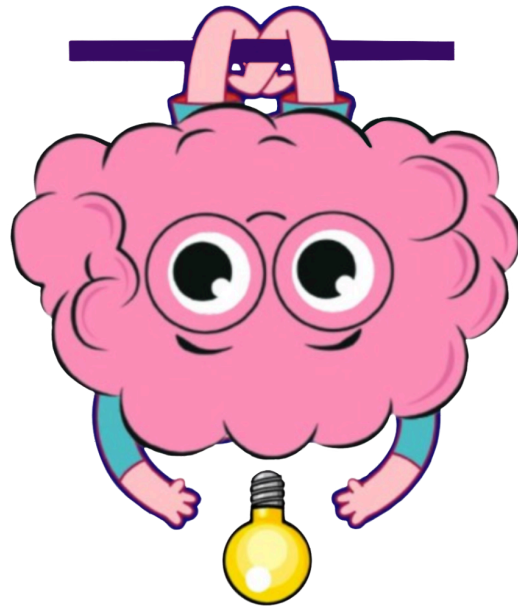


Nimblewitlit



Issue 1

Editors-in-Chief: Melissa Rotert and Kristin Houlihan

Fiction Editor: Melissa Rotert

Poetry Editor: Kristin Houlihan

Nimblewitlit Magazine is published digitally several times a year exploring themes to celebrate a variety of perspectives and advancing relationships through interpersonal understanding. Continuing the conversation with a young audience, we believe children should never be left out of the conversation as they are not only the future but important members of the current community.

We accept submissions from a diverse population of writers, young and old, as we hope to include the stories and literary perspectives that will expand our communities and bring understanding through the written word. All published work will be archived on EpistemicLit.com/Nimblewitlit.

Contact us via email at Nimblewitlit@gmail.com

ISBN: 9798264599743

Cover art: Finn Rotert

Cover design: Melissa Rotert

© 2025 Epistemic Literary Magazine

ISSUE ONE

Taking a Stand

March 20, 2025



Original artwork by Finn Rotert (age 5)

EDITOR'S NOTE

FROM CO-EDITORS-IN-CHIEF MELISSA ROTERT & KRISTIN HOULIHAN 4

POETRY

MONSTERS | E.H. PERRY 5

STAND UP, SHINE BRIGHT | MOYATO AKINTADE 7

PEACE ON YOUR PLATE | REBECCA LOVEDAY 8

LOVE IS JUST LOVE | LAURA BRADFORD 10

FREEDOM | SALLY MURPHY 12

YOUNG POET HIGHLIGHT

STEP 1 TO LIFE | LIA BENTON 14

FICTION

LINA'S STORY | OLIVIA ANNE GENNARO 17

FRANKIE ABAGNALE AND THE FLYING DOOM BOTTLES | TRACIE RENEE 21

EDITOR'S NOTE

With **Epistemic Literary** it's important that our issues reflect relatable themes that can resonate with a global audience and artistry, but there is always one group left out of the conversation: children. We created **Nimblewitlit** to extend our mission to a younger audience. Not only by creating content appropriate for ages 5-14 but by inviting children to submit their own poems, stories, and artwork. We made the decision to pair themes between the two magazines. We knew the next issue of **Epistemic** would focus on Resistance and felt **Taking a Stand** was a perfect compliment. Every day we see stories of young people standing up for the values that mean the most to them. They are not only the future, waiting their turn to make change, but often they are the facilitators of change in the present. Marching side-by-side in protest with their parents, leading the way by example to their elders, and reminding us what passion looks like in the face of adversity. They teach us all to fight off indifference and complacency. This issue and this magazine is in honor of our young heroes.

Thank you all for being a part of our efforts to facilitate knowledge, connection, and growth.

– Melissa Rotert, Co-founder and EIC, Fiction

MONSTERS

Written by E.H. Perry

Stand up, stand up, stand up and fight
All the scary monsters of the night.

With just your pillow shield and toothbrush spear,
You are able to face the things you fear.
The monster in the dark that creeps and crawls,
Casting dark shadows on your bedroom walls,
The monster under the pile of clothes
(Mom says it's just laundry, but you don't know),
The under-bed monsters you're sure you see—
When you're brave and stand up, away they'll flee.

Stand up, stand up, stand up and fight,
Learn to stand for what you know is right.

As you get older, your monsters will change,
No simple pile of clothes that looks strange.
Now you face bullies that swagger and strut,
And learn about words that can hurt and cut.

It's not just you that needs help from a friend,
There are so many people you can defend.
All it might take is a kind word today,
To chase someone else's monsters away.

Stand up, stand up, stand up and fight,
To help make the world a bit more bright.

The world can be a dark and scary place,
But that doesn't always have to be the case.
When somebody's mean, there's somebody kind.
Everywhere you look, there are helpers to find.
Whatever you do, wherever you go,
There is something important you should know.
There'll always be monsters, that much is true—
And those monsters can be defeated by you.

E. H. Perry is a middle school teacher with purple hair who loves books, tea, and yarn. When not reading, writing, or teaching she's busy being a mom to a 7-year-old. You can find more of her writing, including several decodable readers, at <https://ehperryauthor.wordpress.com>.

STAND UP, SHINE BRIGHT

Written by Moyato Akintade

When the world feels heavy, and things aren't right,
Don't stand in silence, don't hide from the fight.
A friend who's hurting, or the earth that's in pain,
You can make a difference—don't let it be in vain.

Speak up, stand tall, let your voice be heard,
Kindness is powerful, it's more than just words.
If something's unfair, don't turn away,
You have the strength to change the day.

The smallest step, the bravest call,
Can turn the tide, can change it all.
So stand up, be bold, let your heart be true,
The world needs YOU, and all that you do!

Moyato Akintade is a Nigerian writer and poet who weaves raw emotion into every line she writes. Her work delves into self-reflection, identity, resilience, and the beautifully messy spectrum of human emotions: heartbreak, longing, and the weight of unspoken words. When she's not lost in the rhythm of

poetry or dissecting life's complexities, she's overthinking or planning her next creative venture.

PEACE ON YOUR PLATE

Written by Rebecca Loveday

Choose peace on your plate!

Leave chickens to peckin',
the cows to the grazing,
the lambs to the leaping,
and savour the flavour
of dinner that didn't have
dreams in its sleeping.

Choose peace on your plate!

Leave pigs to the snuffling,
the fish to the swimming,
the geese to the flying;
embrace the fresh taste
of dinner that didn't feel
fear in its dying.

Choose peace on your plate!

Love the grains and the greens,
the bountiful beans,

the fruits ripe for sharing;
devour the power
of dinner devised with
compassion and caring.

Rebecca Loveday is a writer and early years practitioner from Portsmouth, an island city on the south coast of England, where she enjoys getting blown about on winter beach walks and spotting cool street art. Find her poems and stories for children and young people in *Tyger Tyger Magazine*, *Haunted Words Press*, *Writing Magazine*, *Little Thoughts Press*, *Parakeet*, *The Dirigible Balloon* and on her website: www.rebeccalovedayrhymelady.com.

LOVE IS JUST LOVE

Written by Laura Bradford

Love is just love

It's just love

It's just love.

We all have the right

To be loved

And to love.

To love in a way

That feels right

Just for us.

Let there be no resistance

Hostility

Fuss

But compassion

Acceptance

Encouragement too.

May you love in a way
That feels perfect for you.

Laura Bradford is a writer, teacher and mum to two young boys based in France. She is a published poet and has performed her poetry live in both London and Paris. Children are a mighty source of inspiration for Laura's writing; how they understand, interact with and confront the ups and downs of life. She believes that deep inside we are all still children, and have so much to gain from observing and listening to our young friends.

FREEDOM

Written by Sally Murphy

I caught a bug
put in a jar
watched it
hurrying
scurrying
worrying
how to escape.
Reminded me
of people I'd seen
on television
hope drained
from their faces
as they pressed
at fences
searching for freedom.
I took the jar outside
and watched the bug fly free.

Sally Murphy is an Australian author, poet and academic, who believes the world would be a better place if everyone read and shared more poetry. She has been writing all her life, and her publications include award winning verse novels *Pearl Verses the World*, *Toppling* and *Worse Things*.

STEP 1 TO LIFE

Written by Lia Benton

How naïve you seem to be,
trying to color the world as black and white,
trying to cover up the shades within our lives.

As if it'll solve all the questions you ask,
through the pain of confusion,
through the stab of uncertainty.

You cannot judge a stone for its uneven curves,
or the roughness against its side.

Look beyond its imperfect greys, browns, and ash
for inside lies a treasure of crystals,
a hidden geode, within a pile of rocks.

You cannot yell at the sky for its storms,
you cannot huff while it catches you by surprise
and shut yourself inside.

You cannot ask the clouds, "Why do you do this to me?"
"Why must you be an inconvenience to my land"

While they willingly nourish your plants,
leaving an apologetic scent of rain in their sorrowful trail.

How naïve you seem to be,
how naïve,
how naïve.

How can you ignore the hues of grey?
Each unique, each necessary.

Trying to differentiate the good man from the bad,
trying to shame clumsy souls for their flaws

When there is no such thing as the all-good man
nor the completely bad man, either.

So let's not color the world as black and white,
let's not strive to cover up the shades within our lives.

Let's instead embrace the balance we need,
and only then—as a society,
will we truly succeed.

Lia Benton is a young teen writer from Pittsburgh with a passion for storytelling. In her work, she delves into themes of nature and societal issues, blending thoughtful insight with rich metaphors. Through her writing, she aims to spark conversation and inspire change.

LINA'S STORY

Written by Olivia Anne Gennaro

September 13, 4:38 PM

To: patricia.jenkins@lakesidems.edu

From: lina.cartwright@lakesidems.edu

Subject: Please read

Dear Counselor Jenkins,

~~I need~~ I am emailing you to tell you about something that happened ~~to me~~ I ~~want~~ think you should know about. My name is Lina Cartwright and I am a sixth grader here. I ~~went to~~ meant to go to your office but I ~~would rather~~ prefer to send an email. ~~It is a lot easier for me.~~ Please ~~don't tell my parents.~~ This is still confidential, right? ~~Every year in homeroom they say~~ The Student Handbook says we are supposed to come to you if we have anything we ~~need~~ want to talk about in our life and it's supposed to be a safe place. So I have something from last week. ~~I've been writing and deleting and rewriting this email since then because I'm afraid. It's not that I don't want to tell people. It's just hard.~~

I was going to gym first period and one of my classmates came up to me. ~~I know him a little bit~~ I don't know him that well but he seemed nice from class. ~~I don't want to name him because I don't~~

~~want everyone to know.~~ His name is Jeremy Crewe. He asked me if I was looking forward to playing kickball and I said yes. He said he was too. Then he said he was glad he got to talk to me because we didn't really know each other since we went to different elementary schools. I agreed, because I like making new friends. ~~I never thought of him in THAT way.~~ This all seemed normal. ~~Or should I have known?~~

Then he asked me what I usually did after school and if I'd want to come and hang out sometime, maybe with his friends. I thought this was weird because I barely knew him ~~and he was a boy so I didn't think he'd really want to be just friends.~~ I said, maybe, I'll have to see, even though I didn't really want to. I was trying to be nice. ~~I was afraid he'd get mad and never talk to me again if I said no.~~ He said his friends thought I was cool. ~~I smiled but I didn't mean it in a flirty way.~~ I said, "Really?" because I didn't understand why they would be talking about me. ~~Now I get it.~~

He said "yes" with a smile and then he ~~touches~~ grabbed my chest, like that would explain. ~~It was short but it still happened. I swear I didn't like it. I knew it was wrong. My mom said this would happen, it just would, because I got my period last year, so I had to be careful, and I swear I was!~~ He also whispered something gross. ~~I don't want I don't think I should repeat it. I really don't want to tell all the details.~~ It made me feel like an object. ~~I wasn't wearing my gym clothes yet and I wasn't breaking the dress code. My shorts went all the way down to my knees and my shirt had sleeves and it was a t-shirt so nothing was showing in my chest area.~~

There were people all around, but because there were so many I don't think they saw. We were almost to the gym so I couldn't really go anywhere, ~~and I didn't want to make a big deal since it could mess up the whole next class and everyone would know.~~ I tried to walk a little faster to get away from him ~~but I didn't yell for anyone.~~ Then he might get in trouble ~~and make everyone mad at me.~~ He's very popular. ~~I would have kicked him in the nuts but I was frozen I would have fought back but I know we would both get suspended because of the zero tolerance rules. Why doesn't that include self-defense?~~

~~I didn't say anything because I was afraid.~~ I didn't tell Mr. Samson during gym because ~~I didn't feel comfortable~~ I couldn't find the right time. Nothing else seemed to happen with him in class ~~except I thought he kept looking at me like he wanted to know my response.~~ He didn't even talk to me, which was actually normal ~~except this time I thought he was mad because I didn't want to hang out with him and let him touch me more.~~ So I thought it would be better to tell you since it didn't happen in anyone's class.

I know this email is really long, but I swear this happened ~~even though I don't think anyone saw it and I didn't tell anyone then, so you can't prove it and he'll probably say he didn't do it.~~ I promise ~~I'm not just trying to get him in trouble.~~ I told you, I barely know ~~him.~~ I don't really want this to become a big thing that everyone knows about. ~~I don't want my parents and my friends and my~~

~~teachers to know. It's too embarrassing and they won't think of me the same way anymore. And I don't want to be THAT girl. Besides I know probably nothing will happen to him anyway because I've heard about stuff like this before and the kids are still here bragging about who they touched. I just know your job is to help people get through emotions that are hard from things going on in their lives. Well, I have a lot of emotions, all at once so I can't even tell which is which. I'm not the same since it happened. I feel like I'm being really quiet and I don't think I'm an introvert at all. I've only worn sports bras and baggy t-shirts since it happened. I keep avoiding boys in the hallway, even if they never did anything, because they might. I thought Jeremy was nice, too. I don't want to do this because I think I like boys (not Jeremy) and I have to work with them in class anyway. So please help me and don't tell anyone.~~

Thank you,
Lina Cartwright

Olivia Anne Gennaro is a writer and teacher originally from Indiana. In 2017 her short story "*Entrances and Exists*" was selected for *Harmony Ink Press's* Young Author Challenge and appeared in the anthology *Harmonious Hearts*, 2017. She has also reported for newspapers in rural Kentucky. She lives in New Jersey with her partner, the writer Taylor Tracy.

FRANKIE ABAGNALE AND THE FLYING DOOM BOTTLES

Written by Tracie Renee

The reason I have not found a best friend yet is because the fourth time Kayden Karst chucks his empty water bottle at my head, I get sent to the principal's office. This is completely and totally unfair because:

1. Kayden Karst does NOT get in trouble, even though he did the throwing.
2. Also, I didn't choose that seat in homeroom. Thirty-one days ago when sixth grade ruined my life by starting, Mrs. Tanaka's alphabetical-order seating chart stuck me—last name: Abagnale—right up front (spitting distance to Mrs. Tanaka's desk AND the garbage can that lives next to it), and Kayden Karst one row to my right and four seats behind me.
3. But mostly, this is unfair because when I intercepted Kayden's first three flying Doom Bottles, I caught them and he smiled at me (which made Hannah and Kamila giggle exactly like almost-friends should). So how was I supposed to know that hand-block number four would send the Doom Bottle into Mrs. Tanaka's face?

"It was completely and totally an accident," I tell Principal Lopez.

She shakes her head and sighs. "Francesca—"

“My friends call me Frankie,” I remind her.

“As I was saying,” she continues, “it would be in your best interest to think before you act. Considering that this is your”—she squints at her computer —“sixth visit to my office in the last two weeks, I’m afraid it’s time for a consequence.”

“I’m generally free after 4PM, but if you want me to help Janitor Davis clean up the school grounds again, I’ll need to go home first because these aren’t the right shoes.”

She rubs her temples. “No need. Detention takes place in the media center.” She checks her watch. “Chop chop! Best not be tardy again for second period, Francesca.”

I start to say, “Actually I go by—”

But Principal Lopez completely and totally points to the door before I can finish, so that’s the fourth very unfair thing about today: nobody here listens.

In detention, I listen to the clock tick too slowly for eleven minutes while I multiply four-digit numbers by two-digit numbers. Then I read chapter seven of *A Long Walk to Water* by Linda Sue Park, and for twenty-three minutes I forget that I am the weird, new,

completely and totally friendless kid at Harold Washington Middle School. Instead, I am in South Sudan with Nya, who is exactly my age but doesn't go to school (lucky) because she walks all day to get water for her family (not so lucky). For twenty-three minutes, I don't worry about what Hannah and Kamila giggle over at the lunch table I wasn't invited to; I just worry about Nya's sister, who drinks dirty water and gets really sick. But then I close the book and there are still fifty-six UGH minutes of detention left which is completely and totally too many. And I'm jumpy inside from Nya's worries.

When I ask the librarian if I can use a computer for research, he says yes.

Actually, Mr. Zalusky says, "Why?" but after I explain that I want to research water contamination, he says "Go ahead but if I catch you on YouTube, Principal Lopez will hear about it."

I completely and totally do not go on YouTube. Or at least, I completely and totally do not get caught.

For the next fifty minutes on not-YouTube, I learn that some water is dirty because of parasites (like in Linda Sue Park's book) and some water is dirty because of pollution. Plastic doesn't completely and totally go away when you throw it away—bits of it end up in the water we drink (ew). So Kayden's fourth Plastic Doom Bottle is not just the root of my own personal Doom (a.k.a. detention) but

also a Doom Bottle for All of Humankind because it will hang around (like locker room stink on run-the-mile-day) for hundreds AND hundreds of years. And schools (like Harold Washington Middle) create 14,500 TONS of plastic waste (ugh)—EVERY DAY!¹ Which is sad. And completely and totally does not vibe with my let's-be-middle-school-friends look (sunshine yellow high-tops + a rainbow hoodie) so I spend the last thirty-two detention minutes looking up “environmental activism” and “plastic recycling” and “how to save the earth.”

When it's finally time to leave, Mr. Zalusky asks if I found what I needed. I nod. Because even though it's still completely and totally unfair that I'm here and Kayden Karst isn't, and even though it's still UGH that he chucked his bottle toward the trash can by Mrs. Tanaka's desk in the first place, at least now I know what to do about it.

I start first thing Wednesday morning in the cafeteria, with the vending machine that sells Kayden's Doom Bottles. But even though I have used my very best handwriting to letter the signs, Hannah and Kamila roll their eyes at the posters I've taped to the vending machine.

Think before you drink!

BYORB² tomorrow!

Be cool and reuse!

Principal Lopez doesn't take them down though. And I only groan a little when Kayden interrupts my protest to feed the machine a dollar. Also I completely and totally do not rant about melting icecaps and homeless polar bears when he asks me if I like boba tea. Instead I explain—very calmly—that plastic boba tea straws weigh so little that the wind can blow them right out of garbage trucks and into the ocean, where sea turtles eat them, so no, I don't drink boba as of 5:17PM yesterday because turtle murder is completely and totally uncool.

All Kayden says is, "Oh." But when he punches COIN RETURN, I think before I act: I thank him for not buying a Doom Bottle. And totally don't point out that his ears have flushed as red as the (plastic-wrapped) Twizzlers he shouldn't have dug out of his bag.

174,000 tons of plastic cafeteria UGH³ later, Mrs. Tanaka says we can pick our own seats for second semester homeroom. I nab one by the window this time, far away from her desk AND the trash can. When Kayden slides into the seat behind me, I don't groan or even turn around—at least, not until something (a stainless steel water bottle, sunshine yellow) crashes to the floor at my feet. I completely and totally don't mean to kick it into Mrs. Tanaka's path as she makes the new seating chart. My feet just think faster than my

brain.

It is unfortunate that Mrs. Tanaka's feet completely and totally don't.

"Honest, I didn't mean for Mrs. Tanaka to sprain her ankle," I tell Principal Lopez.

She rubs her temples. "I know. But it would be in your best interest, Francesca, to think before you—"

"Act," I finish. "Usual time?"

She nods. "And if you leave now, you can still make second period."

I almost accidentally tell her that second period this semester is Domestic Arts and I really don't mind missing whatever that is, but then I shut my mouth. I guess I'm learning.

In detention, I sit at my usual table (closest to the books about science). I'm four pages into *How to Change Everything* by Naomi Klein when Mr. Zalusky says, "I don't understand. You're not on the list."

He's by the door, talking to some kid. I can't see who.

"I'm volunteering?" Mystery Kid says.

"That's...not how detention works," Mr. Zalusky says. "But knock yourself out." He nods toward me. "Plenty of room over there."

Kayden slides into the seat across from me. I completely and totally keep my eyes on my book and don't look up at all—not until something falls out of his backpack and crashes to the floor at my feet. At least I don't kick it this time. I just pick the water bottle up and hand it back to him.

"Thanks," he says. "So..."

"So...why are you volunteering for detention?" I completely and totally don't mean to blurt that out. But I guess my mouth isn't as good at staying shut as I thought.

His ears flush again. "Mrs. Tanaka tripped on my bottle? I felt bad." He twists it—stainless steel, sunshine yellow—in his hands. "Don't you live on Holly Hill?"

I nod.

"I'm two streets over. On Maple? Carpools are good for the earth. Right? So...my older brother can drive you home."

I squint at his water bottle. "Does that say 'THINK BEFORE YOU

DRINK?' In sharpie?"

"Huh?" Kayden follows my eyes. "Yeah. I mean, my brother can drive you if you want, Francesca."

For the first time ever at Harold Washington Middle School, I don't have to think before I act because this one's a no-brainer.

"Completely and totally," I say. "But my friends call me Frankie."

¹ Completely and totally true! Read: Evaluating Food Packaging Waste in Schools: A Systematic Literature Review.

² Bring Your Own Reusable Bottle

³ 174,000 divided by 14,500 = 12 (days).

Tracie Renee (she/her) is a librarian, a **Publishers Weekly** book reviewer, a three-time winner of the Grand Prize in Poetry from **Outrider Press**, and a **Best of the Net** nominated writer who lives and dreams in sort-of Chicago. She's currently querying a middle grade novel-in-verse. Say hi and connect here: <https://linktr.ee/tracie.renee>.

VISIT US

