An ink blot on a page of deer hide,
The first words of forgotten years.
How we have travelled, across the endless plains of time,
To this inferno of doubt and oppression.
Where are the green fields of our past?
Where has our happily ever after disappeared to?

Inky words singing of times gone by, of monsters under the bed and of dragons guarding treasure.
Now flip over the page once more, to typewriters and the printing press. There go our pens and our bottles of watery ink. But now, not a rustle of pages, but a click of a button. Our papery mementoes are no more, replaced by books that tick and whir and that are full of cogs and gears. So come with me to a place of memories. Look, over there. Yes, that’s it. A book shop. It has all of your monsters under the bed. All of your dragons and pirates and wizards are right here, in this single small room. Go on, open the door. Wait! Not so fast. Take a while to look at the intricate design on the handle and the beautiful shade of forest green that covers the wooden panel. Is it a golden angel that forms the knocker? Or is it an eagle? We’ll never know, but that doesn’t matter. Just let your imagination flow free. As you step onto the worn floor can you smell the layer of dust rising under your feet? A quiet wind chime rings softly at your entry and the old man at the counter looks up and smiles. He doesn’t get much business these days. Stand there and take in the atmosphere of the place; there is a middle aged man dressed in a khaki suit standing in a corner holding a worn, leather-bound copy of *Jane Eyre* and a young girl and her mother sitting on the old couch looking at a weathered picture book. You can almost feel the calm lying like a blanket over the store. Let your fingers trail along the dusty spines that countless other people have read and loved. Can you hear them speak to you, telling you of their past. Some of these books have caused wars, have been touched by legends and have become legends in themselves. It feels as if you could spend an age drinking in the memories and stories, never leaving the comfort of the book shop. How could anyone forsake this beauty, this peace, for a cold, plastic block?

Now come, let us find a different kind of book store. Where white lights flash and lifeless machines whir. Shh! I know what you will say, that books are not alive. But you are wrong, my friend. Books are as alive as you and I and older than perhaps time itself. For the stories enclosed in their covers are the source of all knowledge in this word and they hold our lives in their pages. You can never find an equal to their comforting warmth, their alternate worlds and the way you can forget yourself in their depths.

What are these cold machines,
These cruel impostors that replace a legend.
Where is the love that once blessed our land
And the home away from home that these books, no, these worlds
Have provided for centuries.
Cadi Pritchard (age 12)