



# Arin Rockwell, Grasshopper

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Athens Area High School, PA.

## Commentary on Learning with Dr. Wales

I have had Dr. Wales as an art teacher since my freshman year of high school. In the past four years, Dr. Wales has taught me several techniques and methods to improve my artwork. Many of his suggestions pushed me to create artwork outside of my comfort zone, which has benefited me as an artist. He also values the history of art and provides students with the opportunity to visit museums and study famous artworks. Dr. Wales seeks out opportunities for his students to share and enter their artwork into competitions and local art shows. A big thing I learned from his class is that setting goals and deadlines is key to success. With the help of his encouragement, I had the motivation to create several award-winning pieces of art. I'm grateful to have had such a dedicated and talented art teacher throughout my high school career.

## Artist Statement

Dr. Wales has always encouraged us to take our own reference photos and provides us with studio space for photoshoots. One of the pictures I took of my classmate inspired me to create the acrylic painting "Pressure to Perform," which is the second painting I created in my portfolio *The Circus of Life*. This piece took a lot of creativity to visualize a circus scene and portray a specific mood. The title, "Pressure to Perform," displays the meaning of this artwork, referring to the way a circus relates to the lives of many people. For example, in this piece, the jester behind the curtain represents hiding from social interaction and trying to hide from the pressure of society. We are expected to put on a show of positivity every day, which can become exhausting. The cigarettes symbolize harm resulting from the stress and anxiety that life creates, especially in teens. The attention to detail and creativity it took to make this piece has inspired me to continue creating works of art and improve as an artist.