**Selection of Students’ Old Growth Forest Freewrites**

“Little mushrooms are coming out of the ground, sharp and straight, just like blades of grass. The devils’ club leaves are probably larger than the ears of an elephant. Each time a car passes by they dance in the breeze that follows the car. Every few seconds a few small drops of water fall off from the tree and onto my rain jacket, making a loud splash noise. On my right two western red cedars grew so close together that you can barely tell which one is which. They are probably taller than a three story building. I wonder, if they could talk, what stories would they tell us. A few pieces of Lungwort lichen that fell a while ago from the tree trunks are starting to build new houses on the big, thick blanket like moss that spreads all over the forest floor.

Next to my left foot a deep shade of purple, mushroom, graces us with her presence. It’s quite beautiful. The cars have stopped passing by and now the deep silence seats itself again on its throne which just happens to be the old growth forest in which we are located. The silence doesn’t last too long since a big drop of water crashes on my jacket making a very loud pop sound. A few pieces of old man’s beard cover what’s left of a tree branch, separated from its native house. On the other side of the street some trees with golden yellow leaves can be seen through the green, velvety, curtain.

A giant Western Red Cedar shed its bark and is left naked and dead in the middle of the forest. It must have been an important tree in this forest since all of the trees around it look gloomy.”

*Gabriella Carninschi*

“I climb on top of the cross section between a Doug Fir that has died and a living Western Hemlock. It's amazing to think that right now I'm probably in between over 1000 years of tree growth when the two are combined. The spiraling beauty of the Doug Fir really shows once it's been stripped of its heavy outer shell. Now dead it stands liberated from its protective clothing, for now it needs no protection. The Hemlock in front of me which is keeping my knee and right foot wedged comfortably in it is still going strong. I can't tell how tall the fir once was but not its Siamese rival reaches its branches and crown above the fallen Fir. The Hemlock is also harboring a bounty of rich green mosses, and mint green lichens. The Doug Fir however may be free from his task of competing for sunshine and nutrients but he now is proudly supporting a new sapling at the very top of what's left of him. Perhaps one day the little sapling will top the crown of its Hemlock neighbor but I think not. The sapling is tilted too much, it is too high up, the Doug Fir is too old, many things can go wrong for it, but for it to have gotten so big in the first place means many things must have gone very right too. This simple rivalry between two old friends and a newcomer is just one of the silent stories told by this ages place. Aged not by man; not by our desires, good intensions, nor hope, but aged by nature. A formula we fight against time and time again but nature always proves to boast her crown well above ours and to see places like this proves that her plan is best.”

*Robert M*

“Drip…drip drip drip, disturbed western hemlock branches shake off a cascade of rain drops as one big drop splashes—like a clumsy man losing grip of his bottle, the glass shattering—on the floor bellow. Our water droplets in this case fall on the cabbage-green of moss covering the decomposing log I’m sitting on. The drip will either fall into the stream running by, or simply be sucked up like a sponge by my log. It’s wet, I admit, a feeling similar to that when washing the dishes after a get-together; wet, but satisfying, and not totally unpleasant; Even as it soaks through my pants. The ferns and trailing blackberry, growing towards the log seem like they wouldn’t mind a piece of the sponge either. If the log cared, I’m sure it would not mind. It has the stream, and the patter of raindrops, the foliage and Western Hemlock making a blanket over it. The trees keep out the sun and wind, leaving enough of the elements for everyone. It’s a feeling of comfort. It’s a big log. Or tree, I should call it; its usefulness has not subsided. It resonates and amplifies the sound around it, but it is not hollow. No it is more like the burley uncle, who at any dinner is the loudest. Still, everyone will want to sit with him, he is like the sponge tree, full of good things. You catch a glimpse of the goodwill when he shares some of the best of his turkey-leg with you, grinning. A Split in the sponge tree grins too. Maybe next year, we’ll see each other.”

*Matt Sineev*

“Water is running far in the distance. A creek bed trickles water. Interesting cut logs. Mushrooms grow sporadically. Everything reminds me of the ravine behind my house that I used to play in, granted these trees are much older and larger. A lot of fern species, devils club like I remember in the ravine. Trees you could build entire houses out of each individual trunk. I’m sitting on a root that is growing around another tree. The surrounding is very green out here in Twin Fir. Small man made bridges, and moss growth practically everything! There are many cut down trees. October; fall season is setting in. Leaves are turning darker and wilting away. The trees stand strong with pride as the rain trickles off each branch. Every tree, shrub, and fern is unique. I must have seeing every shade of brown and green around this forest. Water is cold, temperature is dropping slowly as nightfall soon hits. Sounds of the creek run silent. I’m sitting by a tree that has lain dead a hundred times longer than I have been alive! I have seen every color in the rainbow on mushrooms. This is amazing to see!”

*Brady Cusack*

 “These trees are giants, although that are giants they have a different internal make up than a human giant.  Human giants live short life's because their hearts are too big and cannot handle their bodies.  Tree giants out-live all there smaller counterparts.  There abundance of lichens, moss and other biotic life is vast and continues to grow.  Ferns are everywhere!  There is every fern you could possibly think of; Sword, Maidenhair, Lady, Deer, Oak, and wood all live among this forbidden forest.  The entire forest has plants on steroids.  The cabbage and Devils have enormous leaves!  Even though there is a light drizzle, these forests always have lost of moisture.  No wonder these trees live so long with all the mosses and lichens.  Some of the trees are 1,000 years old and are as tall as skyscrapers; 200 feet tall, maybe even more.  Although life steers everywhere, the dead lay waste on the ground and become nurse logs, which mother many other species.  I can feel the age of the forest as we walked through it, it kind of sent chills down my spine.  The evidence of old age is everywhere!  This forest is the place where beauty and old age meet.”

Joel Maltos