

# *The Mandala*

# ***The Mandala***

## ***Vol. IV***

**Editor Dawn Shattuck Brown  
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**With special thanks to Paul Glenn and Loren Teepe, students in  
The Rockefeller Alternative High School Program, Calmar**



## **Introduction**

What is a mandala? *Mandala* is the Sanskrit word for “sacred circle.” The Tibetan word for *mandala* means “center of the universe in which a fully awakened being abides.” Circles are universally associated with meditation, healing, and prayer. Mandalas have been used for thousands of years in Native American, Hindu, and Buddhist practices to express wholeness, unity, the womb, completion, and eternity.

Mandalas are geometrical art forms that represent the forces of the world, intricate symbols drawn within geometric shapes of different colors to form a perfect circle. People through the ages have used these metaphysical maps to explore their places in the universe. Mandalas can be used as tools for psychological insight, objects of meditation, and forms of artistic expression.

Like the mandalas, may the original art herein collected be an expression of exploration of the forces that have shaped the lives of the authors.

## **About the Cover**

After I looked up the definition of a *mandala* on the computer, I imagined this design. I began to draw it up as it was pictured in my mind. This is the result.

Josh Meyer  
Oelwein Area Alternative High School  
Oelwein

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# Poetry



## The Many Colors of Me

---

Abbie Johnson

Expo High School

Waterloo

Red is a burning flame of regrets that never goes away.

Yellow is the light that shines through my fears.

Orange is a mocking color of everything else that's wrong.

Green's refreshing and smooth with emotions.

Blue feels like an endless flowing body of water that never settles.

Purple is relaxing.

White is like a fluffy cloud that never goes gray.

Brown is a brick wall that traps everything from the other side.

Pink is crowding and uncomfortable.

Black makes me have flashbacks of my past and flashes of what's to come or what I want to come.

Black helps me cry when I think about the horrible unforgettable things from my life.

I can't trap my feelings in for long.

## What Will Become of Me?

---

Jessie Thompson  
Greenview High School  
Waverly

My choices are my fears.  
Fear is my life.  
My past is what tears  
Down the bonds I've made.  
Words are meant to come out,  
But no strength to say them.  
My insecurities, breaking me down.  
What do I do now?  
Where do I turn?  
How do I change  
What happens today  
From what's going to come tomorrow?  
Where is this path going to take me?  
Am I able to see right from wrong?

Redman

---

Nicholas James Thomas  
Buchanan County Success Center  
Independence

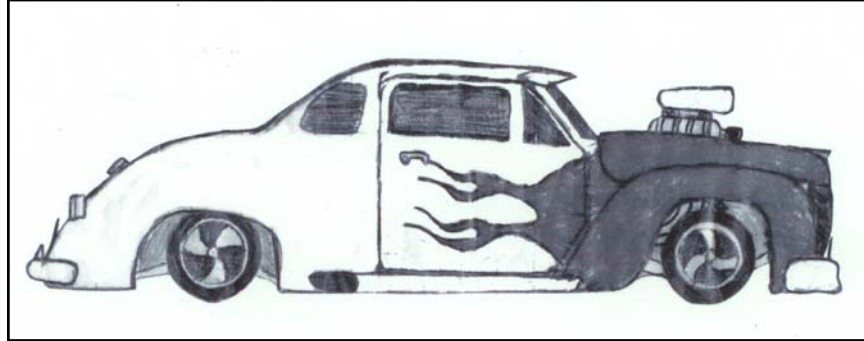
Just because I love the darkness  
Doesn't mean I'm depressed,  
Doesn't mean I can't love,  
Doesn't mean I don't have feelings.

Just because I love my mom  
Doesn't mean I'm not a rebel,  
Doesn't mean I'm not strong,  
Doesn't mean I'm a mama's boy.

Just because I act psycho  
Doesn't mean I need medication,  
Doesn't mean I can't be compassionate,  
Doesn't mean I don't cry.

Just because you see what's on the outside  
Doesn't mean you know me.





Untitled  
Jon Voyak  
Greenview High School

Me: American

---

Charles Ray Wilkson  
Walnut Creek Campus  
West Des Moines

Me: American.  
Don't try to label me any different.

No fist in the air, screaming, "I'm black and I'm proud!"  
No dreams of going back home to Africa.

I feel right at home where I am.

I have no complaints.  
I'm not your revolutionary,  
Nor am I your poster boy for teen black America.

Me: American.  
Don't try to label me any different.

I, Too, Sing America (With regards to Langston Hughes)

Mallory Frederick  
Walnut Creek Campus  
West Des Moines

I know where I stand with my knowledge.  
There are things that I understand,  
Even if you don't.  
In the mind of a mature adult  
Rests the shadow of a child.  
One day you will see...  
I'm not as ignorant as you picture me to be.  
The youngest sure isn't the dumbest,  
If not, in fact,  
The smartest.  
I understand the rules,  
The tricks,  
The things to say...  
I know who I am.  
That's what I know today.

## Untitled

---

Luke Iddings

New Directions Alternative School

Sigourney

Fight your way to the top.  
Once you get there,  
Don't you stop.  
Grow wise and slowly die.  
Don't turn back.  
Don't ask why.  
Stand your ground.  
Don't back down.  
I got to leave,  
But don't you frown.  
Don't worry about the past,  
Just today.  
You're perfect in that messed up way.  
Lose yourself,  
Break down and cry.  
Grow wise and slowly die.  
Find the one and don't let go.  
Don't learn the pain  
That I know.  
You'll be the first, and you'll be last.  
Time will fly, but not that fast.  
So, sit back and watch time stand still  
And somehow still fly by.  
Grow wise and slowly die.



Untitled  
James Ewalt  
Lincoln High School  
Clinton

## Alone

---

Joe Morrow

OASIS

Oskaloosa

As I walk along this familiar road,  
"You'll be fine," is what I'm told.  
But to myself, I must confide,  
I've died a little bit more inside.  
I look at the heavens and keep asking why,  
And the days, weeks, months, just keep going by.  
I wonder if I even deserve love,  
Or am I to be forever mocked by the good lord above?  
With a few choice words, she broke my heart,  
So once again, my search will start.  
For twenty years, I've walked this earth,  
But still some people question my worth.  
I look around, and what do I see?  
The people I love, all of them happy,  
With boyfriends and girlfriends to call their own,  
But still I remain, on this road, alone.  
I've been a good person, at least in my mind.  
But this thing called love I have yet to find.  
So, to you I say this, and you had best take heed,  
For, this advice you may someday need.  
If you have love, hold onto it for as long as you can,  
For, life is easier if you have someone beside you to  
stand.  
As for me, I have finally accepted my fate,  
And I've done so with pain, malice, and hate.  
After three years, pain is again all that I've known.  
Forever down this road shall I walk,  
Alone.

## If All Angels Had Wings

---

Brandon Seaman

Crossroads Alternative School

Belmond

Lurking around in this old world  
Are problems we all must face.  
There are tribulations to make your head whirl  
That trouble the human race.

It makes one wish that he could fly  
To seek shelter from all the pain.  
Really, all one can do is try  
To keep from going insane.

However, in the midst of this troublesome state,  
When you feel as though you can't cope,  
It never fails and it's never late—  
Angels shine brilliant rays of hope.

It sounds strange and even odd  
To believe in something you can't see.  
Fact is, placed on this earth by God,  
Are angels walking with you and me.

They're not always in white and blond curls.  
They choose to wear a clever disguise.  
Some dress up as girls,  
And some dress up as guys.

They always offer a helping hand.  
When you're surrounded by massive commotion.  
Like a meager grain of sand,  
Tossed upon the ocean.

Even as angels, they don't all have wings.  
Instead, they're just like you and I,  
But if all angels did have wings,  
You could rise to your feet and fly.



Untitled  
Sandy Frana  
Rockefeller Alternative High School Program  
Calmar



## How Do You Tell Someone That You Like Her?

Dani Relaz  
Expo High School  
Waterloo

How do you tell someone that you like her?  
That you think about her constantly, even in a deep  
sleep,  
That you've been planning the words, the things to say,  
The setting, every minute detail to make your perfect  
confession?

How do you tell someone  
That you've thought about this topic so much  
That you've dreamt a setting so realistic  
That when she responded saying she liked you the same  
You woke up with a smile still to this day?

How do you tell someone  
You like her, when you're afraid—  
Afraid that opening your mouth could be a huge mistake,  
And it would ruin everything?

How do you tell the person you like her  
When you think you should bite your tongue  
And take all of the emotions and lock them up  
And hide the key,  
Because you respect this person  
And would never want to make her feel uncomfortable,  
No longer being able to talk to her?

This is how,  
By going to my outlet, writing.  
For this is the only way I could tell her.  
I would write a poem, quite like this.  
I would hope that in reading it  
She would realize it was her that it was about

Because so many times have I indirectly told her,  
But never to the point.  
In the end, if she asked me who it was about,  
I would smile and try to say,  
“It’s you.”

## What is Love?

Shaina Doll

Rockefeller Alternative High School Program

Calmar

Love is...

My heart racing at the thought of your name.

Love is...

When we hold each other I feel as if we've become one.

Love is...

Looking deep into your eyes and seeing how much love there is to give.

Love is...

Kissing each other till you can't breathe.

Love is...

Finding your one true love during the hardest time of your life.

Love is...

Feeling so much for a person that you've never felt for anyone.

Love is...

When you're apart from your true love, you feel as if you can't breathe or think.

Love is...

Telling your true love how much he means to you all the time.

Love is...

Knowing without this person you wouldn't wake up to the most beautiful sunrise nor fall asleep in each other's arms to the most amazing sunset.

Love is...

Saying the three most important words straight from your heart.

I love you!

Untitled

---

Jessica Phillips

Rockefeller Alternative High School Program

Calmar

I have found a sweetness in you,  
That I have never before seen likeness of,  
And though I wish to know that sweetness  
It is a thing I can never possess.

I could try for all eternity  
To attain that dear perfection  
But never be able to achieve anything near to it.

But, you so easily attain the sweetest adoration from me,  
And, you so easily win my love and my trust.  
So you, knowing all is yours,  
Reject all that I can offer you.

I would spend a thousand lifetimes  
Wishing for your warm embrace,  
Your sweet caress,  
Your perfect-ness,  
If you only asked it so.

But, sadly (and sorrow is so terribly sweet)  
You again say no.  
So, I shall mourn this loss forever,  
Always wishing for your love.

Don't Doubt, DeAnna

---

Chase Greenfield

Gordon Willard Alternative Education Center

Fort Dodge

You say I have no love for you.  
What you really don't know is that's not true.  
My love exceeds beyond a poem  
And more than mountain men could roam.  
It's higher than God himself,  
Much richer than any wealth.  
The way I love you will still expand,  
Much further than any man.  
Whether it be the way I address myself,  
Or the way I act,  
My love for you will never end.  
So please don't doubt me ever again.

## Untitled

---

Heather Johnson

Buchanan County Success Center  
Independence

I scream out loud, "I hate you!"  
As you firmly stand your ground.  
No matter what I say to you,  
You always stick around.

I notice little things like that,  
Although it doesn't show,  
And do little things, too,  
Because I love you so.

It's the good things that I live for  
And think of every day,  
'Cause even though we fight a lot  
You still take my breath away.

No, not because you're a cutie;  
It's because you are my best friend.  
I know that it will all work out.  
Some things take time to mend.

The sun comes out of the darkest day.  
My frown turns into a smile.  
Everything's okay with me.  
I'm happy for awhile.

Then the fighting starts again.  
We begin to scream.  
I know that you still love me,  
But my tears begin to swell.

For how can two people love so much,  
But still continue to fight?  
Everyone goes through this.  
Don't worry; it'll be all right.

'Cause way deep down, we both know  
That we are meant to be.  
We are Heather and Brandon.  
There's no one else for me.

Untitled

---

Steven Piere

New Directions Alternative School  
Sigourney

I'm standing on the edge.  
I slip and hit the ground.

My life is waiting for a smile.  
It still has yet a frown.

Clouds of dust close my lungs as I begin to breathe.  
She's shown her love all she can and she starts to grit her  
teeth.

She's forced on back as her family refuses to follow,  
But in her mind she knows I'll keep her heart un-hollow.

The pain—I feel for what I've lost—I feel remorse.  
The act she has fallen onto hasn't taken its course.

Violently screaming at a past life that has now been changed,  
She has not gotten older, but her mind has aged.

I stand in front, slowly shedding tears.  
With all the past, many have brought these hidden fears.

Shown with the torture, it's left me for dead.  
I keep on feeding to show her that I'm bleeding for what she  
said.

My heart is exploding from the thought of her smile.  
I know someday it'll be better, but 'til then we wait awhile.

I know that she will understand that her hand will fit the velvet  
glove.  
But no matter what, one day it will end with her forbidden love.

Love is just religion; it's never in the past.  
Your forbidden love's love will forever last.

## Rainy Days

---

Gina Hohnecker  
Kaleidoscope Alternative  
Peosta

Above from the skies  
Rain falls down  
Over my eyes  
Covering the tears  
That flow down my cheeks.  
Brought on by my fears  
Over the past few weeks  
Darkness came in.  
Now nothing can be done.  
Over my chin  
The tears now run  
An endless river of sorrow  
Flowing from my heart  
Leading to tomorrow.



## You

---

Chelsey Geary

Gordon Willard Alternative Education Center  
Fort Dodge

When you said you loved me,  
You had me fooled.  
Then as I was thinking,  
I was saying,  
This boy is playing with my head.  
I don't need this at all!  
You wanted one thing from me.  
Well, you got it;  
Then you left me.  
When you kissed me it meant nothing at all!  
I just knew you were another  
Mistake in my life, so what was I to do?  
I hated you with a passion,  
Knowing you took my life.  
Love is too strong to even think about  
After all you did to me.  
So this is what I have to say:  
Standing strong is what I do  
Now that I'm not wasting my time on you.  
Friends went down like a thud because you didn't like them.  
My stupid self listened to you.  
Finally, I'm getting my life on track,  
But two questions I ask myself:  
What is so special about you?  
Why can't I stop thinking of you?  
Blue sparkling eyes and bleached blonde hair.  
Those words you used to whisper in my ear,  
"Baby you're the one thing I care about."  
I sit here and act like everything is all right  
When deep down I know I'm not with you.  
My heart is shattered.  
I'm full of tears  
Unless I hear you one last time  
Saying, "Hey, I really did love you."  
But, now it's time to say good-bye,

And you kiss me one last time.  
As tears roll down my cheek,  
I sit here and think  
Why do I miss you after all you did to me—  
Hit me and said I was worthless?  
And after that, I still  
Want you back!  
My friends say I'm nuts,  
Sit here telling me everything you've done.  
I tell them to shut up!  
I just don't care.  
I just want you back  
One last time so I can be done crying.  
I've cried so much I can't cry any more,  
Just waiting for you to call, write, or come see me.  
One of these days, maybe my wish will come true.  
But, then I think, "Do I even want you?"  
Because I know you played me.  
But, hey! Guess what? I played you, too!  
Ha-Ha!  
Deep down I know you're nothing but a mistake.  
I hate you more and more each day.  
You messed up my life way too much.  
So whatever you say,  
Or whatever you do,  
I'm not going to take you back any more.  
I played your games one too many times.  
I know who you really are!  
Now you're the one that's going to pay.  
After all you did to me,  
I sit here and think how lame you really are!  
Now it's time to say good-bye the right way.  
I thought I did love you.  
Now I look at us and laugh!  
I was wrong!  
You don't even know what true love is.  
You're the one that messed it up for me and you,  
And now I'm moving on!

Have a great life!

## Darkness

---

Samantha Schmidt

Metro High School

Cedar Rapids

I'm swimming all alone in a pool of darkness  
And I feel darkness is slowly pulling me under.  
I yell for help, but no one is there to hear it.  
I begin to see the water at eye level,  
And I kick and flail,  
Fighting to stay above the darkness.  
But the darkness won't let go of its hold on me,  
And I slowly begin to give in  
To the feeling that lies below the water line.  
The water starts to fill my lungs,  
The lungs that once held so much life,  
Yet now allow the murky water to replace that.  
I know this path doesn't lead to happiness,  
But why doesn't someone grab my hand  
And pull me from darkness's grasp?  
Because no one knows I stand at the boundary,  
The boundary between light and dark.  
So, I give in to the thing that holds me.  
All of the strength and all of the courage  
That I once held in my heart  
Can't save me from the water.  
So, I slowly slip below the world of conscientiousness,  
Undetected by the occupants of that world.  
I don't want to fight anymore.  
I've given in to darkness.

## My Empty Soul

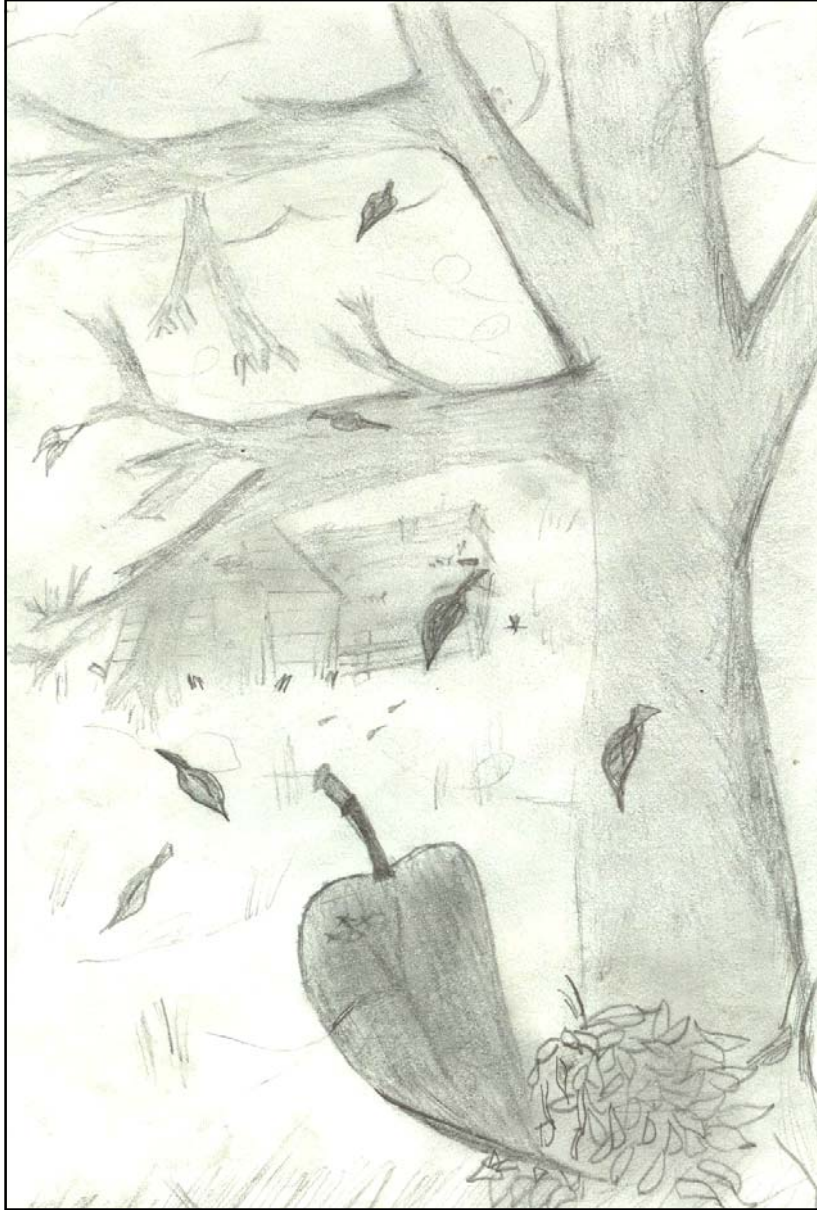
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Amy Link

Kaleidoscope Alternative

Peosta

I find myself lying in a pool of darkness, is anyone around?  
“Hello?” I yell, as I see people in a huddle by the ground.  
Everyone’s crying and looking down.  
They’re looking at something below I haven’t yet found.  
It’s a person; who is it? My God, it’s me!  
I’m pale and covered in blood, for all to see.  
“She did it herself,” I heard one say.  
“She did it herself, right here in her room.”  
Everything now grows frigid with fear and doom.  
“First, she cut herself—hard and deep.  
I see the gash where blood continues to seep.  
Next, she jumped—right then and there.  
She lost her energy and plummeted from the chair,  
Her makeshift noose just inches from the floor.”  
There I hung, proudly, by my door.  
As the rope broke loose from the door’s sturdy frame,  
My breathing stopped, putting an end to life’s pointless game.  
I look to my right and see Mom sob in pain.  
I thought this was best, but what did I gain?  
I want to hug her, but I can’t do it.  
She cries and cries; she just won’t quit!  
To my left I glance now, then straight ahead.  
This is where I see my dad crying right there, on my bed.  
The emptiness I felt is no longer my own.  
To Hell I shall fall, where I’ll take my throne.  
If I could, I’d take this back. I swear to you,  
I’d take it all back if there was something I could do.  
I’d hold you guys tightly and say it’s okay,  
I’d hug you and hold you like I wished for today.  
If I can take it back, I swear I’ll try.  
There’s nothing I’d rather than you were close by!  
I love you, and I’m sorry, I hope you can see.  
If there’s room in your heart, can you save it for me,  
Save it, for an empty soul like me?



Meadow of Sorrows  
Nikki Elenz  
Buchanan County Success Center  
Independence

## My Perfect Suicide

Zak Gwinn

Metro West Learning Academy

Grimes

My heart is being broken smaller and smaller.  
The remains are slowly being devoured.  
My breath grows shallower and dimmer.  
Every breath I take is closer to my last.  
I can no longer grip the pill bottle.  
I can no longer do this. This life is too hard.  
The bottle of vodka slips and shatters.  
My body can no longer support itself.  
My knees buckle in and I topple upon the shards.  
I see a pill rolling toward me,  
One that might mean my life or death.  
I try to move my hand to it,  
But I can't reach my life is.  
Shorting with every  
Last breath it.  
Depletes itself.  
Until I'm.  
Gone

## He's Gone

---

Martinana Corral  
Walnut Creek Campus  
West Des Moines

My cousin calls.  
She tells me the bad news—  
John is dead.  
Tears come down my face  
Like Niagara Falls.  
A pain in my stomach  
Feels as if I swallowed knives.  
I can never get rid of this pain;  
It keeps coming back,  
61 days and tears,  
Still coming back.  
I miss him so much—  
I miss his laugh,  
I miss his smile,  
I miss his warm personality.  
He was so talented;  
I wish he were here.  
I don't understand why he had to go.  
I just want him to be happy.  
He's in a better place,  
And I can just rest now,  
Knowing he's safe.  
Someday we will meet again,  
And the fatalistic conclusion  
Will all end soon.  
For, my tears will come to a stop.  
Maybe you'll see a grin on my face,  
Knowing I will see him again,  
And he will hug me with grief.  
I'll see you soon.  
I love you.  
In memory of John Calvin Seachrist, June 19, 2005, 16-  
years old.

## Never Forgotten

---

Rachel Goldapp

Westside Central Alternative High School  
Council Bluffs

Your dark black hair,  
Your smooth brown skin  
Will never be forgotten.

Your low, deep voice,  
Your perfect, bright smile  
Will never be forgotten.

Your laid back style,  
Your open personality  
Will never be forgotten.

You will never be forgotten.

Espero que estas divirtiendo tu  
Tiempo con Dios. Te extranamos!  
Te quiremos!

(Translated) I hope you are enjoying your  
Time with God. We miss you!  
We love you!

In loving memory of Jorge David Rodriguez, 1983-2002.



'Til the End

---

Whitney Stoddard

OASIS

Oskaloosa

He once was here  
But now is gone.  
He left his name  
To keep us going on.  
Those who know him  
Know him well.  
Those who don't  
Can never tell  
Of us laughing,  
Of us crying,  
For we love him in our hearts.  
Trust him as a friend,  
For, he will be there  
'Til the end.

## My Miracle

---

Kristy Nava

Kimberly Center for Alternative Education  
Davenport

On March 25, 2004, a miracle came along.  
That day I became pregnant.  
I was scared, yes indeed,  
But I did everything to succeed.  
The pains, morning sickness...  
I was brave, but I was scared.  
My mom would rant and rave.  
I was sad at the beginning  
But happy at the end.  
I didn't tell anyone I was pregnant  
Until I was almost at the end.  
I told my mom August 7 and went to the doctor August 11.  
All I wanted was a happy and healthy baby—  
A boy, a girl—it didn't matter.  
I had several due dates—  
My first one was December 20,  
The second one was December 22,  
And finally, the third one was January 1.  
I received my miracle December 29, 2004,  
A baby girl at 1:45 a.m.

Kaylee Jo Nava

4 lbs., 10 oz

Born at Genesis East

Ke'Ariea Kay Brenae Staley

Kasey Staley  
Expo High School  
Waterloo

You were purple and pale.  
Those two minutes you didn't breathe were hell!  
Your first breath was like a hurricane;  
All your blood rushed through your veins.  
God touched you with His healing hands,  
Only to start a bond that will forever last!  
It was a miracle to hear you cry;  
Your guardian angel was watching from the sky.

I still sit and cry  
Thinking of the day my daughter came from the sky,  
Not to say her last goodbye,  
But to start a life.

Dear America

---

Della Roepke

Buchanan County Success Center

Independence

Have you forgotten what has happened to you?  
Are you trying to make our sorrows deepen?  
Remember the times we held each other tight  
To show our enemies our might and strength,  
The building you plan to build at ground zero?  
Please don't forget the blood of our heroes.

Have you forgotten our troops?  
Don't you remember their lonely trips?  
They fight for us; they fight for you.  
Some of us can only ask how we can help.  
Some can come back home to you and me;  
Others can only wish that they can also flee away.

Have you forgotten our home?  
Don't you remember the twin towers?  
With our enemies bringing so much hate,  
It's like our only hope is to fight back.  
The troops fight for what they believe in,  
But do we believe in what they're fighting for?

Grass

---

Bill Goede

Rockefeller Alternative High School Program

Calmar

Grass

Green, golden

Growing, moving, photosynthesizing

Tall, thin, and thick blades

Grass

Untitled

---

Heidi Johnson  
Expo High School  
Waterloo

Deep purple and crimson...  
The light of life ever dipping into the earth's horizon.  
Tucked deeply underneath the galaxy's jagged solar bite,  
Traveling for a new sunrise, while searching for the dark-  
ness.  
Day after day, each fading sun chases after that night...  
Into eternity,  
Embracing all infinity.

While the darkness creeps in from far beneath and be-  
hind,  
Left chasing through time for a delay upon dawn,  
The breaking of gray against such blackness  
Unwinds and unbinds within all silence  
Before all shadows are long gone,  
Cast into eternity,  
To embrace all infinity.

## A New Tomorrow

---

Trent Lang  
Expo High School  
Waterloo

Day by Day,  
Slow decay seeps like water,  
Gathering and leaving behind tunnels  
For eternity's martyrs.

Death comes  
To lift along life's sorrows,  
Only seeking, being  
A sieve inside  
All to change,  
Things lie  
All tuned to follow.

Forever marching  
On, leaving behind  
The sacrifice  
For a new tomorrow.

Pure

---

Samantha Menzel  
Greenview High School  
Waverly

What a beautiful sight,  
The ground turned to white.  
First snow of the year,  
Holidays are near.  
It's a time for family,  
Although some can't stand me.  
We get together anyway,  
Not like the other days.  
So many new faces  
From all kinds of places.  
Oh, the food they bring  
Makes my tummy sing.  
So many different tastes,  
Especially the turkey they baste.  
But then, it's time for goodbyes,  
Hearing all the children cry.  
I'm left alone again,  
With only my closest friends.  
The snow still falls from above,  
Each flake frosted with pure love.  
That's how you know Christmas is coming.



## Graduation

---

Rachel Luensmann  
Kaleidoscope Alternative  
Peosta

Raise your glass to the sky.  
With hopes and dreams held high  
To the graduates I toast.

Here's to the friends we've lost and gained,  
And to the people we'll never know by name.  
To the bonds that we've made and albums we filled,  
Memories that may fade but never be killed.

Here's to the phone calls filled with tears,  
And to the hours spent talking away our fears.  
To the people we thought deserved our hearts,  
Whom now we bash and rip apart.

Here's to the pictures in frames with stories to say that  
the football games we have watched beneath the lights  
with our cheers and chants drift into the night.

Here's to the proms and dances  
And high school romances.  
To Homecoming games,  
With all the wins in our name.

Here's to late nights we've spent cramming for tests  
And to mornings where coffee made up for the rest.  
To dances and events we took months to create,  
The night before worries that came too late.

Here's to the tears we knew we'd cry,  
To the people and places we say good-bye.  
To the wild and bizarre things we've done  
That we will remember to be the most fun.

Here's to the letters we left unsigned,  
May our identities be revealed all in due time.  
To the relationships we wonder how we ever lived without,  
And to the crushes we look back on and laugh about.

So now, it is time to place our glasses down,  
Put our caps on, and turn our tassels around,  
Listen for our names and let them echo through,  
And realize how these four years just flew.

We will really miss you...

Do Your Work

---

Katie Chamberlin

OASIS

Oskaloosa

Do your work  
Or you'll be last!  
Do your work  
Or you won't be passed!

If you want to graduate,  
Do your best!  
If you want to graduate,  
Pass the test!

# **Narratives**



## Looking Through the Glass

---

Delayna Smith  
Expo High School  
Waterloo

When I looked into a mirror and didn't see my face, I was wondering who that was with the unhappy face. I splashed my face with water and opened my eyes, but when I looked up it wasn't me again. I was wondering what to do and who to look to for help. But when I looked around, there was nothing else. The room was dark and the walls were cold and I was standing there naked and alone.

You weren't there to hold me and tell me it was okay. I told myself to lie and hide the pain. You weren't on the computer or even near the bed; you told me you would stay forever and I guess forever changed. You promised to kiss me every day and hold me at least once. I guess I stopped it all before you could help. When I lied, I did it to hide my pain.

I went back to the bathroom and you weren't there. Then I saw the mirror and it was an evil glare. I missed my smile, even if it was a fake. I missed the laughter that used to crowd my face. I missed the look in my eyes and I couldn't see it there. Then I realized why, and it was because you weren't here. My lies had pushed you away, and now you're gone and there is no return.

So, I look at the mirror and begin to cry. My heart is dying and now I am standing in front of the door wondering if you will come home for good. Here I stand at the doors looking through the glass.

## Rising Like the Sun

Samantha Lugo

Kimberly Center for Alternative Education  
Davenport

I have lived an eternity, though to some I have lived nothing but 14 years. Today I have taken the task of writing about myself and something I have learned. I began this thinking I would talk about my cutting, the drugs, or maybe my family. Now I write of growing up, and this is my story, the story almost no one has heard. My story starts like most others, at the beginning. The story begins in junior high, what year I really can't tell you, so much of that time is blurred together; so much is lost in the depths of my mind.

I do remember every Wednesday, the day I felt so together and so very apart. I attended a Youth Ministry on those days. I wasn't Methodist, or even Christian, but I had found a place that was my own, a place where I could listen and talk, a place to be myself, or at least the non-religious self, for I am now, and was then Pagan, but that story I save for another time. This is the year I had my best friend Britt, the girl who never left my side, nor did I leave hers. The memories are bittersweet, for they involve an old friend and a first love.

Our youth ministry had decided to have a lock-in for the conversion into the new year, and we had decided to attend. I remember the lock-in like a dream, foggy and vivid in a twisted way. I remember walking in and handing in my ticket. I remember being dragged around a room of faceless voices. I remember Jeremy, Britt's *mohawked* bear. I remember waiting to get into the auditorium, waiting with a guy we barely knew; his name is still on my lips today, Tyson. Like a smoky picture, my memory shifts to the auditorium, sitting there in the back, not even knowing what was being said or done, but I remember talking, and I remember angry voices behind us, telling us to "pipe down" and "be quiet." I can recall sitting in the "band room,"

listening to blasting music and watching someone dance badly with glow sticks.

Then like shifting slides, I can see clearly the hall where we sat talking, laughing, and spilling our drinks. I remember talking to Tyson, warning him not to hurt Britt, telling him I would get him back if he did. Then fading, fading like black to grey, I remember sitting in the "band room" again. There was no music, other than one lone guy on guitar. I remember the sound of his acoustic in the background like lapping waves. I remember talking, yawning, and watching the sunrise through the glass of the exit door. I remember what Britt said right then; she said it was so bittersweet. The lights of the night were fading, and the light of a new day was coming. She said that even though it meant a new day, it meant she had to leave behind everything from the last. I remember the solemn goodbyes, the hugs. I remember the ride home, quiet and tiring. I remember the burning of my arm. Though I can't recall how I got them, I still carry the scars as a reminder of that time.

This story is faded, like the scars I carry from years gone by. Years have passed, and now I understand why that night was bittersweet. I can see now that things can change in moments. Things in the night can change in the light of the new day. One grows up and everything just seems to shift. Now I understand that "the rising of the sun" wasn't the bringing of light, but the fading of the light we had. We never saw Tyson again after that night, and Britt was never really the same. We were friends for awhile, things changed, and after we got arrested we drifted for good. When you're a kid, you think the world is "just so," but after a while you realize that nothing ever is what your parents said it would be. I dedicate this short story to an old friend and to old dreams. This writing is the closing of a past I never thought would close. This writing is my story of learning, loving, and growing up.



## Grandma Bones

Cylvia Carlson

Kimberly Center for Alternative Education

Davenport

Julia Valdez was my grandma. We called her “Grandma Bones” because she was all skin and bones. She always ate like a bird. I would spend each day with my grandma when I was younger because my mom worked during the day. My grandma took good care of me. I remember she used to wait and get me off the bus when I was in kindergarten. My grandma and I would feed the ducks by the river. We picked my mom up from work every day. I began to get really close to my grandma as I grew older. I could tell her things that I could not tell my mom, because she would not be mad at me. The only thing she would do is give me advice. I was always with my grandma, even on the weekends. I would rather be with her than my friends. I loved spending time with Grandma Bones.

As Grandma Bones grew older, she began to forget things because of her condition. Over the years, she began to develop a bad cough because of the smoking she had done. Even though she had stopped and hadn’t smoked that much, it still caught up to her. She was stubborn, never wanted to go to the doctor or even take her medicine. I used to hear her cough in the middle of the night. I used to feel bad, but there was nothing that I could do.

As time passed, her appetite grew smaller. She would not even finish a McDonald’s hamburger. Grandma did not want to do anything anymore; she watched everyone else have fun. She had stopped driving because her eyesight was bad. I missed having good times with her. She started always wanting to be with my mom; she never wanted to stay home alone. Grandma went everywhere with my mom, even though she would just sit in the car and not get out. I would wait in the car with her while my mom went into the stores.

On December 4, 2004, Julia became really sick. She didn’t want to eat anything because she didn’t feel well, so my aunt Mona took her to the hospital. My mom and uncle went to see

her. Then hours later, my mom had come home to get my siblings and me. My mom said that this was probably going to be the last time that I would see my grandma. That just ripped my heart out. I got to the hospital and there lay my grandma, helpless in the hospital bed. I just cried. The doctors said that she had had a stroke sometime while being in the hospital. When she first got there, she just felt like she had a cold. She was talking and everything; then she became speechless. We would talk to her, and there would be no response. Soon, she couldn't even see anymore because of the stroke. We knew that she wouldn't make it much longer, so my mom had called and made arrangements for a priest to come and say last rights. I could tell that Grandma knew I was there; as I held her hand, she held back tight. I knew that she didn't want to be left alone. She was hooked up to breathing machines. Everyone could tell that it was hard for her to breathe. There was fluid filling up in her lungs, and it was already too late; there was nothing that could be done.

She had lung cancer. I wished at that moment that I hadn't let her smoke when I had seen her light up cigarettes; that played back in my head. We knew that we couldn't keep her hooked on the machines forever. I knew it was the best thing so that she wasn't suffering with her every breath; my family made the choice to turn the life support off at midnight. My uncle unplugged it. She stayed alive on her own for a couple of hours. She died December 5, 2004, at 2:13 in the morning.

Grandma's death has affected my family and me. My mom has sold the property that my grandma once owned. Then my mom moved to Texas, then here to Davenport. Grandma Bone's death brought the family together in many ways. I was depressed for a long time, and I still have not let her go. I dream about her. My mother is depressed. She never has fun anymore; she is always sad. My mother doesn't really make dinner or do anything anymore. This year we aren't going to celebrate Thanksgiving, either. My mom is probably not going to do anything for Christmas. She has been saying, "It is just another day." My mother was never like this until Grandma passed away. There have been many changes in my family.

## The Accident

Cortessa Johnson

Kimberly Center for Alternative Education

Davenport

One day I was on my way home from school. I was in the fifth grade. On my way home, Kenny and his sister were walking with us, and Kenny said he was going to stab my brother with a pencil because my brother had hit him. Then they started to fight. His sister picked up a big stick and ran over to them and was trying to hit my brother.

When she did this, I picked the girl up and moved her. Some people were watching the whole thing. The girl tried to hit my brother again, so I pushed her and she fell. Then my brother and I ran home. I thought I was not going to get in trouble because she was older than me; she was in the eighth grade while I was in fifth. A few minutes later, the police and an ambulance were in front of my house. That girl was in the ambulance, and the police were at my door. The people who saw the fight said she fell on glass, but I knew she had fallen on a stick. The police said that they were taking me. Then I said that I was only eleven. They said okay and that they were going to just put that on my permanent record. From this, I learned to break up a fight instead of jumping into the fight. That is an experience that I will always remember.

## Alcohol and Me

---

Zachary Haut

Kimberly Center for Alternative Education

Davenport

Alcohol isn't what everybody says it is; you do lots of stupid stuff while drinking. People can get hurt and throw up; its not as good as you think. I was sixteen; it was Fourth of July, and I was at one of my cousin's crazy parties. I was lighting off fire works and having fun; everybody else was drinking. The party was winding down slowly but surely. I helped my dad walk and stumble to my cousin Linny's truck, also taking with me a fifth of vodka and a 12-pack of Bud Light. We got in the truck and left for home.

There's where bad stuff started to happen; my dad went to bed, and I pulled out the vodka. My sister, my girlfriend, and I started to drink. We drank for a while and had started to walk; we walked a block and a half before stopping at my sister's friend's house to pick up another person. After that we started walking back to my house. Once there, my girlfriend and I went down stairs to talk; my dad came down and hit me for having a girl in the house.

I ran out of my downstairs bathroom to get a baseball bat, and then I went outside. My dad followed me outside. My friend James was there; my dad got him on the ground, so I hit my dad. I hit my dad five times in the back and two in the leg; I broke my dad's kneecap in half. I just stopped beating him; I actually realized what I was doing. It took about four to six weeks for my dad's knee to heal. He didn't have anything to say to me. I didn't get in very much trouble; my dad dropped the charges. In conclusion, I know why people shouldn't drink.

## Smokin' in the Girls' Room

Kelsey Alexander

Kimberly Center for Alternative Education

Davenport

One day when I was in seventh grade at Walcott School—it was the second week of school and it was seventh period—two of my friends and I decided to go smoke in the bathroom, just for fun. We asked the teacher if we could go to the restroom, and she let us all go. Next, we got a cigarette from my locker. I had brought the cigarette from my house. We went to the restroom; all of us got in a stall and lit it up.

We had smoked about half of the cigarette when someone walked in. Even though one of my friends said it was just a kid, we flushed the cigarette down the toilet. Then the janitor came in with the girl who had told her the restroom smelled like smoke. The janitor told us to open the stall door, so we did.

We denied it all at first; then we just decided to tell the truth. We got a smoking ticket and three days of SSC; I was scared. What I learned from this is that you should not smoke on school property. It was a pretty stupid thing to do. This changed me a lot, but not in a good way. After that, I started to do more bad stuff. But then again, I also learned from it.

## Hanging Out on Roofs

---

Breon Tubbs

Prairie Alternative High School

Cedar Rapids

My attempts are failing and yours are not going any smoother. Let's play this game. We do not even need to keep score. I will let you play the role of a hopeless romantic, while I get caught up in the moment and fall into it. I will hide feelings in folders and write them on the inside of my eyelids. I keep my eyes closed tight and fingers crossed even tighter. Good luck trying to pull this off. No one leaves alive. It is getting colder and your chances are getting even slimmer. White out the paintings; abstract means nothing, but really it means everything. Let's pop white pills and dance on rooftops. We dance towards a disaster. While we twirl in chaos, we anticipate a car crash far below. We will run to the side and watch the metal crumble like aluminum foil. Neon signs paint the sidewalks. Lights paint the people's bodies in shades of pink, green, and blue. We follow dots of light in the colors green, yellow, and red all the way home.

## Seeing Life Through Someone Else's Eyes

Josh Barclay  
Ames High School  
Ames

Every day we interact with all different kinds of people. We interact with people of different racial backgrounds, economic status, ways of living, etc. Therefore, we all have different ways of doing things. We also see, think, fear, and feel things from which situations we exist. I believe that we cannot truly feel what someone else feels, but we can try to understand by putting ourselves in his shoes and seeing life the way he sees it.

Many individuals in this country always criticize politicians, especially the President. We only look for the negative and what he is doing wrong. I'm sure that if we were to put ourselves in the President's shoes and not be so narrow-minded, we would understand more fully.

*As President of the United States, I have many responsibilities. Every day I have to make decisions that could make huge change in this country. I have to make decisions according to my own educated opinion. All I can think about is what the results are going to be of this decision. Will it benefit the people who I am hired to represent, and will it benefit the welfare of this country all together? This comes down to one of my biggest fears, "approval of the people." If my decision does not benefit this country or even if I don't clearly show the people how it benefits the country, I will lose some of their respect, and as a leader I need their respect to help our country prosper. Sometimes the job gets so overwhelming that I just want to run and hide, but I can't because I am the Chief Executive of this country and I have to act like I know exactly what I am doing at all times and that I am not overwhelmed. I have to be*

*strong, and if I am strong the people will be stronger. I only wish that the people of this country only knew the justifications for my decisions and why I do things in certain situations.*

When we interact with the people we do every day, we do not understand fully what they think, feel, and fear. We all come from different backgrounds, and we are brought up differently, experiencing and learning different things in life. In order to understand ourselves more, we have to look at life through each other's eyes and see why we think, fear, and feel certain things.



## Ninth Street

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Arian Hinton

Kimberly Center for Alternative Education  
Davenport

I had the most heart-pounding, horrific experience happen to me not too long ago. My head is still a bit hazy from what happened that night on Ninth Street. How shall I put it? Well, let's see, I got "jumped." Jumped is when there are more people than you getting ready to beat the sense out of you. I can say there were probably about 17 girls surrounding me at that time.

First off, what was the whole reason for me getting into that whole mess? I think I know why. About two weeks before this whole thing went down, I had gotten into a fight with another girl and broke her nose, not a nice thing to do, but it happened. That was that, so I thought. Then the problems started. I guess all these girls must have known Nicole, the girl I fought. It was way too dark that night for me to even begin to tell what even one of those girls looked like. I went out to my boyfriend's car to get my cell phone, and there I found his keys and my phone locked in the car. I yelled for Neely, my boyfriend, to come outside. I turned my back for two seconds to yell to him, and the next thing I knew there were at least 17 to 20 girls surrounding the car.

When they stood around me, they all had this hatred in their eyes towards me. Then one of the girls asked me the weirdest question. She asked me if I was related to Heather and Alyssa H——. Well, I am, so unfortunately I said, "Yes, I am." Then, the next thing I knew, someone swung what looked like a block of wood and nailed me on the back of my head. As I lay there unconscious, I could still hear what was happening. Neely came running out of the house, someone fired a gun, and

everyone ran off. I think it was my Uncle Andre who fired the gun to scare everyone. I never asked him, but I'm sure it was him. Neely carried me inside the house, and when I woke up, he told me what had happened and how long I had been knocked out. For about ten minutes, I had horrible headaches, and I had to be rushed to Trinity Hospital the next day. Three days after that, I felt good as new.

Finally, I have come to realize that I can not blame anyone else for what happens to me in my lifetime. I am responsible for anything and everything that happens to me, both good and bad.



## Call for Submissions

*The Mandala* is collection of art and literary works by Iowa's alternative high school students.

Submissions of poetry, narratives, pencil and (black) ink illustrations, 8-1/2" x 11" or smaller, or b/w photography, 8" x 10" or smaller, for Volume V must include student name, instructor name, school name, and complete school address. Original artwork should be mailed, and electronic submissions of written work is preferred. Entries will be accepted September 1 through December 15, 2006.

## Additional Copies

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