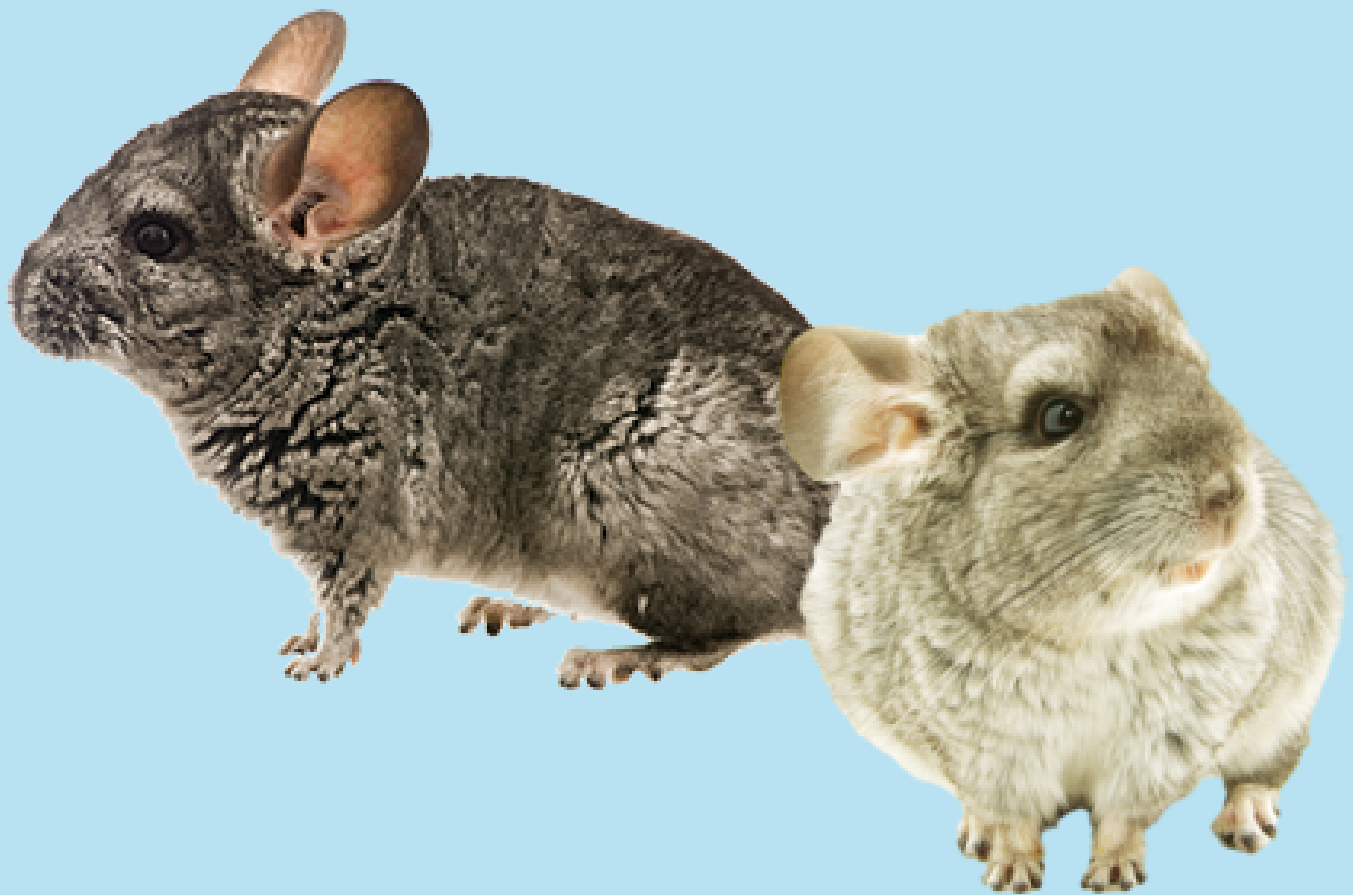


# *CHINCHILLA*



*CHINCHILLA LIT*  
**FEBRUARY 2024**

# FOREWORD

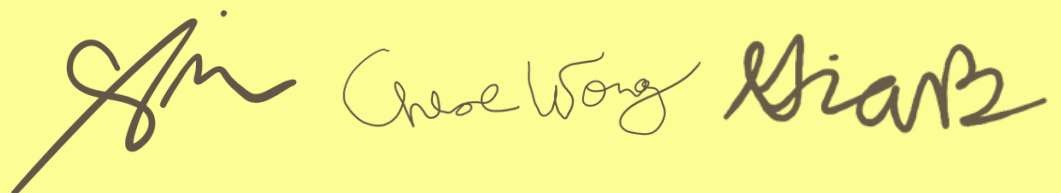
Dear Reader,

When we founded *CHINCHILLA LIT*, we were full not only of our purpose to root for young writers, but also of the conviction that young writers could write stunningly and compellingly—perhaps even more so than us oldsters, with their fearless honesty. Though we have never forgotten that certainty, we became worried that in our regular submission pool of ages 11~25, we'd favor those with prior writing experience.

Hence, *CHINCHILLITTLE* was born, to show off young writers' unmistakable talent. This special issue honors our youngest writers, aged 11~14. For each writer we chose to publish, we asked them their why's and how's for writing and included the answers here to help demonstrate their creative process.

We fully recognize that we would not be writing like we are now without the support of our family and teachers. In that manner, we hope that Maddie, Hunter, Joanna, Cale, and Yeshua all feel the same way when they remember that here at *CHINCHILLA LIT*, we truly admired their work. And we hope that you, whoever you may be, know that your writing is worthy, and keep writing, too.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Chin Wong" followed by a stylized flourish.



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# The Moon for My Baby

1

*by Maddie Rubenstein*

I hold out hope as I hold you in my arms  
I hold out toys, but you can't pick them up  
I hold your hand as we wait for the doctor  
I hold my breath as the machines around you beep

I try my best to be strong for you  
I try everything they say to do  
I try to help you learn and grow  
I try to make myself believe that you'll be okay

I want the world, the moon for my baby  
I want you to laugh, to run, to play  
I want to be your guardian angel  
I want you to know how much I love you

I wish I could've changed your cruel fate  
I wish that you were back in my arms  
I wish we could hold each other tonight

I know you're up there when I gaze at the stars

# *More about Maddie*

*Maddie Rubenstein is fourteen years old, from New York. When she is not writing, she enjoys both practicing and teaching taekwondo, playing the trumpet, drawing portraits, and playing tennis.*

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## **1. What inspires you to write?**

Intense emotions from my life, writing prompts, and random, exciting ideas are what inspire me to write.

## **2. What do you like writing about?**

I like writing poems, flash fiction, and short stories. Some of my favorite topics to write about are LGBT themes, mental disorders like ADHD, romance, and adventure.

## **3. Who helps you write?**

My parents, friends, and the people at my writing workshop, called KSSC (Kids Short Story Connection, run by Sarah Bracey White) all help encourage me to write and push me to improve.

## **4. What are your favorite books?**

A few of my favorite books are *Out Of My Mind*, *Leah on the Offbeat*, *The Great Brain*, and *All In*.

## **5. Who are your favorite authors?**

Some of my favorite authors are Becky Albertalli, Louisa May Alcott, and Bill Watterson (creator of the Calvin and Hobbes comics).

# Mochi and Her Running Wheel

*by Hunter Han*

After dinner, in my living room, I was gazing at a little tan, furry body with a brown stripe, half-covered with Carefresh Bedding. It was my sleeping pet Mochi, a nocturnal 2-inch Roborovski Dwarf Hamster. The expanding and contracting chest let me know that she was still breathing even though she was almost 2 years old already. I sighed with relief, but I also thought it was odd since at this time of day, she was usually either eating, drinking, or digging.

I opened her cage to measure her remaining food and water amounts to figure out how much she ate and drank, viewed the gauge around the wheel to figure out how much she ran, and, using gloves, checked her poop for anything unusual.

I then sprinted up the carpeted stairs up to my bedroom to add that information to my “Mochi Health Chart.” Since the average hamster life span is 2 years, I’ve been keeping a record since I got her 23 months ago.

Opening my window, I heard birds twittering, children playing; the fresh air drifted and so did I, thinking about life’s pleasures.

That night, I had fantastic dreams about me being a hamster, racing with Mochi on the wood floor of the living room.

But at 3:05 am, I heard a strange noise coming from downstairs. Still in a dream state, I thought, what if Mochi escaped and was trying to flush the toilet and drowned? Cautious not to wake anyone, I slowly went down the stairs to check on Mochi.

When I arrived at her cage in the living room, Mochi was on the running wheel. She halted and gave me a rare squeak when she saw me.

“Hi, Mochi,” I whispered. I opened her cage to take her out to stroke her, and she squirmed in my hands, playing dead. I felt her heart pound in her chest.

“Silly hamster. I’m not going to eat you.” I placed her in her run-about ball by opening the hatch and gently putting her in. As Mochi ran around for five short minutes, I filled her empty food bowl, feeling relieved that Mochi wasn’t drowning in the toilet.

I placed her back into her cage and hurried upstairs. Soon I was asleep again. After I ate breakfast, I suggested to my parents, “Let’s leave the house and spend the day at the zoo so that Mochi can rest.”

“Fine by me,” replied my mother. I was relieved because I noticed that Mochi was a lot less active last night here. Normally, Mochi ran everywhere in her run-about-ball. Her inactivity last night showed a sign of old age. If Mochi was coming to the end of her time, I was ready to help Mochi.

When we came back, it was already 6:05. My family and I made an easy dinner. Then, I read a few hamster anatomy books. I also made sure to put a cloth over the cage of Mochi to muffle the sound so she could sleep soundly.

I searched and found the hamster section in my Picturepedia, which showed many hamster species, what a hamster was, and a bit of hamster anatomy.

After I read the pages, I put away the book and took a look at the clock. It was 8:56, so I guessed we will leave to watch the Fourth of July Fireworks soon. I tip-toed from my room downstairs.

When we came back from watching fireworks,, I found my stash of coins. I asked my parents, “Can I use these coins to buy things?” I felt a little foolish because the coins were mine, but it’s always best to check with your parents before you use money.

They told me, “Yes, but you can keep the coins. We’ll buy it for you.” I nodded, went to bed, and fell asleep.

It was morning again. On my bed, looking at the online pet store on my laptop, I wondered, Which vitamin treats are the best? I’m not so sure, so I’ll ask Mochi. Carrying the laptop into the living room, I saw her on the running wheel. She stopped and gave me a squeak.

I smiled and pointed to the treat choices on the screen. “Mochi, do you prefer Vitamin D3 or B1?”

She pointed with her snout, sniffing at the option containing both vitamins. “Okay, my sweet mochi.” She nodded and continued running on her wheel. I hurried upstairs and clicked the shopping icon on Amazon. I smiled. I purchased the \$10.99 bag!

While I waited for the treats to come, at noon, I loaded the cage onto the porch for a decent amount of sunlight, for vitamin D.

I told my parents that I can clean Mochi’s cage. I started to clean it for the first time in my life, because all vets should know how to clean a hamster cage. According to a video about hamster facts, dumping out everything, washing, and refilling can cause the cage to lose the hamster’s territory marks, and therefore causes its heart rate to increase.

I cleaned the cage the right way. I first spot cleaned for poop, using gloves. Then I used tongs to stir the bedding while disinfecting by shining on it, using an ultraviolet flashlight. The stirring let the ultraviolet light kill all the germs.

Three days later, the treats came. I asked my parents if I could sell the normal treats so I can buy extremely healthy foods for Mochi. My parents said yes, again.

I built a stand and a sign saying “Packets of 5 ounce hamster treats for just



\$1!” Soon, the 100 packets sold out. I used the profit to buy pellets, seeds, and fresh foods for Mochi, and now instead of giving Mochi many treats at a time, I followed the correct hamster diet recommended by Pet-fit: 75% pellets and seeds, 20% fresh foods, and only 5% treats.

I made a specific routine to ensure that Mochi got what she needed.

1. Take off the cloth
2. Make sure Mochi is awake
  - a. If awake, proceed to 3
  - b. If asleep, put on cloth and try again later
3. Quietly open Mochi’s cage
4. Gently scoop out Mochi and put her on her running wheel
5. Clean the cage & refill her water bottle, food bowl, and treat bowl
6. Do a checkup (below)
  - a. Use stethoscope to listen to heartbeat
  - b. Listen for breathing
  - c. Feel in front of her mouth and snout for warm air
7. Put Mochi back in her cage and cover with the cloth

After I realized that Mochi was okay, I took her on a leisure walk outside in her run-about-ball for the next half-hour, to exercise and get Vitamin D.

When I checked on her again the next day, I noticed some unusual things about her. She wasn’t moving.

I took my stethoscope to listen to Mochi’s heartbeat. No sound.

I listened for any signs of breathing. No sound.

I felt in front of Mochi’s mouth and snout. I didn’t feel anything warm.

I soon realized what had happened: despite all my efforts to keep Mochi alive, she had died. I started crying, tears streaming from my eyes. I tried to calm down, reassuring myself that everyone who has a pet experiences this.

But still, I couldn't calm down.

I sat with teary eyes down on our couch and, though weird as it may be, fell asleep. I picked up Mochi and I asked, stroking her in my hand, "Mochi, did you have a good life?"

Mochi jumped out of my hand and ran all over me, saying, "You made my life a sweet mochi."

"Didn't you get the idea of 'sweet mochi' from me?" I asked. I started to feel better. Mochi stopped running and nodded.

"I really wanted you to live longer, but I couldn't."

"You might not think that is enough, but I enjoyed life, running around, fresh cabbage, lots of sunlight, and lots of sleep, so I'm happy."

"Okay. I just wanted to make sure you enjoyed life."

Then I woke up. But I felt better since in my favorite book series, *The Magic Tree House*, one main character Annie had a dream that became real, restoring the magic treehouse. That got me thinking that my dream was real and that Mochi had lived a happy life. I decided to buy seeds for bright red and yellow poppies to plant when I bury Mochi.

I hurried upstairs in utter silence, except for snores from my parents and brother. I woke my mother and father. "What? Are you going to buy something?"

"Yes, can I have some poppy seeds?" I asked. I told her that Mochi was dead and that I was sure because I ran a test to see if she was dead. My parents approved of the idea to bury Mochi, so I found a bucket.

Then, I brought it to my yard. I filled it a quarter full with soil from a bag of dirt. I carefully wrapped Mochi with soft tissue paper, put her in the soil, filled the bucket to the half line with more soil, dropped in a red and a yellow seed, and filled the bucket. I placed it where there was sunlight so the

poppies could grow, where Mochi's cage had been, since she was a week old.

Then, I taped a piece of paper to the bucket and wrote: Mochi's Poppies. I wanted everyone to know this was for Mochi.



# *More about Hunter*

*Hunter W. Han is a 3rd grader at Stratford School, Los Gatos campus, with a passion for math and computer science. He has a special affinity for eating pasta during rainy days. Hunter enjoys playing volleyball at his local park.*

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## **1. What inspires you to write?**

I read many good books and decided to learn to write so that I could share my love of books. I hope someday I will be as great at writing as the authors of the books I read.

## **2. What do you like writing about?**

I like to write about nature, mostly animals and pets. I think they are interesting and they add some quality into stories, even if they do nothing, by adding balance between humanity and nature.

## **3. Who helps you write?**

My teacher and my parents guided me while I was making this story. My teacher revised my story with me and my parents gave support.

## **4. What are your favorite books?**

I like many books, but I have chosen some to make the list shorter. They are Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone (or if you're British, Philosopher's Stone), Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban, The Trumpet of the Swan, What If?, The Martian, , Wings of Fire book 2: The Lost Heir, Wings of Fire book 3: The Hidden Kingdom, Wings of Fire book 6: Moon Rising, and The One and only Ivan.

## **5. Who are your favorite authors?**

My favorite authors are J.K. Rowling, E.B. White, Randall Munroe, Andy Weir and Tui T. Sutherland.

# To Fatty, Tiny, Kissy, Fassy, and Biggie

*by Joanna Gao*

It had rained on a summer evening last night on Friday, and hundreds of snails gathered in front of our house in Sydney, Australia. I was checking the weather by feeling the temperature in my front yard like usual. When I saw a bunch of snails crawling in front of my feet, I immediately ran. It was exciting to get a pet. If I could take care of the snails well then I would finally be able to prove to my dad I can get a dog. Some snails were as big as a grape and others were smaller. My older sister Rebecca collected the five snails and put them into a big box.

My mom got a stick that she found in our front yard then used a flame/fire on the kitchen stove and used the stick that she found in our front yard to burn tiny holes into the lid of a box she bought from a shop so that the snails could breathe. The box was bigger than my head, so that the snails would feel like it's outside again.

A few weeks later I did some research on the internet and found out that snails couldn't eat certain types of leaves, but they could eat and live with our front yard grass so my sister and I took seven handfuls of grass out of the dirt and put it into the snail box.

Every day before lunch Rebecca and I took turns washing the snails with water from the hose, turning it onto the lowest volume of water so that it didn't hurt the snails and it would feel like the river flowing. We washed them everyday and let them exercise by putting sticks in front of them and making them climb over so that they stay healthy and clean.

It always rained at night so my sister and I collected more snails and put them in the snail box as friends for my old snails. We collected five snails in

total, we named the snails Fatty, Tiny, Kissy, Fassy and Biggie.

We named the one who was lazy and refused to climb the sticks in front of him Fatty. We called Tiny that because he was very small and wasn't as fast as the others.

We called Kissy that because when I would hold her by her shell she would bend her body to kiss you when you picked her up.

We called Fassy that because she was faster at crawling than the others. Biggie was named Biggie because he was bigger than a grape.

His shell, bigger than Biggie, also fell off once when he was exercising and fell off the edge of concrete in our front yard. When I picked him up the shell fell off, he still survived though.

A week and a half later, my sister and I were watching the snails exercise as usual when my mom called me, "Jo, grandparents are calling!"

I hadn't called my grandparents in a long time so I put the snails inside their box, closed their lid, ran to my mom, and started chatting with my grandparents. The next day I rushed to school, not remembering that the snail box was still in the sun in our front yard.

When I got back home, my mom asked, "Who roasted the snails?" Confused, I ignored that question and went into the house to get my usual snack of yogurt and crackers. I went to my study to do school work, but from the front yard and into the window of the room drifted a terrible smell of moldy pumpkin.

Oh no, my snails! I ran to the front yard and looked down at where the sun was shining and there lay the stinky, pumpkin smelling snail box. I got on my special blue gloves, wore my blue mask so that I won't smell the snails, and opened the lid.

They didn't move, they didn't kiss. I just understood what she had said

about the “roasted snails.” I felt so guilty.

I got out a shovel and called my sister out and asked, “Should we dig a hole out for each of the snails, or one big hole to fit all five of the snails?”

“I think we should dig a hole for each of the snails and put their names above where we buried them,” she answered. So that’s what we did. In each hole we wrapped the snails in black paper and put them down each in their own holes with the side that’s opening face the bottom so that it doesn’t unwrap.

We also decided to dig the holes next to our lemon tree so that the stink would go away. We printed a photo of the snails exercising and stuck some of the photos in the dirt as a memory of the snails.

A week after than, we even had a funeral. We put tiny daisies in front of the picture and a tiny RIP I carved on a palm-sized stone behind the picture. Like human funerals, we wore all black, including black coats, and held yellow and orange flowers, and put them next to the RIP stone.

My sister and I used a magic marker on sand paper of facts about snails so that the paper wouldn’t tear easily.

Rebecca said, “I hope you had a good life with us.”

“Hope you’re enjoying it up there in heaven,” I said.

# *More about Joanna*

*Joanna Gao is a 5th grader at Saratoga Elementary, with a passion for math and is an animal lover. She has a special affinity for reading, writing, and drawing. She enjoys playing basketball at her cousin's house.*

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## **1. What inspires you to write?**

I like to write down fascinating things that have happened in the past of my life so when I grow older I wouldn't forget these that have happened, that's what inspires me to write.

## **2. What do you like writing about?**

I like to write things that have happened in the past.

## **3. Who helps you write?**

Mary Kim, my writing teacher helps me write.

## **4. What are your favorite books?**

Dragon in the Sock Drawer and Dragon Slayers are my favorite books.

## **5. Who are your favorite authors?**

I don't have a favorite author, but I do have an author [who] I always [read], Kate McMullan.



# Waves and Water

*by Cale Thompson*

In the ocean blue,  
Where water flows freely.  
Schools of fish swimming and dancing,  
Water shimmering onto the ocean floor.

Frolicking in the sun,  
Species of fish all different,  
begin to dance and run.  
Some respectful and some ignorant.

Waves crashing against the shore.  
People on the beach watch and adore  
The sun being cast against the water  
Only to disappear later.

The moon begins to rise with its white bright light.  
The beach begins to empty  
Fish swim under the water with all their might,  
Theres enough fish to makes schools of plenty

The fish swim on and on  
Waiting for people to return.  
As they wait they realize they have won  
But only to forget in a moment, never finding out they still yearn.

# The Sky

*by Yeshua Saldana*

An ocean in the air  
But without marine life anywhere  
Instead their made of fluff floating in the air  
A cumulus here and there.

Yes this oceans life are made from clouds and it's where Heaven is stood  
Like the ocean it has a mind of its own  
And the real weather is never really known  
A beautiful thing yes indeed can actually be a dangerous thing.

Like a hurricane from the sea  
The sky sends tornados that can flatten trees  
The sky provides shade and rain  
And there's a lot that we can gain.

If I could fly I would go up so high  
And play in the clouds up in the sky  
Although the Sun is there king  
Clouds, in numbers, may be the true king.

They are really just the same  
When God spoke at the beginning of time and gave it a name  
“Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water”  
And it was so and God called the expanse, “Sky” that stands above the water.

*CHINCHILLITTE*



**CHINCHILLA**