

An abstract painting of a rocky coastline. The sky is a deep, textured blue with a pale, circular sun or moon in the upper left. The rocks are dark, layered, and textured, with some white highlights. The water in the foreground is a lighter, textured blue with horizontal brushstrokes.

# StoneSoup

JANUARY 2018

VOLUME 46 / ISSUE 1

# StoneSoup

*The magazine supporting  
creative kids around the world*

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## Editor's Note

I write to you before a crackling fire. It is officially winter in the Santa Cruz mountains, which, for us, means rain, not snow. But I grew up in the Northeast, and so I am dreaming of snow this time of year. And these poems and stories reflect that: many of them are full of the white flakes, bitter winds, and ice. A few, however, reflect the winter we enjoy in California – crisp but still beautiful, a kind of paradise. As for the art: while there are a few wintry images, I worked to bring a splash of color to the short, dark days. Enjoy (perhaps with some hot chocolate!)

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On the cover:  
'Night at the Lake',

by George Tang, 9  
Barrington, RI

# StoneSoup

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## Frozen Beauty



by Hanna Gustafson, 12  
South Burlington, VT

# Winter

by Sheila Northrup, 10  
Madison, CT



Soft, white, flakes drift down, following the wind.  
They bring a sense of happiness to the air.  
The golden rays of warmth strike onto the fluffy blanket below.  
The harsh cold still manages to crawl inside houses.  
Heat vents roar and the windows give out a moan.  
Thick clouds soon hide the sun.  
Smoke floats out of the chimneys into the bitter air, while leaves and grass are out of sight.  
The snow is swallowing up trees.  
Hot chocolate is being slurped down at every house.  
Now it is official.  
Winter is finally here.

# Pawprints in the Snow

*Stella, the house cat, gets stuck outside in the swirling snow and freezing wind*

Stella huddled against the side of the house, eyes slitted against the blowing snow. The wind whistled in the small cat's ears, slicing through her gray fur and making her tremble uncontrollably. Her teeth chattered, and her paws were numb. She let out a miserable mewl. "Why, oh why, did I ever leave home?"

Stella hadn't *meant* to run away, exactly; she'd only wanted to go outside for a little and bat at this new, entertaining white fluff that drifted out of the sky. But when Stella was done romping around and had meowed at the door, no friendly human had come to let her in. Not even when she'd yowled and raked her claws down the door!

Stella closed her eyes and pictured the door, red paint scarred with five gashes exposing raw wood. She felt like the door now, her "paint" scraped away to reveal the small, scared cat inside.

Knowing she couldn't go inside, Stella had wandered away, bored and alone. Now night was falling, the world growing darker and colder, and all Stella wanted to do was go home. *A warm fire, a comfy bed, my human's gentle hands stroking my back....*

Stella shook her head, trying to clear away the fantasy like it was a film of dust on her fur. *I can't sleep here*, she thought. *I've got to find a better place*. Fighting off the anxiety waging war in her mind, Stella got stiffly to

her paws and raised her chin, tail high. *I am Stella. And no mere storm defeats me!*

This one sure would give her a run for her money, though. The snow was up her belly, and Stella couldn't feel a hair on her pelt after only a few heartbeats of walking. She trekked on, though, clinging to the hope that she'd somehow find a warm, cozy house to sleep in.

What felt like days later, but was probably only a couple minutes, Stella felt like giving up. No more "I can do it" mentality for this cat. But, like a vision before her, Stella saw... an area without snow? She sucked in her breath quickly, regretting it as the cold air stung her throat.

An alley lay before her, shielded from the swirling snow. Stella's green eyes stretched wide. Her tail whisked with excitement. Suddenly rejuvenated, she streaked forward, practically flying over the snow, powder flinging up behind her like a freezing mist.

In the alley now, Stella's gaze roved until it rested on a small nook behind a metal trash can, lined with shredded newspaper. Stella loped to it, kneading her paws in the newspaper, pricking it with her claws. *I couldn't have made a better bed myself*, she thought with a pleased, exhausted purr.

All of her energy spurt drained, Stella collapsed onto the newspaper, asleep almost before her eyes closed.



by Sage Young, 12  
Redmond, OR

---

A low, rolling growl sounded through the alley. Stella's eyes popped open, glowing in the early morning darkness. Fear coursed through her, electrifying the fur on her back; it stood straight up.

A huge, gray animal stood before her. It had short, coarse fur, a bushy, ringed tail, small, round ears, and a black mask around its beady eyes. Its lips were peeled back from sharp, yellowed teeth, and its eyes had a malicious gleam.

Terror made Stella feel faint. This was a creature from nightmares, an animal that haunted even the bravest of cats.

Raccoon.

Another deafening growl erupted from the raccoon, and Stella added her own scared shriek to the clamor. The rank scent of raccoon filled her nose, and she realized it came from the newspaper as well as the creature. She must have been too tired last night to recognize the smell. "Oh no!" she wailed aloud. "I stole its home!"

The raccoon advanced on Stella, claws clicking menacingly on the concrete. Stella backed up farther and farther, until her tail lashed into the brick wall of the alley. The raccoon let out a short, sharp bark, knowing it had the cat trapped. The expression in its eyes changed from anger to a cold happiness.

Panic took over Stella's body. Her whole pelt bushed out; she looked like a ball of gray fuzz with green eyes that flickered with fear. Her mind whirled with survival instinct. Fight or flight.

Flight.

Stella's muscles tensed, and before she knew what was happening, she was leaping, soaring right over a stunned raccoon, landing neatly on light paws and sprinting out of that alley as fast as if her tail were on fire. The creature's eerie screeches still echoed in her ears, vibrating in her.

Stella was like the wind, whooshing over the snow, leaving nothing but swirling flakes in her wake. She was like a bird, riding the snowdrifts and swooping down them in great bounds. She was like an arrow, springing forward and zipping ahead. So fast... faster... faster... faster....

Despite herself, Stella laughed aloud, enjoying the cold air whipping around her face, fondling her ears, flattening her whiskers. She hadn't felt this free for as long as she could remember. And that thought made her skid to a sudden halt, showering snowflakes in a white cloud.

Now that she knew what it was like to be free, how could she ever go back?

Stella's mind churned like ocean waves, each idea crashing into the one before until she couldn't think straight, spraying little particles of thoughts

everywhere.

Inside or out? Together or alone?  
Home or free?

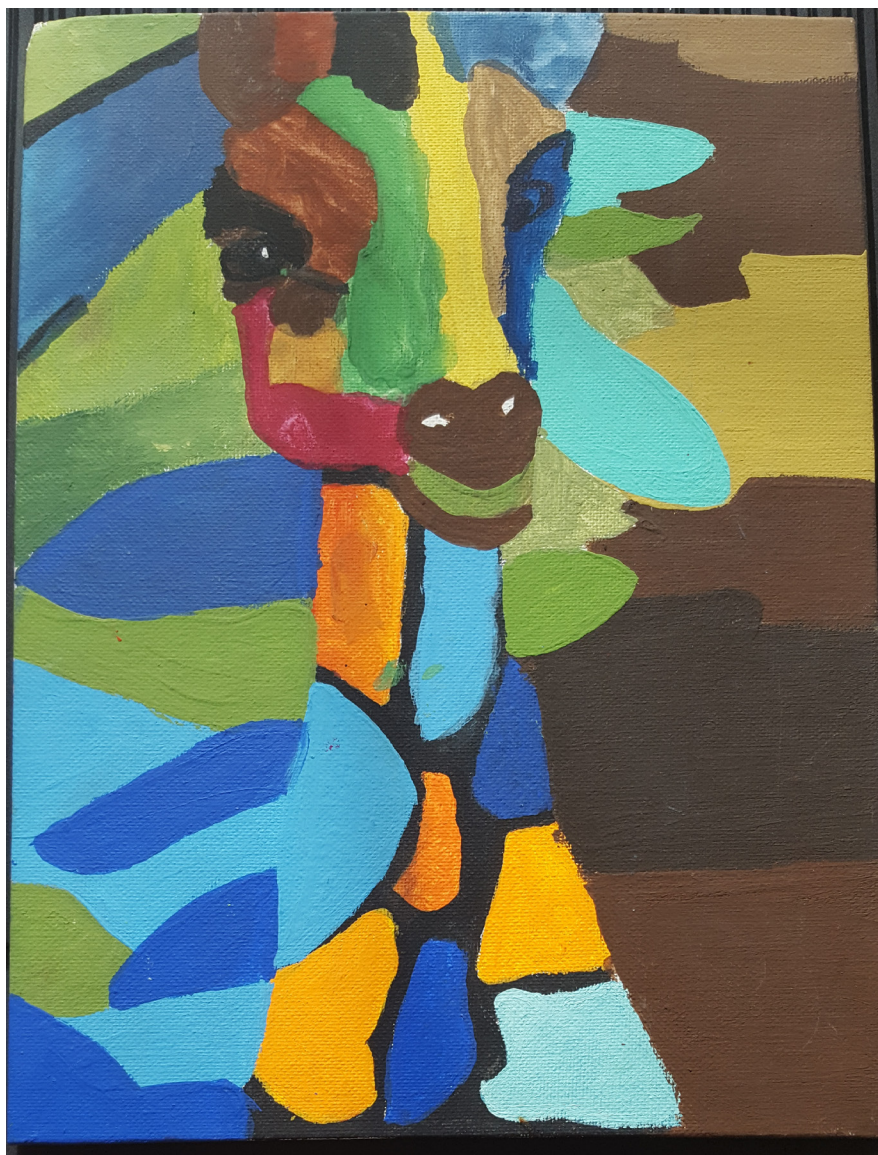
The lure of the wild tugged at Stella. It beckoned her, waving to her with curls of wind and flurries of snow. But home called too. Warmth and comfort, a human who loved her.... Stella's heart ached, but her decision was made. How could she abandon her human? She needed Stella... and Stella needed her.

As soon as she'd thought that, Stella felt a flash of something familiar. She stiffened. She could smell *home*!

Heart thumping a tattoo against her ribs, Stella breathed deeply, inhaling the scents of home, of love and welcomeness and hope. With a yowl of triumph, she raced away, tracing the smell. A few blocks away, she slowed to a trot.

There it was. Her house: gray paint, blue shutters, red door bearing her scratches. Stella approached cautiously, almost believing that if she moved too fast it all would disappear, like ripples distorting a reflection in water.

But it didn't. The door opened, and with mirroring cries of joy, the human and her cat were reunited. The human scooped Stella into her arms, hugging her close. Stella relaxed completely into the human, purrs shaking her body violently. She was home, leaving the pawprints in the snow behind forever.



Teary-eyed Giraffe



by Aevahaadya Arun, 6  
Ontario, Canada

# Paradise?

by Kaya Simcoe, 11  
Cardiff, CA



As I look around me, surveying my surroundings, everything seems different. The sunlight that is spilling onto the ocean sparkles like a thousand gems, and I'm lead to wonder if there actually are a thousand gems floating on the clear surface. The palm trees sweep over me, like protectors, never tiring of providing me shade. A seagull whooshes over me, bringing freedom to my body, also. The sand softly crunches under my feet, a million grains smushed per footprint. Yet, the tide washes them away, so I'm here, but there is no proof that I ever came. My heart beats gently in my chest, like a friend. I root my feet deeper, deeper, into the sand. My eyes are closed, but the bejeweled ocean still swims in front of my focus. "Paradise", I think slowly. I open my eyes, and it's like the slow motion film has stopped. My best friend, Katy, grabs my arm and says loudly over the waves, "Melody, let's go into the water!" I smile at her, and without saying anything else, we dash in. We spend the next few hours body surfing, boogie boarding, and everything else two city girls visiting California could want to do. It was only when we returned to our hotel, late that night, stuffed with fresh sushi and organic juice, that I remembered

those three seconds, standing there with my eyes closed and the wind in my hair. "Paradise" I had thought. But then I looked around the darkening hotel room, where I could see the outlines of my family, could hear their breathing, as the soft sheets wrapped around me in a perfect way, I sort of felt like that was paradise, too.

We left California a few days later, and at first, I worried that I would be losing my precious paradise. But, I had the window seat in our plane, and the clouds looked like bunnies. I also got an orange fizzy water, and some of my favorite chips, so that was pretty great, also. What I realized, sitting there on that plane, watching California fade away, is that paradise is something you carry with you. You just need to find it.

And you know what? As I sit here, writing this on the window seat of our apartment, watching the sunset over New York City, I kind of feel like this is paradise, too.

*Is paradise a place... or a feeling?*

# Pray

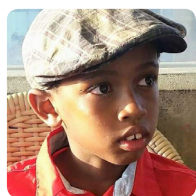
by Gianna Harris, 9  
Metairie, LA



I kneel down to the river  
And say my prayers  
As I hear the water  
flowing and rolling  
I think about how freedom has overgrown  
The magnificent mud of the Mississippi  
I hear birds skim the treetops  
And remember how, when I was a little girl,  
My mom walked me there, and  
I saw the brown water  
I feel memories drift on the surface and  
See my shadow through the deep.



Ababa Wagari



by Christian W. Wagari, 11  
Carlsbad, CA



Fruits Like Heaven

# Sketches

by Saenger Breen, 12  
Northampton, MA



That morning at breakfast, Dylan sat perched on his usual seat at the table, sketching happily. I grabbed the milk and a spoon and sat down. I poured myself a heaping bowl of Cheerios, most of which spilled on the table. Dylan's pencil scribbled away, and he periodically blew huge breaths over his paper to get rid of the shreds of eraser. Curious about what he was working so diligently at, I leaned over to get a better view.

"Dylan!" I shouted. He was adding onto one of my drawings, and had already reshaped a good portion of it. Startled, Dylan looked up.

"What?"

"I've been working on that forever!" I snatched my notebook out of his hands. He'd made the people cartoon like and unrealistic, and shaded in all the wrong places.

"You totally screwed up the whole thing!" I yelled.

"I didn't screw up anything!" he said, defensively.

"I've told you a million times not to touch my stuff, and specifically not my sketchbook!" I flipped through the pages to see if he'd ruined any other drawings. He hadn't. I flipped back to the drawing he was working on. I examined it closely, looking for flaws to point out. The faces of the people had become less dimensional and smudgy. Dylan always drew details with tons of shading, most of which

wasn't necessary. Sometimes I'd teach him where to shade, and help him with drawing figures, but he still resorted to his box-like, over shaded style.

He'd added onto drawings before, but those were just sketches I'd whipped up in a few minutes. I'd been perfecting this one for at least a month. The paper was so worn out from my erasing, that there were shreds of it peeling off. And since Dylan pressed so hard that graphite was sprinkled all over the paper like snowflakes, I knew I wouldn't be able to fully erase what he'd done without making a hole in the paper. I also saw he smudged over the shading that had taken me forever to get right.

"God Dylan, you completely ruined it!" I said, the anger boiling out of me. "You know you suck at drawing figures. In fact, you suck at drawing, period, so why did you have screw up my sketch?"

"I didn't ruin it! And if you'd actually show me how to draw people, like you always promise, then maybe I'd be better!"

"You're so annoying! Why would I want to waste my time teaching you?"

"Oh yeah? Well then I'm glad it's ruined!"

"I hate you!" I said through my teeth. Even though he was still frowning at me, I could tell he was hurt. He started to say something, but I cut him off. "Never ask me to

## *Dylan's just Zoe's annoying little brother... until a snowstorm changes everything*

teach you anything ever again. And don't ever add onto any of my work." Not waiting for a response, I stomped out of the kitchen. I thumped into my room and tossed my sketchbook on my bed. I threw it so hard it slid off the edge and onto the floor. I just left it there. When I passed by the kitchen on my way to the front door, I didn't look in. I impatiently waited for the bus, fuming.

On the way home from school, I sat crammed into the gray leather bus seat, intensely sketching, disregarding the world around me. Frustrated that my pencil wasn't conveying the image in my mind, I flipped to a fresh page. The page I flipped to happened one of Dylan's drawings. All day had been thinking about what happened, and by the time I'd gotten on the bus to go home, I'd realized I'd been a jerk. I decided I should apologize. When I got off the bus, I was blasted with cold air and snow. The snow crept up my ankles as I trudged to the front door. When I got inside, I dropped my backpack on the floor, which made a loud thump, then slid off my boots and tossed my coat on the floor.

"Dylan?" I called. The light in the kitchen was on, but nobody was there. My bowl of dried Cheerios was still on the table from the morning. He must be in his room.

"Hey, Zoe," my Dad called up from the basement.

"Hi, Dad."

"Is it really coming down out there?"

"Yeah, there's already a solid 4 inches."

"Wow, I didn't think the storm would actually hit."

"And it looks like it's just the beginning," I added, glancing out the window. It had started piling up around noon, and there was already a thick white blanket covering everything. I went upstairs to Dylan's room. His door was closed.

"Dylan?" I called again, pushing open the door. His room was empty. His bed was unmade, and a book was propped open, face down on his bed. The phone rang. I ran downstairs to the living room, but my Dad picked it up before I got there. I looked outside again. Snow swirled around vigorously, and the wind whipped the side of the house. Where was Dylan? I was going to ask my Dad, but he didn't like it when we interrupted him when he was on the phone. I sighed. I'd just apologize later. I walked into the kitchen to look for a snack. I grabbed the Ritz crackers out of the cabinet. The wrapper crinkled as I dumped the crackers on the counter. I stood munching on them.

My Dad came running up the stairs from the basement. His face was pale, and his eyes were big and wild. "Come on Zoe, we need to go now."

“What? Why?”

“We need to go to the hospital!” He grabbed his coat off the hook near the door.

“What?” I asked, shocked. I started to panic when he didn’t answer.

“To see Dylan.” He jammed his hat down on his head and started to tie his shoes.

“Why is Dylan in the hospital?” He didn’t respond at first, but just stood there,

“Dad?” I yelled frantically.

Slowly he said, “His elementary school sent everyone home at noon, because of the snow. But then Liam’s mom took Liam and Dylan to the movies. They were heading home, but then they slipped on some snow or ice or something, and they went off the road.”

I blinked and shook my head in disbelief. My heart thumped in my chest like horse’s hooves hitting the ground. I imagined it in my mind. Their car skidding off the road, the windows shattering as it crashed into trees. I imagined his scream, echoing over the empty roads, cutting through the silence of the falling snow. It replayed over and over. Millions of questions swirled through my head. I brushed away most of them, but one stayed, clear as the ice that covered the roads. It scared me so much, I didn’t even want to think it. But I needed to get it out.

“Is he dead?” I said, my voice trembling. My words held in the silence. I bit my lip, tears welling up in my eyes. I had always assumed that my Mom and Dad had the answers to everything. I always assumed that they always knew what to do. But for

the first time, I could see the fear in his eyes. I could see the uncertainty.

“They said he was taken to the ER, but they couldn’t give me any other information.”

I nodded, and swallowed hard. I tried to process it. Waves of guilt flooded over me. I thought of the last thing I’d said to him. I felt like I was being broken, like I was falling into a world of pain. What if I’d lost him?

“Come on, we have to go.”

My legs felt like lead as I walked to the door. I shoved myself into my coat, which was damp from melted snow. When he opened the door, my tears stung, frozen against my face. I walked to the end of the porch, but then stopped. I stared into space. The wind blew my hair around wildly.

“Zoe,” My dad said. He put his hand on my shoulder and walked me over to the car. I got in the car feeling numb. Tears slid down my winter jacket.

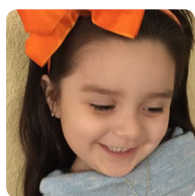
Just as he was about to pull out of the driveway, I shouted, “Wait!” I pushed open the door and jumped out of the car.

“Zoe!” He yelled after me.

I ran to the front door, flung it open, and charged up the stairs. When I reached my door I stopped and caught my breath. I pushed the door open and ran around to the other side of my bed. It was still there, lying on the floor face down, with my name scribbled on the back. I picked it up, and grabbed a pencil from my desk. Then I ran down to the car, clutching my sketchbook to my chest.



Annie with Dogs



by Valentina Ventura, 4  
Des Moines, IA

# Winter

by Micah Lim, 8  
Guilford, CT



The howl of the wind  
The crisp air  
And the crunching of boots on a bed of snow  
The brightest white you will ever see  
The evergreens struggle against the wind

# A Surfing Tradition

## *A special tradition for New Year's Day*

by James Wilson, 11  
Riverside, California



The sun raised its head over a cold California coast. This sun was a special sun. It was the first sun of the year. There was to be a special gathering at the beach. It is what is called a “paddle-out.” Cars slowly gathered at the beach. The people inside the cars exited and came to the shore. No one talked, all they did was look at the horizon, which was light red from the coming sun. The waves were so big it was hard to see the horizon at times. All of them were bundled up, trying to protect themselves from the piercing cold. Every part of their body that was not bundled up was already turning blue.

Soon an old Ford pickup truck parked with the back facing the ocean. The paint on this vehicle was chipping and there were many marks of rust on it. It was filled with wood. Three people got out of the pickup and unhitched the back, exposing the wood. The wood was twisted and knotted so bad it was terrible. Two teenagers came forward and started unloading the wood. They brought it over to a stone fireplace. The three men came into the crowd. Thankful nods went their way but still no one talked, almost as if they were in a trance. Soon a car pulled up with surfboards on the rack. The driver emerged from the car and started untying the boards. Once he was done he set the three boards by the pickup truck. The three men came forward and changed into their trunks

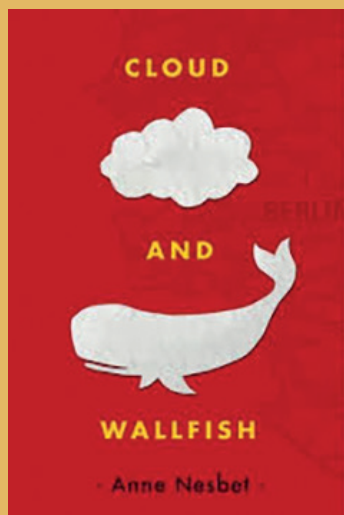
but nothing else. They started to wax their boards, and even though they shivered and were cold to the bone they never put on anything except for their trunks. The group stood motionless, just looking at the horizon. Once the three men were done waxing their boards they walked, with their boards on their shoulder, to the shore and started whispering to each other. Then they stood motionless until the shore break calmed for a little bit and then they sprang into the water and started paddling furiously. The crowd on the beach watched them, still not talking.

When the men were outside they sat there, millions of good waves passing under them. Then one set came with three waves in it. These waves weren't good, these waves were spectacular. The waves so clear and crisp. Each one of them chose their own wave. They glided over the waves, no cutbacks, no nose-riding, nothing but gliding. They all rode in and as the last one exited the water something happened. The crowd cheered, the first sound they made all morning. Soon the festivities began. People got coffee and hot cocoa. People were yelling “Hey John” and such.

Later a spectator of the event asked one of the teenagers who started the fire, “What was the deal with that?” and the teenager said, “It's a tradition.”

# Book Review

*Cloud and Wallfish* by Anne Nesbet;  
Candlewick Press, 2016; \$16.99



Who knew that a regular-looking book could have such an impact on readers and how they view the world? Going into *Cloud and Wallfish*, a historical fiction novel, I was a bit doubtful on how Anne Nesbet was going to weave such a tragic and complex topic like the Berlin Wall into youth literature. However, all my doubts were diminished after reading this wonderfully written novel. While this story is geared towards youth, it still thrums with ever-important themes of finding who you are and remaining loyal to your friends, even through tough times.

Set in 1989, Noah Keller, the main protagonist, had always lead an ordinary American life. That is, until his parents announce that his

name is Jonah, not Noah, and that they will be moving to East Berlin. At the time, Germany was divided into two countries: East Germany and West Germany. In East Germany, the country that Noah moves to, there are many complications. Noah isn't free to discuss anything in his apartment, nor is he allowed to question his government. Most of his days are lonely, until he meets "Cloud" Claudia, who lives in the same apartment with her grandmother. The strange part? Her parents have disappeared, and nobody seems to know why.

This book taught me a few moral lessons, namely about loyalty. In the novel, Noah gets separated from Claudia, ending up on West Berlin with Claudia in East Berlin. Everybody tells Noah that he will never see his friend ever again, but Noah perseveres, standing on the platform in West Berlin that overlooks East Berlin. For weeks, he holds a sign with a message for his friend, to no avail. Finally, right when Noah was about to give up, he sees Claudia again and is able to show her his message, which is: "I have not forgotten you, Cloud!" This shows that you should never give up on your goal, and Noah also demonstrates what it means to remain loyal to your friends.

*Cloud and Wallfish* didn't just teach me moral lessons – it also had relatable characters. I personally

Reviewed by  
**Alexandra Reynaud, 13**  
Portland, OR



can identify with this situation that Noah and Claudia are in. When I was younger, my best friend moved across the country. I was scared that our friendship would drift apart on account of the distance between us, which resonates with Claudia's fear of being forgotten. As I feared, we drifted apart, due to the distance between us. However, this book inspired me to make more of an effort to keep in touch, and to show my friend that I, too, had not forgotten her.

In addition, I also related to Noah's fear of speaking in class. Noah was born with a stutter, so during school, he wouldn't express his opinions frequently in fear of being teased or laughed at. I don't have a stutter, but it can be hard sometimes to speak up in class simply because I'm afraid of what others may think. However, towards the end of the novel, Noah learns to speak up despite what others may think, which also inspired me to share my opinions more frequently in class.

Though it's juvenile fiction, I believe that everyone should read this book, even adults. It is at once a poignant novel about friendship and family, a historical fiction, and a thriller that will keep you on the edge of your seat. I know that this book changed my life—why not let it change yours, too?

# Honor Roll

Welcome to the *Stone Soup* Honor Roll. Every month we receive submissions from hundreds of kids from around the world. Unfortunately, we don't have space to publish all the great work we receive. We want to commend some of these talented writers and artists and encourage them to keep creating.

## Fiction

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