

Gateway
VOICES

Introduction

The Gateway Institute for Pre-College Education directs programs for talented minority and low-income youth in eleven public high schools across the City of New York, with a curriculum emphasizing motivation and preparation for higher education. This past fall, we put out a call to all our schools for students' literary work to be published in a new journal, *Gateway Voices*, that would showcase the creative diversity of these young authors.

We launched the project in mid-semester with a January deadline that was unfortunately too tight for some schools to meet. Nevertheless, Gateway teachers and coordinators in eight schools submitted so much impressive student writing that it was a real challenge to select the best. Those participating faculty members are gratefully acknowledged as "Contributing Editors."

In our choices, we looked for creative energy and originality. Although we did not originally announce a theme, one began to emerge regarding old and new myths. Several students sent in wonderful fables, while others examined the contemporary relevance of ancient Greek and Roman legends. Some pieces reflected on the ever-evolving individual myth that each of us considers throughout our lives: "Who am I?"

Myths are stories we tell to make our world seem more stable and comprehensible. We close this issue with a section about events so sudden and horrendous that they remain beyond the power of myth to tame. Several Gateway students witnessed the burning and destruction of the World Trade Center towers, and one of them photographed the scene; their accounts are documented in these pages.

We hope that you will enjoy reading the sampling of student talent in this issue of *Gateway Voices*. We see the journal as a place where students can encounter the ideas of their peers throughout the Gateway community, and we hope this first installment will encourage more submissions of original writing and art for publication.

For more on the Gateway Institute, visit <http://gateway.cuny.edu>.

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Who Am I?

BY YESENIA SANTIAGO

SOPHOMORE
LAFAYETTE HIGH SCHOOL
BROOKLYN

Who am I?
Am I just a girl?
Am I just a student?
Am I just a sister?
Am I just a daughter?
Am I just a cousin?
Am I just a friend?
I sit still in my thoughts,
Pondering for a while.
And then it hits me.
The answer!
I am all of those things and more.
I am a human being just like others.
But, to put it simpler
I'm just me!

You

BY REBEKA WILSON

EIGHTH GRADE
QUEENS GATEWAY HIGH SCHOOL
QUEENS

You are the gum that I always step in,
You are the failing grade, even when I'm in school.
You are a cavity on Halloween.
You are the virus on my 3.5" floppy disk,
The test I didn't study for, and
The teacher I despise who never retires.
You are the worm I dissected in biology
That made me want to puke!

"Yo Shorty, can I Holla'?"

No.

But you can get your
Doo-rag wearing,
7th grade education having,
take the bus 'cause you failed your
driving test 5 times
self
outta' my face
'cause I don't wanna'
get with YOU.

Who Am I?

BY CRISPIN BOOKER
SOPHOMORE
LAFAYETTE HIGH SCHOOL
BROOKLYN

Do my clothes determine who I am
Is my religion going to tell who I am
Do my emotions play a part in this
Unanswered question
Do my fears, goals, and dreams
Tell me anything to help me answer this question
If I play a sport does that mean I will be a superstar
If I use a computer does that mean I will be the next Bill Gates
If I go to church on a regular basis and I read the bible will I
Become a minister
To me I am who I say I am
That's my answer

Strawberry

SAMANTHA RAMAUTAR

FRESHMAN
JAMAICA HIGH SCHOOL
QUEENS

In the beginning, there was no sun, but a great tree of light that grew in the center of the heavenly island. It lit the world of heavenly beings and cast its light down on the dark waters of the lower world. So it was that the Grandfather of All Creation lived by the Tree of Light where he tended the plants and cared for the animals. Sometimes, the waterfowl, hawks, and eagles flew down to the dark waters of the lower world; heavenly turtles and muskrats swam on its surface and bathed in the light of the heavenly tree. When the Grandfather's work was done, he sat by the Tree, assessing his world around and below him. Sometimes he ached for company, perhaps a wife who would sit beside him in the evening, watching the great birds flying beneath them.

The Grandfather of All Creation fell in love with a young woman whose style and beauty charmed him. Despite the difference in their ages, he yearned for her. He then took her to be his housewife. But like many old men before and since, the Grandfather of All Creation found that he had made a mistake. The young woman laughed and sang too much, and she talked incessantly. She asked too many questions. Why do the leaves of the Tree of Light shine? Who created the Upper World? Who named the plants? Grandfather was still charmed by her beauty, but was bothered by this incessant noise, her constant laughter and questions!

The young wife's chatter became so irritating that the Grandfather of All Creation began to avoid her. Each time he returned home, he found everything out of place. She talked to the animals, uprooted the plants, and interfered with the old man's orderly life.

One day when he returned home, he found that she had uprooted the Tree of Light and was peering into the great hole down to the rolling waters of the dark world. Many of the heavenly animals had gathered to watch and she talked excitedly about what she saw. It was then that the old man lost his temper. While the young woman was still on her knees looking into the great hole in the floor of the heavenly island, he kicked her into it. Down she went, falling straight through the hole. In her effort to stop her descent, she grasped frantically at the plants and animals inside the hole. Many things fell with her: heavenly deer, rabbits, and squirrels, corn, beans, and squash . . . and many kinds of berries!

When the birds of the upper world that were flying over the waters of the lower world saw the young woman falling through the air, they rushed to save her. They created a great blanket with their wings in which they caught her. Where should they put her? As they wavered above the deep waters, a great turtle surfaced and said, "Here, place her on my back." The birds descended with the young wife, from now on known as "Sky-Woman," and placed her on the surface of her new home, the Middle-World, or the Earth. Here Sky-Woman lived surrounded by the plants and animals that had fallen with her. When she touched the earth, it grew in all directions, becoming the bountiful earth that we know.

The earth became a lush garden filled with giant vegetables and animals. However, a man rose from under the water. He was called "Ocean-Man." He came to live with Sky-Woman because she was lonely. After living happily together for some time, they had a quarrel. Ocean-Man was irritated by Sky-Woman's incessant noise and constant laughter.

Harsh words were said on both sides. Finally, Sky-Woman announced that she was leaving. Taking a few possessions, she set out at a rapid pace. "I am going to find another place to live," she told her husband. "You are very lazy and pay no attention to me." In a short time, the husband regretted his harsh words and tried to overtake his wife so he could apologize. The wife began to find berries: huckleberries, blackberries, blueberries. She wasn't tempted by them. Intent on her journey, she came to a field of strawberries. Here she stopped, and as she plucked and ate the "fruit of heaven," she forgot her anger. Finding a basket among her possessions, she quickly filled it and retraced her steps. The man hurrying on his way was surprised to see his wife returning. She was smiling! Her hand dipped into her basket, and she rubbed his face with crushed strawberries. He smiled foolishly. Taking his hand, his wife led him back on the path to their home, feeding him strawberries along the way.

My Song

SARA ELSAYD
SOPHOMORE
LIFE SCIENCES HIGH SCHOOL
MANHATTAN

So easy to love.
So hard to like,
Family ties
Consequences, lies
The happiness
Surrounding the room
Great beats of laughter
Before and after.

Forgiving, forgetting, loving, and hating,
Mismatching and replacing
Doubting the making

Friendship fills the air
In one way or another
Then a smash of the face
But there's always room to replace
The happy plus the sad
Might make it all worthwhile
Sitting there with an uneasy smile.
Life goes on and times change
Sometimes you just need to rearrange

Forgiving, forgetting, loving, and hating
Mismatching and replacing
Doubting the making

Loving, what a feeling
The smooth and easy rhymes
Those unforgettable times.
The stare of the eyes
Makes you run wild
The beating of the heart
Blood pumping in your veins
Knowing it will always last
Without any pains

Forgiving, forgetting, loving, and hating
Mismatching and replacing
Doubting the making.

The Legend of the Oriole's Colors

JOBE WALKER

FRESHMAN
JAMAICA HIGH SCHOOL
QUEENS

Once upon a time, long ago after the world was created and creatures were made, human beings and animals tried to follow the sun. For thousands of years, they worshipped the sun for its guidance and mercy. One day, the animals all gathered at the top of the hill and asked, "Where does the sun go when it goes down?" and watched it rise and set into the ground.

The animals attempted to go to the sun. They sent a bird and they hoped it would return and tell them where the sun goes. Many, many days went by and the bird never returned. The sun was very angry at the animals, so it went higher into the sky and beat down on them. The humans prayed for the sun's mercy, but the sun said, "The only way that I will stop is to order the animals not to follow me again."

The humans went and told the animals what the sun had said. The animals agreed to obey. The sun stopped its excruciating heat and set back into the earth once again.

Many years later, the animals and the humans stopped being friends. The humans killed animals, the animals stormed back to kill humans. The sun was saddened and it left for a long time.

The humans and the animals continued fighting. Many animals tried to find the sun so it would warm up the earth, but they all turned up empty. The weather was cold and many animals and humans died. They started to pray for the sun to return to their land. The sun didn't answer.

The animals said that the sun had gone to the other world. It would take a very talented bird to fly to the other world. No animal had ever tried and nobody could tell if the bird would ever return. After days of debate, they chose the oriole for the flight.

Oriole was excited to go. He thought that his light coat would hasten his journey. He left the next day, and seven days and seven nights went by before the oriole reached the sun's palace. He asked the sun to forgive the humans and the animals, but the sun said, "I won't forgive the killings." Oriole said that the humans and animals were very sorry.

The sun got mad because he had given orders not to send anyone to follow him again. He screamed at the oriole and burned him everywhere except in one spot. Oriole stole fire from the sun and flew out of the palace.

When Oriole returned, no animal or human recognized him. He told them that he was burned but he had something to keep them warm. Oriole's chest had turned orange from the fire. The animals and humans praised Oriole for his courageous deed.

So this is the reason why the oriole is black with an orange flame on its breast.

I Come From

DIANA TAVARES

SOPHOMORE

ADLAI E. STEVENSON HIGH SCHOOL
BRONX

I come from a family that shares hugs and kisses.
I come from the Saturdays that we used to play loud music and clean.
I come from a family that is concerned for each other.
I come from a family that is not perfect and has problems.
I come from a place that is fun and loud.
I come from times shared apple picking.
I come from a church that prays and believes in God.
I come from expressing myself in dance.
I come from expressing myself in silence.
I come from expressing myself in goofy ways.
I come from being in charge of myself.

Strong Caribbean Woman

RENE ROBERTS

SOPHOMORE

LAFAYETTE HIGH SCHOOL
BROOKLYN

Who am I?
Can you guess?

I am a black woman
A strong Caribbean woman

I have walked in bare feet
On very long dirt streets

I have worked hard and toiled
In hot weather on hard soil

I rub and I scrub over a steel tub
With bars of soap hard like gum

My pots and pans are always shined
from morning, noon, and night grind

My hands are tough
My feet are rough

My work is my pride
that is what makes me
A strong black Caribbean woman

How Polar Bears Lost Their Color & How They Lost Their Tails

SHAVAUN JENKINS

FRESHMAN
JAMAICA HIGH SCHOOL
QUEENS

Once upon a time there lived a bear with a long and beautiful tail. All he would do was brag about it. “Look at my tail. Isn’t it so beautiful, perfect, long, and shiny . . .” (and things along those lines). Everybody got tired of him talking about his tail, but they were too afraid to tell him. Bear was very sensitive about other people’s opinions of him, and if he didn’t like their opinion, he would make sure they knew.

So one day Fox decided that he couldn’t take it anymore. Everyone knew that Fox was always sly and mischievous. One day while Fox was fishing with his paw, he suggested to Bear that if he used his tail and tried another fishing hole he might get more fish. Bear thought about it and saw that he was only catching one fish with his paw so he decided to follow Fox’s advice and use his tail. The Fox went on home to have his dinner. When he came back to check on Bear, he was sitting there with his teeth chattering because it was so cold. Fox asked him if he had caught any fish. Bear told him that he wasn’t sure and that he couldn’t feel his tail anymore. So Fox helped him pull his tail up. But when he did, the long, beautiful tail broke! Bear was shocked. He asked Fox what happened. Why did his tail fall off? Fox told him that he should have never left his tail in the hole for so long and he walked off.

The next day nobody heard from Bear. Many people started to worry about him. So some people decided to go out to his den and find out what was wrong with him. When they knocked on the door nobody answered, so they invited themselves in. They found him lying in bed. They asked him what was wrong and he told them his story. They said that he would get over it and after a while they left. The next day they still didn’t hear from him, so they returned to his den and saw that he looked a little pale. They asked him when he had eaten last. He told them that he had not eaten since the day when he had lost his tail. So they made him some soup and left. The next day he started to look a little yellowish-white in the face. They told him to get over it and left again. The following day and the day after, they didn’t even bother to visit him. The next time they did, though, they regretted it. His fur was all white so they decided to call the doctor. Bear was put through a thorough exam. The conclusion was that he would never be able to grow back his tail, but he could get his color back if he started eating again. So he did.

In the end, Bear never got his color back but he did find a way to get over the loss of his tail. He got new, clean, white fur! This is how polar bears lost their tails and how their fur turned white.

How the Peregrine Tundra Falcon Got Its Name

JAHVEL FRASER

FRESHMAN
JAMAICA HIGH SCHOOL
QUEENS

The Peregrine Tundra Falcon was an unknown species until the sun goddess discovered it. Now the Peregrine Tundra Falcon is a well-known species.

On a nice and sunny day, the sun goddess was shining the sun all around. The people were happy because the sun goddess made the day happier by shining the sun. The sun goddess was very happy because the people were pleased with her work.

The next day the sun goddess shone the sun again. She looked around to see the people admiring her work. She looked down over the frozen tundra of Beach Channel. The goddess saw a medium-size figure in the tundra. She swooped down and landed on the tundra. The object she was looking at was a bird. She noticed that it was alive, so she decided to try to break the ice with the sun. She tried so hard that she burned out the sun, leaving the people to live in darkness. They became angry, and started to hate her. She wanted to find a way to make it up to the people as well as to free the bird.

The sun goddess flew back to her kingdom. She wanted to ask the fire god to help her break the ice. After she decided to ask him, she flew to his house. She rang the doorbell. The fire god came to the door. The sun goddess then realized that he was not too bright. She asked him if he could break the tundra anyway. The fire god replied, "I don't know you."

The goddess said, "Never mind," and went to the ice god. When she got to the door, she heard music. She suddenly got the urge to do a dance. After she danced, she knocked on the ice god's door. He answered. The sun goddess asked if he could crack the tundra so that she could free the bird. The ice god said, "No, you only come to me when you need something." The ice god then slammed the door. The sun goddess was angry.

The sun goddess knew there was only one person who could possibly help her, so she went to Zeus, the highest most powerful god. She asked Zeus if he could break the tundra. Zeus said, "You are the weakest link, g'bye!!" The sun goddess realized that she wasn't wanted, so she decided to take one of Zeus's lightning bolts when he turned his back. She got a hold of one. She took half of it and put it near the sun, so that it could gain its light again. She used the other half to crack the tundra. She placed it on the tundra, and it cracked. The bird flew out. She realized it was a falcon. She named it a Peregrine Tundra Falcon because it was dumb for going under the tundra. That is how the Peregrine Tundra Falcon got its name.

How the Caterpillar Became a Butterfly

SANDRA REYES

FRESHMAN
JAMAICA HIGH SCHOOL
QUEENS

In the beginning there was only night and day. The Creators had become very idle and so they decided to occupy themselves by doing something. They therefore began the creation of the earth and decorated it with plants, rivers, and so on. When they were done they felt pleased but noticed that something was missing.

After having a discussion on how to fill the emptiness they had seen, the Creators decided to make creatures of all kinds. They created land and water creatures such as fish, four-legged animals, and insects. When they were done with their creations, they were finally pleased and decided to observe the creatures to see if any changes had to be made.

When some time had passed the Creators noticed that all but one creature, Caterpillar, were content. The Creators therefore decided to focus on Caterpillar to find out the cause of his unhappiness.

Caterpillar was a small greenish insect that had many legs, plenty of food, and lived on the leaves of plants such as trees. He spent most of his time looking at the sky above and the ground below, and sighing afterwards. Caterpillar's discontent finally became so great that the Creators became very worried and decided to ask Caterpillar what the reason for his sadness was. Then one of the Creators went to him and said, "Dear creature, tell us, your creators, what it is that has left you with an overwhelming feeling of sadness?"

Caterpillar responded, "Oh, you are right, my fathers, but what it seems you have failed to notice is that with these other animals flying around or walking, there is no way for me to socialize with them, not having a way to move around." When Caterpillar was done the Creators told him to wait there while they thought of a good solution to his problem.

When they had decided on the perfect solution to Caterpillar's problem they went back to him and told him what to do. They said he must first build a covering around himself that would be called a cocoon and must then remain there for a period of time before coming out.

Caterpillar, being very anxious to see what would happen, immediately began to do what he was told. When a certain period of time had passed Caterpillar came out of his cocoon and found out to his delight that he had wings. He was so happy that he became flushed and his wings became covered with a variety of colors making him look more wonderful than ever. And from that day on Caterpillar became known as Butterfly by the rest of the animals and goes from the change of caterpillar to butterfly so as to remember to be grateful for his features.

The Sunset, Sunrise, and Rainbow

CRYSTAL EDWARDS

SEVENTH GRADE
LIFE SCIENCES HIGH SCHOOL
MANHATTAN

Once when time began, and earth was still developing in the time of the first human beings, there was a goddess whose name was Soli. Now Soli was often called the creator by the people of earth because she made the earth, the stars, the mountains, and the valleys. Soli was very proud of her work and how the people worshipped her. She had long, beautiful black hair and the most alluring blue eyes. She was tall and elegant and she loved all living things. Soli floated among the heavens as if she were a holy spirit, and she was adored and worshipped by all. Every day she wore a light blue dress that had beautiful rainbow tassels that covered the heavens.

Soli lived in a temple in the sky and she made it so that only those of a pure heart could travel to speak with her. She was convinced that she had made earth perfect, until one day a young man came to her and begged to speak to her. Her spirit descended from the stone statue of her and said, "Who may I ask are you, young man?" "I am Aros," said the young man. "And why are you here?" said Soli. "I am in great need of your help, O great goddess and creator of all," said Aros. "What has brought you on this great journey to my temple in the sky?" said Soli. "We the people of earth have the sun to light up the day and the moon to light up the night, but never do we have any beautiful colors in the sky in the day or when night becomes day," said Aros. "Hmm, I see your point," said Soli, sighing.

"Well I don't know what I can do for the people of earth," she said sadly. "I know," said Aros, "you can use your dress and its beautiful tassels to create the colors, O great goddess," said Aros. "Well that may just be the perfect idea," said the goddess. So she took a piece of cloth from her blue dress and created a blanket of sky that covered all of earth. "Now there's the darkness between night and day," said Aros. "Oh, yes," said Soli. So she took the tassels from her dress and separated night from day. She called one sunset and the other sunrise.

"It's beautiful, but what will we do to celebrate this wonderful new day?" said Aros. Without a word Soli smiled at Aros. Then she took seven beautiful tassels and placed them in front of the sun and said, "My fair creation, the bringer of all light, please shine your lovely golden rays of light on my tassels so that this new day of color and virtue may be perfect." The sun brightened the sky and the tassels became the seven colors of the very first rainbow.

The Compass

BERECHIAH ADAMS
& ROBERT PAGÁN

JUNIORS
HUMANITIES HIGH SCHOOL
MANHATTAN

Prologue: Roland looks onto the battle-torn hill and can't help but feel a deep sadness in his heart. He recalls the six months of endless battle, the nights he stayed half-awake waiting for the enemy to break through the door, the countless soldiers who died and whom he never got the opportunity to know. He recalls the ache in his side and thanks the gods that the blade didn't take his life. All of a sudden, a voice from the distance calls out:

"Roland, we don't have all day!"

"Sorry, I'll be right there," Roland yells.

Roland runs down the hill and meets up with Rayon, who is still wearing his armor and carrying his blood-stained ax. His long red hair covers his eyes as he looks upon his beloved comrade.

"Are you done now?" Rayon says angrily.

"Sure," Roland says. "There's no reason to come here anymore."

It's hard to imagine that this war was due to a misunderstanding with the Royal Family. The Royal Family was the living peace treaty among the three nations of Hyklain. Akain, Deneb, and Zin each claimed the other as blood brothers uniting these three nations. After the treaty, the land of Hyklain bloomed with science, art, and trade. A road was built to diminish the racial gaps between these nations, but a dark era would come over the land. King Obrah, ruler of the Zin kingdom, who helped a great deal through negotiation and enforcing the treaty, was killed in his living room. There was a rumor that it was his son Prince Rahl who killed him because Obrah was going to give his throne to the high priest Banzar, but this was never proven.

Prince Rahl believed that the Royal Family ignored the needs of Zin because his father was too passive and let the "lesser nations," as the prince called them, take advantage of his kindness. He promised his people that he would not let the Royal Family drain his nation of life, and he began a violent exploration campaign against the family led by his younger brother Grayton. He started to gain territory in the south, which was forbidden to all nations under the royal family treaty. Akain and Deneb tried their best to stop the Zin but didn't want to provoke them into war. They ended all trade with the Zin and closed all roads that connected their nations to them.

As the fleet moved south, they gained control of the villages and towns in their path. Any difficulty was taken care of in the most appalling manner. Prince Rahl gained control of all the natural resources, such as silver and gold and other valuable metals. His empire grew four times as large and slowly became the most powerful nation in all Hyklain.

King Deneb, leader of the Deneb, knew that it was only a matter of time until Prince Rahl saw the kingdom of Deneb as prime real estate. So he began to rally his army at the city-state's border waiting for Rahl to make the first move.

Soon, Grayton and his fleet came across Mount Ruth. The Royal Family believed that the mountain was haunted by a demon who had been killed by the gods and whose soul was imprisoned in the mountain. As a sign of respect, it was forbidden to go anywhere near it. Prince Rahl thought of it as a fairy tale that his mother had once told him and commanded his army to take it over. He thought that the mountain would be a great source of metal, and, once

it was controlled, he could attack the remaining nations of the Royal Family.

In a matter of days, the Zin began to seize the precious metals from the mountain. Swords, spears, shields, and armor were also made there to help keep the mine secret. A miner began digging deeper in the cave and found a cavern filled with ancient treasures and weapons. Out of all the jewels that filled the cave, a black ruby which was kept in the center of the room lured the miner to it. It gave off a misty glow that took control of his every thought. As the miner moved closer, he could hear the screams of a man being tortured grow louder with every foot-step he took.

He was within a hand's reach of the ruby and breathing hard as if he were running up a hill. He began to think of the many riches that this jewel would bring him. No longer would he have to work in this disgusting cave and he would be able to move his family elsewhere. As he picked up the jewel, he let out a horrible scream of pain. The dark surface of the ruby stuck to his hand, digging its shapeless claws down into his skin, ripping at every fiber of his being.

The miners felt a rumble under their feet as if the mountain was screaming. All of a sudden, the miner, deformed by the ruby, leaped out of the room and attacked the miners. The beast's claws ripped through their skin like paper, spilling their blood and guts all over the mountain. The guards fought the beast with their swords but found that they only enraged it. The others who watched in horror as their coworkers were devoured whole by this beast had no choice but to drop their weapons and flee for their lives.

Some were so petrified by the sight of the beast that they lost all feeling in their legs and collapsed. The monster made short work of them. The others ran down the mountain with all the speed that their legs had to offer. Some even began to roll down. Those in front listened in horror to the unlucky ones behind who fell to the black beastlike creature. Some who chose death by any other means flung themselves off the mountain. I know the last thing on their minds as the monster's claw ripped them in half in midair was "I was so close."

As the next group of guards went up to the mountain, they saw the devastation the beast had left behind in its haste. Hands, legs, heads, and other body parts were scattered all over. As the horrified miners looked around and conferred with each other, a dark, familiar figure watched them. The beast walked into the deep forest, its hunger satisfied—for now.

Prince Rahl declared the event an act of war by the Royal Family. It had brutally killed sixty-eight miners, including his beloved brother. Akayah and Deneb tried to convince Prince Rahl that it wasn't a member of their kingdom who had committed the revolting act. Even if the Royal Family didn't do it, Rahl saw it as a perfect opportunity to put out his anti-Royal Family propaganda to his people. And so that was the beginning of something more than a war . . . it was the beginning of an epic.

Forbidden Knowledge: Sisyphus, Prometheus, & Modern Science

WARDA ZAMAN

SOPHOMORE

ADLAI E. STEVENSON

HIGH SCHOOL

BRONX

Scientists who have tried to heal the sick and enable infertile women to become pregnant by in vitro fertilization emulate Prometheus and Sisyphus, two heroes of ancient Greek myths, writes Warda Zaman.

Hades, the god of Tartarus, the underworld land of the dead, punished Sisyphus, the king of Corinth, for deceiving him with an elaborate scheme. At the time Sisyphus was sentenced to die, he asked his wife Merope not to bury his body. Then he went to Persephone, the Queen of Tartarus, and pleaded for his life. She allowed him to come back to the land of the living, on the condition that he return in three days, which Sisyphus did not honor. When he finally died of old age, Hades condemned him to spend eternity in the underworld rolling a gigantic stone up a steep slope. Whenever the boulder reached the summit, it rolled back down again and Sisyphus had endlessly to endure the cycle. Despite the laborious and frustrating task, Sisyphus felt a sense of accomplishment each time he reached the summit.

Prometheus was a Titan from a gigantic race. He stole fire from Zeus, the king of all the gods, to engender life in man. He took clay from the earth and kneaded it with water. He gave man an upright stature, so that, unlike all other animals who turn their faces downward toward the earth, he could raise his head toward heaven and gaze at the stars. Prometheus used the fire stolen from Zeus to spark life in human beings. He was severely punished for this act by Zeus, who chained him to a rock in the Caucasus Mountains. Every night an eagle came and ate Prometheus's liver, which, day after day, grew back to its original state.

Using the metaphor of Prometheus, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley wrote the novel *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, in which Victor Frankenstein possesses benevolent intentions, but in the end his creation turns into a monster.

Frankenstein can indeed be considered a "modern Prometheus": He takes God's place and creates life himself. He becomes the creator instead of being created. Like Prometheus, he creates life from fire, which in his case is electricity:

I beheld a stream of fire issue from an old and beautiful oak. . . And so soon as the dazzling light vanished the oak had disappeared, and nothing remained but a blasted stump. . . . I eagerly inquired of my father the nature and origin of thunder and lightning. He replied, "Electricity."

Despite Frankenstein's fervent passion and enthusiasm, he abandons the creature that he has fathered in the laboratory. He describes his creation in the following words:

His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing . . . [it] formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same color as the dun, white sockets in which they were set, his shriveled complexion, and straight black lips.

As was Prometheus, Frankenstein is also punished, but by his own creation. The creature is acute and sensitive and closer in character to Sisyphus. Alone, he struggles to find his place in human society and to answer fundamental questions about his identity:

But where were my friends and relations? No father had watched my infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses; or if they had, all my past life was now a blot, a blind vacancy in which I distinguished nothing. From my earliest remembrance I had been as I then was in height and proportion. I had never yet seen a being resembling me What was I?

The creature never gives up. He learns to speak, read, and write so that he can attempt to communicate with people. Like Sisyphus, the creature perseveres, but fails each time to reach his goal.

Among modern scientists, the British chemist and physicist John Dalton, who developed the atomic theory on which modern physical science was founded, can be considered a Prometheus-like figure. Dalton was born in England on September 6, 1776, and spent most of his life as a teacher. His most important contribution to science was the atomic theory, which defined matter as being composed of atoms differing in weights that combine in simple ratios. This theory, first advanced by Dalton in 1803, is the cornerstone of modern physical science. The Prometheus myth could serve as a metaphor for the discovery with which he tried to help mankind.

Victor Frankenstein and John Dalton embody the Prometheus myth in their pursuit of forbidden knowledge, but it is the physicist Leo Szilard who assumes the role of a Sisyphus-like figure. Szilard was born on February 11, 1898, in Hungary. Most likely, he was the first scientist to conceptualize how an atomic bomb might work. Years later, he wrote that the concept of a nuclear chain reaction “suddenly occurred to me” in September 1933 while taking a walk through the streets of London.¹ The chilling idea of what Hitler could do with such a bomb convinced him to keep the concept a secret. Like Sisyphus, he also had an elaborate plan. In 1938, Germany invaded Poland, and after its scientists split a uranium atom, Szilard realized that the race was on to make the atomic bomb. In August 1939, he wrote to President Franklin Roosevelt pointing out the frightening consequences if Germany were to succeed in making the first bomb. In order for his letter to carry more influence, Szilard asked his colleague Albert Einstein to sign it instead of himself.²

Then in 1945, Szilard asked to meet with Eleanor Roosevelt in the hope that she could convince her husband of the danger of a nuclear arms race. She agreed to see him on May 8, but, unfortunately, Franklin Roosevelt died on April 12, the very day that Szilard received Mrs. Roosevelt’s letter. Next, he tried to persuade President Truman, but he disagreed with Szilard’s views. After World War II, Szilard did all in his power to keep nuclear weapons in check. His actions call to mind the myth of Sisyphus.

The Prometheus and Sisyphus myths vividly apply to the present world, since pursuits like gene therapy, cloning, and stem-cell research attempt to recreate life and mimic God. To many, the ethics that are involved seem acceptable since they are for the benefit of mankind.

However, these developments have a likely chance of leading to failure—the rock rolling back down the hill. The events portrayed in *Frankenstein* teach us that we ought not to mimic the works of God, for by doing so, we will meet with the same dreadful consequence that Victor Frankenstein was forced to confront.

1 Hawkins, Helen S., G. Allen Greb, Gertrud Weiss Szilard, eds. *Toward a Livable World: Leo Szilard and the Crusade for Nuclear Arms Control*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1987.

2 Lanouette, William, with Bela Silard. *Genius in the Shadows: A Biography of Leo Szilard*. Foreword by Jonas Salk. New York: Scribner, 1992.

THE ANCIENT GREEK TIMES

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MAN SWALLOWS CHILDREN

In the city of Olympus, a man named Cronos swallowed five out of his six children.

“I swallowed them because I was afraid that they would overthrow me as I did my father,” said Cronos. He didn’t swallow his sixth child, Zeus, because his wife, Rhiea, took a rock and wrapped it in baby clothes and handed it to Cronos, who thought that it was his son Zeus. When he put the rock in his *Continued on Page 3*

Son Fights Father

Zeus had a huge rumble with his father, Cronos. It was like a night at the arena. Zeus didn’t like the fact that Cronos had swallowed his five siblings. He and his father fought for hours. You could hear thunder, rumbling, and yelling. Finally, after hours of fighting Zeus won the battle. Zeus sent *Continued on Page 4*

STEPHANIE PÉREZ

FRESHMAN
HUMANITIES HIGH SCHOOL
MANHATTAN

Woman Comes Out of Man’s Head

In Olympus, a woman named Athena came out of the head of Zeus.

One day Zeus had a headache and he told his son Hephaistos to take an ax and cut open his head. Hephaistos said, “No, I can’t do that for you will die!” And Zeus responded, “Son, don’t be silly for I am a god and I can’t die. It’s OK to go ahead and do it.” So Hephaistos took the ax and swung it into the middle of his father’s head. Zeus’ head opened up and out popped Athena. Hephaistos was at a loss for words. He just stood there in amazement and stared.

A Big City

SARA ELSAYD
SOPHOMORE
LIFE SCIENCES HIGH SCHOOL
MANHATTAN

A big city
Right in the center,
Supposedly one that never sleeps
Mostly living in my room
Walls covered in the color blue
Blue, my favorite color
Smearred across everything, my life
Staring at the midnight sky
Looking at the stars
Seeing only 6, I figured why not
6 stars
6 main characters on *Friends*
6 goldfish I once owned
6 a city that never sleeps,
covered in blue w/ 6

Remember

JOSÉ ALTIDOR
SOPHOMORE
ERASMUS HIGH SCHOOL
BROOKLYN

Remember the love
Remember the life
Recognize the good times
Recognize the bad ones
Embrace your faults
Embrace your pros and cons
Love one another
Love all
Think before you're gone
Think before you act
Feel the sunshine on your face
Feel the marshmallow feel of bouncy cotton
Feel the greatness of freedom
Feel your heart beat and cherish it
Understand the value of life and its inhabitants
Understand yourself and
Accept you
Accept Me
Accept Everyone
Good-bye my love
We will remember
All of those
Who never thought
To remember themselves
In Death . . . We must.

September 11, 2001

YENIFER ROMERO & CARLOS RODRÍGUEZ

JUNIORS
JOHN F. KENNEDY HIGH SCHOOL
BRONX

On September 11, 2001, a group of Gateway students from John F. Kennedy High School in the Bronx were downtown to work as volunteers for the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), on a phone bank for primary elections. Then two planes hit the World Trade Center towers. Here are two brief excerpts from the transcript of a session during which these students gathered together to talk about the terrifying experience.

YENIFER ROMERO: Everything looked like movie graphics . . . like an illusion . . . After walking away from the buildings the phones were out . . . everyone was crying . . . I was scared, I wanted to go and call my mom, and he [Carlos Rodríguez] was like, “Stay and watch, I want to see this, you’ll never see this again.” After the first building collapsed I started crying because I was listening to the radio and they said the Pentagon was hit and I thought the world was ending. I called a friend and told her to call my mom and his mom and tell them we were fine. Then we saw the second building collapse. When the first building collapsed that had the most impact because we saw all the stuff come towards the front but when the second building collapsed all the stuff went to the side. You just saw people running into buildings, they closed the doors behind them, they wouldn’t let anyone in there. If you asked them to open the door they wouldn’t, they were just too scared. They just closed it and wouldn’t open it. We were running and at one point he and I got separated. We tried to get back together, that way we wouldn’t lose each other. It was just very hectic that day. It was the worst thing I ever experienced. I saw little things falling and I thought it was pieces of the building, but when I saw the news I found out it was people who were jumping.

CARLOS RODRÍGUEZ: When I first heard it was second period and I was in the office with the rest of the teachers. We heard that a plane crashed into the World Trade Center so I decided to go home and get my camera and go downtown . . . I got there a little bit after the second plane crash. I’d taken the A train, it stopped a couple of streets before Chambers Street. So I got a couple of pictures in there. I was really looking for my father because he works a couple of streets before Chambers Street, but we never really got to meet each other because there was a lot of panic and confusion along the way. I didn’t really see it as realistic because it didn’t seem possible in the beginning. I don’t know. Most of the people you saw . . . I don’t even know how to describe it. When I saw the first building collapse, I saw a whole bunch of white stuff coming down. At first I thought it was the concrete . . . but I was pretty near I saw a whole bunch of people coming down. I saw a couple of people jump together before it came down . . . I heard from some cars, because they had their radios turned up, that another plane had crashed into the Pentagon. So I was a little bit scared at that point.



PHOTOGRAPHY: CARLOS RODRÍGUEZ



Contributors

BERECHIAH ADAMS, a junior at Humanities High School in Manhattan, is taking advanced placement classes and is very active in the Humanities social circle as secretary of student government and performer in school plays. He recently won first place in the school's Shakespeare contest.

JOSÉ ALTIDOR is a sophomore at Erasmus High School in Brooklyn.

CRISPIN BOOKER is a sophomore at Lafayette High School in Brooklyn. He enjoys sports, hanging out with his friends, and watching movies.

CRYSTAL EDWARDS is a seventh-grade student at Life Sciences High School in Manhattan. She enjoys reading, swimming, and running.

SARA ELSAYD, a sophomore at Life Sciences High School in Manhattan, likes writing, reading, watching *Friends* (on TV), playing with her cat, and learning new things about science.

JAHVEL FRASER is a freshman at Jamaica High School in Queens. He enjoys bowling and would like to pursue studies in computer science.

SHAVAUN JENKINS is a freshman at Jamaica High School in Queens. She enjoys reading books, listening to her favorite group B2K, watching TV, exploring the Internet, and talking on the phone. She would like to study at Penn State or Tuskegee University and become a veterinarian like her uncle.

ROBERT PAGÁN, a junior at Humanities High School in Manhattan, participates in the Christian Club and the Film Club and is a senator in the student government. He also plays bass guitar in a band and will soon play bass for Samba, a Brazilian dance group. He has completed internships at the American Museum of Natural History and the NYU-Physician Bellevue Shadow program, plays roller hockey for the Police Athletic League, and does volunteer work for St. Michael's Catholic Church.

STEPHANIE PÉREZ is a freshman at Humanities High School in Manhattan. She likes to listen to music and hang out with friends in her free time.

SAMANTHA RAMAUTAR is a freshman at Jamaica High School in Queens. She would like to become an architect and enjoys playing “all kinds of sports.”

SANDRA REYES is a freshman at Jamaica High School in Queens. Her favorite activities are drawing and listening to music. She would like to pursue studies in psychology.

RENE ROBERTS, a sophomore at Lafayette High School in Brooklyn, comes from the Caribbean nation of Trinidad and Tobago. Her favorite subjects are computers and history.

CARLOS RODRÍGUEZ, a junior at John F. Kennedy High School in the Bronx, plans to go to college and become an aviation mechanic. His hobby is photography, and he is taking AP chemistry and pre-calculus. He writes that he achieved the highest score in his pre-engineering class.

YENIFER ROMERO, a junior at John F. Kennedy High School, has studied in many outside academic programs including the University of Vermont engineering program, HPREP at Cornell, and SAT prep at Manhattan College; she also trained to work as a poll monitor. She is a lab assistant in the Gateway DNA lab at her school.

YESENIA SANTIAGO is a sophomore at Lafayette High School in Brooklyn. Her hobbies include swimming and playing handball.

DIANA TAVARES is a sophomore at Adlai E. Stevenson High School in the Bronx. Of the work that appears in this issue she writes, “I would like to say that I am proud of my poem and that it comes from the heart. I hope you enjoy it.”

JOBE WALKER is a freshman at Jamaica High School in Queens. He wants to become a baseball player or a botanist.

REBEKA WILSON is an eighth-grade student at Queens Gateway School.

WARDA ZAMAN is a sophomore in the Gateway Academy at Adlai E. Stevenson High School in the Bronx. She writes, “I hope you like reading my article. It took a lot of time and I hope all the efforts I have put into it count!”

Congratulations!

Two Gateway students won prestigious *New York Times* Scholarships in spring 2002. FRANK EVANS, Brooklyn Technical High School, and PHUONG LE, John F. Kennedy High School, were selected from a pool of 1,300 New York high school graduates. Together with 17 other winners, the *New York Times* Scholars will receive four-year tuition aid of \$7,800 per year, summer employment at *The New York Times*, and the privilege of naming a teacher to receive an award. Phuong Le nominated JOEL ALTSCHULER, a 16-year Gateway teaching veteran at the K.I.S.S. Program.

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