

Alix Sykes

Age: 15, Grade: 10

School Name: Interlochen Arts Academy, Interlochen, MI

Educator: Brittany Cavallaro

Category: Poetry

Synonyms For Drowning

Synonyms For Drowning

1. Engulf

Two girls giggling into the darkness
arm in arm, frozen fingers. In the night,
their eyes change. One carries the depths
of the ocean. I've been told that the other's
eyes are the type of coffee you get drunk
off of. I can neither confirm nor deny—I can't
afford to.

2. Soak

We sit on my bed. My ears burn and my thoughts
spin. You can't tell or maybe you can, your piercing
blue eyes hide secrets that I want to find. I know
I shouldn't, but no taught me otherwise. You ask me
a question and I lie. I want to tell you the truth
every moment afterward. I never do. Nothing more
between us than air and my turquoise comforter. I scoot
back, upsetting my blue pillow. My white shelves hang
above us. Books fill them. I yearn to escape into them,
but you can't hide from what's sitting in front of you
I think about kissing you. You're close enough but
that is an impossibility and you know I'm not being
dramatic. I've explained this to you before, sitting
just a few more feet from you. I wonder if you
remember.

3. Sink

This is dangerous, this is cliff jumping
into jagged rocks and I am filleted on
your spikes. You laugh, a cheshire cat grin
your greatest weapon, your eyes a black hole
but much brighter—like blue silk blankets
draped across my skin.

4. Suffocate

On my bad days, you are a churning sea
and I am a rowboat. I always manage to
drown. I wish you would throw me a rope,
I know you won't.

5. Submerge

On my good days, you are a stream and I am a girl—
No, I am a princess escaped from a tower and this
is the first taste of freedom. I throw off the tight white
dress and slip in, your waters are so comforting that
I become ripples I don't even notice I'm sinking until
it's too late.

6. Flood

Blue,
it's always blue,
you're always blue,
and I'm always yearning
until you are orange
and my imagery stops
making sense. Maybe
it never did.

7. Drench

You are a tiger and I am a
I'm not sure. I type
what do tigers eat
into the search engine
and realize it doesn't matter,
backspace until my heart stops
hurting. You will prey on me
anyway even if you don't
notice you're doing it.

8. Immerse

You don't see any of these blue streaked
spirals or these tiger stripes, you are not silk
or stream or sea or spikes, you are simply
a girl—you are simply something I can't have,
I would never allow myself to.

9. Swamp

Two girls sit across from each other. One is thinking
about the other, watching her with lovesickness
in her eyes, coffee warming her hands. The other forgets
she is even there, taking sip after sip of ice cold water.