



REVIEW

THE PC

OF WRITING 2017/2018

THE JOSHUA WEINZWEIG MEMORIAL LITERARY AWARDS
&
THE PICKERING COLLEGE REVIEW OF WRITING

Joshua was born in Toronto in 1973 and enrolled at Pickering College in Grade Eight. He spent the next five years as a student at PC. At first he didn't like it here, but—after a time—he began to thrive. He made many friends and soon excelled at his schoolwork. He was Chair of his House, made the Headmaster's List on several occasions, and learned to love Chaucer and Shakespeare. Josh cultivated a love of language, composing short stories and poems that leapt out of his rich imagination.

Students whose work is published in the *Pickering College Review of Writing* are eligible to win the Joshua Weinzweig Literary Awards. At the end of each school year, the English Department selects three winners from each grade: one for distinction in prose fiction; one for distinction in poetry; and one for its creative literary merit, regardless of genre. Notably, the winner in each category is acknowledged in this publication, receives a certificate of acknowledgement, and is rewarded a small, cash prize.

The process: all students submit writing to their English classroom teacher who considers its literary merit and degree of creative and critical thinking. After considering the quality of the submission, the English classroom teacher may forward it to the Director of the Joshua Weinzweig Creative Writing Program. The key objective is to provide a forum for Middle and Senior School Pickering College students to publish their writing. Editors try to establish a fair balance between providing opportunity to young writers and a reasonably high degree of quality for readers.

At Commencement, one Graduate is chosen to receive the Joshua Weinzweig Memorial Literary Award. This student has demonstrated the highest quality of creative writing among his or her peer group, distinguishing him or herself through his or her dedication to the craft of writing and artful use of language.

The winner of the Joshua Weinzweig Memorial Literary Award for 2017-2018 is Megan Robinson. Megan was a pillar of consistency in her time at PC. Every piece of creative writing that passed over our desks with her name on it could be used as an exemplar to future students. Over the past two years, she has been published in the *PC Review of Writing* five times—but that is only because we could not afford the room for five more. Three of her pieces have been featured to kick off this year's edition: her satirical essay "I'm a Doormat: Welcome"; her critical review of Lana del Rey's *Get Free*, entitled "A Melancholy Revolution"; and her creative non-fiction prose "The Mirage of My Being".

As ever, Pickering College would like to thank Daniel Weinzweig for his generous support, without whom the Joshua Weinzweig Creative Writing Program would not be possible.

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I'M A DOORMAT: WELCOME

by Megan Robinson

In my life, I stand by the fact that I am tolerant unless given reason not to be. It has proven to be one of my greatest qualities and my tragic fatal flaw. Typically speaking, each situation escalates from a minimal reaction to an utter release of every one of my emotions at once. It's a rare occurrence; but alas, I cannot lie, recently a conundrum arose.

The day was superb. I turned seventeen. I had the whole day planned. Little surprises popped up; the day increasingly became better and better—until lunch.

Since coming to PC ten years ago, I've become widely known as the student who bakes the best cupcakes of anyone—possibly ever. I've held that title for ten years and knew that, with graduation coming, the infamous cupcakes must make one final appearance.

Picture this. Third period lets out. My friends and I embark on an icy sprint towards my mom's car, anticipation coursing through our veins. Flinging open the car door, I grab the cupcakes out of the passenger's seat. Everyone gasps in bewilderment. Collectively, we proudly strut through the dining hall—I, of course, led the pack, cupcakes in hand. All eyes were on us. Arriving at the lounge, I placed the cupcakes cautiously on the table and turned to the eager group waiting on the cusp of the lounge, minus a few stragglers catching up from the dining hall. Like a reality TV host explaining rules, I prepped the clientele. There was a certain etiquette to respect before I set them loose.

After distribution, we all sat around the fireplace eating the lavender-iced cupcakes (needless to say, I did not disappoint). This was when things took a turn. Before my very eyes, a couple of students walk into the lounge. I knew them both. We had been friendly here and there, but in no way would I really classify us as "friends". Almost in slow motion, one of them leaned down—without saying a word—and grabbed a cupcake, then simply walked out of the lounge, not to be seen for the rest of the day. All at once, everyone gently turned to look at me.

"Whatever, it's fine. I have lots," I laughed. And at the time, I believed myself. It wasn't until a whole weekend later that I realized: not only was I bothered, but I couldn't stop thinking about the robbery. It wasn't that he just grabbed the cupcake without uttering a simple "thank you" (or even asking at all); it was the principle of the thing. Not only was one of my prized possessions—the thing most coveted by these people for a decade—taken from me that day, but with it, a piece of my being.

It may come as a surprise, but this small fraction of a second on my birthday made me question my own character. I feel like most people expected me to make a scene—and, what can I say?—I'm simply not one to do that. I try hard, day after day, to keep an open and inviting aura; kindness is a quality of mine that I cherish. But perhaps that's exactly the problem. Looking back, I realize I've done it all too often: people not giving my pencils back;

I'M A DOORMAT: WELCOME

by Megan Robinson

asking for information on tests I've already written; even on some of the most important days of my life, I allow events to unfold at the hands of others out of my control.

Perhaps I am merely not controlling enough. Maybe I should have stopped him dead in his tracks and taken the cupcakes from his ignorant hands, but I cannot help but struggle with that thought. I've accepted the way I am. Children are taught to be welcoming, kind and inclusive—I've always detested those who lack these qualities. So what if every once in a while someone takes a cupcake? Sometimes there just isn't much you can do that won't tarnish your own identity.

The one thing I've taken away from this experience is that I am practically a doormat in my own life. And what does that doormat say? Welcome.



photo by Megan Robinson, Grade 12

A MELANCHOLY REVOLUTION:
CRITICAL REVIEW OF LANA DEL REY'S *GET FREE*

by Megan Robinson

One can learn enough about a person's lifestyle from their preferences in music, whether this falls into groups of rock, jazz, blues—or the endless lexicon of others. Certain artists stand out in the endless whirlpool of their own generalization; eras were born to the tune of Billie Holiday, Nirvana, Eminem and the Eagles. It is no wonder Lana del Rey blossomed into the fusion of these artists and more. Her most recent album, *Lust for Life*, showcases a change of sound, but stays true to her own identity—specifically her final track, *Get Free*.

Moving around during her youth, Elizabeth Grant turned to a life of partying and nomadic living. Her urge to capture her life through music—without having to answer questions about it—drive her musical style. She feels confident that “[t]here’s nothing anyone could tell me that I don’t already know ... I know why I do what I do” (Hiatt). Lana lived a life of uncertainty and free-spiritedness, despite often feeling locked down in her circumstances. Her change of lifestyle through fame has been obvious on the surface, yet her personality has kept her true and unchanged. The song *Get Free* highlights her idea of change—in relation to her own relationship with Hollywood—ultimately leading to her “modern manifesto”.

Get Free wraps up *Lust for Life*, an upbeat rhythm to follow-up her predominantly melancholy songs up to that point. The song is intentionally placed at the end of the album to signify the emotional changes and new era Lana sees herself entering in the near future. Mysteriously so, Lana intended the final words on the album to be “I want to move... out of the black and into the blue”—a reference to the landmark phrase from Neil Young’s *Hey, Hey, My, My*—persisting in her truth of overcoming darker times. Fans, at this point, may wonder what direction Lana hints her career will take, though the feeling of the song and knowledge of her own character certainty assures a positive outcome.

Lana is known for her hauntingly beautiful approach to lyrics—not surprising, given her initial dream of becoming a poet. Analyzing the lyrics of her song opens the door to an understanding beyond that heard on the track. The opening lines to *Get Free* depict the “hero’s journey,” universally recognized and represented through generations of mixed media for public consumption. Del Rey sings, “[f]inally I’m crossing the threshold from the ordinary world to the reveal of my heart”—an obvious homage to the initial steps of the Lana’s manifesto. In the recorded version of the song, del Rey references “doing it for all of us who never got the chance”.

The line following remains partially blank in the recorded version; however, when sung live, Lana reveals her intended lyrics to read “for Amy and for Whitney”: a tribute to the admirable Amy Winehouse and Whitney Houston, both commonly recognized for dying too young—their deaths, caused by drug abuse, and triggered by the pressures of Hollywood. In this sense, del Rey gently describes Houston and Winehouse as “birds of paradise who never got to fly at night

A MELANCHOLY REVOLUTION:
CRITICAL REVIEW OF LANA DEL REY'S *GET FREE*

by Megan Robinson

'cause they were caught up in the den". The chorus of the song particularly questions whether the singer regrets her deep involvement in fame and Hollywood; del Rey once stated in a *Rolling Stone* interview that, although she does not mind sharing her music, she feels it is no one else's business to look into her own personal struggles. She goes on to recognize the burden being lifted of her "Crowley way of being" in the past—alluding to Aleister Crowley, a man portrayed as wicked for putting love above all else and turning to drugs. Towards the end of *Get Free*, Lana points the listeners' attention toward the psychological process of one becoming addicted to his or her way of life, and the song continues to encourage gracefully stepping away from that illusion.

Fans will likely explore hidden meanings buried inside Lana del Rey's work for as long as her legacy lasts. Behind the curtain of what some listeners classify as gloomy, melodramatic ballads, Lana pays countless homage to musical geniuses before her time and continues to push her own unique concepts. It's high time for wider audiences to "get free"; to peel back this curtain and reveal Lana's truth.

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THE MIRAGE OF MY BEING

by Megan Robinson

My legacy to this point resides in my physical being. My life comprised progressions to exude perfection—comparable to Da Vinci painting Mona Lisa, perfecting every detail of her exterior beauty. With every brush stroke, I've crafted a perfect mirage. An industry trademarked for its sculpture of carbon-copy individuals requires achieving the pinnacle of your self-identity for survival. Cameras flash more frequently than the blinking eyes, and the pressure cracks a greater majority.

My daily routine: I wake up; I walk into my kitchen—glazed in white with crisp edges. My white porcelain mug absorbs the stain of the steaming coffee as it coats the inside. The familiar, rich smell makes me squirm, and I notice the warmth exchange from the mug to my palms, knowing it won't be long before even this is stripped from my diet. My laptop graced the marble countertop, revealing edits of my most recent shoot. I critique every image and pinpoint precisely where to improve. The dips of my hips and eyesore of my wide shoulders draw a sting my eyes. I blink deeply, absorbing any moisture, and clean my coffee mug, placing it back mathematically before walking down my picturesque hall.

Every day, around this time, I think of the start to my flourishing career. Several workers with elaborate titles traced every inch of my body with a measuring tape in the office of what would be my mother agency; snapping pictures from every angle and conversing among themselves in terms non-coherent—calculating the angle of my torso to my legs and my jaw to my brow bone. One critic contested my nose—but in photography, shadows could be cast, illusions created. The contract slid across the table, complete with an aesthetically-fit pen that matched the cold, miniscule room, and I signed it to the tune of gushing compliments.

The sensation of my nails tapping the back of my warm throat snaps me back into reality. It's coarse from the scalding coffee that burned the passageway, and I just thrust my fingers out of the way in time for the bile to come forward, soothing the pain. After hearing the splash of my vomit hitting water, I rest my head against the porcelain—cold in its ordinary state, yet warm from the grip of my hands. Reaching to flush the toilet, I feel the pressure of the preceding events whirl away.

My hair sticks to the back of my clammy neck and I close my eyes, rising to my feet. Looking in the mirror at my ratty hair and dull eyes, I take a deep breath, only to be interrupted by the buzzing of my phone from countless individuals—some I know, and some who only know me—leaving comments and text messages of how beautiful my latest photos were.

I look into the mirror. How they all wish to be me.



artwork by Maya Dhanjal, Grade 12

ALONE, YET NOT LONELY...

by Anonymous

I had questions that nobody knew the answers to,
I was enjoying things nobody really liked to do.
They told me I was special, but no one really taught me to
Express myself and say what I wanted to.
I had passions that no one really knew about,
Drowning in a sea of thoughts no one ever thought about.
Had the ambitions of a child, but the heart of tiger,
I was determined to resist, and not to surrender.

CHORUS:

Now I am in a foreign land, trying to survive,
Vulnerable and exposed: I've no one to get behind.
I can feel my skeleton, shivering inside,
I'm waiting, in despair, for hardships to go by.
In the past, I had dreams completely unnoticed,
But now, it's my woes that are disregarded.
All I wanted to be was happy and content,
But now, I am old, rusty, drained and ragged.

The decision was made, the bets were placed,
I embarked on roaming an uncharted maze.
I was risking, I was gambling, I couldn't see—
But I could desire and push for eternity.
In pursuit of appreciation, in thirst for recognition,
Rambling in a hurry, but without a destination.
Like a blind enthusiast, incapable of evaluation,
Running across a field of darkness, hoping for satisfaction.

CHORUS

I encountered many obstacles, but I was not afraid.
I could hear my inner voice yelling, "It's OK."
For the first time in years, I felt energized and refreshed.
I was thinking to myself, "I knew I was correct."
I lost many buddies and allies along the way,
But I had the fire—I revived them right away.
I was the main source of power and wisdom,
Surely I was heading in the right direction.

ALONE, YET NOT LONELY...

by Anonymous

CHORUS

I looked tough, but I was weak—like a brittle wall.
Never would I know this quickly I would fall.
Yet my heart was still engulfed in aspiration,
Beating with ferocity and unfathomable devotion.
I tripped and crashed, but I came back up,
“This is my time!” was all I had in mind.
My confidence diminished with every blow I bore;
However, I wasn’t worried, I still had a lot more.

CHORUS

“At least now it’s better,” I tried to soothe myself.
I could feel, though, this was it—I was done, on the shelf.
My vision got blurry, but I didn’t quit. I kept on,
As it was too late now, to simply back off...
I was languishing from inside: like an old, dying tree,
Bowing down in submission to unceasing, acidic rain.
Every time I smiled, my body screamed in deep pain.
I was hurting, for which I had only one man to blame.

CHORUS

I was about to reach my breaking point, but then I became aware,
Opened my eyes, they were shimmering with a glare,
“I am strong,” I thought to myself. “I can do it!”
It’s about time that I get resurrected!
There, I became the man that I was meant to be.
Now I was powerful, just as I believed to be—
I had vanquished my struggle to find out about me.
It came at a cost, but the reward was worth it.

It took effort, but now I’m glad—as strong as a boulder,
Standing tall and proud, but with a chip on my shoulder.
With all my pride and glory, I stood up to proclaim:
“I have done it, with the almighty God’s aid!”
I may be alone, but I am not lonely
In this strange land of affluence and diversity.
For when I have God on my side,
I shall thrive and flourish—the author my destiny!

DWINDLING SUMMER BREATHS

by Brooke Baker

The late August sun cast an illuminating glow as it set across the sky. Its bright-golden colour from the morning transformed into a warm orange as it prepared for its nightly slumber. It had worn out its energy fueling the laughter of young children relishing their last days of summer vacation. The crisp breeze blowing off the water signalled to beach-goers that it was nearly time to retreat to their bonfires after taking one final dip in the ocean.

I sat with my toes buried in the sand, relishing my surroundings. My friends sprawled around me on their beach towels.

Trevor shot up from his towel and began running towards the calming waves brushing against the shore. He called for us to follow him in for another dip in the water. Trevor constantly had trivial ideas like this. He had a certain way with our friends. He was always able to encourage them to follow his lead.

Despite my friends chasing each other into the quickly cooling waters, I hesitated to follow them. I couldn't rationalize running back into the chilly waters—I'd already dried off and was wearing my favourite, tattered hoodie, so I stayed on the shore.

I wiggled my toes, trying to shake some sand off, when Trevor called to me.

"Stephanie, come on! Get in the water, it's not that bad!" He finished his comment with a smirk. No one else saw that smile, but even if they had, they wouldn't have known what it really meant behind his hazel eyes.

"It's okay, I'm pretty tired," I called back, trying my hardest not to meet his gaze. I couldn't stand being near him, but today I had to. Today was Kat's birthday. Having focused on the sand near his feet, I could see he had started moving in my direction. I leaned my back on to the cooler and closed my eyes tightly, pretending that the person I hated most in the world wasn't coming my way that very moment.

"What's your problem with me?" he said coolly. I could tell he had kneeled down in the sand next to me. I could smell the lingering aroma of coffee on his breath. Still, I refused to open my eyes and acknowledge him properly.

"I don't have a problem with you," I lied, but the sharpness in my voice gave me away.

"Come on, Steph. You've been ignoring me all day. What's going on?" He had to realize that I was never going to forgive him for the words he used to whisper whenever we crossed paths.

"If you hadn't been so self-involved, you would've realized I've been ignoring you since eighth grade." I let those last words linger. I felt bolder.

Taken aback, Trevor stood. "You haven't hated me since eighth grade," he chided back. "We were best friends then."

DWINDLING SUMMER BREATHS

by Brooke Baker

My eyes snapped open. “Best friends?” I fired back. “Best friends?” I stood and took a step closer to him. “You ruined me,” I whispered scathingly, tilting my head up, trying to match his towering height. “You broke me.”

“What do you mean? We always hung out.” He seemed confused and outraged, but kept his voice low enough so the others couldn’t hear.

Just as I was about to respond, I noticed Trevor’s body beginning to sway and his face turning pale. “Are you okay?” I asked, reaching my hand out fearing he might fall.

“I’m fin...” but before he could finish his sentence, his body hit the sand.

“Trevor!” I yelled, dropping to my knees and shaking his shoulders. I placed two fingers underneath his jaw. There was no pulse.



artwork by Moira Banks-Batten, Grade 12

STAY TO THE RIGHT TO AVOID THE WATERFALL ON THE LEFT

by Moira Banks-Batten

Over the summer, I took a trip up north to learn how to “take risks” and go outside my comfort zone. I was interested in becoming adventurous. So, I decided to sign myself up for a beginner canoeing trip down the Petawawa River, hosted by the company Paddlefoot.

Keep in mind the word “beginner.” Everyone told me what a great experience it would be to do a camping-canoe trip for several days in Algonquin Park. “Experience the fresh air,” they said. Except they failed to tell me that sometimes, when you step out of your comfort zone, you become angry, frustrated, scared and utterly confused. And in my case, canoeing, camping and portaging were so far out of my zone that I became a stinky little gremlin who contemplated, every night, how to hijack a canoe and miraculously paddle my way back home to my warm bed and hot shower. Now, I know that a seven-day trip is honestly not long, but this one felt never-ending. In order to give you an honest feel for the pain I endured on this journey, I have to explain everything that went wrong. Trust me, for seven days, it was a lot.

The first day was okay. Until I found out that I would have to go down freaking rapids! I’d never canoed a day in my life, let alone white waters. I wanted to back out of the entire trip immediately. Unfortunately, they failed to relay this information to me—up until five minutes before I had to go down our first chute. It never said anywhere on the forms I signed that there would be white waters. What kind of company does that? No, seriously, what kind of company does that?

My partner in my canoe already hated me. I don’t blame him, I have chicken bones for arms. I am no use when it come to physical strength, and I struggled immensely to paddle when sitting in the bow (the easiest position). I remember being so nervous before going down our first rapid, that I actually blacked out the previous five-minutes where my guides explained how to properly use our paddles. This, of course, led to my partner doing all of the work for the rapids that day, making him hate me even more.

Later, we set up for camp. After we finished, my guide Jimi pulled out the dreaded “poo bag.” The minute he pulled out the shovel, I knew. I never thought I would admit to literally digging a hole in the ground and defecating in it, but there you go. When he started to explain how to “do it” properly, I wanted to throw myself off the cliff and let the flow of the rapids take me away. Peeing is hard enough to do as girl. If you don’t angle yourself right, it’s going all over your pants and shoes. But excreting, that’s a whole other level I was not prepared for, leaving me constipated for two days straight.

The second day started out amazing (constipation excluded). My partner and I owned every rapid, dodged every rock, and were way ahead of everyone else in the group. I found myself actually enjoying the scenery rather than constantly fearing for my life. Then we came to the final rapid of the day: the dreaded 500-metre stretch of water that ruined everything. We went in confident and almost finished, but somehow, ten seconds before the finish line, we became caught in rough water. I tried as hard as I could to paddle out of it, but my chicken-arms failed me once again and we flipped over, sending me flailing into the rapid.

STAY TO THE RIGHT TO AVOID THE WATERFALL ON THE LEFT

by Moira Banks-Batten

Rule #1 of going down a rapid: NEVER stand up if you flip. Just lie on your back and let the flow of the river take you. However, just as I was about to turn on my back, I heard a cry from my partner. I stood up in the rapid, trying to gain balance, but I slipped—slicing my leg on a jagged rock. As a string of swear words spewed from my mouth, I looked over and noticed that my partner's foot was stuck in between the canoe and a rock. I immediately helped him flip the canoe over, and we both floated to the bottom of the rapid. Then I noticed his foot, which was now a mangled mess. Now that I think back on it, it's glaringly apparent that if I was just a little stronger, we could've avoided the whole situation. Sorry, Keelan.

Moving forward, Keelan had to ride in the same canoe as Jimi because now he was physically useless. I was paired with my new partner, Will. Will's steering abilities were equivalent to my bow skills. We made a detrimental duo. Our true "skills" showed when we came across an unexpected rapid, which included a waterfall. All we had to do was stay to the right to avoid the waterfall on the left. Easy, right? Wrong. Within the first ten seconds, the canoe drifted into the fastest part of the rapid that led us straight towards the waterfall. All I heard was my guide, Sasha, screaming, "Keep paddling, whatever you do, do not stop!" After 30 seconds of sheer, relentless paddling, tears started pooling in my eyes. I don't know what came over me, but I stopped paddling. I looked behind me at Will—another beginner—and we both gave each other this nod. Then we put our paddles in the air.

Rule #2 of going down a rapid: if you think you are going to flip, hold your paddle in the air to avoid crushing your hands on a rock. As we both gave up—accepting failure—I heard Jimi yell, "Are you idiots? Do not stop paddling! Don't Stop!" Just before we were about to go down the waterfall, our canoe turned backwards—because, why not? I don't know how, but we managed to miss 100% of the plunge pool, travelling down this miniscule path of clear water off to the side that took us to the finish line with perfect grace. All I remember after that is Jimi looking at me with a deadpan face, saying, "You guys are so so lucky, that could've ended very badly." He went on to explain that if we landed in the plunge pool, our canoe would've flipped and we most certainly would've drowned.

After those incidents, the trip continued with more near-death experiences and uncomfortable situations. However, I survived each one. And for some ungodly reason, I want to do it all over again—except maybe this time I could do a novice trip. I definitely smelled awful the entire trip and felt defeated multiple times, but I still walked away feeling accomplished.

Things I learned about life on this trip are:

1. If you try your hardest, you will fail to succeed—leading to a near-death experience.
2. If you just give up and accept failure moments before dying, you'll avoid death altogether.
3. Just because something says "beginner" does not mean it's going to be easy.
4. When going on a canoe trip up north, "experiencing the fresh air" will be the last thing on your mind.



artwork by Sydney Uglow, Grade 11

DEFENCE OR OPPRESSION?

by Emre Basaran

There, he squeezed my trigger once again,
Another bullet pierced through an innocent soul.
A barrage of corruption unleashed upon a family,
Under the name of nobility and rule.
"You are helping to protect your country!" they said to me,
"You are a patriot, a soldier!" they lied to me,
"But, I don't want to do this!" I shouted to him,
But he couldn't hear, as he was indoctrinated.
I tried resisting, with bitter hope, but he overpowered me,
I tried convulsing, in desperation, but he subdued me,
Now, they are lying on the ground, either dead or in deep agony,
yet another home dilapidated by his grisly tyranny.
"...we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming..." they were singing,
as I awaited, underneath the Old Glory.
I was crying inside, but nobody heard me,
as their souls and conscience had been subjugated.
There, he squeezed my trigger once again,
and an entire community fell right before me.
Yet all I could do was watch and mourn,
hoping for the end of this depraved reign.
There, a rotten olive branch descended on my frame,
as my whole body shuddered in a burning sense of pain.
Then, a harsh tear rode down on my face,
and tore a deep scar that would never heal or fade.
"You are helping to protect your country!" they said to me,
"You are a patriot, a soldier!" they lied to me,
"But, I don't want to do this!" I shouted at them.
I know I wasn't born for this,
I could not have been born for this...

SHADOW OF LIGHT

by Kate Beswick

From the day she could walk, Evie never walked alone. A friend and a silent opponent. In her favourite yellow dress, her skirt swayed as the honey in her long braid flickered in the sunlight. The tips of her fingers dwindled as they danced in the darkness behind her. Spinning through the trails of Bissett Creek in that summer breeze of 1943, scents of cool river water and dainty honeysuckle swirled through the air—an assurance of peace and beauty in the wicked gloom. Under the cover of the sweeping branches, her dark friend lurked behind. The figure was cold to the touch, and even the girl's soft giggle could not tinge the black with shades of honey and gold in her long, blonde hair. It was not fear Evie felt, for the shadow entered her home in the winter and her sweltering bedroom in the summer. Even in the dark hours after dinnertime, the figure danced behind, in front, above and below her. In her small home, the little girl grew and, for awhile, her shadow remained the same size as when she was six. Until—just like her long, soft hair and her sunny, chiffon skirt—the gloomy sidekick grew.

Darker, colder, deeper, heavier... the figure weighed down upon Evie. Like concrete blocks beating steadily on her chest, Evie still tried to dance through the constant night. One day Evie tried to run. She ran to the city, with a new job and a new friend to a new home, and the darkness disappeared.

It's 1965, and Evie was dancing through the streets of Toronto alone—her yellow skirt illustrating the stream of the city wind. Industrialization fueled the air with thick, manufactured scents seeping through the grates: the stench of constant revolution. The subways got faster, the food quicker, the lights brighter, the crowds bigger, and the expenses of life higher. The golden tones in the lady's hair transformed to a dusty chestnut, her swaying garments stiffened to a songless grey, her giggle faded to a somber smile. In the darkness of the city, the shadow had returned. Surrounding Evie and her house, once again in darkness. The numbness of the air and the soggy food stood cold against her. Protected under a mountain of lifeless quilts, Evie tried to escape through novels under the dim moonlight.

It's 2018, and Evie never escaped the lifeless shadow. The shadow enters her glacial home in the winter and her sweltering bedroom in the summer. Neighbouring homes seem untouched by the gloomy figure, as sweet and savoury scents of apple and cinnamon halt at the evil veil. From above, there's a hole on the quiet suburban street. Young girls with long, blonde braids reflect the lights of their home in shades of honey and gold, as Evie sits quietly, with her frail fingers turning the pages of her book under the window. The wicked, cold air seeps into the shadow of her drained home.

COLD NIP

by Meghan Beswick

It was supposed to be the perfect winter day. Overnight, snow had covered every inch of what I could see. I finally understood why people always described thick snow as a blanket. When I woke up, each snowflake reflected the sun, creating a glimmering landscape. They were the kind of snowflakes that made you want to open your mouth and catch them on your tongue. The kind that sticks to eyelashes. The kind that people always try to replicate in movies.

I knew school was out for the day when I looked at the time, thinking my mom had been in a good enough mood this morning to turn my alarm off before she left for work. It was always hard to tell what mood my mom was in ever since my father left with my brother and the dog. Originally, we just moved from house to house depending on the week, but it was hard. We were never settled. After I stopped doing my homework one night, my mom demanded we choose a permanent place to stay. I chose her, and my brother left to move in with my dad in California. It's days like today I miss him the most, because of how much he loved the snow. I don't think he's seen it since he moved.

A distinct ringtone set for my best friend, Riley, interrupted my thoughts. I answered on the third ring.

"DI!" she screamed, before I could say hi.

"Good morning to you, too, Riley. Next time you call me first thing in the morning, we can turn down the volume a bit, OK?" I responded, trying to assess the damage to my ear. "I had to make sure you were up. There is no time to waste. See you in twenty, and dress warm."

"Ri—" She hung up before I could put forward any protests.

I threw my phone on my bed and started trying to re-plan my day, looking at the pile of books on my desk. Exam season sucks, especially as an over-achiever. My already pathetic social life completely shuts down for three weeks as I park myself in front of my computer and try to finish the semester with my sanity intact. If I'm home by three, I'll still have enough time to re-read my notes and fill out my math and science outlines. I got dressed in simple leggings and a long-sleeve shirt, before grabbing a hat and gloves after putting on my coat. I ran outside to the sound of Riley laying on the horn of her Toyota Corolla. As I got in the passenger seat and closed the door, I pulled down the sun visor to access the mirror. I was attempting to put my hat on when Riley snatched it out of my hands.

"No hat-hair for you today, missy. I invited a few other people," she said plainly as she threw my hat into the backseat.

"You do realize that it's literally negative forty out? And also, you can't see hat-hair if I leave the hat on." I countered, reaching back to grab my hat when Riley reached over and tickled my stomach, causing me to jolt back forward and grab her hands.

COLD NIP

by Meghan Beswick

After we both stopped laughing, Riley said, "What's the worst that could happen? You lose an ear, big deal."

"Funny. But your ear can't just fall off." I responded, trying to sound unamused. As we continued driving, Riley started turning down side roads that went further and further away from town. I turned and looked out the window, trying to determine where we were. The snowfall had changed and was becoming heavier.

"Where exactly are we going?" I asked, annoyed that I couldn't figure it out on my own. "We're meeting a few friends in the woods to go sledding."

"Sledding? In the woods? With trees everywhere? I can see the logic in that decision," I said, holding back laughter.

"Relax. Obviously we're going on the paths that are cleared on the hills," Riley replied, rolling her eyes. As we continued down the back roads, Riley turned up the radio. I watched the snowfall, and tried not to picture my ear falling off.

Not even ten minutes later, the snow was thick enough to be a blizzard. The radio started to lose its signal, and as Riley reached to try and find a channel in our range, we hit a patch of black ice and went sliding to the side of the road. Riley ripped the steering wheel over as fast as she could, but it only made the car slide down faster to the side of the street. The front of the car turned to hit a tree head-on.

When I woke up, I felt like I had that morning. I was being swaddled in a snowy blanket, still sparkling in the sunlight. I only remembered what had happened when a drop of blood rolled down my forehead and landed on the airbag that had deployed in front of me. I looked over at Riley, who was also stirring, and tried to shake her awake. Thankfully, neither of us had any serious injuries, except that Riley thought she broke her arm. The first thing we did was make sure the car wasn't going to blow up. The gas tank was fine, but the battery had been completely dislodged, leaving us unable to turn on the car or access its heat.

We couldn't call for help. My phone had smashed into the windshield during the crash, and Riley couldn't get a signal on hers. As we sat in the car, trying not to panic, Riley suggested that we just wait for the others to drive back up the road and see us. The snow was still heavy, and so we agreed to take turns brushing off the snow.

As we both sat shivering in the back seat, huddled together, Riley's skin began to go pale. I took the next two turns wiping off the snow, with Riley unable to move. After what felt like an eternity, the sun slowly began to set. I felt my heart start to race and my hands shake. Suddenly, I realized how scared I was of what would happen if we were out here for the night. Riley's skin was turning purple and blistering. All I could do was try and keep her talking. As the sun sank in the sky, the temperature sank with it.

COLD NIP

 by Meghan Beswick

“Di?” Riley whispered.

“Yes, Riles?”

“I’m s-so sorry. If it wasn’t for-r me, you wouldn—”

“Riley stop,” I interrupted. “This isn’t your fault. Neither of us saw the ice, and we were both happy to be out here,” I said, taking her hand.

“S-s-still. I’m sorry, Di.” I couldn’t respond. I felt how cold her hand was.

It seemed like a dream. No, more like a nightmare. Somehow, it just kept getting colder outside, and the snow kept falling. It was supposed to be the perfect winter day. It was supposed to be the perfect winter day, I kept thinking as I slowly drifted off to sleep, still holding Riley’s hand.

The next thing I remembered was a bright, warm, white light. Not a heavenly one, more like a computer screen in a dark room. When I fully opened my eyes, the light was even brighter, shining in my eyes. I wasn’t just warm, my skin felt like it was burning. I slowly started to focus on my surroundings—the oxygen mask over my mouth, the emergency blankets strapped over my body, the dark-haired woman looming over me talking to someone I couldn’t see.

“Riley,” I murmured.

“We have your friend, sweetie, don’t worry.” The girl answered, looking down, letting me see the stress lines and wrinkles on her face—though she couldn’t have been over forty-five.

“Push some more nitrous, please.” It was the last thing I heard her say before my eyelids became heavy once again.

The next time I woke up was to the sound of a heart monitor beeping and *The Price Is Right* on a TV. When I opened my eyes, I saw Riley laying across the room, in a similar position to mine—swaddled in blankets, covered in bandages, and lying in bed. As I looked at my arms, I was hit with an overwhelming pain, explained by the blisters that had been removed and treated since we were stuck in the car.

“Good morning, sleepy head,” she said.

“Riles. Thank god. How long have I been out?” I asked groggily.

“I’ve been up a few hours. Apparently we’ve been here a few days.”

“A few days?” I exclaimed. “What about exams? What’s gonna happen—”

“Woah, Di. Chill for a second. I’m sure that being in the hospital is a pretty decent excuse for a different exam date,” she said, and started smiling. “Think about it, though. At least you still have your ears.”

THE LIGHT FROM WITHIN

by Phillip Carson

The commute to work every morning was a struggle for the average Joe living in Toronto. The underground subways into the big city were crowded, and everyone had to pause and glimpse at the magical artwork on the wall at Eglinton Station. Rodney LaTourelle and Louise Withhöft created a piece of artwork that displayed what seemed to be the light from a gemstone—beautiful and tranquil like the calm sky during a summer’s sunset. It hangs just above the escalator to the train platform, and it brings the wall to life. The escalator descends to the platform, entering a crystalline cave full of beauty and wonder. The artwork was the first of its kind to make its way into Toronto, although there were a few more to come at some of the other stations nearby.

To some people it is just simple geometry, the way light reflects off the glass prisms and mirrors to create a sort of distorted virtual image. But to most people, it is a wonder. The way people can create such elegance and encase it in one piece of art is truly incredible.

For Edward, it’s the former. It does not intrigue him, nor pique his interest. Despite this, it still fascinates him. Why does everyone else in the station stop to look at the representation of the light from within? Every day, Edward walks past it and thinks nothing of it, just trying to get on with his day. He works at a busy accounting firm in Toronto, so his time at the station is limited to begin with.

One day at work, Edward was told that the CEO of a major company requested some advice from him regarding management. He practically jumped for joy out of his large desk chair. As the day went by, he couldn’t think about anything else—solely due to the sheer excitement for getting to meet a big-time entrepreneur.

The big day finally came, and Edward was on his way to the train station at his usual time, 7:30 a.m. on the dot. But as he got to the platform, the train had already left. He was so focused on his work the day before that he didn’t pick up on the announcement about the train leaving ten minutes earlier than usual that morning. Embarrassed and upset, he went back up the escalator to the benches on the right of the station. As he looked into the light from within, all of the stress and worry and embarrassment and dread dissipated.

For one moment, he felt peace; a sense of releasing all the nerves built up about conferences and important meetings. For one moment, he realized that to attain peace and quiet, he needed to sit back, relax, and enjoy what was always in front of him.

THE CASE OF 'NOT GEORGE'

by Celeste Castelino

George gazed absentmindedly out the window, adjacent to his confines of blankets and feather pillows. Attempting to return his gaze to the room around him, he suffered a mild discomfort in his neck. Reaching to coax the pain, he glimpsed a darkening wrinkled hand approaching the source of the pain. Obviously it was his hand—as it was one with the rest of his body—but its antique façade seemed unfamiliar. He was older now, he guessed. Older but not wiser. Returning to the investigation of his surroundings, a large form darkened his line of sight. It was the thief again. The same bloody time, every single morning. He may not be able to remember much, but how could anyone forget the notorious character of 'Not George', as he liked to refer to him.

"Good morning, Mr. Waters. Just the same routine as usual, place your thumb on the dotted line, please, and I will commence the memory download."

Handed a transparent tablet, George begrudgingly complied. He had no choice. Unfortunately, this imposter was the result of his hard-earned money, now thrown about frivolously by his ungrateful spawn. Equipped with the thief's circular device now attached to his temple, 'Not George' embarked on his daily attempts at small talk.

"What a handsome watch it still is," gesturing to the maroon time piece-adorning George's wrinkled wrist, "I remember the day we purchased it. That little shop in Monaco, wasn't it? I recall we complained about the scorching sun melting our gelato and almost ruining our new watch!"

George despised the way 'Not George' had the audacity to use the pronoun "we." It may be able to steal his memories and mimic his personality, but how dare it assume his right to reminisce! It was disturbing. It was as if George was staring into a reflective body, prepared to take any identity that would please its owners. In this case, himself. What is a human without their memories? Empty?

"Alrighty," his synthetic counterpart concluded, "We're done for today."

With that, 'Not George' removed himself from George's view of the window. As 'Not George' ventured back through the jungle of limbs and moaning sighs, George watched his reflection recede further and further away, disappearing into the distance.

George Waters was buried on the fifth day of July in the year 2028. Like many of his declining days, he was lonely in his final resting place with no visitors and no family members. His sole comrades became the few remaining insects that enjoyed sucking the nectar of his tulips that lay in a silver pot next to his grave. Eventually they too abandoned him, leaving him exposed to an unkind reality of dead flowers and a lonesome bed. Not even his legacy was there to comfort him with stories of his past and memories that he once longed for. That, along with all his worldly possessions, were swept away in a tide of 'Not Georges'.

EARLY MORNING MEMORIES

by Aidan Cook

The morning started with temperatures so low it was hard to crawl out of bed. The sky was still dark, and the wind howled with a ghostly whistle. Going outside—away from the warm, snow-covered cabin—was far from inviting. The small cabin was set deep in the forest surrounded by overhanging pines. Every branch bore a heavy load of fresh snow. The old truck outside was completely swallowed up. The buzz of an alarm clock on a cluttered night table cut through the quiet cabin.

The lights flickered on, illuminating a small kitchen. A dog bed in the corner lay empty. An old collar sat on the counter. The man who wandered over to the small coffee maker had a tired look on his face—his long hair tucked under a ball cap, his face unshaven.

The man inside the cabin was Randy Macdonald, a well-known name in these parts. Randy always stayed up in his old family cabin when the snow hit. He skied the hidden runs and mountain ridges others barely consider attempting.

Randy leaned on the counter. As he waited for the coffee to brew, his eyes fell on the snow outside. His small spark of excitement quickly suffocated when he noticed the collar beside him. He slowly picked the collar up from the counter and turned it through his fingers. The small tag read “Diesel.” The cabin felt particularly empty this morning. As he gathered himself, he hoped the snow would continue to fall, making the North Pass around Cook’s Bay accessible.

He knew that if he didn’t get out the door soon, he may not be alone today. The only human competition up this far was Jon McCormick. A new resident. Swelling with his parents’ money, Jon bought property up here. Randy hoped never to see Jon again.

The last time Jon and Randy crossed paths was the one memory he wished he could erase from his memory. Last season, on a day just like today, Randy and Diesel were hiking up the North Pass. Jon came up behind him on his sled. As he came near, they greeted each other with a nod.

“How far you fixin’ to go up this chute?” asked Jon.

“The snow’s a little shaky, we’re gunna head across this valley,” replied Randy, motioning in front of them. “I’d appreciate it if you gave us a bit of time to get out of the gully before you head on up.”

Jon gave a small nod as he closed his helmet.

To this day, Randy doesn’t know if Jon understood what he told him. All he had to do was wait for him and Diesel to make it up that hill. Jon took Randy’s best friend from him that day—buried him under six feet of snow after triggering a landslide while they were still climbing.

All he had to do was listen.

SILENCE

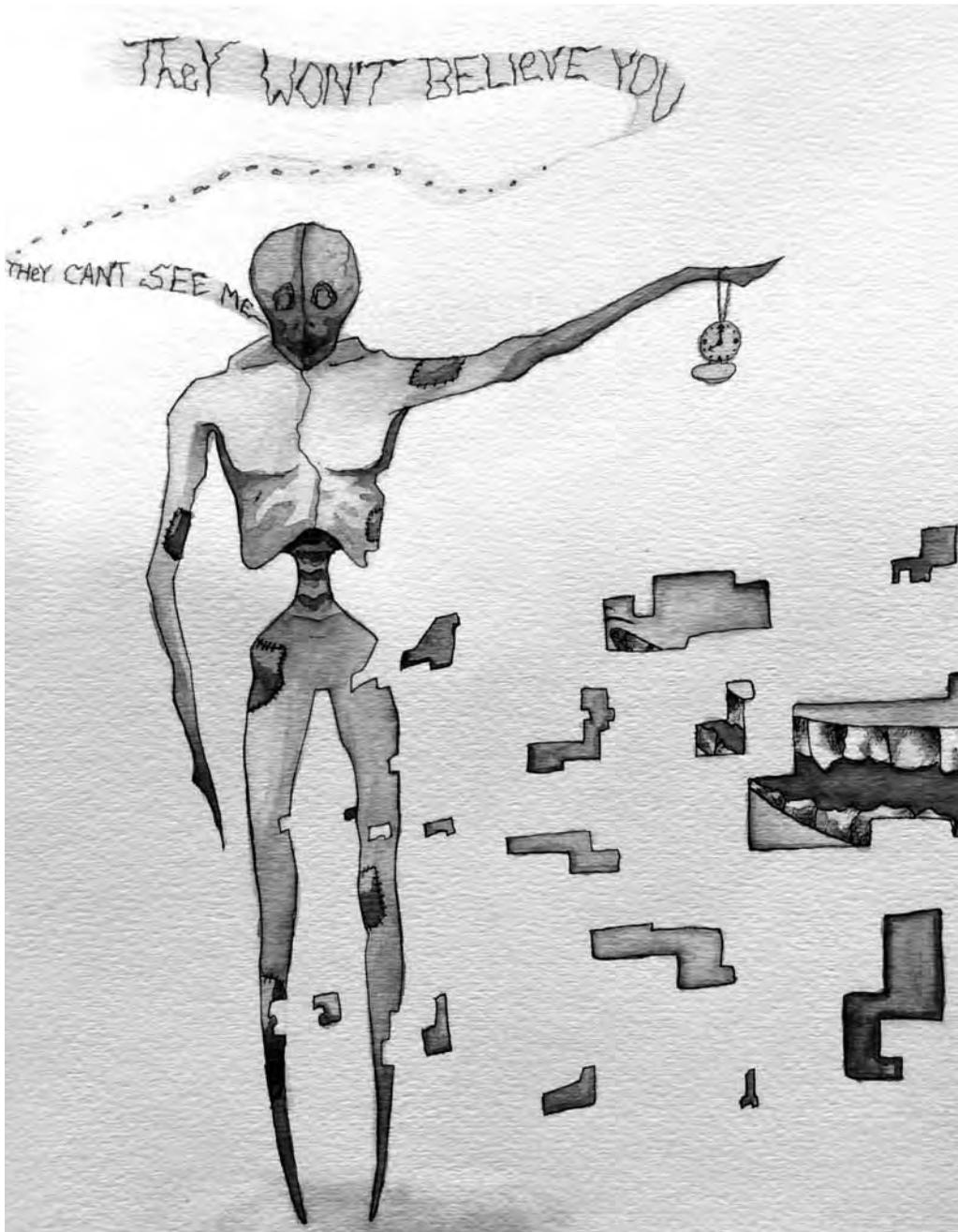
by Julianna Cook

Silence. Like so many things in this world,
Silence is hard to come by.
The need to fill the empty,
The need to talk
Stalks us until we speak for the sake of speaking.
Making believe that you have to justify yourself—
That actions are like empty signs hung on a wall...
Pointless.
That you will not be acknowledged if you sit
And don't speak.

But what if we all realized?
What if... in the midst of it all,
You became familiar.
Familiar with the empty,
Comfortable in the space—
Like mountains, sure of their place.
No need for speech,
Because it is not required.
They may wonder.
They may ask, "What's the matter?"
But the chatter
is just that.
Meaningless sound to make us more confident
In ourselves, with new friends,
Or, at long family gatherings, when the conversation is lost.

The speech is nice. Welcoming.
Beckoning us to speak up,
And this is not bad.
No, speech is not bad.
But instead of getting mad,
Try to get comfortable,
While your friends sit quietly.
Try to enjoy it.
Test out unknown waters.

You might just find
You need the peace of mind.
So take it.



artwork by Sydney Uglow, Grade 11

MY INNER MONSTER

by Anna Cumiskey

Our skin a reflecting surface
Opaque emotions hidden inside
Her blood pumps words of loving hate
Her constant shifts sync to the late tides

Her deep stare could fade emotions
Spirit absent in general words
Passing through the hallways concealed
Our lips silenced like the mockingbird

The fear only will grow stronger
Her aroma fuming vibrant pain
She is one you cannot hide from
Her pure existence drives most insane

She's settled inside of your brain
Constantly feeds on your doubts and fears
More she feeds the larger she grows
Consuming hope, encouraging tears

She fuels self-animosities
Mirroring ourselves to her desire
The ringleader in our circus
A wild Californian fire

We pray for a blurry mirror
We pray for a faultless reflection
But our image is her smile
She shows our distorted complexion

She will never leave us alone
She will turn happy thoughts into dread
She waits for us in the night
The eternal monster in our head

The silent killer of beauty
Yet she's the loudest voice in our minds
She's my atelophobia—
She's the sickness I can't leave behind

THE CROCODILE

by Anna Cumiskey

It was hot. The humid air caused a shortness of breath. The water was a greenish blue. Its foggy colour concealed the secrets that lay within its crystal surface. Many describe the jungle trees as beautiful, yet I was engrossed by the danger they stored. The jungle held many mysteries. The unknowingness of it all tickled my spine with a fearful sensation.

I shifted my attention to the river. The river itself was tranquil. Its length stretched far on each side. My canoe floated close to the left. My arms ached. My canoe was old and wilted. It was my father's canoe, when he took the journey I was originally supposed to embark on before I got so lost. It's been days since I've seen another human soul, yet I have hope. I, George Smithson, will follow my father and paddle down the Amazon River. I will explore the Amazon Jungle. I will survive.

The creak of my canoe interrupted my thoughts. The old boat did so occasionally. I shifted my head to the stern. Everything seemed to be intact. As I turned my head back to its original position, something caught my eye. Swiftly following my old, wilted canoe was a creature. A long-snouted, scaly, green creature. His eyes were stained red from the obvious hatred that consumed him.

As soon as our gaze touched, I was brought back. I was fourteen again. My father was leaving. He claimed he'd return in six weeks. He told me not to worry about him; there was nothing he couldn't handle in the Amazon Rainforest. He gave me a long hug and smiled. The next time I saw that smile was in the Obituary section of the newspaper. This very same crocodile could have bested him. The same crocodile that ruined his life. My chest felt empty. I must redeem my father.

Reality shifted into place. The animal was creeping closer to my old withered canoe. His smile stretched, revealing the daggers of teeth. I felt his glare on my back as I began to formulate a plan. I could no longer run from the fear that I pushed aside earlier. The familiar sensation crept up my spine once more. My body shaking, I began to paddle. I did not intend to follow my father's fate.

The soreness in my arms dissipated. I felt energy rush through my veins. I pushed my fear into the past. I must survive. Faster I paddled. The urge to look back at his cruel face was unavoidable. I glanced behind me. I expected to see the crocodile tailing my small canoe, but he was gone. A deep breath escaped my lungs.

"Did the beast swim away?" I mumbled. I stopped paddling. Once again, I was slowly floating down the Amazon River.

I turned my head toward the front of the boat and let out a yelp. The crocodile was laying on a rock, a mere five metres in front of my canoe. The only thing separating me from his

THE CROCODILE

by Anna Cumiskey

unforgiving grin was the crisp spring air. My harsh scream caught the crocodile's attention. I expected him to swim towards me in a blinding rage. I expected the vile creature to act just that, vile.

He sat there. He looked at me. He stared at me. He stared through me. He looked confused. He looked lost. He looked sad. He looked as I felt. His eyes, no longer stained red with hate, were instead a cloudy blue. Everything I thought I knew. The years I spent, tormenting myself over the death of my father. How I believed crocodiles to be ruthless. Yet he looked at me, as if asking if I needed help.

I thumped down and looked to the floor my canoe. The canoe creaked. I was more lost than I was before. I was going to die on this river. Not from the crocodile, not from the mysterious waters or the dark jungle, but from my own stupidity. The crocodile opened its long snout and yawned. He stared at me for a while, and then slid into the depths of the Amazon River once again.

An idea popped into my head, an idea unlikely of benefit. I picked up my worn paddle and began to stroke, following the creature that I once deeply feared. An hour past. My arms ached once more. The light energy that once flowed through my veins replaced with tar. I no longer looked at the scenery. I fixated on the sway of his long, green tail as he swam. The sky grew dull. My surroundings turned gray. The sleep my body desperately called for was withheld only by the now-constant creaking of my father's canoe. I could no longer see the sway of the crocodile's green tail, although my exhaustion tricked my mind in believing that he was still there. I was almost certain that I would not find help. I would sink to the depths of this river. I would rest with my father. I would become the crocodile. I would become truly lost.

CHESTER'S CHICKEN FARM

by Angelina D'Amico

As the nights grew longer and the temperature dropped a million degrees, I had no other choice but to scavenge my icy surroundings. I was starving. My tiny feet slid across the skating rink with no way to stop. Every passing moment, I gained speed, flying through the gigantic blades of grass. I came to a stop when my whiskers met the cold, wet ground. A long, white stick lay before me. Multiple replicas were scattered along the passage and the longer I layed petrified, the more bones seemed to appear.

Perched on the skyscrapers of the glade, dozens of piercing eyes loomed over me. Suddenly, a massive shadow soared through the pitch-black curtain draped over the night sky. The eagles' wings sliced through the grass, brewing a windstorm of chaos. I scrambled, regaining my balance. My tiny legs squirming around, trying to escape in any direction possible. Aside from the beating of my heart, no muscle would move. Its atrocious call of hunger buzzed in my ears, though soon the frigid air would be shattered. The hunter cocked his gun, a bullet tore through space, and silence fell upon us in its wake—giving me enough time to crawl into safety as the ground crumbled apart.

I lived in a broken-down barn with only a pile of hay to keep me warm. White patches materialized in the thick layer of dirt I lay in. Talons, sharp as kitchen utensils, punctured my stomach. I hollered in pain. Bones were stacked in a pile, camouflaged beneath the hay. In the distance, the birds circled intensely. I could no longer bear to hear them like this. As their cries grew louder, a swarm of flies flew in from every broken window of my prison. I quickly snatched up a few. Shortly after, I felt their wings brush against my intestines. Their sacrifice would give me the energy I needed to escape. The guards never left their post, although, for a brief moment in the night, everything would stop. You could hear a pin drop. I slept through the next few days like a rock, fueling my body for what comes next.

There was a slight humming in the cold night air as I awoke. My mind was a blur of possibilities. I could sense my precious time slowly slipping away. I could not waste another moment. I quickly ran out through a small hole in the rotting front entrance of the barn.

The moonlight danced in the ice. Everything was silent, as expected. I ran across the skating rink, no longer in search of food. I was scavenging for something different tonight. Stranded in the middle of the open field, soft yellow-orange lights flickered on the horizon. Focusing on the lights, I heard twigs snapping in the near distance. A gust of wind blew me off my stubby, rodent feet. We met eye to eye. The eagle's intimidating wings fluttered and its chest almost fell off its body. Its piercing eyes glared down on me furiously.

Without hesitation, I ran like a bullet, but its strong, muscular jaw wrapped easily around my scrawny neck. The king of the sky carried me high. We soared into the night sky, and only then did I realize I had been trapped in a ghost town. A huge sign hanging from a thread on top of the barn read "Chester's Chicken Farm, Sheffield Mills". The sound of clucking swallowed me into oblivion.

A REMNANT FROM THE LIFE OF ALEX I. THYMIA

by Melissa D'Amico

The colours surround. They inhabit and enlighten every living creature. Colour is their building block, the very fibres of their being iridescent. Their breath is an artist's palette, their souls a constant firework display. Their words are dipped in variegated ink, each one beautifully inscribed in the wind by a calligrapher's hand. They are colour. All they touch is bestowed with their vivacious life force, blending and creating and creating, chef d'œuvres and feelings and beings and understanding. Each one a kaleidoscope, their eyes prisms, and their very smiles sing, "Life".

The colours mock. They confuse and shroud, creating a shadow impossibly large, one that only eclipses me. My armour of greyscale, of which no colour could even long to caress. The colours, which I can know nothing of, which I can only watch from afar and hope to glean some, any, sort of understanding of. For I will never know colour. To paint blank sheets and bury myself in them is all I will ever know. I cannot stop. To take a break would mean to allow my black market paint to harden and colours to darken and paper to disintegrate. Duct tape covers my mouth. I claw at it desperately, frantically, but my fingers are but rubber knives hacking and hacking at the trunk of a sequoia, the beast, the titan, of the trees. I am bleeding, but nothing falls but ash and more ash and more ash until I am drowning in my own colour deprivation because I've run out of blank sheets. My paint has hardened, my paintbrush snapped. All I touch, all I am, is greyscale. I open my mouth, imploring, praying, pleading, for one taste of colour. To feel and understand the essence that surrounds and taunts my every atom. And I scream and I scream... but there is only more ash. And I am left alone in my universe of greyscale, incapable of even dreaming of what it is to be colour.

THE TAUNTING TRACKER

by Lukas Fleischmann

After travelling to Thailand, I finally arrived back in the land of the free. The airport was busy, the city busier and the motorways crammed. The hedonistic lifestyle of New York City at night was something I enjoyed: living without concerning oneself with what happened the next day—an easy but careless life, I thought—and the next day, one wakes up, still dressed in a suit, and the night before is forgotten. The parties in luxurious mansions, bigger than some apartment buildings in the inner cities with golden rooms and pools like the Romans had. We drank bottles of champagne which were worth more than what an average worker earned in a year and drove cars even the President would dream of.

But that all changed when I lost everything.

By God, I wasn't the only one who burnt his fingers on hot stocks, but not many lost as much as I did. Then I came to know the real New York City. The brokers turned their backs on me. My friends, with whom I celebrated a week earlier, forgot me. One month later, I slept on the street for the first time. Everywhere was dust, and I had breathing issues because of the smoke from the cars. That night, it started raining. I wandered in my water-soaked coat through this merciless city, the one I once loved. On every corner there were homeless people. Homeless from the repercussion of my former wealth.

I would never again get up there, so I knew I had to leave in order to be happy again, to run away from all this misery. In one hand I held a suitcase with my last belongings, in the other hand I held a map and a compass which didn't work. Don't get me wrong, it always pointed north, but it never helped me reaching my target. So I started to stroll, with every step further away from Wall Street the buildings were brighter, more colourful. Then I started walking faster and with every mile I walked the sky turned brighter. And finally I started running, running, running until I saw no sign of human civilization and I felt truly free.

I didn't know where I was but I was not lost. I filled a bottle I had in a small stream discovered by me which I called the golden river.

"My own river," I said, "all to myself."

But then I heard something, something that scared me for the first time in my life. A voice. It was unique, unlike any I've ever heard. It belonged to a girl, I was sure, but English was certainly not her mother tongue.

"I haven't seen anyone here in ages," the voice spoke. With a sharpened stick in my hand, I went into the woods, looking for the source of my fear. After an unsuccessful search, I went back to my river where I found her, a native girl with dark hair and brown skin. I've never seen one in the city. She was sitting next to my suitcase, throwing my last belongings through the air, looking for something to use.

THE TAUNTING TRACKER

by *Lukas Fleischmann*

“Get out of my stuff, you savage, it’s all I have left!” I shouted in anger. “And get away from my river!”

She stood there with a look of confusion. I insulted her, and said that she should stop acting like she didn’t understand a word I was saying. “I can hear you speaking, but what you are saying is stupid,” she said. “This is not your river, and this suitcase is certainly not the only thing you have left. You still have your arrogance, your ignorance, your greed....” I threw a stone at her before she could carry on with her slander.

“Selfish stranger, you are going to starve out here,” she carried on, “But I can help you, selfish stranger, all I want in return is one favour.”

Knowing that she was right I accepted the offer, but she didn’t want to tell me what the favour would be. We were walking alongside my river when, suddenly, the girl disappeared.

“You can’t trust these savages,” I thought to myself, and carried on running, then walking, then strolling.

I sat down next to a tree and almost fell asleep when she finally returned. She held berries and a dead rabbit in her hand. I shouted at her for leaving, but she ignored me and started making a fire. She used my last money to fuel the fire, and with it cooked a delicious-looking rabbit. That was the last time I criticized her, and actually started to appreciate her way of life in accordance to nature.

Everything about her was peaceful. I finally experienced happiness again. After a long time following the river, we arrived at the border of her tribe’s reservoir—a prison, essentially. Oh, the land of the free! Underneath her teepee, my river disappeared; the source of my river is under someone else’s tent!

I was even more shocked when I discovered that her home was crammed with books from Wittgenstein to Dickens. “Why are you surprised, selfish stranger?” she asked with a provoking voice. “You didn’t think that a savage like me could read, did you?” she carried on. I blushed, lowered my head and nodded, because she got it exactly right.

She then asked me for her favour. She told me that to understand her culture, I have to understand her language, and her language was dying. She wanted me to get her a printing press so she could publish a book about her dialect to preserve it, to preserve the way of life I’ve learned to love. She told me that, unfortunately, the elders did not support this, saying only speakers can preserve a language. And even though I wanted to, I couldn’t help my companion. All I could do was work with the girl, help her speak to important people, to negotiate with and detect when a businessman was not sincere. And that is what I did. I helped the taunting tracker to become a notorious negotiator. One day she left without saying a word.

THE TAUNTING TRACKER

by Lukas Fleischmann

I started working for her tribe—hunting, fishing and building different structures—but I never really became one of them. Maybe because of the lingual differences, maybe because of the vices I still carried from my former life.

Summer passed, then winter came, and summer passed and winter came again and again. Decades passed, and I became an old man when my compass suddenly started working. Not that it didn't point towards north before—it actually didn't anymore—but it pointed towards my goal. It pointed to a carriage with a huge magnetic apparatus on it. There was a woman sitting in the front. She jumped off her horse and ran towards me, hugging and kissing me. My tracker friend had achieved something I couldn't. She told me that she convinced many politicians of the importance of her cause, and that they bought her an old printing press. Right away the production of books began. It made a terrible noise, everywhere was smoke, the gears turned and turned and every few minutes a book was printed. The notorious negotiator gave me the first exemplar, and I started reading it right away, page for page.

I finally went to sleep—dreaming of the selfish stranger and the taunting tracker.



artwork by Ingrid Tai, Grade 12

RUNNING FROM HIS SNOW-WHITE EYES

by Celeste Frank

The floor was cold and damp, even with the sticky humidity of the air coming through the open window. I cleared the small wooden table in the corner of the hospital room. This was the first time in weeks the room hadn't been overflowing with patients. Since the Buddhists started the machete massacre and the military started opening fire on villages in Myanmar, the hospital had been overrun.

I looked out the window at the little piece of beauty that comes with the sunset. It felt like there hadn't been a piece of happiness in this hospital since I landed in Bangladesh. I'm always running here. Running to help a small boy with gunshot. Running to help stop an old, weak woman from bleeding out. There's always somewhere to be, someone to help.

There was a desperate need for people with medical knowledge to help with the patients at the Cox's Bazar Hospital. I'd just graduated from medical school and I wasn't ready to start an internship, so I came to Bangladesh to do what I could. In my time here, I've seen over three hundred and seventy thousand Muslims from Myanmar. Some whose houses were burned to the ground, leaving them completely scorched. Others who'd been hacked apart by machetes. They'd barely made it out of their home villages alive.

"No internship in Canada would have been like this," I mumbled under my breath as a bell went off through the hospital.

"Another wave," I yelled as I ran into the hallway to a medical cart.

There have been waves of people seeking refuge and medical attention every couple of hours for weeks now. I didn't know when I would go home; my two-week trip had turned into a one-way ticket. I couldn't imagine going home and leaving now, I just couldn't. They needed help, and lots of it.

As I thought this, an older woman—a nurse—ran passed me, knocking my shoulder violently. As she ran, she turned around and yelled at me to follow her. I did exactly as I was told. I've learned not to talk here, just listen and work. There is no time to talk. Time is too precious.

I ran down a small, cramped hallway covered in medical carts, injured patients everywhere. I couldn't help but feel sick to my stomach running passed them, just leaving them there. I followed the nurse through the plaster halls; I couldn't help thinking how tired she looked. I wondered if that's what I looked like? I wouldn't be surprised. I hadn't had a good night's sleep in days.

The nurse ran fast, and I struggled not to lose her in the swarm of people through the halls. As I ran, I heard babies crying, children screaming, and—worst of all—I heard people praying for the ones they lost, the ones we couldn't save. I pushed those thoughts out of my head while I ran.

RUNNING FROM HIS SNOW-WHITE EYES

by Celeste Frank

The nurse ran through a small doorway. I stopped at the door to see six young children huddled up in one small corner of the room with a man I assumed was their father. A run-down-looking woman held a small infant in her arms. The baby was wrapped in cloth, and it was easy to see he'd been badly burned in a fire. His burns weren't just visibly noticeable; the smell of his burnt flesh stuck to the air like fleas on a rat. Sadly, the infant wasn't the only one in need of serious attention. As I look at the other children, I could easily see they were severely malnourished and struggling with sickness. I look at the nurse I followed here. She looked back at me, sad and empty.

"Run to the kitchen and grab fruit and water for the children," I said as calmly as possible, feeling my voice choke, "then I want you to tell one of the head doctors that I'm starting an examination of the infant. I want to see what the extent of his injuries are, but I need a doctor now." She nodded blindly, tears in her eyes, and ran to do as she was told.

I worked fast as I examined the little baby boy. His mother, Khurshida Begum, said the small boy's name was Rohingya. I sat with Khurshida when the doctor came, and she told me how everything had been such a panic once the military started to shoot. They'd forgotten Rohingya was asleep. Her husband had gone back in to get him, but he'd already been severely hurt. She told me about her son's eyes. How they were almost whiter than snow after the fire, and how they seemed to seal shut. When I examined him, he had third-degree burns covering open skin. He'd been slashed with machetes and had minor gunshot wounds. I wasn't surprised that his eyes were sealed shut after that. That thirteen-month-old baby had undergone so much trauma..., none of it was minor.

I was assigned to overnight care for Rohingya, but the second I stepped out of that room I broke down. The tears were hot on my hands as I wiped them away and ran towards the night care table. Anyone would've cried looking at that boy; he'd gone through the worst of genocide and survived.

That night, when I sat by his bed to monitor him, I prayed. I'd never much believed in God since I stepped foot in this hospital, but that night I thanked God a million times for saving that boy. I prayed until I could barely speak for that boy to live. I listened to the wind blowing against the window bars; it seemed like the settling sound of music. I closed my eyes to listen.

I heard a small grunt-like noise, one unlike the wind. It was faint, but it was there. I looked down at Rohingya, and his eyes fluttered open. For a brief second, all I could do was stare into those little snow-white eyes. And then I ran. Ran to get someone, anyone that could keep that small boy alive.

Inspired by: Kitwood, Dan. "Rohingya tales of terror emerge from Bangladeshi hospital wards." *The Globe and Mail*, 13 Sept. 2017.

EVANGELINE'S ROSES

by Vanessa Gardner

The stillness of the night hung heavy on a matte-black canvas, lit only by a crescent moon. The courtyard was quiet amidst the tangle of ivy along the stone wall, which held memories from an earlier time. Exquisite trees majestically lined the cobblestone roads; roads that were well acquainted with civilians and soldiers alike.

Evangeline sat warmly wrapped in a cashmere shawl on the balcony, taking in the fresh spring air, while imaging her own canvas coming to life with the simple brushstrokes of a young, uninhibited artist. Growing up in a small village, Evangeline dreamt of the places she would go, people she would meet, and paintings she would complete. Her father often referred to her as dreamer, but Evangeline paid no attention. Instead, she immersed herself in every opportunity that would bring her closer to what soothed her soul.

Deep in her heart, Evangeline knew that she was like her mother. She spent countless hours outdoors, surrounded by the beauty of nature and all the colours and textures it possessed. It was a candy shop for an artist. She certainly did not share the traits of her father—who proudly provided, but knew little of the nurturing required to raise a daughter. She longed to know who her mother was, and yet it was never discussed.

One afternoon, as the weather turned and the dark, ominous sky threatened to open up, Evangeline took cover in her father's workshop behind the rose garden. She had always wondered why her father had planted that beautiful garden so far from the house. Evangeline knew that her father forbid her to go in his workshop; however, given the storm, she had no choice. The wind whistled as it picked up debris from the ground, hurling it at the side of the shed. Realizing that it was not letting up, Evangeline decided to sit down and take out a piece of her damp paper and sketch.

Suddenly, a clap of thunder startled Evangeline, causing her to jump back as she struck the cabinet door. It opened. Staring her in the face was an easel and paint palette with the name "Audrey" engraved on the side. Unable to breathe, Evangeline slowly lifted out the easel, uncovering what looked to be a door. Her heart quickened as she turned the handle and carefully eased the door open. There was just enough room for her to squeeze through. On the other side was a small room filled with paintings of every size. Evangeline's eyes grew wide. At that moment, she knew who her mother was.

The question remained, why was this treasure trove of artistry kept from her? For now, she would put these thoughts aside and concentrate on the beauty she had unveiled. Her eyes, hungry with the desire to take in every painting, caught sight of one particular piece: a small painting of a young child. As Evangeline carefully picked up the painting and dusted the frame, she heard the outer door open and her father call her name.

"Evangeline? Is it you in there?"

Frantically trying to hide with the painting in hand, Evangeline noticed a piece of paper slip

EVANGELINE'S ROSES

by Vanessa Gardner

from behind the frame. At the top, it said: "To my darling daughter Evangeline, may you spend your days creating in this space and looking out at the rose garden, which is a reflection of my love for you."

Overcome with grief and joy, Evangeline stepped out from the hidden room and met her father's eyes.



artwork by Maya Dhanjal, Grade 12

WHY OLD PEOPLE ARE THE BEST FRIENDS A GUY COULD EVER HAVE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

by Monty Gole

From Snapchat to Facebook, social media has proven to be one of the most influential technological innovations of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. As a 17-year-old, I can say that I am a part of the generation that—society says—social media is meant for. But what if society is wrong?

Old people have a bad rap for being dumb and useless, but I beg to differ. The older people are, the more experience they acquire, the wiser they become. Even a 59-year-old carny is much smarter than, say, a 29-year-old with two PhDs. The fifty-nine-year-old has spent his life learning through different cultural experiences. He has seen and done some amazing things. He went to Richmond Hill one summer and saw two floating cadavers in the motel pool. He once rode a bus to Detroit. The 29-year-old, on the other hand, has spent the last seven years of his life thinking about two things.

On social media, young people show their most personal experiences to give you a glimpse into their lives. But posting a couple of pictures with your dog (who'll die soon) does not compare to old people "accidentally" posting how to treat chronic hemorrhoids on their Facebook feeds. The ambition of our elderly on social media is that of Elon Musk off his Adderall. Have you ever witnessed a grandmother trying to livestream her grandson's soccer game on Facebook, watching—the entire time—as the camera points directly in her face? It is a testament to how far humans have come, and how our elderly truly are our god-like counterparts.

Probably one of the greatest times to have old people as your friends on Facebook is on your birthday. They're kind enough to give you constructive feedback on the anniversary of your birth by pointing out "how you should get your life back on track, and ditch your pain-in-the-neck husband" or how "you look like a hooker in that outfit." Your young friends, conversely, will spew nonsense like "I'm so happy we're friends, \$100 coming your way birthday girl!" or "I love you and know we'll always be friends. Happy Birthday!"

Do you use Instagram? I certainly do, and although it's mainly targeted towards the younger population, old people uniquely use this social media app. While most teenagers are busy posting selfies or pictures of their friends, the elderly of Instagram know how to make the best use out of any photo on their camera roll. They can take what at first seems to be a blurry photo, but when examined more closely, is an obvious recreation of Jackson Pollock's masterpiece, *No. 5, 1948*.

How about Snapchat? This is easily the most youthful social media tool today, but the aged users are the true power brokers of the Chat. Normally, the average Snapchatter will keep up their streaks and send some heavily filtered pictures to their crushes. An elderly user, on the other hand, will send extremely interesting articles about conspiracy theories on the discover page, or perhaps even a heartwarming video of themselves calling out minorities—showing their true, infinitely saturated personalities.

The elderly are global treasures when it comes to social media—not only for truly letting people into their personal lives, but also by highlighting their amazing artistry and intelligence through these platforms. So the next time you decline your grandparents' friend request just remember that—like a good wine—tweets get better with age.

 BALLAD OF A NEWBIE DEBATER

by Peter He

Apollo's wheels raced across the thick air,
 Illuminating dreams beneath his head.
 My phone's buzz echoed between brick walls,
 Feeling fatigued, I crawled out of bed.

With heavy steps, I trudged toward the van,
 And waited for our teacher, Mr. Kupsch.
 Yet, the more I approached the blue van,
 The more I wanted to hide behind a bush.

My backpack felt a weight that dragged me down,
 Yet nothing but scratch notes were filled inside.
 Though I wasn't dressed in chunky outfits,
 Sweating hard as I shut the door behind.

The cloudy sky looked even gloomier.
 Engine started, I began my journey.
 Blood pumping through my veins, heart pounding hard,
 Fading away my hope for the tourney.

To win? O what a ridiculous thought!
 May poor Duncan's strong horses rear and bite!
 Time elapsed as an arrow takes to flight,
 And the castle gazed down from its great height.

The stone fortress gaped its gigantic mouth,
 With racing mind, I soon was held inside.
 Statues painted in black-and-white abound;
 The halls echoed the rules one must abide.

Hauling my body to the debate room,
 I rested myself on a cactus chair.
 Beside me, my partner sat calm and cool;
 Across, three judges with threatening air.

The room was silent and the air was still.
 Swiftly, Adran, his notes he placed around.
 Mountains of sheets stacked on opponents' side,
 On which, not a single blank space was found.

The timekeeper's click opened the dam's gate,
 And I was soon submerged in floods of words;
 The flooding tides stroked me with such strong force
 That I was overwhelmed and thrown o'erboard.

Contents o'erflowed profusely from the dam's gate,
 Overcame all that with proficiency.
 There wasn't anything that I could do,
 But hope they show a sliver of mercy.

The timekeeper struck her magical watch,
 And this time she reversed the direction.
 Mixtures of evidences poured out from
 Our side, giving damaged restoration.

The fluctuating tide, it rose and ebbed—
 A back and forth, my jaws hung wide open.
 And, when Adran sat down, I tapped his arm,
 "Great job," I gushed, "you've just crushed them!"

Equipment was prepared, and space was cleared.
 In the centre, attracting attention,
 A narrow rocket stood a-counting down,
 A mission paid with tremendous burden.

The command centre issued the order,
 I blasted off to a realm of unknown.
 Little did I know about the hardships,
 But trusted Adran, who cautioned: "Don't groan."

Unyielding gravity dragging me back,
 Intolerable heat burning my shell.
 Unbroken atmosphere waiting ahead,
 Never had I travelled through such a hell.

I struggled and kicked, clenching my hard fists,
 The question session was a huge success;
 No gravity or heat to oppress me,
 And 'twas my chance to keep up without rest.

BALLAD OF A NEWBIE DEBATER

by Peter He

The first round was a great accomplishment:
One small step for debater, and one leap
In his career. The judges gave comments,
And we left—like Darth Vader—in a bleep.

I swung my backpack onto my shoulders,
Which had never been so light or comfy.
I floated out the room, took a deep breath,
Pulled out my phone, and captured a selfie.

Beams of sunrays raced past the clear window,
Penetrating the thick, opaque curtain.
Their fingertips tapped lightly on my face,
Making me feel warm, assured, and certain.

I strode along the hall, in a pace so brisk,
Thrusted the door aside and sunk in my
Cozy chair. Agilely, I spread my notes,
Adjusted my posture, and fixed my tie.

When the judges ordered the launch command,
Tonnes of words flow quickly and with such ease
Elevating our logics forcefully,
Not granting the time for opponents to flee.

My partner gaped at me with widened eyes,
Watching my volcano's bursting fury
Of words, while the other side recorded
Like a court reporter in a hurry.

I sat back down, my partner grinned at me,
And said, "O man! That was crushing and shrewd."
I thanked my partner for his praise, and said,
"Don't worry, you'll be as good as me, dude!"

MAMA'S HELPER, PAPA'S LITTLE GIRL

by Michelle Joe-Ezigbo

Silence crept in like cracks in the waters of a frozen pond. The *wee-woos* of the police cars drowned out the screams of the audience that had gathered. Actually, it didn't sound like there were many screams. It was more like everyone had come together to form a choir of pain. I looked over at the spot where my lifeless, motionless body now lay. A pool of crimson surrounded me. My blood didn't gush out in a constant flow, but rather in time as the heavy beating of my heart slowed to a minute tap. The red against my brown skin was actually quite calming. One might say soothing. A psychopath might say beautiful. Am I a psychopath? Yes? No? Maybe. The man with the blue eyes and kind face still had his gun pointed at me. I walked over to him but I couldn't feel the ground against my feet. Weird.

I'll take you back. Back to before. I'd woken up that morning in my little, dainty room to the smell of freshly-baked bread that attacked my nose and the sounds of crispy bacon popping against burning oil. If I tried hard enough, I could sniff out the deep, dark smell of Papa's coffee which he never drank without sugar. It tasted disappointing, if I must say. Mama said to go get some eggs so we could all sit together and have a big breakfast. We hadn't done that for a long time. Papa always had work. Mama made sure I didn't wear dark clothes. Mama made sure my hands were visible. But Mama can't make people not hate me.

I skipped along to the store, a song in my heart and a dance in my step. A smile played on my lips. Mama had promised I could help cook. I thought of Papa and how he would swing me in the air when he tasted my meal. I was lost in thought when the car pulled up. The blue man stepped out. He seemed alarmed, but I couldn't understand why. I saw his kind eyes and his lips move. His words didn't quite register, and I was made to ask, "What can I do for you?" I didn't understand why he yelled. I only wanted to explain. I just wanted to show him the money, to explain about the eggs. To show my hands as Mama said to. I thought he'd be glad to hear I was Mama's helper and Papa's good little girl.

I stepped towards him to explain, and then I felt it. The pain. The blue man's kind eyes turned hard. There were loud yells and louder pops. Were those the cracks of eggs? No, I hadn't bought them yet. And the pain? I didn't know which hurt more. The pain from the crimson tide flowing from my side, or the pain of imagining Mama and Papa's broken hearts. Numbness. I slowly slid to the ground. His eyes turned kind again, a last-minute, way-too-late realization of his mistake. A split second where, above ingrained hate, he saw me simply as a girl. Someone's child. A human, like him. Vision and clarity one moment too late.

I walked towards him and slowly caressed his face. A slow, tingling and burning sensation raced through me. It felt as though the devil came out and licked my back seductively before retreating to its fiery home. I slowly realized that I didn't feel hate or anger for this man for taking something precious from my Papa and Mama. I felt sadness. He was a man no different from any other that makes mistakes. How much more ironic could it be that I pity my murderer?

RAIN AND FIRE

by Ashley Johnson

Dark, cold air wrapped around my already shivering body as I looked to the darkening sky. Black clouds swarmed as large, wet drops fell. I leaned my head back and embraced the rain. I loved it. The rain, though cold, always reminds me that new, amazing flowers grow after storms. Rainy days feed colourful ones filled with nature. I had not felt rain in what seemed like forever. The dry summer drained the beautiful colours, but today that all changed. Today, the rain would fix that.

“Want an umbrella?” A shadow emerged from behind the door to my house. The form quickly took the shape of the blond boy I’d seen earlier. His bright, blue eyes and yellow hair perfectly contrasted my dark features. He had just moved into the neighbourhood, and I’d never taken much notice to him. His name might have been Brenden or Brandon or something, I’m not sure.

“In a minute,” I replied, with my head still towards the sky. The umbrella was a beautiful, vibrant, golden colour, which stood out nicely in the dark. I turned to face him as he opened the umbrella and stood beside me.

“This is the best kind of weather,” the boy said. My eyes quickly widened as I stared at him.

“No one else seems to think so.”

“It’s like fire, we need it to clear the dead wood and make room for newer, more beautiful things to grow.”

“Um... sure,” I said slowly. I did not agree. I thought the destructive force of fire was different from the nurturing force of water. Sure, he was right in saying how fires can be beneficial, but the ways his eyes narrowed and lips curled made me feel uncomfortable—like his meaning was different.

I went back inside. I sat in silence by the window and continued to watch the water flow down. The water created pathways down the glass: it spilt up, then joined again before colliding with a bigger drop and continuing its way down. I could feel my heart slowing as I watched. I zoned out for a bit.

“Oh no, you don’t!” my mother’s shout of joy, as she played with my younger brother, jolted me back to the present. I only then realized the boy had not left the front lawn.

“Mom! Dad!” I yelled, my voice shaking. I had just spotted something that made my stomach turn. All the colour drained from my face as I watched him. He was standing there as if nothing was wrong, but everything was. His face illuminated with an orange glow. I had always felt safe from fire in the rain, but not today. As long as there was fuel, fire burned, and it did. The boy with blond hair had just set fire to a dry tree in front of our house, and he was intent on helping it grow.

LIFE IN THE CLOUDS

by Hamza Kara

Clouds carry the weight of my life. Thick and looming, they caress my every move. How could they ever let me fall? As I stare out the foggy plane window, my thoughts drift toward the comfort of the sky. I am floating on my back, staring into the vastness—taking comfort in knowing I will not be the victim of calamities befalling the earth below. Not anymore. It is better to be closer to paradise, further from the hell below.

“So please,” I find myself saying aloud, “can we stay up here forever?”

Ali glances at me with a frisson of surprise. “Abou, I want to land in Canada now. My tummy hurts.” Although the anxiety of what lies before us circle endlessly—like a broken record playing the deep grooves of my mind—I will never let it show.

“Ya hayati, we will be landing in an hour. Let me rub your tummy,” I said.

I am Masar. My mother named me after my grandfather, who was the pillar of our family. Masar means “guidance to the right path”. My grandfather never wavered in his ability to illuminate our family’s direction, so that we could achieve harmony, unity and prosperity. I only realized the value of my name when the path my family was on took a sharp bend that led into the dark depths of war. It was I who had to guide my family out of no man’s land; out of the shrapnel and rubble.

I looked down at my coarse, callused hands. My wife used to call them “beautiful surgeon’s hands.” What I wouldn’t give to hear her say that again. I lost her in a bombing in Aleppo. She was going to the market to buy groceries, but leaving our house was like a game of Russian roulette, and the bullet....

What these hands have not endured in my search for asylum. I scrubbed the steps of a sympathetic grocer’s store in our camp in the outskirts of Istanbul, just to feed the mouths of my two children. I remember my wife’s words when she said that “dignity is not an external quality, it comes from within.” Every painful scrub was worth getting to where I am now.

The flight attendant awakened me from my trance—she kept repeating a phrase I couldn’t grasp at first. I was at a complete loss, until she pointed to Ali and Noor’s unfastened seatbelts. They were both fast asleep.

The plane began to tremble. I spiraled back to the explosions of the past—all those I lost through the never-ending turbulence, one so powerful it shook an entire nation. If only the solution was as easy as fastening a seatbelt.

As the plane prepared to descend, I once again reminisced about our home in Aleppo...

LIFE IN THE CLOUDS

by Hamza Kara

...the ambrosial aroma of fresh dough as it meets the scalding walls of the stone oven as my mother hums a sweet tune:

*Hey, you, who are going to Aleppo, my love went with you.
Hey, you, who are carrying grapes—and on top of that—apples.
Everyone is with their beloved, and my beloved has gone,
Oh lord, may the breeze bring my lover back to me....*



artwork by Parand Pourakbarian, Grade 11

INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES

by Anna Knyazyan, Moscow

“Innovation is the ability to see change as an opportunity, not a threat.”
–Steve Jobs

Intellect, ambition and creativity. These words characterize science and technology today. Fundamental new discoveries are called “innovative technologies” or simply “innovations.” In today’s world, this fashionable word is heard everywhere. But did innovation not exist before? Did it first appear in the 21st century? Obviously not, though it used to be called technical progress. I’ve personally become interested in the history of innovations in a variety of fields—starting from art, through to science and psychology, and finally arriving at ICT and robotics.

Every day, robotics improves and becomes better and better. The priority for engineers is to teach robots to quickly walk and even run without losing balance. The robot Kassi, designed by engineers from Ability Robotics, possesses all these qualities. Kassi moves quickly while keeping one-hundred-percent balance because of his impressive design. He only has legs and torso. The gait of Kassi resembles that of an ostrich. Kassi can perform courier deliveries and rescue assistance. Thanks to his ability to keep his balance Kassi will become indispensable in the future by transporting necessary supplies to people suffering from natural disasters.

Technical progress is not only happening in robotics. Due to the achievements in the studies of ribonucleic acids, it has become possible to create drugs based on RNA. These new-generation medicines can dilute the naturally occurring protein in large quantities, reproducing natural conditions of the body. A number of private firms have established that they will soon create RNA medications and treatments.

In the modern world, we learn about inventions, write to a doctor, or communicate with people via the Internet. The Internet unites people. I want to communicate with people from other countries—learn about different cultures and lifestyles—but I get scared, because I don’t understand other languages. Suddenly I was struck by Microsoft Skype Translator, which first appeared on Windows in 2015. It allows one to talk anywhere with anyone, regardless of native language. Within a conversation, I can get an answer to my questions in eight languages in sound form and fifty in text form.

True, it is better to communicate with people by travelling the world rather than through the Internet, but not everyone can afford this luxury. Thus, the many applications for couch-surfing are far-reaching with limitless potential. Think of the new applications for the LGBT community, for example. This takes the possibilities in a completely new direction, which is rapidly gaining popularity by connecting the community worldwide. One such application is Wimlify, a new but very interesting LGBT application. Rather than couch-surfing through Airbnb and Grindr, this service allows one to travel and save through LGBT people all over the world. Just imagine: you can live in an LGBT-friendly attic in Soho, a room in New York, or a cozy apartment in Vancouver.

INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES

by Anna Knyazyan, Moscow

Now I will move on to another field—psychology. We will get acquainted with one of the greatest discoveries in the field of psychology: the collective unconscious. The crowd lives its own life, it moves like a single organism. Each of us thinks that the crowd is different. The most difficult thing to understand is that we are also part of the crowd. We make our own choice, but too often we take someone else's opinion for our own, even if this opinion is completely absurd. The collective unconscious is mysterious. It is expressed through a variety of forms, such as dreams, myths, and premonitions. As the sages said: "All the answers are in you!"

The term was first introduced by Carl Gustav Jung in 1916. The concept assumes that man is the bearer of the general experience of the development of mankind as a whole. The collective unconscious is transmitted through brain structures and is the deepest layer of the psyche. We could talk about the ramifications of this psychological innovation for hours.

In my essay, I talked about innovations in many aspects of practical life, but one should never forget the spiritual. Even in art, there is innovation. New and essential discoveries in the field of art should consider styles in literature, painting, and cinema.

Take surrealism, for example. This is a modernist trend, originated in France in the 1920s. Surrealism greatly influenced Western culture. This style fascinates me. It is characterized by something bizarre, unusual, not corresponding to generally accepted standards. There are many paintings in the style of surrealism, but only some of them amaze me to the core. I like Salvador Dali's *The Memory Permanence*, Paul Delvaux's *Sleeping Venus*, René Magritte's *Son of Man*. In these paintings, the audience considers conflict between the hidden visible and the visible.

Discoveries prove that the world does not stand still; it is constantly changing and finding new ways to develop. Innovation predetermines our future. I hope that people will start to see a happy future in innovation rather than a threat. I want to believe that discoveries and inventions will be benefit every person on the planet.

I just want to believe.

FAMILIAR FACES

by Hillary Krofchak

Mia sat shivering on the floor in the corner of Room 222. The room itself wasn't cold, but sometimes fits of panic would cause uncontrollable shaking. She wished her mother were there, imagining her face and soft embrace. Safety and home. But thinking of her mother also reminded her of how she lost her, causing the shaking to increase. A tightness in her chest, the inability to breathe, made her feel small and helpless. Mia was sick of feeling this way.

The nurse came in to check on the little one every hour. He had been burnt in his own home, just a short distance from her own—and yet, still one of the lucky ones. This time, however, she was here to make sure everyone came down for dinner.

"Mia, sweetheart, what are you doing in the corner? Come now, it's dinner time, aren't you hungry?" the nurse asked softly. She carefully approached Mia in her corner of solitude. "Are you having another panic attack?"

Mia didn't speak, she didn't usually. Her neighbours said she used to be very talkative—so hyper she would bounce off the walls. Now, looking at her like this, an eight-year-old girl having a panic attack on the floor, the nurse was overwhelmed with sympathy.

Closing the distance between them, she knelt next to her and began to rub her back.

"Shh... sweetie, it's okay, you're safe here. It's going to be okay."

The sentiment was sweet, but a feeling in the pit of Mia's stomach made her feel unsure. Could it ever really be okay? Where was she to go from there? Would anything ever be okay again? So many questions without answers. Instability mixed with fear—and yet, in the moment, with the soothing motion of the nurse's hand on her back and the calm words and whispers, she felt better. Even if just a little.

"Do you want to talk about it? I'm here, I'm right here." The nurse pulled out a tissue and began wiping away the tears on Mia's face. "I know it may not seem like it right now, but it gets better." She reached over to the bed and grabbed a stuffed animal—a frog that had been given to Mia when she had arrived at the hospital—and gave it to her to hold. Her attempt earned an almost-smile from the child as she clutched it to her chest. They moved in unison to the bed. The nurse grabbed the blanket and wrapped it around her, adding an extra layer of comfort. For the moment, dinner could wait.

"Today is my birthday," said Mia, and a sentence that should have been filled with joy coming from a child's mouth was filled with melancholy and despondence. "My Mama used to make me a cake for my birthday. She did that for all of my brothers and sisters. She said birthdays were supposed to be special. I love my mama, I loved her..." she trailed off. She was trying to stop herself from crying.

FAMILIAR FACES

by Hillary Krofchak

"I remember when the men came, knives and machetes. Why? I don't understand why." Her voice cracked and the tears began to flow again and the nurse pulled her closer. All she could offer was a shoulder to cry on.

"I was helping Mama with the laundry. We were hanging the clothes on the clothesline. Then we heard screaming, Papa telling us to run, and we could see the fires burning. Houses and barns were on fire. I was scared. I didn't know what to do. I heard... noises."

"What kind of noises?" The nurse prompted. Still holding her closely, she continued to rub her back and rock back and forth, in an attempt to console the inconsolable.

"I don't think I will ever see my mama and papa again," she said defeated. She didn't need to describe the noises for the nurse to understand her meaning. "All I did was run! I didn't even look back, I hid in the woods like a scaredy-cat. I should have done something! I don't know where my brothers are. I am scared the men will come back and I'll be killed this time." A new wave of tears fell down her cheeks. Her face red and blotchy, eyes bloodshot.

The feeling of loss and helplessness hung in the air. The nurse had no idea what to say. What do you say to a small child who has lost everything in the span of a week? But Mia held the blanket closer and wiped her tears. She turned to the nurse and hugged her. She began to sob uncontrollably now. But in the gesture she made it clear: she didn't need to say anything. They held each other for what felt like forever, when a noise suddenly shattered the silence.

Boisterous laughter permeated the room, although distant.

"Sounds like it's coming from the dining room. Want to go check it out?" She wiped the tears from her face and a new determination consumed her. She was sick of crying. Maybe whatever made that voice so happy would be a welcome distraction. Holding the nurse's hand, Mia made her way to the end of the hall, where most meals took place.

The hospital usually had a somber air about it, neither cold nor warm, but with dull colours that gave the illusion of ice. Near the end of the hall, Mia could see the tables—illuminated with candles, giving a soft glow and warmth to the room. There stood the other survivors from her community. Her neighbour, a distant cousin, a playground friend, the baker. In the centre of the table sat a cake. It was small, lopsided, and—in a way—almost sad. But Mia knew that it was for her. Looking at the people around the table, she saw smiling faces, familiar faces. New and old faces all sending one message. Looking up to the nurse, she saw a new friend. Suddenly, Mia didn't feel so alone.

APPEARANCE

by Victor Liu

She had a look to die for.

-

The symmetrical evenness of her face.

The unflawed curve of her smile.

The perfect shape of her body.

The ideal bridge of her nose.

The styled stare of her eyes.

-

But her façade is stupendous.

-

Watch.

The way she exercises until her bones ache.

Watch.

The way she avoids eating all day,

A miserable frown as her stomach gnaws.

Watch.

The way she is entranced by the numbers on the scale.

Watch.

The way she holds her hair back,

Gagging into the toilet,

She was finally *perfect*.



artwork by Victoria Sharpe, Grade 12

OBASI

by Daniel Mason

The scorching-hot sun beat down upon the village of Kisumu. The beads of sweat dripping off young Obasi's tanned face resembled the rain on a stormy night in the Amazon Rainforest. Alas, he kept walking. The weight of the load dug deep into his coarse skin as he made the daily four-hour trek home. When he finally arrived, he felt a piercing pain in his left hand. The cut from last day's trek reopened itself, revealing a velvety flow of his dark-red blood.

Later that night, Obasi woke up to booming thunder. The rain splashed down loudly upon the outside of his family's one-room hut. He slowly stood up and walked into its centre. He noticed a slow drip of water coming in through the roof. He walked to the kitchen area to grab the plastic bowl. It only rains once or twice a year in Kisumu, but everyone takes advantage—it's the only time to collect the clean, fresh water. The rain came harder now, pinging off the tin roofs of all the huts in the area. It was soothing. Not only to hear the rain, but to hear the soft, rasping breaths of his parents and six brothers and sisters.

The moist air wafted into the house. It was a strange smell. The smell of moist dirt and grass mixed with the warm air to create a scent that only warm climates have. Obasi walked over to the now half-full bowl of water, picked some up in his hands, and took a sip. He had not had a taste like this in months. The warm, tasteless water felt good on his calloused throat, especially considering the few instances of tasting clean water in his entire life. He was careful not to wake his family. This moment was very special for him.

In the morning, Obasi awoke to a coarse, bony hand on his head. It was his mother. He jumped when he heard the playful screams of his six younger siblings, crying and screaming like little demons. The air was crisp after a long night of rain. His mother's thick curls tangled in its humidity. She smiled at him and he smiled back, his hands clammy from having touched the water the night before—water he now craved. Obasi got up, smiled at his mother, and commenced the four-hour trek to collect the sustenance of life. Water.

Obasi trudged through the thick sand and mud. When he finally reached the watering hole, he waded in, deep past his knees, to retrieve the cleanest possible water. Obasi was experienced in this. He staggered a couple times, trying to get his footing. The bottom of the hole was filled with mud. If he stirred too much, he would disrupt the entire hole. He kept his cool as he retrieved the water. He filled two pails. When they were full, he climbed out of the hole, placed one down, and hoisted one on to his head. He staggered again with the immense weight of the pail. He groaned as he picked up the other and marched home. He knew he couldn't do this tedious task much longer.

The next day, Obasi again went to get water. He didn't come back. His mother worried. He did not return the next day, or the day after. But his mother waited patiently for him.

DUALITY

by Samantha McDougall

Logically thinking minds alone will fail
Electing the head guide instead of heart
Without the journey through an artistic tale

Fork in the road, under the sizzling sun, a choice must trail
One, that is wise, analyzes how to conquer this part
Logically thinking minds alone will fail

One must risk the sharp, piercing thorns of a rose to prevail
Alike one's methodical life, missing the gamble of art
Without the journey through an artistic tale

Problem-solving without creativity forces some to bail
Though some may consider rationalizing as smart
Logically thinking minds alone will fail

Imaginative souls have a smooth, sparkling sail
While rational ships remain at the start
Without the journey through an artistic tale

Those with dual-minds find the Holy Grail
Bringing caution to confident abilities, to outsmart
Logically thinking minds. Alone, will fail
Without the journey through an artistic tale.

MY TREE

by Scott McLeod

This tree, its bark melting away like butter on a hot summer's day,
Its life, snatched from its very arms... Oh, why did Mother Nature take such a wonder away?
Holes riddle its body, like a soldier fallen in action
It once stood tall and proud. Now, a silenced infraction.

It witnessed time pass by; however, it stayed stationary.
Shaken by life's advancements, it became wary.
Roots began to cripple, and heaven began to call...
What once stood so tall must eventually fall.

Life thrived within its grasp,
Its tight grip on nature, sadly, began to unclasp.
It, among many alike, was not fazed by the dark or gray,
But it knew its time would come one day.

As it fell, a certain part of us fell with it.
Its heart, once lit by purity, was now lifeless and split.
Time once again passed, its corpse was once again stationery
While snow landed inside a large cavity, where once there lay a heart.

As I sat beside its lifeless body,
I admired the fallen soldier that laid before me.
As I touched its bark
I, too alike itself, was also torn apart.

I found this tree was quite similar to us,
It endured and struggled without fuss.
But then, eventually, it was pushed and—in a form—ambushed.
Ambushed by the weight of life, too soon pushed to the afterlife,
And now it lay on the snowy ground, unshaken, without frown.

A NOT-SO-ORDINARY DAY

by *Michaela Morra*

It started out an ordinary day at Police Precinct 18. Officers were swamped, running back and forth from disorganized desks, shuffling papers and talking loudly into cell phones. Detective Sarah Mianda was the official newbie; she was lucky to get a quick nod.

Ahh... the welcoming aroma of piping, hot coffee and delicious Boston Cream donuts. As she reached for one, Chief Delany bellowed, "MIANDA, my office, NOW!"

She froze with fear, wondering what on earth was wrong. Were donuts off-limits to newbies?

"Y-yes sir, right away," she heard herself stammering.

Mianda stood in the Chief's office. Her heart pounded so loudly she was sure any driver on the Brooklyn Bridge could hear it.

"Mianda, everyone's assigned. I have no choice but to give you this: a murder on Flatbush Avenue in Joe's Barber Shop. Joe Alderman is dust. Forensics is already there, meaning you're late. Keep me posted."

"Yes sir, will do," responded Mianda with fake confidence. Who was she kidding? She was freaking out! It was absolutely *not* an ordinary day.

Mianda whispered a Hail Mary as she parked at Bridge Plaza by the barbershop. Hard work and keen detective instincts had gotten her this far, and this was her opportunity to gain respect. She had already called the scene to have Mrs. Alderman available for questioning. The coroner nailed the time of death to somewhere between 9:00 and 11:00 p.m. last night. With no evidence of a struggle or robbery, Mianda concluded the motive involved anger or revenge. But a life insurance payout could make the widow a key suspect. Mianda's stomach growled. No Boston Cream donut and no Coney Island hot-dog stand in sight.

A crowd buzzed in front of Joe's shop. He was popular—but not with everyone, unfortunately. Inside, Mianda found the corpse lying face-down on the tiled floor, blood splattered everywhere. Large scissors had been rammed into the back of Joe's head. Strong emotions were definitely involved. Some major motivation was needed to pierce a human skull with a simple barber's tool. Hopefully forensics would get a match on fingerprints. She approached Joe's wife, who was sitting by the cash register.

"Mrs. Alderman... sorry for your loss. I'm Detective Mianda. It would be helpful if I could ask a few questions."

"Please, get on with it," pleaded the widow.

It took all of thirteen minutes to discover that Mrs. Alderman had a solid alibi, didn't know who wanted Joe dead, and that she was the beneficiary of a hefty insurance policy. Mianda

A NOT-SO-ORDINARY DAY

by Michaela Morra

knew she wasn't the actual murderer. No way was Mrs. Alderman strong enough to plunge scissors into a skull.

An officer handed Mianda a crumpled piece of paper with a name on it. She read it out loud, watching closely for a reaction.

"Tim Boyer," Mianda said firmly. Jackpot! The widow twitched and looked up quickly. "You know a Tim Boyer?" queried Mianda.

"Me, w-why no, nothing, I mean, no one comes to mind," she replied, avoiding eye contact. Oh ya, she was lying and Mianda knew it. Tim Boyer, a known felon, had left his calling card behind.

At that moment a distressed, heavysset man burst in yelling, "No, oh no!"

Mianda learned he was Tom, Joe's best friend who also knew Tim Boyer. Tim blamed Joe for some financial problems. They apparently met this week and ended up in a fistfight. Tom overheard Tim threaten to get Joe. Done, a warrant was issued to pick up Boyer for the murder of Joe Alderman.

Mianda couldn't let go of the feeling that his wife was involved, but there was nothing connecting her to the crime. A ringing cell phone interrupted her thoughts. Mrs. Alderman was on the phone while simultaneously trying to see who was texting her. Multitasking is dangerous, especially if you have something to hide. The phone fell, and Mianda reached down to pick it up.

It was impossible not to see Tim Boyer's text: "He's dead. Where can we meet?"

It was a partnership. A wife who wanted life insurance money, and a man who lived for revenge.

Later, in Chief Delany's office, Mianda finally received the recognition for which she strived. She was no longer a newbie. Now, if she could just grab that left over Boston Cream donut...or not? Chief Delany scooped it up.

"Mianda," he yelled out, "here, you deserve this."

"Thanks Chief!" exclaimed Mianda. And so ended a not-so-ordinary day.

TECHNOLOGY: THE KEY TO A PROSPEROUS GLOBAL SOCIETY

by Khongorzul Munkhtuvshin, Ulaanbaatar

If I were asked to name a single adjective that describes technology, I would say “mind-blowing”. The reason why is clear: modern science develops and accelerates with fantastic speed. Our lives hang on to technologies that are stronger and tougher. Nowadays, people have started to perceive the upcoming global problems like overpopulation, healthcare, global conflicts, and planet’s fragile ecosystem. The future development of the world community relies on science, and especially on new technology.

Modern society faces plenty of economic, social, cultural and environmental difficulties. Here I will demonstrate these statements on two potential problems: Global Warming and Global Community Health.

Our planet’s average temperature is unceasingly increasing. If we imagine global warming as a disease, then, just like any other illness, we need to treat its causes first. Since everyone already knows the consequences of global warming and reasons behind it, it is more important to think about solutions. If humans create new models of electric vehicles—continuing work on projects such as solar cars or electrified roads—they will reduce unhealthy air and global climate change. As engineers Don Anair and Amine Mahmassani, from the Union of Concerned Scientists, reported in their research, “Electric vehicles are the hands-down winners for reducing global warming emissions.” Anair and Mahmassani present their conclusion that, after many tests and experiments, electric cars show better results than any hybrid or normal vehicles. EV contributes less to air pollution and requires less fuel.

We need engineers to help innovate new ways to produce more solar, wind, and water energy sources. Elisabet Sahtouris, Doctor of Philosophy, said, “We must remember that the Stone Age did not end because men ran out of stones”. In other words, by using new sources of energy, we can unlock new benefits—one of which is reducing dependence on foreign oil and fossil fuels, which is good for both economics and the environment.

Another issue that the global community faces every day is human health. Technologies could significantly lower the costs of health aid while simultaneously making it accessible to all layers of society. Last year, a research team at the University of Nebraska Medical Center discovered “laser art”, a method to reduce the number of dosages of prescribed medicine for a patient. The major benefit of this breakthrough is its price: according to experts, new technologies like this one could dramatically lower costs, making healthcare far less expensive than it is now. I would emphasize that technology in medicine must be flexible—within all changing aspects of a dynamic society—and be used to creatively solve health care problems, including costs.

Ultimately, the importance of technology cannot be ignored. Solutions to present and future global issues lay in new technologies. Scientific research and developments can find new pathways for creative solutions to the global community’s many obstacles. With innovative ideas, we can find simpler, more affordable solutions to better our quality of life.

THE ECHO SHOW

by Lê Linh Nguyễn, Hà Đông District

Nowadays there are many devices and services to improve life around the world. I have interviewed many people, and 95% of them said that it would be a nightmare to live a life without technology. Technology is so essential that we take it for granted; however, it can also create war and violence, and has killed millions of people over the decades. In this editorial, I will show you how technology can better our lives when used properly and discuss a specific instance of a useful, innovative technology.

Firstly, technology must be used to serve good purposes. For instance, innovative new technology can help the blind see the world. "For me, the Internet is a small window to the world," Chieko Asakawa said. "It was a revolutionary moment for the blind." Visually impaired individuals can now use modern devices to recognize people around them and do most tasks independently.

Another benefit of technology is that it can help us deal with environmental pollution. For example, to reduce exhaust fumes, scientists are now making the "energy swap", which helps you travel to any location in a few seconds. They also started building "Smart Cities" to make human life more comfortable and environmentally friendly.

Secondly, technology enhances our education system. We can search whatever information we want. We can become more knowledgeable than their teachers. Subjects become more interesting with the help of projectors. We can access news around the world for our daily exercises, which become funnier and more challenging at the same time.

Finally, technology helps build developing countries. The only way these countries can catch up with the First World is through technology. My own country provides a clear example of this. Vietnam was a very poor nation after war, but with the help of technology, we are getting better and better. Now, we are the third-most developed country in South East Asia. Through the development of agricultural machine, productivity in Vietnam increases 3% every year.

After we appreciate how technology can improve our quality of life, I will show you a potential innovative machine that will change the way we live and even feel about the world. It is a smart home controller. It was first introduced by Amazon on November 6, 2014, called the Echo. It is quite small, and comes in the shape of a cube or cylinder. The machine connects with a cloud-based voice service and controls electric devices around the house, such as cameras, light bulbs, or even your car. Through the Internet, Echo can also play music, videos, or even call your favourite person up on the phone.

Because Echo can recognize user voice, the user can multi-task. For example, you can order a pizza while you are washing dishes. It can also find any information you want and read it out loud. Every day, more than 50% of our daily tasks concern electrical devices. With this

THE ECHO SHOW

by Lê Linh Nguyễn, Hà Đông District

assistant, all this 50% would require is to simply “ask Echo.” Therefore, I strongly believe that this machine will make our lives naturally more convenient and comfortable.

So why do I consider a smart home controller an innovative technology with high potential? First, it has opened a new economic field. Since Amazon created the Echo, many top technological companies, such as Logitech International and Vera, have invested in the new smart home controllers. They have been producing many different machines that have the same functions as the Echo, such as Wink Hub or Logitech Harmony Elite. Second, this machine might not only be used in a house, it could potentially help us navigate a whole company or organization in the future. This machine could develop in more ways that we can imagine. Soon, we will just need to sit and let these machine-assistants do everything.

I first saw the Echo last year on a Vietnamese news channel. When I saw it, I immediately recognized the bright future of this technology. It could change our way of life, just as the smart phone has. Although I have not bought one yet, I still can predict its future. Many reviews by famous Youtubers, such as The Verge and iJustine, echo these sentiments. If I had enough money, I would buy one for sure.

Our ability to improve the quality of life depends on the way we use these new technologies. I hope we continue to invent more machines like the Echo. I hope we continue to make our lives better and better.



artwork by Sarah Osinga, Grade 10

ICE AND SNOW

by Patrick Prochazka

The lash of icy wind clashes my face;
A shrill, whistling howl piercing through the air,
The snowy, white-sheeted town is erased.

Pricks of white scatter across the space;
All exploding like bullets in midair.
The lash of icy wind clashes my face.

In snow, the cars are piled, deep and encased;
The boulevard is blocked up and ensnared,
The snowy, white-sheeted town is erased.

Chickadees twirl cyclically without grace,
Gone are their happy chirps and lack of care;
The lash of icy wind clashes my face.

The tick and tock of life has been misplaced,
No change or progress; it's all at a stand;
The snowy, white-sheeted town is erased.

White—like a fairy tale—a distant place,
Floating and swirling through the frosty air.
The lash of icy wind clashes my face;
The snowy, white-sheeted town is erased.

THE FIRE

by Madeleine Rickman

A city turned an orange glow
With black smoke in the sky
A thrilling show, I cheer bravo
While watching children cry

The screams and cries and glassy eyes
Hide underneath the flames
I wonder why, it must be I
Who has to take the blame

And as I spread I'm filled with dread
For people down below
How can I make so many dead
With such a sudden blow?

But how am I to empathize
When I am bred to kill?
But they are truly petrified
And I am sorry still

My arms spread out and cover miles
Of homes and hearts and souls
Creating piles of broken smiles
With what intended goal?

To burn and break, this golden state
I lose all of control
There's lives to take and hopes to shake
And that's my single role

Not many surely can survive
With new deaths every hour
But deep inside I feel alive
To see these people cower

I cannot help but wonder if
I have to show remorse
Why, no one would exculpate
A deathly, ghastly force

BLUE IRIS

by Gabrielle Robinson

I entered the bathroom and saw my reflection in the mirror. I saw my small, brown face and my thin hands. I saw my brown hair and my thin, tall body. I thought about the fight that Mother and I had in the kitchen, and I wanted to scream. All over school and a couple of bad grades.

“There’s no hope for someone like me, I can’t do it!” I was angry and I could feel my face getting hot, but deep down I felt shame.

Wallowing in sadness, I climbed into my bed and listened to mother clanking pots in the kitchen. I smelled the aroma of baking chicken and the sharp smell of garlic along with burning wood. I could see the rain falling outside my window. The soft *pitter-patter* lulled me to sleep, and soon I was in a deep trance.

While I slept, my body felt tingly and light. I wanted to jump up because it felt like a billion fleas were crawling under my skin, but I couldn’t move. I was trapped. I was terrified. I tasted sweat dripping from my forehead into my mouth. Why was I tasting wet, salty sweat in my dream?

Suddenly, I felt the hot, Indian breeze ruffle my hair. That’s when I jumped up and nearly fell—off a tree? Why was I on a tree? Why wasn’t I in my bed? I looked around my surroundings, my heart racing so fast it felt like it would leap out of my chest. To the east, I saw a dirt path leading to a small village. To the west, in the distance, I could see rolling green hills. They looked beautiful, like you could run through them forever and never tire. Looking at the countryside, I felt a sense of calm and peace.

All of a sudden, I felt a gentle breeze hit my back. It should have calmed any normal person, but it didn’t calm me. I looked down to see that I was clenching my fists; however, when I looked down, I was surprised to see that my clothes were gone. In their place, long brown fur stretched down my arms and throughout my whole body. I spun around and around, trying to see my tail. I was a squirrel! What kind of sick dream was this?

That’s when I heard it: the sound of gunshots in the distance. I jolted through the branches to the top of the tree. I was able to see men, women and children of all ages running. What were they running from? I scampered down the tree trunk, snagging my arm on one of the branches. It hurt, but I was too distracted by the running people to care. My animal instincts were telling me to run away, but I couldn’t. I needed to find a way to help.

I reached the ground, and that’s when I saw them: beautiful women with fabrics of many colours wrapped around their heads. Some had a strange red dot in the middle of their foreheads. They were beautifully browned by the hot Indian sun, but still they ran like mad men. That’s when I spotted the problem. There were men running into the village, dressed in all black, holding huge black guns. They were opening fire into the village of running people.

BLUE IRIS

by Gabrielle Robinson

With every step I took, someone else fell to the ground, limp and lifeless. I wanted to cry, but I had to keep going. I had to find someone to talk to, to help make sense out of the senseless.

I ran into a nearby home and under a table that looked like it belonged in the dining room. All of a sudden, a woman emerged from one of the rooms and in her hand she held a baby, in the other hand she held the hand of a little boy—he looked to be six years old.

“Listen to me now and listen to me well,” the mother said to him. “There are bad men that will come to try and hurt you. So when Mommy says to run, you must run and never look back. Run as far as you can into the forest and over the hills—the tall grass will grant you coverage.” The little boy nodded his head and the mother went back into the room to pack her things.

Seconds later, two men kicked in the door and stormed into the room, guns pointed. The little boy yelled for his mother, and the mother came running. She stopped when she saw her son in the arms of the men. The men looked the mother dead in her eyes and shot the boy. He slumped to the ground. The mother didn’t even have time to scream.

In that split-second—some may call it chance—the mother caught my eye. I knew what was going to happen next. In the mother’s eyes I could see panic, but also deep, deep down, I saw hope. Just a glimmer. I looked away. Then I heard gunfire and the smell of gunpowder.

I closed my eyes and shut everything out. I wanted to cry until my tears ran dry. I felt a shock and woke up to feel my sheets under my back and a pillow under my head. I was home! I leaped out of bed and ran to the bathroom. In the mirror I saw hair on my head and skin on my body. My mom came into the bathroom, and in her hand she was holding an iris-flower necklace.

She sat me down and we talked.

“I know that you are doing your best in school, and I want you to know that you should never lose hope in yourself. Hope is what keeps us going. A glimmer is all we need,” she said. “We need to remember that somewhere in the world there is a person, a boy or girl who unfortunately doesn’t have the privilege that we have. All they can do is hope. That is why I want to give you this necklace. It’s called the Iris flower. They call it the flower of hope.”

I thanked her, and she left me alone with my thoughts. I thought about the insane dream I had when, all of a sudden, I saw a drop of red fall to the floor. It was blood, coming from a small cut on my arm. Within the little drop of blood, I saw the face of the woman from my dreams smiling at me.

IF I WERE MY MOTHER, I'D TELL MYSELF...

by Brooklyn Wodehouse

The life of a sixteen-year-old girl in high school can be a discombobulated mess—take it from someone who has suffered this horrendous stage. It's hard to get through without guidelines. Take it from someone who has also encountered these life obstacles.

To help put it in perspective: if I were my own mother, I'd tell myself...

Slice of Advice Number One:

That boy *is* so worth it, and your life is completely over if you don't get back together with him ASAP! 60% of high school students plan to break-up with their significant other in high school—don't let yourself be part of this 60%! A break-up can be an exceedingly traumatic experience. It can wreck a young girl's heart, so don't be a fool. If your partner suggests a break-up as "the best course of action," refuse to accept. Throw a fit, cry, scream and yell. Get your significant other back. The three weeks you two were together were the best weeks of you life. You two are soulmates. You can picture your life together: you're both rich, living lavish life styles with three unusually gorgeous children. You don't want anything more in life. He is the one—do *not* let him get away.

Slice of Advice Number Two:

She is your best friend. You two trust each other more than you trust your own mothers—which you should. Everyone has fought with her best friend. Sure, your bestie happened to go on a date with your boyfriend—but honestly, who cares? You and your boyfriend will work out your issues (see "Slice of Advice Number One"), so that's no reason to stop being friends. Regardless of what she did, take her back. She's not purposely trying to ruin your life, obviously, that's why you two trust each other so much. She's just going through her own problems. Sure, she could come to you for support, but she wants to settle her issues by herself. Let her be. You two are inseparable. Don't let her tiny issues destroy your extremely healthy relationship.

Slice of Advice Number Three:

Your reputation is way more important than your grades. Sure, this statement may be a bit controversial, but trust me, this may also be the biggest party of your high school career. No one will care if you ace the math test on Monday. People *are* going to care if you show up to the party looking bomb in your new outfit. Why are grades even important? I mean, sure, they'll get you into college or university, but other than that, they are just numbers on a page that judge you. Didn't our parents and teachers always tell us to never judge a book by its cover? Well then, we should never judge a person by their report card. You're better off going to the party and having fun—and possibly taking stupid pictures that you'll later post all over social media and regret ten years later when you are incapable of securing a job. Possibly. But looking back at the "good old days" of high school, the decisions you make will impact your life. Whether you make "good" decisions or "the right" decisions, you'll want to look back and say to yourself: "Wow, I can't believe I married this idiot, and my best friend is still a jerk, but at least I went to that party. That was totally awesome and way worth it."

IF I WERE MY MOTHER, I'D TELL MYSELF...

by Brooklyn Wodehouse

High school only lasts four years. It will be over before you know it, so enjoy it while it lasts. After all, you're going to want to tell your oddly beautiful children all about your stories in high school, and tell them to make the exact opposite decisions you made.

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artwork by Emma Kerswill, Grade 11

THE EFFECTS OF A SCAR

by Kirsten Yip

My eyes opened gently
To allow the white, fluorescent light of the room infiltrate my vision,
And I glimpse around,
From the back-spraining mattress where I lay.
The white walls with a wide window,
And also a droopy curtain,
Are details of a space that's all too familiar.
There is beeping from a monitor in the distance and hushed chatter in the hall.
These components build the *psychiatric unit*.
Why am I a patient in this sanitarium?
I am here because of the scar;
A scar that haunts me daily and has shown great repercussions.
Something that has ultimately provoked my depressions.
The witless wound simply sits silently on my body's surface.
Constructing the shape of a crown;
As if it is gloating—the fact that it has taken control of my soul.
It won't let me forget tenderness;
It won't let me forget the ache;
It won't even let me forget the feeling of vulnerability, which remains forever.
I would sacrifice anything, if I was asked,
For just one shot to re-do what has been.
But I cannot conceal nor negate the past;
My mistakes are forever written on my skin.

THE MAGICAL VIOLIN

by Tony Zhang

A secretary led me to Master Cao's workroom. "Master Cao is currently working with the orchestra, he'll be with you shortly," the secretary said as she closed the door. I put down my jacket and violin case as I scanned the room with admiration. There was the picture of him hosting his solo concert in the Wiener Musikverein; oh my God, there was the picture of him shaking hands with Herbert Von Karajan; and there, on the shelf, lay his two-million-dollar Pietro Guarneri violin. Look at that beauty: the perfect shape of the body, the smooth curve of the F-holes and the shiny strings—what a magnificent work of art!

It was then that I heard the sound of an empty pop can dropping on the ground from at other end of the room. I turned around and spotted a little boy staring at me, his mouth stuffed with bread. The boy was about ten years old. He had large eyes and was very thin.

That must be Master Cao's son, I thought. To my surprise, the boy moved back with fear when I walked towards him.

"Hey, little buddy! What's your name?"

The boy looked at me, he didn't say anything.

"Here, do you want some chocolate?" I took out a chocolate ball. "I brought it back from Austria." Still no response. I was a little surprised, but I still ripped off the wrapping paper and popped the chocolate ball into my mouth. The sweetness of the chocolate and its smooth texture spread immediately.

"Mmmm," I licked my lips. "You sure you don't want one before I eat them all?" I put down another chocolate ball in front of him and patted him on the shoulder. That's when he curled up on the sofa and started to scream.

I was dazed by his sudden upset and didn't know what to do. Eventually, the boy calmed down and opened the violin case beside him.

"Voyilin," the boy said. The boy raised the bow and started playing. I was shocked at how well he could play the instrument; even I couldn't play at that level of sophistication at his age! The boy glanced up at me and started to play *Méditation* by Massenet. I watched his every single movement. The scales crescendo and decrescendo. The music flew.

I tapped out the fingerings on my lap as he played, and for one moment, I lost control of my hands. The next moment, I held my violin. I joined him in the last movement of the piece. He turned to look at me, walking closer and closer as we reached the end of the piece. There he was, standing right next to me, holding that last note of the beautiful piece.

He put down his violin and looked at me, a big smile on his face. Still, he was too shy to say a word. "You're really good," I said, giving him a thumbs-up.

THE MAGICAL VIOLIN

by Tony Zhang

The boy pointed at my violin and said, "Voyilin."

I raised my violin. He nodded with an even happier smile. I started playing *Flight of the Bumblebee*, one of the most challenging pieces I'd ever played to that point. My fingers moved from string to string and slid from place to place just as they did in my countless practices. I could feel myself in the middle of a honey farm, with hundreds of bumblebees buzzing around me. As I finished the first phrase, the boy joined me. He repeated the first part at an even faster pace.

My solo now became a duet: we played faster and faster until, suddenly, he started to play something that I had never seen on a written version of the piece before—his own variation! My chin almost fell to the ground. The boy was so into the music that his eyes were closed and his fingers imperceptible. I barely recognized when he returned to the original music and finished it with a fancy, chromatic scale.

He put down his violin and turned to me. "Why'd you stop?" he asked.

"Be nice, Ming," a voice came from the door. "You know that even I can't play that piece with you."

I turned around. Master Cao was standing at the door. "It seems you two are really getting along," he said. Master Cao shook my hand and patted me on the shoulder. "You know," he added, "you're one of the very few people who can make this kid smile."

"Ming isn't your son?" I was surprised.

"Oh no," laughed Master Cao, "I discovered him while I was visiting an autism care centre. I've been teaching him for a few years."

"Ming," Master Cao bent down and asked, "do you want to play with this big brother every day?" The boy stared at the floor, nodded slightly, and ran away.

"Music builds a bridge between people's hearts," Master Cao said. "What do you say, my new Concert Master?"

FOCUS

by Yoyo Zhang

It's perfect. Absolutely perfect. The whole scenery has such an alluring vibe. It demands a picture. 'Place des Vosges'—a perfect location with nature, architecture and decor.

His hands raised, holding his camera to his eyes and looking through the lens. His finger rested on the shutter button as he focused the photo.

"Look! The fountain—" *Click*. His eyes shot up at the sudden distraction, ruining his perfect picture. Though, once he set his eyes on the girl who walked into his shot, he immediately recognized her. It was the same girl he met the other day, while he tried to get pictures outside the Louvre. The same girl walked into his frame last time.

"Joshua! Time to go," his older sister, Ailee, called.

"Sure, I'll be right there," he told her, before setting his camera for another photo. He adored travelling and exploration. But above all, he adored taking pictures of each location.

Is this normal for a seventeen-year-old boy? Joshua thought to himself. Not *exactly*, but it was what he loved, and having a supportive family sure helped develop his interests.

"Perfect!" Joshua smiled, trying to contain his excitement as he captured the picture this time. Looking back up from his camera, he felt a breeze. It blew his hair into his face, catching him off-guard.

He heard laughter when he tried to fix his hair and looked up. His eyes met hers, and time seemed to stop for one second. A million emotions rushed through him, making him freeze in his tracks.

He never felt this way before. *What is this feeling?* He thought, blinking and looking away from the girl with a deep blush.

Despite having an incredible family and a dream to chase, Joshua wasn't a social person. He didn't have many friends, only his family—and Lizzie. But he hadn't seen Lizzie in years. Not since she moved to London to study.

"Joshua!" Ailee called again, this time from the car, waving at him to come. Joshua's mind immediately cleared and faced his sister.

"Coming!" he called out. He took one last look back to the fountain where the girl stood, but she was already walking away with her friends. Joshua let out a short sigh before hurrying to his sister.

"Mom is waiting for us," Ailee told him as they drove off—farther and farther away from the *Place des Vosges*. Away from *her*.

FOCUS

by Yoyo Zhang

"I saw you looking at the pretty girl," Ailee brought up suddenly, laughing slightly at how flustered Joshua became. Against his will he blushed at the mention of her.

He kept silent through the ride, but his mind was cluttered with distractions. Questions, ideas, and more questions clouded his mind. *Who was she?* He kept asking himself.

He's met her, for sure. He was sure, but unsure. He still couldn't focus when he climbed the stairs to the grounds of the Eiffel Tower. This was the last location for his pictures. He hadn't yet noticed the darkening sky and sparkling stars.

"Joshua! Hurry! Lizzie is here!" Joshua was shocked to hear her name again, especially coming from his mother.

"Lizzie? Here?" He saw a girl standing beside his mom as he and his sister approached. Today may have been the strangest and best day he'd ever had. As Joshua got to his mom, the girl beside her seemed familiar—more familiar than she should have seemed.

"Joshua! You're going to miss your chance for the photo!" Ailee ushered both he and Lizzie closer to the Tower.

"It's nice to see you again, photo boy." She gave a wry smile before striking a pose in front of the tower. That's when it snapped—it was her from *Places des Vosges*! The girl who walked into the frame twice before.

This picture won't be an accident, Joshua thought. This time the focus is her.

Under the starry night, he held his camera tightly, nervous yet excited. The lights of the Eiffel Tower shone brightly and ever-so perfect for this photo. Had Joshua ever expected this? Never. Had he ever thought about romance? Certainly not. And he had never, ever, dreamed of capturing this moment under the Eiffel Tower. With her.



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