



LitMAG

2019





It is our pleasure to present the 2nd annual issue of our Youth Literary Magazine. Young authors were invited to submit original works up to 1000 words, which were read by our own staff before being presented to a panel of published authors.

We are blown away by the level of talent evident in these poems and stories. More impressive, however, are the subjects these writers chose to tackle. They are so brave in speaking about their feelings on gender, race, love, death, and identity.

These are voices of the future, and it's our pleasure to give them the spotlight they deserve.

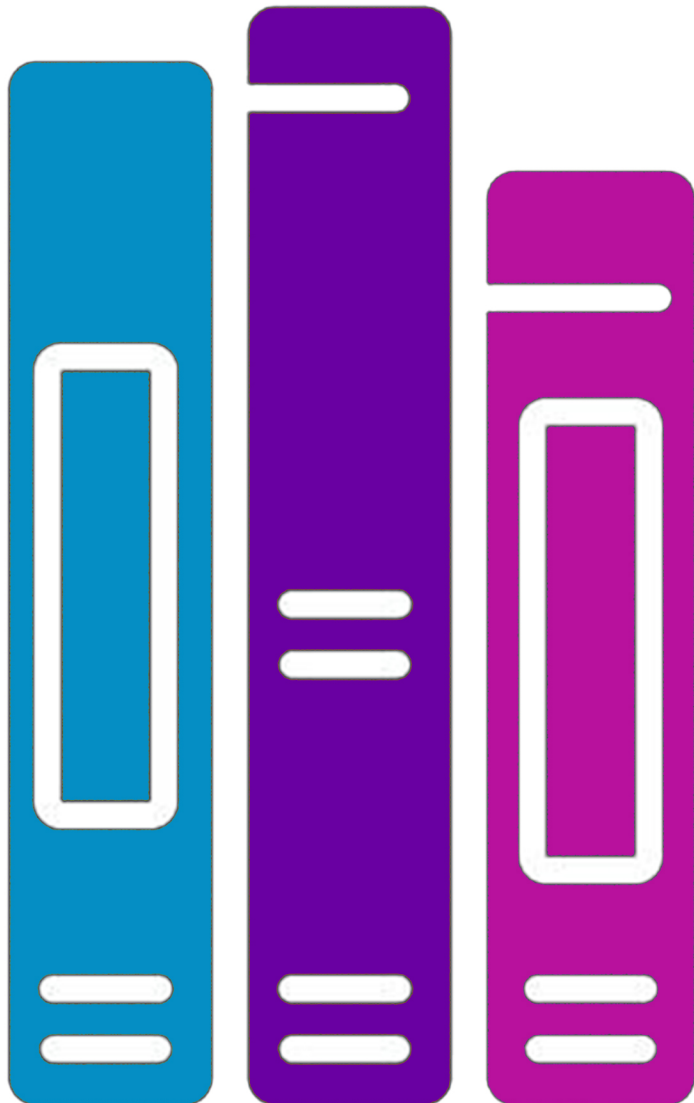
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2019

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Vivi Barnes

Vivi Barnes is the author of three young adult novels: *Olivia Twisted* (2013), *Paper or Plastic* (2015), and *Olivia Decoded* (2016).

She's originally from a farm in East Texas where her theater-loving mom and cowboy dad gave her a unique perspective on life.

Now she dwells in the magic and sunshine of Orlando, Florida with her husband, three kids, and a beagle. She is currently working on a middle grade novel set in Florida.



Christina Farley

Christina Farley is the author of the bestselling *Gilded* series (2014-2015) and middle grade novel, *The Princess and the Page* (2017). Prior to that, she worked as an international teacher and at a top secret job for Disney where she was known to scatter pixie dust before the sun rose. When not traveling the world or creating imaginary ones, Christina spends time with her family in Clermont, Florida with her husband and two sons where they are busy preparing for the next World Cup, baking cheesecakes, and raising a pet dragon that's in disguise as a cockatiel.



Amy Christine Parker

Amy Christine Parker is the author of the critically acclaimed duology *Gated* (2013) and *Astray* (2014), and the recently released *Smash & Grab* (2016). Before she became a writer she worked as a waitress, a dollmaker, and an elementary school teacher. She currently lives in Tampa with her husband, their two daughters, and three crazy cats.



The Call

by Isabella Vazquez, Age 9

Selected by the Lit Mag Team

**You shall not pass the flowers nor the open sea
You shall not cross the ocean without me to see.
I will be the She who is listening to the call of the wind, so I will be free.
This trip may be bumpy, but no doubt about the journey, to shout with glee,
The adventure calls for me.**



A Mystery in 1000 Words

by Olivia Roman, Age 10

Selected by Vivi Barnes

11-year-old Addison ran down the stairs of her tiny apartment. Another *knock, knock* sounded on the door.

"Coming!" Addison yelled. She jumped past the two last steps and landed on her feet with a *thud!* She unlocked the door, opened it up, and ran outside to greet her friend Matthew.

"Mr. Ronald said a million dollars was stolen from the bank last night!" Matthew blurted out.

Addison put a hand over her mouth. She gasped.

"No one knows who stole it," Matthew continued. "The police can't even find one finger print, a boot print, not even a wisp of hair!"

Addison put a finger up. "Hold up, Matthew. You said the police don't know who it is, right? Well, how is the bank going to get a million dollars back from a person they don't even know?"

"Don't know..."

Addison could tell Matthew was nervous. His dad worked at the bank, so the bank could give him lower pay since they couldn't pay him the full amount.

"All I know is that someone – a kid, an adult, doesn't matter – has to find that money," Matthew said. "Otherwise, my dad isn't getting paid..."

Addison started thinking, *who's going to get that money back?* Then she had an idea.

"I'll be right back!" she yelled, then raced for the door.

"Wai-" Matthew yelled, but the loud *slam* of the door cut him off.

Addison ran up the stairs and into her bedroom.

"Back already?" her mom asked.

"I forgot something," she answered. She kept running until she got to her room. She grabbed a notebook from her bookcase and dug through her backpack for a pencil. After she found one, she ran down the stairs and out the door.

"What's that for?" Matthew asked, pointing to the notebook.

"Clues," Addison answered, proudly.

"We are *not* going to the bank," Matthew said loudly.

"Oh, yes, we are," Addison said, as she took his hand and yanked it. "Let's go!"

Ten minutes later they were standing outside of the bank. "Are you ready?" Addison asked.

"No, Addy."

"Oh well," Addison said. She started dragging him inside.

Then, five minutes later, Addison was taking notes of every single speck of dust.

"It's just dust, Addy," Matthew groaned. "Let's go!"

"Wait!" Addison yelled. "Dust always has little bits of dead skin in them, right?"

"Yeah..."

"So, we can take some to that officer over there and ask him to do a scan on it!"

"All I know is that someone - a kid, an adult, doesn't matter - has to find that money..."

A Mystery in 1000 Words (Continued)

by Olivia Roman, Age 10

Selected by Vivi Barnes

"Addy," Matthew groaned. "He probably knows that already."

"Then, why do they still not know who did it?" she asked. She was already making her way over to the officer. "Excuse me," she said politely. "Do you know, you might be able to track down the thief with all the dust here?"

"What do you mean, little girl?" the officer asked.

"I'm eleven," she said. "But I mean you can find pieces of dead skin in dust, right? Well, why not scan the dust?"

"We already tried, *big girl!*"

What is with the insults?! Addison thought.

Addison walked away from the officer and over to Matthew. Or at least where she last saw him...

When Addison lifted her head to tell Matthew she wanted to leave, she saw that he wasn't there!

She looked left and right, but Matthew was nowhere in sight. *He's probably in the restroom,* she thought.

So, she walked over to the men's restroom and stood there. After four minutes she decided Matthew was playing a game. Maybe just to spook her, since last night a *real* bad guy came to the same place she was.

She started to walk around, saying, "Got you, Matthew!" every time she found a good hiding spot, only to find out he wasn't there. After twenty minutes Addison stopped.

Ugh! He seriously CAN'T be hiding anymore! Addison thought. Then she sat down on an old, ugly, broken bench. Suddenly, she spotted a moving tile on the floor. It wasn't really moving, to Addison, it looked like someone was trapped underneath, but couldn't get out.

She hopped off the bench and leaned over the tile. She slid her fingers underneath and pulled.

"Ugh," Addison groaned. "Come on! Move already!"

POOF!

Addison looked down, into the hole. The tile flew into the air, and hit the floor with a crash. Nobody was under the tile, but a huge hole was.

"HELP!!!" Matthew screamed from inside.

Addison gasped.

"Hey!" another voice yelled.

Addison looked to her left. The officer she talked to earlier was standing next to her. Suddenly, he pushed her in!

"Aahhhhh!!!" she yelped. "SOMEONE! HELP!!!"

She landed inside a cage with a *THUD!*

It wasn't really moving, to Addison, it looked like someone was trapped underneath, but couldn't get out.

A Mystery in 1000 Words (Continued)

by Olivia Roman, Age 10
Selected by Vivi Barnes

"Addy!" Matthew said.

Addison hugged him.

"W-where are we?" she asked.

"No idea."

Addison looked around. There was only a small desk in the middle of the room.

"I think that officer isn't an officer," Matthew said.

"You think?"

BANG!

The door to the cell slammed open. Matthew smiled. "Hi, Alexa..."

Alexa was Matthew's girlfriend. Her father worked at the bank, too.

"Get out," Alexa demanded. "I told you to stay away, Matthew, didn't I?"

"Yeah," he replied.

Alexa continued, "I told you my dad was hiding the money today. Correct?"

"Yeah..."

What money? Suddenly, Addison realized why Matthew didn't want to go to the bank.

Alexa's dad is the 'officer' who's really the thief!

Matthew walked out of the cell. "Sorry, Addy. Alexa promised me some of the money, if I kept it a secret."

Alexa slammed the door shut and waved. "Buh bye!" Alexa left smirking, followed by Matthew, who was frowning in shame.

Two minutes later Matthew came back. "I told her my mom made cookies for us."

Matthew opened the cell door. "Let's go to the police department," he said.

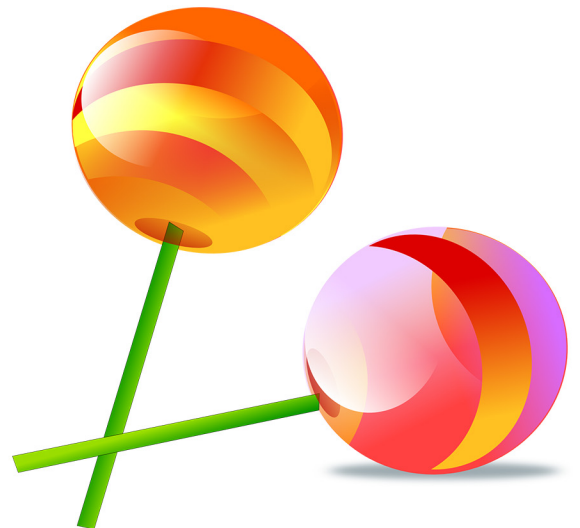
"Thank you for telling us, kiddos!" a real officer named Wanda said. "Here's a Lolli-Pop for each of you kids!"

Addison's mom smiled. "My little detective," she said.

"NO FAIR!" Alexa screamed from inside her cell.

"Yes fair!" Addison and Matthew said together.

The End!



I Make My Own Magic

by MaryAlyce Peeples, Age 11

Selected by Christina Farley

Unicorns and fairies are all great fun;
But I've made my own magic since grade one.
A dragon named Reading blocked my way;
In isolation, I was forced to stay.
I was locked out, ridiculed, and shamed;
The rude beast refused to be tamed.
At first, letters were friendly and dancing about;
When they refused to make words, I started to doubt.
The dragon's letters slithered and slipped on the page;
They refused to stay in their own word cage.
I found letters were magical creatures;
Each of them had their own special features.
Together these pixies have formed words and woven stories;
They've mended hearts and shared heroes' glories.
I realized letters are neither friend nor foe;
They only wait to be tamed by my own magic's glow.
Over time, the dragon named Reading became my friend;
Our friendship's uneasy, but lifelong to the end.
I make my own magic. You can, too.
Magic's in everyone, not just a few.



August 1944

by Caiden McLaughlin, Age 12

Selected by Amy Christine Parker

1. Minerva Weissman

Minerva sat up in her bed. What was that sound? What had awakened her?

She glanced quickly at the watch sitting on her bedside table.

7:00am.

Must have been the mailman.

The space beside her was empty. Peter must have already gone to the barn, working with the animals.

Minerva temporarily savored the exquisite feeling of warmth inside her four-poster . . . and then her mothering duties caught up with her.

"Mommy," called a small voice from the room one door down from hers. "Mommee!" This time more urgent.

Minerva sacrificed her comfort and arose to greet her young son. "Good morning, Tommy."

The young boy, standing up in his small bed, leaning against the safety rail, collapsed in his mother's arms as soon as she lifted him off the bed.

"Eat?" he asked before snuggling into her strong embrace.

He lifted one chubby arm and buried his hand in the soft hair around her neck.

Only a child could make me get up so early, she thought.

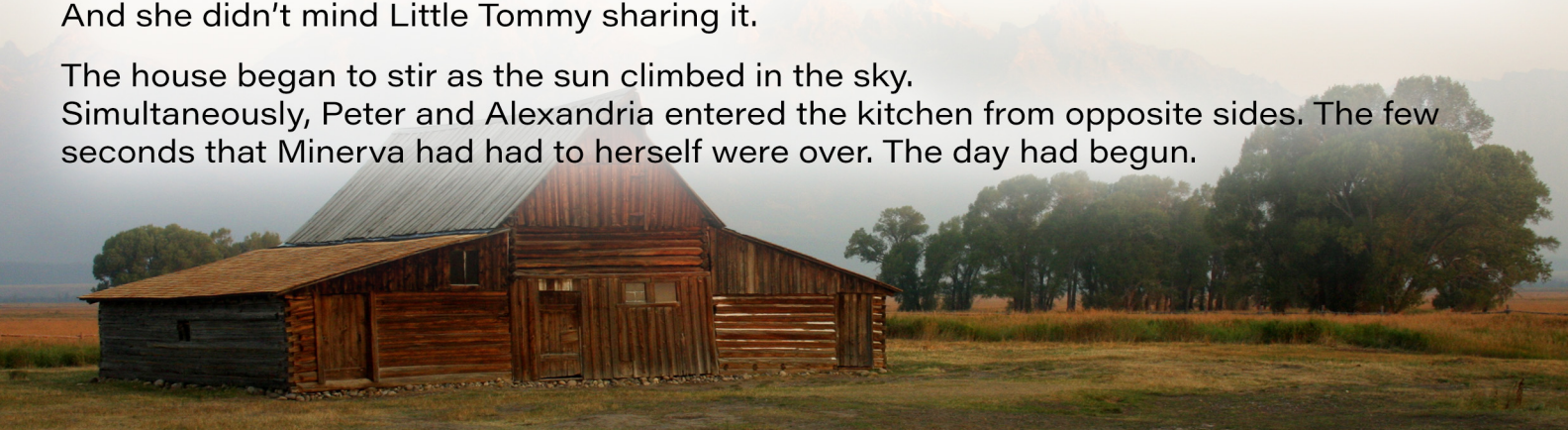
As they entered the farmhouse kitchen, Minerva opened the windows, letting in a few moths, and breathed in deeply the scent of the morning dew. Setting Little Tommy down in his highchair, she began cooking the fresh eggs and bacon from their own farm, enjoying the solitude.

Soon enough, she knew, her daughter Alexandria would come down for breakfast. Peter would return from the barn, either grim about the cow not giving enough milk, or jubilant over the number of eggs he had gathered. Now was the only time she'd get by herself today. And she didn't mind Little Tommy sharing it.

The house began to stir as the sun climbed in the sky.

Simultaneously, Peter and Alexandria entered the kitchen from opposite sides. The few seconds that Minerva had had to herself were over. The day had begun.

Now was the only time she'd be by herself today. And she didn't mind Little Tommy sharing it.



August 1944 (Continued)

by Caiden McLaughlin, Age 12
Selected by Amy Christine Parker

2. Peter Weissman

Peter Weissman was an outdoorsman. In college he had planned to become a naturalist. But then he had married Minerva Weissman, and his plans had changed. Now he was raising his family on a farm. At least, as he always told himself, he had the farm, and the animals. If he couldn't have his dream, at least he had something close.

Leaving the barn, he took a moment to savor the late summer morning still glistening under a blanket of dew from the night before. The stand of regal oak trees beside the house stood tall, dwarfing everything around it. Here moss grew nurtured by their shade, and moths and butterflies danced together. He spotted a rabbit, hiding in the underbrush. All this Peter observed with great care, his eagle eye taking in everything. How he loved his morning 'walk with nature,' as he called it. He hadn't missed this daily ritual in nearly a decade.

It was good for him, too, or so the doctor said. In truth, Peter didn't really care about what the doctor said. He hadn't been born yesterday. He knew that, eventually, he would die from the cancer. And he also knew that nature could heal him, little by little. And so, he lived life today as if it was his last day, with nature giving him strength.

Minerva didn't know about the cancer. The news was only three days old, and he didn't want her to worry. There would be time for worry when they knew more.

3. Alexandria Weissman

She had always been a quiet one, Alex. Always had her nose buried in a book. Lewis Carrol. J. M. Barrie. Mark Twain. These were her friends. They had given her pages full of lovely and interesting adventures. For real life was no adventure, or so she saw it.

In truth Alex's life was interesting. She lived on a farm. Her older brother was in the army. But to a girl of twelve, these things were just typical. Everyone Alex knew lived on a farm, and almost everyone she knew had a relative fighting in the war. Her life was boring. Of that she was certain. Alex's only "exciting bits," she said, were her letters from Robby. Those, of all the things she had read, were the most exciting. Imagine, living in a faraway camp full of gruff soldiers! And fighting the Nazis . . . now *that* was exciting. Call her naïve or selfish, but Alex knew that her real reason for wanting to fight was that she'd be with her beloved older sibling.

Robby was a role model for Alex. Always a daredevil, he had climbed trees that made cats scared. Caught poisonous snakes. Played pranks on the town. And now he had joined the military.

Sighing, Alex set down her book, Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, and went to the kitchen in hope of finding another one of Robby's letters waiting for her on the breakfast table.

**For real life was
no adventure,
or so she saw it.**

August 1944 (Continued)

by Caiden McLaughlin, Age 12
Selected by Amy Christine Parker

4. Tommy Weissman

Everyone was there in the kitchen.

More bacon was sizzling. Eggs were warm on plates. The sun was shining, yet no one seemed cheerful about it.

Tommy, not understanding why the mood had darkened in such a short time, threw a handful of eggs across the kitchen. It landed against the screen door with a plop and slid down.

But Mommy missed her cue to clean it up. Tommy was confused. He hadn't even been scolded! Now *this* was unusual.

He screeched like an owl. *Nothing.*

He tried putting his bowl on his head. Still nothing.

Finally, Tommy started sobbing.

Minerva, her glance unfocused, picked him up and held him, staring at something on the table. He held her, his messy arms staining her white blouse.

A door slammed. Tommy's father had left for the barn.

Alex, sobbing quietly, retreated to her room.

Minerva set Tommy down, still wearing his breakfast, put her head in her hands, and cried.

MR. AND MRS. WEISSMAN:

WE REGRET TO INFORM YOU OF ROBERT (ROBBY)
WEISSMAN'S DISAPPEARANCE ON THE 5TH OF
AUGUST STOP.
MISSING IN ACTION STOP.

—THE U.S. MILITARY

Poor Little Black Bird

by Etrinity Mabry, Age 15

Selected by Christina Farley

When you ask me what's wrong, I'll say nothing. But the look in my eyes says I'm struggling.

I'm trapped and I'm scared all in one. Am I angry or frightened, you choose luv.

I want to tell you, I really do. But I don't think you can handle the real truth.

I laugh every day and fake a smile. But inside I'm screaming "Help me now."

They tell me I'm worth it and to keep pushing. But I'm breaking, can't you see?

There's barely anything.

I hug you as you cry but who's there for me? It's okay dear, stand on your feet.

I could scream and cry but what good would that do? As long as I live my duty is to serve you.

I hold it all in because I was trained that way. But you get to express yourself every single day.

"Poor little black bird," they all say. Poor little black bird has gone away.

Brothers & Sisters

by Raquel Perry, Age 17

Selected by Amy Christine Parker

We are brothers and sisters
Daughters and sons of a generation
Who wanted to give up on love years ago,
But we do our best to uncover it.
We are a constellation,
Beautifully illuminated by our imperfections
We wear our indifferences like armor
Because we fear what we'll see if we're allowed
That second of individuality
To understand our own emotions and display vulnerability

We are brothers and sisters
Who inhale criticism and exhale cynicism
Because the men before us did not acknowledge such a cruel world
So, we can only embrace it
Drape ourselves in abject misery
Stitch and mend the problems of our history

We are the brothers and sisters
A mass of degenerates in despair
Who crave a sweet, hollow feeling that we substitute
For the lack of love that we knew
Because no one told us that we would be born in such a place
We wear our sadness as a charm,
I wonder when unhappiness became so impossible to replace.

But at some point, in between
The energy,
The passion,
The optimism,
The pride,
We are here together
With a fulfillment of desire to do something better,
For the next generation.

The Guiding Hope of Our People

by Raquel Perry, Age 17

Selected by Vivi Barnes

Beautiful Black Woman you are sensuous.
Your splendor is like the shining sun, you are wondrous.
Wondrous ways coming from your soul,
Which no man may hope to control.
Beautiful Black Woman you are the guiding hope of our people.

Every time you are broken the world gets covered with sadness
Beautiful Black Woman your spirit is like a shining church tower
Which points directly to Heaven above
Your magical essence can make two hearts fall in love
Beautiful Black Woman why can't you see how much you mean to me

Beautiful Black Woman you were tortured, abused, blamed
For nothing.
Deep down in your soul,
The words are often untold,
Of the pain you somehow controlled.
If only you knew that you were created
With brown sugar, warm honey, cocoa and precious gold.
You were a mother fighting for her children,
And a daughter who was taught to be a warrior by her parents.
They couldn't help to minimize, de-legitimize, with a dark veil over their eyes,
But as Maya Angelou would say "We still rise".
Beautiful Black Woman you are the guiding hope of our people.

Hours and Locations

Mon – Thu: 9am – 9pm
Fri – Sat: 9am – 6pm
Sun: 12pm – 6pm

**Hart Memorial Central &
Ray Shanks Law Library**
211 East Dakin Avenue
Kissimmee, FL 34741

Buenaventura Lakes Library
405 Buenaventura Boulevard
Kissimmee, FL 34743

Poinciana Library
101 North Doverplum Avenue
Kissimmee, FL 34758

West Osceola Library
305 Campus Street
Celebration, FL 34747

**Veterans Memorial
St. Cloud Library**
810 13th Street
St. Cloud, FL 34769

Wed, Fri, & Sat: 10am – 6pm

Kenansville Library
1154 South Canoe Creek Road
Kenansville, FL 34739

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The Osceola Library system