

Wildcats Roar



BRHS Literary Magazine

1st Edition

2016-2017

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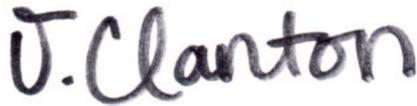
Letter from the Editors:

Dear Reader,

Thank you so much for your interest and support in our first annual BRHS literary magazine. The participating students and staff have worked hard to produce a small but meaningful first edition. Eventually, we hope to garner more support from the community, to encourage more student participation, and to collaborate with our art, media, and graphic design classes here at BRHS to truly make our publication a whole-school and whole-community effort.

Our goal in this endeavor is to give our students a chance to find their voice free of limitations or judgement. This is not about censorship—it is about allowing our students to express themselves, their hopes and dreams, and their fears through writing.

Thank you again for your support,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Clanton". The letters are cursive and slightly slanted to the right.

Jennifer Clanton and the BRHS English Dept.

With special thanks to...

Dr. Cooper, Rhonda Blythe, and the staff at the Alexander City Board of
Education,

Dr. Wilkinson and the staff at Benjamin Russell High School,

Scott Riley and the staff at Service Printing and Office Supply, Inc.,

and finally Misty Bishop, Julie Haynes, Annette Tate, Trina Vest, and
Lorraine Whitley.

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POETRY

Justice and Peace

Growing up in a world so cold
Remember where you came from
was what I was always told.

A young African American girl
living in a racial place.
Only different colored people saw
a “negro” when they looked
at her face.

Why was this going on?
How could this be?
All we ever wanted
was justice and peace!

As she stands in a world
full of racism and hate,
her life up to now
had turned out great.

As she thought about what her
mother would always say--
Remember where you came from--
She is glad she made it out
and is standing here today.

During her childhood,
she has seen her people’s lives go
from some to none.
And now that she knows what
she is fighting for,
her journey has only just begun.

--Shae Kendrick, 9th grade

Fixed

What can one person fix?
A car, a plane, a bus, a train,
a lamp, a stove, a lightbulb, a flame.
But what about a person?
A mentality?
A feeling?
A personality?
A relationship?
We can try and try
to reverse the tears a person cries.
But what we fail to realize-
it's done, it's over. There's nothing we can fix.
But we can mend.
Piece it back together.
There's hope for me and you
to walk this earth, to show love,
to mend mistakes made along the way.
We can try together
to show compassion, affection to our species,
to move a generation toward love,
to praise our God up above.
Help a man find his way.
Tell a single mom it's all okay.
Play with a child, give him a friend.
Offer open arms, a hand to extend.
What can one person fix?
A car, a plane, a bus, a train.
Yes, maybe so.
But we can be the lamp, the flame
to guide our precious people toward a new world of love.

-- Jesse Culver, 10th grade

Everyone Has a Story to Tell

Everyone has a story,
though not everyone's is the same.
However, one thing is for sure —
Life is no easy game.

Everyone has a struggle.
Everyone experiences pain.
There are times of triumph and tragedy,
but it's how we handle them I must explain.

In times of pain,
some people drown their sorrows in beer —
to wash away what has happened,
to forget they're even here.

In times of tragedy,
some people wallow in their grief
enough to make them depressed,
but when someone says they have a problem, they deny it in disbelief.

Life has its struggles.
Some people hide the anguish with wisecracks,
joking about their problems,
but deep down, this doesn't help them relax.

Life is more than just tragedy though.
It can bring you so much delight.
In triumph when you're on top of the world,
life couldn't be more right.

It's the little things in life that bring people the most joy —
babies, puppies, coffee, good books.
Life can be great.
All people need to do is keep a positive outlook.

Life is like a book,
a long story filled with comfort and cheers,
full of heartbreak and dismay
throughout the years.

So be ready to read.
Every story deserves to be read.
One day everyone's story is told,
for everyone has a story to be said.

-- Handley Owens, 10th grade

Band

Standing in the blazing sun
Summer had just begun
Feet at forty-five degrees
Everyone hoped for the slightest breeze
Drill cards, music, and heavy instruments
Working hard makes opportunities infinite
Water at band camp is a necessity
The air condition is what I needed desperately
After the sun beat down leaving harsh tan lines
Our Band director scolds us for the constant whines
Holding our breath to stand still at attention
That breeze blows like earlier I mentioned
Everyone is ready to work hard to get the job done
The last ten minutes we will do one more show run
We all hurry to our spots, daring not to be last
As a voice counts down, we get there really fast
The metronome counts off starting our show
We are eight games in, and the season has us low
The game has no effect to our energy in the stands
We cheer and we play as everyone glares at the band
They can hate us or love us; we will always be here
The band and its traditions are what we love to keep near
We have performed fourteen shows now as the season comes to an end.
Band is worth it, 10 out of 10, I would recommend.

-- Savanna Chappell, 11th grade

A Person

What makes a person?

Their appearance? Their intelligence? Their parents?

People base so much on characteristics which shouldn't be relevant.

It's kindness, strength of will, character, beliefs, and past experiences that make the person.

A person is the one they are when no one is looking.

The one that fights their demons everyday.

A person is the one who isn't perfect and accepts others' imperfections.

What makes a person is who they truly are inside.

--Marijke Johnston, 11th grade

My DC Three

The Batmobile exits the cave;
Into Gotham he goes to save.
Dressed in black wearing a cowl,
The Dark Knight is on the prowl.

When the citizens of Metropolis squeal,
Arrives on the scene the Man of Steel.
Faster than a bullet he flies;
A red-caped savior swoops from the skies.

My favorite can construct anything
He imagines with his ring,
Since his power and his might
Result from Green Lantern's light.

-- Andrew Turner, 11th grade

PROSE

A Moonglade

It all started when I got it. What was it, you ask? The locket, that hideous thing. My great-grandmother gave it to me before she died. She almost looked sorry when she did. I didn't understand then, but I do now. I thought maybe she didn't want to give it away. It was beautiful-- the delicate design looked like metal vines and in the center was a flower, a hyacinth. It was purple to be exact that should have been my first sign.

I did not think about the locket until about a year later. Then, it was only a coincidence, but now I know there was a reason for it. It was all her fault. I guess it began the summer before college. I was headed to the New York Academy of Art. I had a full ride. It was going to be amazing. I had dreamed of it for years.

It was the middle of summer, and I was in my room lounging around trying to find inspiration. I had already thrown away about fifty sheets of paper. I hated this! I hated when my ideas got jumbled up and I lacked ways to sort them out. It was not that I didn't have any ideas; it was that I had too many. I finally gave up and headed to the kitchen to make popcorn. On the way to the door, something shiny caught my eye. Turning, I saw the locket lying in the same place I had put it exactly one year ago.

Picking it up, I opened it. It was hard to open. Looking back now, I wish I hadn't. Inside there was a picture of a girl. She was beautiful. Her hair was a vibrant red, and her eyes were the brightest blue I had ever seen. Her face was splashed with freckles. She was sitting on a swing, and a gorgeous garden was behind her. I smiled and put the locket on.

I continued on with my day, and it wasn't until about a week later that I noticed odd things happening. The fireplace was lit, but it was electric. How did that happen? I dismissed it after a few minutes, having more important things to worry about.

I tried to ignore it, but after a while things kept getting weirder and weirder. The shower would turn on by itself. I thought it might be plumbing, but it wasn't. I also heard people talking at night, but I lived alone.... That was when I decided I had to get out of there.

I started packing, and then I saw her-the girl from the picture. She was grinning madly as she looked at me. She was in front of my bed.

“Why are you leaving me? I thought we were friends,” she asked sadly. I tried to ignore her. She was just a figment of my imagination after all. She wasn’t real. She was in front of me now. “I thought we were friends!” she snapped. There was no denying it-- she was real.

“Who are you?” I asked fearfully. Her grin returned now, and it was chilling.

“Aw, Granny didn’t tell little Rena about me? That’s so sad. I thought she would have at least warned you. My name is Morana.” She was pouting now and seemed upset.

“Why won’t you just leave?” I asked. She was smiling again. She must’ve been insane.

“I thought we were friends. You should be nicer to your friends,” she said while giggling and skipping to my bed. She plopped down and I tried to get up. “Why are you being mean? I don’t like it when people are mean!” She snarled. She was glaring at me now.

“I was going to get something to eat,” I lied, and she was happy again.

“Okey-dokey. I can’t have my new friend leaving me, can I? Come on, lazy-bones.” She dashed from the room and proceeded to sit on the counter in the kitchen while I ate. I washed the dishes I used, keeping a wary eye on her the entire time. She was humming and seemed to be utterly content, but then, she snapped. “Why are you staring? Staring is rude!” She was glaring again. I would have to tread carefully with her, I guess. I smiled softly at her.

“I apologize. You are just beautiful.” She giggled, and I was surprised when a blush stained her cheeks. It took the practice from my years of schooling and being around others I dislike to continue smiling at her.

She soon got over her embarrassment and turned to me clapping her hands. “Let’s play a game!” I grinned at her and nodded. She was

falling for it. She led me to the backyard. Morana and I played games until it was dark. I was starting to become tired. I just wanted to leave and get away from her.

“What?” Her eyes filled with tears. “I thought you were my friend! We were going to play forever and ever, but you are just as bad as everyone else! They made fun of me. They always did. Poor little Morana without a mother or a father! Maybe tonight she will die! We might just save her the trouble! That’s what they said, and you know what? They killed me! Killed me! You are just like them!” She was screaming hysterically. “You know what I did when I woke up? I killed them! All of them! They died the same way I did, but not before one of them reproduced! I was dumb back then. Maybe if I had killed the child too, I wouldn’t have to deal with you! You are going to die the same way they did! Maybe then this torture will end!” I took off running from her, but I knew my efforts were futile. She was going to kill me. She appeared in front of me taking my hand. “You know that locket you’re wearing? It was mine when I was alive, my most valuable possession, but your great-grandmother took it. She took it before killing me.” Her voice was deadly calm. I was thrown across the yard. I heard a crack as pain shot through my body.

She appeared in front of me again, this time holding a knife. She moved forward, and I gave up. I knew I couldn’t fight her. It was impossible. The last thing I saw before darkness surrounded me was the glare of the moon reflecting off the water of the lake.

-- Attie Bishop, 9th grade

Allegory of the Cave: Odyssey of the Surface

In Plato's *The Republic*, there is a famous allegory which tells of men chained inside of a cave and of their false notions of reality based upon shadows on the cave walls. For instance, if they were to see the shadow of a person on the wall, they would think the shadow was the only truth, and not the person from whom the shadow was cast. You see, they were unable to accurately discern the true nature of the images, and therefore thought they possessed knowledge of all reality by correctly identifying the shadows. Only the objects they could directly perceive were real because their situation would not permit ascertaining the source of the shadows. So, the men in the cave lived lives of fallacies and lies but were nonetheless content with it.

One of the prisoners, however, eventually managed to escape the cave and venture out into the surface world. Plato writes of his reception to the immediate sunlight and how he nearly went blind. It took a while for the man to adjust to this overwhelming light, but soon he was able to see everything that was illuminated under the sun's rays. He saw, for the first time too, the purple and yellow hues of the fields of flowers, the green forests with towering trees, and even the sparkling beauty of the ocean. In short, he spent as much time as he could seeing and experiencing everything as long as the sun radiated in the sky. Not long after, he learned the seasons of the earth and could tell time just by looking at the sun's position. It was truly a whole new world for him. The man was ecstatic with all of his newfound knowledge and wisdom of the surface world and wanted nothing more than to share his learning with those who were still in the cave. Upon his return, however, he was met with harsh treatment and even hatred from the cave dwellers, so much so that they even killed the man. The people in the cave cared not for this man's enlightenment for they themselves believed they already knew everything there was to know. And this, Plato says, is the risk and possible fate of those who seek the truth. But, where the allegory of the first man on the surface ends, the tale of the second man begins.¹

The second man watched as the others in the cave killed the first man for his "stupidity." This struck him at first as justified, but soon the act of murder upon the first man weighed heavily on his conscience. While he didn't partake in the killing, he felt guilty for standing aside and

¹ Note: The story of the second man is entirely a product of my imagination. Plato's *The Republic* included only the tale of the first man.

letting the atrocity commence before his eyes, so the second man decided that he too would escape the cave somehow and begin his own journey to enlightenment. When the others had fallen asleep, the man took a small rock and beat his fetters until they broke. Keep in mind that he had never walked more than a few feet, let alone run; yet his body and perhaps a sense of fear made him suddenly gain heightened motor skills and he left the cave in a sprint, thus beginning his odyssey.

Unlike the first man, the second was not met with instant sunlight but instead with the dark of night. In fact, he believed he was still within the cavern and chose to walk until reaching that radiance of which the first man spoke. His journey to the surface began in confusion and bewilderment, as he expected to behold something much more spectacular than more darkness. Nevertheless, he travelled until finally he came upon a pond. This was the first large body of water he had ever witnessed, so it is only befitting that he was cautious of it. He reached down to touch the surface and soon realized that this was that nourishing liquid so dear to him, as well as to the rest of mankind. Prior to this discovery he only drank of the little droplets of water that fell from the cave's stalactites, so his first encounter with the surface world was indeed just a higher quantity of water, a substance certainly not foreign to him.

He sat beside the pond and contemplated his findings. What perplexed him the most was that the cave was not the only place where there existed water, and he concluded that there must be yet more objects and substances that he knew from his experience in the cave. His whole world hitherto was completely dismantled, as he knew nothing to be true from the cave. What he thought as the only reality there, not just water but all objects, was now in excess on the surface. There was nothing significant about it, and this realization caused him to feel not euphoria, but crushing despair. Such a feeling of despair was also new to him, completely alien to his complacent life in the cave. This sudden emotion forced him to consider returning home, but he knew that was out of the question as he would surely be killed much like the first man. Finally, he decided to journey forward in hopes of dispelling his awful feeling.

Not too long after the encounter with the pond the sun began to rise. As he sat on the slope of a small hill he witnessed the all-pervading brilliance of the sun reign over the earth, lighting every object in its dominion. All of the trees were made apparent, and every stream and river was in no way capable of hiding from the rays of the celestial body.

It was as if a picture was being painted right before his eyes. His hillside seat gave him an even greater view to see all of nature spring forth from the tyranny of darkness, and he was in awe of the power made manifest by the sun. This prevailing feeling of awe quickly replaced any trace of his previous state of despair, and he ventured onward to see even more of this jubilant landscape.

He continued his travels in advance of his next encounter, that of the confrontation. In a field surrounded by looming trees stood two men, one armed with a weapon. At first the second man did not notice them, but was no more than approximately fifty yards from them when he heard them yelling. Out of fear, he hid in the tall grass of the field. He had not yet seen the likes of another person since his departure from the cave, hence his precaution. In spite of his fear, his curiosity could not be contained, and he peaked his eyes just above the grass in hopes of a more advantageous view of the two. It appeared as if the two men were engaged in a rather heated discussion as made evident by the presence of the weapon. Suddenly the argument escalated into unintelligible yelling, and once more the second man had an uneasy feeling. This feeling was reinforced when one of the men assumed a fighting stance and raised his fists, eager to fight. However tough that man might have been, the one wielding the weapon undoubtedly had an unfair edge over the other, and soon the two began their brawl.

The second man watched among the grass as the unarmed man struggled in vain to wrestle the other to the ground, only to fall on his back at the mercy of the one with the weapon. After the hopeless begs and pleads from the unarmed combatant, the other man raised his weapon and bludgeoned him into a pulp, making it nearly impossible to tell the difference between the earth and his corpse. This entire altercation took place while the second man cowered in fear, as he strove to not make his presence known in any way, much less settle the dispute. Moreover, the second man did not even ascertain the occasion of their conflict. Therefore, following the second man's first sunrise was the first contact, though indirect, with other people, but it was not his first time seeing man's destructive capabilities.

Eventually the other man, the one who killed the unarmed combatant, fled the scene, leaving behind his weapon. Still in a state of shock and dismay, the second man approached the mangled body of the unarmed combatant. This truly horrific sight reminded him of his life in

the cave and how he watched as the rest of the cave dwellers murdered the enlightened one after his escape to the surface. Once again, this caused him to ponder the recurring themes of the cave world and the surface world: not only was there water and similar substances in both places, but there was death also. No matter where the second man went, there would always be the same material world, and now he could add human malice to his experiences in both. His heart filled with sorrow as he discovered that he could not escape the trifles of his former life in the cave. All he desired was to see the world for what the enlightened man saw it, a place beautifully illuminated by light and precise with a rationally ordered system of life. Instead he saw that his perception of reality was frail, regardless of his place of being and that an inevitable chaos controlled the conduct of man. In short, life for him on the surface only yielded depressing truths that he previously thought were merely the result of the world of the cave.

The world was now reduced to insignificant matter, and man was a chaotic, irrational creature both capable and willing to commit transgressions on a whim. But, there was one final hope for the second man. You see, in his time in the cave, the second man believed that within everything lived a sort of spirit or life force that caused all objects to exist. He and the other members of the cave agreed on this supposition and thus chose to worship this spirit collectively. Their mutual worship of the life-sustaining spirit created bonds between them, and eventually they formed a religion based upon these bonds. Until his voyage to the surface, the second man believed that all that existed was what was in the cave, that man was perfect, and that a spirit lived in all that there was, thereby making it good. Now it seemed that the earth was matter which formed an indifferent, faceless nature and that humanity was corrupted beyond all help and salvation. His last hope was that there still existed some consoling spirit to garner and nourish his sorrows and give him the will to continue. With this, he brought himself up and moved on once more.

At last his journey brought him to a village. What struck him as odd was that the air surrounding the village was filled with black smoke from what the second man assumed were chimneys, giving it an ominous appearance to those unfamiliar with it. In the center of the village stood a partially destroyed statue of what seemed to be a local hero, as the statue still featured the muscular arms of a warrior. After inquiring unto a woman, the second learned that the statue was in fact the village's former

deity, abandoned after the village fell on difficult times. Earlier that year, famine struck the farms, and soon all of the livestock died, resulting in a massive food shortage. On top of this, a disease broke out and wiped out half of the population, most of whom were given the task of defending the city in the event of an attacking neighbor. Because the town's military force was almost erased in a matter of weeks, nearby tribes raided and plundered the village's remaining food supply, and raped all of the women. The village now had no food, livestock, no way of defending themselves, and the women all lived with the agonizing psychological pain they experienced in the countless raids. Some of the remaining villagers resorted to cannibalism, while others chose to eat inedible objects around the village. One decided that the bronze head of the village god would make a decent meal, so he took a sword and chopped its head off. No one was in a position to leave because they lacked the means or the ability to gather their belongings and go, which only resulted in pandemonium amongst the populace. Neighbor slaughtered neighbor just to live, mothers drowned their children in the river so they could eat that night, and some of the deranged souls took to burning houses with families still inside. The moral and structural integrity of the entire village was degraded in days, and all that was left was the woman and her son. She told of how she hid underneath the rubble of one of the burned houses with her son so as to avoid torture from one of the various arsonists. She had not anything to eat or drink for two whole days, until finally the noise from the arsonists subsided and she was able to scrounge for the remains of the corpses of the people who fell victim to the fires. After she told the second man the story of the village and its unfortunate inhabitants, she walked off into the piles of rubble of her once cherished home, hoping to find shelter and other necessities to survive for a bit longer. The second man concluded that he could not stick around to bare witness to this, and he too left in search of something.

The second man walked until he could go no further. Resting on the edge of a cliff, he forced himself to evaluate his situation for the last time. It was now all too evident that the mystical spirit he once worshipped was nowhere to be found. He could not rationalize what he saw there in the ruins of the village, all of the suffering and degradation that had occurred. He once believed that this spirit unified man and established a lasting peace in all of creation, but now saw in its place a void, a chasm of unfathomable depths. The second man felt isolated. Oh, how he wanted so badly to return to the life of the cave! But he knew that if he took this path he would be killed mercilessly by his former friends.

On the other hand, if he stayed here on the surface he would surely go insane at the constant turmoil he saw everywhere he went. A sacrifice had been made, he realized - a sacrifice of his innocence for his desire to know what was real. The guilt he felt at the death of the first man writhed in his heart until he had had enough, and he then began his odyssey into nothingness. Nature, man, and even his god betrayed him as he apprehended the truth of it all: that nothing was different or better, that everything remained the same, only to eternally come from whence the place it came. Suffering would not be atoned for as the indifferent forces of the world grinded its oppressive gears continuously. There was no justice in the actions of humanity or divinity, nothing to possibly redeem existence from this hell. The second man had sacrificed his innocence to know wisdom, and in return recognized that nothing was of any value anymore - not nature and all of its material substances, not his fellow man and his corruptible attributes, and not his god and all that it supposedly sustained with goodness. Chaos, pandemonium, destruction, anguish and agony all loomed over the second man like a suffocating blanket, taking his very will and smashing it much like the unarmed combatant's head, leaving him a hopeless creature amidst the void. There he stood, on the edge of the cliff, his soul spiraling into oblivion never to return, losing all grasp of hope and faith in this nothingness. He mustered up enough consciousness to make one final decision: to free himself from this despair. The second man closed his eyes and let the wind take control of his body, flinging himself into the abyss that lurked below.

-- Ezra Robinson, 11th grade

Shay and Boyd

Lights twinkle in and out of existence on the side of the Ferris Wheel at the county fair. The mass of slightly rusted, painted white iron looms before me, taunting me with its groaning machinery and childlike decor. The wooden platform where you board the ride is home to a line of laughing children and exhausted parents holding giant stuffed animals and reams of cotton candy.

“Please, Boyd the view is amazing.” She rises on her tiptoes and places a small peck on my cheek. “I promise you will love it.”

Not as much as I love you.

I look at her, a purple light cast against her red hair from the ring throwing booth behind us. Her thighs are exposed by her blue jean cut-offs. A cardigan is draped around her shoulders, and she pulls it tighter around her as a small breeze rustles the red waves of her hair.

“I don’t know, I mean,” I pause, not quite sure if I want to do this. “It’s so tall.” I fiddle with my hands as we stand next to the booth.

She huffs at my reluctance. “You are coming; we are doing this, and you will love it.” I look down at my shoes, covered in the dust that the crowds of people have kicked up. My hand floats to the lump in my pocket in the shape of a square.

“Shay...” My words are cut off by a sharp tug at my arm, jerking me in the direction of the looming heap of glittering metal.

We wait in line for a while. Small children who won’t stand still next to their parents weave in and out of the queue. Shay whispers to me how cute they are. Little curls bounce on one girl’s head in a mass of gold, and a boy with brown hair hanging over his eyes clings to his mother’s skirts as the girl tries to get him to play with her. Their cheeks are flushed with innocence, and the boy slowly peels away from his mother and takes the girl’s hand.

We near the end of the line. Shay leads me up to the steps of the platform and a carriage wobbles to a stop in front of us, it’s striped sides bright as can be in the flickering carnival lights. Shay goes first,

delicately sitting on the bench and sliding over. My heart races when I step onto the carriage. It sways under my weight, and I tumble into the seat next to Shay.

A giggle falls from her lips. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah, I can do this,” I say. My hands are shaking at my sides as the operator of the ride, a teenage boy with bleach blonde hair and patches of acne strewn across his jaw, pulls the metal harness over our laps.

“It’s not that high, Boyd. You are fine.” Her eyes are soft and reassuring, a warm brown against the colorful lights surrounding us in the framework of the wheel. The ride lurches, and I suck in a sharp breath as we start to ascend. “Don’t look down, honey.” Shay’s voice is gentle and lovely, but I can’t tear my eyes away from the receding ground and the wisps of dust being trampled by the families milling around.

Her smooth hand touches my jaw and nudges until I meet her eyes. “Don’t look down look out.”

Her hand brushes the stubble on my jaw as her touch leaves me. I take her hand instead, lacing our fingers together. Somehow her touch is calming. It makes my fear of how high we are fall away. I look out across our small town, but the lights and bustling cars that we slowly rise above are dull in comparison to her flaming hair and bright brown eyes. We lurch to a stop at the very top of the ride, and I look at her.

It’s silent for a moment, and I take in her slim shoulders and the softness of her face as she looks out across our small town. “You are supposed to be looking at the beautiful view,” she says. She doesn’t take her eyes off of the city lights.

“I am.” The words slip out of my mouth without missing a beat. Her gaze falls to her lap, attempting to hide the blush that moves across her freckle-covered cheeks. “Shay,” I whisper, and she looks up at me. As I reach into my pocket, my fingers pull out a black velvet covered box. I open the box to reveal a silver ring cradled in white silk. A diamond flickers in a rainbow of lights.

-- Alaina McCrispin, 12th grade

A Night of Many Lasts

The road is bumpy under the bus tires. As I rest my head against the bus window, I can feel the motor's vibrations. This game we are heading to means everything. Winner takes all, moves on to the second round, and adds another win under his belt. The loser goes home, and the seniors' season is forever finished. Every year the stakes of this have always been known, but this year I cannot help thinking of it. Because if our team loses, this will be my last trip on the bus with my friends who mean so much.

I guess the past four years have just slipped by me. It doesn't feel like this should be my last year. I look out of the window for perhaps the last time as we head to the stadium. I sit and think of everything that has led me up to this moment, and now I am saddened. The seniors of years' past are long gone into their new lives. The trip to Chicago's Thanksgiving Day Parade has faded into a memory, and every single long, hot practice is merging into one. The laughter and every private joke made between all 150 of us will soon be forgotten. The other seniors including myself will soon be ghosts of the past in just six short months from now.

I feel the bus come to a screeching halt. The time starts now to make sure that if this is my last game, I give everything I have into my last performance. Our new uniform's lightness is unfamiliar considering that this will be only my second time wearing it. The sadness in this is that I will have only worn the new uniform four times before I graduate. The old, heavy uniform I have worn the past four years is now an item of the past, and I will never get to wear old faithful again.

We are now marching into the stadium to start cheering on the Wildcats with pride. The stadiums have always been my favorite part of the games. All of us in our shiny uniforms sit together in our own section in the stands. We play short music to pump up the football team, we laugh about almost anything, we dance to the percussion beats, and we cheer on the Wildcats with the cheerleaders. My parents have made the effort to come to every game this year, and they are here tonight to make sure they get pictures of me at this potential last game.

Now, I see our drum major telling us to put on our hats and gloves, which is a signal that means our performance is drawing near. So we start moving down to the side of the stadium to warm up our horns

and to make sure we are all in tune with one another. Our director calls us in together after we warm up and says, “Make tonight memorable, Pride. Make this your best performance of the year. I love you, Band. Band dismissed!”

“Wildcat pride!” we call back in response. I look to the scoreboard and realize we are losing by a couple of touchdowns. The reality sinks in that this may truly be my last halftime performance, my last game, and my last bus trip.

My boyfriend and I always stand together on the sideline before we perform because we have a trio together with a dear friend of ours. He sees the look on my face as I stare at the running clock, and he says, “Our last game together.” I cannot cry now, because the rush of adrenaline that the games always give me is now providing me with just enough strength to not come apart at the seams. So I just look back at him and smile without saying a word. He puts his arm around me to hold me for the last time on a high school football field. We start watching the clock narrow until there are just a few seconds left, and the anticipation builds. Then, right as the clock stops, he pulls me to him and kisses me softly. The moment is perfect-- the lights, the adrenaline, the shiny new uniforms, and the inevitable truth of this final performance. He could not have chosen a more perfect way to rein in the last show. The buzzer of the clock is now ringing and the moment is over. It is time for us to shine in glory.

The crowd is always loud and seems to be oblivious to what is about to happen. They stuff their faces with seemingly endless amounts of peanuts and popcorn while discussing the last play of the game. That’s when I take to the field with my own team. I am still not sure why, but I can never remember the full performance. It is always a blur that begins with the loud unwavering sea of people. We watch and wait for our count off, which is always “1, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4.” Right before the count off, everything seems to get quiet. All the outside distractions become nonexistent. I see the drum major begin the silent count off with his hands and hear faintly in the background the announcer proclaiming that The Pride has taken the field. The bright stadium lights illuminate the plains of painted grass and the stands grow quiet. We, the band, have stepped off for the last time.

-- Erica Patterson, 12th grade



From left to right:
Alaina McCrispin, Attie Bishop, Handley Owens, Ezra Robinson,
and Savanna Chappell

Not pictured:
Jesse Culver, Shae Kendrick, Marijke Johnston, Erica Patterson,
and Andrew Turner.