

**WRITING****Stars**

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**TYPE****POETRY****GENRE****GRADES 9–12****Stars**

I spend a lot of time thinking about the stars

Bright lights in the darkest of nights

As if black ink were spilled across the sky

When I look at the stars, I'm reminded of a quote I  
like,

“The dance between darkness and light will always  
remain—

the stars and the moon will always need the darkness  
to be seen,

the darkness will just not be worth having without the  
moon and the stars”

Words, like stars, are immortal

And when I look at the stars

I hear the stories of those who came before me

Decades and generations between us

But they used the stars just like I do,

For comfort,

and relief,

and as a reminder that I have a guide even when it feels like I've lost the map

If I had lived 200 years ago,

I would have looked at the stars and seen a roadmap to freedom

My skin dark like the night,

leaves under my feet

wind lashing against my cheek

Running

Always running

Because even now

Freedom is an illusion for many more than it is a reality

And life is a race in which you see how long you can run before you are  
stopped in you tracks,

Because a boy in your city was shot 16 times  
and each shot rang out in your ears like the 16 years you had lived  
because you were in fact almost 16 when you finally saw the footage

And still, no justice

What do you want me to do

When I live my life in fear

Not even for myself

But for my brothers and sisters in the world who aren't as lucky as me

My head spins

and I think

and I think

and I think

I think about what you see when you see my father  
a black man living in America

because after one too many times I can't keep telling myself that random  
selection at the airport is really all that random

I can't keep telling myself that everything is ok  
because it's not

But from darkness comes light

Like shimmering stars emerging from a hazy dusk

And I am strong  
and vulnerable  
and angry  
and proud

I'm Olivia to the world  
and ladybug to my mom

I'm young,  
and full of wishes that I still whisper into the night when a star makes  
its way across the sky

I want change

I don't want to worry about my dad  
or my friends  
or my neighbors

I don't want my daughter to ever feel like brown skin isn't beautiful

I don't want to live in a world where a color can be a crime

So I take these wishes  
and hopes  
and prayers

And I write them on my mirror in lipstick

And the red stained glass reminds me of a past in which blood dripped  
from black fingers onto white cotton

But at the same time

I think of the blood coursing through my veins  
And I think about how we are all the same on the inside,  
blood and bones and a beating heart

And I place my hand over my chest,  
and I feel it beat once  
and twice  
and again and again

And once again, I'm thinking

Thinking about how beat has four letters just like l-o-v-e and f-e-a-r and  
h-o-p-e and s-t-a-r

Star

And I smile, and apply that lipstick,  
red like the fire igniting within me,  
and I sit down at my desk to gaze outside my window

Four stars always shine the brightest,

and each one gets a letter in the way you might have guessed

S-t-a-r, I whisper into the dark,

until a fifth one catches my eye and I'm awarded an extra letter

And I'm compelled to spell a new word,  
one that's written in the stars and written in night

B-l-a-c-k

Black.