, I don’t debate the  
 pros and cons.  
 I pull my backpack onto my lap  
 Slide in toward the window to make more  
 room  
 And smile up at the girl to let her know  
 That she is welcome to sit with me.  
 And I ask her how she is, and we talk  
 For the rest of the ride.  
 And I hear from in front of me, sullen and  
 barely audible,  
 “Oh. Never mind.”  
 And I feel satisfaction.

I am a senior. I have privileges that  
 younger students do not.  
 I have the privilege of my own seat  
 On the bus ride to school.  
 And I have the privilege  
 Of making a difference.  
 However small it might be, I am able  
 To put a smile on a freshman’s face.  
 To make the world a better place.  
 Because no one messes  
 With a senior.

# A medal

**By Sarah Rathbun**

*Vergennes Elementary School, Grade 3*

I won a medal for the “Punt, Pass and Kick” competition. It is shiny and pretty. It is amazing. It is my first medal. My medal is special to me.

# The camera

**By Paige Farrington**

*Rice Memorial High School, Grade 12*

*(Excerpt: Full story at [youngwritersproject.org](http://youngwritersproject.org))*

Albums and albums of pictures live on the shelf in our living room. Black and whites, family portraits and different family events are housed in them. My mother’s camera has taken them all. The camera defines her; wherever she is, it is always there with her. No matter how big or small the event is, she is the designated photographer. ...

# Waves

**By Eliza Thomas**

*Renaissance School, Grade 6*

My sister loves to surf. On Nantucket, she goes to the beach every warm day. You can’t keep her away from the waves. The water is her other home. Winning or losing a contest, she keeps practicing. Sometimes she practices getting up on the board on the sand!

Our family supports her by making sure she gets a ride to the beach, giving her good advice and confidence. She is only looking at colleges near the waves because she can’t keep away.

My sister loves to surf. Water is her place. Waves are her motivation.

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maintains [youngwritersproject.org](http://youngwritersproject.org) — a supportive online community for students; trains college mentors to provide students with feedback and builds Digital Writing Classrooms for schools. For more: [ywpschools.net](http://ywpschools.net).

**THANKS:** YWP depends on business, foundation and individual support to keep going. Special thanks to:

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# Three words

**By Emily Mulvihill**

*Mount Mansfield Union High School, Grade 10*

Three words to describe him then: troublesome, slightly lonely and ecstatic over everything. He could find humor in anything. He rode the bus home with us all the time, yet no one ever considered him... one of US. He wasn’t from the richest of families. In a small town, I’ve never heard of or seen his dad. Yet every single day he’d come to school with a smile on his face, even when kids would beat him up because he was smaller, even when they told him to hang himself in the closet. It seemed nothing could get him down. He was the boat that wouldn’t sink.

But how much can someone really take? When he woke up he had to go to school. When he was at school he had to go home, and I can’t picture either one being that much fun for him.

One day he got on the bus and he was someone different, someone I barely recognized. He was like a piece of clean white paper whose edges had been burned under a lighter and smudged in dirt. His eyes looked like the peaks of mountains at dusk. They still told him that they wished he’d get hit by a bus one day, but he never said anything back anymore, except that one day when I finally noticed him again. “Go stab yourself, the world would be a better place,” someone from seat 24 said.

Calmly, he turned around in the middle of the aisle. “I probably will,” his words cut through the laughter that followed and hit me somewhere inside the heart. He got off the bus, with his head hanging low. Three words to describe him before: troublesome, slightly lonely and ecstatic over everything. Three words to describe him now? In trouble, all alone and ecstatic over the lighter and knives he keeps for protection in his back pocket. Some things don’t stay the same.