





The Cupola

Granby High School's
Literary Arts Journal

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757-451-4110

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Cover Page: Knock, Knock by Prescillia Ervin

Inside Cover: Chipped by Alexis Caudell

1st Place Winner of the 14th Annual Granby High Poetry Contest

Taglish

Jan Vincent Cruz

Nagsasalita ng isang wika ay
tulad ng pagtugtog ng isang instrumento
kung saan hindi mo e pagtugtog
mawala ang iyong kasanayan

Kakailanganin mo ang iyong skills para
maintindihan your family sa pilipinas
tapos you will not forget yung culture
the culture that made you

So do not forget your roots
Roots that are like the Shepherd's tree
that grows deep into the ground
to keep you connected to who you are

Tinnitus

Marjorie Cenese

I have lost the capacity to hear nothing.

-Alex Landragin

A phone call on repeat
calling in the wee hours of morning,
observing my every move,
reprimanding, screaming
until my voice is raw
and the taste of blood mellows
with my tea pot,
whistling with steam.

Only you're undying, ringing
until my own breath stops.
You'll call until the day I die
and my body will continue to weep,
your echoes and screaming
your sorrow, your mourning, your love
fades as my carcass is devoured
by worms and maggots
crawling in and out of my ears.
But I live today as if that is already so
because you won't ever let me go.



In Defense of Looting

Shawna Alston

It always takes too long
They always take too long

We don' t got no more time to waste
No space to create

No more life to give

Stop asking for our patience
Stop begging us to take
what little you decide to give

We waited and we
waited and we
waited some more

No more life to give

Too much of our blood on
your hands
Too much of our blood on
your tongue

We wanna taste
We wanna feel
We wanna
live

No more life to give



Feeling a Voice

Leia Morrissey

Fill myself with words than admit I' m lonely:
talking, chattering
painting images in empty spaces
reciting novels into open air
stand-up comedy being delivered downwind.

But who am I talking to?
Who' s the one receiving these words?
I talk just to fill myself up
with the feeling of letting it out,
the therapy of sharing a message
and releasing my voice to the world –
comforting lull of my own sound.
I know if anything, I' m still listening.
If that' s so, I' m fine.
I don' t know who' s listening to me, for me

at the time
but I' m all I need.



Daydream

Angela Navalta

I lie awake under the galaxy's cloak,
dreaming about the sun. As I look up at
the darkness, I daydream about the soft
sunlight and the light blue clouds.

God

Shiyi Wang

I have always looked up to you. But I will
never meet you, for you are always ahead
of me by a long yet brief second.

Haiku

Four toddlers
eating extreme cheddar goldfish
listening to old school rap music

- *Zach Casey*

A leaf falls
into the pot --
a basil sprig

- *Xavier Gillmer*

A wrinkled nose
over a greased tin bucket
released at dawn

- *Victor Hartov*

Sunny August morning --
Broken branches thrown around
flooded streets

- *Emily Seemar*

The breath of earth
whispers softly
to the trees

- *Elijah Borque*

Nothing is here,
but look closer --
a button!

- *Yvonne Boadi*

The persimmon tree
shading the cool, tall field
of rotting fruit

- *Marjorie Cenese*

A dusty statue
floats on the wet porch --
No, the flooded road

- *Divine Satchivi Akakpo*

Cold coffee
burnt in the pot
leaves my mug empty

- *Charlotte Mann*

The sun was out
but she sat
in the pouring rain

- *Shawna Alston*

Elisha

Shawna Alston

*Elisha's miracles repeat and multiply
elements of the miracles of his teacher
Elijah, from whom he requested 'twice as
much as your spirit.' - Nachman Levine*

Like Widow's Oil
I pour
and flow
and move freely on my own volition

I cannot be contained
by anything accessible

Reach out for aid from
neighbors and friends and
Gentiles
and yet nothing
can slow me down

like Widow's Oil

Mr Fox

Adelé Benda

Like the scripture says:

"Everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree
and no one shall make them afraid"

The fox sits under his own vine

He operates under his own fig tree

many options

Independence

Sylvia Plath sits under the fig tree, watches her figs begin to rot

Mr Fox will rot

Like all the rest
and loneliness

Mr Fox is an island of his own thoughts

He is described as smart... cunning... witty... but he doesn't always FEEL that way

Cats are so independent and smart and BEAUTIFUL says the fox

MR FOX YOU ARE NOT A CAT

*You must be who you were born to be even if you end up 1000 feet below air as you
become, Mr Fox*

Mr Fox I wanted to make you aware: you are drowning

Mr Fox replies:

It's ok, cats have nine lives.

Ashlyn Brady



Crows in Company

Kirkland Butler

One for sorrow:
Covered in flowers
and vines
a man kneels in the dirt
still fresh in his heart

Two for mirth:
A window seat for two
cups of tea steaming
on a winter morning
a blanket covers
the two
with their ringed fingers
entwined

Three for a wedding:
Flowers streaming
the chapel
the veil is removed
and there is clapping
their child sits on the
front row

Four for a birth:
The hospital room is still
except for the crying
of a newborn
the mother exhausted
the father too
their parents are on the way, now

Five for silver:
His car comes up to the side
of the road
a 1969 Stingray
used
the lamplight reflects
off the paint
but pales in comparison
to the beauty he's escorting
to the dance

Six for gold:
They wait for the bus
to school
silent, awkward
strange
because it was never that way
before

Seven for a secret never to be told:
She watches him
as he sits on the bench
watching the other children play
A warmth kindles in her heart

He watches her
talking and laughing in
a big group
radiant and joyful,
as he sits in the tree above

He won't join her until
it's time to go back inside
But still
a warmth kindles in his heart

Honey Continued: Golden Evil

Charlotte Mann

The bees swarm out of the house like taunts. They reach a boy playing with his jacks,

Laughing Jauntily

They I R
C him C
N L
E E

hoping to join the game, but he swats them out of the way. The flies with stingers and an extra bit of color: poke prod and leave his body red all over.

She is still in the attic, licking her lips and looking over her brother with satisfaction in her eyes.



Olivia Slater

Ode to Things Made Undone

Victor Hartov

peering into the glass
mirroring what I choose
not to see
the brick
clutched tightly in calloused hands

builds something
of no shape until
viewed when passed
on the road to a place

yet to be named
I will be there soon or so
I believe

Open Doors:

Isabella Winston

Everyone says
that doors will open
You know?

Doing this
will open a door for you

Even Frozen says
Love is an open door
but
what if this open door
is just
a closet door
You know?





Ashlyn Brady

INTERVIEW WITH

NOAH RENN

SHAWNA ALSTON
MARJORIE CENESE



WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE POETRY?

Wonder and possibility. I consider the act of creation something full of wonder and mystery and something that is wonderful, pleasurable to make and experience. I think poetry presents us with possibility, both in language and in its power to reimagine the world.

YOU TEACH LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE AT ODU. DOES TEACHING LITERATURE, IN PARTICULAR, FRIGHTEN YOU SOMETIMES, SUCH AS GIVING REVISIONS ON STUDENTS' WORK?

Early in my teaching career I definitely had more apprehensions about what I was having students read, or the way I would guide them through the writing of their papers. Teachers on all levels would never want to discourage a student from reading or writing or trying to express themselves, and perhaps there is always a bit of fear regarding that process. But I think now, after teaching all kinds of classes at many different institutions and organizations, I feel confident that I am leading my teaching practice with compassion and understanding. While I still have a lot to learn, I'm inspiring my students to be the best writers they can be.

MORE RECENTLY, POETRY SEEMS TO BE RECOGNIZED AS A WAY TO SPEAK OUT ABOUT POLITICAL TOPICS. HOW DO YOU THINK POETRY AND POLITICS SHOULD COMBINE, IF AT ALL?

I'm not sure there's been a time in its existence where poetry hasn't been political. But you are right, it seems recently more and more people are recognizing it as a means to speak truth to power, to reinvent ourselves through shared experience, and to serve as nourishment against a traumatic world. I delight in poetry's role in civic discourse. I think of my poems, many of which explore the emotional toll of climate change on a person. Even though many are narrative and drawn from personal experience, climate change and its effects are inherently political. This is because the policies created by those in power either allow us to prevent climate change, or they prevent us from addressing it. Also, many climate policies serve government and corporate interests rather than the people that are most affected by it. So, poetry should definitely be overtly political if it must; but even when someone is trying to avoid politics in their poems, it is still present in the subtext.

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR CHAPBOOK *SINKING CITY*. WHAT'S YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS LIKE? SOME WRITERS DON'T WRITE ROUGH DRAFTS; ARE YOU ONE OF THESE WRITERS?

Thank you. *Sinking City* was the result of many years of drafting and revision. Workshops and readings and experimentation with different styles and arrangements-- all these aspects of the process of writing, creation, and making art went into the book. Rarely do poems come out perfect-- for me at least-- so to admit and dedicate oneself to revision is to also admit that we are not perfect. My creative process is mostly trying to practice having a heightened awareness of inspirational or transformative moments, capturing them, and compiling and refining them later in revision. I will say I've never been the most disciplined writer. I don't wake up every morning and write a thousand words, but over the years I've realized I just have to accept the kind of writer I am, and not beat myself up about not having a new book every year.

HOW DO YOU ENCOURAGE STUDENTS AND OTHERS TO 'FIND THEIR VOICES'?

That's hard to explain because the process of finding one's voice is different for everyone. It is important, and the best teachers I've had always told me to find and follow my voice. One thing I always teach my students is to write toward truth and specificity, and that the more you can reveal to a reader of your poem, the more you can learn about yourself.

WE NOTICED IN SOME OF OUR OWN POEMS, WE IMITATE THE STYLES OF THE POETS WE'RE CURRENTLY READING; DO YOU FIND YOURSELF DOING THIS SOMETIMES?

Yes, sometimes intentionally and sometimes unintentionally. One of the best things a writer can learn by trying to imitate another is what they aren't great at. Maybe you are inspired by Clay Matthews' collection of sonnets, *Pretty, Rooster*. So, you try to write a sonnet, and it's tough, so you try writing another-- and it's better but not as strong as those you've read. Then you try again, and it's probably the best sonnet you're going to write, and you are still not really happy with it. You might be learning that perhaps sonnets aren't what you should be writing right now. This is a good lesson.

WHO ARE SOME OF YOUR POETIC INFLUENCES THAT INSPIRE YOU?

Because I grew up learning poetry in a public school system in the 90s, my first encounters with poetry were with those typical poets you find in many public-school curriculums-- Frost, and Dickinson, Hughes and Brooks and then the Transcententials. Those classic American writers (throw Whitman in there too) will always have an influence on my work, but as I got into college and graduate school, I became much more interested in more contemporary works that came from or explored a working-class life that was similar to how I grew up. Poets like Phillip Levine, Gary Soto, Adrian Matejko, and Davis McCombs (to name just a few) really spoke to me and gave me a path to imagine what kind of poetry I could write and what kind of audiences I could speak to.

YOUR CHAPBOOK *SINKING CITY* SEEMS TO FOCUS ON THE CITY OF NORFOLK. HOW DO YOU INTEND FOR THE CITIZENS OF NORFOLK TO RESPOND TO YOUR POEMS?

I hope people who grew up in or live in and around the Norfolk/757 area find my work somewhat compelling, mildly entertaining, and most of all familiar. I hope they can connect to a place or a voice or to the emotional environment I was trying to establish. I hope there's a kid like me who reads it and sees their life is similar to mine-- how close I was to tumbling into dangerous decisions, and an existence without order or direction, and that through poetry, through education, through the act of creation I've resisted (self) destruction, and that they might make it through to somewhere they want to be as well.

*Noah Renn received an MFA from Old Dominion University in 2011. His chapbook, *Sinking City* was released in 2019 from Finishing Line Press. It explores a life growing up in Norfolk, Virginia while experiencing climate change and other environmental threats. He was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 2015. His poetry can be found in *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Whurk*, *30 North*, *Blue Collar Review*, *The Quotable*, and *New Verse News*, among others. His nonfiction can be found in *Cezanne's Carrot* and *Full Grown People*. Currently, he teaches literature at Old Dominion University and leads a poetry workshop at The Muse Writers Center. While themes of environmental conservation remain present in his work, he is writing a memoir in essays about the effects of war and deployment on members of the military and their families.*

Magistra

Noah Renn

Immortal one, bring all in memory to the singer's mind —Virgil

I'm sorry, Mrs. Motta.
It's been twenty years and I'm still on book one of the Aeneid.

Every time I try,
Virgil says, *this poem is about a man at war*.
Then I have to stop reading.

I mostly remember the endings
of the 1st conjugation
recited to the tune of "Mickey Mouse"

O
S
T
MUS
TIS
NT

When you taught us, you said—
you should remember this for the rest of your life.

I'm sorry that I didn't stop Thad when he threw that desk at you,
and that I may have been one of the ones egging him on that day.

I'm sorry Mrs. Motta— you were trying to teach us an ancient language—
I never got how important it is to learn something old.

I remember your story about traveling Europe translating for the U.N.—
the pain in your face, as you shared that bit of your life with us,
told us your past chapters were more epic than your current.

I'm sorry that I tried to use the cognate, pulchritudinous,
It's root, *pulchrous*— or beautiful— to flirt with a girl in class.
I remember how terrible and obvious that was,
but in college I tried it again and ended up marrying her.

I' m sorry for the stress I caused you for four years.
So much so, when I see you in the grocery,
dark and worn from teaching
kids like me who unfailingly tipped
toward failure instead
of having the courage to try.
I' m sorry I don' t say *Hello, you probably don't remember me but...*
And then share my life story, all the wars I' ve soldiered, how I met my wife—
sorry I don' t get to tell you how I' ve become a teacher, in part because of you.

And we' d stand there by the olive oil
remembering together/our shared history.

Magistra,
I' m sorry I never got through Latin 3.
My senior year, in there with freshmen who' d entered ahead—
and even though I cheated off Sully every test,
I still couldn' t pass

and I couldn' t graduate.

I' m sorry I failed,
and *you* had to tell me— and I remember,
at that moment, you felt sad I wouldn' t walk,
and you were trying to tell me I should feel sad too,
but I wasn' t brave enough to care.

Magistra,
I remember *Paenitet me* (I' m sorry)
and *Aegre Fero* (hard to bear).

I' m sorry I doodled in the textbook, which was not mine,
not yours either you said,
and then you wrote the referral.

In his office, Principal Spencer asked me
what the hell I was drawing in there—
Crowns and swords?
Why are you drawing crowns and swords?
Are you supposed to be a king?
King of what?
What story are you in?



Whitney Pierce

First Place Winner of the Sister Cities Literature Competition

My World

Addison Villanueva

There are two of me. One of them you've already met
but the other is one you will
never. I myself have barely had the pleasure of getting
to know that part for it comes and goes.

It's hard to explain to ones closest how they will never
be as close to me as they think they
are. I am a large book filled endlessly with pictures
that cannot fully bring you to a conclusion.

Now even I, myself, am in a far proximity from this other
me and it's on purpose.
To fully understand why I must search deep in the sea abyss
of my mind just to find nothing.

If I were a little bit richer

Marjorie Cenese

If I were a little bit richer,
I wouldn't have to wait
to repair the refrigerator light.
I'd have leftovers stocked in the fridge
and snacks at my fingertips.

If I were a little bit richer,
I wouldn't have to rip my jeans
and wash the sweat from my shirts.
I'd have a new, ethical wardrobe
and lifetime warranty shoes.

If I were a little bit richer,
I wouldn't have worry-filled nights.
I'd dream of sunshine and laughter;
I'd sleep under the roof of one of my houses
and listen to soft lullabies.

If I were a little bit richer,
I wouldn't have my conscious infest my mind.
I'd order meals for 5,000 men, beside women and children
I'd pay in rich, sparkling gold
and say "keep the change."

If I were a little bit richer,
I wouldn't hear the corporate atrocities.
I'd make the factories cooler;
I'd pursue solar and wind energy
and make the world right.

If I were a little bit richer,
I wouldn't hear the bad news.
I'd pay for free healthcare;
I'd roll down hills for fun
and be able to see my great-great-great granddaughters.

If I were a little bit richer,
I wouldn't cower in my stance.
I'd stride with no care in the world.
The world would be my oyster
and I'd ask for more.

Alexis Caudell



Listen

Kirkland Butler

I can create a thousand simulations
But it doesn't beat the stimulation
Of talking to someone in a real conversation
Can you feel my elation
At knowing what responds isn't my own imagination?
The words and ideas transmitted are not my own creation
But of another feeling, breathing, thinking
Soul.
Oh! You don't know
How I've trapped myself inside a tv show
Acting out a part so
I can be accepted or find out what I'm looking for
Grow up!
I don't know my character type
It's not typed on a piece of paper
I can refer to when I'm feeling blue
Cause I don't have a clue
Of what my place is
Unless I'm fulfilling a role
Roll, roll
The clouds like people
Roll on by
As I ask why
They smile and wave goodbye
Don't cry, don't cry, don't cry
You are not a figment of their imagination
A non-existence for their stimulation
They're not coming from your situation
So you add meaning to the conversation
It'll be all right *Breathe*
You don't need to be your own simulation
If it can be changed
Then change it
If it cannot
Then find a way to accept it
Accept the indecision
And the contradiction.
And live despite it



Ashlyn Brady

My Twin Flame

Kayla Galdamez-Lopez

To the one who reads till slumber,
To the one who fights for social justice,
To the one who praises only where it's sweet and heavenly,
I love you.

So, meet me when WE read till slumber,
Meet me when WE fight for social justice,
And meet me when WE praise only where it's sweet and heavenly.



Kayla Shields

Wonderland

Shawna Alston

There's something in the water, but I'm too afraid to look. The last time I looked into the bottom of a glass, it swallowed me whole.

Nothing Lasts Forever

Shiyi Wang

I want to make you love me,
not like life-long lovers,
but like siblings - forever and ever.

The first time I saw you,
your scar caught my eyes,
bright like a diamond,
 a pearl,
 jewelry,
 a stone.
Now, it's worthless.

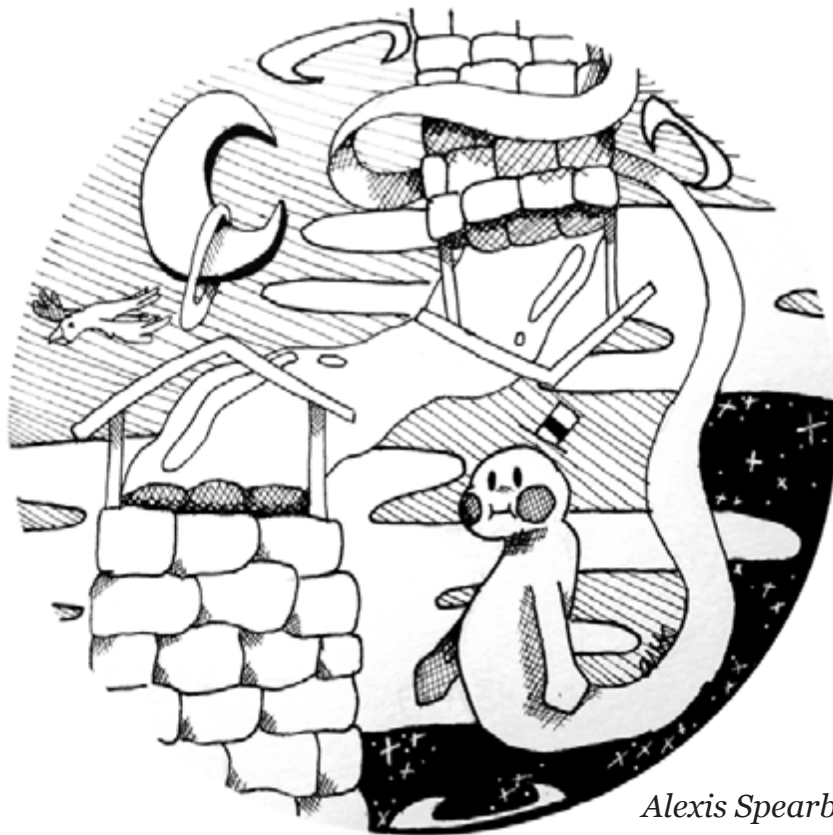
I waited for you
in this life. I will
wait for someone else
in my next life.

It's an endless cycle:
again
 again
 again.

Thanks, Ray

Rebecca Bonheur

I pictured I was the Illustrated Man, covered in tattoos and stories come to life. My mother always hated tattoos. They were permanent and meaningless. But, I loved them. Human skin was a canvas waiting to be painted, and many indulged. Perhaps my parents were just old fashioned. Maybe they didn't have an eye for art. I told them not to worry, I would only get one, and only if it was extraordinarily meaningful, but I longed to become an artistic medium. Although I have yet to get one, they have a reason to expect one in the future and an excuse to hate Ray Bradbury.



Alexis Spearbeck

The Harvest

Ava VanHecke

The entwined mass of roots covered the sky. It was Harvest: men with their ladders plucked apples from the canopies hanging from the clouds. We will not starve today.

The Post-Office Worker

Marjorie Cenese

She never rested. Sweat bore her face and dark circles under her eyes and hair combed to one side and Hawaiian shirts worn all the time. She carried the remnants of the world in her hands each day. She was Hermes only she wasn't. Time gave her gowns and took her hair and hollowed her eyes and gave them tears. Atlas gave her the world, and she carried it through her burning and peeling and yellowing skin and she watched the cattle pass her feet until she was paid with a danake.



Blair White

Blinded by the Starry Lights

Patricia Ortiz

The starry string of lights
blinded me
deprived me
but excited me
in its awestruck sights.
The intense luminosity
drowned me
in the night.

As the sun rose,
I was left with only
ash and burnt clothes.

Fame is a drug.
Life slowly decomposed.
I chose
highlights instead of
the northern lights.

The Street, the Rain, and the Dogs

Haley Van Vliet

I often find myself walking down
a street
It is always night, even when it
is day
It is always raining, even when
it is sunny
There is always one street light
glowing orange
flickering every few minutes
It makes my eyes feel warm and raw
The rain around me feels cold
I do not like the cold or the
light
I do not like the ground I sit
upon
And I cannot blink because the
dogs are watching

The dogs make sure
They prevent me from focusing
They stare at me and whisper words
of doubt
They prevent me from finishing
what I need to do
They make the orange stronger
They are not dogs
They are rabid black clouds of
smoke making my lungs feel orange
and raw
and I do not like them

Sometimes I will retreat
into the park far away from the
orange light now blue

blue and soft and cooler
underneath a roof
where I can be at ease
I am alone and the dogs cannot
reach me

Here, I sit on the dry chair
and focus on the pixelated blue
cube Earth
and I close my eyes and see myself
in a street away from this street
as pianos ring through the distance
Here I can focus
Here
I cannot
hear
the dogs
I cannot
stay here for long

And back and forth I travel
from day to night
doubt to comfort
orange to blue
It tires me
One big fever dream
In the end though
I have trapped myself here
for the ground is me
The dogs are me too
The orange and the blue are me
and I am here

In Gravity's Embrace

Kirkland Butler

He fell slowly at first. It felt slow. He couldn't hear what was happening inside his suit. Over the coms, the techies were shouting about altitudes, velocity, acceleration, and on and on. He turned the volume down. It was just him and the earth below. Increasing in size deceptively slowly. The air pushing against him, struggling to hurl his body back up, but to no avail. The falling man aimed towards a spot of blue: adjusting as he hurtled down at greater and greater speeds. The plan was to hit the water after slowing down with the parachute, but he wanted to test the limit. This feeling wasn't an everyday experience after all. He felt as if he had become a jet himself, just like the ones he used to fly. The earth kept growing, gradually all in his field of vision becoming blue. The sound of his fall was enough now that even his earplugs and helmet couldn't block it out. He gave himself to the adrenaline for a few more moments before sighing and activating the parachute. With a whoosh, it pulled him out of the dive. Now he floated leisurely, just barely inside the troposphere. The fun part was over. Now it was time to work.

Olivia Slater



An Unwanted Visit

Ava VanHecke

I talk to myself but am met with silence. Only when my visitor arrives do I get a response. Every week he comes by on a random day. He breaks in my door and tapes me to the wall. I do not mind this visitor, because he makes me cookies. The only downside is the cookies are made of gunpowder and glue, but when I'm done eating them, I gain the power to kick the visitor out until he comes back another day.

Sisters

Sarah Halstead

Often seen as opposites, one appearing at night, the other during the day; one illuminates the other - hidden. Sometimes, only if the conditions are right, can one see both at once.

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Cupola Staff

Shawna Alston
Kirkland Butler
Marjorie Cenese
Azucena Gordus Huizar
Advisor: Eddie Dowe

Policy

The Cupola features the writing, art, and photography of Granby High School students. The Cupola staff accepts original submissions; final selections are based on individual merit. Works to be considered must be submitted by the designated deadline, which quite often will also be Samuel Beckett's or William Shakespeare's birthdays. Submissions are accepted through English and art classes or may be given to Cupola staff members. The staff reserves the right to edit submissions, including art and photography, when necessary. After publication, rights revert to the author/artist. You can find this year's volume online at Granby's library homepage, including archived volumes.

Colophon

The Cupola is printed by Allegra Marketing, Print and Mail. Cover paper stock is 110 pound gloss and inside paper is 80 pound gloss. Title font is Georgia and body font is FangSong. Press run of 100 copies of 40 pages.

