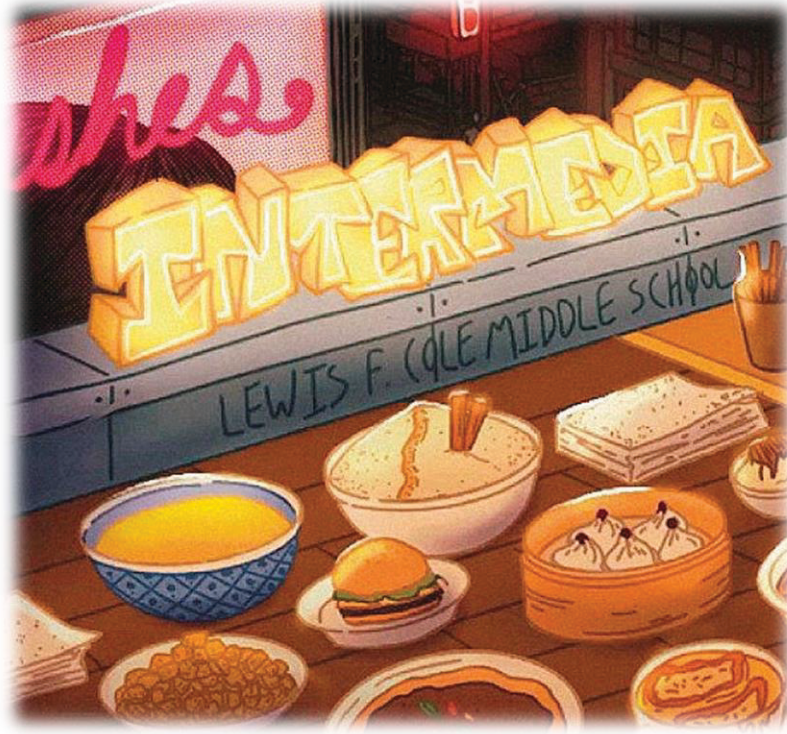


Intermedia 2022-2023

Volume 51

Lewis F. Cole Middle School
Art & Literary Magazine



Cover Art and Title Page
Ashley Park '24 – Digital Art



Lewis F. Cole Middle School
467 Stillwell Avenue, Fort Lee, NJ 07024

A proud member of the Columbia Scholastic Press Association

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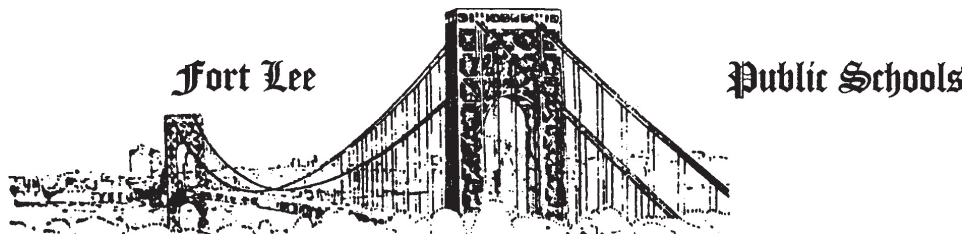
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INTERMEDIA 2022-2023

Volume 51

Recipient of a Silver Crown Award

at the Columbia Scholastic Press Association 2023 Spring Convention

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We wish to take this opportunity to thank all who have contributed their talents in both the literary and art sections of this publication. Special thanks to the Fort Lee School District for financially supporting our art and literary magazine.

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2022-2023 INTERMEDIA

Theme: **Bon Appétit**

Art is collaboration. It allows humans to connect beyond traditional means. Without it, many things would not be possible: growth; community; truth. This year's theme is our way of cultivating art in all of its forms, features, and varieties – allowing us to dine at a table topped with cuisines of all kinds. This would not be possible without the multiculturalism that has flourished in Fort Lee, enabling artists from around the world to sow the seeds of their imagination, display beautiful truths with their talents, and reap the rewards of their bountiful harvest. Though *Intermedia* has always promoted the creative aspirations of all people, this issue specifically embraces the many facets of the human experience across borders and beyond time periods. No matter where we stem from, we have the comfort of knowing that our art transcends the limitations of our world and represents what we all are: human.

Mission Statement:

Intermedia strives to promote and foster the creative aspirations in the literary and artistic fields of all students in the Lewis F. Cole Middle School through a showcase of their works. *Intermedia* exhibits works of art and literature that our middle school students have produced over the school term. We accumulate the works of our pupils and compile them into a magazine, which our editors organize and bring to life. We provide our students with an opportunity to express themselves and inspire creativity in others. We bring values of happiness and success to our students.

The cover was designed by Ashely Park '24.

All layout spreads were created by our Art/Layout Editors,
Carolina Perez '23 and Brianna Dominguez '24.



Sunset Before the Storm
Carolina Perez '23
Acrylic Paint



Bouquet of the Day
Yuju Oh '24
Watercolor

Section 1: Seeds

Olivia Rhee '24

"I'm off to the lot Dad!" I shouted through the house of boxes and empty frames. No response. I didn't expect one anyways. The divorce hadn't hit him hard, but instead, it gave him the chance to simply ignore it. Ignore his job, ignore his tasks, and ignore me. I couldn't find it in myself to care at this point. There was hope blooming in my pocket, a fresh, bright bucket of water in my hand, and a stainless-steel spade in the other. I was overly prepared (and terribly underdressed in basketball shorts and a random tee, but who cares?) as I shoved my headphones on and played my beloved music playlist. With *Hey There Delilah* playing in the background, I stopped in front of the faded iridescent door of my neighbor. I didn't know her name, just that she was old. Like, really old. She took care of her grandson after his parents passed. She herself had cancer and has told me multiple times (in the span of the two days I've been here) that she doesn't expect to live too long. Her half-hearted chuckles following closely behind. I considered knocking on her door, just to tell her that I was going to the garden. After all, she's the one who told me about it, and told me that she felt that I'd be the person to bring more people in.

"Teenagers in this apartment... Well, they have better things to do nowadays than being baked in the sun." She had told me. Yet I held hope. Why else would I be planting irises? A symbol of hope will make it come true. Yes, it took fourteen weeks to grow, but that didn't mean that it'd fail to sprout. I haven't told the woman yet, but I know it'll work. I need it to work. She had told me of the friends she made every year in the garden, and I needed that. Friends. The people to stick by me through the heated summer and biting

winters so that I won't be through this alone. So that I have someone better than dad to be with. The tangible hope in my pocket felt heavier as I stepped down the stairs, the water of the bucket tipping dangerously side to side. Once the sun became much more prominent, I took a good look around at the lot. However, I didn't see other people. I saw abandoned squares of dirt and a lot so empty that I half-expected tumbleweeds to suddenly pop up from nowhere. Nevertheless, I approached a square of land in just the right position from the sun and started to dig with my spade. It took a few minutes, yet I didn't hear anything but my music playing. There were no footsteps, no voices, no nothing. I slowly ripped open my seed package, still listening carefully for footsteps or the clang of a shovel past the song *Since I Saw Vienna*. Three seeds went into the ground, and I pat the soil on top of them. My dangerously full bucket of water finally lost its weight as I poured its entirety on the seeds. A bit much, but I trusted that the diminutive bucket would be small enough. I stood and turned

abruptly, expecting someone, anyone, to come down and join me. No one. The tumbleweeds of my imagination seemed much more real now. I trudged back up the flights of stairs and to the

apartment. Through the thin walls, I could hear dad shouting into his phone, most likely at mom. I turned the volume up of *Alone in the Dark* and went to my room of boxes and dripping loneliness. The sun shone so brightly in the sky, yet the darkness of the room stood out too much against it. I collapsed on the bed and took a second to peer out the window. There was no sign that the soil had been disturbed since I'd left. Was there really no one interested in the garden? Perhaps I spent the day like that, staring out the window, song after song playing in my head. Dinner was

The tumbleweeds of my imagination seemed much more real now.

spent alone, with dad still shouting on the phone with a voice so hoarse that I expected it to crack. It was a week after the day that I'd planted the irises that I knocked on the door of the old woman. However, for the first time since I'd done so, she didn't respond. Not even a whisper came from behind the door. I stood outside that door, shuffling from foot to foot. What would she tell me?

"That garden is dear to many people here," She told me the first time I spoke to her, "Those people have come and gone, fewer and fewer each year. Yet they'll always find a way there when they're in need. They just need a push sometimes."

A push.

A barrage of ideas heaved against the doors of my mind. Maybe—just maybe—I could be that push. People would come flooding in for events, and I could do that. I could escape to the garden every week and do *something*. People would come, they'd have fun, and they'd stay.

They'd plant their seeds next to mine and speak to me with such excitement that I'd barely match it.

They'd plant their seeds next to mine and speak to me with such excitement that I'd barely match it. Yes. Yes, that would work. I cranked up *Life By The Sea* and began the first of fourteen weeks of ideas: flyers. The standard flyers for festivities and parties. The empty house was silent and Dad's screaming was interrupted by sleep, so I took that as a chance to snatch some printer paper from his room. Five sheets were enough, right? Word of mouth was certainly powerful. Several messy designs and crossed-out Sharpie mistakes later, I had five (fairly sloppy) papers. Now for the right people. I looked at the door of the old woman, hoping for answers.



Hillside Beauty
Briana Santaella '24
Watercolor



Full Moon
Yanna Cuerto '24
Watercolor

The Price of Progress

I wonder if this still qualifies as progress.
When I wake up in the early morning, forehead damp and
Hands cold.
Does it still count?
How do we even measure progress?
By seconds that have passed since we thought about it?
Or by seconds that have passed since we didn't think about it?
Is this progress?
Can I call any of this progress?
Maybe I survived the war, but did I survive the aftermath?
The words keep falling out, I need to patch the hole before something bad happens
Too late, I can feel my throat contracting and my eyes going black and I can't breathe I can't breathe I
Can't breathe.
What if it's worse next time? What if there is no next time?
I can't feel my fingers. Midsummer frostbite hits me like a baseball
Am I improving? Am I getting worse? Am I going up or down?
I wish I stayed. I wish I didn't slam the door.
What would have happened, then? What would happen to my not-progress?
The days I can feel the sun on my face I wonder if it's the moon
The days I'm staring at the moon I wish for the sun.
The days I look for answers, the questions stare back at me.
The days I look for questions, answers to ones I don't know wave hello.
Coins slip through my fingers and I choke on the golden dust floating around
I'm swallowing fortunes one by one
I can feel myself fading away as I think,
This is the price of progress.

Hina Postilion '24

This Shadow Is Regret

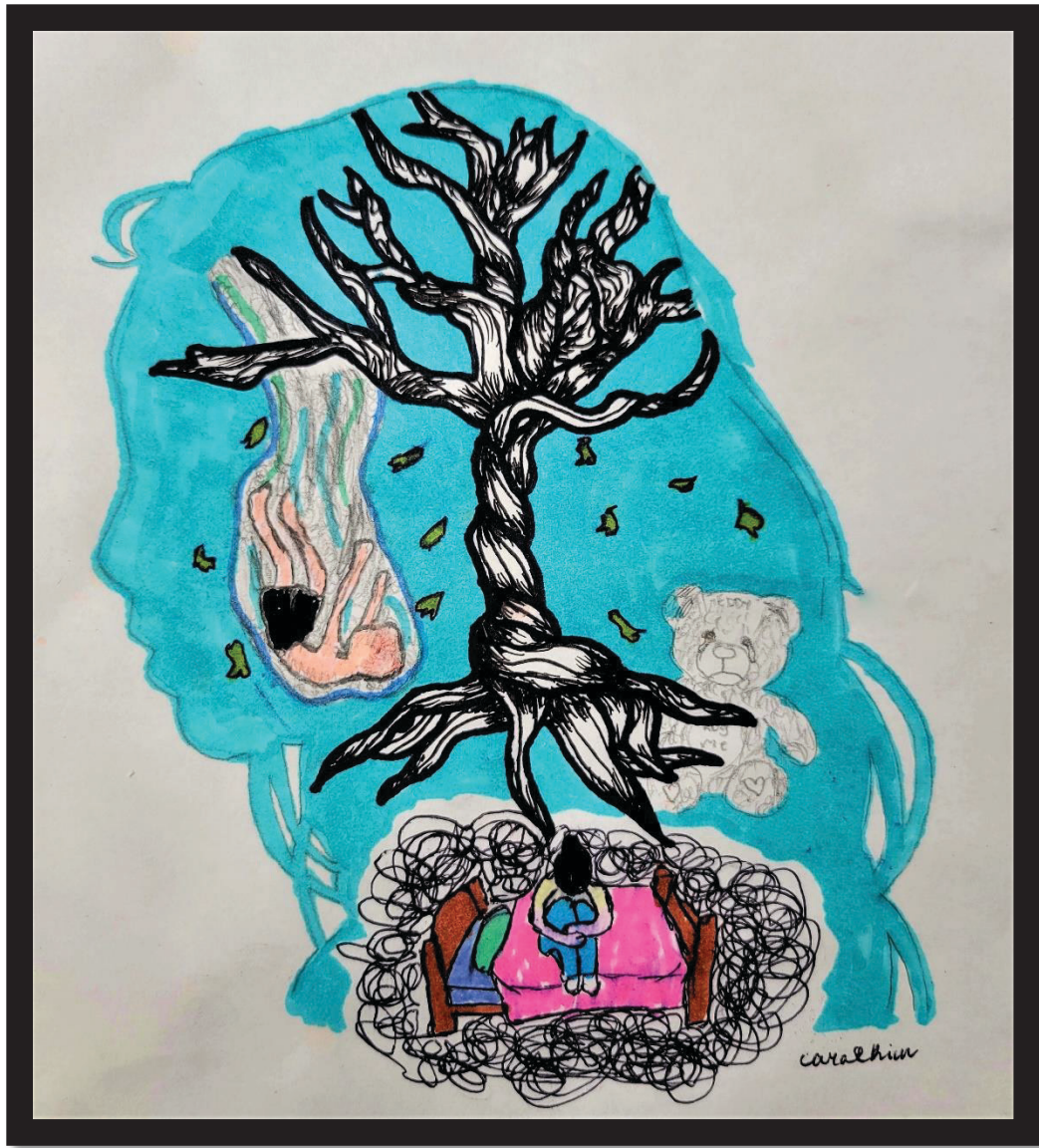
You are always there
Through every doorway,
Every building, every room.
You manage to follow me like a shadow,
Always one step behind.
Tell me *why* you do this.
Tell me *why* no matter what I do, my mind constantly circles back to you.
You ring through my head,
Over and over.
Why did you say that? Why didn't you do something?
Why, why, why?
Sometimes I wonder if I could go back,
Change my mind.
Would you still be there?
Through every doorway,
Every building, every room.
Would you still follow me like a shadow?

Shannon Lobato '23

Anxiety

Thoughts wandering like the leaves in the fall wind
My mind twisted like the roots of a tree
Hopelessly drowning into the depths of the ocean
Why
Nothing makes sense
Consumed by memories that never happened
Or *might* happen
Crying on my bed
Only trusting my pillows to catch my tears
Only trusting my stuffed animals to keep my secrets
Only trusting my bed to catch me
Why
Never looking back on the people who can help me
Who can catch me
Who can keep secrets
Who I could rely on

Ariane Choi '24



Tangled
Cara Minkyung Kim '23
Mixed Media

Rest My Weary Soul

By Olivia Smith '23

"It was very cold last week and I decided to take a shortcut through the woods." I began explaining to the others my perspective of the events leading to a life-changing event. *Now I know what you are thinking. Who goes into the woods that they have never ventured into before, just for a shortcut? Well, I'm a sensible person, so now I'm wondering how I got here running through the woods as well.*

"You're not going to do a flashback within a flashback, right? That's so cheesy." said the one sitting across from me.

"Shut up, and let me continue my story," I sharply replied. "Anyways, let's start in the beginning..." As I said, I was coming back from my daily ice-skating practice before a blizzard was snowing through the area. *Damn it. I should have checked the weather. I would have stayed home if I knew and would've gone to the ice rink another day.* I checked my phone and opened the bus tracking app. When I open it, the app says "NO BUSES RUNNING DUE TO THE BLIZZARD!" in the middle of the screen. *Great.*

I continue walking until I pass by the high school in my area. *Wait. What if I just go through the woods next to the school? My house will be on the other side of it.* "Now before you go saying, 'That's a stupid idea. What happened to being a sensible person?'," in my defense, I was very much hungover and desperate to get home quickly. So there; don't you dare say anything."

The moment I stepped into the woods, I felt something different. I shivered and continued on. And so, my journey into the woods officially began. The

cold, dark woods where I couldn't see further than six feet ahead of me with my phone's flashlight. "My god was I stupid," I quickly muttered under my breath. Now the thing I had forgotten was the rumors about the trolls living in the forest. Supposedly, they were similar trolls to the ones from "Hilda", but more aggressive. "Honestly, I, too, wonder how the heck I forgot about the trolls. Everyone in the town avoids the woods because of the troll rumors. Apparently, these rumors just slipped my mind."

Halfway through the journey, I heard a noise. It was something inhuman. I immediately turn off my phone's flashlight and go to hide behind a large rock next to a tree. Just then, the storm starts to clear and the moonlight shines through. At the time, I couldn't tell what exactly the creature I heard was, however, it looked like one of those monsters from the "Sweet Home" webtoon. *Wth... I've got to get out of here.* As I sobered up, I remembered the one thing I learned from "Sweet Home;" be quiet. I waited for the creature to get at least fifty meters away before I attempted to quickly and quietly run in my house's direction. There was another creature. I ducked before it was able to attack me and hid again. Soon I realized I was surrounded by monsters.

Why haven't I once seen a creature outside the woods? There must be some type of barrier. Was that what I felt as I entered the woods? That means I should be safe as long as I get out. I can't go back the way I came. For one, there were monsters and creatures lurking around the area, and I am already closer to my home. I must continue forward.

And so, my journey
into the woods
officially began.

“PFFFT! Is that how you ended up here? From going into the woods? That’s so stupid! You should hear how I got here. I-” I cut off the soul next to me.

“What did I say earlier? Shut the heck up and let me continue my story.”

“Jeez, fine.”

As I was saying before I was rudely interrupted, I was to continue my journey. Trudging through the snow would be a grueling process as it made a lot of noise. I had to do it slowly, but I couldn’t risk getting caught. After observing my surroundings, I saw some thin sticks and light, bendable bark. I trudged over to them and tied the sticks to my shoes with the bark, so I would be quieter.

When I didn’t spot any monsters near, I quickly trudded through the snow until I saw a cabin. With no monsters in a seventy-five-meter vicinity of the cabin, I saw it as a sign to rest. Soundlessly, I opened the door and walked inside. As soon as I closed the door, my shoulder was pierced. “Who...se the...re? So...me meat. So yum...my.” My eyes bulged and my heart rate quickened. *Run. Run. RUN!* I noticed a knife on the table next to the door. Before the monster could get near, I grabbed the knife and stabbed the extended part of its body where it pierced me. I opened the door to run, and run I did. *I can make it home if I just keep running.* I was panting hard and breathing in the ice-cold air as it felt like icicles in the air were stabbing my lungs.

All of a sudden, I heard an ear-piercing shriek from the cabin, now fifty meters away. It forced me to stop running and drop to my knees.

Instantly, I covered my ears which were now bleeding. As soon as the ringing caused by

the screech stopped, I realized that the noise was probably coming from the cabin monster. Other creatures were now coming closer as they were attracted to the noise. Some were just starting to notice me. I got back on my feet and started running again.

I saw my street, my house. I finally smiled as I also realized tears were falling down my face. *Hope. I’m so close. I can make it.*

“Oh, how naive I was.”

Something sharp and spear-like stabbed my right lung. Then, like a cactus, more spikes grew from it. I fell to the ground. Still, with hope, I attempted to crawl in the direction of my house. Blood was pooling around me. More monsters and creatures closed in. Their voices surrounded me. I screamed horribly as I was torn limb from limb. Flesh peeled off my bone until I could no longer scream. *My house. It’s so close. I can make it.* Desperately, I attempted to slither like a snake, but the creatures just wouldn’t let me go. My life flashed before my eyes.

“That’s how I ended up here with you souls. I died a tragic and traumatic death. Not anything new. Who’s next?”

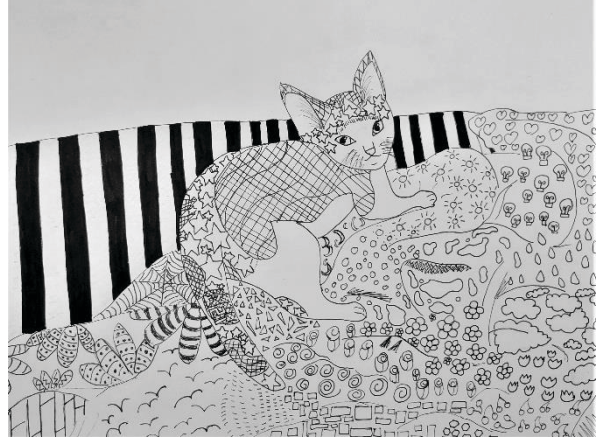


Eye See You
Brianna Dominguez '24
Mixed Media

Study of a Cat



Rescue Me
Kris Ip '23
Pencil



Camouflaged Cat
Jaslyn Kim '23
Pen & Ink



Attitude
Briana Santaella '24
Gallery Glass

Study of a Cat



Aboriginal Cat
Briana Santaella '23
Mixed Media



Cat's Eye
Luke Shen '24
Pencil



Fast Friends
Ara Cho '23
Scratchboard

Ashes

Himika Siracusa '24

Shot dead. Two words that describe my parents and my hopes of ever being happy. I was just seven years old and my parents got shot by a white man right in front of my face. Shot dead and ascended to heaven. Since then, I realized why different races are separated - they just can't be trusted. My mama always told me that I should treat people equally, but my mama was wrong. We can't trust them white folks.

A few weeks after my parents died, I moved in with my aunt in Cleveland. She was the best thing that happened to me after my parents died. She was the only white folk I liked. At first, I wanted to run away, scared like a baby thinking she'd shoot me too, but I soon realized she ain't so bad. She ain't like them white folks who shot my parents. She provided me with love and attention, but she couldn't provide me with much else. We lived in a small apartment right around the corner from Gibb street. Close from that so-called community garden a few blocks away.

Three words described it. Unpleasant. Awful. Worthless. Every time I passed by the garden my heart died out and I thought of my parents. I don't understand why people can be so stupid. Don't they know all them white folks carry guns? Shoot you any second. I especially don't like that one white folk in the garden always smiling at everyone, probably thinking he owns the place. If I asked one of them white folks what they own, they'd say the world. All these people bonding together made me think of my parents, and how I missed them, but I'd never tell anyone or admit it. Look strong, be strong. That's something I got from my papa.

The garden is like Medusa's eyes. Look straight at it and you'll turn to stone. I wanted

to break Medusa's curse, and in order to do that, I must tear the garden apart. At first my rebellion was just stealing its fruits and vegetables. Once, I took juicy ripe tomatoes and the man who grew them told me to give them back, and I just responded, "Ain't this a community garden, it's for everyone to share," and I ran off. I hated to admit it, but I was hungry. Those tomatoes were all I had.

Sometimes I threw garbage in the garden. At night when nobody could see a black boy like me, I snuck in and ruined the garden. I pulled out plants and took some fruits and vegetables. It felt good, but I saw this one girl devastated. She looked like she hadn't eaten in ages. She had ripped clothes and torn shoes. Looked like she'd never seen a shower. She was white, but she was just a young girl, a lot younger than me. I went up to her and handed her some fruits I stole, but of course, she didn't know that I stole them. She took it and thanked me and wiped the tears off her face. It made me feel a little guilty for what I did, but them white folks deserved it.

The garden was separated for a time and people barricaded their plots. Good. I started to think of my parents. I wished there was someone who would keep me and my family away from them white folks. Far, far, away, but I guess I'm not as lucky as others. Not as lucky. I couldn't stop thinking about how my parents looked. It has only been five years and the memories with them are fading. Losing hope. Losing hope...

A week later, I was just passing by the garden when I saw all the barricades gone. I took a closer look and saw different people talking to each other. That smiley white man talking to a black man. This was wrong. This was really wrong.

I was FURIOUS. I couldn't take it. People can be so stupid. They don't know what them white folks can do. They don't know. I was scared and infuriated. I couldn't think straight. I needed my parents.

The fire was cleared and all that remained were ashes.

I didn't come out of my room for days, thinking that half the people in the garden were dead. I was scared. Only one way to cure it. I had to destroy the garden. I ran out of my room and straight to the garden, tears in my eyes. Held tight to the matches I was carrying. I was going to put those white folks to hell just like they put my family. Without thinking, I lit up the match and threw it in the garden. Then I lit another, and another, till you couldn't see the garden...just smoke, fire, and ashes. The fire grew like my anger.

I stood there in horror. What did I do? I was shaking in fear. Few inches away from the fire. Felt all the hopes and dreams of the garden pass my regretful body. I was the shooter. I shot all those people who were in the garden straight in the heart, just like how those white folks did to my parents. I was confused. I thought I was going to fall into the fire, so all my guilt, fear, and sorrow could burn away.

I sat next to the fire, closing my eyes and crying. I could've cried for hours. After a while, I felt an arm on my shoulder, and I heard a familiar voice - "I know what you did, and I know you didn't mean to." I looked up and I saw the girl I gave the fruits and vegetables. She sat beside me. I could see tears in her eyes. I thought about my parents. I knew they wouldn't accept this. They wouldn't accept me. I could see God was looking down on me in disappointment. If my mom were here I would get a smack on my face, but I felt worse than that. I felt the same feeling when my parents left me.

I heard sirens. I heard people gathering in fear. I felt the heat of the fire. I felt the guilt inside me. People were trying to figure out how this happened. I was paralyzed with fear. It was the fear of losing everything.

Later, I went up to the smiley white man and I said sorry. I was scared - not knowing what he was going to do - but surprisingly, he just smiled. It was almost like he was saying it's ok. He looked like he knew what I did, and almost like he knew what I was going through. I suddenly realized how much damage I did. To do what? Separate a good community?

It was dark outside. Almost as if it was midnight, but it was only two. The fire was cleared and all that remained were ashes. I was just sitting on a bench next to the homeless girl. In silence. Every second I sat, the guiltier I felt. So, I got up, and I got a garbage bag that was lying around, and I started to pick up the ashes. It was like cleaning all my burdens. When I was cleaning, I started to see people join me and clean the ashes, too. I also saw the girl right next to me picking up ashes. She looked up and smiled at me. All of a sudden, all my fears faded away and all my focus was on helping the garden.

Being with those white folks and those other cultures made me happy. Not once, the whole time, did I feel like I was in danger. I felt safe. I started to get to know the homeless girl more while we were cleaning. Her name was Giselle and she didn't have parents, like me. I felt closer to her each second we talked. I felt like I belonged...belonged in the garden.

It took a week to clean out all the ash. It was just dirt after we cleaned it. I helped everyone with their planting. The garden was refreshed, but there was now something different about the garden. It had me.

Emo - 이모

I don't remember you.
It's odd to say, odder to write,
But it's true.
Did you ever laugh with little me?
Ever smile as we played?
Hug so tight it hurt?
I don't know,
I never will.
I was six when I last saw you.
I didn't understand the words
Both you and Umma said.
"Chemotherapy...
Trial...
Cancer."
I asked Umma why you wore wigs,
I don't remember her response.
I can't recall when we got the news,
When we asked her why she cried,
She told us:
"이모 is somewhere better now,
In heaven."
I don't remember your funeral.
I don't recall thinking about you
When I was seven, eight,
Nine, ten, eleven.

It was when I was twelve Umma told me:
"My sister used to love books
Like you."
"My sister used to have cold hands
Like you."
"You
Are like my sister."
It's now I wonder,
Thirteen and on,
Seven years since I saw you.
I don't remember your funeral.
I don't remember your voice.
I can't recall
Your face.
I only remember what I've been told
About you.
An eldest daughter always reading,
With hands often cold and still,
With parents, younger brother and sister.
Then an adult,
With a white shelf of wigs,
With a faded face I hope is smiling,
With a cancer I know not of.
I don't remember you 이모.
I hope that's okay.

Olivia Rhee '24



Just Me
Sia Son '23
Pencil

America Should Adopt Universal Healthcare

Madison Melo '24

Seventy-three out of 195 countries have access to universal healthcare for its citizens, but America is not one of them. Countries like Canada, Brazil, and Germany provide 90%-100% universal healthcare. When people from all over the world come to America they expect it to be as great as others make it seem. Immigrants seek freedom and a better life overall. They already have to worry about housing, food, and heating. Why should they have to worry about getting sick and paying their health insurance when it could just be part of their rights? America should adopt universal healthcare because other first-world countries already have, more lives could be saved, and it would eliminate of medical bankruptcy.

America should adopt universal healthcare because other first-world countries have. Brazil, Canada, and Germany all have free or universal healthcare for their citizens. In Brazil, all residents, citizens, and visitors have free access to healthcare that is funded by the government (International Citizens Insurance). In Canada, the government uses taxes so that residents and citizens can apply for public health insurance (International Citizens Insurance). Germany was the first country to provide universal healthcare and they use a Bismarck Model system in which people pay a fee that turns into a health fund (International Citizens Insurance). Although these countries have different ways of providing for their citizens, they all provided universal healthcare. People in these countries don't have to pay thousands of dollars to be seen by doctors, nor do they have to stay at home because it is too expensive. If these countries can do it, America can do it too. Research done by BioMed Central

America should also adopt universal healthcare because it could save lives.

and published in an open-access journal for population health metrics states, "... Canadians can expect 2.7 more years of 'perfect health' than Americans – more than half of the gap found between the richest and poorest people in Canada..." Because of universal healthcare, people in Canada are living longer than people in America. Nobody should have to know that they are going to live a shorter life just because they don't have universal healthcare. When people immigrate to America they expect to have a better chance to live than before. Without change, the chances of success are extremely low given the current cost of healthcare. There will be more chances of dying and lowering the population. There should be an equal chance of survival worldwide.

America should also adopt universal healthcare because it could save lives. According to an article on the Yale School of Public Health, a study shows that about 335,000 lives could have been saved during the spread of Covid-19 in 2020 if America had universal healthcare (yale.edu). Many people who had Covid-19 in 2020 and were not financially stable couldn't afford to go to a hospital or doctor's office to be treated. People with Covid-19 had to struggle at home with improper treatment because they couldn't afford to pay their hospital bills or to even have basic health insurance. Thousands of lives could have been saved if people had access to universal healthcare. Along with universal healthcare saving lives, it could also save the country a lot of money. Alison Galvani, director of Yale's Center for Infectious Disease Modeling and Analysis, and an endowed chair in the Department of Epidemiology, states, "A single-payer health

care system would be much more economically efficient than our current fragmented structure and would save over \$450 billion per year” - money that could have been saved has now gone to waste. Hospitals and doctor’s offices could have been upgraded to make them safer for patients. It could have also been used to help school nurses survive in an environment where there are many illnesses. A small cold can turn into something big and not all parents can afford to take their child to the doctor. Universal healthcare would save more lives and money that could go towards more important things like improving treatment.

Additionally, America should adopt universal healthcare because it would get rid of medical bankruptcy. According to the National Bankruptcy Forum, medical debt is the top reason people file for bankruptcy in the United States. In 2017, about 33% of all Americans with medical bills reported that they “were unable to pay for basic necessities like food, heat, or housing.” People oftentimes have to decide whether they provide food for their family or spend money to see a doctor. If there was universal healthcare, medical bankruptcy would not exist and the government would be caring for its citizens in ways that could help improve their lives. Not having to worry about medical bills would be a relief for a lot of families. People that do file for bankruptcy hold back from going to get treated by a doctor because they don’t have enough money to pay for basic necessities, let alone healthcare. The average price to stay in a hospital is \$2,883 per day. Most people that have

to spend time in a hospital don’t choose to be there but need to be in order to get better. Delivering a baby is around \$2,000+. Parents expecting shouldn’t have to worry about having to pay for their own baby to be born. On top of that, they have to pay for formula, clothes, and childcare. Babies are always growing and at the rate they develop, the \$2,000 that was spent on their birth should be spent on food and clothes. People file for bankruptcy for many reasons and medical bankruptcy should not be one of them.

Some may say that universal healthcare will create longer wait times for patients. What isn’t considered is that there are some people out there that really need universal healthcare no matter what. Most parents, whether they are from a low-income or a higher-income family, don’t care what it takes and just want to have their families healthy. They will wait however long they need to. Universal healthcare will do nothing but help society in the long run.

If America doesn’t provide universal healthcare now, what will happen in the future? More people will lose their lives because they can’t afford to see a doctor or buy their medication. Thousands of people in America struggle day to day to survive and to be able to afford healthcare for themselves and their families. Having universal healthcare means many lives could be saved and people will live a longer and healthier life.



My Bad
Christopher Jackson '23
Colored Pencil

Leprechaun John
Cristian Ramirez '24

Once upon a time, there was a leprechaun named John who lived in a small village in Ireland. John was a clever leprechaun who had accumulated a great deal of wealth over the years. However, his wealth had led him down a dangerous path of greed and deception.

One day, the authorities caught wind of John's suspicious financial activities and began to investigate him for money laundering. They questioned him at length, but John remained tight-lipped and refused to give up any information. That was until they brought in the detective. He walked up to the table and sat down beside John. He picked up John's hand. John had a gold ring on his finger. Then the detective headbutted John and knocked him off his chair.

The detective got up from the table, grabs John by his shirt and said, "You can tell me what I want to know or you can stay here until I make you speak." John, with blood in his mouth, spout in the detective's eyes, "You could do anything to me and you will never make me talk!" The detective pulled out a pair of golden brass knuckles and started brutally beating John. The detective picked John up and started punching his ribs. It took five broken ribs to make John confess.

However, his wealth had led him down a dangerous path of greed and deception.

The authorities eventually obtained a warrant to search John's home and found a large sum of money hidden away in a secret compartment beneath a painting of a rainbow. John was arrested and taken into custody.

During the trial, the evidence against John was overwhelming. His extravagant spending habits and unusual financial transactions were difficult to explain. John's lawyer tried to argue that the money was simply the result of years of hard work and good investments, but the jury was not convinced.

In the end, John was found guilty of money laundering and sentenced to several years in prison. He was stripped of his wealth and his reputation was ruined. John learned the hard way that greed and dishonesty always come with consequences.

After serving his time, John returned to his village as a changed leprechaun. He had learned his lesson and had a newfound appreciation for honesty and integrity. He spent the rest of his days using his wealth and knowledge to help others and make amends for his past mistakes.

Archwizard Duke O'Rourke Alden Etra '13

Archwizard Duke O'Rourke had learned everything there was to learn before his beard turned gray. He knew how to pronounce every spell. He knew the recipe for every potion. And he knew how to conjure every creature from every corner of the world - even a porcupine with a top hat.

Archwizard Duke O'Rourke was the best wizard who had ever lived up until the year 785 P.M. (Post Magic) and by the time he had locked himself in the top room of the tallest wizard tower ever built, it was assumed he'd be the best wizard who *would* ever live. Because he took with him all that knowledge and hid away with it. Though he was a prodigy in every sense of the word he hadn't quite mastered how to be a kind, caring, and social human being. But if you asked him, those hardly mattered.

When Archwizard Duke O'Rourke realized he had nothing left to learn from the world of man, he found a nice, open clearing in the middle of a great forest where no one could disturb him and cast a spell that summoned a tower so tall, its top floor grazed ozone. He looked up at his masterpiece but only for a moment before starting his long trek up the many stairs. He could have cast a spell that transported him to the top but he thought better of it. Knowing everything was good for the mind but exercise was good for the body - like everything, he knew that.

Four-hundred and ninety-eight years passed. Archwizard Duke O'Rourke had spent his time away performing experiments, channeling magic, and futzing around with spells - all from the comfort of his tower in the silent clearing, in the middle of a densely-wooded forest. Only, so

much time had passed that the forest was no longer densely wooded. The trees were traded for taverns and terraced houses, hospitals and hotels, cottages, and commercial real estate. But Archwizard Duke O'Rourke was none-the-wiser because the world of man could hardly bother a wizard of his esteem - and from the top of the tower, he wouldn't even hear an earthquake. That was until Little Nikki Newman knocked on the stained-glass window of his top-floor bungalow.

"Good afternoon Mr. O'Rourke," Little Nikki Newman shouted from beyond a pane of colored glass. The stains depicted a lone Archwizard Duke O'Rourke below an ancient dragon, its fiery breath blasting into the night sky. "Mr. O'Rourke!"

Archwizard Duke O'Rourke was in the midst of discovering the last three syllables to a time spell, one that might very well be able to unravel the fourth dimension and unlock the secrets of the physical plane. The sudden noise drew him from his stupor and made him lose the words which were clutched tightly to the tip of his tongue. He screamed several profanities and bruised his hand on the granite table where his spell book lay. He turned; face red beneath the matted gray beard that hung from his chin to his belly button.

"Oh, what is it!" Archwizard Duke O'Rourke shouted to no one in particular before rushing to the window. He took a look at Little Nikki

Newman, taking in her ragged brown tunic and leather pants; her tanned, freckled cheeks and glowing brown eyes; the bangs that draped over her forehead, and the half-bitten fingernails tapping at the glass. Then he threw down the shades.

Knowing everything was good for the mind but exercise was good for the body - like everything, he knew that.

Little Nikki Newman stared hopelessly at the shaded window; her legs starting to wobble from holding her body upright against the tower's moldy brick. Her shoes, which had small suction cups pasted to the toe-tips, were slipping off. Her fist banged once more on the window with all its might. This, however, triggered several small vines which sprouted from the bricks as if by magic. From those vines, plant heads budded - the kind of plant heads that had jaws and snarling teeth. She squealed, then swatted. Before her fingers were bitten off by the wizard's booby trap, she rushed back down the tower to the city below.

Little Nikki Newman had never found a problem she couldn't solve with dedication, hard work, and an appropriate amount of elbow grease. When her mother couldn't figure out how to rid their shack of pests, Little Nikki Newman studied plant extracts and invented the first pesticides her city had ever seen. When her father was stumped on a more efficient means of cleaning the gutter, Little Nikki Newman asked a woodworker to attach oak planks together with two thinner planks on both sides - effectively creating the world's first step ladder. Her efforts were in vain, however. Her mother dumped the vial because it gave her allergy attacks. Her dad was never a fan of oak - so he used the wood for his fire. But Little Nikki Newman was determined to finally get something right, and a little bit of credit.

It was nearly three days when she climbed back up the tower, this time with a new design for her suction-cupped shoes. Instead of the top head of a plunger, Little Nikki Newman used the tips of iron arrows, which, when firmly kicked into the bricks, were a heck of a lot sturdier. It took twice as long to trek the tall tower, but when she made it to the top, it was a much better hold.

The window was still shaded. As she readied the next phase of her plan, she heard a loud explosion from within the tower, followed by the sound of a pencil snapping, a rooster screeching, and a head slamming against a cabinet. When she knocked, it only took a few seconds before the shade was withdrawn, and standing before her was Archwizard Duke O'Rourke, two chunks of beard hair in his hands and smoke rising up from a shattered beaker behind him. They shared a glance, then Archwizard Duke O'Rourke snarled and snapped his fingers. That's when Little Nikki Newman's shoes transformed into ice cream cones. She was slipping, quickly, and the tips of her toes were freezing!

For this, however, Little Nikki Newman was prepared. She unbuttoned her blouse, revealing an oversized goo trap, a few flies scattered around the front side. Before the ice cream cone shoes crumbled, Little Nikki Newman slammed her torso into the outside wall. She was stuck, quite miraculously, and Archwizard Duke O'Rourke was stunned.

"How in the world?" he said from behind the glass. Then he frowned. With a quick spell, the stained-glass window was frosted over like a pond in the wintertime. Then, Archwizard Duke O'Rourke dragged his finger across the pane, writing - in the most beautiful cursive - a message.

LEAVE ME ALONE!

There were few things more bothersome than uninviting hosts. Little Nikki Newman slammed on the glass with a curled fist. "I am not leaving until you see me!" She screamed. "We have things to discuss."

At this, Archwizard Duke O'Rourke rubbed his hand across the pane, creating a circular space within the frost. He pressed his

forehead to the glass, then made a point to open his eyes abnormally wide.

“There, I’ve seen you.”

“Everyone was right about you, old wizard!” She shouted back. “You are a conceited, no-good, very bad person with little - scratch that - no, and I repeat, NO manners. The least you can do to reward my efforts - having climbed several thousand feet in the air - is to offer me a cup of tea. Is that so much to ask?”

Archwizard Duke O’Rourke, who had already begun thinking of a serum to cure male-pattern baldness, stopped in his tracks. He was taken aback. Had they really thought such horrible things about him? How could they presume to *know* anything about him? To keep his good image and prove everyone *wrong*, he decided to let Little Nikki Newman inside.

“All *this* is about a flood?” Archwizard Duke O’Rourke was pouring a cup of tea from a kettle into two ceramic mugs. Little Nikki Newman took her mug and carefully sipped at the side.

“Yes, sir,” she said between sips. “We have seven days, three hours, and twenty-four minutes.”

She looked at a tiny, handmade watch she made from twine, plant fiber, and glass. “Scratch that. Seven days, three hours, and twenty minutes. I’m still learning how to tell time on this thing. But it’s much better for the eyes than looking at the sun.”

“I supposed it is,” Archwizard Duke O’Rourke looked at her curiously. “And how do you know of this flood?”

“The gods left us a message.” Little Nikki Newman dug into her pocket and pulled out a piece of parchment. She handed it to Archwizard Duke O’Rourke, who looked it over as the girl continued. “It was in the fields of grain just outside the city. I tried my best to copy it word-for-word. At first, I thought it was the religious fanatics taking things too literally, but then the rain started to come. It’s not letting up.”

“You can’t see it from here,” Little Nikki Newman continued. “But I spent half my climb up this tower drenched from head to toe. Still, I had to come to see you. You’re our only hope.”

“Hope?” Archwizard Duke O’Rourke scoffed. “For humanity? There is none. Have you seen the way they fight wars? How they scoff at education? What you’re looking for is a miracle. I don’t serve miracles.”

“Please, mister. I worked so hard to get up here. All I need is a spell, maybe. Or a blueprint for one big ark - no that wouldn’t work. But something, anything you can think of! You *are* Archwizard Duke O’Rourke after all. You have to help us.”

“How heavy is this flood? Do you think it’ll reach me here?”

“No sir,” Little Nikki Newman said quickly. “You’re totally safe up here.”

“Good,” Archwizard Duke O’Rourke picked up his mug, took the girl’s too, and set them into the bale of water behind him. He snapped his fingers and a cleaning rag lifted into the air and began scrubbing away at the ceramic. “Then no need for worry. You’ll let yourself out?”

“You seriously aren’t going to help us?” Little Nikki Newman said disheartened. Then, she got angry. “You have all this knowledge. All this unbelievable information stuck in that thick

skull of yours and you're going to keep it all to yourself? Even when an entire city of innocent people is going to be destroyed!"

Archwizard Duke O'Rourke turned to Little Nikki Newman. "Oh, dear. You are very bright. Your inventions are marvelous. But you are wrong. Those people are *not* innocent. Humanity is trapped between their ability to innovate and their stubbornness to change. You've seen it. You're parents."

Humanity is trapped between their ability to innovate and their stubbornness to change.

"How did you know about that?"

"I know everything," Archwizard Duke O'Rourke said. "You can stay with me, I've decided. In my tower. I have plenty of space on the floors below me. Take one for yourself. I can use someone to bounce ideas off of."

"No," Little Nikki Newman said stubbornly. "I won't give up on them. You may be the smartest wizard to ever live but you don't know the most important thing about me. I don't give up. I'll figure out a way to help them. With or without you."

At that, Little Nikki Newman stood from her chair and marched to the window. She reached for the inner latch when an awful realization struck her: she was barefoot, and her toes still smelled of strawberry ice cream. Before she turned around, however, Archwizard Duke O'Rourke had already begun writing something on a magical board with a strange instrument. It made a squeaking sound as he ran it across the flat, white panel.

"Hand me that- over there. Come on now, hurry. This equation isn't going to solve itself."

"Uh," Little Nikki Newman hesitated. "You're helping me?"

"Not unless you hand me that." He pointed to a beaker and a pair of tongs. Little Nikki Newman grabbed it carefully and set it down on a small desk near the wizard. Then she followed his exact instructions as he listed off ingredients. His laboratory was filled with the strangest elements: toad feces, troll pinkie, kitten nostril, and rhino intestine. To Little Nikki Newman it was a treasure of the coolest things she'd ever seen - though she was grateful for the gloves in the wizard's top left drawer.

"There," Archwizard Duke O'Rourke said finally, using a dropper for the last pinch of unicorn bile.

"And, what does it do?" Little Nikki Newman asked. She had taken meticulous notes on parchment paper of the exact steps for the mysterious potion.

"Floatation!" Archwizard Duke O'Rourke exclaimed.

Little Nikki Newman looked at Archwizard Duke O'Rourke, who was frowning at the floor. "What's wrong, sir? You've just saved us all."

"Yes," he said formally. "You'd better be off then, I suppose. To deliver it before the city's flooded. I'll send you the ingredients and you can reproduce the potion. You have the right stuff, Nikki Newman. I'm... proud."

Little Nikki Newman threw herself into the Archwizard's arms. "Thank you, sir. I won't forget you."

"Um," Archwizard Duke O'Rourke said. "Perhaps, maybe, you'll find yourself up here again. You know. I have a few more recipes that you might find useful. If you have nothing else to do."

“You’ll teach me?” Little Nikki Newman asked, concealing her excitement. Archwizard Duke O’Rourke had to admit that Little Nikki Newman’s curiosity reminded him of someone but he couldn’t cast his wand on who.

“Yes,” he said, deciding it. “You find your way up and I’ll share with you what I know.”

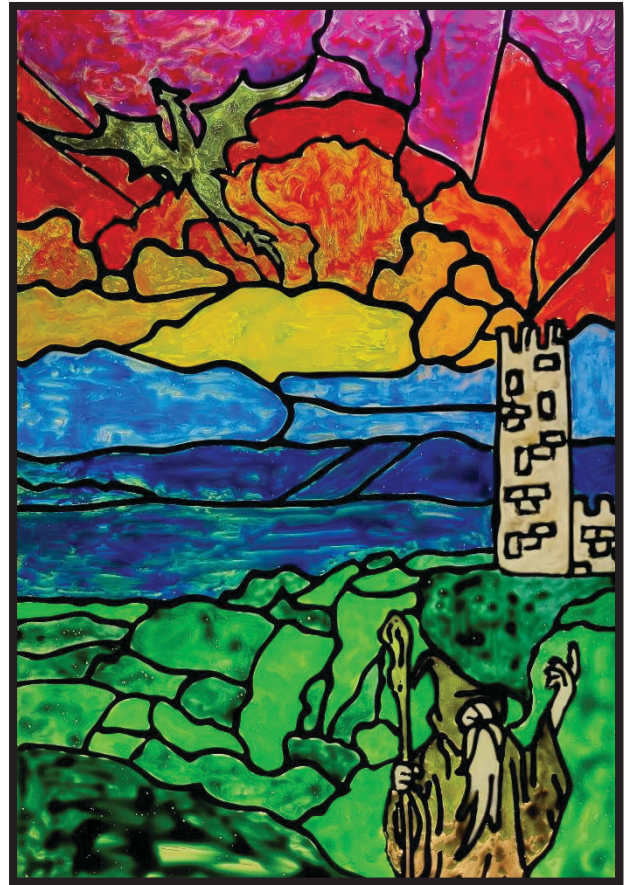
And he knew a lot. Very soon so did Little Nikki Newman. Before long - after the

saved people rebuilt the city below - there were hundreds of potion brewers, spellcasters, and avid learners, all taking lessons from the man who knew everything. Though Archwizard Duke O’Rourke would never admit it, someone did dethrone him as the best wizard who ever lived.

But as her teacher, he took all the credit.

But as her teacher, he took all the credit.

The story “Archwizard Duke O’Rourke” is not only a love letter for teachers everywhere whose drive and determination help feed the curiosity of our youth, but it’s an analogy for Mr. Etra’s own experience as a learner and as a developing teacher. When he was a student at Lewis F. Cole Middle School ten years ago, Mrs. Anderson was a guiding light for those students passionate about the arts. She cultivated that passion and saw that it transformed from talent into determination. Now, as an ELA teacher at the same school he attended, Mr. Etra wants to do the same thing for those who yearn to develop their talents, skills, and interests. Though Mrs. Anderson is retiring at the end of the 2022-23 school year, her legacy will live on through her students, through *Intermedia*, and, hopefully, through Mr. Etra. So, in honor of this transitional time in *Intermedia*’s long history, both Mrs. Anderson and Mr. Etra created pieces to commemorate this publication.



Rainbows of the World
Nina Anderson '83
Gallery Glass



Looking Back
Bridget Leung '23
Digital Art

In the Picture

In the zoo,
People admiring peacock's beauty.
Its feathers and body,
Standing out, the only thing in view.
A pigeon stands next to her: Why don't they notice?
The peacock stole their focus
I'm standing there, as if blurred.

Breaking the piggy bank,
You're staring down at the penny.
Doesn't mean as much, even if you have many.
Next to it, it's a dollar bill you see.
It's only a piece of paper: that everyone gives value to.
What did she do, that I didn't do?
When the time comes to decide,
You would pick her, as I'm rusting here, time passing by

Delivery arrived!
They took me inside.
Rushing to open my cardboard face.
Their eyes lit up when they saw the product.
Why do they pretend I'm not there when I took all the damage?
Just like last time, will they throw me away?

But am I supposed to compare a peacock to a pigeon?
Why do people decide how much they value just from their vision?
Two different animals, just standing next to each other,
Supported by the same frame, drawn in the same picture

Pick up the penny and you'll notice
That it's made carefully, carved with a face.
When you find a penny in the streets,
People would most likely pick it up with glee,
Supported by a different frame, and drawn in a different picture.

Oh, a kid picking me up.
Cutting and gluing me, I'm filled with creativity
Nobody can replace me now, I'm the kid's memory
I'm still being drawn and I don't have a frame that's supporting me.

Nanami Ishihara '24



Look at Me
Carolina Perez '23
Mixed Media



Beauty Comes from Within
Alina Nam '24
Colored Pencil

Gone Forever Isabella Yu '24

I never really cared about the things I had. They were just always there and weren't that important to me, like my house and neighborhood. It all got ruined by a tornado and I was never the same. Everything was gone. I had to move to Cleveland with my sister while my parents figured out what to do. I never liked Cleveland, until I came across the garden. I spent most of my time there planting flowers and watching them grow.

My old neighborhood was very different from Cleveland. It was pretty with fountains and beautiful flowers in every corner. My house was big too and had a huge backyard, but it disappeared. The garden became the only thing that reminded me of home. I found a cat that always hid in the flowers. I showed her to my parents and they loved her. We took her in and decided to name her Marie. I played with Marie whenever I could and took her outside to play among the flowers.

The summer was fun with everyone in the garden planting fun foods and talking with neighbors. My sister loved the garden too. She planted carrots and made them into funny shapes and animals. I had planted an apple tree. The apple tree reminded me of my old house. I remember going to the local apple tree farm and looking at the rolling hills, while climbing to the tops of trees and picking apples. Sadly, this apple tree would have a chance to grow.

When I heard that the garden was going to be demolished by the government, I was mad. I saw people protesting so I made a sign and joined them. Officials wanted it to be a parking lot. When they wouldn't budge, I shut down. The one thing that reminded me of home was gone.

My family decided to stay in Cleveland for another year. At least I had Marie to remind me of the garden... but it wasn't the same. All the work everybody was doing was gone and I thought I would never be the same. The garden was a special place where I could relax and play with my cat but just like everything else in my life, it was gone. I was angry for weeks, until my grandma came to visit. I ran into her arms crying.

"Grandma! The garden's gone forever."

She didn't seem sad when I told her. She was the first one to plant in the garden way back when it started. She told me we can start a new one together. The next day we bought fruit and vegetable seeds to plant in the empty garbage pile near the park. We cleaned it out, throwing refuse into gigantic garbage bags. Soon, it looked brand new. We put in more soil and planted the seeds. Marie tagged along too and played in the park while me and grandma worked. People walking in the streets saw what we were doing and started to plant seeds too.

I love the new garden but it didn't really feel the same as the old one. The first one ran for 40 years and all that time and all those memories vanished. The whole incident made me realize to not take advantage of things and learn to appreciate them.

I spent every moment of my life with Marie after that.

I spent every moment of my life with Marie after that.



Childhood Dream
Chellina Yoo '24
Watercolor

Today

Today is the end of the tears of this year
Today is the beginning of the fear of the new year

Everyday people undergo pain
There is no gain or strain, but endless feelings of vain

Sometimes I wonder...
Why am I always curled in the vast world like a frightened freak facing away from the light?

But then I realize.
Just like my Uncle Joe, my Best Friend Jeff, and my Pet Dog John...
We are too afraid to die and hope in hopeless situations...
That everything will go back to normal tomorrow.

Sean Kim '24



Side by Side
Hannah Chang '24
Watercolor

When A Pig Tries Ballet
Yuju Oh '24

I'm a pig. Literally. I trip and fall in the hallways of my middle school. I'm miserable at sports. Even when I agreed to go to ballet classes, I only agreed because I imagined pretty turns and leaps being performed perfectly in my head. Since I was a beginner, I thought that maybe I'd meet someone new there. Unfortunately, everyone seemed to know each other and although everyone there was a beginner, everyone was still so much better than me. The ballet practice room was painted pink with flowery lace curtains and long wooden bars. Along with the other animals, the gazelles held their heads high and prim, while the swans moved, making dainty little steps towards their places. And I, one with a curly tailed body and thick legs, was clunking all the way to my spot. Every step toward my barre made my fat jiggle. My pink cheeks flushed with splotches of dark red as I looked down at the floor, wishing I hadn't agreed to do this. What was I doing embarrassing myself here?

Warm-ups began with soothing, classical music, and I decided to try again. It was the beginner's class after all, so how good could the others really be? A few minutes into stretching, I changed my mind. Everyone *was* better than me. Feathery wings and slender bodies were all too much of a contrast with my round stout form that could easily roll down a hill. They completed splits in marvelous unison, folding like pieces of paper, going this way and that without limits. How? They must have been born into that position or something because I couldn't bend down even half as much as they could.

It felt like something cold had just dropped down into my stomach. Sluggish,

miserable, and hopeless. We ended warmups. I looked at the clock and sighed, there was still an hour left to go. I grabbed the barre intensely. I tried breaking it in half, but I only managed to squeeze hard enough to the point where my paletas became pale. The Bluetooth speaker began to serenade us with graceful, violin music. Everyone's wings and arms went up and down in elegant movements while their legs kept moving upwards, showing no sign of stopping. After getting a sharp glare from the teacher, I began to copy their movements shakily. I was constantly looking at the kid next to me, while the teacher passed me with a disapproving stare. She walked towards me, remarking, "Fatso! Your leg is too shaky. Suck your belly in. Your arms look like deflated helium balloons."

I didn't know what to say, so I just mumbled, "Yes, Mrs. Giselle," trying to fix myself into the correct stance.

I was mortified. A wave of embarrassment swept over me like a tsunami and I felt like I could drown in its self-pitying waters forever. I tried my best to copy exactly what my neighbor was doing, but the constant nagging of the passing teacher and the sideways glances of my classmates was making me feel skittish. I felt fat and ugly in front of the graceful technique of all the other animals, the animals that *were meant* to be there. I fumbled with every step and barely made it to the center where we twirled and jumped and kicked our legs high up.

This time, it wasn't so bad. Even though I was still making mistakes, I was actually enjoying ballet for the first time. I stepped the

My pink cheeks flushed with splotches of dark red as I looked down at the floor, wishing I hadn't agreed to do this.

wrong way and my turns were unbalanced, but it wasn't as horrible as the past hour, or so I thought. As soon as I let my guard down, disaster struck. We were doing grand Jetés, a marvelous leap in which you split your legs while you are in the air. It is a difficult skill and hard to land right. I copied the teacher buckling my knees and I jumped. I felt like I was soaring through the air- just like the beautiful swan right next to me- lifting my arms up, elongating them.

"Finally!" I thought in giddy exuberance. "Finally, I'm not the worst!" The giant jump suddenly ended with a big crash, with my legs giving way and surrendering to the massive weight of my body.

I slipped and the last thought I had was: "This is embarrassing; I'm going to die."

Everybody surrounded me in a circle, looking at me with pitying eyes and teasing smirks. I wished the ground would open up and swallow me whole. I couldn't believe I had made a fool of myself out there. I dusted myself off with a forced smile taking one deep breath after another, hoping it didn't sound as awkward to me as it did to everyone else. I spent the remaining time there looking down in complete embarrassment. The snickering chirps and neighs haunted me. I went back home, tears streaming down my face.

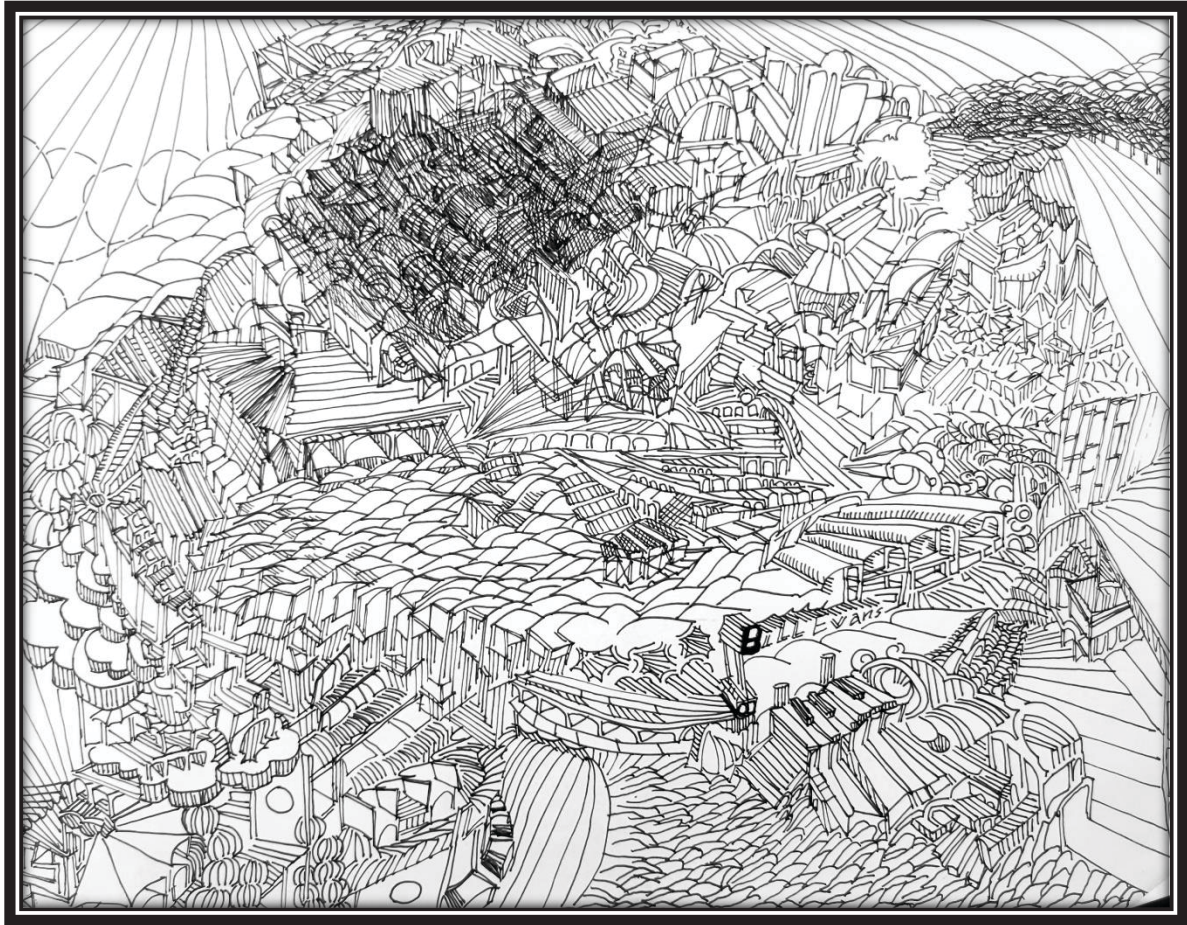
I wished the ground would open up and swallow me whole.

I couldn't face the humiliation anymore, the pity, and I knew, I knew for certain that everyone thought that I was inferior to them. I still wanted to do ballet, though. Although the thrilling moment of the grand Jeté was brief, the rush and elation I felt when I leaped was intoxicating. *There* was something I loved and wished I could do. But I huffed a breath, remembering the snobby gazelles and swans that would look down on me if I kept on going there. I was torn between the embarrassment and the exhilaration of ballet. After many motivational talks to myself and self-pity parties, I decided I should still give it a try. I was determined to become a better ballerina and that I would shock everyone.

After so many crashes and time being wasted on whether I should keep going, I was still horrible at ballet. I turned the wrong way, I fumbled my steps, and I jumped too low or too high. Regardless of all of this, I knew that I truly loved ballet. The twirls, the graceful hand movements, and the feeling of flying when I did my grand Jeté. What was different from before? I'm still a pig, but I guess now I have just a little bit more confidence in myself.



My Passion
Katie Lee '24
Watercolor



Moving
Maya Lee '23
Pen & Ink

Section 2: Sweet as Pie

Olivia Rhee '24

"A man in the apartment beneath me—Sam, his name is—used to plant in the gardens. I never see him anymore," The old woman had said. I started there. From then, I taped one to the pole just outside the complex and left a few more at random doors. The week was spent watering the irises and hoping, staring out the window to see a living being other than the occasional stray cat. It was in the weeks that followed that I started to see how futile it was. It started with the garage sale just outside the lot because of Dad's need to get rid of some of Mom's stuff. I had no quarrels with doing this since all of the items were useless. But that was the problem: they were completely and utterly impractical. Seventeen people stopped by; four bought something. It wasn't bad, but they hadn't spared a glance at the garden when I told them about it.

With each passing week, hope became a weaker candle. My irises were still under the soil, not yet peering through to see the sunlight. Dad continued to shout, and soon his voice was piercing my music. As I listened to *Brother* during another lonesome dinner of the fourth week (it had been a failure of a door-to-door advertisement - the doors shut faster than I could speak). I could hear his furious shouts. At this point, I was too tired to care. I had a fitful rest that night and woke up to my routine once more. It was different from what it was in the first few days of arriving here, but it remained tedious, each passing day becoming the liquid wax of my candle of hope. The old woman did not respond to my knocks every week. It was the moment I was listening to *Tell Me You Know* that I first thought of giving up. This was supposed to be a fresh start, yet it turns out that I'm incapable of attracting attention and making friends with anyone but an old woman behind closed doors. Week nine involved a bunch of

With each passing week, hope became a weaker candle.

old lamps that I hadn't sold from the garage sale. I waited till night came and turned them all on. However, I hadn't prepared for several things. First, the amount of dust the antique lamps produced. Every single one I approached held decades of dust under their shades, and it wasn't pleasant finding a few spiders every now and then. Then there was the fact that I'd neglected to do a test run on any of the lamps and discovered that more than half of them did not produce light. A flicker, a pop, and stifling darkness. I didn't even bother to clean up the lamps and instead headed up the stairs groaning. I trudged past the door of the old woman, and still, I heard no sound from within the apartment. I instead went to the house I needed to call my own for now.

"-lia! I can't keep doing this and you know it!" Dad shouted. Apparently, *Oh Yeah, You Gonna Cry* was not sufficient music to block out the shouting. It was like this before the divorce, that I knew, but at least the house was bigger. There was more... distance. Now I was crammed in an apartment with an angry dad, thin walls, and no one to keep me company. At that very moment, I really hated life. Yet it persisted day after day. Twelfth week: Shouting from my window (Can you blame me at this point? I never was a creative person. That was all my mom). My voice felt like Dad's by the five-minute mark and I gave up. The garden remained empty. I lived in blissful ignorance till the next, when Dad again dumped some of his tasks on me: grocery shopping. At the market, I spoke to everyone. I wasn't a social person though, so my words became a jumbled mess of 'garden' and 'welcome'. It ended with me being complained about after making a little kid cry (To be fair, he didn't understand and kept tugging his mom away whilst I was speaking to her. A tad bit rude.) and I was forced to pay and leave. When I entered the complex, I didn't even bother to look out the window.

I knew there'd be no one. That's when the fourteenth week arrived. The final stretch. The moment my irises, my only hope, were supposed to grow. I planned on selling them to others, offering them my leftover seeds and a square in the garden. It was a decent plan this time, and I actually felt hope lighting its candle for me once more. Just before I went downstairs, I stopped by the faded green door. I knew futility when I stared it in the face (Or in this case, the door), but I knocked anyway. As expected, no response. I slipped a seed from my iris packet under the door for the old lady when she came back. The sun was brighter than the day I planted the irises, and I was prepared. I had three clay pots and my spade (I was still underdressed, but that really isn't of note). Yet the deception of the bright day became evident when I realized that there was nothing. No sprout, no hint of disturbed soil, nothing. Would they ever grow? I hadn't been bothered to look around at the time, instead opting for the choice of leaving the iris seeds there. If they didn't grow by the end of the week, I might as well give up. The seasons were shifting far too quickly, and I knew the garden's end was coming. Winter approached with every chill outside and every colder day. The day after I went to the garden, leaving my spade behind but keeping three clay pots in my hands. I was beginning to realize, beginning to understand, but I didn't want to just yet. The disappointment rang clear and strong, echoing throughout the pots themselves. I had imagined growth, comfort, *people*. A new beginning. Yet everything was just as empty as my old house, where the air of home was replaced with arguments and the dripping feel of loneliness flooded my lungs. I left a pot there, the one that was cracked just at the bottom, and left to go back to a house of phone calls and abandoned picture frames. *Passerine* was

ringing through my empty head as I ate dinner alone. Yet this time, a certain someone came out of his room. His eyes had bags under them, and his hair was rather unkempt. He sat down and took some of the food I made.

"Hannah." He said slowly. Paced, as if waiting for my reaction.

"Dad," I responded, my tone even and straight.

"I've got a job." When he spoke those words, maybe I expected to be elated. Yet I didn't react. I kept my head in my food, music still playing softly in my ears.

"Alright, Dad."

"Hannah, it's in Colorado."

At that, I shot up.

"Be ready in four days. We leave Sunday." He abandoned the table and emptied his rather full plate into the sink. He closed the door of his room, and I stared at it. I wouldn't be here for the final day, the day the irises should bloom. The day when my hopes were either snuffed or lit brighter. Should I be saying goodbye? To whom? Shouldn't I be feeling something else? Doing something? With little attachment to this place other than the garden (which may soon be nothing more to me), what would I be sad about? I stood and left my plate in the sink for later. I didn't leave for the garden the next day. I knew from the weeks I had been notified before the divorce that it would be best for me to just cut things loose. It would be a shame to grow attached just to lose it all in less than a week...

Leaves of the Sycamore Tree

Lauren Cho '23

Fall was coming to an end as Thanksgiving approached. High from the ground, I was a leaf, hanging from the branch of a tree, watching other leaves fall one by one. I did not fall. I held tightly onto the branch of the huge sycamore tree that stood in front of the Miller family's house. From high above, I watched the children wearing padded jackets running around after school, playing football, and giggling.

A yellow-colored leaf beside me had let go. "Here I go!" The leaf exclaimed, fluttering down and landing gently on the ground.

For many days, the leaves fell, and I saw new cars that I've never seen before and they parked in front of others' houses. Turns out they were family members gathering for Thanksgiving. I watched the families from a distance and noticed how the atmosphere in town was filled with happiness.

Then I looked at the ground, noticing all the leaves below me. The different colors of yellow, orange, red, and brown scattered on the ground were a beautiful sight.

"Why don't you go join them now?"
The sycamore tree said to me.

"Why should I? I like it here," I replied.

"Haven't you noticed? You're the only leaf remaining."

I looked around, realizing that no other leaves were hanging on the tree. Suddenly, holding onto the tree branch became harder than before.

"You need to let go now, little leaf. Let this old tree get some rest too."

"But I don't want to! I want to stay with you during the winter. Don't you get lonely in the winter?"

"Oh no, I don't. Of course, no leaves are left on me, but there is life crawling everywhere. You probably don't know this, but there are bugs under my roots! They're always alive, so I don't get lonely. Occasionally, flocks of birds will come and use my branches to rest."

"Still, I'm not letting go!"

The tree sighed, and a harsh gust of wind blew, nearly pushing me off. I tightened my grip.

"Little leaf, I know that you are only doing this because you care about me, but what about the other leaves? They're your friends, right? Wouldn't you prefer to be with them instead?"

"No..."

"What a stubborn little leaf you are," the tree sighed, letting out another gust of wind.

"Why don't you want me to stay?"

"It's not that. This situation has happened many times, perhaps it's the same leaf, taking on different forms and colors, and always bothering me before I can fully rest. Little leaf, we will always meet again next year in spring, when you sprout as a new leaf onto my branches. When you fall, you'll have so much more freedom, it'll be amazing. You'll be able to see new parts of the world that you never got to because you were always stuck to me!"

"I can already see so much from here, what else is there to see?"

"What a stubborn little leaf you are," the tree sighed, letting out another gust of wind.

“Oh, believe me, there is so much you don't know about. The thing is, little leaf, good things come and go. Nothing lasts forever. Sometimes, it's just best to let things go. In this case, you have to let go of this branch. You'll be able to experience so many more things.”

The thing is, little leaf,
good things come and
go. Nothing lasts
forever.

“Oh. Will it be amazing just like you say?”

“Yes.”

“Okay... I'll let go then.”

As I let go and slowly fell to the ground, the world spun around me. I finally hit the ground. When I looked up to see the tree, I saw it smiling at me.

For a while, nothing happened. Most humans are busy with whatever they're doing that they trample on us. Then nighttime came. From the new view on the ground, I could see the Miller family having a Thanksgiving dinner with turkey and many other treats through the window.

I realized this must be what the old sycamore tree was telling me. When I was on its branch, I could hardly see inside the house. The tree

let out a sigh, causing many leaves including me to fly in different directions. The wind carried me to a new place. I admired the new view that I had never seen from the tree. I could no longer see either the sycamore tree or the Miller family's house.

Time passed, and as the wind blew harder, I got to observe new places. Now, Thanksgiving has passed and winter has come. Today, the first heavy snow fell. The clouds covered the whole sky, and the snow fell for hours. The snow had covered me and I could no longer see the surface. The cold snow against me was a new feeling. I closed my eyes, getting rest for the first time.

After a long while, I opened my eyes. I looked around and saw a clear blue sky with birds chirping. Snow is melting off the rooftops of houses. It looked familiar. I looked at myself and realized that I am a small green leaf that had just sprouted from a tree, like many others.

I then turned around and realized that it is the large sycamore tree again. The tree smiled at me.

“We meet again.”



Fractured Seasons
Ethan Green '23
Mixed Media

Someone Else's Mind

I wish you could have my eyes.
Squish them and put them
Into your sockets
To show what you said in the mirror's a lie.
Always wondering, "If I get prettier,
Will my life be better?
Maybe more people will like me."
Because everyone judges you from what they see.

A leafless tree
Deemed ugly
Surrounded by blossoms.
Oh, to be them is to be pretty.
You absorbed too much water,
Like drowning in the sea.

Parts of you start to die, slowly starving your tree.
Wondering, "Should I put on plastic leaves?
I won't die out, and I'll stop being ugly."
But I still see life in you.

A notebook,
With a cover that doesn't have the best look.
Scrambled words inside, it looks like a mess.
With frustration, you tear and cut out the pages.
But the feeling's always there,
Like being trapped in cages.

You're looking at what you've done,
Connecting the pages one by one.
Just for you to do it again.
But I saw art in it.

Touched myself with regret,
But realized the season hasn't come just yet.
They never got to see the full me.
What I think about myself, my insecurities.
You're still hiding your true beauty.

The parts I hate,
Most people want it.
We only get
Two eyes, apart from many.
Just living things,
All built differently.
But no matter what, they have feelings.
Even monsters can just be acting.

My eyes now in yours,
Your eyes, now in mine.
The body that made you insecure
Was gorgeous in someone else's mind.

Nanami Ishihara '24



Being Me
Brianna Dominguez '24
Mixed Media

Poets > Writers?

Poems are egregious
Poets are even worse: they are ludicrous.

Why read poems when we have stories
Why be a poet when we can write heap with much more detail?

I sometimes forget why I am writing this, as I am writing this

But poems and poets are not only about writing
Even small, they have meanings

Poems give us the realization:
We are free from localization and build up our creativity without restriction

Every letter in a poem has as much importance as a chapter in a book; they are our loved ones in a crowd of thousands of people

Therefore, poems are serenity itself
Poets are even better: they are adept and preeminent
And I, the one who is writing this phenomenal poem, am the one who tries to get a better reputation towards my language arts teacher.

Sean Kim '24



It's My Story
Kris Ip '23
Pen & Ink

Cat Eyes

Hina Postilion '24

The trees whip by at a breakneck speed and I reach my hand out of the car window. "Kaya!" my mother yells at me from the driver's seat, so I shrink back.

My fingers itch to reach farther out again, but the window slowly rolls up and locks with a click.

"Did Doctor Grant tell you about that therapist he was talking about?" my mom asks, gripping the wheel hard. I feel guilty, but I push that feeling down. It's not my fault.

"No," I replied coldly. "He said he would today." I pushed my back against the car seat, looking out the window on the other side.

"How about that new medication he wants to get you on?" she urged. "Have you thought about it?"

"I don't want to be on any more medication. I'm already taking too much." She knows it's a touchy subject for me, but she keeps asking.

I bite down on my tongue. It's not *her* fault, either. Besides, she hasn't asked since last Tuesday. I automatically start counting down the days and then the hours it's been since last Tuesday. I hold my breath while doing it, so when I finish, I'm heaving.

Mom looks at me from the rearview window, concerned. "Are you sure, Kaya? This might be the one," she coaxed.

I tap my right foot frustratedly. Then I tap my left one because it feels uneven. "You say that for everything."

"Well, it's important that we explore all of our options," she says in an overly critical tone.

"Sure," I mutter under my breath, and then we stay silent for the rest of the car ride. I feel bad the entire time because she's trying her best and spending her money on me.

When the car slows down, I open my eyes, which is when I realize that my eyes have been closed. We're stopped in front of the *Grant Clinic for OCD Treatment and Other Related Disorders*. At first, when we started coming here, Mom would come in with me, but now she just drops me off outside.

"Make sure to mention that therapist," she reminds me as I get out of the car. "And I'll see you soon!" I hear her say as I slam the door.

And then sort of suddenly, I regret slamming the door so hard. I mean, you have to slam the door to close the door, but I could have probably slammed the door less hard. I *should* have slammed the door less hard. Now she probably thinks I slammed the door hard on purpose, and now I'm gonna have to slam the door just as hard when I get back in so she doesn't think I'm mad at her. But now she might be mad at me. I'm gonna have to watch carefully to see if she slams the door hard like me, but that will be difficult because she slams the door hard usually, even when she's not angry.

I turn my thoughts to cat eyes, because that's what I focus on when I notice that I'm obsessively overthinking. Cat eyes are so freaky, it's like a mousetrap. Once you start thinking about them, you forget what you were thinking about a second ago. They glow green with that slit of a pupil peeking out at you. They're similar to our eyes but have that glint that we lack. I've always wanted a cat, but three of my friends are allergic and I don't want them to stop coming around either, so I've never asked for one.

Whenever I think about cat eyes, enough time passes to make me forget what I was thinking about. What *was* I thinking about? I shouldn't jinx it. I stop thinking about it.

Pushing open the glass door, I meet the eyes of the secretary at the front desk, Heejae. Heejae is in her early twenties and very charismatic. Not a hair on her perfect head is out of place any day and her toothy smile that lifts up her freckled cheeks is enough to cure any sickness.

She gives me one of them and I have to smile back. "Here to visit Dr. Grant again?" she asks me, scrolling through the list of guests. I nod, pointing to my name on her screen that she hasn't spotted yet. She gives me a little sound that lets me know she understands.

"He's already in his office! Hope your appointment goes well," she says sincerely, and I wish I could be just as sincere as her with my life.

When I enter Dr. Grant's office, he's going through a medical document on his computer. "Kaya! Welcome back. Come sit down," he says, patting the chair across from him. I do, reluctantly.

"Have you talked to your mother about the therapist I was speaking about last week?" he asks me, his glasses sliding down his nose.

"Um... yes, but I'm not comfortable with starting therapy. Last time was a disaster." I rubbed my sleeve, avoiding eye contact. I look at the stuffed animal on his desk instead. When I finally look up, he's smiling gently at me.

"Your old therapist wasn't a good fit. That doesn't mean no one will be." he tries. But respectfully? I don't budge. I just don't want to.

"Alright," Dr. Grant says, giving up. "How about the new medication?"

"What exactly is it?" I ask suspiciously.

"It's a newly developed medication. Perfectly safe, obviously. It's a pill you'd have to take daily. A type of antidepressant. Not too big, so you won't have trouble swallowing it."

I hesitate. This medication sounds... okay. Maybe my mom is right. Maybe it'll be the one. Maybe it will save me. But then again, do I really want to be saved? Do I want to have to go through all that suffering I went through the first time I tried? Just to fail again? If I dive back into this, I can't come up for air again. And I still don't really want to take medication. This one sounds alright, but I don't want to send them the message that I'm opening up to a billion drugs again.

Cat eyes. Cat eyes. Cat eyes.

My thoughts fade away into the stale coffee on Dr. Grant's desk. "Let me think about it," I tell him, but I'm sure my answer will be no by next week. *I'm such a mess.*

My thoughts fade away into the stale coffee on Dr. Grant's desk.

The rest of the appointment goes by slowly, and when I finally exit his office, I feel like the hallway air is somehow fresher than the air I was breathing seconds ago. I take a deep gulp of it until my stomach hurts, and then let it go.

My mom isn't here yet, so I wait in the lobby. No one else is here, so it's just me and Heejae again. I have the sudden urge to ask her a question.

"Hey, why do you work here? It's so dreary." The moment the words leave my mouth I feel extremely dumb. I probably insulted her. But Heejae smiles.

"I came here when I was younger."

"Oh. You have OCD?"

"Mhm. It's gotten much better since I was diagnosed."

"How'd you do it?" That makes no sense. I accidentally flick my pants with my hand, and then I feel the compulsion to touch them again with my other hand. I do.

"Do what?" She asks, frowning her brows.

"Like... how'd you get over it?"

"I didn't." Heejae shrugs and smiles without a lot of humor in her expression. "I have bad days even now."

"Doesn't that bother you, though?" I say carefully, trying to word it in a way that wouldn't offend her.

"It does." She nods, putting the drink she just sipped down beside her keyboard. "That's why I'm grateful for the medication they have now."

"They didn't have a lot when you were young?"

"Hey, I'm not that old," Heejae argues, raising an eyebrow.

I smile. "But they have more now."

She agrees to that. "The medication has helped a lot. Maybe not for everyone, but I'm glad it did for me."

I swear it smiles with its bright green cat eyes.

"Oh," I say, nodding.

"You want a list of medications that worked for me?" she asks, perking up again.

Not really. But I say yes because I don't want to hurt her feelings. She starts rattling off all the names of the best medications and halfway through the list, she mentions the one Mom and Dr. Grant keep talking about.

Huh. If it worked for Heejae, maybe it'll work for me. It may be worth a try.

My mom is running really late. She calls me and tells me she won't be here for another fifteen minutes.

Something similar happened before. I thought I could do it and I tried and failed. It was easier to just deal with it. But maybe if I try this medication so I can be like Heejae, or come close.

While I'm feeling reckless and a little bit motivated, I go back to Dr. Grant's office to tell him I'll try the medicine. Not the therapy; I'm not ready for that yet. But one small step at a time is what I'm getting at right now.

The little stuffed animal sits on the edge of his desk. When I squint, I realize that it's a cat.

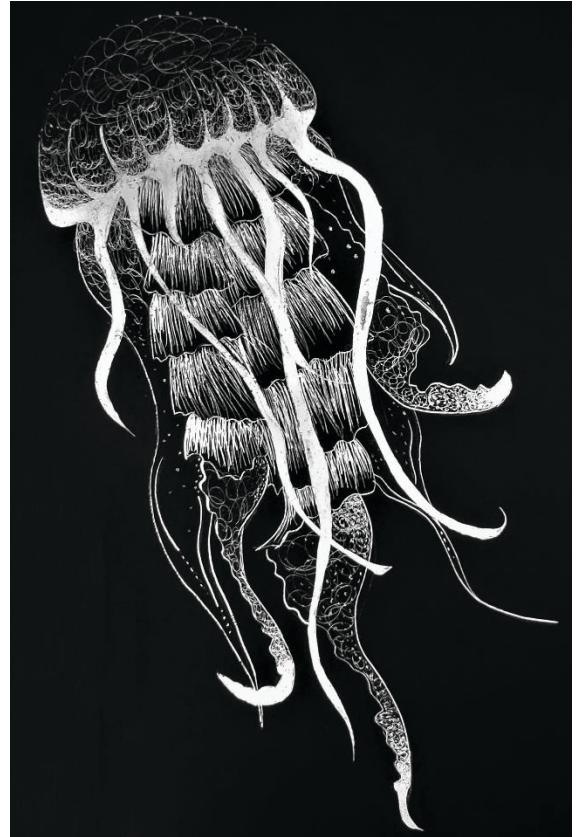
When I say I'll give it a try, I swear it smiles with its bright green cat eyes.



Staring
Theodor Carreno '23
Scratchboard



Pelican Perch
Rachel Lee '23
Scratchboard



Water Wonder
Gianna Kim '23
Scratchboard

Animal Testing is Justifiable

Aaron Chun '24

Standard surgical procedures that save myriad lives daily were tested on animals - without animal testing countless people will die. Animal testing is the use of animals in scientific research to test the safety and effectiveness of products such as drugs, cosmetics, and household items. The coronavirus vaccine was constructed in under a year. This was only possible because of extensive testing on animals. Furthermore, one vaccine can help infinite people survive at the cost of only a finite amount of animal lives. Animal testing is justifiable because it is needed to create vaccines and medications, it is necessary to ensure the safety of products, and the animals tested are treated humanely.

Without the results of animal testing, making effective vaccines and medications will be virtually impossible. Countless people's lives are saved by vaccines that prevent deadly diseases and medications that keep people alive were the result of animal testing. According to the NIH or the National Institutes of Health, a government-controlled website states, the only reason that the Covid-19 vaccine was created quickly and effectively was because of extensive animal testing. The coronavirus vaccine has saved countless people from getting sick or even from death, the scientists couldn't have saved countless people if it wasn't for animal testing. Without animal experimentation, humans couldn't have been able to make a vaccine in under a year that was as effective as vaccines that had taken years to make. If it wasn't for animal testing society might still have a pandemic in 2023. According to the North Carolina State University, injecting insulin, which is used to help people with Type 1 Diabetes, was extensively tested on dogs before being used for human use. The CDC or Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that approximately 28.7

million people in the US alone are diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes. If scientists were not able to create a way to deliver insulin into the bodies of people with Type 1 Diabetes, an unfathomably large number of people would die around the world. Animal testing is a requisite for saving people with diseases and stopping pandemics.

Animal testing is justifiable because it is necessary to ensure the safety of products. By testing products on animals, researchers can identify potential side effects and toxicities that could harm humans if the products were released onto the market. The FDA or the U.S. Food and Drug Administration states that many manufacturers of cosmetics such as makeup use animal testing to test the safety of the product. Animal testing protects users of makeup from toxic chemicals. Toxic chemicals can cause burns, rashes, itches, and sometimes even death. Makeup is used by commoners every day. Without the process of animal testing, people will be harmed in large amounts by chemicals that are very dangerous to us. An example of this is the infamous thalidomide. Thalidomide was used to help with morning sickness in pregnant women but caused birth defects. The NIH, National Institutes of Health states, the babies of people who took thalidomides had birth defects, and scientists did extensive animal experimentation and proved that thalidomide caused birth defects. If it wasn't for animal testing the process of finding the cause of birth defects would have been much longer. The longer it took for the problem to be identified, the harm caused by thalidomide would have caused a substantially large amount of destruction. Experimentation on animals is a necessity to ensure the safety of everyday items that are accessible to the public.

Animals used during testing are treated humanely so animal testing is justifiable. Tested animals are given proper medication before, during, and after the testing to guarantee their safety. According to the NIH, National Institutes of Health, the “Three Rs” of animal testing or replacement, reduction, and refinement in most, if not all animal testing procedures around the world. Replacement is replacing the use of animals as much as possible, reduction is trying to use the least number of animals when testing and refinement is trying to decrease the amount of testing done on one animal. These guidelines have let scientists minimize the use of animal testing. The “Three Rs” have led scientists to use computer simulations to decrease the number of animals being used. Even when animal testing ensues the animal is tested with care and the scientists try to get the most data from each test to lower the number of animals that are tested. The NIH’s guideline for pain and distress in laboratory animals states it is the ethical and legal duty of the scientist to relieve the animal’s pain and distress if it doesn’t interfere with reaching the objective of the research. Scientists and researchers alike follow these guidelines to provide the most painless process possible for the animals. Researchers would treat the animal with care as if it was going through surgery, giving it pain medications and anesthesia to relieve the pain. These ethical guidelines ensure that animal testing is conducted humanely and

People over the age of 80 who had taken the coronavirus vaccine had 683,714 fewer people tested positive than unvaccinated people in the U.S. alone.

responsibly, with minimal harm or discomfort to the animals involved.

The opposition claims that animals used for testing can be traumatized by the experience. That doesn’t account for the fact that animals are given anesthesia before the testing and pain relief after testing. As stated above, the NIH’s guidelines for animal experimentation requires the researchers to give the animals proper care and medications to relieve the pain and distress from the experiment as much as possible. In most experimentations, the animals are given anesthesia which makes the animal feel no pain during the process of testing. Animals are also unaware of the procedure due to the anesthesia. Opposers of animal testing are obstinate people that want to stop the quick and effective manufacturing of life-saving vaccines.

After the coronavirus was released to people over 80 years of age, 683,714 fewer people tested positive than unvaccinated people in the U.S. Vaccines like these are created at a great speed and are effective for users. This would not be possible without animal testing. Scientists and researchers conducting tests use anesthesia and pain relief to treat test animals humanely. If we stop animal experimentation an innumerable amount of people will die because we cannot create vaccines effectively and quickly.

Hurt and Happiness

Two boys meet,
Beneath the newborn bridge.
One's cheery, delighted,
In spite of rotten lives.
The other's hurt, anguished,
Spiteful of fine world.
Eyes meet, hands touch,
A friendship is formed.
The joyous promises to visit,
The hurt wanders away.
Somehow, always,
The hurt finds his way back
To the pond beneath the bridge,
Where the happy stands, waiting.
An escape from awful lives,
From agonizing ignorance,
From blatant hate.
And for once, the heart of hurt beats.
Forever, happiness is boundlessly true.
And in moments exchanged,
In smiles and wonders,
Glances and almos,ts,
Hurt declares his love.
Happiness accepts it.
And for once, hurt is happy.

Yet happiness is never tethered,
Hurt left to simmer, to hate.
The smiling boy promises to come again,
To keep the promise they first made,
And leaves.
So, Hurt waits.
He visits a pond of growing ducks,
Of creaking bridges,
Of ageing memories,
And one day realizes
That happiness broke his promise.
He should be hurt.
After all, the boy he loved the most,
His joy, his world,
Left.
Said goodbye, promised to come back,
And never kept true to his word.
But hurt cannot hate love.
Not when love showed him wonders
Beneath the creaking bridge,
With blissfully happy ducks,
Hurt cannot hate Happiness.

Olivia Rhee '24



Two Faced
Brianna Dominguez '24
Acrylic Paint

My Favorite Type of Book

It's a new genre, something I've never seen before.

Getting upset over every little thing.

A simple book, but always expecting something more.

It's written in a new language, no clue what any of this means.

The book's inscribed on my mind, always appearing in my dreams.

This book is something I didn't borrow, but it still isn't mine.

I'm still on the first chapter but it feels like it can end anytime.

It always has the same plot, but the story won't get old. Even if I read it again and again.

Hoping for every theory to be true, even though I know, it's not going to happen.

Read every other book, and it always had a happily ever after.

Emotionally, it's unsatisfying, but logically, it is filled with laughter.

I don't want to show this book, others can make fun of it.

Although it's not mine, I don't want others to have it.

This is my favorite type of book. It's true, I cannot pretend.

Oh, the ups and downs and the plot twists are something I thrive on. Please don't let it end.

Nanami Ishihara '24



One Page at a Time
Eunice Cho '23
Pen & Ink

Post-It

If I stay true to my goals
If I stay true to myself.

I would be able to accomplish anything.
Unbeknownst to me, I've never stuck to anything.

Always linear,
Like living in a 2D plane.

Memorizing the game plan,
Though failing in the execution.

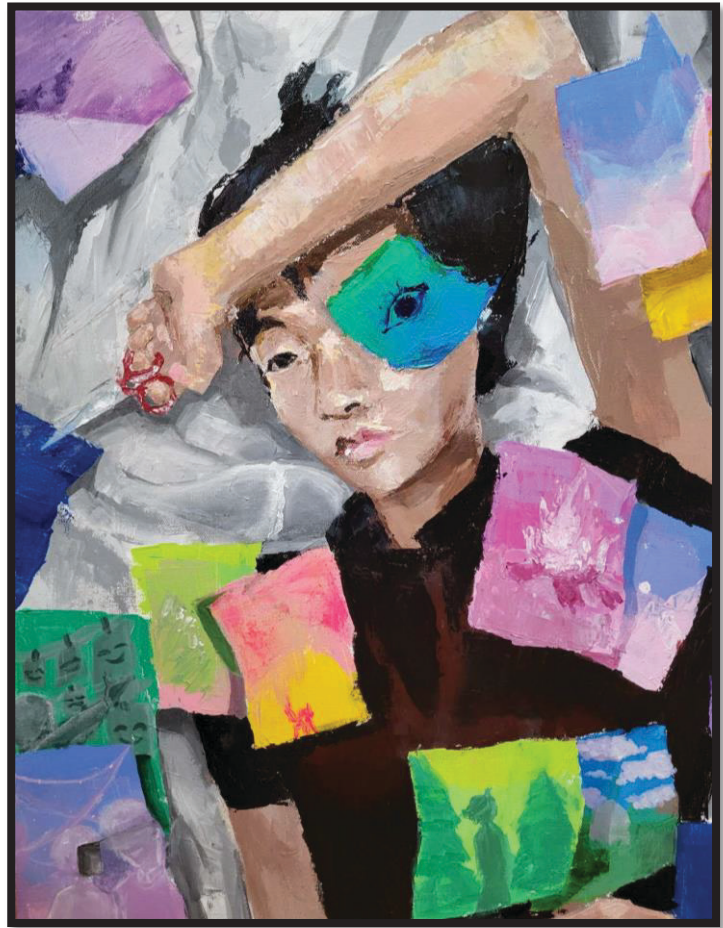
Pieces of myself fall
But my vices stick on me as a reminder.

It builds and builds,
Until it's the thing I'm affiliated with.

I close my eyes,
Cleansing my head of anything negative

And just for a minute,
The reminders flutter away.

Keanu Nakasato '24



Pieces of Me
Kris Ip '23
Acrylic Paint

Green Eyes Madison Melo '24

I have green eyes. Not the bright green that you get when you mix blue and yellow but the green you get when you mix gray with just a touch of green. Those are my eyes. My mom and my sisters have beautiful golden-brown eyes. Their eyes glisten like honey while mine are almost as light as snow. They say I get my eyes from dad's side of the family. Even then, I still don't look like them. My eyes are light; kind of like me, I guess. I have light eyes and light hair. Isn't that what everyone wants? Not me. All I want to look like is the rest of my family. They look like each other. But I don't. I don't look nor act like them. They are all bright and happy, but how am I supposed to be when I can't even get out of bed in the morning? I'm just me, but "me" is not what I want to be.

I'm just me, but
"me" is not what I
want to be.

Today after breakfast, something in me was telling me to go down to the Anderson Street garden I'd heard about my whole life. I brought with me a small blue shovel and some Marigold seeds. If they grew, I was planning to give them to my mom. I decided to not tell my sisters where I was going. This would be the one thing I would have to myself. I heard all the stories of things that happened at the garden. Surprisingly, 10 years later, it was still here. On my short walk, I thought about it. The garden had been through long and harsh winters and beautiful springs and summers but I still didn't understand what was so great about it. All you do is plant seeds, but what do you do with them? I mean, you can sell them. But what else is there? Why is everyone telling all these great stories of the people of the Anderson Street garden?

After five minutes, I finally arrived. There was no one there, but as soon as I entered the smell of all kinds of flowers, fruits and vegetables wafted

around me. It felt different. It felt like it wasn't New Jersey anymore. It felt like a whole new world. I found an empty pile of dirt in the far-right corner of the garden. I sat down with my little pouch of seeds. I used my shovel to dig a small hole in the dirt. Then I carefully put my seeds into the pile and covered up the pile with dirt. As I was patting the dirt down, I heard something. They were voices. The voices sounded familiar. Grace and Addison. Two girls from my school who felt the need to pick on me every day. No matter how hard I tried, they still didn't stop. I didn't understand why they needed to pick on me so much. They had perfect lives. Both of them had long, beautiful blonde hair, still fit in their clothes from when they were 12, huge homes, successful parents, and closets as big as my whole apartment. I could go on and on, listing what they have and what I don't. I crouched down so hopefully they wouldn't see me. It didn't work. As soon as they passed by they saw me.

"Oh, my goodness, Addi! Look who it is... it's Marina." Grace called out to Addison.

"What are you doing...?" Grace said, disgusted.

"She's being a total loser, of course!" Addison said.

"Well Marina, we don't want to bother you so I think we should go. Tootles!" Grace said to me.

I froze like a deer in headlights.

As soon as they left, my knees collapsed to the ground and my hands went to my face. As I was sitting there sobbing, I started hearing more footsteps approaching the garden.

It was a lady. She looked to be about in her mid-twenties. The lady walked into the garden, sat down next to me and introduced herself.

"Hi, I've never seen you here! My name is Maricela. I come here all the time. I basically grew up here," She said.

"My name is Marina. And yeah, it's my first time here." I replied while wiping tears from my eyes.

"Nice to meet you, Marina. I wanted to ask you if you are okay. I saw you crying and saw two girls in the distance laughing away. I was wondering if they had anything to do with this," she said softly.

"Yes, they do," I replied.

After that, I told Maricela the whole story. My home life, my feelings about myself and Grace and Addison and all the problems they caused.

"Oh wow, I'm so sorry. No one should ever have to go through that. But, you shouldn't hate yourself for not looking like your family. Not everyone looks exactly like their family members. That's what makes it special," she said to me.

It made me feel a little better, but I still wasn't totally confident in myself.

"You know Marina, I was 15 once. Can I tell you something?" She whispered in my ear. That's when she told me her story. She told me about her teen pregnancy and about how her friend Leona helped her understand that her body was natural and beautiful.

Maricela is my Leona. After she told me her story, I realized that everyone has a story that makes them special. Maricela and I sat there talking for hours until dinner time, when she had to get home to her daughter.

"Marina, I have to get going to pick up my daughter, but one last thing. Can you come to the garden at around noon tomorrow?" She asked me.

"I sure can!" I said with a smile on my face.

The next morning, I was about to sleep in a little longer when I remembered that Maricela had invited me to the garden. Luckily, I woke up just in time to do my morning routine. It was 11:40, I had 15 minutes to get ready because it would take me five minutes to walk to the garden. Maybe three, if I ran. I hurried out of bed and picked out the first things I saw in my dresser. Some shorts and a tee-shirt. After I got dressed, I walked over to the kitchen. It was empty. My mom, dad and sisters were gone. I didn't think anything of it and went about getting ready. I poured myself a bowl of Frosted Flakes cereal. I ate quickly. Then, I grabbed my keys and left. I made it just before noon. Once again, when I stepped into the garden it felt like a whole new world. My nose was pleased with scents of flowers, fruits and vegetables. I walked a little further into the garden to look for Maricela. As I passed by the garden's refrigerator, I was shocked to see and hear Maricela and my family. And some people I didn't know.

"Surprise!" They all cheered.

"Woah. I don't quite understand what I'm being surprised about..." I said, shocked.

"I'm surprising you with a gardening party!" Maricela said.

"Oh! Um, okay...!" I said with a confused expression.

"Just trust me, Marina. This is sure to teach you something."

After that, Maricela introduced me to people she called the Seedfolks.

“Okay Marina, this is one of the people I want you to meet.” Maricela explained.

“Why hello, Marina! My name is Sam. How are you?” Sam asked with a wide smile.

His smile was contagious.

With Sam’s contagious smile on my face, I said, “Well, I was confused at first, but now I’m happy to be here.”

“I’m happy to hear that. Just wait for what’s in store later.” He said with a wink.

He was right; there was so much in store for later. After that, I met the rest of the Seedfolks including Maricela’s daughter.

After a couple conversations, Maricela called everyone over to the front of the garden. As everyone walked over, I saw how happy and excited everyone was. Even my family. I connected the pieces and concluded that that was why they weren’t at the house this morning. Once everyone got to the front of the garden, Maricela announced our next activity.

“Okay everyone! Our next activity is... planting flowers! Let me explain how we are going to do this. Everyone is going to pick a pack of seeds that are all different, a shovel and mini watering can. Once that’s done, we are going to all go to an empty pile of dirt on the right side of the garden. There should be enough for everyone. Then, once everyone has done that, at the same time we are going to start planting our seeds. I know everyone has some type of negative feeling about themselves, so the whole point of this is to bury our old feelings about ourselves, and when they grow, they’ll blossom into new, positive feelings. Once they fully grow, there will be something else to it, too. Does anyone have any questions?” She concluded.

Everyone shook their heads no. But suddenly, as we were all about to start, two people showed up. Grace and Addison.

“Actually, we have a question.” Addison said.

Everyone just stood there staring at them. I didn’t even know what to say. Luckily, Maricela stepped in.

“What’s wrong, girls?” She asked.

“We were wondering if we could join in, too. We just wanted to say we are really sorry for the way we always treated you, Marina. The truth is... we were just jealous of you. To us, you looked perfect, and we just wanted to be like you.” Grace explained.

“Oh, I didn’t know that. Of course you can join in!” I said. Maricela explained to them what the project was about.

“Okay girls, grab some seeds. Let’s get this party started!”

Surprisingly, they both chose a pile of dirt next to mine. Everyone planted their seeds of emotions. After we were all done, we went around in a circle saying what we planted.

When it was my turn, I said, “I planted Marigold seeds. My seeds symbolize my old feelings toward myself, and if they blossom, they will symbolize how my feelings have blossomed.”

Everyone clapped and it made me feel really good. At around 3:30, everyone had left and it was just me, Maricela and my family.

“Maricela, I don’t even know how to thank you for all of this. This really taught me something,” I said.

"Of course, and *when* the flowers bloom it will teach you something else, too. Come to the garden at noon exactly 3 months from now." She replied.

As much as I wanted to believe, I still had my doubts. Would the seed blossom? Either way, I made a mental note in my brain.

Three months later, like I promised I would, I was at the garden again. As soon as I walked in, my eyes sprung out their sockets when I saw all the beautiful flowers everyone grew. Only Maricela was at the garden that day, but I knew there was a reason for that.

"Marina! I'm so happy you remembered. Come on, let me show you something!"

I ran over with her to all the flowers.

"Marina, do you notice something about these flowers?" She asked me.

"The beautiful colors and scents, of course." I replied.

My green eyes
shone brighter
from that day on.

"Yes, that's right, but do you notice anything else?" She asked.

I didn't, I was so confused by what she meant. All I saw and smelled were colorful flowers. I looked at her with a confused expression on my face.

"That's okay. I'm going to tell you what I notice. I notice that they all look different. See, your flowers are yellow and orange."

I saw my beautiful marigold budding out of the dirt and I was awestruck.

"While my flowers," Maricela continued, "are pink and purple. You see, what I'm trying to say is that all flowers fall under the 'flower' family. But they all look different."

I knew what she was trying to say. I realized that flowers are one family, and for example, chocolate is another, but there's many types of chocolate but they all look different. Maricela showed me that everyone in a family looks different, but it was okay because they were still a family."

My green eyes shone brighter from that day on. Green and gorgeous.

Weird Life

Life's weird

why do people expect us?

to be perfect and like
get over things quickly

things happen and life's hard
especially when you don't live in a perfect ideal world.

It's hard to get over people and things and just stuff in general but it's even harder when you have expectations higher than you can handle and if you don't make it to that impossible level then you're just nobody

you have to be special in this society to make a change
but that makes no sense when everyone is struggling
in some type of way whether physically or mentally
they both matter the same.

I just don't know what most people want.

I'm glad a lot of people keep going every day for people they barely know. I'm proud of everyone who at their lowest time still made it to this day.

I'm proud of the people who aren't here but still tried.

I'm proud of the people who seek help and the ones who suffer and still put on a brave face.

I'm proud of everyone who's just here because living in a society like today can break you.

Lizmelly Munoz Alejo '24

A watercolor illustration of a person walking a tightrope. The person is a black silhouette with arms outstretched, balancing on a thin black line. Below the line is a large, bright yellow-green circle, possibly representing the sun or moon. The background is a soft, pinkish-purple wash. Several small black birds are scattered across the sky.

Walking a Fine Line
Lea West '24
Watercolor



Family
Sophia Rivas Dominguez '24
Digital Art

Holiday Hullabaloo

Lora Shakirova '24

Holidays, Holidays, Holidays. Always all about the holidays. Last year, the holidays were perfect. I definitely can't say the same about this year. First off, my parents had a business meeting, which meant that they were out of town for a week or two, exactly on the holidays. Even worse, Grandpopernino (grandpa) fell off the stairs in our house. That caused terrible chaos. He almost died! As worried and scared as I was, I knew that I had to make sure that my siblings didn't stress. Since there are seven of them, I knew that I had to take matters into my own hands.

"You ok pops?" I asked.

He weakly replied, "I-I'm h-hur-".

"SEE! He is totally fine!" I replied, trying to calm everyone down. I don't think it was very visible, but I was having a huge panic attack.

"I think we should just go to the hospital for a quick check-up," I suggested. I decided to wait an hour before going to make sure that he actually wasn't okay. I realized after only an hour that I made a mistake. He was completely unconscious. I decided I needed to get to the hospital. I told all of my siblings to get dressed and get ready to go on a road trip. I was making things up to keep them calm as I talked. I knew that I had to keep them entertained.

"Guys! Did you know that our car is so cool that it could drive just by having a person sitting in the front seat?", I asked them. I knew that what I was about to do was the worst idea, but there wasn't another option... I decided to drive to the hospital without knowing how to or the rules on the road, at

thirteen years old. I got my siblings with me in the car goofing around, an unconscious old man, and a teenager driving a car (aka, me).

On the way there, I heard a police car behind me. I was scared so I just drove even faster, thinking that he needed me to go faster. I was having fun because I felt like I was on a jet ski, speeding through the whole world. This fun ended the moment I heard the siren and announcement that told me to pull over. The cop came up to me and told me that I was speeding. After a few seconds, I saw a look of confusion in his eyes.

"How old are you?", he asked. "Can I see your drivers' license?" I didn't know what to say...

"I may look young, but I'm not. And to answer your question, no, I do not have my driver's license. I had to run out of my mansion which I own and rush my pop to the hospital. And so, I forgot to bring my license. Answer all of your questions?" He had a blank look on his face, as if he just saw a ghost. Quickly, something in his face changed. He got a call from another police officer and ran quickly to his car. While running, he told me that he will be right back and just needs to check on something. I didn't have the time for this. I knew that I had to go, cop or no cop.

I quickly rushed to the hospital, but halfway through the road, I realized that half of my siblings were gone. I thought and thought, and soon realized that I left half of them at home! It's okay, I say to myself. Just breathe...

When we got to the hospital, the doctor told us that Grandpopernino had a "light," (being sarcastic) concussion. It was pretty obvious that it was no light concussion. It was clearly a big one.

Last year, the holidays were perfect. I definitely can't say the same about this year.

Grandpopernino also broke his leg, sprained his ankle, and dislocated his shoulder. I told my siblings to wait for pops and I went outside. I didn't want them fussing over it and thinking about this. I just want them to feel like this is a normal Christmas. If I'm being honest, I am kind of thankful that it is not one of my siblings being rushed to the hospital.

On the way home, I was hoping that I would just be able to relax and take a nap. However, little did I know that there was a messy surprise waiting for me at home.

"I am so sorry that I left you guys!" I said. "I just completely bla-" I could not believe my eyes. The house looked like it was torn apart and as if there was a party. It turned out that my siblings made a huge mess. I had to figure out something to do, so I gave each one of my siblings a chore. I clearly wasn't thinking straight, since I actually decided to trust my siblings to do what they are supposed to. In the meantime, my grandpa was resting in his bedroom. When I finished my chores, I went to go check how my siblings were doing.

My little brother and sister, who are non-identical twins, were chosen to clean the bathroom. When I went in there, it smelled like an overdose of chemicals. They thought that they had to pour the whole bottle in, when really, they just needed one pump. I know that getting mad at them would just make things worse. I explained to them that next time, they were to put a small amount and wash it thoroughly. I went to my other siblings, and they

didn't do any better. My little brothers started to run around and spill the chemicals all over the place.

"Stop! Guys, you are going to slip!" I yelled. And what do you think? I was right. One of them slipped and the other one tripped over him and also fell. They started to cry and scream, which caused all of my other siblings to come and each and every one of them slipped on the same spot. My younger sister, who is six, accidently pushed me and caused me to slip onto the floor next to everyone else. Everyone stopped crying suddenly, when they saw that everyone was on the floor. My littlest siblings started laughing, and then little by little everyone started to chuckle. After a few seconds, we all started to laugh so hard that our stomachs were starting to hurt.

Suddenly, we hear the doorbell ringing. During the same minute, our parents come into the door with presents! We all run up to them and hug them.

"I thought you said that you wouldn't be able to make it... we were all so upset." I said. My parents explained that it was all part of a surprise. They didn't actually go away. They just went to their friend's house while getting the presents and surprise ready. We all hugged again, and I realized that the most important thing is family. Just because some things went wrong this year during Christmas time, I was with my family, which is the most important thing. Even though it wasn't perfect, it was the imperfections and accidents that made it perfect, and special in its own way.

THE BEST PARTS OF MUSIC ARE...



REHEARSALS!

FRIENDS!

CONCERTS!

DORNEY PARK!

More Than Music
Carolina Perez '23
Pen & Ink

No Simple Line

A line always starts with a dot.

It can go 3 ways:

Up, down, or straight.

Some lines are short and some are long.

There are so many things that they can create.

They're everywhere, we give them meaning, so there's no such place where they belong.

They're made from being dependent and independent.

But sometimes the starting point is never fair.

And although it is always going somewhere,
sometimes it might make a turn you don't expect.

And the timing and the turns might not be perfect.

But that's just how a line is made.

A line can connect with another line.

It just keeps on going, no matter how fast or slow.

Once it's drawn, you can't turn back time.

The line's destination is somewhere we don't know.

A line always ends with a dot.

The dots have to be together, never apart.

That line stays in the paper, forever and ever.

All together, making art.

Nanami Ishihara '24

An Interview with a Poet – Nanami Ishihara '24

Interviewed by Intermedia Staff '23

Nanami, your poem, "No Simple Line" is truly a remarkable piece. Can you tell me a little bit about it?

It's a metaphor. The line is our life and the dots are our memories and feelings. Going up, down, or straight means that we will have our ups and downs, being happy, sad, or just feeling "normal." Some lives are short, while some are long. One life can create so many things such as music, motivation, and love.

Amazing. I specifically loved the part: "They're made from being dependent and independent." To me, it had to do with math. Am I reading that right?

You're absolutely right! The dots that make up the lines have dependent and independent variables (x , y). This means that every memory has something to do with you(x) and others(y), showing that being dependent and independent is something we need to do in life.

What about the line itself. Why was that an inspiration for you? You pull so much out of such a simple idea.

Well, just like how lines are everywhere, such as in art and letters, there's life everywhere and *we* give them meaning. People will have different opinions on others' lives, meaning that there's no such place (such as ONLY getting positive thoughts about you from others) where you belong.

Is that what the line "But sometimes the starting point is never fair" is about?

Well, yes. In a way. That line also has to do with math. The starting point of line (b) can be positive, negative, or the origin (0,0). Some people are born with talent or money, while others could be less fortunate. Life won't be perfect, so there will always be unexpected ups and downs. Still, we can make connections. Our life will keep on going, and time won't stop no matter how fast or slow it feels like. Once you do something (make a decision), you can't erase/redo what you did. It will be part of your life and you will have to move on. We don't know when our life ends. It can end in 80 years, 10 years, tomorrow, or even 10 minutes from now. In the end, we will have a story, where all our memories and feelings are together and connected. When we die, our life can be in someone's heart or story, staying there forever.

Wow. That's incredibly profound. It's given me a lot to think about. Do you have any final thoughts on your process or anything else you'd like to tell your readers?

There is actually. I wanted to say that people connect with others to make "art" (Could be "you" since we all have a story, making us a form of art.) For example, if I make music, that music software is made by a bunch of other people, and the computer I'm using is made by others. When they unite, it is how art is made. Our stories are made by people living in them. Therefore, the human connection makes art.



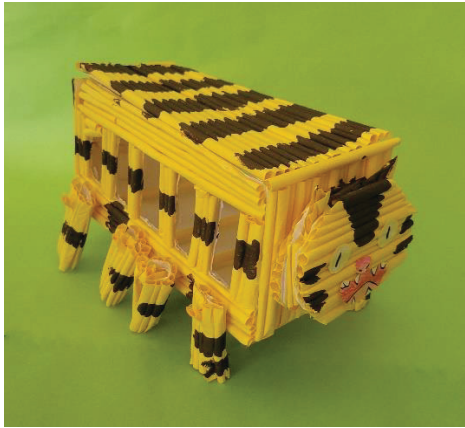
A Cap for Chloe
Nicole Park '24
Fibers and Fabrics



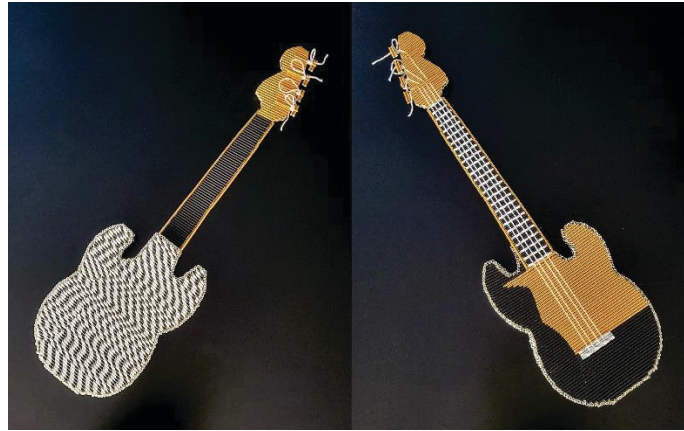
Octopus Overload
Carolina Perez '23
Fibers and Fabrics



Yarn
Carolina Perez '23
Fibers and Fabrics



Cat Bus
Ara Cho '23, Chloe Chen '23
Sculpture



Play It Loud
Leon Ryu '23
Sculpture



Attracting the Bees
Chloe Shin '23, Sophia Campise '23,
Sophia Tseung '23
Sculpture



Dinner Time
Yerin Cha '23
Sculpture



What to Wear
Chaeyeong Lee '23, Juerta Disha '23
Sculpture

The Loop

Aaron Peña '24

I stare at the ceiling and tried to imagine nothingness. But what is nothingness? That's the only way I can get any sleep. First, I need a fan blasting in my face. Second, I need classical music playing in my ears. Third, nothingness. For god's sake! What is *nothingness*?

I stared at the ceiling and tried to imagine nothingness. But what is nothingness?

I close my eyes and try to sleep for what is most likely the twentieth time tonight and finally I can feel myself being dragged away into my subconscious with the cold breeze and the rain hitting my window. Then, I'm being taken somewhere else.

I wake up but I'm standing by my bed already and when I draw the curtains I can tell it's still dark outside. I check the time - only an hour has gone by. I *blink* and find myself in bed, sweating, but the clock tells me it's only been minutes. Once again, I am standing by my bed, but this time I go to my phone. I open the calendar app... What? How could it be? Two days. I've been in bed, for *two days*. Before hysterics I Googled "Calendar Date Glitch" but find nothing. It has to be a mistake.

I open Messages to try and ask my friends if they have ever experienced a shift like this but instead I find messages that I don't remember sending. I imagine myself having run on autopilot for two days but I laugh to myself at the thought of it. That's not possible. I would have remembered something, anything. Instead, all I remember is... nothingness. I reset my phone and lie down while I wait but I blink and find myself standing by my bed once again. I check my phone and the calendar is three days ahead. Now I'm concerned but I brush it off. I'm hallucinating. Right? I'll just pull another all-nighter. I'll get through this. I collect my phone,

earbuds, and a water bottle and sit down on the couch next to the Xbox controller and turn the console on. I check the date on the Xbox but it's the same as the phone. I ignore it and load up the last game I played, watching TikToks while I wait for the game to finish loading. Then, the banners appear. Notifications from people I barely know, people that I don't remember talking to. I ignore them. Hours pass and I see it's about 6:30 in the morning. I'm free from sleep. I just get ready like usual. Comb. Bush. Cereal. Door. Normal right?

When I get to school, though, I find myself in the midst of curious eyes. People looking at me differently. People looking at me at all.

During gym class, I walk up to my friend Keanu and try to explain days skipping. How can I make it sound not completely insane?

"I feel like I've been unconscious these past three days."

"Yeah, you've seemed out of it lately."

I tell him about me waking up by my bed with time skipped and days passed, and he starts to laugh. I laugh too, try to play it off and it slips into my head that no one is going to understand what I mean. When I'm home again I Google: "Is it possible to sleepwalk through the day?" which seemed like the most logical explanation for the puzzle pieces of my life so scattered. I find nothing but old forums and odd websites of conspiracy theorists going on about time travel and skipping through time. I slam my phone on the table and place my chin on my fist. I decide maybe I can find a solution to my problems in a book. So, I put on my shoes in a hurry and leave the

house before I can even tell my mom where I'm going.

When I get to the library I'm lost and I don't even know where to look. I decide to check on the computers and search "Time Travel." Several books pop up. Some science fiction. Others by wackos trying to get their moment in the sun. I don't buy any of it. But I check them anyway because I'm desperate to get out of this loop. I take a chance with a forum I find that is buried and hidden underneath pages and pages of results and I search through the responses and posts for hours.

I'm in a daze, reading people's experiences, the loop they find themselves in. Thousands of people just like me. But are they? They can't be, right? Because all their stories end the same way: death.

I will break the loop. Even if it means... Yes, I'll try my best to enjoy my time with family and friends. What comes next, when I finally break the loop?

I begin to think: How will I be able to do it in a way that may make it seem accidental because just in case this truly was the decision that could bring my life to a halt instead of breaking this horrid loop, how would I want to do it? I'm lost in my mind within the first-floor stacks of the library when I drift to sleep. I'm up again and in my bed and I'm **losing my mind** because when I check my phone it's all just the same. Two days gone and my friends have planned to meet at a restaurant I've never been to before. Life's running by me and I can't catch it. I put on a dress shirt, throw on some khakis, and bike across town.

When I cross past the highway my eyes widen and I realize this may be the way to it. I try to break away from that thought so I turn my head back forward because I haven't truly accepted that the

pain of death is my solution to the loop. And who knows whether or not I will return to my life after. I shake the thoughts from my head and finish the ride to the small diner.

We're all enjoying soups and salads and sandwiches and conversation when I bring up the question of an afterlife. At first, my friends are confused. They all think for a moment. Then debate erupts with many disagreeing but one of my more religious friends brings up the idea of a paradise for those who believe in it. It may have not been exactly what I was thinking of but it was a better answer than none at all.

Hours of laughter pass when we all decide it is time to head home. Before I fall asleep I wonder if the possibility of life after death seems true enough to bring me to taking the big step towards what might just be my only solution. Finally, the lurking thought that maybe at some point not far from now I'll want to make this decision just so I don't have to suffer this loop any longer. I sit up in my bed, eyes wide realizing that not only is this a short-term problem but if I don't do anything this will be the rest of my life. I ponder this thought and realize that even if this doesn't work, I won't have to suffer the painful time skip any longer. This brings a stinging relief to what first seemed like a terrifying and distant last resort.

I think about what I could do to set this all up in a way so that it won't be horrible for those around me. I can't imagine them suffering when I simply just pass on into the forever darkness. My eyes sting and I press them shut as hard as I can to keep my tears from dripping down my face. I open my eyes and wipe them with the sleeve of my hoodie. I try to track back to my first thought, maybe I could leave a note or a video of some sort? Finally, after pondering my choices of how to soften the blow, I realize that it doesn't matter whether I leave a note or not. It seems selfish but I'm only doing this in an

attempt to save myself. I look at a pile of five-hour energy drinks on my bedside table, some empty. I don't remember buying them so I assume that I bought them at a 7/11 while sleepwalking. I chug one and open the door to leave my room. I step outside. The noise of the cars passing and the headlights beaming past me makes my knees weak under my weight. I stumble for ten minutes until I'm looking over an overpass with the lights shining in my face. I don't blink, I just stare over the edge at the cars speeding past beneath me. Tears run down my cheeks and my eyes get more and more blurry. I blink and place my hands on the ledge in front of me. Now practically peaking over the edge, I push myself back and to the floor. I find myself sitting on the cold cement under me. I don't get up but I just take in everything around me. The texture of the cement, the blaring sounds of the cars, the footsteps as people walk by me, and that odd feeling that everyone is watching but no one cares.

I struggle to get myself up, but I do; and I run as fast as I can back home. I walk around the side of my house to the fence and try to climb it but I just struggle to the top and fall over to the other side. I land on my back and there I am, it's me and only me in the silence. I put my palms on the grass and grab at it. The only two things I can hear are the grass and my breath. My heavy breath makes a cloud in the air when I exhale. It travels upward toward the stars that seem to float together but away from each other at the same time. They keep as agreed millions and millions of years ago to live like that. I imagine if only I could find a way to live like *this* so that I wouldn't have to follow up with the other option still lurking in my mind. I give up and close my eyes, I'm done for now.

There I am again, back by the side of my bed. I check my phone hoping for there to be a miracle but there isn't. I've only ever had the one idea I have of how to get myself out of this loop and all

I've done with it is think about it and suffer. I can't even make up my mind on whether it matters if I get myself out of this loop or not. I can't even decide if I want to save myself or not. All my emotions feel bottled up and I don't even know what to do with myself anymore, I don't even know if it's worth it, and I don't even know if I'll be saved after this. I feel like I don't know anything at all.

I just want to take the risk and release myself from this loop, ignoring whatever possible outcome could come after. I take a sharpie from my desk and rip a piece of paper off the calendar on my wall and with such a small movement, I've decided that I *am* going to do it. I press the paper on the desk with one hand and write with the other: "I love you all." I write so hard it leaks through the paper. I try not to cry, but I don't think a few tears will matter for what this is worth. I fold the paper as neatly as I can even if it isn't neatly ripped and I place it under my pillow. I decide that this was as far as I would go, I'm not pushing this or my suffering any further.

I open the door again but I don't close it behind me. I drag myself to the front door and throw it open. This is it. I close it lightly behind me. I didn't even change my clothes because I know it won't matter after this. Stumbling my way to the overpass, I find myself leaning against the railing. The last thing between me and returning to a normal life. But only if this works as I hope. I close my eyes and slide myself over the railing, and I'm standing with my legs and arms holding me back and my chest and head forward. Cars honk as they drive under me, and the lights likely would be blinding if I opened my eyes, but I don't, I just let go. I hear brakes squeal but not fast enough. I hear cars crashing and then it all goes silent.

I find myself in a dark space with one spotlight beaming on me from above and I hear rhythmic tapping from the darkness. It stops, but then I hear footsteps approaching me. I hear it but I

don't see it. I yell in fear as I see the shadow emerge from the darkness and it says:

"I'm not here to hurt you. I just can't believe what you've done. You were so desperate for a release from something that didn't allow you to enjoy a life you had taken for granted. It's so interesting how different circumstances can change your life so rapidly, right? You should know if anything, you wouldn't have done what you just did otherwise."

I try to talk but I can't.

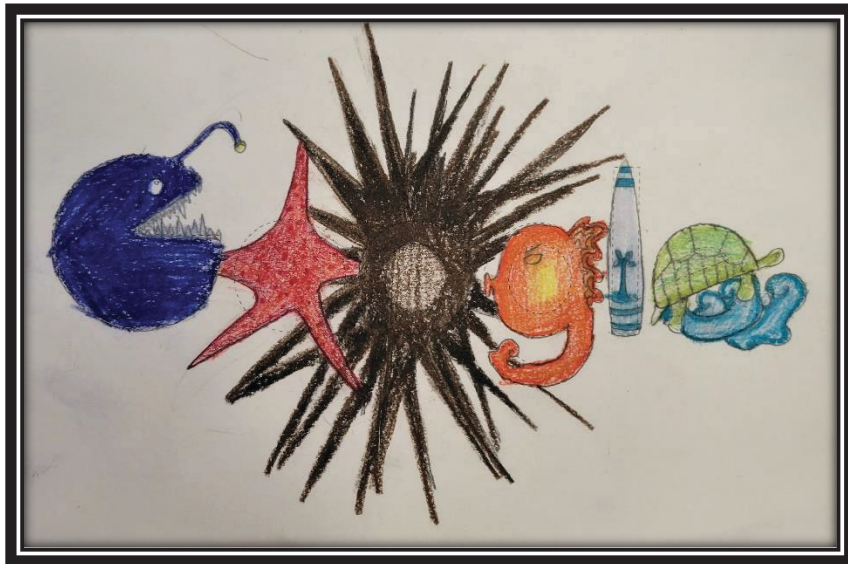
"I'd just like to let you know that you shouldn't take your life for granted, because the next chance you'll get you're in for so much more. You can't give up that easily. You *can't*."

You can't give up that easily. You *can't*.

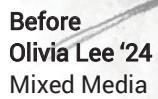
My eyes widen and I scream but, in a flash, I find myself in a hospital bed, and it all hurts, but in a way that I still feel so numb – like I'm floating. I find myself trying to make faces and noises at the silhouettes standing around me, reassuring them I would be just fine. But there was truly no way I could be sure, because, for all I know, this isn't even real.

Then something pops into my head and I put a finger over my wrist and feel a pulse. I'm alive. I am alive! Then, my mother's voice:

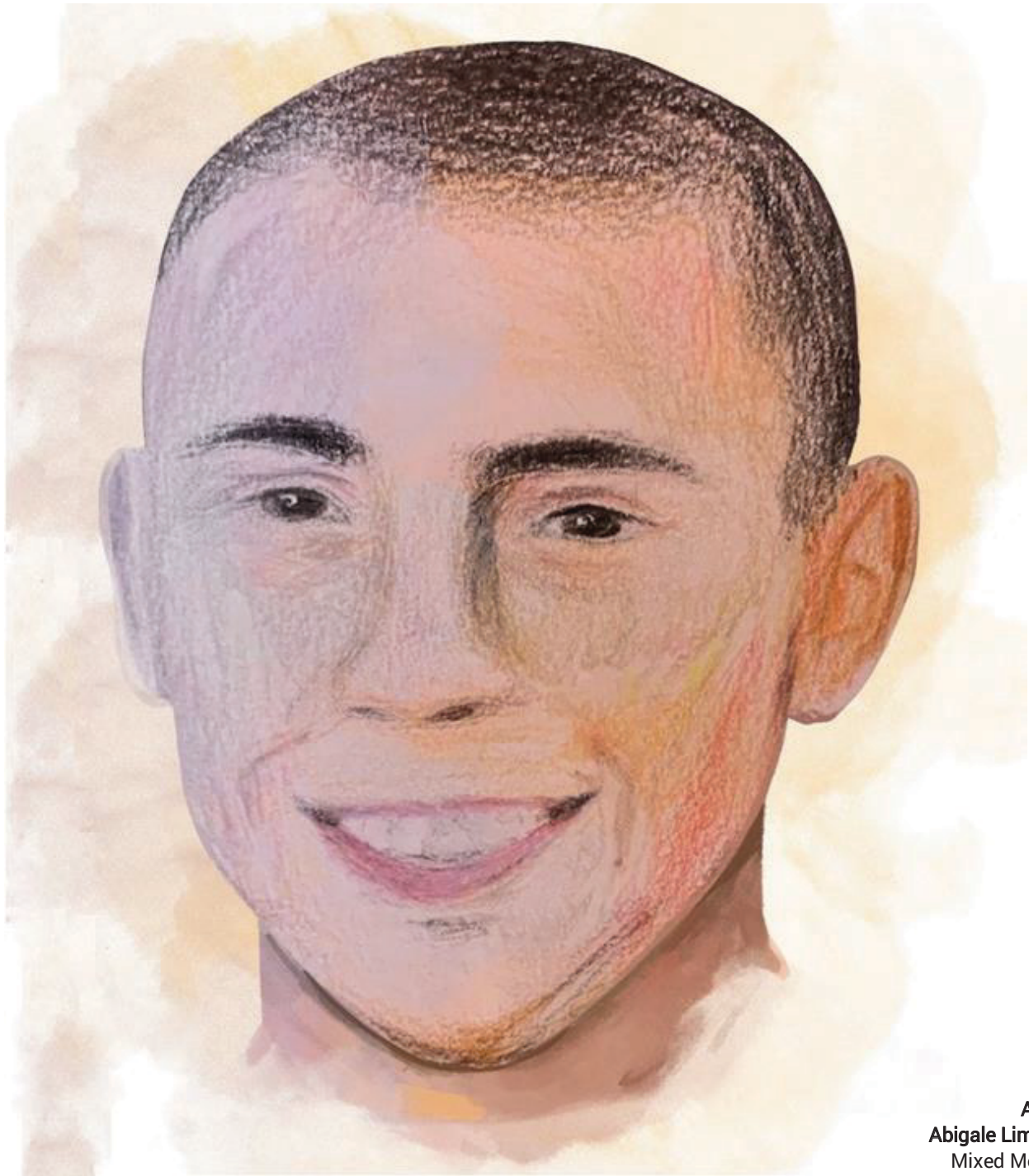
"It's one thirty-seven sweetheart." I feel her grab my hand and suddenly, as I take in what she said, I realize that I've finally awoken. Tears run down my face and I feel her clasp her hand in mine.



Google
Chelsea Namkung '24
Mixed Media

A mixed media portrait of a woman with glasses and a smile, rendered in pencil and watercolor. The drawing uses fine pencil lines for the facial structure and glasses, with soft watercolor washes in shades of brown and grey for shading and texture. The woman has a friendly expression, showing her teeth. Her hair is pulled back, and she is wearing large hoop earrings. The background is a light, textured wash of grey and white.

Before
Olivia Lee '24
Mixed Media



After
Abigale Lim '24
Mixed Media



Beautiful Blooms
Janice Mun '23, Maya Lee '23
Sculpture

Section 3: Bountiful Harvest

Olivia Rhee '24

Friday came. I don't know where Thursday went, but it had gone. It flew far away, taking my dashed hopes and melted wax along with it. I peered out the window for a singular moment, kindles of hope being washed out with my flood of disappointment. At some point, I thought of saying goodbye to everyone I knew before realizing that I knew no one. No one but the old lady behind the green door who hasn't been responding. The whole point of the garden was supposed to be for me to make friends. For it to be different than last time. I groaned into the pillow at my failure, the song *Trust Me Not* a whisper in my ears. On Saturday, I left the apartment and decided to visit the old woman one last time. I knocked on the door. There was no response, but I was determined for one final word.

"Hello... miss. You never told me your name, though I suppose I should've asked at first. Um... well, you haven't been responding lately, and I've been worried. I'm leaving tomorrow morning. First thing in the morning, before the sun rises. I imagine I'll be tired then. I just want to say how I liked the garden, I guess. You showed it to me. You told me I'd be able to bring people in, but I think you misjudged me. I failed, and my irises haven't bloomed. They mean hope, did you know that? Funny how hope won't come up and meet the sun. Well... thanks, I guess. I hope you and your grandson are doing well. I've never met him, but I bet he's a great kid. I'll see you—wait. No. This is goodbye. Maybe I'll visit one day. Colorado's not that far, is it? Well. Thanks." I said to the door of faded green. No response. I went back to the apartment and skipped dinner. I'd have a granola bar the next morning. When it was time to say goodbye to a house that used to be of boxes and empty frames, I had no problems looking back. It was in the garden where I paused. But this time, it wasn't for a longing glance. It was for the glimpse of purple, illuminated by the first rays of sunshine. Could it be? Had the irises grown? I dropped the boxes in my hand and ran over, ignoring the complaints from Dad.

Had I simply neglected to look at them? Sure, I'd missed watering them for a week, but had they persevered? Was there hope? I peered into the square of land and—

Oh.

They had grown. At some point, they had sprung up to meet the sun. Hope finally peered through, but it didn't last. Instead, my iris had withered. It died. There was no disappointment, no hollowness. I sighed. So much for this hope. Candles were made of wax and string after all. Those could never stand the unbearable heat of the fateful sun, especially when a river of despondency rushed over the remains. I plucked the wilted flower from its bed of soil. A reminder for myself. The boxes lay scattered as I dumped them in the trunk of the car. Then we drove away. Away from the house we never called home. Away from the old woman whose name I never knew. Away from the garden that never began. Away from it all, to start our lives again.

But I should've stayed. If I'd stayed, I wouldn't have lost hope. Because in the wake of my empty, snuffed-out, bitter sadness stood a boy. He held a pack of lima beans in his hands. The sun had already begun its peak over the horizon, glimpsing down at the small Vietnamese child. He used his trowel and cleared a square of dirt. Dropping his lima beans in, he stood and appreciated the cold, autumnal wind. Water from his small bucket was dumped. Half of it was used. He had a sign with him, messily scribbled and stained with his tears. It would eventually fly away in the wind or be ruined by rain, but it didn't matter then. All that mattered was what it said:

Kim

My grandmother

I miss her

The boy was just about to leave when he noticed something I had failed to see in my dismay and haste. It was the smallest bit of green peering through the soil. No, make it two bits of green. I'd forgotten how many seeds had gone into the ground just fourteen weeks before. He glanced at his half-full bucket before pouring the water on the plants. Smiling, he left the garden just as the sun lit the sky ablaze.

If I'd stayed just a little longer, I'd have noticed his lima beans.

If I'd stayed just a little longer, I'd have noticed his lima beans. I'd have noticed my

irises beginning their growth. I'd have noticed that he'd heard me through the door just a day before. But I hadn't, and that was the irony of the whole thing I suppose. I'd failed, but I'd also succeeded. That's how my story would end in Cleveland, but it's also how his story would begin. Maybe he'd get people to come. At this point, I could only wish, with wilted hope in my pocket but buds of irises blooming somewhere miles away.



Summer's Harvest
Shannon Lobato '23
Colored Pencil

Students at the Lewis F. Cole Middle School utilize Mixcraft, an intuitive and affordable editing software that allows them to create their own digital media as part of our music technology class. Throughout the ten-week course, students complete projects in order to hone their skills within the Mixcraft program, eventually building off of those skills to write their own compositions. Please scan the QR codes below to listen to exceptional examples of musical pieces crafted in our music lab.



Switching Switcheroo
Adrian Ip '24
Mixcraft



Funky Monkeys
Eliza Ademaj '24
Mixcraft



Jazzer's Best Man
Jessica Son '24, Kaitlin Lee '24
Mixcraft

Friendships

Ups and downs
The most important thing in your life.
Sometimes the worst
Something so close to your heart
Shattered in front of you
Spiraling in an endless tunnel
Painting a smile on your face
Not wanting to seem vulnerable
Surrounding yourself with voices from within your head
Overthinking
Until you look up
A bright light coming from afar
A hand reaching out for mine
Finally, the end to your dark tunnel

Ariane Choi '24



BFFs
Brianna Dominguez '24
Pencil

Keana's Bakery Hina Postilion '24

The last time Keana's Bakery closed was one-hundred and fifty years ago, when Keana was fifteen. She had come down with the Spanish flu. She laid in bed for two days, wondering if her customers would be upset. On the third day, she tied her black hair in a bun, coughed her final cough, and threw open the doors.

Keana's Bakery has persevered ever since. Of course, the environment around her changed immensely; what were once humble houses filled with happy children turned into high-rise buildings that gray adults passed through without a thought.

Her orders were affected, too. Keana remembered when all she baked were colorful, double-decker cakes that tasted like jubilation and luck. Now, people stared at their phones and muttered through the corner of their mouths, "A coffee and a bagel, please."

Keana never told any of her customers, but she *hated* the bagels she served. They tasted of melancholy and avenoir. Lately, Keana had been thinking about shutting down *Keana's Bakery* completely. She had even taken a day off to ponder it, something that she would never have done back in the day.

Seeing the adults of the new generation, with dark bags under their eyes and blue light shining in their faces, didn't exactly make Keana feel younger. Sure, she

was the physical embodiment of a fifteen-year-old, but she had been living for a millennium. Her purpose continued as it always had: serve baked goods to those in need. If she closed down her shop, her immortality would fade, and she would quickly reach the same fate that the rest of humanity did.

She wasn't afraid of death. She knew not to fear it. She was afraid of what humankind would continue to rush to upon her departure, the marathon that led to their eventual demise. She was there, offering humble donuts to them at the halfway point.

She had been cheating the game for years; each sweet, savory treat she had given out would supply these people with contentment and luck for the rest of their short lives. She handled each with care.

But now? She only served the same meal every morning. The lemon tarts and red velvet cakes on her counter were collecting dust.

Keana sat down at the cash register, waiting for her regulars. A beeping tuned to the melody of an old lullaby promptly started ringing, and Keana remembered that she had put a batch of chocolate cookies in the oven an hour before.

She bent over and grabbed her red gloves. Pulling the oven door open, she plucked the tray from the heat and set it down on the counter.

All they tasted of
was melancholy
and avenoir.

"Miss?"

Keana blinked. She leaned over the counter and was met with big eyes staring back up at her. "Hello," she said, slightly flustered. "Would you like anything?"

It was young girl wearing a bright yellow hat, her dark hair (like her own, she mused) in braids. The girl thought about Keana's question for a moment. When she gave no response, Keana gave her a few suggestions.

"We have chocolate cake. Peppermint brownies. And a lovely batch of rainbow cookies."

The girl shook her head, and Keana's heart fell again. "Don't ask for a bagel. Please, I can't serve any more of them. I'm so sick of them!"

The girl, who looked taken back, wrinkled her nose. "Ew. I hate bagels."

Keana felt an immense sense of relief and regained her normal posture. "So... what would you like?"

"I don't have any money," the girl admitted.

Keana shook her head. "That's okay! We don't take money. It's free."

"Really?" The girl asked, eyes wide. Keana nodded encouragingly. The girl looked around the store properly this time, her eyes lightening at the fresh cookies. She pointed at them. "Can I have one of those?"

"Sure," Keana said, grabbing one.

The girl took one of the burning hot cookies right with her fingers and chomped down on it. She nodded, satisfied. "It's good. What's your name?"

"You can call me Keana," Keana said, extending a hand to shake. The girl took it, and replied, "I'm Sellie. Can I have more cookies?"

"Of course," Keana said, slightly perturbed. "Where are your parents, Sellie?"

She shrugged. "I'm not sure. Can I bring my friends next time?"

Keana shook the odd feeling and nodded. "Of course! Bring all of your friends."

Keana noticed that in the next few weeks, Sellie had definitely told all her little friends; her bakery had finally started to repopulate again. She started serving her chocolate-dipped strawberries and lunchbox cakes in little containers.

Keana hadn't seen Sellie again. A month passed, or maybe it was a year; she wasn't great with time.

She owed all her luck to Sellie. *Keana's Bakery* was a big hit again; Keana didn't serve another bagel for sixty-seven years.

But, all good things come to an end. When the generation of children all grew into teenagers, then into adults, then into elderly folks, and then eventually buried six feet under, Keana went back to sighing and leaning on her counter, wishing it was the day that she had met Sellie again.

And maybe it had become that day; because Keana noticed a little girl with a yellow hat and black braids sitting in the corner of her store. She acknowledged Sellie, before greeting the adults who were holding their own gadgets that made Keana feel outdated.

"Coffee and a bagel, please," one said mindlessly and Keana almost threw the cash register. When they were all gone, she let out a muffled scream into a chair cushion. "Why do they all go?"

"Maybe because your sweets aren't realistic." Sellie shrugged.

"Aren't realistic?" Keana said, outraged. "I work my immortality off in this little kitchen, baking all day in hopes that a little child will come up to the counter and ask for a slice of triple-decker cake with rainbow sprinkles like they all used to."

Sellie got up from where she was sitting and came up to the counter. She looked at Keana with pitying eyes and ordered a chocolate mousse.

After Sellie left, streams of the kids Keana had wished for came into the store and laughed while eating her cakes. Keana felt a rush of relief and felt bad for losing her temper.

She wished Sellie would show up again so she could make amends, but she didn't. Not for a long time. The same cycle: seven more times. Keana was beginning to

lose track when Sellie finally showed up at *Keana's Bakery's* worst moment.

Sellie sat at her usual chair. Keana was beginning to feel weak herself; she feared that her immortality was fading. She realized that maybe she *was* afraid of death.

"No one is coming anymore!" Keana heard her own panicked voice and swallowed hard. "*Again*. What are you, Sellie? It's been centuries. Maybe a millennium. Yet you're still six years old and I'm still the one who has to go to you for help whenever my shop is on the brink of shutting down."

Sellie shrugged. "Well then, I suggest you take my advice," she said, sounding much more grown up.

Keana sighed, defeated. Every time Sellie came, she told her to be more realistic. But what could be more realistic than someone's dream? They came to *her* for their inspiration. If she stopped making her sweets, what would happen to them? If she stopped giving them their happiness, what would become of them?

"You need to let them live their own lives," Sellie said like she was reading Keana's mind. "If they become failures, it's on them. Or maybe not," she decided. "But it shouldn't be on you."

When Sellie left that day, Keana took the words seriously. She made her first only-vanilla cake. When she tried it, she tasted plainness. But she also tasted a little bit of change.

If she stopped giving them their happiness, what would become of them?

The regular flow of children came as they always did after every one of Sellie's visits. This time, instead of happiness-infused sweets, she gave them Kindness Pastries, to teach them that what happens to you depends on your actions.

The flow wasn't temporary. From then on, people continued to visit her store for her cakes and donuts, and advice.

For the first time in one thousand and fifty-two years, Keana's bakery was closed. She wasn't considering shutting it down again; she had just decided to take a day off to spend time with her good friend.

The closed sign disappointed many people, but they knew they could come again tomorrow.

Keana sat down at the table in the corner with Sellie and they shared a cup of coffee.



Tasty Treat
Claire Joo '23, Kiera Tung '23
Sculpture

Departure

Departure is unplanned; it can occur to anyone at anytime
Departure often contains anger, sorrow, and pain

One word or action can spark the fire of an argument
No matter how long or dense the bond may be, a simple collision can cause days to years of departure

Departure is a weed in the garden of sunflowers
Departure is a flicker of light that can grow into a massive conflagration

It is silent like a shadow, unnoticed by people
It then slices the long, strong bond between two people and alters it into foes

For the departure to cease, the only perfect solution is empathy.
A perspective that can even interpret the complication of unexpected departures.

Sean Kim '24



Take Flight
Bradley Li '23
Scratchboard

Social Media Should Be Banned for Kids/Teenagers

Zeya Merchant '24

Ten more minutes. Then I'll start my work. That's what everyone says. Ten minutes becomes thirty minutes. Thirty minutes becomes an hour. An hour becomes two. It's an endless cycle of scrolling through videos from TikTok, Instagram, YouTube... the list goes on. Kids and teenagers all over the world suffer from this affliction. Uncontrolled use of social media is not only a sign of phone addiction, but can have lasting effects on the health of an adolescent. Being on social media for too long can precipitate mental health disorders, induce fatigue, and take away time spent with oneself and loved ones. All of these repercussions can be detrimental to a teenager's development. That is why it is absolutely necessary that social media should be banned from kids and teenagers under the age of 15.

Mental health illnesses are an immense issue for teenagers all over the world. An experiment done by the Butler Hospital in Rhode Island reported that almost all teenagers who use social media for more than five hours a day have depression, anxiety, paranoia, suicidal thoughts, or feel left out from their peers (or within society). Not only that, but spending excessive time on social media can cause psychological problems such as eating disorders and insecurities. While social media is not the main reason for developing an eating disorder, it can encourage it. Influencers on social media often promote unhealthy eating habits or less

eating in general to inspire the 'ideal' body type. A recent study done by the National Eating Disorder Association shows that roughly 74% of women between the ages of 16 and 24 have body image concerns. These problems can persist until adulthood and have a lasting impact on adolescent lives.

We have all had nights where we just could not stop scrolling through TikTok, Instagram, or some other social media

platform. Once in a while doesn't hurt, but for thousands of teenagers, it has become part of their nightly routine. Research done by SCL Health, a healthcare organization, shows that the

blue light being emitted from the phone screen disturbs the sleep-wake cycle, which makes it difficult to fall asleep and wake up refreshed the next day. This is because blue light blocks the release of melatonin, the hormone that controls our circadian rhythm. The research study also shows that exposure to blue light at late hours can heavily damage your retinas, ruining your eyesight. Teenagers need at least eight hours of sleep each night in order to have a productive following day. Sleeping for less than six hours every day can heavily stunt a teenager's growth process. According to the National Sleep Foundation, around 45% of young people constantly check their phones throughout the night, which can lead to sleeping disorders such as insomnia. This may lead to students finding it hard to concentrate and learn in class (National Sleep

That is why it is absolutely necessary that social media should be banned from kids and teenagers under the age of 15.

Foundation). "My lack of sleep makes it harder to concentrate and falling asleep in class puts me behind my studies and hinders my ability to comprehend the content," Jenny Xu, a high school sophomore, reported. Feeling well-rested the next day is so important for adolescents, but the bad habit of scrolling can have great consequences.

In order for a teenager to feel emotionally supported, it's necessary for them to foster healthy relationships with their family members and friends. A healthy relationship with a parent can help prevent any risky behaviors. Unfortunately, social media is ruining these essential interactions. If a teenager is addicted to social media, they may be losing the time that could be spent bonding with a parent or sibling. *Alone Together*, a book written by Sherry Turkle, an MIT professor, talks about an interview

between parents and children regarding technology. Many children reported that they wanted to spend quality time with their parents, but they felt their parents were too addicted to their phones or computers to even notice them. On the other hand, many parents reported that their kids spent too much time with technology, which became out of their control. The lack of supervision from parental figures can be harmful as their children form friendships. A study done by the Pew Research Center shows that more than 17% of teens have friends they haven't personally met. This can be dangerous in many ways. Strangers on the internet often can't be trusted. 55% of teenagers that meet a

It is possible for us to revert back to the earliest means of establishing connections, and it might be the answer to many of the problems caused by early-age use of social media.

friend online experience a form of threat or problem (often in the form of blackmail or predators). Even once teenagers develop friendships, social media stops them from engaging with their peers in a healthy manner. "Fear of missing out", or FOMO, is a kind of anxiety many teenagers have when they fear that they are being excluded from an exciting or interesting event on social media. It is likely that FOMO, or rather, the attempt to avoid it, that drives people to share what they are doing, who they are doing it with, and how much fun they are having. This reduces the amount of time that teenagers can dedicate to building healthy connections with their peers in real life.

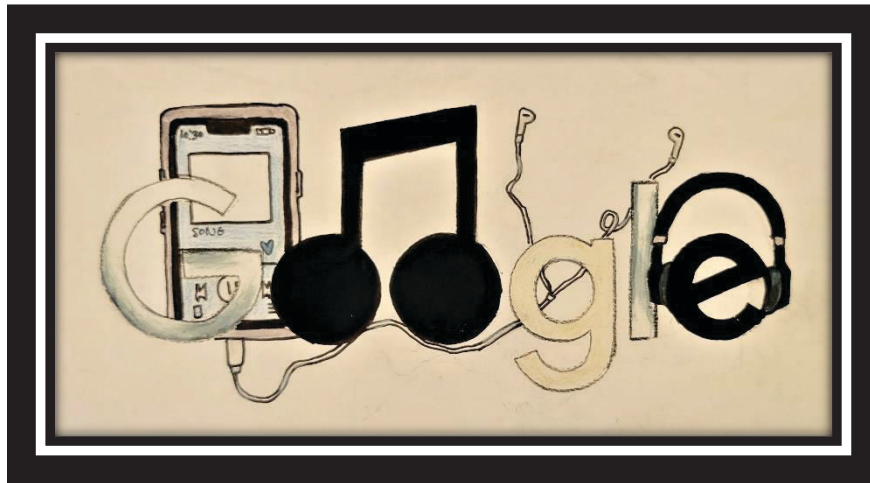
Many people might disagree with limiting the use of social media for kids under the age of 15, claiming that not using social media can disconnect teenagers from the real world.

According to SCL Health, social media exposes people, especially if they live in a non-diverse area, to different perspectives. Ideas from different cultures or viewpoints create a more knowledgeable and 'well-rounded' view of the world. Social media can also help connect people, especially teenagers, with similar interests or causes. Moreover, social media wouldn't be banned for adults, so teenagers would still be able to receive important information. But, we have to remember that social media did not always exist, and nevertheless, cultures and ideas still spread. Even if social media is modern, there is nothing new about the study of ideas that spread through social networks. People

would exchange ideas face-to-face, the most intimate type of communication. It is possible for us to revert back to the earliest means of establishing connections, and it might be the answer to many of the problems caused by early-age use of social media.

Two hours have passed. It is very late yet no work has been completed. Tomorrow will just be another day where you will have to complete extra homework from an unproductive night scrolling through social media. Social media activates the brain's

reward pathway, which releases dopamine, a neurotransmitter involved in neurological and physiological processes. This is the way social media becomes addictive. A teenager harming their mental health, depriving themselves of sleep, neglecting hobbies, and spending less time with loved ones are just a few examples of social media taking a toll on young people's lives. In the modern age of new technology, we can find a balance between using the internet for good (research, for instance) and regulating social media user age to prevent all the aforementioned harm.



Google It
Hannah Chang '24
Mixed Media

Grown-Up Children

A child opens his eyes
To a world he wishes to see anew.
"Youth is fragile,
Children oblivious to harsh truth,"
But they neglect.
They do not know of a boy,
Who waited and waited
For the father that never came,
For the mother to leave her room,
To stop being a pitiful shell,
To be the parent he has left.
The boy learned to cook eggs,
Got sick of scrambled yolks.
Learned when milk spoiled,
Not before he got a sour taste.
He learned, he knew,
What it meant when he said 'busy'
To friends who got to be kids.
Till no more friends were left.
Soft thumbs turned calloused,
Light smiles turned tired.
A small, little child
Never got to be one.
Yet in schools, to worlds outside his own
He is happy.

He is a joyful life, and
Nothing is wrong.
Not when a father with the same
Tired smile, calloused hands,
Tied back hair, knowing eyes,
Is welcomed in by a mother
Pretending she's always been one.
But her facade falters
As two boys of the same hair, eyes
Smile from behind.
The child has no mother,
A father who left too long to be forgiven,
Two brothers born of his loneliness.
Still, though, he fries the sickening yolks,
Sets out cups of fresh milk,
And claimed to be busy
When the father asked for him to join.
They never get to say
Children are innocent, oblivious.
There will always be the child
Who's been through too much.

Olivia Rhee '24



IOU

I owe you.
A debt that can never be paid

Only after I forgive myself of my past
Maybe I'll even consider seeing you again.

Unable to undergo change.
Something you always berated me about.

Whence forth to an unknown future
Maybe someday I'll repay you.

Or maybe someday I'll pay it forward.
Expressed by a newborn child

Surely you went through the same thing when I was a child
Afterall, you and grandma weren't always on good terms.

I don't expect to see you again
But if I ever do, I owe you.

Keanu Nakasato '24

Just Like Yesterday
Ana Pestic '24
Watercolor

To the Ones I've Left Behind I'm Sorry

Intermedia is about pushing the boundaries and experimenting with art in ways only humans can. So, we wanted to put our writers and audience to the test. Below you will find four original works - each spawned from the same opening line: "To the ones I've left behind I'm sorry." For three students, that line struck a chord, and from it, they crafted truly exceptional works of poetry. As for the fourth, the *Intermedia* team prompted Open AI's chatbot, ChatGPT. It will be up to our readers to decide which form of artwork they prefer: those crafted with human hands or with an AI's processor.

I

To the ones I've left behind, I'm sorry.
I swear I will never forget you.
Your acts of kindness ripple through and through,
etching your place in my life.

To the innocent girl who disappeared, I'm sorry.
You're still here, just hidden.
I tried to bring you back,
but they wouldn't let you out.

To the family I used to know, I'm sorry.
I never knew what to say to save you.
I would scream and shout so you would hear me,
and you shut my words away.

To the friends who drifted afar, I'm sorry.
Your company was always more than enough.
I treasure all of our memories no matter who I'm with,
my memories of you will never dull.
To the life I used to know, goodbye.
I wish I had more time with you.
I'm sorry I left so quickly,
but the initial chapter is always the first to be finished.

Can You Spot The AI? (Answer on Page 105)

To the ones I've left behind, I'm sorry
You were my friend, but it was love that made me
Why did it end? I bet our friendship wasn't something
we should have believed

Now I turn back,
And all my memories unpacked
I realized that I didn't know you,
Even if I took a closer look.

If I was never friends with you,
I would still have the same view
Loving your smile,
But only for a little while.

If the world ended tomorrow,
I will be regretting, filled with sorrow
I didn't know your value,
Until I lost you

I guess I didn't know
Because we talked but with our trust low,
Recovered friendship, I hope
My love and affection, I wish I showed

Can You Spot The AIP? (Answer on Page 105)

Seeing things grow like trees,
And seeing time pass by
It hurts.

It hurts knowing you're without me
Because I left you.
I'm sorry.

I want to come back home
To continue my memories with you.

The wind can move on
But I can't
I'm sorry.

I never meant to hurt you.
I hurt many people and I don't care,
But I did when I hurt you.
I'm sorry.

The burden that you carry
Because of me.
The pain that you carried.
I'm sorry.

I watch as you revisit the places we went to
together,
The places we would admire
We did together
But now we can't
And I'm sorry.

You paint us together
But it'll never be true.

I hope you miss me too.
When the time comes, you'll soon come too.
When you do, I hope you forgive me

I wish we could continue from where we left
off together
But we can't.
Because I'm gone
And we both need to move on.

Can You Spot The AIP? (Answer on Page 105)

To the ones I've left behind, I'm sorry,
For the tears that fell and the pain you carried.
I know it's hard to move on from the past,
But life has a way of moving way too fast.

I never meant to cause you so much pain,
But sometimes in life, we have to break the chain.
I had to leave and find my own way,
Even though it meant leaving you in dismay.

The memories we shared will never die,
And the love we had will always multiply.
But sometimes we need to spread our wings,
And fly towards new beginnings.

To the ones I've left behind, I'm sorry,
For the sleepless nights and the days so blurry.
But please know that my heart still beats,
For the love we shared will always be sweet.

I hope one day you'll find it in your heart,
To forgive me and make a brand-new start.
To the ones I've left behind, I'm sorry,
But my love for you will always be extraordinary.

So, hold your head high and keep moving on,
And cherish the memories of days gone.
To the ones I've left behind, I'm sorry,
But our bond will forever live in glory.

Can You Spot The AIP (Answer on Page 105)



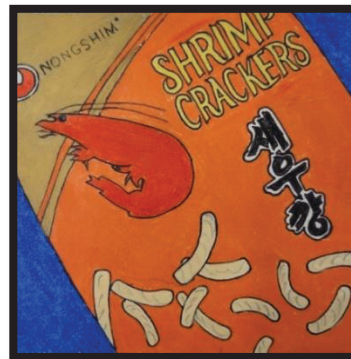
Running Out of Time
Halley Kim '23
Mixed Media

Should Students Learn Language or Culture?

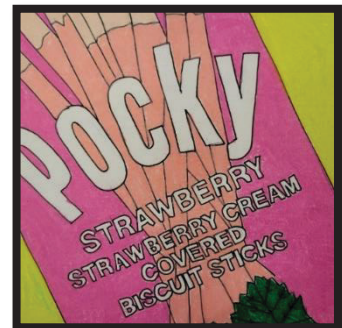
Russel Ng, an honors ELA student, delves into the debate regarding language classes and whether they should be abandoned for something more practical. As the world moves further into the digital age, Russel thought it more engaging to use the video essay format to develop his argument. Please scan the QR code below to watch his in-depth analysis of the current value of language classes in middle school and the alternatives.



Refresh
Alice Solodukho '23
Colored Pencil

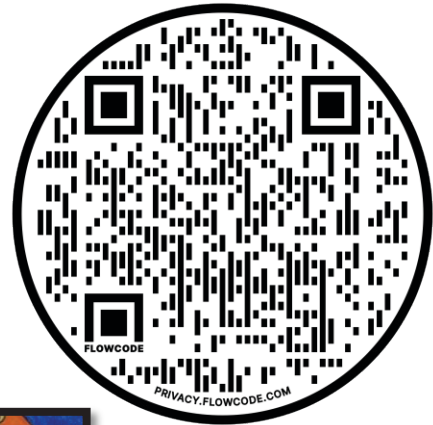


Shrimp Chips
Anthony Kim '23
Colored Pencil

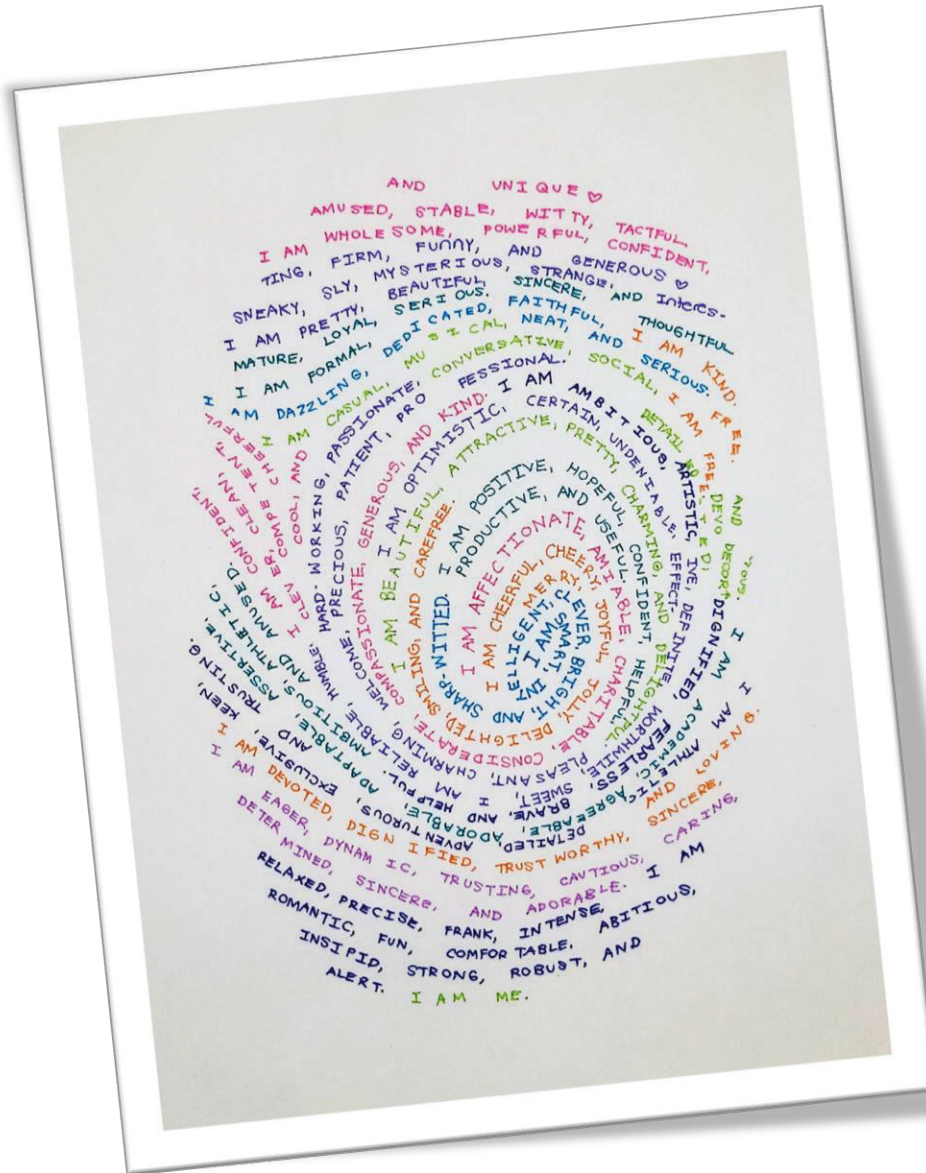


Pocky
San Yun '23
Colored Pencil

Russel Ng '24



I Am



I Am
Elle Choi '23
Pen & Ink

Hopeless Fireflies

Going on and off.
When I see you,
It's so hard not to show.
Our light: Wanting to make that gorgeous view.

My mind, full of wonder,
If we both lit up at the same time,
Looking just like the stars,
People would be watching us, on the night of July.

I always wanted to know
How perfect this light had to be.
Do I have to be the brightest?
Because it has always been unnoticed.

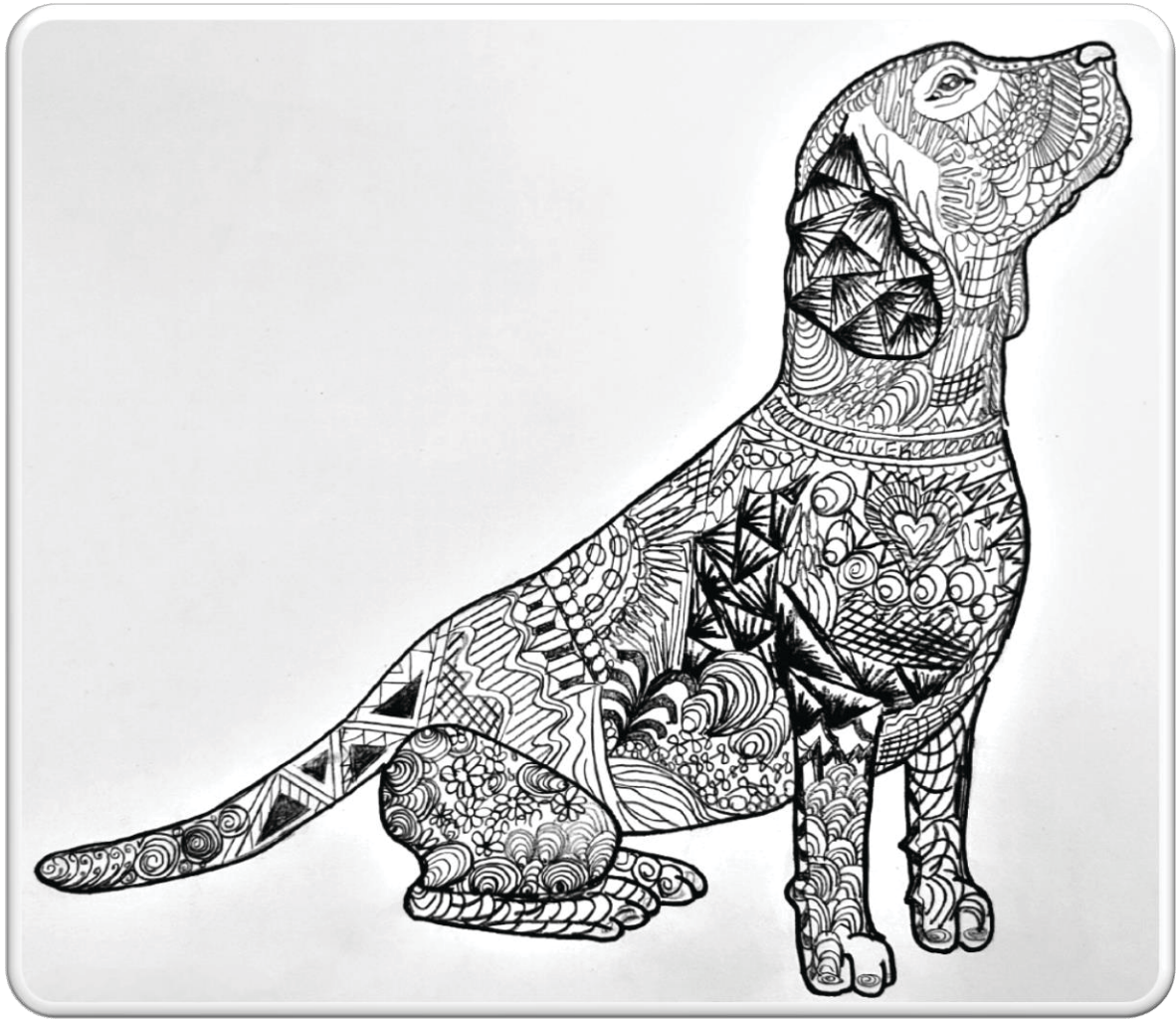
Nothing I can do.
Too tired of trying to fly,
I tried again and again
But the only thing I see is my loneliness.

Trapped inside this jar
I was waiting for you to come.
Nothing but time just passing by
I was a hopeless little firefly.

Nanami Ishihara '24



Fire Light
Nanami Ishihara '24
Mixed Media



My Best Friend
Natalie Dimitriadis '23
Pen & Ink

C'est La Vie Keanu Nakasato '24

You lay paralyzed and unmoving in your chair. Or so you think. See, you've been like this for a while and you aren't too sure if you could move or not. You know you're there mentally but you aren't sure if you're there physically. The two are sort of disconnected. One can control the other one, and the other one can send signals back. You suppose this is how it's intended to work but it seems off. That's why you start experimenting with the capability of your body. You start to twitch your fingers and conclude that it is quite easy. You realize that there were more preprogrammed movements in you. Now all you have to do is tap into them. It's been a while though. Your knuckles creak and crack as you wiggle your fingers.

Trying new things is fun but learning something as fundamental as this seems a bit tedious to you. Slowly but surely, you start to blink, inhale, and exhale as opposed to it being up to instinct like before. You want to venture on to more complicated things like walking or making sounds with your voice. After more tests and edging, you're able to stand and even walk; albeit a bit finicky. Now, contempt with the progress you've made, you begin scanning your area in search of answers. To the left of the chair, there is an array of food and knives plastered on the brick wall. To the right, there is a large portrait of an older man with four kids below him. And finally, in front of you is a ginormous kitchen adorned with amazing spectacles of

It just feels right to be in the kitchen, but you don't know why.

cutlery resembling a museum more so than a kitchen.

The first thing that catches your eye is the food on the left. It really isn't out of the ordinary, but something about its glossy finish makes it seem unnatural. On closer inspection, you learn that the food is layered with wax. Curiosity gets the better of you and your hand ventures forward. On touch you do in fact learn that the food is fake. You are slightly disappointed, but C'est La Vie.

You being devoid of edible material invigorates you. Something about your disappointment motivates you to turn it to a reality - like a force of habit waking from hibernation. That's why you turn to the kitchen next. Every detail in the direction of the kitchen blends well with each other but seems placed for maximum efficiency. It's in pristine condition and paintings line the wall working together to form a phrase you can't quite make out. You're not sure why you feel the need to go, but some sort of invisible force reels you in. You inch your stiff legs forward, and, after what feels like an eternity, your slippers finally scrape the repetitive white and black tiles.

Almost instantaneously, every problem you felt dissipates and all of your fatigue disappears. It just feels right to be in the kitchen, but you don't know why. What should be a momentous occasion is dulled because you're still confused. There are pieces

of the puzzle but you can't find them to place them where they belong. Instead of the relaxation you felt in the chair, you now feel as though you have a duty - do it as quickly and as efficiently as possible. You try going forward but your legs don't listen. They decide to go left in front of a cabinet, like a magnet. As if they were pre-programmed but again; puzzle pieces lost.

You embrace your position and bend your knees and make the cabinet eye-level to you. After you do this, the scent coming from the cabinet makes your eyes water. It isn't quite the strength of the aroma, but the sheer magnitude of content that make up the smell. It's hard to pinpoint. But how could you forget anything as important as that?

Your mind is blank as you open the cabinet, like a newborn taking in a playground for the first time: shakers filled with odd-colored powder; bags of white and gray; oils and vinegars. You, yourself, don't have any cooking knowledge nor background - that you know of - but perhaps you could try today. You grab the many shakers with different scents and prop them on a counter left of the seasoning cabinet. Above the counter, a drawer with many labels sits atop a stove. Without much deliberation, you grab the largest pan you can find in the drawer and prop it next to the *plancha* to your right. Behind you about two feet from the seasonings' drawer is a huge fridge with expensive cuts of meat and vegetables. Every scent from the fridge hits you with nostalgia, sort of like meeting an old friend you haven't seen in a long time. There is a near limitless library of foods that you can choose from,

but you decide to grab the flank steak and asparagus for their shockingly simplistic but versatile nature. Then, a hint - a picture in your limited memory of a menu, words you can't decipher, but ingredients you knew so well. What you do remember: the flank steak is considered a very tough piece of meat, so you must marinade it in a mixture of soy sauce and wine to make the meat more palatable.

Sake was your wine of choice; with this, you are able to sweeten the meat while also making it retain its earthy flavor. As for the asparagus, you dredge it in flour and fry it at around 350 degrees; some part of you says that this is wrong, and the instinctual feeling you felt before feels as if it is slowly slipping from your hands. To alleviate this realization, you put your attention to the steak. Although you would've opted to marinade it for longer, the absence of something to do slowly becomes more dreadful. You approach your *plancha* with your steak. In front of you, there lies a flat grill for steaks, seafood, and almost about anything you could dream of cooking. You admire the grill for a few seconds, but quickly realize the mistake you made.

Why would you need to use a pan for a grill that doesn't need it? You berate yourself internally, but to minimize this, you quickly adhere to your instinct and you chuck the pan to the side. Not only did the tiny error hurt mentally, but physically as well; your side starts to sting and your coughing becomes more prominent. The dreadful feeling you had felt before was nothing more than eerie foreshadowing. Will you be able to finish the

meal in time? That is the question that lingers above your head. You know something is about to happen, but you don't know what. You snap out of the trance and rush towards the steak in a pitiful attempt to jog. You roughly place the steak on the *plancha* in front of you. All you can do is wait, though you aren't sure you can make it. Some invisible force prevents you from doing the thing you love, and you hate that. With your hands, you flip the charred piece of meat to its top half. You start to hear a ticking sound reminiscent of a heartbeat - a time limit of sorts?

All of a sudden
you remember
something.

After the steak is finished, you begin the tedious process of plating. Instead of the hasty feeling you felt when cooking, you now have a sense of security. Nonetheless, you still must do it with speed and precision, especially now that you feel limited to a few minutes at the latest. Whilst plating, you feel a certain threshold of fulfillment in your work. You enjoy the process of making the dish more than the dish itself. What does that mean? With a spoon, you lay a dollop of the steak residue, then hit it hard with the bottom side of the same utensil. Next, you add the asparagus intentionally to the side before adding the steak on top of that. The result: a fine dish, comparable to that of masterclass foodies. You stare for a minute, admiring your work. You've never been so happy in your life, though you suppose this was an understatement as you can't quite remember anything before getting up from the chair. On the other hand, your physical state is slowly deteriorating, sort of like how an apple decomposes. About thirty seconds ago, you

would've said that the pain you feel is unbearable, but now, you cannot feel a thing. It may be placebo, but you feel content. As your vision darkens, you decide to pace around the kitchen one last time.

You kick off your slippers. The smooth black and white tiles sooth your bare feet. Cabinets and shakers are left open and untidy, whilst the fridge stays swung open. You don't really remember making the clutter, but there really isn't anything you can do about it now. Your knees start to capsize on themselves and your back starts to hunch. Outside the kitchen, the main centerpiece of the chair room stands behind the place you first woke up in. From this angle, you can make out a table with a pamphlet and book. You start to hallucinate a stage light beaming on the table. Slowly, the left and right sides of the chair room slowly fade away, leaving only the table visible. There is no end nor beginning. You walk towards the table, but your legs simply do not have the capability to. Instead, you drop to the floor and tactically crawl towards it - perseverance, eh? Instead of running off of instinct like before, you hold hope that something will come from your efforts. Before you know it, your hand bumps the table. You use it to stand. On the table, the book and pamphlet are titled: "Insights of a Chef." As for the cover, near the bottom, the author's name stands in large, grand letters: "Senyia Watanabe." And at the cover's center is mosaic art of a tall male chef. All of a sudden you remember something. Something striking.

Despite your excruciating pain, there is one more thing you have to do. You struggle your way back to the chair but stop short, turning to the portrait - the four children, the old man. Suddenly he looks familiar. The man on the cover. And then you realize that the person you're looking at is you...

I figured this was the cue for a groundbreaking epiphany but I stare at the photo and address myself as the same person as before but only wiser. I'm not Senyia anymore but I still share his talents and passions. This new enigmatic feeling is quite demoralizing but maybe I can be a different person tomorrow. I'm scared I will forget what happened today - like all the rest. But, one thing's for certain, C'est La Vie.



Stuffed
Rachel Lee '23
Sculpture



Remains of Our Home
Ashley Park '24
Digital Art

To honor Mrs. Anderson and Mrs. Larson as they retire at the end of this school year, Cara created shape poems in their likenesses to commemorate their many contributions to the Lewis F. Cole Middle School.



Mrs. A & Mrs. L
 Cara Minkyung Kim '23
 Shape Poems

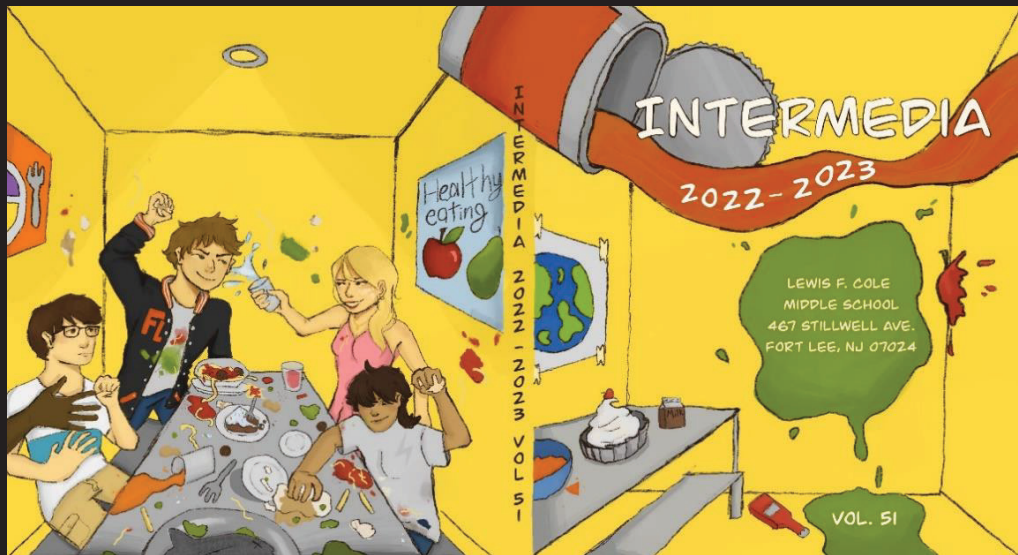


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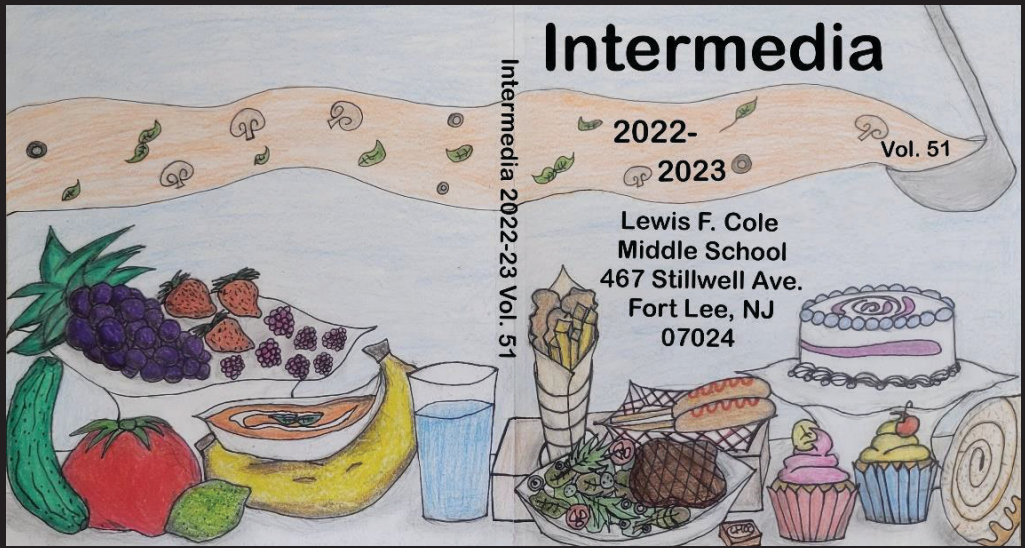
Intermedia 2022-2023
Volume 51
Lewis F. Cole Middle School
467 Stilwell Avenue
Fort Lee, NJ 07024

Carolina Perez '23
Digital Art

Intermedia Cover



Brianna Dominguez '24
Digital Art



Alina Nam '24
Mixed Media

Runners-Up



Ahyoung Shin '24
Mixed Media

Colophon

Literary works in “Section 1: Seeds” were printed in European Typewriter. “Section 2: Sweet as Pie,” was printed in Roboto, and “Section 3: Bountiful Harvest” was printed in Highland Gothic. Additional pages were printed using Calibri.

All issues were printed in Upper Saddle River, New Jersey by GT Marketing which produced 110 copies of the magazine. The cover design was created by Ashley Park, class of 2024.

Through the years, *Intermedia* has accepted all types of artwork and literary genres, including various forms of poetry and prose, short stories, non-fiction, essays, and short plays; often centered around a theme. This year’s theme, “Bon Appétit” shows the passion of the artist. This year’s theme is our way of cultivating art in all of its forms, features, and varieties – allowing us to dine at a table topped with cuisines of all kinds. We have the comfort in knowing that our art transcends the limitations of our world and represents what we all are: human. Much has changed over the past fifty years of publishing our magazine, but our commitment to the creative self-expression of our students remains the same.

Intermedia art and literary club members met in October 2022, browsed books from previous years, brainstormed ideas, and then voted for the theme that best represented the students of Lewis F. Cole Middle School. In meetings throughout the rest of the school year, art and literary members discussed how the theme could be represented visually and in writing. Our theme shapes and divides the stories, poems, and artwork into three sections.

From October through March, literary staff members and editors, in addition to spending meeting time after school each week to write their own pieces, also evaluated the content of all submissions by providing written feedback and advice to each other using Google Classroom, Google Docs, and Microsoft Word.

In addition to Google Office Suite, Microsoft Office Suite, Microsoft Paint, Ibis Paint, FireAlpaca, Blender, ChatGPT, Procreate®, and Adobe Photoshop were programs used by the art and literary staffs. When final texts were accepted, our literary editors were responsible for copying and forwarding these pieces to the art staff as well as typing and proofreading these works before the publication was sent to the printer. The art staff created pieces to complement our literary works; and the art/layout editors were responsible to organize the entire magazine. All spread designs were created by the art/layout editors, Carolina Perez, Class of 2023, and Brianna Dominguez, Class of 2024. Our advisers met with the *Intermedia* students consistently so that we could all create a magazine that we would be proud of.

Our school is comprised of 297 seventh graders, 304 eighth graders, 45 full-time teachers, 2 secretarial staff members, 2 guidance counselors, 3 full-time Child Study Team members, 1 school nurse, 1 media specialist, 9 paraprofessionals, and 3 full-time custodians.

The advisers, editors, and staff would like to thank the Fort Lee School District, faculty and staff, parents, and friends. These people continually provide us with their unconditional support.

Thank you also to Mr. William Diaz II, our Principal, Dr. Michele Carlor, our Assistant Principal, and the Fort Lee Board of Education for their encouragement of this publication.

The publication is distributed to members of the Board of Education, Superintendent of Schools, and certain members of the Middle School faculty and staff. Students who are published in the magazine who wish to obtain a copy may do so at the end of the school year. There is no fee charged to obtain a copy of the book. Art and literary excerpts from the publication are also made available on the Fort Lee Board of Education website.

Last but not least, the editors and staff wish to extend their thanks to everyone who submitted their work for our 51st *Intermedia* publication. This was such a special year for us – Mrs. Anderson’s last publication and Mr. Etra’s first year as an adviser! (Fun fact: Mr. Etra was published as a student author in *Intermedia 2012-2013*!)

Were you able to spot the AI poem from those on pages 91-94?

1 – Ashley Park ‘24

2 – Nanami Ishihara ‘24

3 – Ariane Cho ‘24, Jisoo Lee ‘24

4 – Artificial Intelligence by ChatGPT

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