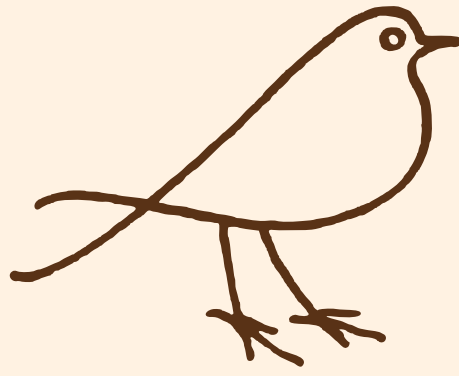


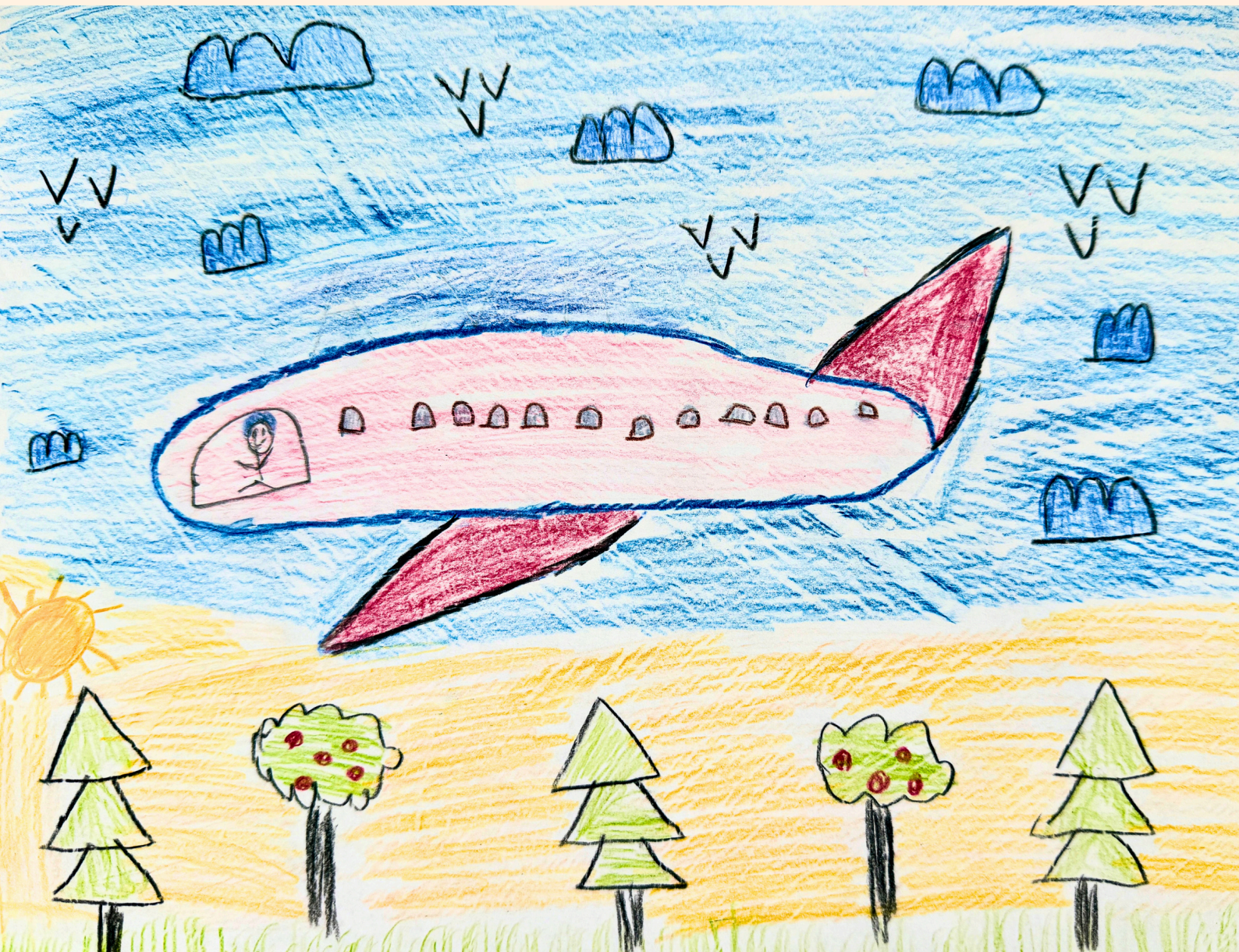


Curiosity & Adventure

ISSUE 2
FALL 2026

SPARROW

literary magazine by young voices



A literary magazine by young voices,
exploring the world through imagination, storytelling, and reflection.

FROM THE NEST: LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Dear Readers,

Welcome to the second issue of *SPARROW*! I'm really excited to share this issue with you.



You will be reading poetry, stories, reflections, and things to do this season.

Hopefully, this issue will help you brim with curiosity and become more adventurous.

Happy reading!

Sincerely,

Malika Alharash

Executive Editor, *SPARROW* Magazine





The Adventures of Swirl

A Series by Malika Alharash

Part 1: Vacation

Once upon a time, there lived an alien on a planet called Alianos. Because lots of aliens lived on that planet, it was called Alianos. And one of them was Swirl. He had a swirly tail and swirly ears.

He loved his planet very much because he had lots of friends and cousins there. He was very happy. But one day, he got bored of his planet because all his friends went on vacation. He wanted to do that too, but he couldn't find where to go.

He kept searching on his phone. He typed, "Where is a good place to go in space?" And he found it. He was going to Earth. He got his clothes ready. He had green overalls with a pocket and a picture of an alien sewn on it. He got into his rocket and flew to Earth.

When he came out, he was so surprised. His mouth opened wide. He was shaken. Then he read a sign. It said, "Clothes Store." Swirl decided to buy some clothes. When he came in, everybody who was in the store was shocked. Some of them even fainted. But one girl did not react.

She said, "It is just an alien!"

When she took a closer look, she fainted as well.

The alien said, "Why did you all faint? I am just a friendly alien."

When he said that, everybody started smiling because they discovered that he was very nice. Then he said hello and started laughing.

And everyone was delighted.

After that, he bought his clothes and had a nice vacation. When it was time to leave, he said goodbye to everyone.

The End!

STORIES THAT STAY WITH US

The Curious Zebra

By Zein Alharash

Once there was a curious zebra who found a magic ring in the forest.

He didn't know that it was magic, so he wore it and he disappeared.

He looked around, and everything was ice. He was in the Arctic.

He touched the ring again, and he was back home. He was so happy. So he and his mother went to eat ice cream, and they were both so happy. Then they ate dinner and went to bed.



Butterflies in Space

By Zein Alharash

Once there was a group of butterflies. They were going to space. They were so excited to go, so they went in the rocket.

The captain said, "Five, four, three, two, one, blast off!" And off they went. They went through the stars, through the planets.

Then they met an alien.

The alien said, "Hi." The butterflies understood him because their language was the same as the alien's. The butterfly responded, "Hi, alien."

The alien was mean. The alien said, "I am better at flying to space than butterflies." And the butterflies said, "No!" And they started to fight him. After the fight, the butterfly said, "Okay, okay, you're better. Now let's go have some ice cream."

And they all agreed, and everybody was happy.

The End



Art by Zein Alharash



Hamza Saves the Day

By Muhammad Rafay

Hamza was walking home from school. The family was about to go on a vacation. His brother Zaid was in high school. He liked going to school and didn't want a vacation at this time. When Hamza reached home, he immediately started preparing for vacation.

When they were on the way, it was really fun, and when they reached the hotel, Hamza said, "Let's walk to the soccer field and play soccer." The game soon turned out to be fun. When the game ended, they ate dinner and slept.

Clunk, clunk. The sound came again. It woke Hamza up. Zaid was next to him, so he poked his brother in the ribs. Zaid got irritated and said, "What's the matter?" Hamza replied, "I hear sounds."

"Why are your ears ringing? Now go back to sleep!"

"Fine," said Hamza, but his mind was racing.

He would soon see what and who was causing the sound. Hamza opened the door. His heart pounding, he stepped into the hallway and followed the sounds until he heard clear voices. He slowly followed them. Then he came to a room—he could hear voices from inside. He entered it. There were ten gold boxes, all of them fake. A few men were painting the boxes blue while talking about the goods they would get by selling these fake gold boxes. Suddenly, Hamza got grabbed by the collar. Then he was flung out of the room.

Hamza was good at fighting. So he kicked the man who had flung him, and while he staggered, Hamza punched him with all his strength. The man fell. Hamza then ran for his life. He stopped after he left the hotel. He heard footsteps behind him.

Suddenly, he saw a tree. He ran towards it. He climbed the tree with ease. When he reached the very top, he looked back and saw several men unsheathing small daggers. Hamza was a black belt at karate. And he had practised fighting many people to earn this level. That's why it felt easy for him to get past these many men. And so he picked up a strong and big stick and he deflected their strikes with that stick.

And he came back to the hotel, victorious. There, in the room, everybody was worried about Hamza and his whereabouts until there was a knock on the door. All eyes turned to the door. Abbu stood up and opened the door. It was Hamza. Ammi cried, "What happened to you?" Hamza told them the story. When he finished, they all ate a big breakfast, and the family lived happily forever.

POETRY GARDEN

POEMS, THOUGHTS, AND LITTLE BLOOMS OF LANGUAGE.

Summer Breeze

By Zein Alharash

I was enjoying the breeze,
and there were so many bees
in the trees,

and there were trees,
and they liked
the breeze.



About Summer

By Nusayba Basrawi

Listen to the breeze,
listen to the leaves.
Look at the trees.

Why don't you have a picnic
and drink many different
kinds of teas?

Summer, oh summer,
you are finally here.

Oh, how I wish I could
be in summer everywhere.

It smells like honey,
maybe I'll buy some
with my money.

Play in a pool,
and you will feel cool.

The Best Kitten

By Amna Malik

Ginger was naughty,
Stripes followed people,
Cookie always smiled,
which made him best
from the rest.



The Curious Bear

By Zein Alharash

Once there was a curious bear.
He loved honey and fresh air.

He had beautiful pajamas,
and he was so happy.

He wanted to go on vacation
to the Bahamas.

He wanted to swim.
He wanted to dream.
He wanted to think.

Then came the day he went,
and he was so happy.

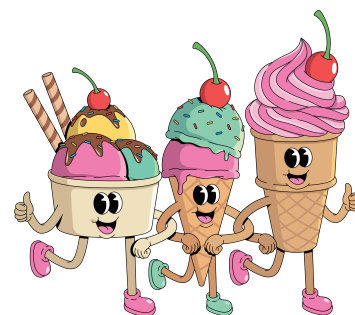
The End!



Summer Days

By Rahma Gazanfer

Summer days,
dewy haze,
fun pool dips,
cold ice cream
on your lips.
No school
for everyone.
Don't forget
to have fun!



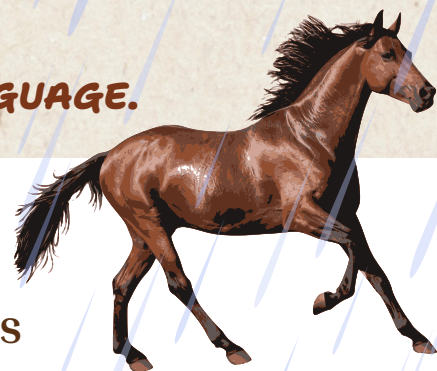
Adventure

By Rahma Gazanfer

Deep forests,
buzzing bugs,
luscious trees swaying,
small critters laying,
big creatures growling.

POETRY GARDEN

POEMS, THOUGHTS, AND LITTLE BLOOMS OF LANGUAGE.



Storm

By Rahma Gazanfer

Dark clouds cover the sky.
The sunlight dies.

Raindrops start to hide.
Thunder rumbles
while lightning flashes.

Soon the blue comes back.
Rain dies down.

Bye-bye, clouds.
Hello, rainbow.

I Love Horses

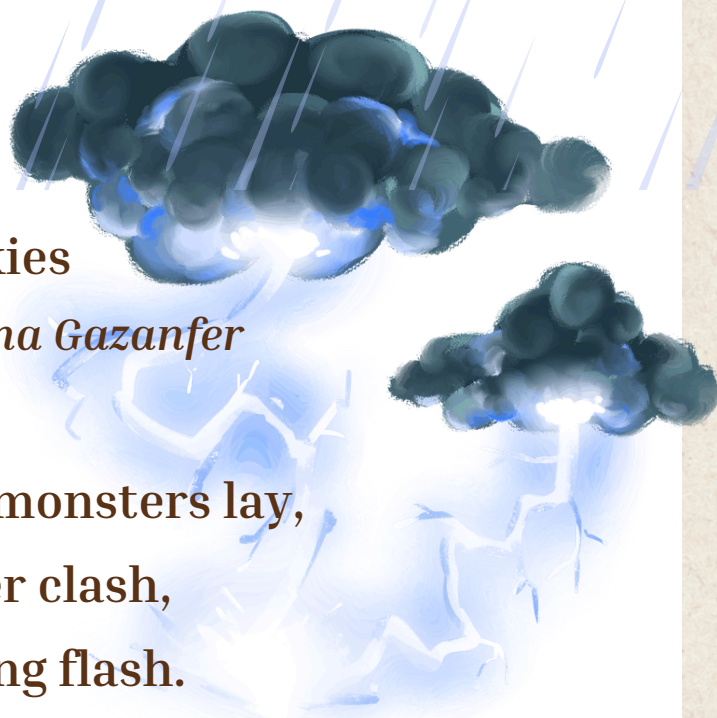
By Malika Alharash

I love horses.
I love their shimmering mane
And how they run in the rain
And how their skin
Cannot stop glistening.

Dark Skies

By Rahma Gazanfer

Where monsters lay,
thunder clash,
lightning flash.
They're always
ready to roam.
Run if you can.
Hide in your home.



POEMS, THOUGHTS, AND LITTLE BLOOMS OF LANGUAGE.

Waiting for the Fall

By Malika Alharash

Today is such a nice day.
I wish we could dance
the day away.

We play outside
while my mom sits by my side,
and we dance and prance
till we can't take
a glance at the sky.

I see a girl
that is very, very shy.

It is fall,
and I am very sad
because the leaves are red.

Well, but I still see
a flowerbed,
and all the flowers
are nearly dead.

The sun is warm,
but right now
we see a storm.

The flowers started
to not smell,
but I am feeling
very well.

The animals are preparing
for their winter nap,
because winter will come
in a very quick zip.

Now that the colorful
fall season is done,
I want to spend
a very hot day
playing in trees.



Art by Malika Alharash

LITTLE WONDERS

VOICES, OPINIONS, REFLECTIONS



Monday Night I Saw a Moon

By Luna Kabbany

It was Monday night. I was sitting on a rock. When I was looking at the moon, I was wondering who made this beautiful world.

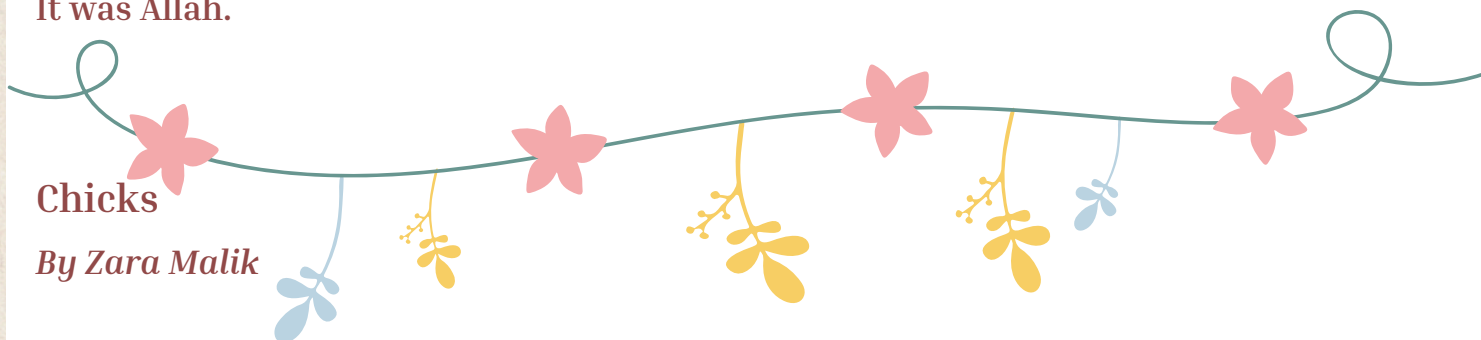
The world was very, very, very beautiful. I did not know who made the world. So every day in the middle of the night, I looked at the moon.

Then one day, I went outside and looked at the sun. I wondered who made this beautiful sun. Then the next day, I knew who made this beautiful world.

It was Allah.

Chicks

By Zara Malik



One of Allah's most beautiful creations is animals. Example—chicks. They are soft, energetic, adorable creatures who stick with their mother hen. I came to Pakistan in my summer break, where my grandma's house had a hen named Cupcake and thirteen chicks. I learnt so much about them. They eat tiny seedlings with cool, fresh water.

Chicks enjoy the springtime with other chicks. They aren't independent creatures, so you would probably find them in pairs or groups. Keep them indoors (with a heat lamp or a brooder plate) when it's raining cats and dogs! Keep these little animals away from other pets like cats, dogs, and also rats! Chicks have many different colors. Some are yellow, orange, black, light red, and more!

Maybe I don't want chicks as my pets because then my mom will not let me keep a cat!



GATHERED FEATHERS

ART, INSPIRATION, COMMUNITY, AND THINGS WE LOVE.



We are now accepting submissions for the Winter 2027 issue of *Sparrow*!

For submission guidelines and details, please visit:

www.mzmpublishing.com/submissions

From the SPARROW

Adventure Bookshelf:

- *Narwhal: Unicorn of the Arctic* by Candace Fleming
- *The Truth About Dragons* by Julie Leung
- *The Lion of Mars* by Jennifer L. Holm
- *Bog Myrtle* by Sid Sharp
- *Pax* by Sara Pennypacker

Places to Explore

START AT YOUR LIBRARY!

NEAR WILLOWBROOK

- Fullersburg Woods
- Graue Mill
- Little Red Schoolhouse
- Morton Arboretum
- Waterfall Glen

EXPLORE CHICAGO

- Obama Presidential Center
- Field Museum
- Griffin MSI
- Garfield Park Conservatory
- Harold Washington Library
- Maggie Daley Park



Things to Do to Stay

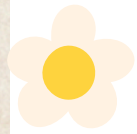
Adventurous and Curious

- TAKE A NEW PATH
- LOOK CLOSER
- ASK QUESTIONS
- TRY SOMETHING NEW
- EXPLORE CHICAGO
- WRITE DOWN YOUR WONDERINGS
- LOOK UP!



SEEDS FOR THOUGHT

IDEAS, PROMPTS, AND SPARKS FOR CREATIVITY.



Curiosity Makes the World Spin

A Note on Curiosity from Malika Alharash

When somebody is curious, they will ask questions and observe.

The more questions they ask, the more ideas they will get. So if everybody in the world asks lots of questions and observes, the whole world will become curious, and it will make the world spin like a crazy globe!!!



Imagine...

By Luna Kabbany

One day, I closed my eyes and imagined what the sky looked like. The sky was in my imagination. The ocean was teal.

In the ocean, there were dolphins, fishes, and a hole. The hole was too big, so I went in it. Down I went.

In the hole, I found money. There was a lot of money. I got some. In the money, there was a note.

The note said:

“There is a big whale coming and a shark.”

Then I swam a bit. I saw a big whale and a big shark.

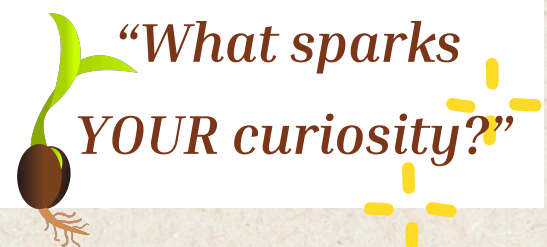
And now I want you, dear readers, to close your eyes and imagine the rest of the story!

Why?

By Rahma Gazanfer

Why is there pain?
Why do we feel pain?
Why do we cry?
Why do we die?
Why must we leave?

But we know
who to believe:
Allah SWT.



TENDING THE GARDEN

GROWING THROUGH COMMUNITY AND SERVICE.

"The best of you are those who are best to their families, and I am the best of you to my family."

— Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

Sunan al-Tirmidhī 3895

My Family Is the Garden in Which I Grow

By Malika Alharash



I love spending time with my family because I love the quiet afternoons when we turn on the fireplace, and when the crackling of the fire goes like this: click, click, click.

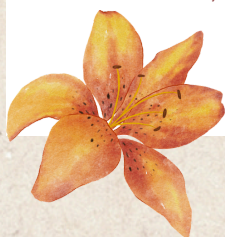
And I especially love spending time with my Babushka. That is grandma in Russian. She lives in Minsk. We sit down and do all kinds of crafts, and the very moment she arrives and sits with us and drinks tea with cookies, the happiness just brims and cannot stop.

I also like spending time with my cousins in Syria. We sit down and play a board game or play in the park, and there are smiles on everybody's faces and the giggles of children laughing.

I also love spending time with my other grandma, Tete. I call her Tete. She lives in Damascus. She is very kind and loves me very much. She teaches me how to cook and cares for me, and sometimes she sits down and reads me a book.

I also think my family is unique. We all have different cultures. I am half Syrian and half Belarusian. My mom is Belarusian, and my dad is Syrian. I love my family.

Oh Allah, bless us all, bless all our families, and keep them safe. Ameen.



ROOTS & WINGS

FAITH, CHARACTER, AND GROWING WITH PURPOSE.

“I have left you with two matters which will never lead you astray, as long as you hold to them: the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet.”

— Prophet Muhammad ﷺ
Al-Muwatta' of Imam Malik

We Follow the Prophet ﷺ

By Zein Alharash



We follow the Prophet ﷺ

Because we are Muslims,
and we follow Islam.



And he is our Prophet ﷺ

We have to listen to him.



He told us to pray.

He told us to be kind,
generous,
and also to read the Quran
and worship Allah SWT.



Our Prophet ﷺ

By Malika Alharash

In the past,

Our Prophet ﷺ was very generous
And would always be willing to share with us.

He told us to give charity

And always try to increase our spirituality.

He always had a kind mind.

He never lied and was very wise.

He gave everybody good advice.

We should always obey him.

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

By Aamina Bodal

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was merciful and kind,

To everyone he could find,

He helped the poor who were weak,

And taught us to think before we speak,

He took the ignorance and pride,

Out of his tribe,

Allah blessed him with the Quran so we can pray,

He taught us to trust Allah and follow his way,

He traveled through the heavens, all seven,

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is waiting at the doors of heaven,

He makes Duaa for us,

May Allah bless our Ummah and Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

MEET OUR WRITERS AND ARTISTS

(IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)



Malika Alharash

Malika is 8 years old and the Executive Editor of *SPARROW*. She loves creativity, nature, and discovering the wonder in the world around her. She enjoys turning her ideas into something she can share with others. Her favorite time of day is when her whole family gathers around the table for tea in the evening.



Zein Alharash

Zein Alharash, 6, is a Senior Editor of *SPARROW* and a lover of learning and friendship. She loves reading—especially with a flashlight at night—and discovering new things. Zein is happiest outside, exploring and spending time with family and friends.



Nusayba Basrawi

Here's Nusayba, 9, an avid reader and lover of storytelling. Her kindness shows through in her writing and in her character MashaAllah. She's a special little lady with a special connection to literature.



Aamina Bodal

Aamina is a sixth grader who likes to dabble in a little bit of everything. She's known for her outgoing personality and friendly face. She's exploring her creativity through storytelling, acting, and writing. And, naturally, Takis remain an important part of her lifestyle.



Rahma Gazanfer

Rahma is 11 years old. She loves writing short stories, poems, and playing volleyball. As a pastime, she loves making small comic skits with her sisters and cousins. She aspires to become a doctor and continue to work on her creative writing.



Luna Kabbany

Luna is 7 years old. One of her favorite hobbies is writing, along with painting, playing basketball, and swimming. She loves helping others and enjoys spending time with her friends and family.



Amna Malik

Amna is 6 years old. She loves reading books and enjoys going to the library. She loves playing soccer and making new friends. Amna also loves traveling and especially enjoys visiting Pakistan. When she grows up, she wants to become a doctor.



Zara Malik

Zara is 10. She loves nature and enjoys going on hikes. In her free time, she likes reading, playing volleyball, and creating her own comic books. Zara loves animals and hopes to become a vet when she grows up.



Muhammad Rafay

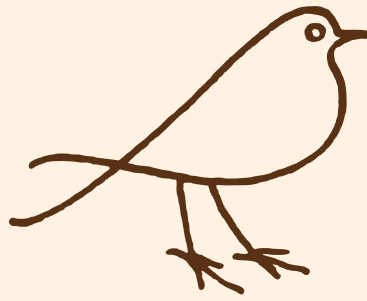
Meet Muhammad, the brain behind all things words! He is 7 years old, and if he's not buried behind books, he is usually planning mischief with his brothers. With a curious mind and an adventurous heart, he writes with immense imagination and hopes to create fabulous real and not-so-real stories for all readers!



MY REFLECTIONS

SPACE FOR THOUGHTS, WONDER, SKETCHES,
AND QUIET CREATIVITY.





SPARROW

Youth Literary Magazine by MZM Publishing

WE ARE HERE TO NURTURE CREATIVITY

“And among His signs is that you see the earth barren, but when We send down rain upon it, it stirs and grows.”

— Qur'an 41:39

Thank you for reading *Sparrow*.

Like the earth after rainfall, we hope these pages inspired reflection, creativity, wonder, and growth. Through stories, poetry, art, and thoughtful voices, *Sparrow* is a place where young hearts and imaginations are encouraged to grow gently and with purpose.

We warmly welcome young writers, artists, thinkers, and dreamers to continue growing with us in future issues.

Submit your work!

www.mzmpublishing.com/submissions

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A literary magazine by young voices,
exploring the world through
imagination, storytelling, and reflection.