**14-16 Creative – Joint First Place**

**Eleanor Joan Harvey, International School of Los Angeles: Sighting of a Highland Sparrow Hawk' in response to ‘Day, with Hawk '**

**Sighting of a Highland Sparrow Hawk**

The first true summer day

at Clachtoll Beach,

backlit by sweltering sunlight,

I noticed above a dancing speck,

wingtips weaving the sky,

with currents of air as invisible threads;

it dipped and dived and spun

as if tossed upon careless waves

and yet, with regal head aloft,

it tamed the swirling tides.

Sand clutching about my ankles,

breath catching, congealed, in my throat

—muted, I am earthbound.

Still the sparrow hawk hangs,

keen black-tipped beak,

piercing, abysmal eyes,

slanting upwards;

marking time.

‘Sighting of a Highland Sparrow Hawk’ is set at Clachtoll Beach, which has a stunning, white-sand shore as well as deep turquoise waters. I chose this specific setting in order to accentuate the beauty of the sparrow hawk in relation to its surroundings. Taking inspiration from Vahni Capildeo, I attempted to capture the narrator’s awe and embarrassment at the sight of such a magnificent creature, as I wrote about ‘breath catching, congealed, in my throat.’ I also took inspiration from Capildeo’s description of the hawk as ‘princely,’ by referring to the sparrow hawk’s head as ‘regal.’ Additionally, I wished to further Capildeo’s observation that in the face of the hawk’s beauty, a poet loses all words, resorting to cliches, by describing my narrator as ‘muted.’ My poem was not only inspired by Vahni Capildeo’s ‘Day, with Hawk,’ however; I also drew from ‘The Hawk in the Rain’ by Ted Hughes, who, at the start of the poem, writes of drowning in ‘the earth’s mouth;’ bringing to life the feeling of heaviness one has when watching a graceful, airborne hawk. I also attempted to illustrate this, in describing the ‘sand clutching about my ankles,’ and the sensation of being ‘earthbound.’

In writing this poem, I wished to reinterpret the notions of wonder at the melancholic beauty of the hawk and its surroundings which Ted Hughes and Vahni Capildeo had in turn explored, as well as the sense of the poet himself falling speechless, and the irony and embarrassment inherent in that.