



epiphanies



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Epiphanies Literary Magazine

2023 Staff & Acknowledgements

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aren't i everything?

By Maya Jain

i have begun to rot
the flies will come to buzz
around my carcass

my face has caved in
sunken and mushy
as the rot begins to spread

this is the part
they don't tell you
about growing up

you lose everything
your beauty and your brains
rotting away, decomposing

sometimes i pray
to return to my old self
childhood calls me

but then i remember
the pain of being young
and i suppose i am grateful

that i am no longer
a small child
big words

Hallways: an afterthought for “Solitude” by Ella Wheeler Wilcox

By Meredith Smith

You tell a joke, and everyone laughs.
You cry, and suddenly you're alone.
Like you're stuck in a box, with no room to
breathe. You can feel your heartbeat inside your
chest.

You're excited, and the world is bright.
You're sad, and it goes dark.
The world echoes your joy,
And buries your sorrows.
When you're cheerful, people gravitate toward you.
When you're upset, everyone disappears.
They want your joy, but none of your grief.
You must conquer life alone, with no one there for you.

Enjoy it, and the halls are crowded.
Rush, and time flies.
You succeed and give, and you live,
Because no one can help you die.
There is room in the hall of pleasure
For a large group of people.
But we must line up single file,
Through the narrow aisles of pain.

Inner City World

By Jayden Forsythe

I'm from Brooklyn
1 out of 5 boroughs in a big city
A concrete jungle where dreams are made of
You don't see what I see
We not cut from the same cloth

I grew up in the midst of an epidemic
Drugs, guns, and killing
The boys at the turnstiles and outside of buildings
Yellow tape on sidewalks in winter with chilled winds
A young girl bleeds as the mom screams
With a lucid cry wondering what the future brings
Lil' brodie in the street with a ski mask scuttling
Running from the cops hopping over fences
Rushing and ducking

But the real "cops" is the government who put us in this position
Food desert neighborhoods where kids don't get no nutrition
Walking out the McDonald's where the meal don't got no vegetables
But these kids is quick to come back home with some snacks that's some edibles.

On cloud 9 in the night making decisions that are regrettable
You see in this society we gotta have short hair to look "presentable"
Tattoos and dreadlocks are so-called "unprofessional"
Breaking barriers just to put some ham on a damn plate
Just tryna make sure that the family is straight.

Moon Eclipse

By Peishan Huang

Cold wind. Cold heart. She was walking outside. To keep a promise.

It was 3:30 am. The sun hadn't risen yet, and the stars hung still in the early morning sky. She couldn't sleep.

She knew it was her last day. A desert full of scorpions, vipers, and lizards. The origin of every sandstorm and tornado. Standing at the eye of the storm, besieged by sand crusaders, she could only look up, expecting the moonshine to paint her skin and kiss her eyes. Now it was her time to leave. Nobody had managed to leave before, and she knew the giant claw would drag her back and throw her into the tempest again. But she would still keep her promise to the moon. Not for her future, but for her old friend, the moon. They'd promised each other, that during the eclipse, the moon would carry her to nowhere.

She lifted her eyes. More than half the moon turned ocher. She'd never seen ocher before. She had seen the blush on young girls' faces, the scarlet in monsters' eyes, but never the ocher of the eclipse. It reminded her of bricks: solid and indestructible. Thinking of the ocher as the shadow of Earth in front of the moon, she thought of a fort protecting the innocent moonlight from the evil darkness. She felt satisfied. The chance to be saved by the moon comforted her. As if she were in a sturdy brick cabin in winter before a roaring fire, the sound of a mother's lullaby nearby. She closed her eyes and smiled.

Then her smile froze. She felt an overwhelming force squeeze her body. The claw came as expected. Now she stood by the ruins of the brick cabin, as fragile as a new-born infant.. Memories she once tossed from her mind reemerged. She heard every particle of sand become a scream, an acerbic curse. She saw the scorpions carrying gossip from everywhere to this desert. Then, the vipers hissed with their own judgements, and lizards squirted the venom of hypocrisy. They were her so-called friends. Everyone in her little group expected her to be biting sand, a scorpion, a viper or a lizard. And so she disguised herself to blend in. But her soul was in anguish. Every day, she lived under the shadow of her disguised persona. Her fort didn't protect her soul but eroded it. She wanted to run away.

She didn't want to open her eyes. Her eyes would sting if she saw the gentle ochre light. It didn't matter. She was dragged by the claw. Soon the moon would be too tiny to see. In an instant, with the surprise of her balance regained, she felt a soft blanket covering her body. She opened her eyes in confusion. A blaze of ochre. Suddenly she realized it was the eclipse. She found she was suspended in the sky. The moon was only one inch away. She reached for her finger, and then her whole body. Now she had become invisible. The cloak of invisibility allowed her to escape from the clutches of the claw. She looked down and saw the claw, wandering aimlessly. She saw the horrible creatures stop. The sandstorms paused for a moment, as if to mourn their loss. Then they resumed. Even before she said her farewell.

A great magnetic force pulled her onto the moon. Then she rode the moon, flying to nowhere.

Untitled

By Alex Carty

He paced the floor of his dark, quiet, shaded room as if pulled by a string. The floorboards whined as he retraced his steps. Thinking about how he spent hours perfecting every part of his story, he struggled on what would seem to be the easiest part: the title. He paced and thought of words to summarize his literature. What couple of words would give it justice, but his mind was empty like a blank document. As he sat down on his old wooden bed, the frame creaked as he rested his body on the inviting blankets. He decided he needed a break after an exhausting day's work.

He opened his door and the light from the hall blinded him, but he couldn't be bothered because the only thing he was concerned about was the title. He strode down the hallway and to the door outside. As he opened the door, he got hit with a brisk breeze; the hair that was covering his stern and pale face flew back like a flag on a windy day. He walked out feeling the cushioning grass on his feet and golden rays from the sun glide over his skin. The warmth of the sun and the conflicting chill of the wind made his body confused but comfortable, reminding him of how he felt. As he looked into the sunset and described it as a visibly endless sea of fall trees and their vibrant leaves that mimic the orange and red sunset. Stunned by the beauty of the sunset and the day he has missed because of his story, he turned in disappointment and sulked back into his house. As he walked back down the hall that was so vibrant minutes ago, the author in angst continued to ponder the big questions. What will the title be? When will I think of it? Am I going to be able to do my story justice in such a few words? All questions that replayed in his head while he lay

in his creaky, old wooden bed. After a full night's rest he woke up to the birds singing a song that he thought of as a routine slice of peace, something that made nothing else matter. In a moment's bliss the questions snapped back into his head like they had been flung from a slingshot. Although he hadn't a clear answer to the questions he didn't want to risk missing what the day could offer.

The author leapt from his bed, grabbed the first clothes he saw, and sprinted into the hallway that was glowing with the warm sunrise essence. As he threw the door open he got hit with a brisk breeze again, but this time stood there. He stood describing the cushioning grass glistening with the early morning dew settling in. his description of the morning mist that took away the endless sea of trees that was so gorgeous the evening before. As he took in all the little details he was reminded of his writing, the story that he had written so in depth and so detailed. As he watched the morning dew settle, he realized that he was the dew, needing to take his time, be patient and that a good title wouldn't come while he forced it. The sun will rise and set the same, no matter if he found his title or not. When he took on this new mentality he relaxed and stepped onto the fertile and damp grass. As soon as he felt the grass and water on his foot he started to think about how it felt, describing it in great detail to himself and suddenly it clicked. He had been so focused on details and so zoomed in it would be so impossible to describe in a few words. Right then and there he thought of the perfect title. He ran back through the door and dashed through the hallway into his now lively but quiet room and typed it in.

Birdcage

By Steven Zhao

A small sparrow flutters across the window,
Its delicate wings spread out against the
gale. Attempting to flee the horrors of this
earth, Hard iron barred its path.
I watched as it crashed down, down
And *down*.

Thump!
Clang!

A turned head,
A sigh let out,
A few footsteps,
I am back in my room.
Waiting, waiting,
And *waiting*.

The heavens reveled in a fierce battle,
Spears of electricity lit up the sky,
Echoed by the drums of thunder,
And raindrops pounded on my window,
Mocking the boredom that envelops all in this
city. Must be fun up there.

My eyes drifted downwards,
Dark empty streets reflected my gaze.
Abandoned stalls,
Locked doors,
Frail leaves battered down,
Spiraling until they crash into the
pavement. Nothing fun down here.

Shanghai,
Pearl of the Orient,
A shining star in the east.
Now, there is nothing, nothing,
And *nothing*.

I turn to the other window,
A clump of white hazmat suits marched along the road,
Their footsteps trailed thunder,
Their heels cracked leaves,
Their blank masks foretold their business.
The world stopped for a split
second, All noise was quelled.
Breath.

The suits turned to the left,
And in a flash of white,
Stormed into a nearby building.
Exhale...

Several citizens snatched away.

Amidst the downpour,
Cries of children were silenced,
Pleas of their parents muted.
Birds trapped in cages,
Unable to escape the iron fist of law. And
the hazmat suits dragged them away.

To where?
From one birdcage to another.

Westtown School Guidelines

By Anqi Wang

Disclaimer: This is a work of fiction solely for the purpose of entertainment and by no means represents any version of reality. There is no intended disrespect towards any person or group.

Welcome to Westtown school, class of 202_!

Here are some guidelines you will need to follow during your time here:

1. Please keep your student ID card by your side at all times
 - a. If you lose your ID card during the day, report to the technology office. They will help print another ID card for you.
 - b. (For BOARDING STUDENTS ONLY): If you lose your ID card during the night, notify a dorm parent and stay in your dorm for the entire night. Shut the blinds and pull down curtains in your room. The next day, if you see birds circulating around campus, go to the Lake immediately. If you do not see birds flying around, report to the technology office and request another one.
2. (For BOARDING STUDENTS ONLY): Do not leave your dorm after checking in. Never leave your lights on after 10:30.
3. If a squirrel comes near you, please hold your ID card in your hand and ignore the squirrel. If you are with a friend, discuss your next class loudly.
4. If you need to leave the top of campus, for example, to go to the lake, please fill out a form in the upper school office. You will be given a card with a number on it, which you need to return when you get back.
5. If you see strange shadows on the ceiling of the library, please ignore them. If you see them more than three times in a week, please report to the upper school office and request to go to the Lake.
6. Head to the Health Center if you feel unwell. However, if you are experiencing eye irritation, headache and arm or leg cramps (likely due to overusing electronic devices), head to the Lake (for a walk in nature) after filling out a permission form.
7. Advisory is a time to meet with your advisor. Students are required to meet with their advisor at assigned spaces on

specific days of the week. During these ten-minute meetings in small groups, you may be asked to talk about your day and discuss recent events or assignments.

8. Meeting for Worship is a Quaker tradition that is held weekly at the Meeting House. All students and faculty must attend. It is a 40-minute-long reflective practice and grounds students to the present.

a. Meeting for Worship is held outside of the Meeting House once every semester. This “walkout” method ensures freedom of speech and opinion. Ignore the birds if they get too loud.

9. Never, ever light a fire. An open fire will trigger the smoke detection alarms. When the fire alarm is activated, all students must evacuate to assigned locations. There will be fire drills that are not told to students beforehand. This usually happens on a weekly basis. This is to make sure all students are capable of evacuating in case of an emergency.

a. You cannot hear the fire alarm in the restrooms on the first floor of the main building. If you happen to come out of one of these restrooms and hear a fire alarm, please head in and wait for at least 15 minutes before coming out again. If there is no more alarm and no visible damage, resume your normal activities. If you see unfamiliar students in the restroom, hold your ID card in your hand. Do not attempt to interact or talk to them.

10. Always remember: You are class of 202_. Ignore anyone who tries to tell you otherwise.

11. Failure to comply with these guidelines may result in grave consequences. You will also be given infraction points on MyWesttown.

“You need to learn to follow instructions.” —Teacher Marvin

We sincerely hope you have an enjoyable time at Westtown School in the 2022-23 school year.

There is a piece of paper taped onto the librarian’s table, tucked snugly beside a calendar.

LIBRARIAN GUIDELINES:

1. Students cannot bring plates with food into the library.
2. Kindly remind students to stay quiet if they get too loud.

The library is a quiet study space for those who want to focus on their homework.

3. Organize books every morning. Books are sorted by year published, then the author's last name. Usually, recent releases are kept on the upper level, as students visit it more often. For specifics, please reference the digital map on the Mary Hutton Library website.

4. Lights on the lower level must be kept on every night. Always check if they are on before you leave.

5. If you see squirrels outside the lower-level library door, ignore them. If there also happens to be many birds that are flying in a circular motion, open the door. As seen on the door, this will trigger a fire drill alarm.

6. During a fire drill:

a. After setting off the alarm, head up the stairs to the upper level and exit from the front.

b. Set a timer for 40 minutes. After the timer goes off, return to the library and resume previous work.

7. Always have at least 2 copies of your ID card with you.

8. If you find yourself experiencing symptoms such as headache, eye irritation, and cramps in your arms or legs, please head to the Lake as soon as possible with both ID cards. Hand one of them to the first member of faculty you see along the way.

Moss was already snaking up the board that was nailed to the wall of the cabin. Bold red words were printed on the whiteboard.

LAKE GUIDELINES

1. Please do not stand too close to the lake.

2. Only enter the lake when you are wearing a life suit. Do not frolic around while kayaking or canoeing on the lake.

3. During winter, do not skate on the lake.

4. IF you are experiencing eye irritation, headache, and arm or leg cramps:

a. Look into your reflection, and say your year of graduation or the current date out loud. Repeat three times, and symptoms should gradually disappear.

b. Enter the cabin only if you are experiencing severe symptoms, or if you cannot perform the action above.

Beside the board, scratched into the wooden surface in squiggly handwriting: **REMEMBER!**

Ode to My AirPods

By Parker Coates

You fill the empty air
like the aroma of cookies baking.
When the silence is deafening,
Your melody pervades through the room
Without crowding it.
When the halls are a hollow sea shell,
You are the sound of the ocean.



Art by Summer Guo

Departure

By Noah Fisher

Content Warning: This story deals with suicidal ideation

A sharp breeze cut through my jacket, chilling me to the bone. I sat stoically, watching as the wind picked up piles of dried up leaves, making them shoot up, forcefully moving them to a new place, much like myself. Back at home, I loved the cold, but this was somehow different.

I sat on a ledge, watching the movers struggle to jam my parents' bed frame through the door, the roughness of the concrete ledge cutting into my legs as if they were tacks. Twelve stories down, my father embraced my mother as they watched the last of the furniture enter our building.

I briefly allowed a bird to steal my attention. Its bright red feathers and playful energy distracted me just long enough to allow myself to forget where I was. I imagined myself to be home, the problems and sorrow of today having been shed behind me. I was brought back to the hours my brother and I would spend exploring the woods, each day bringing new adventure and challenges.

As quickly as the diversion had begun, it came to an end. I watched as the bird took off and dissolved into the dull gray sky. Back home, I would've been able to run free alongside the bird. Here, I am confined to the roof of this building, a single tree in a concrete jungle.

I think back to yesterday, I was back home, sitting alone outside. Ever since it happened, I had visited the graveyard often. It had become a serene place where I could be alone and at peace. This time was different. My face, wet with

tears, could barely make out my brother's name on the gravestone before me. I knew that ever leaving his side would be a betrayal to his life, though sitting there, I knew that after that day, I would never be there again.

My heart suddenly became filled with rage. Why did my parents decide to move us to New York? Why exactly one year after it happened? As they explained to me through sobs, they were doing this for all of us, and while they cared, it was time to move on. If my parents cared, they clearly didn't show it.

My anger led me to consider something horrible. With one jump, I could join my brother, an idea that brought goosebumps to my arms and legs. All of my anger, hate, and trauma would suddenly cease. Instead, I sat quietly, reflecting on my journey. I realized that moving forward into a new chapter of life wouldn't be a betrayal to my brother's life, but this would. As much as I missed him, no amount of darkness, anger, and hate would ever fill that hole.

I slid off the ledge and began to run down the stairs to find my parents. I still wasn't ready to move on, but I began to despise this place a little bit less. I went out for a walk, and went to explore the new environment around me. It wasn't the same as when my brother was there, but I felt a sense of excitement and novelty. Ahead of me lay a new world, and I was ready to step into it.

I've returned to the roof pretty frequently. It has transformed itself from a dark place to one where I can be alone and step out of the chaos of life. I enjoy sitting on the ledge, looking out over the city, reflecting on where I've been and where I may be going next.

Tides of Weed

By July Wen

The poets compare love to ivies,
but mine grows like weed
You planted seeds
that grew into fields of green
Did you watch
the roots bleed into me?
My love dry, Winter-bitten Autumn leaves
My love calamitous, clandestine catastrophe
My love lingers, stares,
Burrows under my gaze
Branches wild and uncontainable,
Forever spreading onto
Your ice frozen,
snow fallen ground
Every word I swallow
Dissolve in my stomach
Into acidic longing
and insurmountable
Waves of hurt
At death I glance
when kissing your shadow
as the water running in me freezes
Like tides, I hit your rocks

But every once in a while you give me
A glimpse of Spring
Roses and wisteria
Your cruel kindness change of season
Can you see me freezing
in your Hoax?
Dandelions growing
Onto my carcass
My rotting heart is pounding
On your edge of March, it's
Every petal of your littered hope
that I treasure
— and like tides,
I keep running back

Main Character

By Jahmare Memphis

Yo, what's up guys?

I gotta write a poem, so I'll improvise.

My teacher said it's gotta have metaphors and similes,
But really, that sounds more like spelling bees.

I really don't get the point of this whole thing, But
I'll give it a shot, and see what I can bring. Life is
like a carousel, spinning round and round,
Moments of pure joy, moments we hit the ground.

Like a game of chess, you gotta make your move,
One mistake could ruin everything, just be smooth.
The world's a stage, and we're all just actors, But
it's up to us to be the main character.

Aunt Cathy

By Liam Kazemi

“A zombie, she looked like a zombie,” I thought to myself as my mom helped my Aunt Cathy through the doorway into our house. My Aunt Cathy had been diagnosed with cancer, and her treatments had taken a toll on her body, leaving her pale and gaunt. Her face was sunken in, making it look like she was wearing someone else's skin as a mask. I rarely saw my aunt before she came to our house, so I didn't pay any mind to my mother when she came downstairs into the basement to let me know that my aunt was coming to live with us for a while, and that she'd be staying in the basement. Later that day, it was my dad who came downstairs to the basement. “Put those LEGOs down and come upstairs to say hi to your aunt,” my dad told me. I reluctantly put the bricks down and walked upstairs with my dad, not knowing that in just a few hours the basement where I liked to play would turn into a pitch-black underworld that I wouldn't dare step into. As I sat in the living room drinking a glass of mango juice, I couldn't help but think about my LEGOs waiting for me in the basement. I so badly wanted to feel the bricks and let my imagination run rampant, so I knew I had to go down there to retrieve them. With trepidation, I tiptoed down the stairs, my heart beating faster with each step. The basement was darker than I remembered, and I fumbled for the light switch. As I reached for it, I heard a faint sound, like someone whispering. I froze, wondering what it was. Then, out of the darkness, she appeared. My aunt's sunken face loomed in front of me, and I took a step back in fear. It was like staring into the eyes of death itself. “Hello, sweetie,” she said, her voice a raspy whisper. I couldn't respond. It felt like my throat had closed up, and I was choking on my own fear. My Aunt Cathy took a step closer, and I stumbled back, falling

onto my LEGOs and crushing the house I had just finished building. I scrambled to my feet and ran up the stairs, screaming at the top of my lungs. "Monster! There's a monster in the basement!" My parents rushed to my side, but I was inconsolable. It took them a while to calm me down, and even then, I couldn't shake off the image of my aunt's face that had felt like it had been burned into my memory with an iron. For weeks, I didn't dare go back into the basement, forcing me to read the books my dad had bought for me for Christmas to pass the time. It wasn't until one day while I was playing in the woods that I heard sirens coming from my driveway. I sprinted back up the hill to my house and saw my Aunt Cathy being lifted up on a stretcher into the back of the ambulance. Later that day, we got the news that my aunt had passed away. The whole house was filled with sadness, but for me, it was like a weight had been lifted. I could finally go back to the basement and play with my LEGOs without fear. However, the memory of my aunt's face lingered, like a ghost haunting the corners of my mind. Sitting on the basement carpet a few days after the passing of my aunt, I realized that even I could end up like my aunt someday. What had she done for God to turn her into a zombie monster? I quickly brought my attention back to the zombie apocalypse I had just finished building with my LEGOs and smiled with satisfaction and relief.

English

By Joey Kim

They tell me I'm good at English.
Do I look like I don't know?
I learned the same way they did,
Working tirelessly so I could grow,
Surrounded by people who look like them too,
Learning my two to my too to my to.

They tell me it's okay if I stutter
They understand me, English probably isn't my first language.
It's like knowing English is my sharp knife's edge,
Cutting through what they all think
It's so funny when they're wrong.
But
It's only funny the first few times.

They ask me where I'm from
Where I'm from
No, where I'm really from.
My answers don't satisfy them.
It's like a poorly-made film,
They have expectations
But the ending disappoints them.

Their mouths don't tell me what they think of me
But people say eyes are the gateways to the soul,
And oh, how their eyes tell their stories:
"It's because you're Asian,"
"You were born this way."
My genetics only go so far.
It gave me my body, my mind, and my tongue,
But that's all it gave.
I shaped everything else.

I love food,
I love bananas and rice crackers, but coconuts, not so much.
But sometimes,
this isn't about food.
People like to be rude.
It messes with me.
Just let me be.

“나만 다른게 싫어,”
I'm the only different one, I hate it.
“내 몸, 내 음식, 내 마음, 내 냄새, 내 피부, 내 머리카락, 모든 것,”
My body, my food, my mind, my smell, my skin, my hair, everything.
They point it out every day,
But there's no need, I see it too,
This is something in which I had no say
So just let me blend in for once.
Let me be the same.
After all, we're all humans, right?

Here's the problem,
Even when I find people
With the same tongue as me,
I'm still different,
Life just can't let me be.

I'm stuck in the middle.
Having both is a curse,
It hurts me, more than just a little
Too American for Asia,
Too Asian for America,
I guess I'll never fit in.

There's a chance I would've never known.
My wings would've never flown,
And I would've lived on without knowing how.
But my eyes are open now,
I see things anew.
I see you.

I don't just hear what you have to say.
I see your words,
I see what you hide under them.
Even if you didn't mean to hide them,
I see them better than you do.

"You have it so easy!"
At least you have your family with you,
At least you have people who look like you,
eat like you,
Talk like you,
At least you had it.
Don't tell me I have it easy if you did.

Do you have parents that started a new life in the middle of nowhere?
How often do you talk to your extended family in person? How often can you?
Do people ask you if you're related to strangers?
Do people speak slowly to you, assuming you won't understand?
Do people mock you without trying, hitting your weakest spots, your identity?

If you hear me,
And you get me,
I'm sorry.
I know.
I know how hard it is,
I know how tiring it is,
I know how lonely it is,
But if you can't take my words as your own,
Don't say shit to me about them.

This is my language, not yours.
No matter how much you study it, it's still mine.
This is the one part of me I will never let you control.
I let you control my food, my clothes, my culture, my closet,
But I will never let you control my tongue

your litter gave me scars

By Chloe Costa Baker

limerence
glimmers, hints
metal detector
spectral collector
roaming the sands
combing my hands
through rusted trash, washed-up and tarnished scraps
discarded sea glass shards and torn-up maps
holding on tight to anything that glints

tinder, splints
driftwood, flints
crutch or kindling
nurture inklings
to ignite or to salve
to inflict, to resolve
these building blocks are plentiful, essential
raft, vessel, raw material potential
but desert shores are empty of blueprints

shiver, wince
as swimmers rinse
inhibitions away
baptized by the spray
never plunging under water,
I hover, wonder longer
how others strike such bold strokes in their sleep
while shame would drown me the ankle-deep
anchored by this instinctive abstinence

limitless
innocence
they steer their ships
and chart their trips
I slowly build a model
construct details in a bottle
pleas to be rescued, never to be found
more grave than treasure buried underground
let sands of time obscure the evidence

phantom kiss
scant, sunless
fading gazes
scathing grazes
brush and burn, then melt and mangle
fantasize, fray, spiral, tangle
clutch moments in my palm, each stolen token
careless encounters, brief words barely spoken
gilded by dreams, lenses with brighter tints

fingertips
wistfulness
sharp, jagged, thin
sliced up my skin
but I chose to caress it
press it, trace your edges
tinged with blood, now sealed like lips, like lockets
incrimination hidden in my pockets
its scars haunted the surface ever since

His Reality

By Adriano Lewis

The potent smell of sunscreen filled the nose of the middle-aged man. He was clutching onto the small patches of hair around the side of his scalp and his six-year-old son by the arm. As his son played in the water around him, he gazed at the mass of people surrounding him. He noticed those who were just like him, clinging to their children and their marriages as if their lives depended on it. Many of them were dragged out of their homes, out to the long strip of the oceanside city to try and wring out what was left out of a dry relationship. Except after hours in the baking heat, there'd likely be an altercation right before the end of the family vacation and a silent car ride on the way back. Although it had yet to happen this time, he felt it was inevitable.

A small voice tried to say something to him, but he didn't care very much nor could he make out what it was saying. The man was too busy scouting the waves around him. The waves of people who wished they didn't peak in college. The waves of people who wished they waited a bit longer to give their parents grandchildren. The waves of people who couldn't rid their beer gut even after taking every possible measure. The waves of people who couldn't satisfy their wives no matter how persistent their efforts were. He saw his reflection in the waves. The man looked up to the sky and the noise of the waves crashing together faded into the sound of families around him attempting their best impressions of mid-afternoon fun.

The sun flashed into the man's eyes and he saw a flash of the man he once was. A fearless man who was never afraid to explore unfamiliar locations with his friends. A man who

was always the life of the party and would never be too timid around women. A man who was the best at every sport he played and the man who would never get shown up. The man was being tugged on by reality. Not that he cared, he was the one who would never back down from any challenge or “triple-dog dare” that crossed his path. He was the man that totaled his car after he drank half a bottle of bourbon on a Friday evening. He was the man who didn’t back down from the cliff over a waterfall and he was the man that made a moronic decision he never fully recovered from.

Reality tugged a bit harder, but he was a man surrounded by a sea of regret. He was the man who had his kid beside him one second and didn’t the next. He was the man who broke into a cold sweat and started to panic. He was the man who called out for his kid frantically and almost started to break down. He was the man who would never be able to go back to his wife if he lost their “pride and joy” that ruined their marriage. He was the man who called out some more in a desperate attempt to find his kid in the barren sea of shame that surrounded him. Reality tugged as hard as it could and finally the man found himself back on that Ocean City beach, with his child right beside him. The child wanted to jump waves with his father, as he looked down, smiled, and agreed. They ventured deeper into the waves surrounding them.

Ode to My Mechanical Pencil

By Jacob Liu

O my T-800:

How many times have I sat staring at my paper,

And wondered what I would do

With you

my third arm

my primitive tail if I ever had one.

your silver, metallic tip, the precision it gives

the sharpness, enough to penetrate my heart the first time I saw you.

What has your tip seen?

Chemical compound formulas, Conic sections;

Integration and differentiation;

My essay I pump out before English class ends.

Your touch, always so silky

S

M

O

O

T

. H

If I was an A4 paper, I would have begged to be caressed by you
Yes, you have been thrown into the pond (by me!)

The mud

And the hard concrete on a summer day

But that doesn't change that I love you so.

One day I'll take you to the top of the Himalayas,

To the bottom of the Mariana Trench

To outer space, to where no human (or T-800)

Have been before

But before that,

You sit in my pencil case

Before I forget to put you back

In my bag

at the end of class.

Fault Lines

By Chloe Costa Baker

Ormus (Rushdie)

Now and for eternity,
that songbird's restless soul sleeps:
anchored by death,
embraced by silence and
oblivion,
reduced to
darkness.

The prince of
godlike voice once charmed
the masses,
only to be torn to pieces by
grief.

You share your
musical gifts
with
your dead other half.

Knowing no melody can recreate
the face of your beloved,
you mourn
still being alive.

Deteriorate, rage, curse,
revel in the harmonies.

The cavernous earth captures your heart
when vocal chord vibrations fail,
and no songs pulse beneath
your fingers.

She slipped through
the cracks between worlds,
clear as day, to echo and fade into memory,
fault lines
forming this doomed reality. Your
lost,
tortured soul:
you knew, you looked, you saw the
tragic trajectory, but no
one could have prevented this.

Orpheus (Virgil)

One could have prevented this
tragic trajectory . . . But no.
You knew, you looked, you saw the
tortured soul
lost,
forming this doomed reality. *Your fault.* Lines,
clear as day, to echo and fade into memory,
the cracks between worlds.

She slipped through
your fingers,
and no songs pulse beneath.

When vocal chord vibrations fail,
the cavernous earth captures your heart.
Revel in the harmonies,
deteriorate, rage, curse
still being alive.

You mourn
the face of your beloved,
knowing no melody can recreate
your dead other half.

With
musical gifts,
you share your
grief,
only to be torn to pieces by
the masses.

Godlike voice once charmed
the prince of
darkness,
reduced to
oblivion.
Embraced by silence and
anchored by death,
that songbird's restless soul sleeps,
now and for eternity.

Nurturing Hope

By Russell Joarder

The old farmer had been living on his farm for nearly fifty years now, but he'd never seen anything like this before. The seemingly eternal winter was the result of a global war in which countries unleashed their nuclear weapons, causing the nuclear winter that devastated the world. All at once, the world around him seemed to be locked in eternal winter; snow and ice blanketed the land as far as the eye could see. Gray clouds loomed overhead every day like a heavy blanket, suffocating the land below with their weight. After a few days of sheltering, the farmer ventured out into his fields to check on his animals and plants, and he was met with a heartbreakin sight. All of his animals had perished in the cold, and all of his plants were frozen solid. The old man wept for what could have been. His tears froze on his beard as they rolled down his wrinkled face.

Day after day, he would search the fields in what he thought was a fruitless attempt at finding a sign of life. One day, though, he noticed a single baby tomato plant that was still alive amidst the frozen wasteland. The old man carefully dug it up and returned it to his home, where he took great care of it. He kept the soil moist and warm with blankets from his bed, giving it just enough light from a nearby window so that it could continue growing. As time went on, the old farmer relentlessly continued to care for the small tomato plant. He saw it as a symbol of hope, like a ray of sunshine breaking through the dark, ominous clouds —a reminder that life could still exist even in the bleakest of times. As the tomato plant grew taller and stronger, the farmer began to feel a sense of purpose once again. He knew that he couldn't bring back his beloved animals or restore his once-lush fields, but he could at least care for this one piece of precious life.

Other survivors in the area would come to visit the old man, marveling at the sight of the green leaves and hairy branches contrasting with their everyday gray and brown world. The farmer would spend hours talking to the tomato plant, telling it stories of the world before the war. He would reminisce about the warm sun on his skin, the sound of birds chirping in the morning, and the sweet taste of fresh berries picked from his garden. The tomato plant seemed to listen to the old farmer's stories as if it had a soul of its own. He knew that these memories were all he had left, but they gave him company and peace in the midst of the endless winter.

For the next few years, the old farmer and the nearby survivors lived off the rations they had saved in anticipation of the nuclear war. They ate sparingly, only taking what they needed to survive. Every month, the old farmer would give out small slices of sweet, story-filled tomatoes from the plant, giving everyone a window into what delights the future after the winter might hold. It was a difficult and trying time, but as the years went by, the weather slowly began to change.

The snow and ice began to melt, and the gray clouds that had once loomed overhead began to dissipate. The sun shone brighter, and the air grew warmer with each passing day. The old farmer and his neighbors began to cultivate crops from the seeds of old stockpiles and raise new animals that had survived from towns over, slowly but surely rebuilding what had been lost. It was a difficult journey, filled with sadness and hardship, but the farmer never lost sight of the hope that had started with that one small tomato plant. He knew that as long as they maintained even a single shred of hope, they could find a way to survive and thrive in this new world.

Out of Delirium

By Mark Ham

What a pity. Such a frail disintegrating body. At least in this sad nursing home, Eleanor could blend in as merely one among many. Among the others, broken mostly by time and age she felt comfortable. Here she could try to hide from her pain, her memories. The pieces on her familiar chess board never comforted her, they reminded her of her past, but they never tortured her with it like they did today. She stared down a knight and saw 256 possible routes to capture that bishop on the other side of the board with it. She couldn't move it in her current state, she doubts she will ever be able to again. Even without a chessboard in front of her, she could never forget her past; not while that queen on her side of the board glared at her. Wicked white crown with its unwavering, sinister gaze. It didn't have eyes, but it was scolding her! Isn't that cute! No, it wasn't because it worked. She felt powerless. She couldn't move it.

She had always played chess, long as she could remember: her mother told her to play this silly game to keep her mind sharp, "else you'll be dumb like the other kids...and me" She wished she had played with those kids; maybe she wouldn't have ended up in this poor old nursing home. She didn't know how to have fun because of her mother. This was her mother's fault. All she knew how to do now was memorize, observe, predict, and outthink. And she did it All. Day. Long.

She remembered her lessons: "Memorize this, I'm going to quiz you later." "Watch this, I'm going to quiz you later." "Tell me what I'm going to do next . . . Incorrect. Memorize that...I'm going to quiz you later." The quizzes! Oh the quizzes, they never stopped. It hadn't served her anything

but a pathetic body and one inhumanly keen mind. The doctors said that her mind was getting worse now too, but she knew they hadn't an inkling what was happening to her. They were wrong, they had to be. She would prove them wrong. She had to prove it to herself. Move the knight. Distract yourself. Do something simple, a common move to the front line. Castling would take too much effort, best to keep it simple. "Start small," that's what she had to remind herself. She wouldn't get better if she gave up, cornered with kings and queens all over her. She had to try.

Someone burst through the door. "Eleanor! Where are you?" The rude woman turned to face her. "There you are, of course, you're playing chess. I'm taking you to the ER. Your mother is hurt, I bet she's gonna die soon. Put your chessboard away and come with me." She turned to go but of course, Eleanor couldn't follow. She couldn't move a single chess piece. So she just kept on trying to move that knight. Her mother had died long ago, this woman was out of her mind. Or maybe... maybe Eleanor was wrong, maybe her mother was still alive, but it wouldn't matter, she doubted she would want to see her anyway.

She was right of course, it didn't matter, because the rude woman pulled her out of her chair and dragged her to a car. Why should she be forced to confront her pain? That was supposed to happen on her own time; ...how long had it been? She hated her mother, right? Why was she in a nursing home with old people? Why was she in a car? Where was her mother?

They arrived and Eleanor tried to run, she had to see, this wasn't real. But she fell, and someone caught her. The walk to her mother's room was excruciating— and there she was.

Lying in bed, peaceful...not dead, but not full of vigor and vitality either.

“Mom,” she said as the tears finally came. “I ... am so sorry.” It wasn’t her mother’s fault she was in this state; she always knew that. Her mother was the only one who cared enough to try to prevent what she had become. She was the one who taught her to create light in her mind amidst the looming darkness devouring her body. She could be absolved...on her deathbed, next to her daughter. Eleanor wasn’t too late; she didn’t feel guilt for her years spent in odium. The time was perfect to comfort her poor soul.



Art by Alessia Gao

there's no place like my madness

By Melanie Flynn

They say to forgive and forget
But I'd rather resent and remember
To err is to silver as to forgive is to Santa's sleigh balls
You've broken me in more eggs than one
Have you gotten it out of your hand?
I guess to make an omelet you gotta break a few legs But don't
judge someone until you've pissed a mile in their pants Because
the kit is mightier than the caboodle
And the thinly sliced bread's in my mouth now
And there's no place like my madness

Looks like you've woke up in the wrong side of your pants
Now you're stuck between a pickle and a hard place They
say don't judge an apple a day til you've killed the cat
Because you mess with the lion, you get the beans So
you've eaten your last egg now and
Thats a blanket you can't put in the freezer
But if that's the can of worms you're willing to die on
Then know there's no place like my madness

1000 worms are louder than words
And you may be able to kill the sharpest egg in the attic
but you can't make it drink
You really scrambled my butter
opening this can of worms,
Now you lie on it
know there's no place like my madness
there's no place like my madness

Now you're back, a sight for sore fish
You should speak softly
You say easy does it
But easy gets out of hand
Remember, actions speak louder than worms
You're all captain, no crunch
Your revenge is a dish best served over my dead body
there's no place like my madness

We used to be thick as two thieves in a pod
I guess ignorance is a fish
Slow and steady burned the bridge
Now I'll give you a taste of your own silly goose chase
The sky's limit wasn't paved in a day
You'll see good things come to flatter fish To
make an omelet you gotta break a few legs

It's not your onions
So have a nice plague
And die wondering

The Farm

By Sam DiStefano

As I awaken, the lush canopy of a forest surrounds me, but I am disoriented and unsure of my location or the time. My rumbling stomach and unkempt appearance indicate that I have been here for some time. As I wander, I stumble upon a babbling creek and observe my reflection, surprised by the stranger staring back at me, though we appear to be of similar stature.

The distant sound of gunfire pervades the air, strangely bringing a sense of comfort and recognition. I know I am home. Where is home? As I wander aimlessly, I eventually come across a familiar-looking house, one which I knew as mine. I make my way towards the door, but the person who answers it is foreign to me, cutting our introduction short with the slam of a door.

Puzzled but undaunted, I head back in the direction that I believe to be my neighbor's house. Navigation is made difficult by the distinct lack of any street names or addresses as if this place was never meant to be found or explored. Along the way, I encounter police cars that are devoid of any identifiable markings or town names, making me question the reality of my situation. I recall my parents referring to this place as "The Farm," even though there is no farmland for the next ten miles.

After walking for what feels like hours, I find a bench and decide to lie down, falling asleep despite the constant volleys of rifles which have only gotten louder and more frequent since I found myself here.

Suddenly, I am surrounded by two armed officers who demand that I identify myself. My mind reels from the day's strange events, and I struggle to speak. They accuse me of trespassing on a military facility, and before I know it, I am forcibly dragged into a vehicle.

When I come to, I find myself in a sterile, gray room with a friendly man sitting across from me. He offers me a glass of water and begins to ask me questions. I am still in a daze, attempting to make sense of the chaos that surrounds me.

The man chuckles and inquires about my name, then delves deeper, seeking to know how I ended up in the military facility. I inform him that I have no idea, as this is my home. He scrutinizes me carefully and affirms his belief in my account, then requests that I provide a phone number to contact someone I know. I give him my mother's number, and as he dials, I watch him transition from calm to bewildered.

After what feels like an eternity, he hangs up the phone and reveals what he knows: "Noah has been missing for 10 years." I am left in a state of disbelief as he turns to me and poses the question that has haunted me since my initial awakening in the forest: "Who are you?"

Be You

By Jayden Kelsey

Be yourself, through the long days and
Nights. Through adversity and fights.
What separates you?
Why do you wake up in the morning? Do
you get up before the birds chirp, Or
wait for the birds?

What about those difficult days? How
do you recover from them? Will you
persevere through the day if the evil
guys come?

Being yourself is effortless
Just get under the blankets

When times are dreadful,
how you handle them is what
sets you apart from the crowd.
Be you...

Global Storytelling Section

Edited by Chloe Costa Baker



Art by Alessia Gao

History itself is informed by various narratives. With this in mind, creative writing can be used as a means to process and make sense of major historical and international events. It can also serve as a method of realizing and articulating one's own national identity. The following section includes a selection of poetry, short fiction, and personal essays by Westtown students that address themes of world history and global citizenship.

What is Nationality?

By Oleksandra Khalo

What is nationality? Definitely something that unites people through their origins and, therefore, cultures. The culture of a particular ethnic group can be shaped over hundreds, thousands of years. And as a result, people receive a priceless heritage, which highlights all beliefs, values, traditions, and belongings of ethnic groups. But it still leads to the question, "Why is it so important?" Because maybe it doesn't matter at all, as the question of matter is relative. However, people's opinions of an individual can easily change after they receive knowledge about the individual's ethnic origin. Thus, it can be concluded that the masses' perspective directly depends on stereotypes, and practices like genocide and racism prove that. But if the stereotypes based on nationalities are deceptive, then what determines who we are? I want to explore this question based on my own ethnicity.

To begin with, I am Ukrainian. And in February 2022, my ethnicity became the most valuable thing that I have. I am proud of being Ukrainian. My nationality helps me find self-determination and purpose in life. My origins, culture, and history are irreplaceable to me. But all Ukrainians have to pay with their lives for being who they are. Russians always tried to destroy my country. A war that the world noticed only now began a thousand years ago. I feel so devastated when I realize that every single one of my ancestors has experienced genocide. The number of murders, tortures, war crimes, and terrorist actions Russia has done to Ukraine cannot be even approximately determined. The fact that millions of Ukrainians were just erased from Earth's surface because of their ethnicity seems wild, but this is the price we have to pay for our freedom, again and again. However, the constant fight to save our culture impacted the Ukrainian people in a special way, which shaped our nationality.

On one hand, historically genocide is a devastation for our nation. Millions of Ukrainians were and are still murdered for just existing. When Ukrainian lands were occupied by Russia, the Ukrainian language was forbidden, and our culture was proclaimed a non-existent one. Any Ukrainian books, religious items, or traditional clothing would be burned by its owner. Any resistance would be punished by death or torture. Holodomor is a significant example. Russians desperately try to destroy Ukrainians for a thousand years. They try to erase the memories of our culture, history, and values, but here is where Ukrainian ethnicity plays its role. We are a strong nation. We are brave, enduring, courageous, and independent. It passes on through generations and cannot just be taken away. Our love for freedom shapes our culture, which impacts all Ukrainians and their identities. Even if sometimes we don't realize how united we are by our ethnicity, it is still there. It's part of all of us.

Moreover, this ethnic connection to my land and its history inspires me to do more for my country. When the war started in 2014, I was only 8, and I didn't fully understand what was going on. But now, when I'm 16, I know what we are fighting for and I make my own contribution to my country's history in any way I can. Ukrainian history and culture raised me, they made me the person I am today. My origin has shaped the way I see myself and how other people perceive me. Even now, when I'm thousands of miles away from home, I still know who I am and what I am supposed to do, and all of that thanks to mystical blood connection. So going back to the question, "Does nationality matter?". Absolutely. Every individual's ethnicity is a treasure; it's irreplaceable and its impact is inevitable. My nationality made me a strong and fearless person. It determined who I am, and I will never underestimate the value of my belonging. Nationality creates history, and we are history.

Promises

By Liam Sellers-Johnston

here we stand,
in a Broken land
land Broken,
shattered by the hand
of Men who handed
a promised piece,
of forgotten Peace
Pieced together from dreams. a
People longing to take what was
Beautiful
Verdant peace, not theirs
Given only to share,

to Own
what gave in to Greed. Taken by force,
here we stand
in a stolen land,
A land for freedom
for who is Free
but for we.
For a freedom
so valuable,
so precious,
we had to protect it
For only we
could save it
For only we
could enjoy it
For only we
could destroy it
For only we
Shattered the land, the
land where we stand.

Nationality

By Hayato Ishii Ynoue

Nationality, nationality is something that has given me many problems throughout my whole life. The exact definition of nationality is, “The state or fact of being a citizen of a particular nation.” I was born in Mexico, my mom in Peru, my dad in Mexico, and my grandparents on both sides in Japan. I have a mixed culture from three countries: Mexico, Peru, and Japan. I have always felt that I don’t have one defined nationality, because when I’m in Mexico I cannot feel 100% Mexican, and when I’m in Japan I cannot feel 100% Japanese. But all these problems have made my identity a great and unique one.

Because I have three cultures running through my family, I am a person with a mixture of all. My family grabbed whatever they liked the most from each culture and gave it to us. The funny, nice, extroverted, and sometimes a little too scandalous from the Mexican culture, and the respect, pride, and order from the Japanese culture. Having multiple nationalities is something I feel proud of because I can represent different cultures and traditions.

As I said before, I don’t feel totally identified with one culture. I feel myself in the middle of both, and even though I feel pride, it sometimes gives me rough times. In Mexico, I receive a lot of comments because of my Asian characteristics. With time my family has taught me how to manage those comments, but sometimes it is difficult to keep control of my emotions and actions.

I can feel disconnected from the Mexican culture because even though I was born there, I don’t have any Mexican look, and I feel disconnected from the Japanese culture because even though I look Japanese, I wasn’t born there. So, in conclusion, my nationality and my identity are things that I will have to carry my whole life, and I should feel proud of them.

Words of Generational Despair

By Michelle Olak

The crashing of the waves, The hunting of our race.

The issues from our love, To our food, To our face.

The reason for our despair, Starts from here.

The Atlantic slave trade, like a sword and a blade,

Used to slit the throats of my people, in order to make us fade.

So many lost, so many souls unknown,

so many loved ones gone, and none with a tombstone.

From living room home, to drowning alone, the captors' only goal,

Was to make the white man known.

The hate for the black man, is more than the killer,

That silent scream could make the sun shiver.

Silenced voices, silenced souls, silenced people, yet no one knows

No one knows their mother, father, no one cares or even bothered

The domestic slave trade, more to be saved,

No more brother and or sister, to escape is to be slayed.

A free black, still a slave, still running, still afraid.

The underground railroad, a passage to be free,

But right here, death and desire feel like the same thing.

To be free and alive is not to be free and live,

For the whites are lurking in jealousy, with no fucks to give.

Nothing to give for the life of a young black boy,

for he lingered on the street too long, so now he must be gone.

Hung up high, so the crowd could cheer, another one down,

another mother's tears.

Using Christianity to try and justify their blasphemy,

Saying that the Lord created them to be better than me.

From fighting for freedom, to fighting for rights,
Rights of a voice, rights of a home, even the rights to be all right.

Rights only gained by the power of money,
But without it there is no value in our blackness.
Boycotting like Parks could only get us so far,
for the system was built from head to toe, to shred us all apart.

And as the whites complain about the hoods they made,
We fight to evolve, to be accepted, when only little has changed.

Its funny how war is the only thing they see,
And fighting one another is the only way to get our peace.
Even now as we're free, the justice system still holds the key.
The key to the shackles of segregation and inequality,
As we try to free ourselves from something we were born to be.
No longer slaves, but we are still not seen as whole human beings.

Finding My America

By Tally Gneiser

My eyelids flutter lightly as slices of sunlight pierce through the wooden deck above. The droplets of light hit me as I shake off the groggy fog that settled in during the night. As my eyes begin to adjust I can just make out the faces of my mother and older brother in the corner of the cargo hold. They seem engaged in a hushed argument consisting of whispers to elude my ears. Our voyage has not been an easy one. The tension and worry in the air are palpable and thick. Many of our fellow cargo companions are sick of the stress. I grow increasingly bored and unwell by the day, and I wish I was back at my home with my dolls.

My mother forced us onto a packet ship to start anew in glorious America. I had only known these sea-traveling wood buckets to carry mail, so it came as quite a shock when Ma was ushering us below deck. Germany had been my home before this dingy hold. We had not been particularly well off but we had enough to get by. Our small cottage resting on a light country hill was decorated with fading wallpaper. It was our home; Ma and Father raised me and my older brother Henry there. After Father was lost in a riot in the square, Ma hasn't looked quite right. It's as if something has come askew in her head, her eyes reflecting a tint that I have never seen. Father's disappearance has nestled a sadness in her heart, which rears its ugly head at Henry the most. Henry got my Father's height and eyes. My mother misses those eyes the most. When Henry starts one more of their many fights, it usually ends with a sad whimper from Ma as she stares into his eyes remembering her love. She would never say it to me, but I know this boat is her ticket away from her grief. They would never enlighten me with what their quarrels concern but I can tell Ma's decision to leave Germany is what upsets Henry the most. I wish to throw my hat in the ring but even if I were to have a hand it would scarcely be considered.

A sharp thud overhead breaks my reflective trance. Curiosity and fear ripples through the cargo hold and many confused and anxious eyes meet mine. From above, we hear the captain shout, "Land Ho!" Finally! It had been too many long months since we had left our home. I feel an electric excitement spark through me. I begin to gather my meager belongings that are strewn on my small hammock where I had rested on this journey. A sudden jolt clues our docking. The shout from above to unload begins the shuffling of people and things. Ma and Henry gather up our things as we ascend the steps to the deck. The stench of fish and the sound of the wharf greet me on deck. Ma ushers me along off the boat and stops to discuss something with a strange man. He hands her some papers in exchange for a small pocket of change. Ma grasps my wrist and we make our way toward the quaint wharf town laid out in front of us.

The cobblestone street clashes with the bottoms of the people filling the road, creating a symphony of clicking as we walk towards the banking office. We pass many buildings coated with fading paint and old signs. The smells of the wood and the nearby market draw my attention away from Ma and Henry. They enter the banking office and leave me outside to window shop at the pawn shop next door. I run my hand along the glass that separates me from the beautiful dresses and trinkets that litter the window shelf.

Out of the corner of my eye, I catch a small group of children around my age playing in the alley just around the corner. They are sketching a strange series of connected boxes on the alley street with a piece of white chalk. Once they finish drawing they begin hopping around one at a time like they have stepped barefoot on a sharp rock. My curiosity gets the better of me and I wander over to figure out what they are doing. I walk up to a fiery red-haired girl with a freckle-painted face and a light slate-colored modest dress.

“Hello,” I say.

“Elo there,” she replies.

“What are those strange squares on the floor you are dancing around on ?” I inquire.

“Hopscotch? Have you never played in a round of hopscotch before? Why, you must be fresh off one of those boats. Never have I met a girl who hasn't played hopscotch. Where are you coming from?”

“Germany.”

“Ahh Germany,” she sighs as she spins around. “I have always wanted to go to Germany. I guess I used to. If a nice girl like you left then it must not be a place for a lady like me.”

“Oh, I don't know. I quite liked it there. We only left because my Ma decided she wanted to come to America.”

“Ohh, my mother talks about people that travel the sea to leave their homes. She says that because it's 1856 all these brave people want to join our nation. What is your name, oh brave one?”

“Adeline. Adeline Bauer. Who might you be?” I inquire.

“Eliza Frank, and this is our club The Wharfers.” She points at a taller sullen raven haired boy and his stoutly sunny blond companion who are quarreling over who gets to hop on the chalked squares next.

“That one with the lank arms is Benedict and that round one is Harold.” She sighs, “Harold, Benedict, come meet Adeline, our new friend. She is joining our club.”

The boys come thundering over and stare at me quizzically like I'm a new invention they've never seen. They drag me over to the squares and begin to walk me through the game. I watch them fly through the squares and study their feet. I step up to the edge and take the first couple of steps quite slowly but soon I realize it's quite easy. I go again and again, taking turns with my three new companions. I only break away from our fun because of an argument that starts to grow louder coming in our direction.

A squeaky male voice shouts, "I saw them, I swear! They were just around the corner. Those ruffians that messed up your store!"

A deep husky voice responds, "You better not be lying, Frank. Not like last time. I will string you up with the lot of them!"

Worried looks travel from me to Eliza and the two boys. Eliza grabs me and we begin to run down the alleyway away from the bank. We are sprinting as the men round the corner behind us. I hear the thunder of a booming voice.

"There they are! Get them!"

I feel a wave of terror drowns my mind. Sharp pops sound behind me as bullets wiz past me. I don't dare look back. I have to keep going.

How does nationality impact me?

By Amy Vaduva

My whole life, I have always wondered if people outside of my country know where Romania even is. It wasn't until I moved to the U.S. that I started taking so much pride in my own nationality. I believe that nationality is who we present ourselves as, relating to the place we were born. It is more than just a place you come from, it's a story that brings you on your own path as well. I am Romanian, and my whole family is Romanian. Since I arrived in the U.S., I have been very eager to share my culture and ethnic background with my friends. To me, nationality is one of the most interesting aspects of my life, which stays with me even through different schools with various cultural backgrounds and even moving to the other side of the world.

To start, I would like to reflect back to the times when I was in my public elementary school. Learning with the traditional Romanian teaching practices made me weirdly comfortable in my own identity. Fast forward to fifth grade when I moved to an International American school still in the same city. It was all going well until I realized that I would now be speaking English in all of my classes and with all of my friends. It was honestly a slight cultural shock, but it strengthened me for what was about to come when I moved to the U.S. in 2019. When I came to the U.S., I was very defensive of my nationality, as well as very proud of it. I had a slight accent due to Romanian being my first language, but it eventually faded. I believe that language plays an essential role in the development of my identity. It is still a charm I hold with me every day since I left my country.

Furthermore, for a bit of background of my culture, Romania is a Balkan country with a Latin language, Romanian. As far as unique cultural aspects, there are many superstitions that I follow to this day as part of my culture. For example: if you break a mirror you will be the happy beneficiary of 7 years of bad luck or if you whistle inside a closed space, bad luck will be present as well. To add, traditions-wise, Romanians are Orthodox Christians (being the only Latin country with orthodox religion) which means we celebrate saints as second birthdays. Usually, each Romanian person will have a middle name that relates to one of the saints. My middle name is Nicole, which stands for St. Nicholas. I celebrate St.Nicholas as my second birthday. St.Nicholas is a “special” saint who is also the face of a bigger holiday, similar to Children’s Day. Romania is also the only Latin country in the middle of many Slavic countries. Many people make the mistake of calling Romanian a Slavic language, when in fact it is a Latin language. My country is also very innovative, with one of the fastest internet connections, the second-largest administrative building, and beautiful monuments and castles. All in all, Romanian culture is very fascinating and I recommend that when people come to visit my country, they embrace the good parts of it such as the mountains, museums, atmosphere, and delicious food. Romania is a versatile country that embraces all visitors and the majority of us speak English or French as our second language.

Finally, Romania not only is a beautiful country to visit, but it is also a political ally and part of NATO. I love my country and I am very proud of my nationality, although it is not very well-known. Politically, many people could be surprised by what Romania holds. Romania is one of the countries in Europe with missile shields, which were funded by the U.S. It was part of a bigger plan in order to bring more security to Europe and not just Western countries. Alongside NATO, Bucharest 9 is an organization formed by the president of Romania and the president of Poland. As of current events, two weeks ago Joe Biden met with Bucharest 9 and a group of NATO allies in order to follow up with their unconditional support towards Ukraine, even one year after the first Ukraine-Russia attack.

Heritage Academy Section

The following section contains selections of creative writing from students of Junior High School 2 at Heritage Academy. Located in Mankessim, Ghana, Heritage Academy is the sister school of Westtown School. It was founded in 2004 by former Westtown teacher Kwesi Koomson.



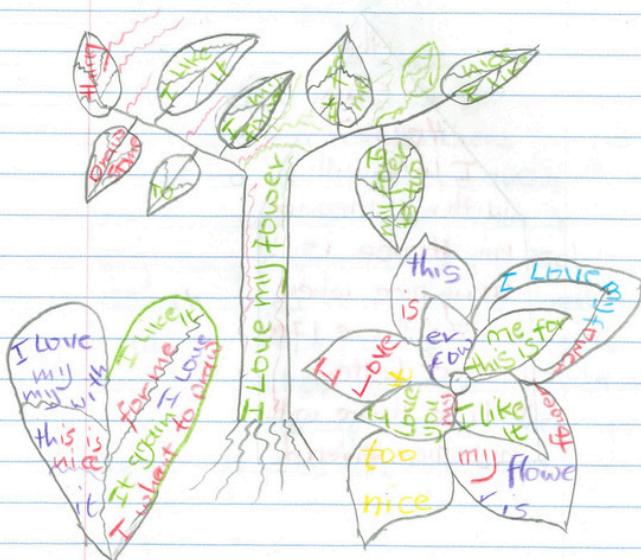
In March 2023, a small group of Westtown students had the opportunity to visit our sister school and teach middle school classes. My friend Maya Jain and I taught creative writing, engaging in prose exercises that captured a certain setting, acrostic poems that described a classmate, and concrete poems that were structured to form a picture. This is a collection of some of the work produced by JH2 students.

-Chloe Costa Baker '23

I Love my Flag



Emmanuel Arkoh



Abiba Amadu

Manaf

By Faruck Sarful

Manaf is very creative
And good friend
Nice
Absolutely kind and
Funny

Faruck

By Manaf Eduah

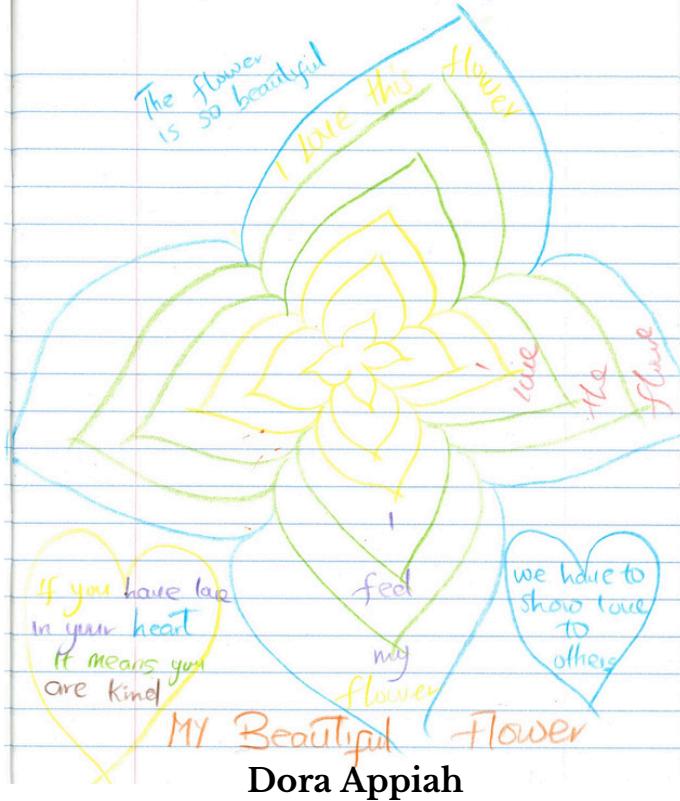
Funny like a monkey
A rich person
Run fast in a race
Unfriendly boy
Creative boy
Kind person

Deborah

By Nuratu Yusif

Decent
Educated
Beautiful
Old
Rose
Always nice
Healthy

This is a flower



Volley is nice

I like Volleyball because volleyball is a nice game

Volleyball brings money in the family

Volleyball help us to travel

Volleyball help us to know more skills

Samuel Odoom

Dorcas

By Deborah Atiemo

Decent
Obedient
Respect
Concerned
Always happy
Serious

Birds

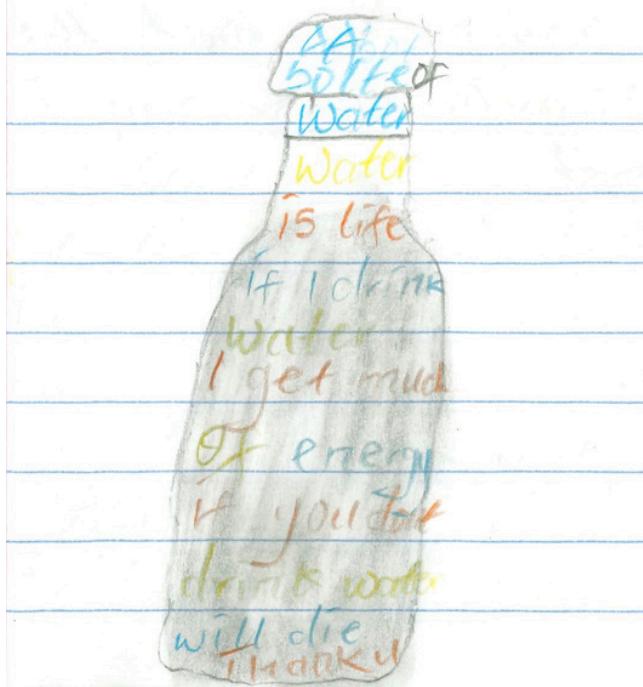
By Faruck Sarful

Birds are so colourful
And they are so beautiful
They really like food
But they are so good
They are so lovely
And they are kindly

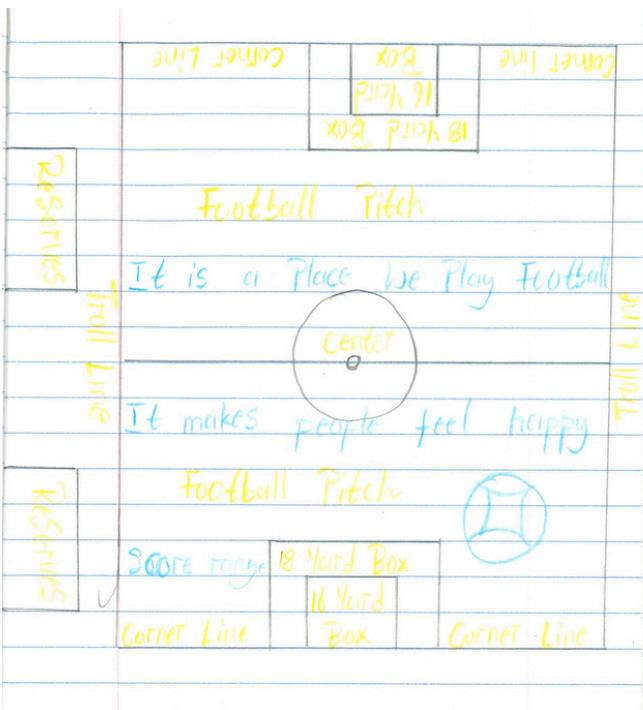
Hospital

By Deborah Atiemo

The Doctor in that hospital is so caring. He is from Ajumako. He is called Dr. Kwabena Mensah. He lives with his family in Ajumako. He has two daughters and one boy. He saves lives and he heals people who are sick. And the hospital was painted blue and green.



Dominic Noah Assan



Richmond Nyarkuh

School

By Hannah Nsor

School is a place we go for education. School helps in getting knowledge and also helps us to see what is right and what is bad. In school, we have a lot of teachers. They teach us different classes. School is a very exciting place. You will see a lot of people over there.

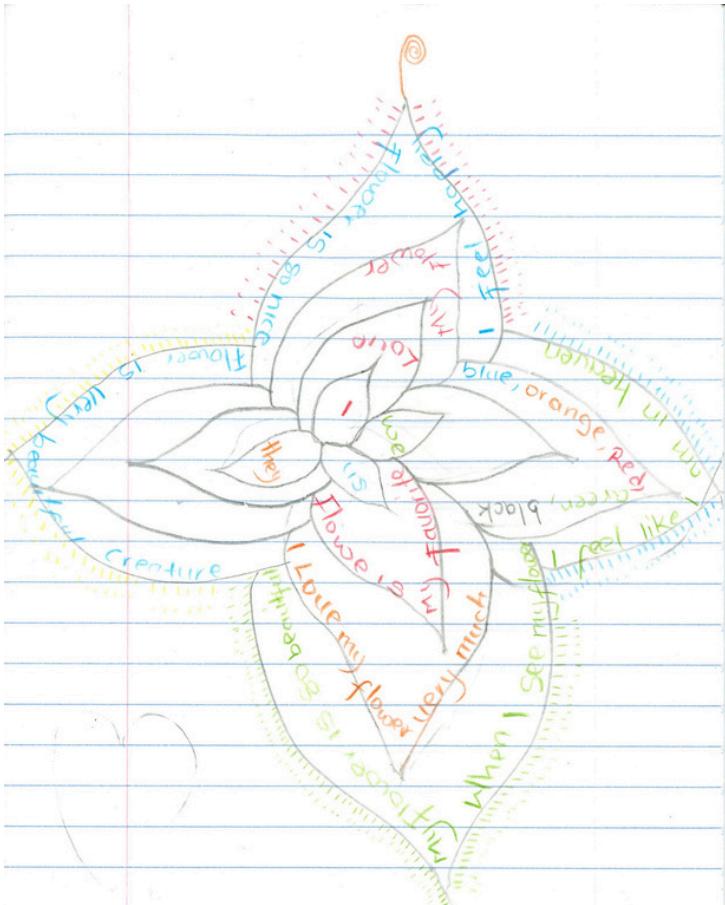
Market

By Gloria Andoh

Techiman Market is the market I have seen in the Brong Ahafo Region. It is the biggest market in Brong Ahafo. The market is held on Tuesday so Tuesday is the business day in the town. The market starts on Monday evening. People from outside Techiman arrive on Monday to prepare for the next day. Some traders even display their goods on Monday evening for sale. The market has a lot of sheds purposefully built for the traders. Other traders too have their kiosks in which they display their goods. The lorry park is not all that far from the market. The market is closer to the stream.

The town becomes full of activities during the market day, such as buying, selling, and people drinking. In fact, a lot of people from every nook and cranny of the country come to sell their wares.

The types of goods commonly found in the market include fish, textile, cocoyam, and yams. People make a lot of noise in the market, especially the hawkers. From the look of things, the market provides much more revenue for them.



Irene Anobil



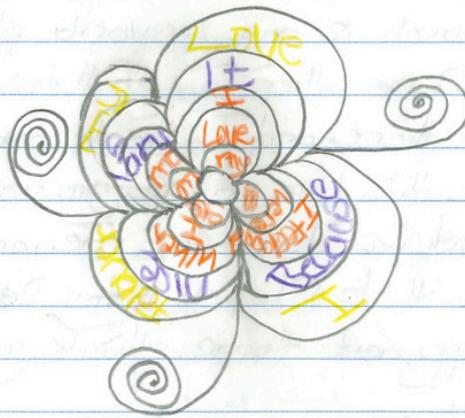
Judith Inkoom

It's About Love

By Christabel Koomson

In 1925, a tiny Sanitorium for mental patients was established on a farm in Topeka, Kansas, by a father and his two sons who had recently graduated from medical school. These two doctors were Karl and Will Menninger. The clinic they started has become world famous. Karl Menninger summed up their philosophy this way: "Love is the medicine for the sickness of mankind. We can live if we have love."

How elusive, however, is that word love! It is derived from the Indo-European root leubh, which means "to be fond of" or "to desire." Love is a strong feeling of attachment or devotion. In our day-to-day living, we can see two basic kinds of love. First, consider a man who loves apple pie because of the pleasure it gives him. This kind of love is centered on oneself; it has been called the love of desire. Secondly, consider a man who loves a friend. He wishes that other person such good things as health, success, and job satisfaction. This "other-centered" love is called the love of friendship. In this kind of love, the other person isn't just a handy source of pleasure or someone to be used, that other person's welfare is the main concern.



thank you for coming here.

Jennifer Adobah

