



The Things I Live For

Reflections from Metropolitan Learning Center
2009-2010

A WITS Digital Chapbook

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All pieces are by MLC students taught by WITS writer Amy Minato

(Cover photo: "Ian, Fireworks" by Olivia Bolles of Grant High School)



LITERARY ARTS

Writers in the Schools Online Chapbook

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Dear Reader,

We ask the poets, graphic novelists, playwrights, fiction and creative-nonfiction writers who work in the Writers in the Schools program to model the writing life. Many of our students have never met people who place writing at the center of their lives or who spend so much time searching for the right words.

During a WITS residency, students develop a writing habit. As one high school teacher put it, “the students developed a new awareness of the writing process, gained self esteem, and were willing to take more risks in their writing.” For professional writers, writing is revision. Each week WITS writers provide students with eagerly awaited written feedback, along with strategies to help students expand and revise their work.

WITS strengthens the literary communities within schools and beyond. In addition to coordinating 48 residencies and 10 author visits to schools, we coordinated 13 student readings attended by more than 650 people. Along with the digital chapbooks located on our blog W.o.o.t.s (at <http://literary-arts.org/blogs/>), we publish a yearly print anthology, available for purchase in independent bookstores throughout Portland or for purchase here: <http://www.literary-arts.org/wits/anthology.php>.

This year WITS began providing tickets and transportation for students to attend Portland Arts and Lectures events at the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall. Seventy-five students from Roosevelt High School attended Isabel Allende’s lecture. Afterward, one student remarked, “I learned that a great story involves the reader, and that good endings leave the audience with something to wonder about.” Another student wrote, “It was great. It was one of the best places I have ever gone. It was really amazing.”

Since WITS began in 1996, we have invested over \$2 million in our partner, Portland Public Schools. Our goal is to build relationships that last and grow over time.

We are committed to providing arts education even in these difficult economic times. Please visit www.literary-arts.org/donate if you’d like to help by making a contribution to Writers in the Schools.

Mary Rechner

Writers in the Schools Program Director

Things I Live For

Zoe Star MacWilliamson

I live for the feeling of the soft leather of a basketball rolling off my fingertips and the sound of the swish it makes as my perfect shot hits the net.

I live for the way my little brother Indy giggles and screams when I pull him into my arms and hold him upside-down by his legs.

I live for the way I can always pick out my dad at basketball games, because he's the only one wearing chunky black glasses and a green and brown Hawaiian shirt.

I live for hearing my dogs bark through our front door and feeling their wet tongues lick my hands and their soft bodies nuzzle against my legs the moment I get home from school.

I live for the bliss of a Slurpie brain-freeze after a basketball game.

I live for music.

I live for the way my favorite TV shows can bring tears to my eyes or make me fall to the ground laughing, no matter what mood I am in.

I live for my family now and for the family I hope to have later.

I live for the feeling of a team, for the friends I've made, for my past, and for the future I hope to have.

These are the things I live for.

Optimist/Pessimist

Emily Villanueva

The sunrise was beautiful this morning.
Wind caressed my face and tugged
playfully at my hair.
Seagulls flew past overhead, their
beaks open wide in song.
The air was fresh and moist from the
nearby ocean, little pockets of mist
skimming the beach.
Another day in paradise.

Dark clouds rimmed the far-off
horizon, heavy with rain.
The stinging wind flew ahead of
the storm, biting and tearing at my
clothes.
Birds screamed at each other, the flapping
of tiny wings filling the air.
Drops of freezing water clung to
my hair, making my face taste of
salt.

Things I Live For

Maddy Chrisman-Miller

Waking up to soft buzzing, and a lit up screen,
a friendly good morning, typed in black.

Jumping and bouncing
and laughing, screaming as we hit the ground.

Stepping through clouds of steam,
into streams of heat and moisture.

Settling into a warm, thinly covered seat
and plugging out chatter and grunts
with soft piano and harsh drums
staring out the window as the city whips by.

Finishing a test,
typing the last word
knowing, it was worth it.
Giggling and chattering,
soothing me to sleep.

Windygrass

Madeline An

Windygrass, windygrass
With the tulip in your hair
White as Snow drenched in blood
Slowly whispers
Oh Lady of the wind
Muse of my soul
Off you float on a cloud made of gold
Screaming through a meadow
Dreadful walking
Sometimes talking
To the burden of my death
Which does greatly affect me on
My journey down to health
But the sun welcomes me warmly
The shadows hide beneath the trees
So everything is clearer
It is this way for me

Things I Live For

Scarlet-Frances Alonzo

I live for the music blasting throughout the house when I am sick.

The mother who saved me at a birthday party.

I love living for the random drawings that my friends make on their shoes at lunch.

My best friend and I teasing each other about stupid things in class.

I live for the mist rising above Wallace Park in the cold winter mornings.

My Muse CD blasting throughout the house and my mom telling me to turn it down.

Green Day singing about the 'Son of rage and love, the Jesus of Suburbia'

I live for eating pie and ice cream at midnight.

I live for Georgia and I singing 'Time is Running Out' in the halls at lunch.

I love living for music and my friends.

Things I Live For

Alexi Bloom-Herring

I live for the sun bouncing off my golden wall
The moment of nonexistence when you dive into the water
The soft tinkling to raucous thunderstorms of laughter
Sitting by the fire on a stormy night
Running through the soft rain and fog

Questions

Marina Harrington

I can see the warm yellow lights shining at me from down the street. As it oozes out the windows, the leaves of the rhododendron section it off like a cookie cutter laying out delicious little morsels to be baked.

Nearing my lovely, tiny little home, I can feel blankets protectively hugging my tired shoulders, hear a voice calling me “kid.” I can feel my whole house saying, “Drink this and tell me where you’ve been.”

...

The cold seeps through my clothes. On the bus my warm skin had slept peacefully, but now it is being roused, beaten, blindfolded, and marched away to dark rooms where bad things happen. My little sister is skipping, and the echo of her steps reverberating off the darkness rips my skull open. Ever since she was born, she has had uncanny ability for making bad situations worse, a skill she has been exercising in full swing tonight. My eyes throb in their sockets, and the few yards left to go could quite possibly be an entire ocean. When I get home, I know there will be questions. Questions and furrowed eyebrows. In truth, my blistered consciousness cannot answer any more questions.

The Things I Live For

Isabel Gerber Hrydolf

Crawling into bed and being submersed in blankets.

Making chocolate chip pancakes
with burned outsides and gooey middles.

Midnight hot tubbing.

Alone on a sunny morning
when my dad calls me dude
and I tease him for being old.

Watching tragic movies with my mom.

Playing cards by candlelight.

In a desert

laughing with friends until I fall over.

Things I Live For

Rory Campbell

I live for the many food carts scattered around Portland.
A jumbo pulled pork with house sauce from the Smokin' Pig,
or a single poutine from The Potato Champion
can brighten any day.

I live for the deep conversations I have with my family.
Whether they're in the car, or at the dinner table,
they linger in my mind hours after they're over.

I live for the summer.
Where life slows down, and you are free,
even if its only for a few months.

I live for my house.
Far enough from the city so it's quiet,
but close enough that I can go into town any and every day.

One Morning

Katy Roy Johnson

Sunlight shines through my blinds, making everything brighter, waking up the to a new day. Music plays from a radio as I get ready for school. A cat walks in purring. Walking to the car, the brisk morning smell washing over me.

Sunlight hurts my eyes as I stumble out of bed. The radio keeps playing commercials, the music disappearing too fast. A cat walks in, knocking over a glass of water, I'm already late. I can't find a towel as the water soaks deeper into the carpet. Walking to the car, I shiver in the too cold morning and they went weather.

Things I Live For

Elliot Coates

I live for:

Warm hugs shared between lost friends, reunited once again.

The feeling of pure accomplishment as I catch my trick,
with my front foot.

Going out to skate in the summer and not coming home 'til our white
T-shirts have turned to a dull shade of gray.

Slipping onto my backside, in the icy northwestern winter.

Sitting in my basement along with my younger brother surrounded by
a gang of bellowing fans, trying to cool off from the molten hot day we
had just endured.

The feeling that I've done my absolute best on a piece of work.

Being so dedicated to a sport that I have literally broken bones to keep
progressing.

...

I live...for living.

Things I Live For

Calvin Porterfield

I live for my brother, for his goofy attitude, his crazy games. I live for comic books, the art, the plots, the fights, the jokes, the feeling that anything is possible. I live for basketball, thinking each move out, slipping up the defense, making a shot, hearing the net swoosh. I live for Oregon, for Portland, for nature. For the trees, the birds chirping, the cool breeze, surrounded by green. I live for my family, for the times my dad and I play outside together, for my sister's illiterate language and her kooky and loving ways, for my mom, taking care of me, talking with me, and for all of them for being there.

My Getaway

Truly Sanders

My getaway is the deep pastel forests,
the crystalline rivers,
the bright, sunny shores
of the imagination

Where your wildest dreams become reality
I can soar as free on the winds as a seagull
not caring about how far away land is
relax and listen to nature's song

This is my ritual

Taste the smell of the pine trees
sour-bitter-sweet in one as in song
and when the time comes to return to Earth
I simply open my eyes

What I Live For

Aine Kennedy

I live for the way my best friend giggles at our stupendous jokes,
it comforts me like a baby's hug comforts their mother.

I live for late night phone calls with her,
talking about absolutely nothing relevant.

This is what I live for.

I live for the way my little brother says, "I wuv you,"
it warms my heart like nothing else does.

I live for his adorable, three-year-old angst,
telling me that I'm wrong and he's right.

This is what I live for.

- Coils.

I Escape

Avi Goldberg

I escape to my mind as I free myself of all chores, responsibilities.
My mind soars upward. I think of nothing but the gliding of my brush
over canvas. I think of nothing, as I swing, the constant moving angle
of the sky and objects around me. I think of nothing as I feel the wind
on my face, carrying a scent of healthy dirt, plants,
and trees. I smell the familiar scent of my home.
I feel the soft and steady movement of my wrist and arm.
I hear the creek burble, birds chirp and the river roar.
I am calm as I enter back into the world of others.



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