

## The fire

**By Maggie Sullivan**

*Milton High School, Grade 10*

*I am embarrassed for them.*

They walk and talk  
With their heads held high.  
They push their way through the  
Crowded high school halls.  
They push and poke and prod and point.

*I am embarrassed for them.*

They call her  
A slut.  
They call him  
A freak.  
They call me  
A dork.

*I am embarrassed for them.*

They push and poke and prod and point  
At us  
In every single direction,  
Waiting to  
Hear  
Us  
Scream.

*I am embarrassed for them.*

They look at her, but they don't see  
A girl who has confidence,  
A girl who is comfortable with her body  
A girl who has a need to share her gift with  
the world.  
They look at him, but they don't see  
A boy who is desperate  
To stick out in this world  
Where everything is the  
Same.  
They look at me, but they don't see  
How I always watch a spark  
Illuminate an entirely dark room.  
(They only wonder if their eyes were playing  
tricks on them.)

*I am embarrassed for them.*

They push and prod and poke and point.  
I am embarrassed for them.  
They will never see the world as  
Beautiful,  
Never see the  
Wonder,  
Never see the  
Sheer happiness.

*I am embarrassed for them.*

I remain here,  
In the middle of this crowded room,  
Basking in the warmth of that small spark.  
And them,  
They remain  
Huddled in their separate corners,  
Shivering to keep warm  
In the night.

*I am embarrassed for them.*

They will never understand  
That we will always be warmest  
When we are  
Together

## Rwanda

**By Jenna Marie Rickson**

*Essex High School, Grade 11*

The radio blares  
from a small corner  
of the beaten hut  
threatening, hating  
the room goes silent  
for all of a moment  
before another voice  
bounds through the speaker  
"Kill the tall trees!"  
rings, echoes in my ears  
the bowl slips out of  
my hands and shatters  
into millions of tiny  
clay pieces; the hairs on  
my arms prick upward  
spreading a ripple of  
goose bumps over my skin and  
fear in my soul  
the lives of the Tutsi's  
will be changed dramatically  
my existence solely in  
the hands of God

## African Beauty

**By Basundhara Mukherjee**

*Frederick H. Tuttle Middle School, Grade 7*

You know, there are stereotypes about certain things. We hear different things about Africa: food, wealth, culture.

But when you ask a group of people what they think of when they hear "Africa," I'm sure they would mention poverty, tribes, grasslands, deserts. No one speaks of the wealth in many places in Africa, or the huge cities in places like South Africa. Or the amazing people in Ghana. These things are often left out.

Africa has a different side to it other than poverty and "odd" languages. The most amazing thing about that continent is its culture and history. There are hundreds of different indigenous languages and religions.

To me, it's like a magical place, like Disney World or a beach would be to you. I just imagine myself walking through the streets of Alexandria or viewing the Atlas Mountains from Rabat. Being on the crater on top of Mt. Kilimanjaro and feeling like I'm on the top of the world! I can just hear beautiful Africans speaking Bantu or Swahili — even French. Their jewelry is so amazing, I can't even picture how I would feel.

We should expand our knowledge of Africa throughout the whole continent!

## Africa

**By Eva Kamman**

*Vergennes Elementary School, Grade 4*

When I think of Africa I think about giraffes with spots all over, eating grass on a desert. I think about lions prowling for food in the jungles, their long manes bristling.

## Sights and sounds

**By Alexa Kartschoke**

*Allen Brook School, Grade 3*

When I hear the word "Africa," I picture zebras running through grass as tall as a snowpile here in Vermont. I also imagine a hippopotamus as fat as five Thanksgiving turkeys blowing bubbles in a muddy pool. I see some elephants stomping around with the sound of a volcano erupting. I picture villagers working and little children running through dusty streets. There is a whole market full of shoppers. In the distance people are riding in a jeep on an African safari.

Africa would be an amazing place to visit.

## A dance with Africa

**By Izzy Moody**

*Monkton Central School, Grade 6*

The sounds of beating drums around her  
She's dressed in colorful, beautiful clothing  
Her hair decorated with beads  
Tasting sweet, freshly-picked yam,  
Children are smiling the biggest smiles  
She's thinking how nobody smiles like this in  
The States  
Adults and kids are now dancing  
Their dances tell stories of hard work,  
Of folktales  
But is that how it really is?  
All bright and beautiful?  
There's only one way to find out.

## African Wildlife

**By Cheshta Singh**

*Albert D. Lawton School, Grade 8*

*(excerpt; go to [youngwritersproject.org](http://youngwritersproject.org))*

When I think of Africa,  
I think of all the wonderful  
animals that live there:  
My instincts are  
telling me to  
RUN  
unlike any speed I've  
ever gone before.  
I can feel my muscles  
tightening —  
my sleek golden coat  
is rippling and then  
the springbok  
lands in my clutches.  
People kill me for  
my tusks -  
they don't understand  
the pain that I go through,  
not just physical,  
but the emotional too.  
*Would you want your life taken away from you?*  
I kill people;  
not because I want to,  
but I need to eat  
somehow.  
My gray hide is matted  
with mud  
after my latest  
mud bath.  
*I just like being dirty. ...*

## Embarrassing

**By Brendan Mulholland**

*Ripton Elementary School, Grade 6*

When I was six, my mom signed me up for ballet lessons along with my twin sister Meghan. Then my mom called my dad to tell him the news. My dad told my older brothers, Sean and Malcolm. They teased me about it. After a few lessons with a group, including Meghan, I kind of liked it. Then we had a recital in front of a thousand people. I was the only dude in the group. We got through it OK, but it was the most embarrassing moment of my life.

## Embarrassed

**By Jah Robertson**

*Burlington High School, Grade 11*

What changes a person?  
The smile that fades  
was once so sunny,  
now hidden away.  
Who determines your mood?  
Who says what is right?  
Who decided day  
would be brighter than night?  
What makes them laugh  
when you hold your head high?  
Is it guilt or truth  
in those tears in your eyes?  
They laugh out of fear,  
ignorance,  
Too enveloped  
to discover, figure out, know.  
So don't be embarrassed  
to be the unique you  
because I'm not embarrassed  
When I am called geek.

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**MAY 5, 2009**

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