

## **CREATIVE NON-FICTION, Honorable Mention: Keira Guerrero**

Teacher: Meredith Baine, Jonesboro High School

### **What Music Speaks to Me**

“Music is a language that can speak to one and all” is a choral song lyric I heard while singing with the Delta Symphony Orchestra at Arkansas State University. As an 8th grade student who is just beginning their musical career, those lyrics were just words in a song. Only now do I realize the importance of these words and how they have applied to me throughout the rest of my school years. As someone who was consumed by the arts at a young age, the concept of learning music was never strange to me; however I never put myself out there until the 7th grade. That's the year I was given the opportunity to play clarinet in the band, and a choice I will never regret.

At first, I never thought too much about playing music, it was just an extra activity that I had to do. However, when I entered high school, I was hit with a sudden passion for the art. Concepts that never made sense to me began to make sense. I started wanting to play my instrument and learn all I could about music. Maybe it was from meeting new people who enjoyed music way more than I did, or seeing my upperclassmen succeed through it, or from even getting to see my own success. This sudden motivation gave me three simple words: “keep getting better.” At first, it felt like a simple-minded phrase, “do better so you can be better than others” is what I thought. At first it was enough, I wanted to be better and my only way to be better was to push everyone out of my way. But as I kept going with this mindset things stopped feeling right again. Practice sessions began feeling like chores and full ensemble rehearsals felt dreadful. I began to feel like I didn't fit into everyone's sound anymore. Even so, I was given the opportunity to fill a leadership position for the clarinet section. This responsibility was the missing piece of the puzzle. Getting the responsibility to teach and to encourage gave me a chance to reflect on myself and gain a new perspective on how I fit in: it was never about improving for others but to improve for myself. No matter how much I beat myself up about improving, I was never going to truly get better if I kept seeing it through a dark lens.

Knowing I had the ability to impact what people understood made me want to get the lost passion for band back, because how could I help others if I couldn't even help myself? This became really apparent when new band members would go and ask me questions, I would answer their questions, but only by rewording what had been instructed to me before. The static responses were what gave me the realization that I needed to make a change in how I engaged with my team and how I viewed my position as a section leader. Once I began to focus on myself as an individual who wanted to get better for myself and not to become better than others was when I realized how enjoyable being in a band could be. As I got more comfortable instructing others and more confident in myself, I began to discover how important it is to have someone who instructs you in the right path, and now, as I choose what I want to do with my future I realize I want to become that person. Seeing someone else succeed from my instruction almost feels like I'm that person learning something and getting excited over getting something right. Learning has become something very important to me. I would say one of my greatest qualities is my longing to keep learning and I hope I can inspire that same longing in others.

Something my mother always said to me was, “Do what makes you happy.” If someone had asked me a year ago what made me happy to the point I would choose it as my future career, I wouldn’t know what to say however, now I can say with confidence that music is what speaks to me. Even if it took gaining and losing and having to rebuild my passion for it, music has shown me my best qualities and what I need to strive to continue working on.