



HILLS REVIEW

A Journal of Student Creative Writing

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Joy Lyle, Editor

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Table of Contents

Elijah Berry Focused.....	5
Elijah Berry Should I?.....	6
Mia Ellis Heart.....	7
Dasani Garner Journal Entry.....	8
Jacob Glandon It's Gone.....	9
Abegail Hulgan Oneiric.....	10
Mary Loyd Girl with an Apple.....	11
Tyler Loyd Sins of the Sky.....	12
Tyler Loyd Ode to My Armband.....	13
Tyler Loyd Recurring Dreams.....	14
Corrion Matthews Be Aware.....	15
Corrion Matthews To Families.....	16
Amber McCombs Hunger Roams.....	17

Raydawn McLaurin
Fear of Success19

Raydawn McLaurin
Brown Bird.....20

Gracie McVeigh
Perspective.....21

Nayeli Mejia
Senioritis.....22

Nayeli Mejia
Home of the Brave.....23

Margot Petersen
Letting Go24

Emily Prescott
Slipping Reality25

Madison Sky
Summer Night26

Autobiographies.....27

Elijah Berry

Focused

I am focused; I am determined; I am fully committed
I am high atop the mountains as my confidence soars
My vision is clear, yet my purpose is unfulfilled
Glowing like the sun yet alone like a dwarf planet
Dreaming to be rivaled by none and respected by all
Working day in and day out practicing perfection always
But the distractions surround me like a raging sea
My enemies taking forms I would have never guessed
But instead, I am focused on the goal at hand
I am dedicated, determined to achieve my ultimate dream
I will not waver; I will rise above all

Should I?

Why would I love if I don't love myself first?
Am I putting my sense of distrust against my emotions?
Is being paranoid about my past a curse?

Should I let my guard down and embrace the compassion?
Allow myself to once again welcome someone into my life
And make myself vulnerable while I indulge in passion

Or be naive and yet again make a fatal mistake?
My patience is running low, and I'm extremely conflicted.
I'm very tired, and there's only so much I can take.

Love isn't real to me but rather fake.
Locking myself up for my sake is only for the best.
I'm down to my last because my heart will break.

Mia Ellis

Heart

My eyes are as red as the sunrise at five in the morning;
I gaped at it for far too long.
I was ready for a clean slate,
a do-over from the mess I made.
My heart is made of paper; at this time of day,
I am ready to crumble
like a child does before their notes are read aloud to the class.
I slide out of my day clothes and put on what I have been
looking forward to all day long: my red printed pajamas.
Chamomile tea calls my name from the kitchen;
I need to shut off thoughts racing through my head.
Staring at my empty perfume bottle I wonder:
when will I ever throw it away?
Meaningless conceptions compete against melatonin.
The moon smiles at me; she is full and plays with my emotions.
She is as awake as I am; I close the blinds.
Like an old hospital, the town is desolate.
Everything is sleeping,
except me.

Journal Entry

Lately motivation for me has been lacking. Having to complete the same routine day in and day out is starting to become draining in a sense. Of course I'm not asking for excitement all day every day, but some form of change in my life would be great. I believe most people are used to being on the same schedule every day of their lives, that when conflict or a change arises they feel as though they are not able to continue on. If days had more variety and less routine, the approach and reaction to complications would be less severe and handled in a better manner. The majority of the time trouble appears at random moments when it's least expected. Becoming accustomed to imperfection instead of an ideal week, month, or year will help all of us when trouble and stumbling blocks show up.

Jacob Glandon

It's Gone

What you needed you always had,
but what you want you'll never have.
It is the inadequacy of adequacy that tears us down,
but retrospectively, it is our greatest crown.

Oneiric

See, the thing is, Quincy knows that they're dreaming. There is no way that the actual zombie apocalypse is happening, but, somehow, the world around them feels so real, so tangible, that they can smell the nauseating scent of rotting flesh off the zombies' skin and feel the sweat dripping down their back from running under the hot sun. Realistically, this is a dream, but it definitely doesn't feel like one, so Quincy keeps running. With their life on the line, dream or not, there's no way they're going to stop until they reach safety. Unfortunately, finding a safe place hasn't been easy amongst the rubble of what they're sure used to be a beautiful town.

Actually, they're positive it used to be beautiful because their surroundings look a lot like the town they live in, where they grew up. Quincy can see what used to be the local grocery store as they run past. The sign was missing some of the letters and all of the glass from the windows and doors was shattered. They could faintly see two zombies inside the store wandering aimlessly until they decide to join in the chase. The zombies in their dream are surprisingly fast for being undead, and Quincy can't help but wonder if it's their fault.

This is in their head. A figment of their imagination and nothing more, which must also be why they've recognized some of the undead that have been chasing them. Among those behind them includes their biology teacher, a girl from school, and the most jarring of them all, their mother. Quincy keeps running anyway. They don't have time to stop and think about any of this; they know they can't get caught, whether it's a dream or not.

Mary Loyd

Girl with an Apple

After school I remember
throwing my bag in the house and running back outside.
We would always meet in the orchard
under the biggest tree.
I would get there first.
I'd look for the biggest red apple I could reach.
I would pluck it from the tree and wait for him to approach.
There were always apples lying on the ground.
Some were brown and rotten
others looked just fine.
I would patiently wait
as he would cautiously come closer.
I'd hold out the apple
making sure my fingers were straight.
He would gently press his lips to my hand
and take the apple.
As he crunched on his treat
I would pet his nose.
He was a muscle-bound quarter horse.
He was wild and intimidating to many.
It was clear he would melt in an instant
for a little girl in an orchard
with an apple in her hand.

Tyler Loyd

Sins of the Sky

The ceilings painted above us
must not go unseen but must be ignored.
The average dreamer sees a reality;
the anxious fright sees a misty mirror.
Clouds block our hope but lay a beautiful tarp
like sins upon the wretched.
I watch the storm on this cold grey day,
timid and warm. Sitting with friends, on a rooftop so close,
they block my dreams from being in arm's length.
It's a mirror; it's a mask. But every mask must come off.
And every storm must turn to day.

Tyler Loyd

Ode to My Armband

Welcome my armband,
conceived on a vacation week,
out of love and adventure.
Envisioned at an earlier time
but never remembered though.
How could I forget
a time I finally felt unchoked?
When a moment is so warm,
and the happiness is stuck,
you never want to imagine your life
ever being any different.
So I got this armband.
Mine is not like yours;
mine tells a story.
Yours reminds you of goals;
mine paints a picture.
While both may have meaning,
mine will not break;
most are made to put on top the skin,
while mine is ingrained in ink within.
Welcome, my armband.

Tyler Loyd

Recurring Dreams

You're kind of like a bird cage.
Every night we reach a new stage,
then you close the door,
and I feel the red in my face.
Everything I do feels in spite of you.
Every relationship requires two, but
every mirror I see, I look and you're in my view.
I don't want the drama, I just want to hold you.
Even though you say otherwise, that's what you're opposed to.
We sit here and try these things like I'm supposed to,
but if this is the only outlet I get to know you,

then fine. I propose to explore the road, too.
I just hope, too, that I can show you
in life there's more than what you've been exposed to.
I'll grab your hand and dive in this deep cold blue.
I don't know where to go from here but to try to forget.
Worst part is I don't want to, so I can't.

You live in my dreams calling me your man.
You pull away; I awake when I'm reaching for your hands.

Be Aware

Life is like a chess move
make your next move
your best move.
Nobody is going to help you
along those lines,
and I'm not lying;
when you're crying,
it's more like you're dying.
Now in this generation
you have to strive to succeed,
and there's a need
for someone to lead.
Kids barely get to see eighteen,
and now their moms are screaming
because they can't see 'em.
So for now be aware
of what you do
because at the end of the day
the only person you're going to have is you.

To Families

You never know what you have until it's gone. Death doesn't come with heads up. You could get hit by a car or even get shot. There's only one thing more precious than your time and that's who you spend it with -- your family. The reason for this message is to really get you to understand the importance of time spent with family and how it could benefit you in the future. When you don't have anyone, you have your family. I believe if families spent more time together they would prevent deaths, even prevent depression in kids, and there would be more conversations around the house. People take the family for granted and forget the real meaning of family. Long story short, spending more time with your family is good and really benefits you in the long run.

Families are not supportive enough and don't have that great bond like they need to have. For example, there are people dying due to suicide and impulses. There are Americans eighteen years and older dying due to this problem. There are Americans taking their lives each year. This is a serious issue that could affect anyone at any time.

Parents should start bringing their kids together, maybe get them off their phones, off the game and out of the bed, and having movie night or something. This solution is the best because people could be going through things such as depression, failing classes or even not having any friends. Mark out days of the week you guys can do things. Maybe even at dinner parents should have a rule such as no phones during dinner time. Then going from there, if they don't remove their phones like they were told to, then there's consequences. Things we can apply in kids' futures are getting them into sports and keeping them focused. Let your kids know there's a point of living life that makes a memory of it. I think parents should start investing in their children and let them know they love them and appreciate what they do. The last thing I have to say is that if parents stop being so strict, it may stop kids from being so sneaky, and they would ask for help and things wouldn't happen.

Lots of problems could be solved if families spent more time together. Mental health and family relationships can be better by spending quality time and talking about whatever is on your mind. Call or text your parents and express your love and appreciation.

Amber McCombs

Hunger Roams

He walks into the room and all the hair on my neck rises.
He moves the chair and I brace.
I feel my shoulders tense and my eyes turn down.
Whether I like it or not.
He's there.
Hunger, as a man.
As a father.
Never happy, never enough.
With clothes that smell like oil, dust,
and the stale air of the factory floor.
With his cigarettes and black-scored eyes.
He'd been gone for a week
until he'd walked up the drive this morning,
coat thrown over his shoulder.

The dogs thrash on their chains.
Every time he steps on the porch to light his cigarette.
Their teeth are barred and white.
Barking. He throws the remains of his smokes at them,
and they snap them up. Like bones, they bite the stubs.
They tear them to bits.
All the while, barking.

The tea kettle steams from the fire beneath it.
Wailing louder and louder like a hungry child
searching at poverty's breast.
It cries like the ones we buried.
The starving ones, the little ones,
with the blind eyes and bent limbs.
The stunted ones, with the twisted spines
and the cleaved lips.
All thin and skin and bone.
The ones that grew from poisoned love and ruined body.
Of lack of warmth and arms around them.
The ones that lay in soiled blankets.
And never had enough.
Though I gave them all I had.
The same hunger as their father.
Never happy, never full.

Amber McCombs

Hunger Roams (continued)

In the next room, an infant whimpers,
too weak to muster a bawl.
I rub the ghost tears out of my dry eyes.
Building the strength to go to the crib and lift him.
I know I'll be unable to bring him solace.
For we have nothing to give besides watered-down milk.
We have nothing to give at all.

Raydawn McLaurin

Fear of Success

What if I succeed in school?
What will they expect of me?
What if I succeed in life?
Will success make me happy?
I'm afraid to succeed.
Why do I deserve it
more than anyone else?
Who am I after I succeed?
Do I keep looking for success?
When I succeed, do I have to take
care of everyone?
Do I owe them for loving me?
If I say "No" will they hate me?
What if I Fail? Who am I then?
Am I still me?

Raydawn McLaurin

Brown Bird

I see a beautiful brown bird
sitting outside my window,
about the size of a fist, black beak, black eyes,
light brown head, almost black body,
beautiful, so free and fearless
she spreads her wings
and leans forward and falls
down, down, down;
right before smashing to the
ground she soars back up in the
sky and disappears in the sun;
her strength is my aspiration;
my fear isn't in hitting the ground
but in shining with the sun.
Who am I to shine
when others live in darkness?

Perspective

I can almost see it now. The blinding white lights, all those strangers looking at me, the screams. It's a distant memory, but I remember it like it was yesterday. Of course, I can't really remember what happened yesterday. But that's not important. What's important now is breathing, inhaling and exhaling, slowly.

Careful not to panic, you wouldn't want people to see that you're afraid, don't want them to know that you're weak. Can't let them feel the butterflies in your stomach, how they're quickly turning to spiders as you sit there on your bed.

That's where I am, my bed. No, you're in your head; you're back in that room with all those people, all those lights, all those screams. Careful now, don't get too worked up. You see, you don't need to be afraid. They can't hurt you. You're perfect, remember? You hide behind that mask, concealing your true emotions, playing the part of the hero. Or maybe just the best friend. But you are not young royalty trapped in a high tower. The only place you're trapped is your mind, and that room.

It's time to get up now, time to go back. So soon? Yes, now. Hurry up, you're going to be late. Put on your perfect mask, prepare to say your lines; tonight you play the lead; the focus is all on you, and you cannot mess this up. Don't you want to stay here? Stay with me? Please? The screams are there again. They echo through your mind. The lights come on, just as blinding as they were when you first stepped foot here.

Don't worry, your eyes will adjust with time. The people are quiet now, observing you, watching your every move, as though waiting for you to mess up, encouraging it. Some take notes, others simply watch. There are other people here, others just like you. Usually they would be out here with you, but the people wanted you alone this time. It won't be for very long, but it will feel like hours. You don't mind though, do you? No, you like it here, like the attention they give you. Isn't that why you're still here? You need this place much more than it needs you.

Senioritis

I haunt these halls as I climb the stairs to the library
where I sit and stare out the window.
I think about how even if I could get it open,
the fall is too short to do any real damage.
And even if I were to be damaged,
my assignments would be overdue.
So I climb back down when the bell rings
and surrender myself to another six hours.

After four years of midnight deadlines,
I'm still no better at telling time.
Four years of test reviews and
the wasps in my stomach try to
crawl up my throat for release.
Four years of walking into class
with heavy, red eyes, and I start to think
maybe the straight A's aren't worth it anymore.

But my struggle is beautiful, you tell me.
My tears are nourishment
for the grand tree of my future,
and my self-restraint has prepared me early
for the confinement of adulthood.

Now you sit back and praise my accomplishments
as an excuse to condemn my decline,
and I wonder what makes you feel
you have the right to say that when
you didn't lift a finger to help me.

Nayeli Mejia

Home of the Brave

This is the land of peace
where we are raised to be sweet,
every street lined with treats
served by those earning just enough
money to reach rent this month—
if they cut down on groceries.
But only if they smile and make your
time worthwhile enough to leave a tip.
It's a safe space,
filled to the brim with police.
The children's toys reflect those
of their mothers' and fathers' in the
Middle East.
"Oh, please!"
Land of the incarcerated.
This is where man clips birds' wings
then orders them to fly.
This is the land of the vote,
where at the end every man croaks
that at least he has died with liberty.
And after the curtain is called,
when the body finally falls,
his family is given a bill
that they cannot afford—
to be paid lest they lose
their own integrity.
This is the land of opportunity.
The American Dream preaches,
voices in perfect unity.
Yet for reasons Unknown,
no one's fault but one's own,
there are babies trapped in cages
their mothers can't reach,
children learning phrases only
bullies could teach.

"But Oh! — If only you were
blind enough to see
just how happy you could be
in the Land of the Free."

Margot Petersen

Letting Go

The birds are louder than usual
I stop to listen
I wonder what it is that they could be saying
Are they saying anything at all?
One chirps
Another one whistles back from a distance
The wind blows, the sounds stop
The breeze hits the trees, rustling their leaves
Just enough for the sun to peak through
I feel the sun hit my cheeks
I inhale the fresh air
I exhale all that has weighed me down

Emily Prescott

Slipping Reality

Who is that behind the mirror?
Not sure if even I know.
I can feel the corruption
Like I've been corrupted.
This electric shock is strange, but I'm fine.
Send a message to myself.
I just feel like a void.
It goes around wherever,
And it happens whenever.
I was tossed aside, but this façade is mine.
Am I that painful to be around?
A pin dropped in my chest
And my face felt wet.
I saw my cracked reflection:
An empty collage of traits stitched by vine.

Madison Sly

Summer Night

Sitting by the toasty campfire
Lightning bugs fill the air
The full moon pours its bright light
Casting shadows through the tall trees
Wind blows through the atmosphere
Smells like fresh cut grass
The white stars are whispering to each other
The sky becomes darker like a smothering blanket
If only I could hit pause
And make summer last forever

Autobiographies

Elijah Berry will graduate in the spring of 2021 and will be attending Oklahoma State University in the fall where he plans to major in Kinesiology. He enjoys running, skating, doing film, and taking pictures in his free time.

Mia Ellis took courses in the Early Education program at IHCC to become a first grade teacher. She has two dogs named Pickles and Copper and lives with her girlfriend. Mia has one brother named Mason, and her parents' names are Matthew and Mary. She thoroughly enjoyed taking Creative Writing Poetry class and hopes to continue writing.

Dasani Garner is an Indian Hills student who likes to write.

Jacob Glandon is a sophomore at Indian Hills. He is a member of the track and cross-country teams and enjoys photography and writing. He plans to study communications at a four-year college in the fall of 2021.

Abegail Hulgan is a twenty-year-old from Knoxville, Iowa. She will graduate from Indian Hills Community College after spring term and will be attending the University of Iowa as an English major starting fall 2021. She enjoys reading, writing, and petting her cat, Bamboo-zle. She hopes to be in editing after she finishes college, and her main goal in life is to have a book she's written published, but before she can do that, she has to finish writing a book.

Mary Loyd lives in Packwood with her husband Ron. They have two sons, Cory and Tyler. She has worked at John Deere as a welder, an assembler, and recently got a job in the Continuous Improvement department. After years of working full-time and raising a family, Mary decided to go back to school and finish her A.A. degree. Upon completion, she plans on transferring to Buena Vista University to pursue a degree in Organizational Leadership.

Tyler Loyd is from a small town in Iowa. Between traveling with friends to go see concerts or explore faraway places like California, Ty dabbles in computer programs like playing games, making music, graphic designing, and editing videos. He's found that the curses and blessings of life are unpredictable and quite literally the thing that keeps it going, but friends and family are the true purpose. After graduating from Indian Hills, Ty plans on continuing his art education at the University of Iowa.

Corrion Matthews is a sophomore and a member of the track team. He plans on graduating May of 2021 and transferring to major in Social Work.

Amber McCombs is from Lovilia and attends most of her classes at the Albia campus. She is currently pursuing getting an A.A. degree. In regards to writing, she really likes to write fiction. World-building is one of her favorite past times. She usually dabbles in sci-fi, fantasy, and alternate histories. Most of her stories are horror centered, though she also enjoys writing stories that aren't necessarily spooky. She enjoys writing poetry as well. Aside from writing, she loves music and listens to just about anything, though her favorite bands/musical acts at the moment are Bathory, Mercyful Fate, and Kero Kero Bonito.

Raydawn McLaurin is from Columbia, Missouri, and she is studying to become a dental hygienist. She has always been artistic and enjoys drawing, making pottery, singing, dancing, and writing. As an African American woman, she has felt the need to speak for people who can't speak for themselves. She had issues with speaking up for herself, but once she found her voice, nobody could take it away. Now she uses her voice for people who haven't found theirs yet.

Gracie McVeigh enjoys the arts, drama, and writing.

Nayeli Mejia is an eighteen-year-old high school student who will graduate from Ottumwa High School in May of 2021. She plans to attend Simpson College to pursue a degree in English. Along with writing, she enjoys cheerleading, cooking, crocheting, and illustration, and she spends all her free time on her artistic hobbies.

Margot Petersen was born in Washington, Iowa, on March 8th, 1993. She currently works for two doctors at a private practice and is going to school for Health Information Technology. She went through some very hard, very dark moments in her life, but it shaped her into who she is today, and for that, she is thankful.

Emily Prescott is from Albia, Iowa, and a first-year student in college. Her major is undeclared, but she is working toward her Associate of Arts degree. During high school she was involved in choir, archery, NHS, and took all available art classes and participated in the art shows, some drama, volunteered throughout the community, and many other opportunities. Some of her hobbies are art, mainly drawing and pour paints, listening to music, and writing. She likes to write poetry, short stories, and sometimes music lyrics. These usually are formed from either her thoughts and emotions, a vivid dream, or a stroke of inspiration from something she saw or that came from nowhere. She has also dabbled a bit into some world-building but still struggles with that. For a while she was struggling to get back into writing again, so she got some of that inspiration back by taking a creative writing class.

Madison Sly, known as Maddie, was born and raised in Ottumwa, Iowa. She likes to have fun with friends and to play softball. Her favorite food is pasta and her least favorite is peas (She really hates peas). Her most important values in life are forgiveness, love, and growth. Without any of those a person wouldn't get anywhere in life. One of her favorite quotes that she lives by is "It is never too late to be what you might have been" by George Eliot.



Elijah Berry

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