



HILLS REVIEW

A Journal of Student Creative Writing
2022 Edition



INDIANHILLS
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Special Thanks to the students who encouraged and supported one another, submitted their creative works, and participated in readings this past year. Also, thank you to the Arts and Sciences Division and Performing and Visual Arts for their support, as well as the Marketing Department for their fine work.

Joy Lyle, Editor

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Ryan Adams

Ode to Music

Music gives us songs of joy
for our hearts and souls to enjoy and employ.

In every expressive measure
there can be found amazing pleasures.

Music helps us to escape life.
It keeps our minds well and alive.

Music makes every day better.

It makes us stronger.

Music helps us heal.

Music makes us feel.

Ryan Adams

The Ocean

As I observe the rise and fall of the ocean waves, it reminds me
of the power both within the tides and myself.

Waves we learn to ride,
always changing in action,
always in movement,
looking far and beyond,
in the day, in the moment, in the stillness.
We can be calm, rough, still
an unknown adventure,
knowing the day will
allow for a peaceful night.

His Hands

His hands are rough and calloused,
stained so horribly.

They are covered in cuts and bruises,
but they are beautiful to me.

They have comforted our crying babies
and dried so many tears.

His hands have rubbed my aching back
and shoulders at night.

They have fixed so many broken toys
and thrown so many baseballs.

They have kept our family afloat
for the last fourteen years at least.

His hands are rough and calloused,
but they are beautiful to me.

To Know the Feeling

Going to the garden I find myself wondering:
How could something so neglected grow?
The two-toned plant that has been outside for weeks
I sobbed, *why must you die?*
I relate to you, I said between weeps.
To be looked after and loved enduringly,
to be fed and nurtured to grow,
but alas forgotten, cast aside and another was bought.
Just as I was going to throw you away,
I saw some green budding on the branch.
I wiped my tears and smirked.
You too can grow when you've been tossed away.
I bring you inside and set you on the windowsill.
Weeks go by, and you've grown;
I have grown, too.
Every day you stand taller than before.
Your white petals are in bloom.
You are whole once again.
You just needed someone to get you there.

'Tis the Season

Alluring snow sticking to the wet ground,
Animals shivering in the trees,
The smell of oak trees brushing through the air,
Wisping through the jacket,
Icicles hanging from Grandma's house.
Freshly baked pies come out of the oven,
Delicious smells of the sweet cinnamon and apple mix,
Sizzling apples soften,
Layered between the golden crusts.
A reflection of a Christmas movie on Grandma's glasses,
A lap covered in a warm and cozy blanket,
The warm, chocolatey taste of hot cocoa,
Flowing between frozen lips.
Calm sounds of the wind,
Not an animal in sight,
Grandpa gets home,
The loud trampling of his boots,
Begging to try the pie.
Christmas joy in the lights on the tree,
Thankful for the times spent with them,
Someday, we'll look back at these moments.

Tired

I'm tired
Tired of the stress
Tired of feeling worthless
Tired in this life of mine

Why has time gone so slow
I just want to grow
Have my glow

Be the woman my parents wanted
But I'm the woman they didn't "raise"
Not satisfied
And I'm not the daughter they wanted

I want to make a difference
But I'm in this dark place
How can I make my parents proud?

I want that crowd
That's cheering so loud,
For me...

Soldiers of Conformity

Small feet disappear in the large prints of superiors,
Each move is mimicked by the younger inferiors.
Striving to be distinguished from each other,
One stumbles from the tracks laid out by another.
Disoriented incipiently she camouflages herself.
She glances forward seeing row after row of thyself.
Behind, younger faces mirror the old grasping for acceptance.
She realizes that they have become clones of expectance.
The experienced are just as foolish as the uninformed.
Mindlessly the line continues, and mistakes are performed.
The ground crunches around her as she etches her story into
the Earth.
The procession halts each stare piercing her before continuing
in their birth.
Her path deviates from the sickening rhythm of conformity.
Within she discovers character despite the lack of uniformity.
She is different; she is renewed; she is strong; she is gracious,
and she is kind.
Faint footsteps follow, for narrow is the path she follows.

Too Late to Be More Than a People Pleaser?

A real joy to have in class, very mature for her age
Biting my tongue, I do all that I've been asked
Crying under the rain of the shower head, music drowning me out
Don't let anyone know you've pushed past your limit
Everyone has their own limits, they'll be rid of you soon enough
Force your smile, focus
Giving more than I have
Holding back and hiding my own truth
Indifferent, incomplete, incompetent, ignored
Just who am I to stand up for myself?
Kneeling against my own neck
Learning to live in the "grey zone"
Meeting everyone with a helping hand
Never there long, go back to the shadows
Often, I fear it too late for myself
Perfecting people pleasing- punishing
Quitting now seems too difficult
Reaching for a goal just shy of my fingertips
Show who you really are to very little, safer
Taking control of your life slowly,
Yet feeling you've let people down by doing so
Ultimately you feel lost
Venting internal fears through words on a screen
What have I done to myself to keep safe?
Xenolith made, a geode, tough exterior
Protecting what fragile crystals rest within
Yet my own mind pushes harder than others- you're worthless
If you can't manage everything
Zealous seems distant when depression knocks on one's door

First Love

Falling in love with her was slow and gentle,
a breeze in late spring that carries the promise of warmer days ahead.
Distance didn't matter when the moon's light shone,
illuminating all that she cast her gaze upon.
Being in love with her was a dive into clear water on a day
where the sun is bare of any cover, the heat visible just beyond where
you stand.
And as I fell deeper and deeper in love with her, I grew, not unlike
a flower
nurtured by a careful hand but willing to stand through the heavy
fall of rain.
But distance is paid with a heavy toll, the banks that once held
so strong
washing away with the ever-persistent current.

Sweet Peach

An orange fading into pink,
a blend of colors that are so unique
yet, they are so recognizable.
With the colors on the outside,
you would not expect what is on the inside,
much like some people you may meet.
A vibrant yellow leaning toward an orange
met in the middle by a core, a seed
that you do not want to eat.
The middle so hard, inedible,
the inside so sweet and delicious,
with an outside skin so soft it just draws you in.
A sweet peach, much like people,
may show a soft side just to have a hard inside.

Emily Prescott

Flames and Waves

She came out of nowhere it seemed,
standing out but remaining hidden.
Her feelings were like the wild ocean waves,
unpredictable and ever changing
with a heart of compassion.
Yet the one she had fallen for held a heart of passion,
protective and always caring
who had a fire in his chest,
and he had lit a vibrant flame within her own.
But all that laid in her heart were embers,
for the uncertainty of love requited.
And her waters would carry woe
because she knew even if this love was shared,
her water would drown his flame
should they become close or torn away.

The Drunken Tale of Benjamin Ellsworth

Benjamin Ellsworth immediately tensed his brow as he regained awareness from a night of drinking. He could see the sunlight through his eyelids, and pain flooded his noggin. Benjamin Ellsworth could have stayed in his starfish position on the ship deck for hours to come; however, the sound of waves crashing against the shore had him scurrying to peer over the railing. There should have never been the sounds of waves crashing. He was supposed to be out in the middle of the sea. His first thought was his boat that guided him back to his small fishing village. It would probably be for the best. He had spoken regretful words.

This was not a recognized fishing village. It was perhaps the most peculiar land he had ever seen. It was far from welcoming. Tall black cliffs stood above his boat. The cliffs were sharp and sculpted. The rough waters had shaped them well enough to make Benjamin startled. To distract Benjamin from his worries, he looked down at the waters. Speckled in them were plenty of fish. It seemed as if they were doing circles around his boat, comparable to a warm welcome. With the number of fish around him, he could supply others for at least a handful of months. Fishing had become scarce at the village, and many of the people had begun to starve as the winter season ended. Benjamin Ellsworth wanted to feed his family's bellies if they'd ever let him back into the house.

Benjamin Ellsworth quickly began the process of fishing. He threw out his thick roped net into the swarm of fish. He wrapped the end of the rope on his pulley to lift up all of the fish. He waited a few minutes, letting everything sink in. His excitement for fish increased by the second. He would be thanked by all for all of the fish he'd supply to the village. When the time was right, he pulled on the rope and hoisted all of the fish caught in the net. He gasped with surprise; so many fish wiggled around in his net. Benjamin struggled to angle the net back onto the deck. On top of his hangover, Benjamin had lost strength over the years. Fishing was not as easy as it once was.

Suddenly, Benjamin Ellsworth heard a high-pitched scream. He immediately stopped lifting and noticed that the sound came

from his net of fish. *Impossible*, he thought. Another scream was shouted, followed by another. He wrapped the rope around the pillar to keep it stable. He noticed a massive fish tale, not even comparable to the other fish. He fell backwards in fright as a face appeared in the net. No nose, scales covered all over. Glossy eyes stared back at him. Webbed hands wrapped around the net, as if trying to break it open. Once it realized it was not strong enough, it turned back to Benjamin and screamed once more. Benjamin Ellsworth had to kill this thing. Whatever it was, it seemed dangerous.

"Dugar!" Benjamin shouted towards the ship cabin. "Grab the spear!" It was like a slap in the face when Benjamin remembered that he was on this fishing trip alone. The *thing* turned down to the water and started screaming again. The screams snapped Benjamin back and he hurried to the boat cabin to grab the spear. When he returned with the spear in hand, the *thing* looked at him and then back at the water.

Benjamin Ellsworth realized that the *thing* was not screaming in horror, but rather communicating with others below the water surface. Benjamin Ellsworth's face fell. He felt hurt, like somehow this netted up siren attacked him. The thing's calls were a reminder of those who were absent on his fishing trip with him, like his son, Dugar. Why did it feel as if this siren was stabbing Benjamin with the spear when Benjamin was the one holding it?

Benjamin heard the sound of a rope untying. The giant net full of fish began to lower. Benjamin was too hungover to tie knots properly. He cursed and immediately turned and ran to the pillar he tied the rope on. However, due to his unstable state, Benjamin wobbled in his faded yellow rain boots, tripped, hit his head against the pillar, and fell into a deep slumber.

The stars twinkled when Benjamin Ellsworth regained consciousness. His memory quickly resurfaced and he scrambled to get up from the ship deck. Struggling to light his lantern to observe his surroundings, Benjamin cursed his throbbing temple. As the lantern was finally lit, he ran to the railing and leaned over, almost throwing his arm out into the sea. Nothing. No sounds of waves crashing against the cliffs, only the calm hum of the sea. He practically lunged to the other side of the boat to observe. Silence, followed by the sounds of his brain falling to pieces, he then moved to the other side of the boat. Nothing. He quickly mustered enough

strength to cross the boat to the fourth side. He saw only the sea that he could see, no absurd islands.

Benjamin Ellsworth took a few moments at the final fourth side of the boat, practically praying for a sign that he was, in fact, not going mental. Finally, after it seemed like half a day of waiting, Benjamin Ellsworth chugged back to his boat cabin, mumbling how he should give up drinking his whiskey and rye. He opened his cabin door and stepped inside. Just as he was about to close the door behind him, he heard the sound of a small plop at sea. As if it was a fish going back under the water. It could have been just a fish swimming at the surface. Perhaps it was the sprinkling of a storm soon close to reach. However, this small sound kept Benjamin Ellsworth from losing his mind. He sat down at his desk in the cabin, pulled out a pen and paper from the drawer, and began to write to his only son.

Blank Walls

I pull up to the house I once knew so well;
I can remember the way it smelled
when mom would bake.
Oh, the smell of those cupcakes!

The smell would fill the air;
it was all we could bear.
My sister would steal one.
There was nothing to be done.

The way the floors creaked,
the wood against my feet.
When we left that house,
we were quiet as a mouse.

The joy began to fade,
but new was to be made.
We drove to a new place,
no emotions on my face.

We walked in the door
and my emotions began to soar;
this place smelled like death,
but I didn't want to be a pest.

I helped my mom bring in our stuff;
I had never felt so rough.
He left us there,
and all I could do was stare.

The rooms were bare,
but I didn't care;
my mom was with me.
That's all I ever needed to be.

Broken Glass

She sits in her window on a cold night;
She had never been with less delight.
She looked and saw the world so proud;
She thought of when she was a girl so loud.
She felt her desire flee her heart;
She now feels lost without that part.
She thinks of her dreams going away;
She bows her head and begins to pray.
She becomes lost in all the games;
She begins to think she is lame.
She is alone;
She is only crying prone.
She feels trembles in her body;
She begins to think she's dotty.
She sits in the window and cries;
She doesn't ask for help; she doesn't want to pry.

Letters to Abigail

The post is late today, for the third day in a row. It's as if it's taunting me. My heart pounds in my chest, well perhaps flutter is a better description, awaiting the arrival of the postman, who will undoubtedly deliver me a letter that's written in sprawling blue ink and filled with wonderful daydreams and exciting occurrences. Abigail does lead a rather exhilarating life after all. She lives all the way in New York and I can only imagine how thrilling it is to live in such a bustling part of America, or even to live in America at all. Hopefully, I'll be able to visit someday, be able to escape with her to the city, and blend in with everyone else. Or perhaps we could move to the countryside somewhere, live our days only in the company of each other and nature.

It is odd sometimes, falling for someone you've never met in person. I've only ever talked to Abigail through letters, and I bet it's nearing a year since we've exchanged our first writings. Her address was given to me by her cousin Anne with a friendly wink and a warm smile; our family has been friends for quite some time, and they've wanted me to marry Anne's brother since we were at least twelve. Of course, I've always refused, maybe in another life, certainly not in this one though.

It's been over an hour since the post was set to come, and I can't help but find it disappointing. I've been waiting for a letter from Abigail for months. I've sent out six of my own in the time I've waited, but to no avail, not even her cousin knows what's happened. Hopefully, she's well. I started worrying by the third week that something was amiss. Oh! There he is now! The postman and he's headed this way! He tips his hat as he approaches and hands me a stack of envelopes, all addressed to my father. I should head home anyway; mother will worry about where I am. At least it's a nice day out. Right on the cusp of Fall. The walk back home should take me a bit, so I'll read the book I've brought with me to keep my mind slightly busy as I walk out of town. Soon enough I see the house in the distance, with my father and brother on the porch having a "men's discussion" (as my father would describe them) and smoking two rolled cigars. Anne grins at me through the window and I grin back, wondering why she's visiting. As I step through the door, I

catch sight of a dark-haired woman with the most beautiful green eyes sitting in our parlor. I almost recognize her from her picture.

“Sarah?”

“Abigail?”

Part Two

So many years have passed since my last letter from Abigail. I keep them in a small wooden box hidden far up and away from my ever-growing children. I look back at them from time to time, reminiscing and missing the past. When I was younger it felt as if I could do or be anything I wanted. But alas I’ve grown, the war has passed, and so has my younger self. I have two children now, Alexander and Amelie; they’re mine and my partner’s joy. I’m married, of course; we wed right after the war. It was sweet and simple. Not *exactly* what I wanted per se, but my parents insisted. Abel is sweet, and we grew up next to each other. I remember playing hide and seek with him in the front yard of our church and teasing each other as young teens. I never expected to marry him, but alas we’ve been together for five years, ever since he asked my father for my hand and we got married on a blistering day in June. As for Abigail, however, we spent so much time together, she stayed with us for months after her first visit and decided to move to England, that is until Abel proposed. I couldn’t refuse anyhow; my parents were tired of waiting. After that, she moved to France and became a writer. Her last letter to me detailed how she was trying to get someone to publish a book that she had written with little to no avail. That letter was sent five years ago, on the night of my wedding. I’ve sent her numerous since, none of which have been replied to. I know it’s either out of jealousy or sadness, but for some reason, whenever I come home I keep hoping that she’ll be sitting on my sofa, that she’ll stand up and hug me as she did before. I know she won’t though; it would be improper now that I’m married with children; I can still have my daydreams though. Oh! I almost forgot, I’m expecting another child soon, in a few months. I hope it’s a girl, no matter how rotten that sounds. Because then maybe I could name her after an old friend I knew; Abigail has always had a nice ring to it.

Part Three

My dearest Abigail,

It has been so long since we have least sent away our final letters, but I feel the need to inform you of my husband's passing. My children, though grown and married themselves, are devastated. I am, too, but I don't feel as though I feel heartbreak as deeply as I should though I do feel sorrow for my children and grandchildren, who have lost such a substantial figure in their lives. My dear daughter Abigail, your namesake, is completely undone by her father's death as she enters the end of her pregnancy. Her poor child will never be able to meet their grandfather. I do hope that time will heal her pain. Though, my children are not why I write to you. I hope I'm not too forward when I ask, do you happen to have any advice for the situation I find myself in? I heard of your husband's passing a few years ago and I can only wonder how you both deal with the grief of one you loved so dearly mixed with the guilt of knowing that your heart was never really theirs. I do sti-"

There is a knock at the door, light, and fluttering. It must be my daughter. I slowly push backward from my husband's desk and stand, smoothing my dress before turning towards the rapping at the door. I think for a moment, then turn back quickly, folding the letter ever so carefully and concealing it in a drawer so that my daughter cannot see it. She does not need to know secrets so dear to me.

The rapping continues, more fervently than before, and I take a deep breath.

"Just a moment!" I yell, starting to make my way towards the door. "Amelie i-" I swing open the door and gasp, for before me stands a woman, older than I last saw her, but with the same green eyes that I remember from all those years ago. "Abigail?"

"I came as soon as I heard."

Tracy Worsham

The Woman Who is Me!

She's short and sassy, sometimes sweet and nasty.

She's smart and savvy, but most of all she's kind of snazzy.

She is aging gracefully in her mind at least; her body's not taking
the job so well.

She's giving and caring, the kind of woman that the world loves
sharing.

She's a wife and a mother all rolled into one.

She's a lover and a fighter, never a quitter even when failure
is inevitable.

She's lived through more than she can tell; some things were pure
hell.

She never gives up on the ones she loves, even when the tears fall
and the pain tugs.

The woman I speak about, she is everything that she should be.

I know her personally because she is me.

Autobiographies

Ryan Adams is finishing his last couple of classes at Indian Hills with a plan to continue his education online to study business management or ag business. He enjoys sports, music, boating, fishing, hunting, and nature. Ryan has spent a lot of time at the ocean, the Lake of the Ozarks, swimming, and reading. He grew up playing sports and on traveling basketball and baseball teams in the summers.

Savannah Burk thinks poetry is beautiful. Poetry is art. Writing poetry is a stress reliever, and it helps clear her mind.

Maria Des Jardins has been writing poems since she was twelve years old. Poetry has always been an outlet for Maria. She is currently getting her Associates of Applied Science in Culinary Arts.

Abigayle Ellison enjoys painting, writing, and trying new things. She plans to transfer to the University of Central Missouri to get her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. Her favorite form of writing is poetry. She enjoys writing poetry about her everyday life. Abigayle developed her love for writing her junior year of high school and that was when she got her first poem published in Appelley Publishing in 2018 and again in 2019.

Sophia Hopkins is a student at Albia High School. She is scheduled to graduate from Indian Hills next year with her Associate of Arts. She wrote a poem about how each generation gets manipulated by the other. She watched the generation beneath her grow up too quickly through the influence of social media and the pressures of the older generation. This inspired her to write about how lost we get when we get too engrossed in the idea of "fitting in."

Rhylie Lisk is a young author and poet who is a proud part of the LGBT+ community. She spent much of her life moving around Iowa and gained different perspectives from having done so. She has been writing since she was young and can often be found writing and reading.

Laci Messamaker grew up in a small town with her mother, older sister, and twin brother. She graduated from Twin Cedars High School in Bussey, Iowa. She is now continuing her education at Indian Hills Community College to complete her Associates degree in Biology. While going to school, she also works full-time as a Team-lead (department manager) at Walmart. While she is unsure what her future and career hold for her, she is focusing on one thing at a time, and right now it is getting through each term.

Emily Prescott is from Albia, Iowa, and is currently attending Indian Hills. She enjoys creating art, writing, and singing. She mainly writes poetry, but she also has written short stories, journaling, and world building. Her inspiration comes from her emotions, personal experiences, and often from random ideas. Writing has been a way for Emily to let loose the many thoughts that fly through her mind, and she hopes to share her works and talents with others.

Lydia Swarney is a 2022 Ottumwa High School and Indian Hills graduate. She transferred to Luther College to major in International Studies and Global Health with a minor in Music. She plans to get a job as an abroad humanitarian relief worker. Lydia enjoys traveling, hiking, kayaking, and reading in her free time.

Olivia Teno graduated from Albia High School. She enjoys writing, art, sports, and many other activities. After graduation from Indian Hills, she plans on attending Upper Iowa University and majoring in accounting. After graduating from Upper Iowa University, she plans on attending the University of Iowa to earn her Master's in accounting. Olivia hopes to work for a large corporation or a hospital after college.

Emma Verellen has a passion for all forms of art but has a particular interest in writing. She hopes to become an author someday.

Tracy Worsham is a student who has lived an exciting and rambunctious life! In her 47 years of life, she has spent her time traveling, raising children, flipping houses, and working in customer service. She loves to write and considers it her passion. Tracy has always been extremely passionate about humanity. From an early age, she paid attention to people and their actions; not many children do this, but to her it was especially important because it is how she learned about the world. Tracy is a self-starter. Doing things on her own has given her strength. Someday she hopes to share her stories with the world.



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Life. Changing.

Ryan Adams

Savannah Burk

Maria Des Jardin

Abigayle Ellison

Sophia Hopkins

Rhylie Lisk

Laci Messamaker

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