



Cathy Ma
Year 12 · Killester College

Me Vs. Myself

Often the biggest enemy is one conjured up of the self. Largely detached from my own culture, I taste the sour and bitter ends of lemon, but hold a ribbon of connection in wanting to meet myself halfway. My Chinese zodiac of a rooster follows a motif of self-identity - though talons are out, a willingness to learn and inspire also supersedes any internal conflict.



Jackson Walsh
Year 11 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

Digital Painting

MOIRAI

Nomathamsanqa Masuku · Year 11 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

We possessed as far as the eye could see,
conquerors of the seven seas.
Our kingdom unstoppable, our power
unmatched.
We were gods among men, standing dominant
above the rest. Kingdoms toppled and nations
forged at our bequest.
We were fated to have it all, we held the world in
our grasp.
Oh Clotho, were we always destined to fall?

We were the empires of old.
doomed to fall, oh once we had it all.

Alas it was not meant to be,
oh, how we raged against the idea of destiny.
In the end it only led to tragedy with a ruined
empire, lost dynasty.
Our golden age now tarnished; our kingdom
overthrown.
Oh Lachesis, were we always destined to fall?

We were the empires of old.
doomed to fall, oh once we had it all.

Buried in a tomb of our own creation.
As a sea of fire engulfs the sky, we lie and wait to
die.
We were blind to the truth until it was too late,
but with our empire toppled we've sealed our
fate.
With nothing left but ruined memories, fallen
champions, a legacy of ashes.
Oh, Atropos were we always destined to fall?

We were the empires of old.
doomed to fall, oh once we had it all.

We were both bound and free, tied by destiny.
And now our fate has come, our time is done.
What was once great now mere ruins adorned
with a crown of destruction, damnation, and
desolation.
Our fall from a grace once coveted now lost.
Like the rising sun our end is inevitable, doomed
to rise only to fall. ■

LIVE WITH LOVE AND LAUGHTER, IT'S THE KEY

Abhijeet Singh Brar · Year 7 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

When life gets too hard and I am feeling blue,
I remember to find inspiration in what's true,
Live with love and laughter, it will get me
through,
The tough time to come, I will make it through.

A smile on my face, a laugh in my heart,
These will keep me going, no matter how hard,
Life can be, a little joy can start,
To turn my frown upside down, it's a start.

A hug from a loved one, a kind word or two,
Can help me stay inspired, that much is true.
With each passing day, more love I can view,
More happiness and joy will come, that's my cue.

Live with love and laughter, it's the key,
To unlocking my joy, this I can see,
No matter how hard life can be,
Live with love and laughter, it's the key. ■

THE TOWERING FENCE BETWEEN AUSTRALIA AND REFUGEES

Priscilla Monewalu · Year 8 · Aquinas College

The ever growing problem of people suffering from a corrupting government in the midst of war is by no means new. With the wars in Ukraine and Russia, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Libya, Syria and many other countries, it is time the Australian Government takes empathy on civilians caught in the crossfire. It is evident that our government must take peaceful action from the suffering of wars and corrupting politics. Not only will the action have a positive effect on refugees, but also for Australia's workforce and economy. The approval of an increase of refugees will also prove to other countries that they must also take action against such wars. The effect of the Syrian war for example has caused millions of children to be deprived of education, due to the inability to attend school.

Allowing an increased number of refugees into our country is incredibly important and moral with our duty as human beings to provide support to one another. It is inhumane to create such a war, however it is worse still to sit and do nothing. As reported by the World Vision organisation, approximately 2.5 million people at least are in need of support, 1.1 million of these people being children. Roughly 3.2 million children are also unable to attend school. These numbers are incredibly worrying as they have only been collected in Iraq. Considering the number of countries in war, the amount of people in desperate need of support is far greater than the number of refugees Australia is accepting. According to the Australian Parliament House, there are only roughly 13,750 places for refugees. Necessities being sought by people are available for those who would like to seek asylum in Australia. Education and safety are human rights, not privileges. Children should be able to attend school and people should be able to live without constant fear.

Furthermore, the approval of an amplified number of refugees into Australia will set a positive example to other countries. This demonstrates how other first world countries can support people suffering from civil wars, without being involved in the argument. Just as remote learning and social distancing regulations were rapidly accepted and acquired throughout the world, the approval of an increase of refugees may also have a tantamount effect. Countries may begin to be open to the benefits of supporting others. During times of need, countries and people have seen and followed ideas created by one another proven to decrease severity. If such a method is implied to the state of refugees, the issue may be reduced. As human beings, we are obligated to help one another, thus other political leaders may also show such courage.

Despite this, others may argue that accepting a greater number of refugees will jeopardise Australia's welfare and economy due to their inexperience in a different country. However this idea is completely false. Refugees can provide Australia's workforce with high ability workers, who can uplift our economy. Many refugees are skilled in employment, some becoming successful entrepreneurs and creating many open jobs for others. This is incredibly pivotal as it is able to improve Australia's employment rate. According to the Australian Government Department of Immigrant and Citizenship, "In the year 2000, five of Australia's eight billionaires were people whose families originally came to the country as refugees." This demonstrates that despite being refugees, these people are talented and are able to be of great support to our economy and employment. Skilled workers are valuable to Australia and any other country, able to uplift our workforce in many industries.

Though this is an incredibly large scale issue, Australia must do its part to support civil wars and the drastic effect it can have on civilians. It is morally necessary for us to provide assistance to others in need. Such aid is also able to improve our workforce and economy. A chain reaction may come from increasing the number of refugees, providing the step forward. However, people all around the world can make actions to support others in the face of danger. Make donations to charities, advocate rights, volunteer and stay informed. Do your part to save our world. ■

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Elicia Bracher
Year 9 · Aquinas College



Avril San Jose
Year 10 · Catholic Regional College St Albans

Beauty Is Difference



Anne Jackson
Year 12 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

Art



Kate Fernandes

Year 10 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor

The Beauty of Nature

Inspiration comes from the beauty of nature. Our world is home to the most beautiful natural wonders, from the towering mountains of the Himalayas to the lush rainforests of the Amazon and the stunning, unique views we have here in Australia. These natural wonders inspire through their awe and wonder and remind us of the power and beauty of the natural world.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE INSPIRED?

Sofia Toro · Year 10 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor

The muse of inspiration is delicate
A tune from inside, ever so elegant
The words that pour from the poet's pen,
Writing poems over and again

To be driven is to rediscover the world,
Vibrant colours all swirled
Every minute has a tale to tell,
Every obstacle presents a possibility to impel

Embrace the times that strengthen your core,
Hear the voices to let your soul soar
Dreams take flight amidst the possibilities of inspiration,
As its bright light alters our imagination ■



Sofia Toro
Year 10 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor

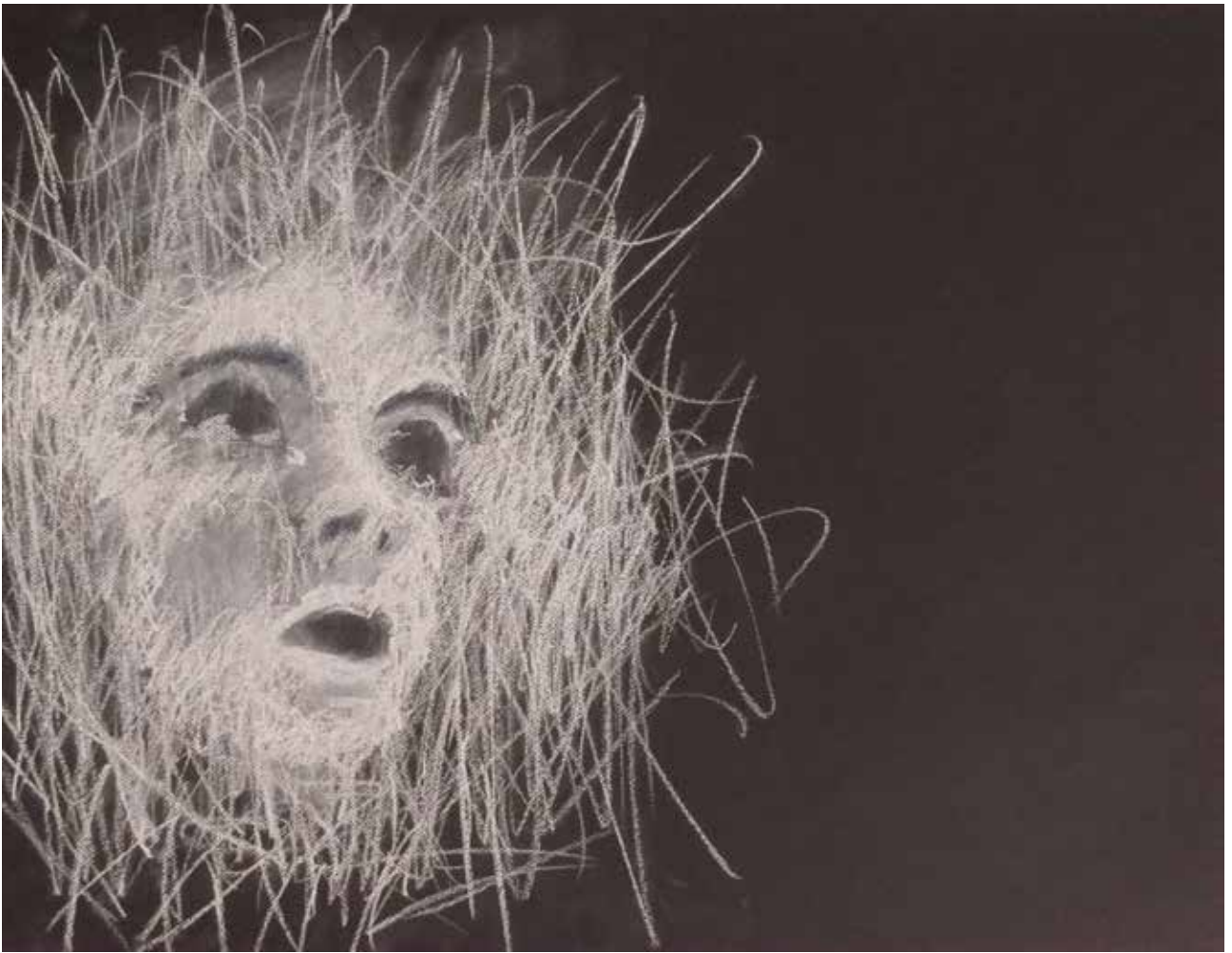
The Beach

The beach inspires me in a variety of ways. The expanse of the sea and the rhythm of the waves reminds me of nature's power and its sense of freedom. The beauty that comes from the sunrise and sunset over the water hits me with amazement, a place where I can appreciate the world's beauty.



Yar Wel
Year 12 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

Gouache



Andrew Mattioli
Year 12 · Whitefriars College



Andrew Mattioli
Year 12 · Whitefriars College

AS HUMAN

Patrick Ly · Year 12 · St Mary's College, East St Kilda

It was an early Sunday morning when my parents decided to go grocery shopping, dragging me into the car with them as they didn't want to leave a ten-year-old child alone in the house. But this wasn't your usual trip to Coles or Woolworths, because at the time, my mother was going through an Asian cuisine phase. For the past couple of weeks, she had been cooking up an exotic dish each night, whether it be Vietnamese beef noodle soup or Chinese sweet and sour pork. As a white family, we were not accustomed to these meals but took them in stride, glad to experience something unique, even if the recipes failed disastrously. At the time, my mother had been tipped off by a friend about the vast Asian markets existing in other suburbs in Melbourne, where dragon fruits, Hoisin Sauce and other legendary oriental groceries were being sold in abundance at low prices. But as my father drove us to the foreign land of Springvale that Sunday morning, I was unaware of the life lesson I would learn that would be more valuable than any jar of shrimp paste.

"Remember, stay close to us and *do not* talk to any of the people around you", my father warned me, "never know what these Asians are up to".

"That's right", Mum agreed, putting on lipstick whilst staring into the mirror located in the passenger seat's sun visor. "We're here to buy a few things and leave. You wander off and you'll be thrown in the back of a van and be put to work in a dumpling restaurant for the rest of your life!".

"I heard you shouldn't point a pinky finger at them, they find it rude or something", my dad piped up, as he made a swift right turn into a sea of cars and trucks.

These stereotypical views on other races had always been present in my household growing up, and as a child I lacked the ability to speak out and disagree. After all, they were my parents, how could anything they say be wrong?

After luckily finding a vacant spot in the overflowing car park, we strolled through the sliding doors into the market. Fruits of every colour were arranged in methods appealing to shoppers, large crates of long green beans, pyramids of mangoes and durians sitting in yellow plastic nets. A man stood shouting in a foreign language, offering samples of bright golden jackfruit to passing customers who mostly ignored his presence. Workers in hi-vis jackets wheeled cardboard boxes of coveted goods on hand trolleys with chipped paint on their worn metal bars. The smell of seafood and raw meat filled the air along with the sounds of high-

pressured hoses used to clean the guts and scales off fish before they were sold. The Asians I had been taught to be wary of filled the large building, pulling brightly coloured two wheeled shopping trolleys by their plastic handles and carrying bags of rice noodles and custard apples, trampling the stained and sticky tiled floor.

As we strode down the store, we passed an Asian man wearing a grey jacket and a dusty pair of denim jeans. He had a patchy beard and eyes that were heavily sleep deprived, eyes that met mine as he moped along. I felt my mum pull me closer to her. "Don't look at him", she hissed into my ear, "Those are the ones you want to avoid."

We hastily headed past the fruit and vegetable stands and skipped the meat and fish sections in search of the aisles where oriental cooking ingredients could be found. At last, we stumbled upon the tall shelves on which rice paper sheets, jars of curry pastes, cans of coconut cream and other condiments could be found.

"Ah, I can make a superb Kung Pao Chicken with this soy sauce!", triumphantly announced my mum, adding the little dark bottle into her basket. She continued with my dad down the aisle, collecting boxes of mochi, containers of oyster sauce and other ingredients I'd be sure to taste in tonight's dinner.

Our day continued quite slowly, as we advanced from section to section of the market, purchasing rainbow trouts and pork shoulders, my mum's basket becoming increasingly full and my dad's face becoming increasingly worried at the total grocery bill. We browsed the fresh produce section, where my parents became distracted by the wide range of exotic fruits. I remember distinctly being interested in a stand full of rambutans, little bright red balls covered in long green lashes. I picked one up and wondered how one would go about eating it – are those long strands edible? What colour would the fruit inside be? But as I turned around to ask my mother if perhaps, we could purchase a bag of the colourful fruit, I realised they were nowhere to be seen.

I swished my head left and right, squinting into the sea of bustling shoppers, trying to find the people who had warned me so vigorously not to get lost. I wandered back and forth, they weren't at the eggplant stand, nor were they examining the Chinese broccoli on display. Panic washed over me and sweat dripped down my neck, when suddenly a voice broke my anxious trance.

"Boy! Come!", beckoned the Asian man we had

seen earlier, with the patchy beard and the sleepy eyes. Oh no, I thought, this was it. I'm going to be kidnapped and put to work in a dumpling restaurant. He's going to take me away and I'll never see my family again because of these stupid rambutans.

"Follow! Come!", he kept on saying, his thick accent making it difficult for me to understand. I stood frozen. The man, sick of my lack of response, came closer and grabbed me by the arm. He pulled me with him, and I began to cry. But cry to who? No one here would help me, a white boy in a crowd of unfamiliar faces. He dragged me past the colourful fruit stands, closer and closer to my doom.

But as I began to accept my fate, the man let go of me. I looked up and was greeted by the relieved

faces of my mum and dad. I leaped into my mother's arms and buried my face in her shoulder. The man did not want to kidnap me, he was only trying to take me back to my parents. As we left the market and headed for home, I learnt something which changed my perspective of other people. My parents' view on other races and what they taught me about Asian people was wrong. I had been taught to assume those different from me were only trying to hurt me. But in reality, a man who could have easily taken advantage of me actually wanted only to help. He may have gone about it in a way that was misleading and rough, but only because he was limited by language. I learnt to be less distrusting to people different from me, and see people from different cultures as not Asians, Africans, and other races, but as human. ■

THE SEA

Alice Webster · Year 7 · Star of the Sea College

The gentle waves slowly whisper to me
As they quietly crash over my feet.
The wind, as gentle as a buzzing bee,
Fades away in the cool, summer heat.

The last rays of the lovely setting sun
As it dips behind the endless sky-line.
Red and orange, all melting into one,
Reflecting on the lovely sea that shines.

The waves dance across the receding shore.
It hits the pillars and sprays all around,
Then returns to the sea, further no more,
Diving under the waves to claim its crown.

With a mind, its own, it leaps with a bound
It can be vicious and loud, calm and sound. ■

INSPIRED

Lucy Thomas · Year 9
Padua College Mornington

When I was 6 years old I discovered my first
inspiration: Emma Watson.
Everything that she did, the way she sang and
acted
Made me want to try my best.

When I was 8 years old my inspiration was Taylor
Swift,
Everything she did; her music and songwriting
skills
Made me want to raise my voice.

When I was 10 years old I found my first netball
inspiration; Jo Weston
Everything she did, the way she defended and
commanded the court
Made me want to train harder.

When I was 12 years old my inspiration was
Arian Titmus,
Everything she did, the way she dominated the
pool
Made me want to do better.

When I was 14 years old my inspiration was Sam
Kerr,
Everything she did, the way she kicked incredible
goals and inspired a nation
Made me want to succeed.

In this imperfect world,
I am lucky to have so many female inspirations.
Girls who make me want to try my best,
Girls who make me want to raise my voice,
Girls who make me want to train harder,
Girls who make me want to do better,
Girls who make me want to succeed.

All of these incredible women have made a
statement on this earth,
They continue to inspire me and many people all
across the globe.
They have given young girls like me an idea of
what you can achieve,
When you try your hardest at anything you do.
They are true inspirations. ■

INSPIRED

Amber Robinson · Year 9
Padua College Rosebud

I want to be shown all the wonders in the world,
The lights, the city
Everything that makes the word wonderful
The fights, the frights

The hand that writes all my inspiration
It all starts with the admiration
Of the world
And all the seas

I want to be known as a light
Like the moon in the night
When there is something good
The stars shine upon us

The stars talk to me
You know—I can't disagree
When my inspiration lies out in front of me
For all that I can see

I am even grateful
Even if I don't know the abyss
And what I can see
It is on display for free

Only I can do so much
Nothing I can do can backfire
The bird that perches on the branch
Tells me otherwise ■

*The poem pretty much explains my connection to
inspire, I've been inspired by many things in the
world and think it is a great thing to want to do
something because of being inspired by someone
or something.*



Airlee Sheehan
Year 12 · Padua College Mornington

A SPARK OF HOPE

Andy Quang · Year 9 · Mazenod College

The nights were freezing and the days were blazing, nothing would be the same ever again. Without warning, the communists invaded the land destroying the people. The levels of danger kept increasing and increasing up until the point that my grandfather decided to do something that would change his family's lives forever. He immediately packed his belongings and told household members that he may not return. There was only enough money for one person to board the boat. The next night he snuck out... My grandfather risked getting caught as he quietly made his way to Vũng Tàu beach, boarded the boat, and sailed, escaping the home country he loved in Southern Vietnam. Once at sea, there was no turning back from the chaos that lay ahead.

The small smashed-up boat was tightly packed with barely any room to move around. The air was filled with anxiousness from the people surrounding him, but that wasn't enough to prevent his courage. There was no navigation, as they sailed into nothing. Days passed and the situation took a turn for the worse. Several people died from sickness that spread through the boat. A week passed and suddenly, in the misty fog, a large green image appeared before them. Everyone

screamed for joy, they had found land. Running towards the island my grandfather saw the locals. My Grandpa was the only one who knew a bit of English. He tried to communicate with them and informed the locals that they desired freedom. Instead, everyone on the small boat was beaten up and struck several times with rocks. The locals suspected that they were spies and assaulted them, locking them up with little food and water.

Months past, nothing changed, but my strong grandfather withstood the misery that he was experiencing and maintained a positive mindset. Constantly he prayed for help. Then after two years something unexpected occurred. The Australian Department of Immigration arrived at the island known as 'Bidong' located on the south coast of Malaysia. My grandfather was stunned and cried. He was transported to Melbourne, Australia, and later sponsored the rest of his family. Today, he lives a healthy life, never forgetting a single moment of his frightening journey. My grandpa is the sole reason why I am here today. He has taught me that anything is achievable as long as you work hard for it. He tells me, to never lose sight of hope because even in the darkest times, the light never disappears. ■

TO INSPIRE

Joedan Davis · Year 9 · Mazenod College

To show no Fear,
They may not always hear,
To have inspiration,
You know the light is near,

Don't worry about the past,
Because there is no task,
That with inspiration,
You cannot pass.

At the start they won't notice,
But keep your focus,
Just keep working,
And success will be your diagnosis.

So find someone who you admire,
And light that fire,
And at the end of the day,
You will be the one to Inspire ■

MELODIOUS MUSIC

Glen D'Souza · Year 9 · Mazenod College

Inspiration helps to achieve your goals, dreams, and passions. Inspiration can make a world of difference to a human being. If there is no inspiration in the world, it is difficult to be motivated to achieve your goals. In this way, music is an inspiration to my life. Growing up, I never thought of playing an instrument. Music was always viewed as something unnecessary, or a skill only some can attain. However, my family convinced me to start playing. As inspiring as I thought music was, I could not ignore the fact that the best music I had experienced was complicated and sophisticated.

My first instrument I learnt was in primary school. The guitar was my starting point on my musical journey. Lessons in school were an enjoyable experience but something was lacking. After almost a year of playing the guitar, I decided to completely discard it. The inspiration I felt prior to playing the guitar had vanished. Instead, I decided to learn piano at a music institute.

My mum talked to her friend and found the perfect music teacher. At this point, I did not know my music journey would take off. Beginning was fairly easy. I thought about playing complex pieces in the future. At times, I felt practice was boring. However, my experience at the institute made me realise that my teacher taught well. She taught me

piano and I enjoyed learning new songs. It was like learning another language and it helped me develop my passion for it.

Sooner than I realised, it was exam day. My first ever exam for piano made me feel stressed. During the car ride to the examination, the tension built up and the stress was overpowering. I had no previous experiences of doing exams. I was guided to a room to sit my exam. When I finished, I felt relieved. When my results arrived a few weeks later, I had achieved a high distinction. Elated, I knew that music was my passion.

After exams, I confidently began playing for leisure. If I ever felt stressed, music rescued me. By strumming a few strings on the guitar or playing the keys on the piano, I appreciate the fact that I have a talent. Just playing scales or a few pieces makes me realise the beauty of music. I believe music shouldn't be played for the sake of it. However, practicing time and time again proves that music helps me to enjoy and live life.

Music not only helps me develop my memory but assists me with learning the names of notes. I aspire to create my own songs, resulting from what I have learnt. Certainly, music inspires me to help others be inspired because it is a gift. ■

OH BIRD

Amber Christie · Year 7 · Star of the Sea College

Oh budgerigar, look at how you dance
Golden stripes of yellow above your head
The feathers on your body, green as plants
You chirp and whistle, paper toys you shred

Oh lorikeet, listen to your screeches
Devour that wattle, drink that nectar
You dangle from the palm trees near beaches
Rainbow bird, smart as an inspector

Oh mighty macaw, the king of parrots
Silky feathers, of blue, gold, red, or green
With your pellets, you sure love those carrots
Fly across the sky, look at you preen

Oh caique, your little hops are so sweet
All your birdy friends, all their pretty tweets. ■

PAINTING

Alison McGregor · Year 10 · Lavalla Catholic College

It was in front of me
Everything I had desired of
Just out of reach
The colours wash together capturing the watcher
The heat of an open mouth stare in awe
Unable to tear my gaze
The stars stare like they have eyes
Eyes lulling me into a trance
Yet I am still present
Feet solid in the ground

I wanted to get away
To find more
But that was all of it
There is nothing left
Just the singular painting hanging by a fragile nail
He knew everything
And he didn't tell a soul
He didn't tell the truths
He didn't tell the reasons
Every word he uttered
Encased in the strokes upon the canvas
Edging the watcher to reach
Grasp
Clutch
Hold
Taunting them to tear it open
Taunting them to destroy it
Just for answers
Just to understand

He knew what he was doing
He knew it all
That is what I want
To know all
To create all
He is everything I was not
But I will find a way to take it
Even when he is not sharing
Even in the grave
I will take it
No hesitation
My new muse
My new inspiration. ■



Violet Hicks
Year 9 · Lavalla Catholic College



Isla Macdonald
Year 9 · Lavalla Catholic College

ABSENCE OF YOU

Janelle Lawang · Year 10 · Catholic Regional College St Albans

Keiko was born with weak lungs. Nevertheless, she could always manage a smile due to her friendly disposition. But over the course of the last couple of days, her condition had rapidly grown worse.

She was a small woman, her chocolate eyes hinting the sweetness of her personality. Kiyoshi, Keiko's boyfriend, was a lean man who always had a nonchalant expression, but Keiko was the only person who could ever bring a smile out of him. Keiko and Kiyoshi were both twenty-six years old and had been dating since they were teenagers in high school.

It was one August evening; the smell of damp pine trees filled the air as Kiyoshi walked to the hospital. Clouds appeared each time he puffed and the wind gushed through his curly hair. In his hand he held purple carnation flowers and a ring box. Just at the moment Kiyoshi was about to grip the handle of her door, the nurse intercepted and held his arm back. "I'm sorry, I cannot let you in - I have bad news." Still grasping the ring box, his hand dropped. He lost balance and fell to the ground.

Keiko opened her eyes and all the pain she had endured suddenly disappeared. Rows of brightly coloured and awkwardly lopsided buildings surrounded her. The interior of all the restaurants and bars were painted with a reddish tinge, matching with the hanging lanterns lighting up the district and alleys. People appeared to be translucent, and even some were like mist. A cat bell rang in the midst of laughter and chatter. During a very busy night, a black cat suddenly appeared, meowed and sat in front of Keiko's bare feet. Just as Keiko reached towards the cat, it stood with its tail up high and stared at her with its golden eyes. The cat snaked through the busy crowd and looked at Keiko, as if it was telling her to follow.

She was led to a bar in the corner of an alleyway with no customers. A windchime sounded, lightly tinkling as she pushed open the door. The walls inside were coloured with a sepia hue, different from the red restaurants and bars in the district, and a cartel clock without arms was at the centre of the wall behind a young bartender. The teenager in a black apron bowed, "Please take a seat." Keiko squeezed herself between the antique wooden round table and chair lined with gold, beside an arched window revealing the lively restaurant district. The teenager handed a thick photo album with a burgundy velvet cover. With soft fingertips, she lightly tapped the photo album, "Open the album and think of someone you wish to meet for the last time." Keiko watched the girl walk back to the counter with the black cat

following behind. Opening the book, Keiko closed her eyes and memories of him filled in the empty white boxes. The windchime tinkled once again.

A man emerged beneath the steam opposite Keiko. She gasped.

"Keiko?"

"You've aged quite a bit!"

"Oh, shush," he said and they laughed together. For Keiko, it was a typical conversation but for Kiyoshi, it was the first time he had laughed in two years.

"How are things going, a family yet?" Keiko raised her eyebrows and chortled. Kiyoshi sat still and shook his head of octopus curls vehemently. "What's wrong?" Keiko looked at him with great affection and concern.

"I'm fine."

"Kiyoshi...you're crying." Stunned, Keiko lifted his glasses and lovingly wiped away the tears streaming from his eyes.

"Why did you have to go so soon! We were supposed to grow old together. You promised me to hear what I was going to say to you two years ago." He was reduced to crying with shoulders trembling. He had thought of giving up on several occasions. "I love you, Keiko! With you gone, there's nothing to live for." He started bawling uncontrollably, but Keiko just smiled back fondly.

"I love you too, Kiyoshi. I'll always be beside you. You can keep on fighting, can't you?" Kiyoshi shook his head. "I think it's wonderful if you keep carrying on. It would make me really glad. You work to make me happy until you die, you understand?" Kiyoshi lifted his tear-soaked face. He had distanced himself from friends and was unmotivated to do anything anymore. Yet, Keiko wanted him to rediscover the things he loved and the man he was once before. And now he realised, if he was to make his late girlfriend happy, he would have to fight through this life. "I won't let you say it's over just because I'm gone." Come to think of it, how much of his life had he devoted to make Keiko proud? "Now what were you going to ask me two years ago?"

"I was going to ask if you would be my w-" However, Keiko faded into mist like the ones in the district and Kiyoshi opened his teary eyes as he was back in his bed. A silent stillness remained. "...Keiko?"

Kiyoshi turned his head, more tears streaming down his face. A portrait of Keiko's smiling face was beside the ring box on his bedside table. "Keiko..." ■



Melak Al-Najjar
Year 10 · Catholic Regional College St Albans

Girl With Candle



Andrew Lian
*Year 8 · Catholic Regional
College St Albans*

Cubist Inspired

DEAD WEIGHT

Frankie Massa · Year 10 · Kolbe Catholic College

Olive understood she differed from other kids her age, lacking in a certain department in her life.

Her mother sat ill in the hospital down Mulberry Street - the effort to take the bus and walk fifteen minutes there was draining. Her heart would sag low within her ribcage, the dead weight from the guilt heavy as she went.

Now, she *would've* been there, but her exams were coming up, though part of her feared going to see her mother. She had let her know this - hoping, praying she would understand - which led her to currently sit at her desk frustrated, gripping her pen tightly. The words on the papers seemed to float annoyingly in her head, the irking taste in her mouth pungent as she attempted to focus. The smell of pine and vanilla sifting through the apartment complex from a candle she was gifted by her mother. She recalled her mother saying it would help her 'relax'. She knew that it wouldn't help her in this case but proceeded to take it thankfully.

She scratched at her wrists aggravated, her mind flooding with thoughts as the clock next to her continued to tick annoyingly with each passing second. It seemed as though every small noise distracted her, not to mention how she was remembering too many things she definitely didn't want to remember.

Not today at least.

Her foot tapped swiftly against the ground in an attempt to calm her nerves. A filthy, upsetting urge rising in her chest. She could feel her gut swirl in guilt.

Olive's eyes darted around the room. The plump, puff stitch cushions that sat on her old, worn-out bed and the crumpled-up taupe-colored papers strewn messily around her bedroom - lines sketched violently with crossed out math equations and random scribbles, thrown astray to land in random spots within her bedroom. She could care less about the mess. Sure, it had been annoying to carefully sneak around the piles of clothes and the multiple noodle cup containers stacked in the corner, but it's not like her mother was there to say anything. Living with her aunt meant being neglected to the point she could do anything she wanted without a care in the world. Luckily, she didn't abuse that privilege, though her living conditions weren't necessarily good either.

She gripped her head, fingertips digging into her scalp, feeling only a distaste for herself and the

life she had lived. It tasted and felt sour, her eyes clenching as she teared up.

She wanted to give up. So, so badly.

But who would look after her mother? And the fluffy calico kitten that appeared on her porch every night? Who would help her friends who needed her when they were struggling, relied on her for just a moment of peace and quiet?

She was needed and had an exact purpose. Yet, that fact was unknown to her.

Olive could only pray that she would feel that equally returned love, even for a second.

To have that consistency in her life where everything would go alright, just one day everything would be okay. She bit her lip, her grip growing tighter as her chest heaved. She needed to keep the tears in, she couldn't break. If she did, she would've broken all the progress she'd made until now. She needed to keep it together, for her mother, her friends, her teachers, everyone.

Keep. It. Together.

Suddenly a whistle broke her free as she swallowed down the vile cry that built up in her throat. Her eyes widened, tears lined her waterline, threatening to fall any second. She swallowed; her breaths began to steady as another whistle made its way to her ears - well, a chirp! She could hear the birds outside, but why did this one sound closer?

Olive raised from her seat, pushed her chair in as she took slow steps towards the window on the right wall of her bedroom, dodging the random books and plastic water bottles on her hardwood floor. She leaned against the windowsill, eyes darting towards the tall oak tree that took up half of her view.

On the branches lay a bird's nest. How had she not noticed that before? A small, baby bird sat there, its black feathers not fully developed. Its pink skin was painfully bare, and its taupe-colored beak slightly contorted. The adult, which seemed to be a dark, haunting raven, stood above the baby woefully. That's when Olive noticed the adult's wing, which was bent out of place and looked agonizingly painful. The injured wing twitched, as the raven let out a miserable cry - the baby jumped up to it, returning its sad song. The chirps started to grow more distressed.

Olive gasped as she noticed the wounded raven steady its feet on the edge of the ratted nest before attempting to fly off. It leaped before spreading its wings, but only so far until the wing finally failed

itself. The raven went plummeting down into a random bush a few houses down the street.

“No!” Olive yelled out, leaning further onto the sill knowing it was too late.

The baby bird wailed, whilst Olive stood there unsure of what to do. She looked back at the little baby raven, as she knew the confused cries were for its parent. Olive’s nerves felt electrified, as every possible scenario ran through her mind with an array of bad endings.

Anxiously, she continued to monitor the baby bird closely as it stood up on its two wobbly feet. Olive’s heartbeat began to quicken just as before, as she saw the bird attempt to flap its feeble wings on the spot within the safety of its nest. It continued to fail, just falling back into the spot it had sat in earlier. The baby bird’s weak wings failed to hold its body up in the air. Olive gripped the windowsill more intensely, her heart dropped at the sight of the baby bird slowly crawling to the edge of the nest. Its spindly legs shaky against the multitude of rough, fibrous sticks. Its wings switched hesitantly, lowering its head to look at the steep fall beneath its small body. The comparison of the height to the small little critter had Olive reeling even more against the windowsill. She was useless in this situation.

It’s not as if I could climb to save it in time. I’m purposeless, it has always been that way and always will. Why did I think this time would be any different?

The baby bird let out a little wheeze from its tiny frame. Its wings spread open. It jumped.

And it fell.

A feather fell off its body, it peacefully drifted as the rest of the baby bird continued to plunge downwards. Olive gasped loudly, as she lost sight of the baby raven quickly. She slammed her fist

against the window. She pivoted, ready to run after it when suddenly, the baby bird soared through the air, flapping its unsightly frail wings and flying in an unbalanced manner, eventually steadying into an easy glide. It flew in the direction of where its mother had landed earlier, venturing off into the distance as Olive jumped and roared a loud cheer for the little birdling’s victory.

The smile on her face almost felt disturbing. She couldn’t tell if it was because she hadn’t smiled in so long, or if it was because she was smiling so wide. Her heart warmed at the feeling, a small giggle erupting from the whole emotional rollercoaster. She sighed contently.

That whole situation, it couldn’t help but remind her of herself and her mother.

Olive missed her.

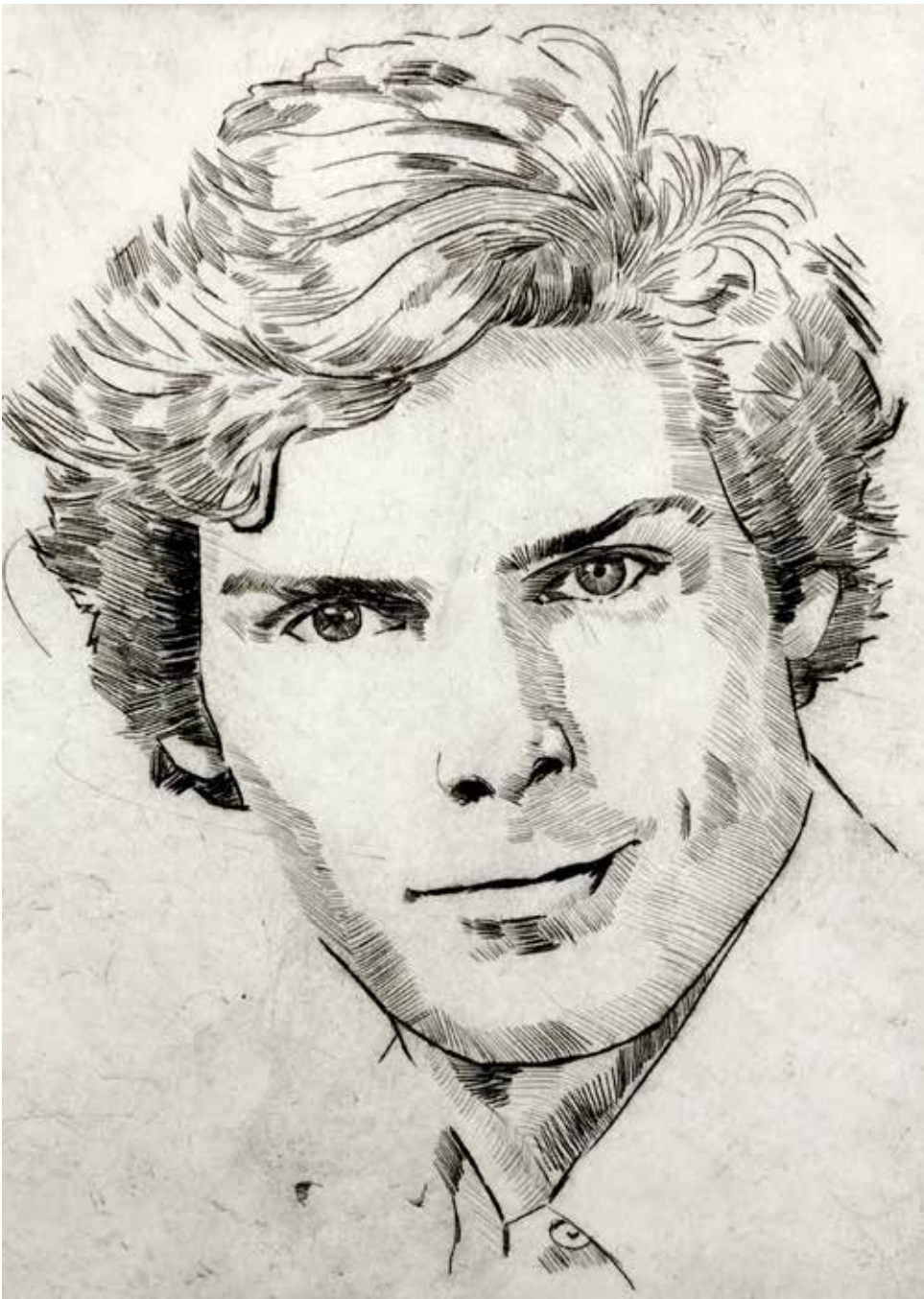
She swallowed the guilt she held before, as she felt it was time to spread her wings as well. She wasn’t going to give up. She *wouldn’t* give up. She walked quickly past all the mess on the floor, as she swung her arm and pinched her satchel and jogged out the door. Exiting the house, she felt the sun warm on her skin. She readjusted her black framed glasses, as she made her way to the hospital.

The feeling of just standing in front of the hospital made her feel nauseous, but she stayed persistent. A short, lanky nurse led her to the door she very much recognised. The nurse opened the door for Olive, as she saw her mother sitting in a rocking chair with a cloth wrapped around her scalp. Her pale skin was visible, yet her sickened face was turned to the window. Olive knocked on the door frame, and her mother looked over to the noise. She then smiled, and so did Olive.

“Hi Mom.”

She knew she had purpose now.

Olive was sure her mother thought so too. ■



Skyler Sahely
Year 11 · De La Salle College



Hunter Todd
Year 11 · De La Salle College

MELANCHOLIC DRESS

Ariya Khadka · Year 6 · St Finbar's Primary School, Brighton East

Visualise a dress with several layers,
Each one covering the crinoline,
The one that keeps the dress up - float,
Holds all the emotions.
The top layer of the dress is coated in velvet and
expresses vibrant whilst blissful expression,
And maintains the pretense of what everyone
expects of one.
From pleated all the way down to the petticoat,
Many conflicting feelings embraced through each
layer of fabric.
At a glance, they saw flawless,
Nothing to fault,
They see things traveling smoothly,
But beneath those layers was another story to be
told.

Agony,
Low self-esteem,
All of the expectations,
Self-consciousness fills up the air bubble,
There's no escape.
As they may think,
There is a way,
A way out that most think is beyond unthinkable,
A way where walls cave out,
Not in,
A way dream catchers actually catch,
And corsets not too tight,
A way where self-love is not one in a million,
And the great depression was last heard of in
1939. ■

MY BEST FRIENDS

Georgia Maloney · Year 1
St Finbar's Primary School, Brighton East

My friends are kind because they include me in their games. They like to play with me, and I like playing with them. They like playing the games I do. We have a good connection when we play together. They are very funny and make me laugh a lot. They make me want to be the best friend I can be. ■

THE GREATEST SOCCER PLAYER

Penelope Gill · Year 1
St Finbar's Primary School, Brighton East

The person who inspires me the most is Sam Kerr. I really want to be like her. She is a really good soccer player. I love watching her on TV. I want to be the greatest soccer player in the world. I want to play for the Matildas, just like Sam Kerr. ■

THE CURIOUS EXPLORER

Charlie Tremellen · Year 3 · St Finbar's Primary School, Brighton East

“Hi Charlie, how was basketball?” asked mum.

“It was good but I’m getting a bit bored around here.”

As we walked down the street I saw a yellow taxi which reminded me of New York. So, I booked a flight there. When I got there, I was so excited! I got to see so many awesome things. One of the awesome things was The Statue of Liberty. After a couple of days, I felt like I had experienced New York. One day, when I was in New York I saw a person wearing a Hawaiian Lei Necklace, and that made me want to go to Hawaii. So, I jumped onto my Ipad, and I booked the next flight to Honolulu.

It took a long time to get there but I’m glad I got on the flight. I got upgraded to First Class. There was a special bed for me to sleep in. I didn’t have the normal yucky plane food, I had luxurious food. They served me spaghetti meatballs with a light parmesan cheese sprinkled on top like snow on a mountain top. It even came on a golden plate.

When I got there I was so excited, and every day I went to the hot beach. The water was clearer than normal, and there were so many dolphins in the water. There was even one pink dolphin. This was incredible because they are nearly extinct.

The pineapples there were so fresh, and I got to have some delicious coconuts that I grabbed from a nearby tree. The water in the coconut was amazing. One day, when I was on the beach I heard someone’s voice. It sounded like they were from Ireland. It reminded me of Ireland and Miss G. I really wanted to go to Ireland, so that night I

booked a flight to go to Ireland. That morning I got on the plane. When I got there, it was freezing. Ireland was so fun! I got to see my mum’s family because they live there. They had a range of different accents. Some words I didn’t really know because they say funny words in place of normal words.

It was so cool to go to Ireland and a couple of days it even snowed. It was really different from Hawaii. One Wednesday it was really chilly, and when I was walking in the snow I saw a person eating a croissant. That made me not only want to go to Paris, but it also made me really hungry for one. That night I booked a flight to Paris and on the plane, I ate a croissant. When I got there, I was really excited. I said in my head this might be my favorite place. I got to see so many amazing places like the Eiffel Tower, and I ate lots of croissants. They were the best croissants I have ever had. It was really hard to understand what they were saying because they didn’t speak English. After a couple of days, I was getting a bit homesick. So, I decided to go back home to Australia. I had the best time of my life, but I missed everyone in Australia so I booked a flight to go home. When I got home and saw my mum and my family, they were so excited to hear what I did on my trip and I said, “It was fun but I missed you too much.” So, I told them all about it in the morning because I was exhausted. That night, I dreamt of being in the city. I saw some Chinese symbols on people’s clothes. That made me want to go to...

“Charlie, Charlie, wake up! You are going to be late for school!” ■

THALASSOPHOBIA

Ella Scott · Year 7 · Star of the Sea College

The crunch as I step
As I feel myself go still.
Deep, deep, very cold.

I’m scared for my life
yes, the sea is not my friend,
thalassophobia.

It is dark, and black,
things live among the seaweed
that bite or poison.

I stay on the sand,
here it is perfect, so safe.
I’ll never go back. ■



Angelien Phull
Year 8 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

Art



Shayelyse Fraser
Year 8 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

Art



Marishka Aldon
Year 8 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

Art



Alysia Sumanada
Year 8 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

Art



Michael Fernandez
Year 8 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

Art



Matthew Biswas
Year 8 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

Art



Cleo Tan
Prep · Holy Rosary Primary School, Kensington



Trixie Ohle
Year 3 · Holy Rosary Primary School, Kensington



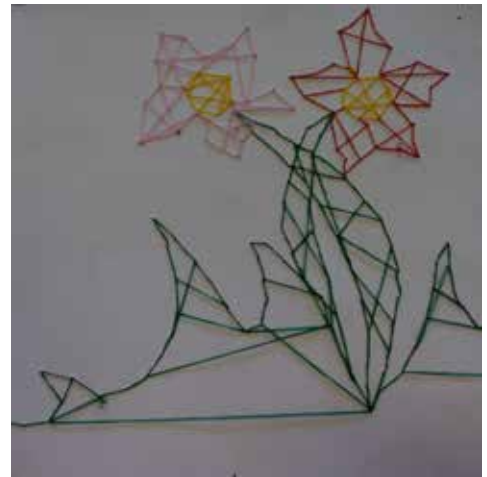
Terry Wei
Year 3 · Holy Rosary Primary School, Kensington



Vera Tan
Year 2 · Holy Rosary Primary School, Kensington



Grace Carbonari
Year 6 · Holy Rosary Primary School, Kensington



Violet Kennedy
Year 5 · Holy Rosary Primary School, Kensington



Scarlett Furse
Year 2 · Holy Rosary Primary School, Kensington



Lawrence Jenkins
Year 4 · Holy Rosary Primary School, Kensington

MY BRAIN IS EMPTY

Ariel Singh · Year 10 · Killester College

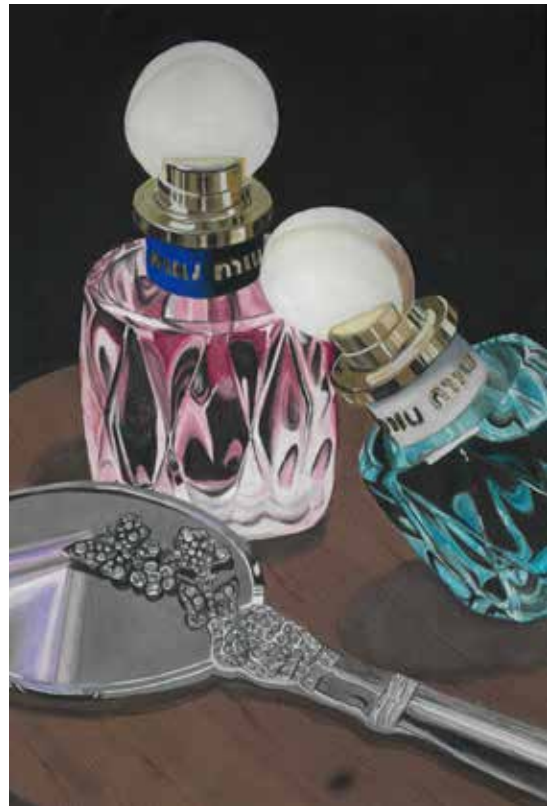
“I can’t think! My brain is empty!”
“Empty?”
“Yes, empty!”
“Like a dull sensation? Nothing is up there?”
“You know what, it’s more like it’s stuffed to the brim.
“What?”
“Stuffed to the brim with clouds, it is.”
“Then you should have loads of ideas.”

“No. Clouds are nothing, fluffs of white nothing sitting around.”
“I’d say they are more like swirling breaths in your mind. As they whirl about the billows surge one with innovation.”
“Well my clouds aren’t swishing about.”
“Then I guess they are just infusing you with creativity, just very very slowly.”
“That will take forever!”
“At least your brain isn’t empty.” ■



Catherine Vo
Year 11 · Killester College

Visual Communication Design. Mixed Media



Leyna Vo
Year 11 · Killester College

Visual Communication Design. Mixed media



Ella-Ivy Smith
Year 9 · Killester College

Mile Creek

My ceramic artwork was inspired by some of my favourite memories when I was younger. Walking around the creek nearby my house with my father and dog during warm afternoons. I've always loved the untamed nature that flowed through it, and I still admire it today as I walk there by myself surrounded by the free growing environment.



Kim Nguyen
Year 9 · Killester College

Petal

We can all find love in the gift of nature.

EDDIE MABO, YOU BROKE THE CYCLE OF PAIN AND WON

Divinia Kihara · Year 9 · Marymede Catholic College

Why must people take what is already claimed?
Greed
Why are we kept from relatives?
Alone, they pass away
Leaving families with bodies to burn or let decay

It is fear and hatred

Angry, yet helpless with small or no power
Yet we decide to fight
But each time in the end,
our hope, the summer of our lives,
is slowly fading through autumn heading to
winter.

The cycle repeats in life and in seasons.
They take.
We fight, Autumn.
They win. We lose, Winter.
We teach. They learn, Spring.

Over and over, season after season
Land, homes, children, rights
All of them stolen, taken
Yet we take them back to us
While they learn they yet repeat it.

Our peace like a flower blooming in spring,
New, fragile, fresh, vibrant, and beautiful.
But as time goes it wilts and withers,

New problems being challenged,
threatening like the old traditions of winter.

A caretaker of the land, admirer of nature
Witnesses the cycle,
A threat to the nature he so loved,
Challenged winter,
to gain power over himself
to bring summer
to let this single of many flowers regrow.

He, who sees the power of knowledge,
Who sees determination and faith
Though denied,
He stood tall,
And challenged a century's old law
Obstacles arising tall as mountains
But he kept climbing
Reaching for his goal determinedly,
Rivalling the sunflower's need for the sun, during
summer.
But fate took him to be with the ancestors
When it turned to spring.

A hero, a gardener, whose legacy is past on,
Through generations he will live on,
A man who broke the cycle
Marking his moment in the past.

The man who brought summer! ■

FOR LOWITJA O'DONOGHUE

Shayan Khan · Year 8 · Marymede Catholic College

In the heart of a land, sun-kissed and vast,
lies a tale of courage, of the shadows cast.
Amidst the ancient songs, the whispers in the breeze,
Lowitja O'Donoghue, a beacon of strength, she
sees.

Born of two worlds, entwined with fate's embrace,
A soul that soars, bridging cultures with grace.
In the red-earthed Outback, where dreams take
flight,
her journey began, bathed in the desert's light.

A Yankunytjatjara woman, bold and true,
she sought wisdom, dreams, and visions anew.
In the sacred silence, she learned to hear,
the echoes of ancestors, whispering near.

From the ochre paths, she ventured afar,
To distant shores, a blazing northern star.
With purpose and passion, she took her stand,
A voice for justice, in this foreign land.

In halls of power, she fearlessly strode,
A champion of rights, for the oppressed, she
showed.
She fought for the stolen, the silenced, the lost,
A voice for reconciliation, no matter the cost.

With tenacity, she shattered barriers tall,
breaking through ceilings, she watched them fall.
A trailblazer she was, without compare,
empowering hearts, inspiring those who care.

In the weave of time, her legacy blooms,
A tapestry of hope, transcending glooms.
Her spirit's flame, an eternal glow,
In Lowitja's story, the world shall know.

Let us honor this heroine grand,
The soul of a nation, the Outback's hand.
In Lowitja O'Donoghue's story we see,
The triumph of unity, love, and unity. ■

THE RAINBOW SERPENT'S LAST BIRTH

Josselyn Lewis · Year 8 · Marymede Catholic College

My arms sway in the burning breeze
Whirls of deep crimson dust flies around me
I watch the water in deep clear river flow
Reflecting the sunlight shining its elegant glow

Then Yurlungur came down again
And gave birth to the women and men
Over the breezy, sparkling river
Flies the serpent in a line of silver

All humans far and wide
Watch as the rainbow glides

As fast as a jet
Out into the sunset

I watch my green leaves fly around
Myself as I hear the sound
Of the people coming by
Faces glowing under the sky

They slowly walk away
I hope the nature will let them stay
As they start their life
While I grow in the wildlife ■

ANYTHING, AT LEAST SOMETHING

Layla Zarah Jafary · Year 9 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong

People love everything,
From books to paintings to even jewellery.
However,
I believe the best things are things you cannot see
or hold.
As a young child I was told,
The best things in life don't always fit into a mould.
Sometimes things can be too big,
Or too bold.
They are things you cannot physically hold.
People love everything,
From books to paintings and even jewellery.
But I,
I love hope, memories, and even love itself.
Love isn't something that is seen,
It is something that is felt, expressed, and shared
among one another.
Something that is felt together.
Hope is something that can be experienced
between one or all.
It is something that can fill a hole.
Whether that hole be in you or another.
It is something that can hold you together.
The same thing happens for memories,
It is something you can share or hold alone,
But it is always something you can call your own.
It can be something happy or sad,
Anything that reminds you of the great life you
have had.

The best things in life can't always be held,
Maybe it's a scent you have smelled?
Memories hold great value,
Sometimes value only you know,
Maybe a value only you can interpret.
But sometimes only you knowing is enough.
You can love anything,
From books to paintings, even jewellery.
Even memories, hope and love itself.
However,
The one thing you should love the most is
yourself.
you may go to parties and parades,
big fancy balls and displays,
but when you go home and lay alone,
deep in your own thoughts,
the only person with you, is you.
And only you.
If you are not able to love yourself or make
beautiful memories with yourself,
Then how can you show the same values to
others?
How can you become great fathers and
mothers?
Love and hope stems from you and only you.
Only if you choose to hold it in your heart,
Close and tight.
And with this your life finally begins. ■



Ash Upston
Year 11 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong



Ash Upston
Year 11 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong

YOU USED TO INSPIRE ME TO LIVE

Hanna Unmack · Year 12 · Emmaus College

I hate the way you whisper. I hate the way your voice carries in the wind, through the trees, never so close as for me to truly comprehend what you murmur but always near enough to fill my head with memories and my heart with cement.

I hate the way I still feel your touch in the gentle caress of the reeds of grass and the tickling scratch of the low-hanging branches that catch on my clothes as I wander. Even now, when your fingertips are impossibly far and out of reach, I feel the ghost of them on my skin and my hair stands up on its ends.

I hate the way I can't forget you. I hate how your memory causes the lump in my throat to grow and makes my knees buckle. I collapse, dizzy and distracted, at the edge of the lake. The water laps lazily at my legs and I sink down into the marshy ground, mud staining my clothes like your love stained my soul.

There's a certain malice in how you've left me.

We were sound sleeps and giddy smiles and vivid fireworks that covered my world in a colourfulness it had long gone without. You simply made life better. You made me better. And God, how I craved to be better. You became a drug. I was obsessed with the way you made me feel. I was an addict, crazed and infatuated, enslaved to the highs I felt with you. I was so fixated on the highs with you that I was blissful. I was ignorant to the mere thought of a life without you to rely on. You were my weakness and strength simultaneously.

And so, when you left, I crashed. Without the fleeting pleasures and sweet indulgence that you provided me, I grew empty. The colour slowly seeped from my world like an aging photograph. My skin grew dull and sallow. My bones hollowed and my eyes lost their lustre. I retreated into myself and found I was trapped within my own breaking mind, no way to escape the echoes of you that were slowly driving me mad.

Because mad is how I felt. Mad is how I feel still. Insane. Because to feel comfort is to forget about you but the thought of forgetting you makes me sick. I sit on the bank of this lake, nauseated by both the idea of you and of anything without you. How ruthless of you to leave me in such a state.

The world around me feels static. The scent of evening rain fills the air, sultry and sticky and

heavy in my lungs. The damp air feels stagnant, too slow as I breathe it in, and I gasp and gulp with eyes wide and panicked as my mind's desire for oxygen remains unsatiated.

Perhaps it really is the lack of oxygen that lets my thoughts spiral and unravel further, or maybe it is the simple fact that you used to love the rain. Regardless, I find my eyes welling, teardrops threatening to spill over and leave a trail of inky mascara down my flushed cheeks. My visions blurs, and the murky colours that melt together seem to form your silhouette.

The same silhouette that follows me, every day, unrelenting. The same silhouette whose mournful eyes catch mine in a crowd only to vanish instantaneously. The same silhouette whose reflection looks back at me in every shop window, every shallow puddle, every lurking mirror I pass no matter how fervently I try to avert my gaze.

The sky begins to darken, clouds creeping together, clustering, the magnetic pull that draws them in cruelly mirroring the magnetic pull I felt for you. The storm clouds crackle. The bellowing thunder and flickering lightning set the sky ablaze, a cacophony of grief, yet one that pales compared to the raging storm inside my heart. My tears fall unnoticed, blending with the rain that plummets from the clouds. The droplets hit my skin with a stinging pain. The water's edge rises as the storm continues.

I am conscious of the dirt my body is melded against. I am conscious of the way it melds against your body too. I am conscious of how you lie buried six feet deep. And yet, your soul is trapped miles above. I am conscious of my red puffy eyes and my shaking hands that show the world a glimpse of my grief. I am conscious of how you cannot hold them still like you used to anymore.

I cannot explain the cruel science behind how my body is viscerally different without you. I cannot even begin to try. You showed me love. You showed me life. I never hoped you'd show me loss.

You used to inspire me to live. You and your mischievous grin and unrelenting joy and impossibly infectious delight. I do not have joy or delight anymore. I cannot find the strength to smile. Now, all I do is cry. Now, all you inspire is my tears. ■

IN DARK TIMES

Dougie Cowie-Kent · Year 12 · Emmaus College

The familiar rhythm of hooves on cobblestone woke Eric from a fitful slumber. He had been staying in a hollowed-out part of the wall of the tannery, the hastily erected building weathered by the ceaseless traffic from the street beside it. It was evening, and the dim light of the setting sun was slowly being replaced by the small flames of the street lanterns – the lamplighters had begun going about their nightly work. Eric’s reasons for sleeping during the day were twofold: first, being unaware of one’s surroundings was inadvisable when the sun was down, when the hungry, the desperate, and the depraved lurked the streets. Second, the boy found something in the night, a thing which he now moved to find, driven by a hunger greater than the pain stabbing at his gut.

Eric extracted himself from the brick wall and steeled himself as his calloused bare feet made contact with the biting cold of the stone street. As tired as he was, he could not afford to linger; already, the eyes of the people walking about him began to fill with an all too familiar desperation- an animalistic pain and starvation that painted every vulnerability as an opportunity. Even in his fourteen years of life, Eric had seen people succumb to it, seen people lose themselves to stay alive just another day. Despite all this, he continued, driven by an unseen power.

Eric began making his way through the alleys and backstreets toward his goal. To one not raised on these streets, the laneways would be a tangled web of convoluted paths through the gathering darkness. At every turn, one was confronted by the sick and starving. Small shelters constructed from old blankets and tattered clothes were held up by defunct industrial equipment; decrepit tarpaulins fluttered in the evening wind like banners of an ancient noble house.

And within each of these shanties, poor souls clung to life. The elderly, the ill, the crippled; each judged worthless and cast out with the garbage they dwelt in. A thick layer of grime coated every surface, each step adding to the film of filth lining the soles of Eric’s feet until finally, he came to the place he had been looking for.

It was a wall – two or three stories high – where a kindly young man had once carved out handholds, a gift from an old life almost forgotten. Eric’s goal coaxed him upwards, calling to him through the vapour and the dusk, and soon the boy had begun his ascent.

Ever upwards he climbed, leaving behind the streets and horror. Up and up, away from the hurt and the loss and the *indifference*. That was the only way to survive, out on the cold streets where one could often not even find an ally in themselves – shutting oneself off. Everybody kept their heads down, turning away from the horror that surrounded them, shutting out any feeling – pain and hunger, but joy also. Happiness was fleeting and futile, and moments of sweetness in a harsh existence only ever left one with a bitter taste in their mouth, when the pleasure is invariably torn away.

But Eric climbed above it all; each inch he dragged himself upward, the air in his lungs seemed to grow lighter. It was hard work, but eventually, he reached the rooftop and stood defiantly above the city.

The first time his brother had taken him up to the roof, Eric had asked him the point. Asked what use there was in struggling through each day, heaving the weight of all the hurt up the building, and indulging in the fleeting joy of the evening. His brother had told him that it was a reminder.

As Eric craned his neck upwards, his brother’s words echoed in his head:

It’s a reminder, Eric, that even in dark times, the stars don’t have to go out.

His eyes lined up with the stars, and he was a little boy again. He was sitting in his brother’s lap, with the warmth of the hearth and the smell of decadent meats seemingly effusing into the very marrow of his soul. In each twinkling ember of light lay a memory. Recollections of fragments of lives Eric wasn’t even sure he had lived. Summers spent with parents he didn’t have, jokes with friends he had never made – the warmth of these memories filled the lad with a hope, a power, a strength that fought against the despair threatening to overpower him at every second.

Eric had been told very young that the universe did not care – it was blind to his pains and sorrows. But he knew something now he had not known then: People were not visitors in the world, but a part of it. The world could not be indifferent if the people in it were not, and as tears began to stream down his face and the boy yawped over the roofs of the world, Eric gave life to a lifeless existence. The world cared because Eric cared, and thus, the earth bathed in the starlight of a caring universe. ■

JEANIE SWAN

Isabella De Silva · Year 10 · Nazareth College

On October 11, 1934, Jeanie Swan flew.

Jeanie Swan stood five foot six inches tall. She had an exceptionally ordinary face, defined by a straight sharp nose that drew to a point. She had long, feathery, blonde hair that cascaded down her long and slender neck, which her friends would lovingly braid and re-braid and fasten with white velvet ribbons. Her deep brown eyes were captivating and, perpetually occupied with a faraway look. And, she had an infectious smile that possessed the ability to make even our sternest teachers smile in return -- a seemingly impossible feat, but nothing was impossible for Jeanie Swan.

Jeanie Swan had no brothers or sisters, just a mother and father. Mr. Swan was a dentist – he was the only dentist in our small town. He knew people’s teeth better than he knew them personally. Mrs. Swan never stepped foot outside of her house, not even into her own garden. I had only ever glimpsed her gazing out of her windows a few times when I rode past their house (which I had done often). It was a wonder to anyone who knew the odd pair that they raised a free spirit like Jeanie Swan.

Everyone loved Jeanie Swan; no one had a bad word to say about her. The people would call out to her when she peddled by on her bicycle, and they delighted in her replies. She could make a person’s day just by looking at them. I can tell you that most of my good days were made this way. She would help the old women cross the street and play hopscotch with the children in the town square.

Jeanie Swan was always happy, which is why it was a curious thing when one day she stopped smiling back at the people. She disappeared from the town square, and when her friends called in on her, she was never home. The people noticed and took great offence. They were quick to whisper about what a sullen young girl Jeanie Swan was turning into, so much like her remarkably taciturn parents. It didn’t matter, she was never around to notice.

My recollections of that day, now decades ago, are blurry around the edges and are possibly faded and out of order. In any case, this is what happened as I remember it.

We were long into summer. The sticky, oppressive heat had settled into the houses and the church, the people’s clothes and the people’s thoughts. Everyone had settled into an irritable disposition, compelling me to seek refuge amongst the trees rather than venture into my own sitting room. The woods became a haven – there, the sun’s rays barely broke through the thick canopy. It felt like I had entered another world entirely, one that was open only to me. The air was still and cool, the noises of the wild inhabitants travelled towards me from far away. I was walking barefoot on a beaten path, the dirt and roots felt natural beneath me.

I was hunting for toads and newts by the river, which wound its way through the forest and far beyond. Here the waterway ran deep, its banks slick with moss. Bordered by towering cliffs, it twisted and turned like it had been carved by a gigantic ancient snake long before humans walked the earth.

I made my way along the river’s edge, gently turning over rocks, net at the ready. I was approaching a bend in the river where the snake had made a sharp turn; it obscured me in such a way that if someone was around the corner, they wouldn’t see me unless I was standing in the middle of the rushing water. And she didn’t.

Standing on the precipice of the cliff was Jeanie Swan.

She was squinting up at the sky with a look of unwavering determination. She stood barefoot on the edge in a delicate white dress, with black charcoal smeared across her eyes. Although, this was not the most curious part of her appearance. Jeanie Swan was adorned with a pair of giant white wings extended out behind her, both elegant and ominous.

I didn’t call out to her; I only watched her, not daring to make myself known. She stood still and alert for some time, with eyes transfixed on the sky, she emanated a sense of anticipation. Even from a distance away I could feel the energy radiating from her. It seemed to me that she was waiting for something. Curious, I decided to wait with her.

My knees began to ache from balancing on the rocks and I was exposed, the heavy sun beat down me causing sweat to run down the back of my neck. We were still waiting when the sun began its descent and faraway voices sounded through the sky. Voices that were calling to Jeanie Swan, beckoning her to follow. With my eyes trained on the sky, I began to distinguish the silhouettes of hundreds of swans. They flooded the sky, a dark mass making its way to warmer weather.

When I looked back, Jeanie Swan had begun to beat her large wings back and forth, disrupting the air around her. Her body was tense, her hair alive in the wake caused by her sudden movements, but her face was hers again, with bright eyes and her familiar smile. And, from my spot by the river, I watched as Jeanie Swan leapt and took flight.

Mr. and Mrs. Swan left town soon after; one night they were there and by morning they were gone. In the years after I last saw her, many stories were told about her disappearance. The people would talk about what a beautiful and bright girl that Jeanie Swan was; such a tragedy she was never found.

They say these things, but they will never know, that for a moment on that day, with the boundless blue sky behind her, and with her wings stretched out wide, Jeanie Swan flew. ■



Cayla Ho
Year 10 · Nazareth College

Jeanie Swan, Mixed media – Watercolour and Digital

INSPIRE

Lequan Talaia · Year 8 · Caroline Chisholm Catholic College

The sun radiated its golden light, painting the vast meadows in hues of vibrant green. Fluffy clouds danced lazily across the clear sky, while a gentle breeze rustled through the leaves, punctuating the serene stillness of the day. Nestled amidst this picturesque landscape, was a cold, detached, empty two grave cemetery shaded by a solitary tree. The granite stones read ‘Bob McCoy’ and ‘Adele McCoy.’ Shuffling slowly towards the vivid scenery, tears dripping slowly off his face, was a man. It was like everything was frozen in time except for this man who seemed to be slowing down to the speed of his crystal-like tear. As his tear dropped to the ground the sun rose up from the tree, leaving no shade on the two still graves. With the tear surrendered the man sat down next to several pots of flowers, each one darker and less alive than the one beside it. It looked like a one-month gap between all of them... except for a group of flowers that looked the same age (the darkest flowers of the group). It was almost like the sun only shone on the graves when he was present, like his presence was the only light in the gravestone’s still eyes.

Two circles around the sun ago there was a gym brought for a small price. It was brought by a man who was bulky, muscular and broad but the opposite on the inside. He was fragile, isolated, and sensitive... He brought the gym with his father’s financial help. Bob McCoy was an accountant in his early life, he worked in a large business full of state-of-the-art accountants. He didn’t earn much but had potential to go big if he chose to. He helped his son Jimmy with all his math when Jimmy was small and when he got older, they did all the gym’s finances together too. The gym was bright with white walls and large colourful abstract artworks on a feature wall at the back (which has faded in the past 2 years), there was the regular gym equipment around the edges and a small running track in the centre. It was all grouped in parts: one corner for cardio, one wall for mirrors and weights, and another part full of core and leg work gear. It was all an authentic work of art. Back when Bob was helping, the gym was pumping. It was full every session and everyone in the area knew the gym... Now the gym is deserted, a ghost town you may say, Jimmy never runs classes and doesn’t even live at home anymore. He sold his home last month and has slept in the gym ever since. He knew that if he didn’t make the sacrifice, he would lose the gym and he was afraid the heart-warming reminiscences would go with it too.

At this point the gym was threatened with being shut down and Jimmy McCoy would not only have no house but no gym or shelter to rest in. His heart was chilly, cold and crisp and felt like it could be broken with ease. His face was as grey as a granite grave in

front of him and his clothing had an aroma that just wouldn’t disappear. Everything around him was still and motionless. He placed a flower in a bowl as he knelt down before of the graves, reading aloud ‘Bob McCoy... a son and a wife with great futures ahead of them.’ He had read the plaque multiple times yet still cried every time he saw the word ‘son’. He stayed still sulking for a while before moving on to his mother’s grave repeating the same routine as before. He felt like a whole bunch of nothingness and read the plaque of the first grave countless times, stopping and stuttering on the word ‘son’ and the word ‘future’ every time. He then stared into his father’s eyes in the picture of him and Jimmy at the gym that was on the gravestone and didn’t move for a moment. He stayed there for minutes almost as still as his surroundings. A puddle started to form around him.

It was as freezing as the arctic and the once colourful walls were dark and unwelcoming. There were boxes at the front and the space was slowly fading away... no more bikes, no more weights, no more mats, no more kettle bells, no more ab-rollers, all that was left now was a singular mirror. He walked towards the mirror wanting to take it down and pack it up. He hesitated but took it down; he knew what it meant to his dad, it was the first ever piece of furniture that had been put in the gym... Jimmy had saved it for last.

He stared at the mirror in his arms and looked into his own blue, innocent, tearful eyes and mumbled, “Sorry dad.”

It was at that point that he noticed that at the place where the mirror had hung there was a little safe-like door. It was as grey as his face and had a number pad at its left and a picture of himself and Bob on the right. He hit ‘1’ with a huge gulp and then hit ‘9’, after a pause he punched in the number 9 again with a tear running down his cheek. He stopped for a while and stood still. Then he clicked ‘0’ and ‘#’ and a green light appeared.

“My birth year,” he said, crying as the door flung open. Inside lay a note from his dad...

‘Son, though my earthly presence may be gone, know that my love for you remains eternal. In times of need, remember I’m always by your side, guiding you through life’s challenges. May my spirit inspire you to persevere, succeed, and find happiness. You are never alone. Keep going. Make your own happiness and keep thriving. You know how much you mean to me, and I am sorry I won’t be able to help with our gym anymore. Keep the business going in memory of me son and never forget I will always love you.’

Jimmy stood there in silence after reading the note and read the last few sentences over and over again.

He turned after ten reads and unpacked everything he had just recently packed away: all the weights, bikes and mirrors went in the same place as before. He spent days cleaning all the equipment and even re-painted all the walls with colour and quotes about never giving up like: 'Be better than yesterday and make tomorrow's goals hard to beat.' His wallet was now empty except for a few dollars, he was without friends and without a partner.

'This re-opening had better work', he thought to himself and then printed out flyers with the last of his cash. He put them up everywhere, in every mailbox and on every light pole. Soon, when the gym was all ready, he renamed it from: *McCoy Fitness Gym* to: *B.M.C. Fitness* and in a matter of days the gym was full and so were Jimmy's phone book and wallet. Not only did Bob's inspiration save the gym but he saved Jimmy McCoy's social and physical life. ■

THE ESCAPE

Noah Tran · Year 8 · Caroline Chisholm Catholic College

Screams permeated through the city of Saigon. The malnourished Vietnamese citizens rushed through the streets, fearful of what would happen to them next. South Vietnam was overpowered by the North many years ago and now, the new government was trying to arrest any remaining soldiers and their families. My grandpa, who came from a whole family of war generals, was now on the run - desperately trying to escape the terrors of being captured.

I still remember the first time my mother told me this as a bedtime story, I was 6 years old and hiding behind my blanket. This is the story of how my mum and her family escaped the horrors of Vietnam.

When the North had taken over, the authorities indoctrinated all the citizens, convincing them that trying to escape would be met with harsh punishments or even death. This led to the people being scared, to the point that they didn't even leave their homes. Despite this, some of the South Vietnamese stood strong, maintaining their innate desire for freedom and justice.

My grandfather was the driver of an oil tanker, and he helped these determined Vietnamese communities in their attempts to escape, providing them with leftover oil to fuel their boats. After many years, he was caught and taken in for questioning. Refusing to hand over any information about the communities he was helping and his personal information, the authorities threatened to send my grandfather to jail and prosecute him. Increasingly concerned by these threats, my grandmother reached out to the community my family had helped for so many years - asking them if they could supply her with any boats or transportation to help my family escape.



Finally, a plan was hatched. My grandfather was released from interrogation on bail and went straight into hiding at the same time, my grandma and her 3 children embarked on a "wedding trip". Meeting up in a secret location where my grandparents reunited along with their children, they trekked through marshes, swamps and jungles - eventually reaching a secluded waterfront where a rusty fisherman's boat waited for them eerily.

After a few last-minute repairs, the boats cast off from the banks, floating through the dead of night. Initially, everything was functioning as expected, until suddenly the engine suffered a critical failure, leaving over 50 people stranded out at sea. They were stuck there for a week, low on food, with no clean water and constantly under the threat of pirates. After many menacing days, salvation was found at last when a German Tanker ship spotted them and took them to the coast of Indonesia. Back on land, my family were cared for by the local community and after nearly two years in Indonesia, they had the resources to move to Tasmania where they had their fourth child and then eventually moved to Melbourne, Australia, where they live now. ■

CAN HARD WORK CONQUER TALENT?

Lenni Garbutt · Year 6 · St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

Can hard work conquer talent?

The truth is, I'm not sure!

Sometimes people say you were born with a talent, but I don't think that's true.

Talent takes time and commitment.

Inspiration plays a huge part in this.

Inspiration makes us work harder, it makes us strive for excellence.

I believe with perseverance and determination anything is possible.

Any talent can be achieved!

Then we can relish in our successes and be proud of our accomplishments.

So...Can hard work beat talent?

Absolutely!

WE CAN DO ANYTHING WE SET YOUR MIND TO! ■

INSPIRE

Tilayo Sowunmi · Year 5 · St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

Dream amazing dreams

Don't give up yet, you got this

Believe in yourself

You are so unique

We love you for who you are

You're incredible

Your dreams will come true

Only if you believe

So, believe in them

I know you might not

But give it a little try

Maybe you'll like it

Even if you don't

Just think about this haiku

Because you're awesome ■

GOING FOR GOAL

Valentina Ramos-Damico · Year 5 · St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

When you have the soccer ball at your feet, you wonder
should I keep on going or pass to my teammate.
As you make the decision to continue, you feel the pressure
of everyone watching you.
But you just keep going.

You finally reach the goal box.
It's just you and the goalie now.
Sweat pours down your back. The pressure is on.
As you take the shot you hesitate, then follow through.
The goalie lunges to get the ball, but misses.
The ball hits the back of the net.
An indescribable feeling rushes through your body.
The crowd rises to its feet, roaring in happiness and cheers.
You jump for joy and your team is so proud of you.
You murmur to yourself, 'YES, I did it! I really did it!' ■

SEASONS

Year 1CJ · St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

Summer is fun.
Relaxing in the sun

Autumn leaves fall
Around the garden wall.

Winter winds are cold and chilly
Making us all a little bit silly.

Spring brings blooming flowers
giving fairies magical powers

Seasons come and go
That's one thing we surely know. ■

THE HARP - A HARRIS BURDICK MYSTERY

Josephine Merlin · Year 6 · St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

*"So it's true he thought, it's really true"
(Inspired by an image, a title and a caption.)*

My lungs burn as I pant. They feel fiery and dry, but no amount of pain will stop me from running. I'm too close, I can't stop now. I can hardly coordinate my legs, they feel numb. But I can't give up now. I'm too determined and too hopeful. Leaves brush against each other making a horrible scratching sound. My ears bleed. My head hurts and my chest aches. Then I feel my foot hook on something sharp. Wham! I hit the floor.

I look over to see blood running down my arm. "Ouch!" I cry. Even with my ears ringing I can still hear my mother's soft voice in the back of my head. "You should take a break." For the first time ever, I listen. I lift myself to sit up and lean against a nearby oak tree. I'm weak and tired, so I reach for my bag and pull out my drink bottle. I take a big gulp of water and spray some on my face. Laying on my back looking up at the sky makes me realise something. "Why didn't I think of this earlier?" Instead of running around mindlessly with no sense of direction, I should just climb one of the trees to see where I'm going.

I'm still so tired and weak, but this is the only shot

I've got at finding what I'm looking for. I wedge my foot in between a branch and pull myself up. The higher I go, the better the view I get. I keep climbing until I'm at the very top of the tree. "Wow," I say, admiring the spectacular landscape. The sun shines over the horizon. Everything looks tiny from up here. I feel like the king of the world. But my focus quickly shifts when I remember why I'm here. I know the sun will disappear soon, so I need to find it now. Otherwise they'll catch me, and I can't let that happen.

My eyes scan across the forest. When it feels as though I've been searching forever, I spot it. It's not so far in the distance. It feels like I can reach out to touch it. The glowing light. The thing that can save me. I scramble down the tree, scraping my knee along the way. But it doesn't bother me. There's no time for breaks. I start running again, adrenaline rushing through me. The more I run, the more speed I pick up. After about 15 minutes of nonstop running, I slow down to walk. I see it. Sparkling in the remaining light. Golden specks surrounding it. I shift over it. I'm in shock. The thing I've been searching for, for two years. Finally, I've found it. I fall to my knees. Lean over and whisper, "Take me away." ■

WHAT IF

Siena Howse · Year 4 · St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

What I hear,

I hear a crowd cheering.

What I smell, I smell the smoke from the fire cannon.

What I see, I see a crowd.

What I touch, I touch the ball on my feet.

I hope to see you,

one day I will.

It's not like everyone has this feeling inside them...

It feels as though it is happiness

I really like it.

I know this is the feeling of being inspired. ■



Anna Tsaglos
Year 4 · St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

Peach Ink Bird

I was inspired by Australian artist Grotti Lotti and her bright colours.

FIND YOUR OWN WAY, DON'T FOLLOW THE CROWD

Francesca Shortal · Year 2 · St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

I am inspired to make unique pieces of art.
It helps me to inspire other people to do amazing
things that they didn't know they could do.
I enjoy helping others to be creative. ■

USE YOUR IMAGINATION

Daniel Lamaro-Romeo · Year 2
St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

This quote inspires me because if everyone copied
each other it would be really boring.
Your imagination lets you be creative.
I can use my imagination in the stories I write and
the games I play. ■

A SPECIAL PERSON

Rory Moore · Year 2
St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

A special person in my life is my Grandma.
She is helpful and loving.
I read with her and she teaches me words that I
can't read or spell.
I see her nearly every day because she picks me
up from school.
She looks after me by giving me food and water.
She has a beautiful smile and a joyful voice.
She makes delicious food like porridge and
apple pie. ■

ART

Christina Spyropoulos · Year 4 · St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

Art is all about...
Art is all about creativity,
Art is all about imagining,
Art is a wonderful skill to learn...

Art can be big or sometimes small,
Art can be colourful, or sometimes dark and gloomy,
That's ART!

Art could also be inspired by something you have
seen or done!
Art can also be realistic or made up.
Art makes me feel happy and joyful ■



Gabriella Dedic
Year 3 · St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

Hot Chocolate 3D Mug

I was inspired by hot winter drinks in my favourite mug.



Vi Doan
Year 3 · St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

Seagull and Chips

I was inspired by the "Seagull Rap", a song we sang for our school production.



Maiya Vue
Year 10 · Kolbe Catholic College

Bridge the Gap, Acrylic on canvas

MY SOURCE OF INSPIRATION FROM ACROSS THE WORLD

Mietta Ackland · Year 12 · Star of the Sea College



This image is of the tower of the Cathedral of Alessandria, Italy; a small city of about 90,000 in the Piedmont region which I called my home for two months. In contrast to the grand reputation of the nearby Turin and Milan, Alessandria's unique unspoilt beauty is easily overlooked by tourists. Indeed, it's best known and enjoyed by those who reside there.

For most people, the world consists of one central home and a world around them of unexplored territory. When you live for an extended period in one place you gradually grow comfortable. The different things that fresh eyes are curious about in new places become that which is normal and no longer actively noticed. In the same way that Italians I'd meet were wide-eyed with interest when I described my vastly different homeland,

in the first few weeks in Alessandria, I actively absorbed everything that was new.

This picture captures the ancient history and architecture of the Cathedral, which excited and intrigued me. For Italians who had passed this view for years, it was among the easily ignored surroundings. Yet for an Australian girl halfway across the world, this monumental and historical architecture from long before Australia's federation amazed me.

Inspiration can come from anything and everywhere and is different for everyone. Upon my return to Melbourne, I was reminded to take the time to appreciate the smaller and mundane things in my life that are too long forgotten and yet which can offer rich sources of inspiration. ■

LIVIN' ON A PRAYER

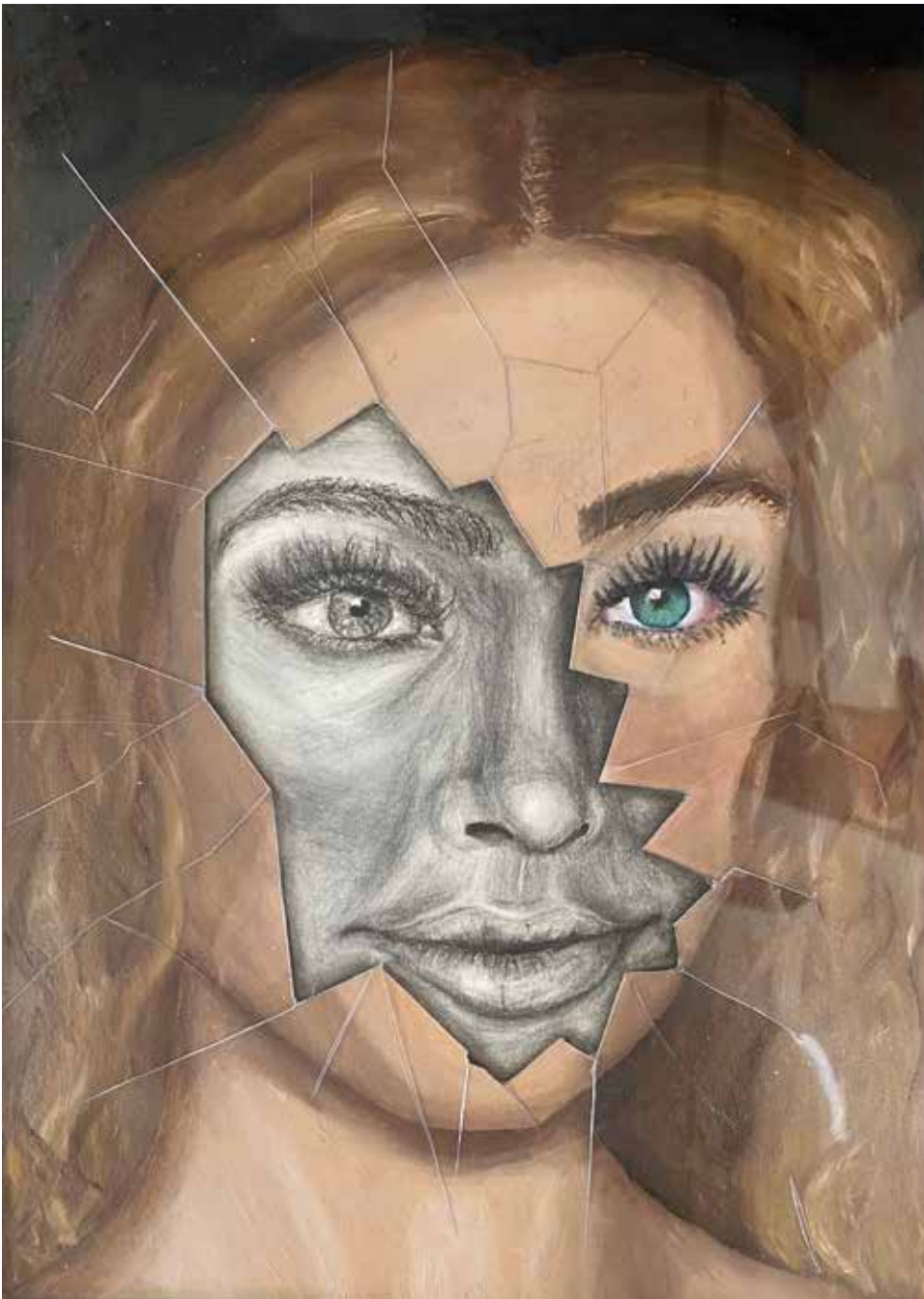
Bianca Maroun · Year 10 · Star of the Sea College

Since I was very young, I have always had a memory of this song. My parents used to have it playing in the car on the way to the hospital. The line that sticks with me the most is “Take my hand and we’ll make it, I swear.” This part of the song brings back a lot of feelings, like wanting to be in control, hopeful, and worried when I was a kid and had to go to the Children’s Hospital to do chemotherapy.

This was the one song that my parents would blast in the car before going; we would always call it our family anthem. I listen to this song whenever I’m struggling. I play it, and it gives me hope that I will make it. Every time this song comes on, we all sing it with all we have. We hug each other and sing from the top of our lungs. My parents are telling me that they are holding my hand and that we always have each other. ■



Lila McMahon
Year 7 · Star of the Sea College



Marni Van Wyk
Year 11 · Star of the Sea College

Focusing on the theme of personal identity, my artwork showcases the vulnerability of the burning question, 'Who am I?' The artwork portrays a seemingly confident girl who really is lost and actually disillusioned. The mask of her confident self is hiding who she really is, literally 'smiling through the cracks,' trying to keep up her facade of how she appears to the outside world.

ANIMALS IN SHADOWS

Luke Hoang · Year 6 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Every dawn, every morning,
every dusk, every night.
As people enjoy their magnificent day,
others struggle to enjoy their way.
Hiding in darkness away from light,
clueless, harmless they don't bite.
Don't judge a book by its cover they would say,
but fixing mistakes seems miles away.
Yet down below there is a gem,
waiting to be found again.
So when the plain old flowers start to bloom,

their happiness will finally resume.
The hefty clouds start to clear,
soon new personalities begin to appear.
They still live poorly in the street,
but at least they are up on their feet.
When I pass them I always admire,
how they can progress towards the fire.
As people steal, damage, hit, and harm,
they heal, manage, admit, and be calm.
No matter what challenges they face,
you never know when they'll become first place. ■

STANDARDS

Anna Chu · Year 5 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

I find standards so judgemental
A person gets judged using these standards
It pressures you to be better
Work better
Concentrate better
Be a role model
**They say people younger than you are looking up
to you**
They say that they get influenced by you
Is that really true?
They may look up to you for inspiration
But minds don't think about the same thing

Everyone is different
Standards just make it harder
Being judgemental is easy until someone judges
you
Minds can't always be up to the standard that
you set for it
But it tries its best
Have you ever been through **that** stab of
disappointment?
If you haven't
You don't want to
It just puts you down. ■

THE CALL OF YOUR DEMISE

Linda Ly · Year 6 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

The flock of birds fly past again,
How pleasant it would be if he never dropped
dead.
Oh Felix my dear, if you never disappeared,
Only God knows how many fortunes could peer.

The light of the moon cascades over my being
with the flowers springing out of the verdant
grass, yet the only thing that stirs my euphoria
is your own presence that fails to accompany
me in this sight.

My eyes dart onto the reflection of the moon that
rushes over the waves that pace over each other,
bringing me back to the memories we created.

The call of your demise rushes around my head at
the speed of light, echoing in my head yet thou
lie there with no sign of viability in front of me.

My drowning in kalopsia only makes your
misfortune unravel a forbidden euphoria that
I cannot deny, only makes thou passing more
tragic.

No amount of fake or masked apathy can rescue
me from the misery that lies in the deep and
dark depths of my heart.

The flock of birds fly past again,
A new and innovative healing holds me in its
embrace.

It's hard to announce, but I've accepted it.

The feeling of my sweetheart's eyes washed over
me with an elated proudness.

A new door opens along with the company of my
beloved's wrath. ■

THE EYES

Sienna Lee · Year 5 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

I stared into her dark soul.
It looked mysterious.
My eyes felt like they were glowing,
But it was painful.
I tried to draw my attention elsewhere,
But something about her kept sucking me in.
My eyes were painful and dry,
I felt like I was going to cry,
A tear dropped down,
It felt thick.
Her eyes got wider and wider.

Making them more painful by the second,
I touched my cheek,
It wasn't a tear,
It was blood.
I felt like my eyes were getting sucked out.
When I found out they were,
More blood dripped down,
Pouring out like a waterfall.
I screamed my loudest.
But no scream came out.
I was dead. ■



Alicia McKean
Year 7 · St Francis Xavier College, Officer

untitled



Madi Daly
Year 7 · St Francis Xavier College, Officer

untitled

EMOTIONAL CONFLICT POEM

Annabelle Ross · Year 9 · St Francis Xavier College, Officer

My words have meaning they'll never know
There's a fence around my heart
Slowly a hedge of thorns starts to grow
To protect or to harm

A soldier guards this empty kingdom
Left all alone
An endless ticking timebomb
Is waiting to explode

An unfamiliar feeling
A shadow's creeping in
In the darkness it's revealing
The light that it is stealing

The flood gates threaten to burst
To drown the noises out
This mind it must be cursed
Somewhere it's been hurt

Alone in this abyss
Falling piece by piece
A bittersweet sense of bliss
Somewhere there is peace

Now a fire's raging
My world is ablaze
A secret war is waging
When will it all end ■



Hayden Warner
Year 7 · St Francis Xavier College, Officer

untitled



Lucy Angus
Year 12 · Star of the Sea College

Daroorluk - Connection between Human and Nature

I have recreated a rainbow lorikeet using my preferred medium of prisma pencil. This large-scale drawing was then projected onto my 4-year-old sister. This then formed the basis of my photograph. This conveys the vital role that nature plays in our childhood and the ability to express oneself amongst nature.

MUSICAL CHAIRS

Taylah Quinn · Year 11 · Star of the Sea College

But we cannot simply sit and stare at our wounds forever.

- Haruki Murakami

The game of musical chairs tormented me as a child; the sound of upbeat music intermingled with innocent laughter became overwhelming. I found my hands shaking and my heart pounding as chairs would begin disappearing, prohibiting me from sitting and grounding myself. I'd be on my feet and always ready to make an escape. Except, I could never truly remove myself, for everywhere I looked in my colourful kindergarten classroom, there were chairs; empty chairs beckoning me closer, their allure almost hypnotic. I'd start to grow impatient; their vacancy suffocating me, reminding me of the empty seat at our kitchen table, the space you no longer fill.

In another universe, we sit in cushioned stools across from each other at the kitchen table and go over the grocery list. You teach me the rules of AFL on a sunny Saturday afternoon. In another universe, we play endless games of cards, debating our UNO reverses and 'pick up fours.' I'd tell you about my time at school, while you'd recount the craziness of your working day. In another life, I share the same rational phobias as every other ten-year-old in a primary school 'circle time.' In another life, you exist more in my present than as a distant memory.

Although, as I sit facing the empty seat, with playing cards hidden in the confines of a dusty cupboard and my football long deflated, I imagine a man whose face is unknown to me. Maybe it's the fear of not knowing the unidentifiable entity I've conjured. Maybe it's the anger of missing someone longer than I've known them. Maybe it's the reason why I am confined to my own passenger seat, distracted by the wind in my hair and the gentle rhythm of our favourite song; too busy to notice the car we drive slowly fade away until I become the younger version of myself, huddled against my kindergarten teacher, begging her to free me from such torment.

We define love by the way we experience it; I know that now. I mourn the blank canvas of my inner child that you ruined with angry splashes of red paint. I try to craft something from it, a flower of sorts, while attempting to cover the gaping holes you created. In doing so, I learn that I am allowed to grieve the child I could have been; the child who fully understood the rules of Australian rules football; a child who felt seen and heard by someone they admired; a child who wasn't afraid of a simple kids' game. And while in my dreams, I continue to visit the parts of my inner child that died when you left, I will come to understand that your chair will never disappear; instead, it will gradually fill with the love of others who, too, are seated at my table. ■

THE MIND

Jessica Cuschieri · Year 10
Catholic Regional College North Keilor

The birds, they soar, up high, above,
Look there, there flies the little dove
It's free, you see
Like you, and me
It guides the way
With no such sway
Leads us to our dreams,
Through fields and some extremes
The places we are meant to find,
Are here, right here, inside our mind. ■

THE CHANCE

Jessica Cuschieri · Year 10
Catholic Regional College North Keilor

Armed with iron,
Made of stone
Yet still stand I afraid, alone,
I will not follow
It ends in sorrow
My dream is this way
And so here I shall stay
I'll take my own road
So that wealth be bestowed
So, I take my stance,
And take that chance. ■

THE TRAIL

Jessica Cuschieri · Year 10 · *Catholic Regional College North Keilor*

Follow the trail,
And you shall not fail
But where does it go?
And how will I know?
Reach for what you're owed,
Trust your gut and follow the road
All you've got is what you know
So, take your aim and make a throw,
It's hit and miss,
Until there's bliss. ■

I have included this collection of poems for the Shared Stories "Inspire" theme because poems inspire me and help to bring a new perspective to how I see the world. The three poems represent the steps people take in order to achieve their goals and how people can use their own ideas, inspiration and courage to reach them.



AnnMary Sajo
Year 10 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor

Photography, Flower emphasis



Lucas Sant
Year 10 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor

Flower in the darkness

UNLOCKING THE SECRETS HIDDEN WITHIN

Lily Peace · Year 7 · Aquinas College

BANG! BANG! BANG! Sadie, flicking her smooth brown hair out of her face to see something she was not expecting, turned around in horror as she saw her front door to her beloved house coming down. Her lake green eyes darted around the little house she called home. She laid eyes on a round, wooden, hazel table. She tipped it over and dove for cover, using the table as a shield. She winced, bracing herself for whatever was coming.

Sadie was a very curious and smart 13 year old, but she was not prepared for this. This feeling was pure fear. Then, the tall, dark brown, wooden door that matched the table and the rest of Sadie's miniature chocolate-coloured house, came collapsing to the ground with a massive THUD.

Sadie opened her murky green eyes, and saw someone she recognised.

"Come out where I can see you!" boomed his deep voice. It was the wizard, the head of their hometown, Secret Village.

Sadie's heart was pounding. Questions flooded her mind. What did I do wrong? What does the wizard want with me? She stepped out of her hiding place, pushing her silky, chestnut brown hair out of her face. Her pale hands were shaking in fear, and feeling clammy.

"It's just me, Mr Wizard, sir," Sadie stammered. The Wizard narrowed his small, shadowy, eyes.

"Sadie?" he asked, confused. Sadie gulped as he stroked his brown beard.

"Yes, sir, what were you expecting?" she replied, now filled with curiosity and intrigued.

"Well, I suppose you have the right to know," he sighed. Sadie waited for him to continue, her fear washed away by curiosity.

"You see, Sadie, there is someone in our village,

someone unknown, who is leading humans into Secret Village! We must find the person, or creature, of this evil doing. Many believe it to be the unicorn, Dark Dust. So, please keep an eye out, and if you see anything suspicious, report back to me immediately," he finished.

Sadie had stifled a gasp, but still couldn't hide her shock.

"Oh, and, um, sorry about your door," he said apologetically, resting a firm hand on our shoulder. Before she could speak, he pulled his oak coloured wand out of the pocket of his long, emerald, velvet robe.

Then, to the surprise of Sadie, with a flick of his wand, the door got itself upright. The Wizard walked out the door with nothing but a wave, leaving Sadie in utter surprise and shock.

Once she got over that interesting conversation, she sat down to think things over. How could some terrible person or creature lead humans to Secret Village?! Secret Village, the fantasy world filled with luxurious rainbows, murky lakes, (for the Loch Ness Monsters and merpeople), tall mountain peaks, fluffy clouds, it was home, Sadie's home.

She needed Secret Village. Because Sadie was a shapeshifter. When she desires, she can turn into a Loch Ness Monster! She needed those lakes, she needed this village.

And that is why she was going to stop this horrible creature who was destroying the village. And she knew it was going to be easy saving the unicorns, wizards, witches, dragons, griffins. It was going to be an extremely intense battle. But it would be worth it to save the sensational place of Secret Village. Nevertheless, it sure was going to be terrifying at times, but she was going to do it. Sadie was going to save the Secret Village. And that's how the adventure begins... ■

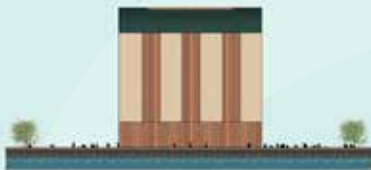
DJILANG ARENA



WEST ELEVATION



SOUTH ELEVATION



EAST ELEVATION



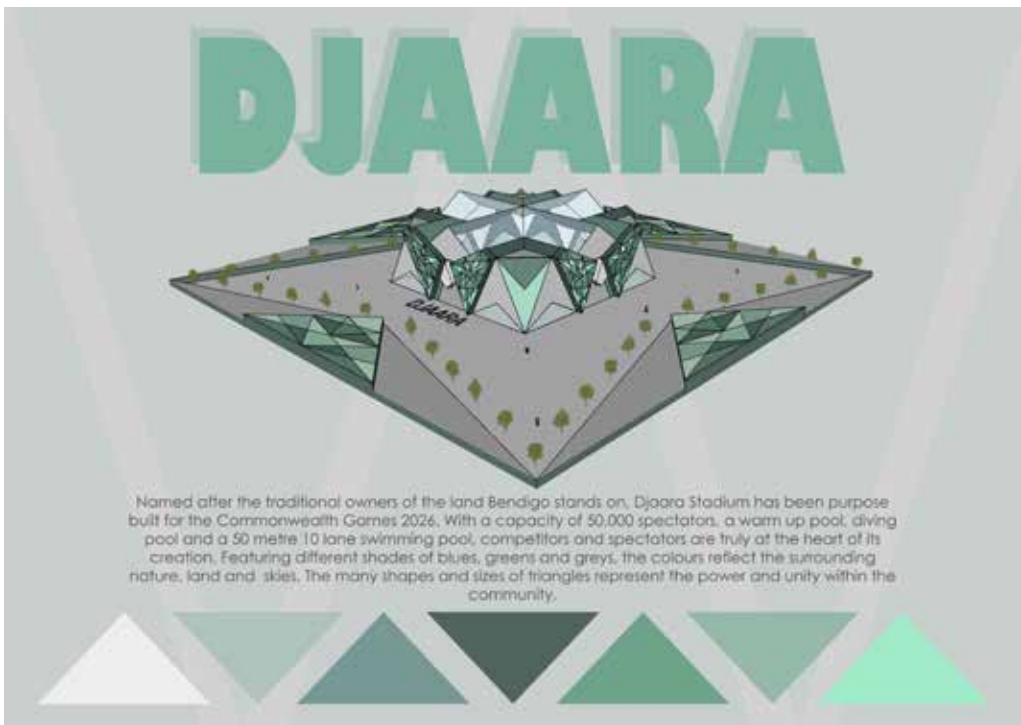
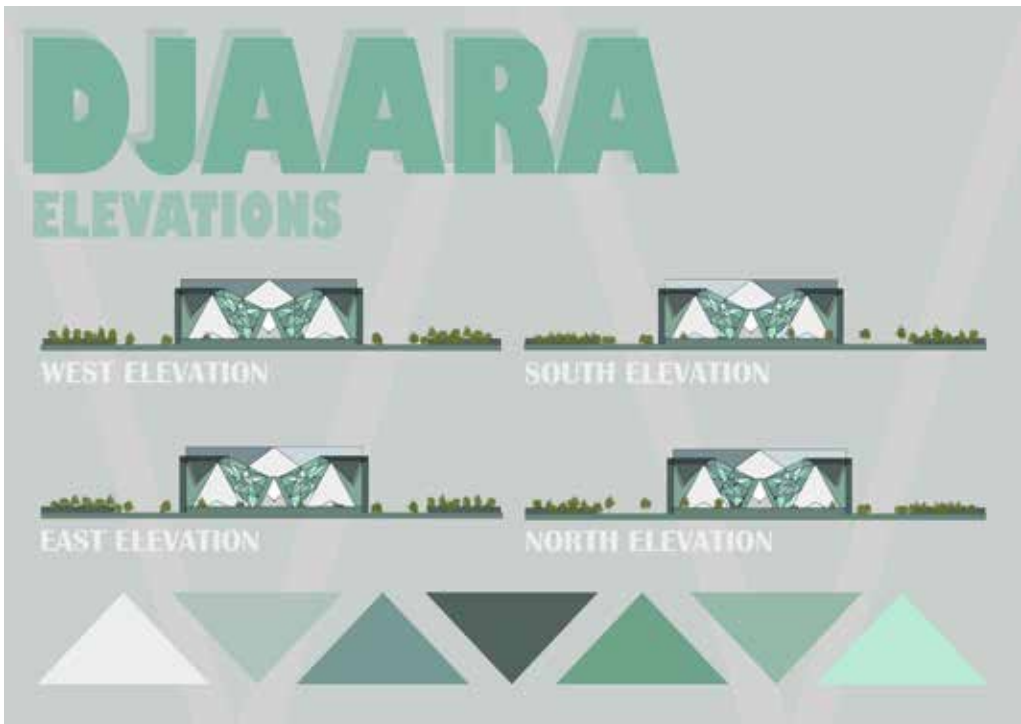
NORTH ELEVATION

DJILANG ARENA

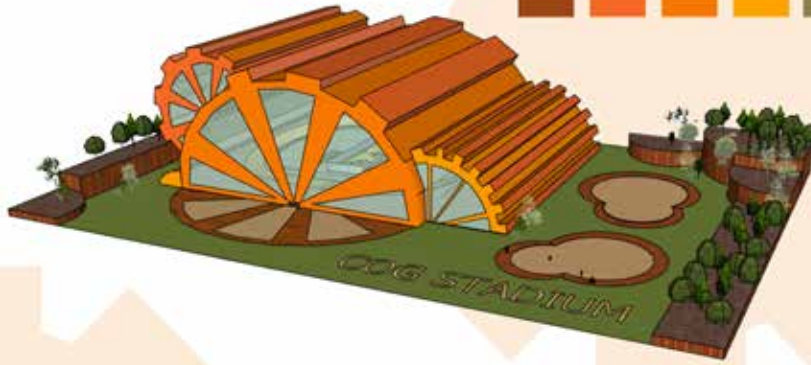


Inspired by the surrounding coastal area of Geelong, Djilang Arena (Aboriginal for Geelong) is a 35,000 seat multipurpose stadium, built for Rugby and Soccer events in the 2026 Commonwealth Games. The curved panels are representative of the water in the Port Phillip Bay, and the colours resemble the nearby Otway Ranges. The open roof allows for air flow through the stadium, and the glass shell allows for wonderful views of the nearby ocean from the ground. The waterfront location is a picturesque spot to not only watch sport, but enjoy what Geelong has to offer.





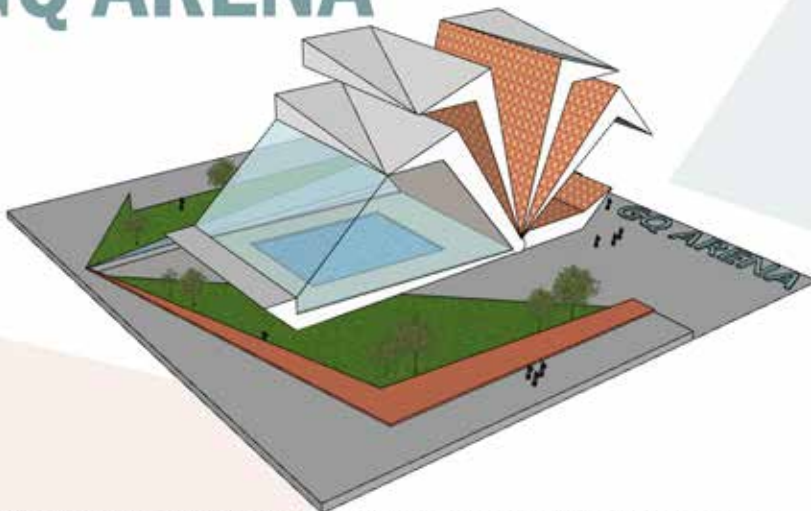
Cog Stadium



Cog Stadium is located in Geelong, Australia and is designed to hold 65,000 spectators. While the stadium is inspired by mechanical gears used in cycling, the orange is based on the Geelong Cat's "Just Think" campaign that raises awareness of alcohol risks and promotes wellbeing. The stadium's closed roof accommodates all weather conditions and allows sound to be absorbed thus avoiding any disturbance with the outside environment. Large floor-to-ceiling windows provide all-natural lighting and spectacular views during events. This stadium will feature Netball, Cycling and Basketball events for the 2026 Commonwealth Games. The structure has three distinct sections, allowing multiple events to run simultaneously. The top section, in addition, provides an aerial view of multiple events. The fan experience is improved even further with the seating and luxurious garden areas present outside the stadium adding to the anticipation of entering a grand event.

Erin Came
 Year 11 · Aquinas College

GQ ARENA



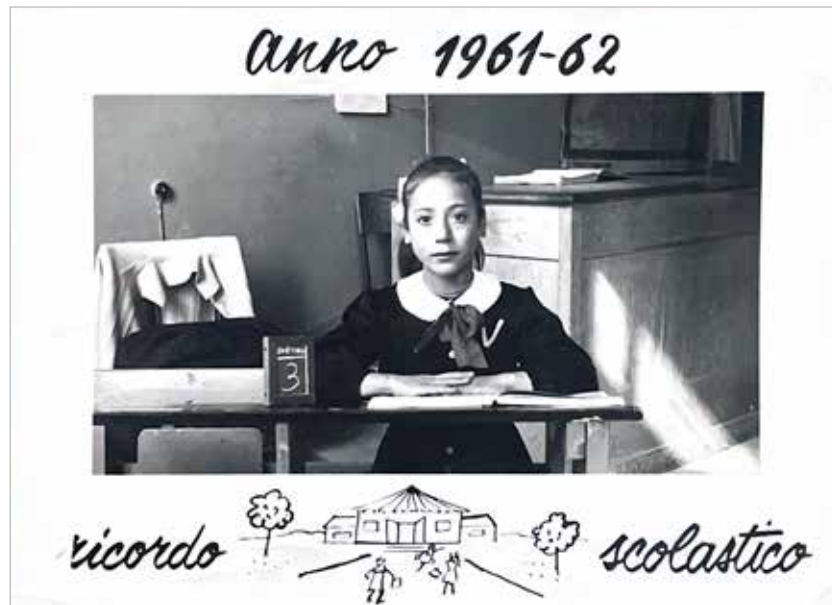
GQ Arena, designed by the world renowned architect Maddison Bowden, accommodates 15,000+ spectators for the 2026 Commonwealth Games. The ultra modern geometric shape represents an abstract water splash. The accents of the orange embody the artwork of the Indigenous Culture of the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung people of the Kulin nation. In Bendigo's history the colour orange also draws reference to the gold rush era. The G in the Arena name represents the gold rush of the area of Bendigo and the Q symbolizes the 4 arms of the Arena.

This stadium aims to immerse the spectators in the art and atmosphere of aquatic. GQ Arena will become the hub for all swimming events including synchronised swimming, water polo, and diving. Facilities include canteens, toilets, change rooms, warm up rooms and a medical centre for all attendants. GQ Arena provides a place for all visitors to learn and immerse themselves in the art and culture of Australia while viewing all swimming events for the 2026 Commonwealth Games in spectacular fashion.

Maddison Bowden
 Year 11 · Aquinas College

SOFIA TABACCO - MY INSPIRATIONAL NONNA

Taylor Foti · Year 8 · Star of the Sea College



This is a photo of my Nonna at age 10 when she was at school in Italy. This was taken one year before her father passed away and four years before she had to leave Italy and come to Australia.

My Nonna, Sofia, was born in Sicily in a little town called Sortino. Her father, Salvatore, passed away in 1962 at age 61 years from prostate cancer. Together with his wife, Concetta, Salvatore farmed their land and sold carob, almonds and olives. After World War 2, Italy was decimated so there was little to no work and her brothers were not getting paid. Australia was a new country and they needed to build infrastructure. They didn't have enough workers so they opened up the border to European migrants.

Her eldest brother, Giuseppe, applied to migrate to Australia in order to find a better life. The year was 1955 and Giuseppe was aged 26. Following his successful migration, his brothers followed: Vincenzo (1960), Paolo (1962) and Luciano in 1963. Unfortunately, their sister, Cesarina, applied with her family to emigrate but she was rejected because someone in the town doxed her in as being a Communist, which was untrue. Giuseppe, while working in Australia, would regularly send packages back home with money, fabric, Cadbury chocolate, Bushells Tea and clothing.

After the death of Salvatore, there was no one left to work the land and it was decided in 1965 that it would be best if Concetta were to migrate to

Australia to give Sofia a better life. Sofia's brothers suggested that they would pay for their fares. The cost of a ticket was equal to a year's wage. They were joined by Carmela (Giuseppe's sister) and her family. At the age of 14, Sofia left Sortino with her family and headed to the port of Messina to board the SS Galileo Galilei. It was a new ocean liner and this was its second voyage to Australia. The amenities on the ship included a movie theatre, bar, nightclub, swimming pool and ballroom. She remembers that the food was amazing, too.

The first stop after leaving Messina was Port Aden in Yemen. Sofia remembers disembarking the ship and what her father had told her about Port Aden, that the city was surrounded by mountains, as he had been there during World War 2. The next stop was Fremantle, Western Australia, where Sofia and her mother disembarked and walked to War Memorial Park. On their way back to the ship her mother spotted some wild fennel which she decided she would pick and bring back on the ship to make her famous polpetta. Unfortunately, she was stopped by the customs officers before boarding the ship and told she was not allowed to bring it on board. She tried to explain, in Italian, while gesticulating that it was "mangiare".

Finally, they arrived in Port Melbourne on 19/10/1965 and were greeted by her eldest brother Giuseppe who they went to live with at 315 Station Street, Carlton North . It was a small 3-bedroom single-fronted house. A few days after arriving, my Nonna was enrolled in Lee Street Primary School, where she completed Grade 6. The following year she started Year 7 at Princes Hill High School with her nieces, Margherita and Sofia, along with many other Italian migrant children. She had learnt limited English at school in Italy which made her experience at school in Australia easier. Although she understood English she wasn't proficient in writing English. Although she found the academic side of schooling easy, the social side was more difficult. In those days the Italian immigrants were not accepted. The Anglo Australian students were not welcoming and inclusive. Although she had aspirations of becoming a teacher, at the end of 1966, Sofia had to quit school and start working in a factory. This was because her brothers were now married with expenses and could no longer afford to keep Sofia in school.

At the age of 16, she started work at a factory on City Road in South Melbourne making towels and earning \$11 per week. She vividly remembers when she came home after her first day of working there she was deaf from the noise of the machines and asked her mother. "Where did you bring me?" After working there for 12 months she quit and got a job as a seamstress at another factory making military uniforms for the Australian Defence Force. Here she lied about her age and said she was 18 in order to earn \$28 per week. Even though she didn't know how to use a sewing machine, a lovely old Australian lady took her under her wing and taught her. Twelve months later, that factory closed down and she went to work across the road making men's suits. Here, the manager, who also was her manager at her previous employment realised that Sofia wasn't 18 and questioned her. When she confessed, Sofia explained that the reason she lied was because she didn't have a father and had to look after her mother. As a result of her confession, he decided to pay her \$35 per week. After three years of working there the factory closed down and she went to work for Frize Brothers on Hoddle Street, North Richmond making men's suits.



My Nonna today remains an inspiration to me. She is very special to my family.

During this time, Sofia and her mother lived with her brothers but mainly with Paolo and his family in Fawkner. In 1969 her brother, Luciano, married Josie Piazzi. At the wedding, Sofia met Fabrizio Bronzoni, 22 months her junior. He was Josie's first cousin and she didn't realise that they had met years before when she was just 18. On her 21st birthday she had invited her sister in law's brother, Aldo, who brought along his cousin, Fabrizio. After 12 months of dating Fabrizio they got engaged and were then married on 31 January of 1976.

I find the story of my Nonna Sofia to be inspirational because it shows all the sacrifices she had to make at such a young age. As Well as the lengths she went to be able to build a future for herself. ■



Samantha Grant

Year 11 · Star of the Sea College

Brothers

In this drawing, I employed two pencils to replicate a photo I took of my brothers. I chose to draw in colour to make the artwork more lively and perhaps frivolous, embodying the saturation of childhood. Green and blue could further symbolise the inner emotions of the subjects. These boys are an embodiment of fraternal twinhood. The different shades emphasise that while sharing a unique bond, they are not mirror images of one another. I aimed to dispel the unintentional notion that twins are an indistinguishable unit.

WITH THE TOUCH OF A NEW DAWN

Isabella Sestoso · Year 8 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

There I was, standing in a dark, empty, rotting field. I could feel the brown, rough dirt beneath my feet and the gush of a lonely wind. It felt almost as if the life was pulled out of this poor land and the sadness of this field was starting to draw upon me too. My life was getting pulled out of me. All I could feel was sorrow and regret, knowing that I was the only one left. Knowing my loved one left like the green grass that once laid on this floor. Knowing I would soon leave this world. Am I alone?

Is this world all that's left? Am I all that's left? I didn't want to leave just yet, but I didn't want to stay. I stood there, staring into the distance. The trees that previously felt the joy and happiness that I did, were dark, dead, and destroyed. I needed to give it a spark, the spark that would resurrect this field, but do I really have what it takes? Do I still have my own spark? Am I capable of reviving this land? I shut my eyes and listened to the howls of the wind and the lonely voices of the deceased.

The breeze began to accelerate its pace. I felt the tickles of the wind surrounding me. Except, it didn't feel like the wind. It wasn't. It was the fingertips of my loved one, embracing me. Tears started to fall

from my eyes. Tears of happiness. With my eyes still shut, I cried into their arms. The feelings of their touch made me feel a sense of belonging. A smile started to shine on my face, giggles started to fill the silence, but I wish those 30 seconds lasted for forever. I felt alive again, I wasn't that lonely girl anymore. I was **inspired**.

I opened my eyes to see the dirt below me had become fresh, beautiful, green grass. I was shocked. I lifted my feet from the ground and started walking at a slow pace. Each step I took turned the dirt into something alive. I ran joyfully across the land. Everything was alive again. I held on to the trees only to see them become prepossessing again. My memories were unlocked, I remembered my younger self running around the flourishing field, playing with the dandelions and tulips, getting lost in the tall grass and making friends with the bugs.

I looked around at what I created. I dropped myself to the floor and stared into the bright sky. I thought to myself, maybe I'm not so alone after all. At first sight, I didn't think I could change anything, but I **inspired** the field with the only drop of happiness I had left. It wasn't a lot, but I risked giving it up and it grew into something even bigger. ■

INSPIRED BY THE STARS

Abbey Phelan · Year 9 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

In the world today,
It's easy to see in black and grey.
But once in a while a star will shine.
A little spark of colour,
A little loyal light.

Run towards that light,
Take it by the hand.
Use its warmth and guidance,
Use it to understand.

Harness its strength,
Channel its wisdom,
Take the star to the horizon,
Relay its message like a siren.

Be inspired by your little star,
Whether they be the man on the moon
Or the person in your heart.

Strive to be a star,
Shooting across the sky.
Gift your warmth to another,
Be an inspiration in the light. ■

THIS TIME WILL PASS TOO

Priyam Saxena · Year 9 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

They say time flies ... mine has stopped last few breaths and I will be on a new journey. They complain life is miserable, painful and hurts a lot. My mama said I knew a magic that can vanish any pain. She hardly had time to talk to me those mornings starting at 4 am walking 10 miles in search of water.

A glass of a dark brown colour water was precious to us. When she used to return empty hand, she could not talk but her eyes used to speak to us. The days when she finds some water her eyes used to twinkle like a 5-year-old girl. I was 5, living a life where everything was out of reach and had no understanding of fairness or unfairness and humanity. My mama used to say one thing always which stayed with me forever "this time will pass too." Time was flying in a land of hunger and thirst. Whenever I used to close my eyes, I used to see a white pigeon flying towards me, standing in front of me and staring at me with vivid eyes and I used to smile.

A year pasted my mother came back empty handed her feet were bleeding, she laid down next to me asking to hug her. Felt like to skeletons are embarrassing each other, her body was burning, and her lips were dried. In her broken voice she said "Amla, keep smiling does not matter what life offers you, this time will pass too," she closed her eyes, and I was staring at her, her hair was moving with the flow of the wind. I think she cried, her tears left a mark, and she seemed like in deep sleep. I was keep staring at her for many hours. She could not wake up again, night started falling on us and I understood like my papa she is gone too. I closed my eyes, and the pigeon was staring at me, I said to myself this time will pass too. The people of the village took her body, and I was all alone, but were I?

By the age of 7 life taught me many lessons and the most important one was to never bow down in front of what life offers you time flies, survived many incidents that left a mark on my heart and my body. From last few days I was keep hearing villagers talking about taking ship to a country where angles live. Their skin is soft and shiny, they get as much as water and food they want.

Morning, sun was planning to start burning as again. I started following the villagers heading towards the ocean, they all sat in a boat, and I was staring at them with hope, but everyone pushed me away, I felt like my horizons are shrinking in me to kill me.

I closed my eyes and blabber this time will pass too, and a little smile danced on my thirsty dried lips, suddenly someone pulled me an old woman was holding my hand and pulling me into the boat. She said as my daughter died, we have a place you can fill in. I smiled gratefully then I looked out towards the ocean as the water shimmered under the sunlight, I have never been on a boat before and never saw one so big. Many people were yelling, pushing, and trying to get on the boat but not everyone could do so there was people left behind.

The journey was unforgettable, painful, and frightening. Perhaps something so bad that it is difficult to describe in words. Despite the boat was huge, it was filled with people and there was barely any space to take a step. After a few days, the boat had arrived at the dock and many people were waiting for us. I do not know if I was nervous or excited, everything was so different. I was in a new country filled with unknown people and an unknown language. It's okay I told myself this time will pass too and I closed my eyes and saw the white pigeon once again. Years passed and now I am old and beside me sits my granddaughter. Her eyes were filled with tears and she grasped my hand tightly.

"Grandma, you are my inspiration and what will I do without you? Please, don't leave me," she cried.

"Your story of life isn't too different from mine. Perhaps different destinations and dreams but all wish for the same. Hope. Inspiration is something that encourages and motivates you to go further in life. So let your inspiration be for a hope to a better future. Let my words stay in your heart forever, "then I closed my eyes saying my finally goodbyes to the world around me. The granddaughter wept terribly then closed her eyes to remember the white pigeon flying towards her, "This time will pass too." ■

MY PERSONAL INSPIRATION

Lakshay Mall · Year 7 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

I am not inspired by many idols, but the one who I idolise is the great Lt. Muhammad Ali who was a boxer and social activist. I first heard about Muhammad Ali when I read about his boxing match. After that incident I began to learn more about Muhammad Ali and his fight against racism. Because of him I began to start learning Muay Thai, a cross between boxing and kickboxing.

Ali was born on the 17 of January 1942 in Louisville, Kentucky with 5 siblings through a time of racial segregation. He attended Louisville Central Highschool and faced dyslexia through out his life. He was really affected by the 1955 murder of Emmet Till. Muhammad Ali was first directed to boxing by coach E. Martin in 1954 after his bike was stolen but refused. He was later inspired by an amateur match on tv and took Martin's offer to box. He began his training with Fred Stonner in 1954. He made his debut in 1956 against Ronnie O'Keefe and won. He later won 6 Kentucky Golden Glove titles and 2 national Golden Glove titles and the AAE title. He won the light Heavyweight gold medal in the 1960 Rome Olympics. Subsequently to that he threw his medal in the Ohio River when he was denied entry into a "white only" restaurant. He received a replacement in Georgia Dome in the 1996 Atlanta Olympics.

One of the biggest reasons I got inspired by Muhammad Ali was when I heard his motivational quotes. I was substantially impressed when I heard his famous quote "champions are made in the gyms, champions are mad for something they deep inside them- a desire, a dream, a vision. Reading this I felt that every individual has the capability of have a vision, a dream and with hard work they can achieve that vision, that dream. This is applicable to anyone irrespective of their age, gender, race. Malala Yousafzai was one of the few girls who were educated in Pakistan during the Taliban regime. A girl being educated was considered a threat to the Taliban authority. So she was shot on her way to school but she persevered and became an advocate for a woman's rights to education.

One must be courageous and take risks. Everyone should have that quality of being brave and to find inner strength to deal with whatever comes their way. During the pandemic I contracted the virus and was unable to attend online classes because of which I was lagging my peers. But despite being on bedrest I would contact my friends after school and get notes from them and sit up late nights doing my work and I had completed my work before the due date. I have understood that you need skill, but need greater will power to succeed in life. ■

THE WAR OF THE RACES

Raphael Guillaumier · Year 8 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

Two breeds of people came to a stop,
They had zero interest in making this a co-op,
Eventually they believed that they were not at all related,
This belief grew stronger, stronger, they became alienated.

A conflict of colour began of hate,
The war never slept and was not at all great,
Weapons were words that hurt hearts deep,
More offensive overtime that made some weep.

As the race rampage sung his terrible song,
An atrocious word of 'N' was like a nuclear bomb,
Killed millions of hearts and dignity overtime,
The leftover residue tasted sour like a lime.

Could this ever end? As well as this pointless notion?
They are the same as us, same heart, bone, emotion,
It's not fair, as this war eats it keeps getting fatter,
We always need to know that 'Black Lives Matter.' ■

SADNESS

Thenumi Hindhakumbura · Year 7 · Killester College

The sky has been angered. Its fury comes in the form of lightning and thunder. The fearful clouds start to cry. Droplets of rain heavily hit the ground. The usual sound of car engines haunt the deserted road.

To the right of the road stretches an endless desert of dusty buildings and apartments. The deadly touch of society. To the left of the road, a chain fence rises from the concrete ground. It dully looks down at the city from some ten metres height.

Beyond the fence lies a forest, so dense not even sunlight can escape it. The trees of the forest rise higher than the fence, they seem to touch the sky. Wildflowers dominate the forest floor as well as scattered tribes of ferns. Such a beautiful world compared to the prison we are in.

A bird flutters down to the deserted road, its gratefulness clearly lost to urgency. The bird falls onto its side, and it lets out a squawk muffled by pain. The bird's stomach is swelled at an unnatural size, like a water balloon about to burst. It attempts to stand upright and take flight but draining life weighs it down.

The bird's eyelids slowly close, death has come to take it away, away from pain, away from suffering, away from life. It lies on the right side of the road, rain pounding on and around it, trying to wake the bird, even though it is long gone. The bird's stomach bursts open, where its guts should be is bits of plastic.

A car dives over what's left of the bird, flattening it. The rain continues to fall. ■



Lily Sam
Year 10 · Killester College

Within Reality

'Within Reality' expresses taking a chance to escape from life's complications and instead, face the natural reality and beauty of the world, viewed since life had formed. It is impossible to predict the day when human civilisation will replace all of nature, so it's crucial to appreciate the unique feeling of freedom and joy that comes with being in and interacting with nature, whilst making the most of what life offers with what matters. Though nature may lead to death, disasters, and suffering, we can obtain many teachings from our experiences such as new life and change always begins as seasons change.



Haley Nguyen
Year 10 · Killester College

Mundane Blues



Alyssa Pham
Year 10 · Killester College

Pearl



Angela Bourke
Year 7 · Emmaus College



Maria Anderson
Year 7 · Emmaus College

A SURFER'S INSPIRATION

Rose Williams · Year 7 · St Mary's College, East St Kilda

Crash! The waves fall and bubble and the atmosphere of this event was intense. There were reporters shouting and crowds screaming as Avery Carter prepares for one of the biggest events in her career of breaking the world record of the largest wave surfed by mankind! She was halfway down the wave looking focussed but shakey. Suddenly, she lost her balance and fell backwards on the monster of a wave. It all went silent, crowds stopped cheering, reporters gasped, and time moved very slowly for the next 30 seconds then a rescue crew came in frantically searching the deep water. Two minutes later they saw Avery floating on top of the water holding onto a bit of her once whole surfboard. They rushed her back to shore by that time the crowd was ushered away and Avery was quickly airlifted to hospital.

Days later she awoke with multiple broken bones and a concussion. Avery was shocked and confused. By the time the doctors and nurses rushed in she had already seen the bruises and the body parts wrapped up in white cloth. Her body was stiff and raw. Over time she remembered what happened and slowly recovered. In six weeks, her bruises were gone and her casts were soon coming off but not once had she gone to the beach or stepped anywhere near large bodies of water. Since the accident she was terrified that another freak accident like that would happen again. Many of her family members tried and failed in getting her back in the water again but it just didn't work.

One day Avery and her sister Emma went to the pool on a 40-degree day. Avery didn't want to go

at all but eventually gave in because of the heat. It took a while to get into the water but when she got in, she couldn't deny that she enjoyed it but after a while she wondered where her sister was. She started looking around the pool and stopped in her tracks when she found a group of young swimmers with their teacher learning to paddle and splashing around in the water; for some reason she just stopped and continued looking at the beginner swimmers. She started remembering when she was nine and went surfing with her dad for the first time and she absolutely loved it, even though she got stung by a jellyfish and dunked by a wave she got back in the water as soon as she could she loved the waves the anticipation and how the sea had a life of its own. And she realised that's why she started surfing in the first place why even though when she got knocked down or stung, she always came back to surfing because she loved it.

She soon snapped out of her trance and found her sister determined to hit the beach. She was then cleared by the doctor the next day and practically ran back to her surfboard to get started. When she saw the waves there was a sinking in her stomach, but she decided to persevere and without thinking ran into the water and started catching the waves. It took a while before she could catch a wave and gather the courage to stand up on her board but the waves were relatively small so that helped ease her mind. The more she went to the beach the better she got but was sure to go to calmer beaches for the time being. Avery Carter was ready to turn the next page. ■



Charlie Purtell
Year 12 · St Mary's College, East St Kilda



Athena Anastasopoulo
Year 11 · St Mary's College, East St Kilda

HOPE

Hamish Sharpe · Year 11 · St Mary's College, East St Kilda

I'm the leader of a dying race, our last bastion of hope, the great "Nevara City", has been taken from the earth and boxed. My species, the Nevereians, are one of the few intelligent species on the Earth. The others think they are the only ones, that they are the smartest creature on the planet. There are the Merpeople, denizens of the deep sea who wander the sea in search of their next big catch. The Seeran, bird-folk who reside in the highest mountains. The most successful of the sentient species are the humans, spread across the globe, still somehow unnoticed by the others. Unlike them, we are not ignorant, we knew of the others, and we worked to preserve our anonymity whilst studying their behaviour. We found the humans to be the most intriguing as they seemingly have no natural advantage, but their perseverance and fierce intelligence allowed them to build humungous civilisations. Seeing as they are not unlike my own people, we considered making contact and telling them all we know of the planet we live on. Despite the debate raging for more than 3 years, we decided against this course of action, as my people are as small as the ants the humans so carelessly stomp.

Whilst being small allowed us to stay hidden for a very long time, it was never going to last forever. The Nevereians were building cities when the humans started to make fire, performing space missions when they discovered agriculture, and unlike humanity we were united, in other words we were significantly ahead. Due to our technological lead, we brushed over the humans as a potential threat, this mistake doomed our species. The humans discovered us, they were intrigued by us, so they

uprooted our cities to study them. They failed to realise we were smarter than them but seeing as we had not been at war for years, weapons had nearly disappeared from our possession. We couldn't fight back against their huge size. Eventually, they discovered our intellect, and they were frightened, so as the warmongering race that they are they set out to contain and/or eradicate us all. So that's how we got here, our last city, contained in a glass box, for observation.

We lost the war, if you can even consider it a war, and the consequence is eternal captivity in a box, like an animal. The humans laugh as they pass, they think we have given up hope of escape. Most here have, but those are merely the common folk, the leaders of my great city plot to free us from this see-through prison. We have made many attempts with various methods, all carefully planned out, doomed to fail by an unforeseen countermeasure. We are holding another meeting today to discuss the next course of action; no longer can we suffer through this hell of arranged feeding time and mouldy water. Looking over what I have written down for today meeting I've come up with some pretty good lines. "We will never give up", "Hope will never be lost as long as we fight". Whilst they are shallow words, they do have meaning, keeping hopes high is important in this crusade against captivity. Residing in the ruins of our once great civilisation makes many think that "not all good things can last forever", I add my own ending to that saying, "but once they fall, they can still rise back up greater than ever before". If we know we're trapped, we still have a chance to escape. ■



Kingston Caguioa
Year 7 · St Mary's College, East St Kilda

LENNY'S CITY

Olwen Rees · Year 8 · St Mary's College, East St Kilda

Lenny woke up covered in sweat from his mane covering his face during the 30 degrees night. He looked at the first thing he saw every morning, which was the city. Lenny loved the city. He had dreamed of going there every day since he got put in his sanctuary at the zoo. As the day slowly passed, he saw that the zookeepers had put on the 4:00 pm news. Lenny was watching through the tiny eye height window on the staff room door that he got a perfect view of. Then he saw that it was scheduled for there to be a storm at 5:30pm, which was only an hour and a half away. It had hit 4:35pm and the zookeepers were starting to put plastic tarps over fishponds and were double checking the locks. Usually, Melissa, Lenny's favourite zookeeper, would come and lock his sanctuary, but today it was this guy who had a white sticker on his shirt saying, "Hi My Name Is Nick." This was very different to Melissa's badge, that was gold plastic and had a very basic typed "Melissa" on it. Nick came up to Lenny's sanctuary and put the keys in the gate then turned it to the right. Lenny didn't see this, but he heard it, usually the left turn would make a very quiet click, not like the loud right turn click. Lenny just ignored it.

By 5:30pm, it started raining. Lenny's sanctuary was not covered so he sat under the tree that was right by the gate, Lenny leaned on the gate, when he scrunched up to be warm and the gate slowly creaked open. Lenny was shocked, he thought to himself "How could Nick be so dumb?" He also thought "This is my chance." Lenny crept through the zoo to the staff bathrooms, to get the spare zookeeper uniform. He found the biggest size which was an XXL and squeezed his enormous mane through the head hole and half of his tail was sticking out of his tight shorts. He then confidently strutted out of there and used his special cat ability to jump over the brick fence. The first thing Lenny saw was a car park, that had no cars in it. The only thing there, was the ticket booths. He started walking. Lenny had no idea where to go, but just followed the tall apartments, which was mostly blocked by trees.

He was only halfway there and had already been walking for 40 minutes, through thunder, lightning, and very heavy rain. Lenny had finally arrived in the city and the only sign of life that he could see was the apartments and office jobs. Lenny knew that it was not usually like this, but he was still filled with excitement. The first thing Lenny did once he was in the city was to go to a chemist to buy 3 heavy duty hairbrushes. He found the nearest bathroom and started brushing his drenched soggy fur. He had finally finished brushing after 3 long hours and walked out leaving a trail of soggy golden-brown clumps of hair behind him. The storm had finally passed at 6:45pm. Lenny was getting hungry, so he walked into the nearest coffee shop, and ordered a hot chocolate, and a cheese toastie. Lenny sat next to a man in a suit who looked tired. The man looked up to Lenny eating a toastie.

"Where did you get that?" The man asked, Lenny pointed to a QR code menu on the table and the man replied with "No, where did you get the costume?" Lenny stayed silent, the man thought that he must have made it himself. The man kept talking to Lenny about how his day was going really badly and Lenny was getting bored. So, he started looking around, he then saw a white glossy analogue clock that said 8:05pm. Lenny looked at the clock twice, shocked by what he could see. The man looked down after talking for 2 hours, and Lenny sprinted out of there. Lenny got on his hands and feet and put his lion abilities to the test. He was sprinting back to the zoo to try make the 8:14pm dinner. Once he got there, he tore off the tiny uniform and leapt over the twelve-foot brick wall and jumped back in his sanctuary by 8:14pm. Melissa came over and gave Lenny two rib eye steaks and checked the locks when she saw that it was unlocked, and then locked them again with a scared look on her face. Lenny woke up to the same city view the next morning, but never saw Nick again. ■

CASTLE ON THE BRINK

Oliver Elliot · Year 7 · Aquinas College

Quint was scared. More scared than he had ever been, even when his brother had ‘jokingly’ dangled him off the side of a cliff, he hadn’t felt this scared. Because in fifteen minutes, the ominous castle doors would open and he, alongside twenty-four other individuals, would disappear behind those castle walls for four years to study the magical creatures of the World Turtle and the larger Kosmos, so that they may help the turtle, and consequently themselves, survive.

Bang! They all jumped as the old, wooden double doors, worn by centuries of exposure to the elements, abruptly flew open against the walls of the castle, hinges screaming with age and rust. Just as Quint recovered from the abrupt movement an enormous figure suddenly materialised on the bridge. It wore an eerie, billowing white robe, all you could see of the face was two gleaming purple eyes. It spoke in a deep, wise voice and simply said “enter,” then vanished. Following that up a woman’s voice spoke, angrily yelling “you heard them, get inside!”

So we did.

The inside of the castle was filled with lush plants, swarmed by pixies and fairies flying around making the plants even more beautiful than they already were. Suddenly a strange tall woman appeared. Quint knew at once that this was the person who had yelled when they were on the bridge. She looked fairly normal, with a sharp nose and brown hair pulled back. Except for the fact that she only had one eye, sticking out of front of her head, its size hurting Quint’s head

“You’re a-a-” he stammered

“Cyclops?” The woman snapped back sarcastically.

“Yes of course, I am you dimwit.”

Quint snapped his mouth shut. He hated it when he was treated like an idiot because it made him *feel* like an idiot.

“Anyways, if we’re done with meaningless comments,” she continued, glaring at Quint, “My name is Raethel, I have been tasked with showing

you to your rooms. You will have a one week break before we start, now. Hurry up!”

Quint’s room was quite comfortable. After Raethel’s insane, aggressive personality, he had expected something like a cage cell with a rotten smell and water dripping from the roof, but in reality it was quite nice. It had a double bed, a large oak desk, his own bathroom and even an entire bookshelf of books on magical creatures. After soaking in the room he collapsed on his bed, which was plush and comfortable, like everything in his room. He stared out the window into the courtyard of which he had entered and reflected on the events of the morning.

The reason Quint had ended up in the school, he didn’t entirely know, all he knew was that it entailed his knowledge of magical creatures, which was unparalleled in Tabar where he was raised. He had been ploughing the fields with his two friends Fredrick and Anelie, when Quint’s Father had called him to come inside. Curious as to what was going on. He assured his friends he’d be back in a moment and hurried into his house to see his father. When he got inside he saw his father sitting at his desk with a strange man across from him, his father was a short, man with brown eyes and a balding crown, the man across from him however, was a very different man, he had a full beard and long, flowing dark hair, with vivid green eyes and even a claymore strapped to his back, Quint could tell this man was very serious,

“Your father has told me a lot about you,” The man spoke in a deep, gravelly voice, namely your knowledge of magical creatures.”

Quint swallowed, he did not like where this was going,

“How,” the man continued, “would you like to join me the new school, castle on the edge of town, midday,”

Quint looked to his father, who gave an almost imperceptible nod and gave him a Kunai, a short knife used for digging and self-defence. ■



Airley Kadlis
 Year 11 · Aquinas College



Connor Haughie
 Year 11 · Aquinas College



Maddison Bowden
 Year 11 · Aquinas College



Madi Stella
 Year 11 · Aquinas College

THE BLACK QUEEN

Lexie Shenton · Year 7 · Aquinas College

I went past, headed towards the Queen's Throne. I sat and gestured for the meeting to begin. The men spoke of the wars, the wellbeing of the kingdom, and about my mother and father and where they had gone.

I walk into the council room, hoping for some peace and quiet, away from all the people, only to find the lords and ladies discussing war and battle strategies without me. As soon as everyone notices me standing there, they drop down on their knees in front of me.

"My princess", a lord states, "we were just going to send someone to get you!" He trembled as he spoke, I took note of it. I waved my hand to make everyone sit back down in their designated seats as I stayed standing up and cleared my throat. "I would like to let everyone in this room know that in my father's absence, you answer to me, you talk to me and you tell me everything that you would my father. Everyone should know that I am in charge and nothing happens without my permission. Understood?"

There was a lot of nodding and murmuring as everyone agreed. The council meeting went on to continue for the rest of the evening. At the end, I waited until everyone had said their goodbyes, bowed and had left the council room before I got up to go back to my rooms.

Later that night, after my ladies had finished getting me ready for bed, I sat down staring out of the window, thinking about nothing and just sitting there until I heard a knock on the door. I got up swiftly and quietly, just in case, I opened the door a little bit, just enough for me to see outside. When I looked out my door, I saw a figure in a black cloak with the hood over their head. When the figure noticed me looking at them, they pulled the hood back just enough for me to see their face. In the dark, I could just figure out who to be my best friend, Andromeda.

She gestured to the seats behind me and I nodded my head, opening the door just wide enough for her to slip in. She sat down as I moved over to the table to pour us some tea and bring over some snacks. I sat down opposite her and handed her a cup of tea and offered her a biscuit. She took her cloak off and set it beside her. We start to talk about all things that girls would, like men, rules, family and so on.

Before we know it, the night is gone and the sun has risen up above the mountains, ready for a new day. Someone knocked on the door again so I got up, stretched and moved to open the door. I open it to find my ladies standing at the door, smiling at me. I let them in and straight away they started to push me to my dresser and sat me down to brush my gorgeous and smooth long dark brown hair. They start to fuss over my dress and my jewellery for the day. By the end Andromeda had to step in and help choose a dress. She decided on a royal blue gown and sapphire earrings with a matching necklace and bracelet.

We left my rooms together with my ladies walking behind me and Andromeda next to me. We walked to the throne room and the doors were opened for us.

"May I present Princess Leonor. Princess of the tide and the air. The regent queen in her father's absence."

I walked past all the noblemen and continued up the steps and sat down on the queen's throne. One man stood up to speak, he bowed and started to speak about war, then eventually everyone had spoken. We covered the topics of battle strategies to the topic of where my parents had ventured too. Once we had finished the meeting, I waited till everyone had gone before I got up to leave with my ladies trailing behind me. ■



Nyah Kennedy
 Year 12 · Aquinas College

Three Rooms, Mixed media

The purpose of the artwork is to communicate the concept of ‘making a house a home’. The ambiguous name of ‘Three Rooms’ connects to the artwork’s simplicity and mundanity, subsequently leaving room for interpretation from audiences. Themes of personal development and growth are expressed through the amplification of chaos as the rooms progress, the message becomes apparent as the spaces become consistently cluttered and more personalised. Resembling a dollhouse, the pieces convey how outside influences cause characteristics of a room to change throughout its lifetime, similar to how a person’s appearance would. Mixed media was intended to create coherence across the trio and authenticate the artwork to the existent life-size rooms. Connecting to individuality, nostalgia and the importance of change, the project is representative of the familiarity of experiencing the changes that occur throughout adolescence.



Milla Woods
Year 12 · Aquinas College

roots, ceramic with plastic, muslin, oils, metals



Bavneet Mangat
Year 9 · Aquinas College



Damon Friebel
Year 9 · Aquinas College



Fletcher Haughie
Year 9 · Aquinas College

ZERO TO HERO

Nathanael Huanung · Year 7 · Simonds Catholic College

At 14 years old, Diego Simone was convinced that he was a loser. He had no friends, was terrible at sports, and struggled in school. His only comfort was playing video games, where he could be the hero and save people.

But one day, everything changed. As he was walking home from school, he noticed something strange in the sky. It was a glowing object that seemed to be getting closer and closer. Suddenly, it crashed down to the earth not far from where he was standing.

Curiosity getting the best of him, Alex rushed to the site of the crash. What he found was beyond his wildest dreams - a spacecraft, unlike anything he had ever seen before. As he approached the ship, a small, friendly-looking alien emerged.

The alien explained that he was from a distant planet and had been searching for a hero to help save his home planet from destruction. Alex couldn't believe what he was hearing - he, a loser, a hero? But the alien was sure he was the one. He had scanned the Earth for weeks and determined that Alex was the only one with the potential to save his planet.

Alex was hesitant at first, not believing in himself or his abilities. But as he spent more time with the alien and began training for the mission, he found that he had a natural talent for piloting the ship and using the advanced weapons systems.

Over the next two months, Alex and the alien travelled across the galaxy, battling evil forces that threatened the alien's home planet. Alex's skills and confidence grew with each mission, and he began to see himself as a hero.

Finally, after many battles and close calls, they reached the alien's home planet. There, they faced the ultimate challenge - a giant, planet-devouring monster that threatened to destroy everything in its path. Alex knew that this was his moment to shine.

With the alien's guidance, Alex piloted the ship directly into the monster's mouth, unleashing a powerful weapon that destroyed the creature from the inside out. The planet was saved, and Alex emerged as a true hero.

As they prepared to return to Earth, the alien thanked Alex for his bravery and offered to take him on more adventures in the future. But Alex knew that his place was back on Earth, where he could apply the skills he had learned to make a difference in his own world.

Returning home, Alex was a changed person. No longer did he see himself as a loser - he was a hero, someone with the power to make a difference in the world. He knew that he had a purpose, and he was excited to see what other adventures lay ahead. ■

THE STORM

Philip Galovich · Year 9 · Simonds Catholic College

The night was young, and Frank Townsend was sitting in his cheap straw chair on the balcony of his apartment. He had come home from a long day of working and studying. At the time he was 22 years old and had been attending Normandale Community College for four years and was soon to receive a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering. Frank was incredibly mechanically minded and had always had an insatiable thirst for knowledge which was his primary motivation for acquiring a paid internship at a mechanics.

From his balcony on the tenth floor, Frank could see much of the Minneapolis area. Reaching into his pocket he pulled out a packet of Marlboro Reds. Marlboro was his preferred brand of cigarette, in his words, "The mark of a true man in an age of sissies." He poked through the fresh packet looking for the 'right' one like a child deciding which one of his toys he wants to play with. He finds the 'right' one and places it in his mouth. He takes a drag through the unlit cigarette to get a taste of what was to come. Then he retrieved a red box of matches from his pockets. A rich smell of sulphur fills the air. Indulging in its warmth he could finally begin to unravel his thoughts.

Townsend sat on the balcony for a good ten minutes without thought before realising that he was shivering. Being mid-August, it was abnormally cold. The Midwest for all its stereotypes of whipping wind and bitter cold was never this cold in the summer even in the evenings. Frank went inside his apartment in hopes of finding some warmer clothing. Scurrying through his closet, he found an old winter parka. He put it on and made his way back outside. "Much better," he said to himself. Warm he was able to think and reflect. Suddenly he was taken aback to his life back at home.

Frank grew up in a small country town called Whipholt. He never knew of his father or mother or anyone else in his family, besides his grandfather who had raised him and loved him dearly. Whipholt being a small country town, many of the residents had an appreciation for tradition. It was often that Frank's grandfather would take him on hunting and camping trips. Their escapades would be often and close between. It was with his grandfather that Frank gained many skills and a great appreciation for the outdoors, something which had been subdued when he went to college. He had forgotten the great yet simple joy he got from self-reliance. Suddenly the lights from the apartment switched off. First, Frank peered through the sliding door, but due to the immense and sudden darkness.

He crept inside expecting the worst. "Who goes there!" he bellowed to no response. Townsend moved to the fuse box adjacent to the front door. He lit a match to illuminate the fuses. For a good thirty minutes, he looked through the box trying to diagnose an issue to no avail. Defeated, he pulled out another cigarette, placed it in his mouth and walked back outside.

To his utter shock, the night sky was filled with a bright green and blue dance. "Aurora Borealis," whispers Frank. His astonishment was only broken by the sudden and distinct scream of a woman. Soon, the night was swallowed whole by the cries of babies, glass shattering, knocks and occasionally cackles of evil men. In the midst of the beginning of the end, the apocalypse a glimpse of white and crystal beauty befell upon the city... snow. During the chaos, Frank boarded up his door. He did not understand what was happening, only that he must self-preserve and that there was no electricity, an unexplainable cold and chaos.

Gunshots rang through the streets, and the Looters with their shotguns were hot on Frank's tail. His mind was racing, and his feet were moving so fast that they were now a blur. Frank estimated that a good five Looters were chasing after him. "BANG!" a shot rang and now Townsend was getting tired. The 30 kilos of canned goods in his rucksack were no help but he couldn't afford to lose it. His group of four others; Carla Watt, Sherill Tigris, John McCaw, and Jamie Ireland, were now skin and bone after weeks of borderline starvation. "BANG!" Frank was starting to get tired now and he slowed to a jog, he must have run a good mile before another bang ripped through the air. This however was different and he collapsed into an icy pile of snow.

Frank was incredibly lucky that the looters did not 'seal the deal' and he lay in the ice with one-half of his face fully submerged in it. After a long while, Townsend woke up and upon regaining consciousness he realised that he could not see through his left eye and that he was so cold that he was beginning to warm up again. He looked at his reflection through the glass of a long-abandoned jewellery shop and saw that the left hemisphere of his face was black. A solid cancer of sorts had formed when he was laying in the snow and an almost perfect line had formed where his face was exposed to the snow and the air. It looked as if Frank Townsend's face had been a culmination of two different beings that had been somehow wrongly sewn together. Fearing for his life Frank picked up his rucksack and shuffled as fast as he

could through the empty streets to the ‘safe house’ where his accomplices were hopefully waiting.

It had been five years since Frank sat and shivered in that plastic straw chair on that fateful night and much had changed since then and the world had completely turned in on itself. With the outright inability to generate electricity and therefore preserve food or turn on a heater to beat the insatiable cold. Many, many people starved or froze to death. Those who did survive abandoned much of their morals. It was not uncommon that brothers would fight over a can of creamed corn. The event that had caused this became known as ‘The Storm.’

Finally, Frank arrived at the safe house, barely

alive. The safe house was an old suburban house with a functional fireplace, it was nothing remarkable, but the group had made it well-defended. As Frank shoved open the door and fell limp right beside the fireplace. Carla inquired in a monotone yet somehow clearly concerned tone “What happened? John and Jamie are out there looking for you.” Sheril Tigris was a trained nurse before The Storm, sprang into action and tended to Frank’s afflictions.

Tigris was an older lady; a devout Baptist. She had incredible hands that worked very quickly. She was kind and caring amidst the apocalypse, a thoroughbred used to plough fields. Within two hours she fixed Townsend right up and guaranteed him that he would live to see another day. ■

ROBOT RUBIK’S CUBING COMPETITION

Finn Cubitt · Year 7 · Simonds Catholic College

As soon as I stepped into the Melbourne Convention Centre, I felt a surge of excitement that made me grin from ear to ear. Today was the day of the Robotics Cubing Competition, and I was competing for the first time.

I had been practising for months to prepare for this moment. I had built my own robot from scratch, carefully assembling each piece, programming and troubleshooting it to be able to solve a Rubik’s Cube in record time. And now I was ready to put it to the test.

The competition was divided into three rounds, with the top performers from each advancing to the next. As I waited for my opening round to begin, I watched as the other competitors set up their robots, their fingers speeding over control buttons – making last-minute adjustments.

Finally, the timer beeped, and the Rubik’s cube was scrambled. I hit the start button on my robot and it sprang into action, its arms moving with lightning speed as it began to solve the cube. I watched in amazement as my robot worked, its movements precise and efficient. And then, with a final bust of movement; it moved the last piece into place. The timer stopped and my robot had solved the cube in an impressive 12.34 seconds...

The next two rounds passed in a blur of excitement and adrenaline. I watched as my robot once again flawlessly solved cube after cube, its movements becoming more and more efficient with each

passing round. I let out a cheer of excitement and the other competitors around me turned to look. I had beaten my personal best, and now I was in the running to advance to the next round.

As I walked out of the convention centre, clutching my robot in my arms, I felt a sense of pride and accomplishment that I had never experienced before. But as I reflected on the competition and the incredible experience, I just realised that it wasn’t just about winning. It was the journey – the hours of hard work and dedication that had brought me to this moment. It was about the people I had met and collaborated with; the fellow competitors and the supportive community of cubers and programmers who had cheered me on and shared their knowledge and experiences. The power of technology to bring people together, to inspire creativity and innovation, and to push the boundaries of what we thought was possible.

As I looked ahead; finding myself into the future, I knew that there would be many more challenges and competitions to come. I knew with my robot by my side and the lessons I had learned from this experience, I felt ready to take on anything that came my way. At the end of the day, it wasn’t just about solving a Rubik’s Cube. It was about the hobby and passion that drove me to try a new thing – leading me here. My self-motivation and slight competitiveness drove me. And that was something that would stay with me for the rest of my life. ■

A DASTARDLY DUNGEON

Joel Johnston · Year 8 · Simonds Catholic College

Rat lay down on the floor motionless, breathing wearily, posed as if he was dead.

His foot was misshapen and broken, and his head was beaten up and bruised, with a scar on his right eye; He had rough and rugged skin covering almost his entire body, yet patches of flesh and dried blood from years of agony and anguish still spread across him. The shadows in the background warped and seethed, giving the illusion of a monster just around the corner, and Rat started sweating profusely.

He was a skimpy little boy, starved and malnourished, and he looked like he was just skin and bones; his skin was scratchy and scarred, bruised from years of mistreatment and torture, and he could only hold on for so much longer.

The courage to do anything but weep slowly faded away, and it seemed more and more like he was fighting a losing battle, nowhere to run, nowhere to hide.

Faint, bloodcurdling screams from someplace elsewhere echoed in the halls, and Rat, suddenly inspired, realized he would have to do something, and lying down would only lead to more misery and torment. He looked at the room around him, defected and deformed brick walls, scratched and scraped from decades of age and ignorance restricted his movement immensely.

His hand brushed against the wall, remembering the trauma that came from being brutally bashed against it, and how he cried for help with no avail, his screams meaningless in the giant labyrinth that was the dungeon.

Trash and residue rested on the wall, and it constantly exuded foreign stench that forced their way into the nose of hapless passers-by. The trash piled against the wall scaled for miles, and it was unstable and precarious, so Rat had to be wary when crossing through, and he saw the woeful bodies of disfigured victims who had not been so vigilant as they made their way down. He scrummaged through a pile of garbage for food, the only way to be slightly satiated, and he slowly grabbed his way through a wide assortment of bits and bobs, too mucky and disfigured to be recognizable, and that oozed with an almost endless supply of a gooey, pus-like liquid. He picked up an unusual clump of rotten eggs and unknown meat, but it tasted bland and dreary, his tastebuds unaffected after years of ingesting chunks of refuse and rubbish.

Rat gazed around, frantically searching for even the slightest chance of a way out of the hellhole he was situated in. Out of the corner of his eye, the glint of a meagre hole in the wall revealed itself to Rat, and he

realized that through enough grit and determination, he might have a chance of survival, unlike the many poor souls who had fell victim to the dungeon's merciless horrors. He started chipping away with an ancient, decrepit spoon, which he had found derelict and deserted in the trash. The spoon was a mangled mess of metal, with scratches and bends everywhere, and it was a testament to how unforgiving and cruel the dungeon was.

Time passed.

After weeks of monotonously mining away with a spoon, Rat finally made a breakthrough, and he managed to make a hole big enough to fit his body through, which wasn't difficult considering he was barely flesh, and could fit through the tiniest of gaps with his rodent-like body.

Rat stumbled through clumsily, his feet not used properly in an age, and he had to put all his strength into moving one gruelling step at a time, lest he fall down onto the tough brick floor and lose all the hope he spent so long searching for.

As Rat stared up at what lay before him, fear struck through his heart, standing right there just a few metres ahead of him was a monstrous, inhuman being. Their cold, bloodshot eyes stared right through to his soul, and he felt as though the room temperature drop.

The monster had coarse, shaggy hair with bits of trash and debris littered all throughout it that concealed its true form, and its large, sharp claws were barely visible beneath it, yet still threatening and sinister.

Rat froze in terror, unable to move as the hairy monster slowly advanced towards him. Its breath was heavy and hot, and the stench of decay emanated from its matted fur. Rat could see the scars and wounds on the monster's body, evidence of the countless battles it had fought and won. Its eyes glinted with a primal hunger, and Rat knew he was about to become its next meal.

With a sudden burst of courage and adrenaline, Rat lunged forward, wielding his spoon as a makeshift weapon. The monster roared in anger, its claws flashing as it swiped at him, but Rat was quick and nimble, dodging and weaving around its attacks. With a final, desperate lunge, Rat plunged the spoon into the monster's eye, causing it to howl in agony and stumble backwards.

Seizing his chance, Rat scrambled past the wounded beast and fled into the unknown depths of the dungeon, his heart pounding with the thrill of his narrow escape, and he screamed in triumph, seeing a flicker of light just up ahead. ■

HIS FACE GLEAMED

Cooper Cusack · Year 9 · Simonds Catholic College

The cool winter breeze strikes Jackson's wet face and sent shivers down his as he floated on his surfboard there waiting for the next wave to ark up. You can hear the thud of the waves barrelling overhead and spinning around like an angry washing machine, towards the sharp and fierce rocks behind. The surf was immaculate that morning at Barwon Heads.

He gazes up to see a flicker of light in the corner of his eye, the sky illuminates with a raging orange colour within almost an instant which is quickly accompanied by its raging nuclear boom. It didn't take long before a barricading wave 10s of meters tall was sent towards the coast of Barwon Heads.

Jackson immediately thought about how his family who were at home whilst he had gone out surfing for the morning. Questions flooded into his head rapidly.

Where are they going to go?

Do they know what is happening?

Have they gotten out safely?

Did they forget about me?

Before he had any more time to think, he turned around and was greeted by a monstrous wave that struck his body like a brick wall and knocked him unconscious. The muscular sea wrestled against Jacksons' body and sent it spiralling around ferociously towards the jagged sea floor.

A boiling hot bright light shined down from above, beaming onto the face of Jackson. Watered erupted from his mouth and he shot instantaneously looking dazed and flustered. The water rushed between his feet almost picking him up, his arms were trapped and constricted by two trees. Jacksons' face was dazed, and his eyes were locked on the devastating surroundings around him. The urge to get up was agonising. With the lack of food and water he drifted off slowly to the sound of gushing water beneath him.

Calls from the crows in the deep black sky, jump-started Jackson's heart, widening his eyes to a max and picking him to his feet within a second. By this point, the water had wondered its way out. Bark from the tree ground his hands and feet like sandpaper as he hugged the tree towards the slummy ground. Cicadas buzzed as he lurked around the barren environment, sticks cracked and crunched as he stepped approached a vandalized shack with splinted wood encasing its structure, stained windows that stared at him like ghosts from the insides and a door that guarded who entered. The door squealed its way open, and Jackson started to frantically search the shack to find anything that could help him aid his survival. A hammer caught the corner of his eye lead him to an idea to take up the floorboards as some firewood, as well a little matchbox that waited alone for its use once

again containing a solid 5 matches. Flames spewed up into the air welcoming Jackson as he sat down on the veranda, kicking his feet back and observing the night lazily as he drifted off into his own world.

Grumbles in his stomach attacked him from the inside forcing his weight up instantly out of his morning rest, Jackson stumbled leisurely to the wrecked shack and did one last intense investigation to find a source of food. Draw after draw, nothing but the intertwined bits of thick white cobwebs with a side dish of heavy dust. Emotions were high, his fist was clenched, and his face screwed up as tightly as possible. All the other draws ripped out into pieces on the floor, this one had his hopes. Jackson tugged on it gently and it revealed itself, 20 tinned foods set out for him to ration in his days for the hope of survival. Jackson scoffed down 2 tuna cans to ease that killing pain of hunger within seconds with it magically disappearing, forgetting he needed to save it.

For the rest of the day, he paced back and forth eager to figure out a plan on how to get himself out of the remote place that plagued him of resource and into the hand of rescuers. Jackson pieced together a brilliant proposal on how to get out. With the use of his surfboard which would be buoyant, he could fit together floorboards from the shack with the use of the hammer to make a makeshift raft, to attract attention. Jackson was out of breath and gasping for air his hand were sore with splinters running down his hands, but the main thing was that he might have a chance of getting off the island and finding help. He dragged it steadily toward the mouth of the ocean, leaving a trail behind. Jackson slammed the raft aggressively; his grip was the only thing stopping it from taking off. He lifted some of the last of his tuna in and secured it. The makeshift raft started to get sucked out by the immense current pulling him out.

The gloomy sky overhead watched over Jackson as he laid there lifeless, arms wide out. Water splashed and fought against the raft, waves spewing over the side and engulfing the raft. Jackson balled himself up thinking about if that wave had killed his family.

Do they know that I am alive and well?

Have they left me and gone somewhere else?

His stomach dropped and his mind felt empty, he blamed himself for what happened and told himself he should have been there with them not out surfing. Fists belted against the raggedy wood furiously letting all his physical emotions out, wood started to fall off and he fell back out of breath holding his fist.

Horns blared violently as they made their way around Jacksons' little raft in circles and locked onto him with a blinding searchlight that exchanged eyes with him.

The eyes on him lit up and his face gleamed. ■

SITTING 2ND CHAIR

Corey Saoud · Year 7 · *Simonds Catholic College*

Walking along the footpath and reaching my destination, the Music Centre, I entered the practice room and found that no one was there.

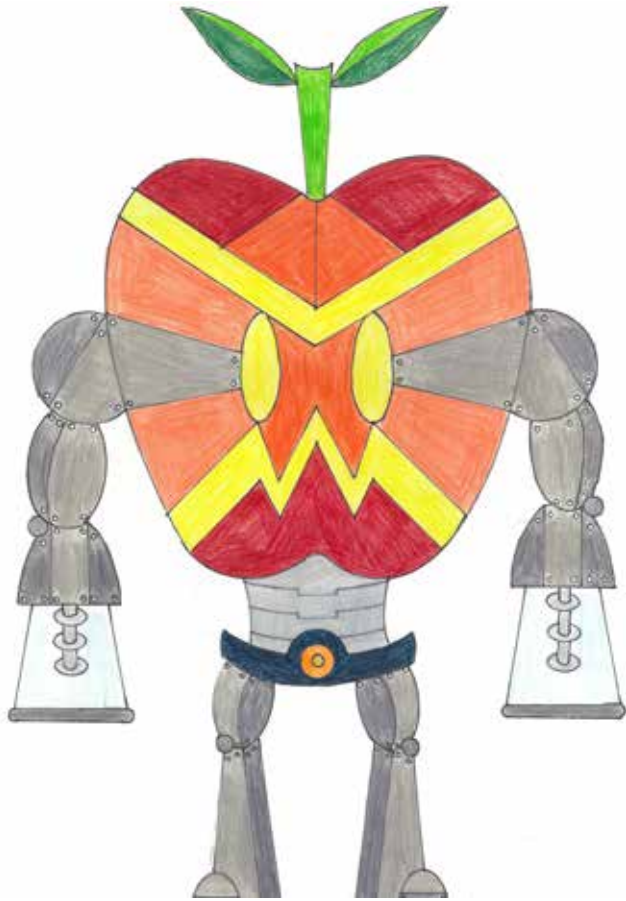
I picked up my violin and bow, placed my music score on the stand, and started practising the second violin part for the 1812 Overture by Tchaikovsky. I moved my bow along the strings and my fingers on the strings. I was practising for my part in the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. I practised the piece repeatedly, hoping to hit all the notes right when I would perform in the orchestra. After practice, I took my music score, put my violin and bow in the case, and left the Music Centre, following the footpath to reach home.

As I woke up early, I remembered that I had to practise with the orchestra today, and I needed to quickly get ready so I could be there on time. Driving towards the Opera House, I then realized that I had forgotten my music score. They didn't provide extra sheets over there, so I rushed back home to get the score. When I arrived at the Opera House, I went to the orchestra's practice room and got my student ID out. I tried to open the door with my ID, but student IDs couldn't open doors, so I got a staff member to open the door for me. Then, I rushed in. I was now 10 minutes early for practice to start, but since everyone was in the room, we just started anyway. As we finished practising the piece for the fourth time, we were told that the date we were performing had been moved from next week to Friday, which was in two days.

It was Thursday, and I was excited, but I was also stressed, thinking if I would play well or not.

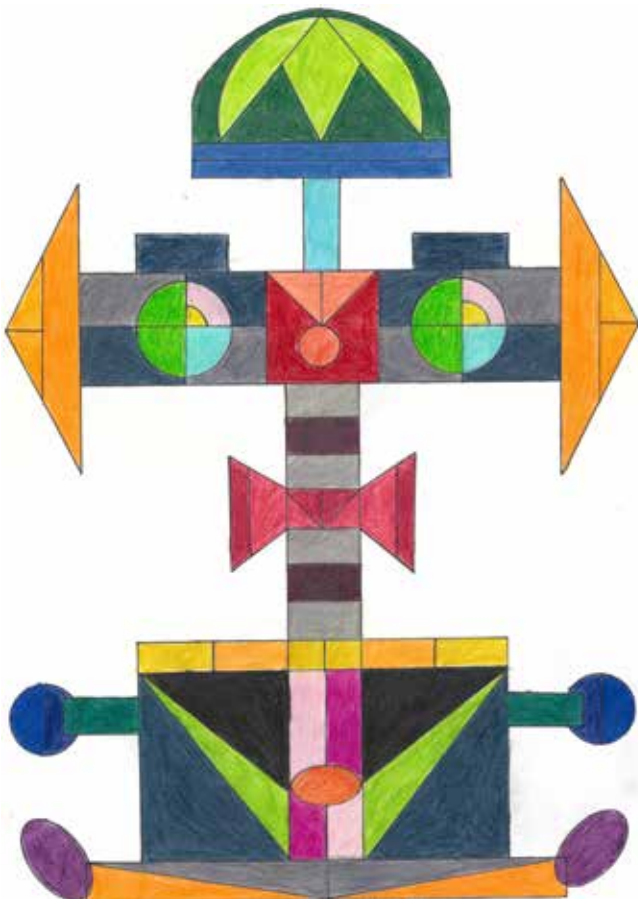
Well, Friday arrived, and I reached the Opera House ready to play the piece. As the conductor walked on stage, we all stood up, bowed, and sat back down. We started tuning all our instruments one by one. Now it was showtime. As I put my bow to the string, we started playing very softly, starting the piece pianissimo. After a few minutes of playing, we began to crescendo, going from soft to loud. We were still playing as we reached forte. After 12 minutes had passed, we were playing very loud with fireworks simulating canon sounds. We went softer and played quietly, then went to a fairly loud part that ended the piece. As we walked offstage, I was happy that I had successfully played all 15 minutes of that. I walked up to my friend who was playing first chair, and we joked around. I repeatedly practised and got ready for my second orchestral performance.

Next, we were going to play Symphony No. 5 by Beethoven, which was not as long compared to Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture, which we had just played. But right now, I needed to focus on Beethoven's 5th for the moment. Today was Wednesday, the day we were playing, and I was getting ready to play. I had the role of first chair, and my friend had the second chair, like last week, but we had just happened to switch roles. The same thing happened: the conductor bowed, we bowed, I picked up my bow, and we started playing. As the piece ended, I was having so much fun, joyfully playing this piece, and hoping it wouldn't end for a long amount of time. But then, it just ended. We left the stage, and I went straight home so I could rest peacefully, alone with my thoughts. ■



Zachary Fu
Year 7 · Mazenod College

Robots of the future, coloured pencil on paper



Ethan Palermo
Year 7 · Mazenod College

Robots of the future, coloured pencil on paper



Charlie Morrissey
Year 8 · Mazenod College

Still Life, acrylic paint and marker on Canvas board



Harris Mayar
Year 8 · Mazenod College

Winning, expanding foam and trophy with confetti



Chris Antony
Year 8 · Mazenod College

Cauliflower, coloured glaze on ceramic



Easeo Kim
Year 8 · Mazenod College

Mango, coloured glazes on ceramic



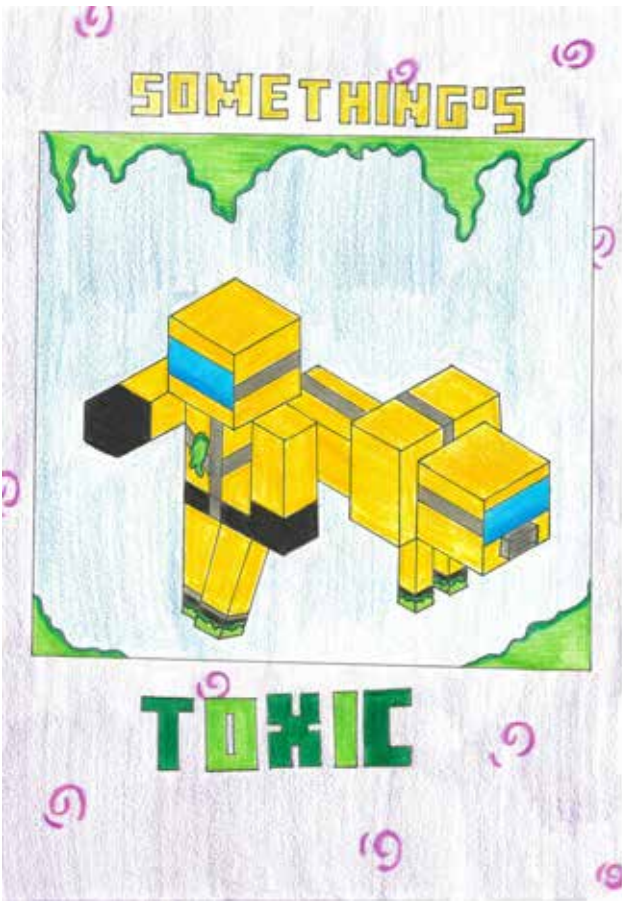
Andrew Nguyen
Year 9 · Mazenod College

Bird, Cut paper collage and acrylic paint



Richard Lau
Year 9 · Mazenod College

Wombat, Cut paper collage and acrylic paint



Dominic Dubois
Year 9 · Mazenod College

Something's Toxic, coloured pencil on paper



Kyle Le
Year 9 · Mazenod College

EnderPig, coloured pencil on paper



5/6 my house DEAN TZORTZOUKAS

Dean Tzortzoukas
Year 9 · Mazenod College

My House, lino print with
watercolour on paper



2/6 "HOME" Ethan Samar 2023

Ethan Samar
Year 9 · Mazenod College

My House, lino print with watercolour
and coloured pencil on paper



Julia Youhana
Year 8 · Kolbe Catholic College

A Creation Dreams, Pastel on Paper



Tiffany Mazzarella
Year 7 · Kolbe Catholic College

Dreaming, Acrylic on canvas

UNDYING FLAME, HAVE YOU NO SHAME?

Claudine Yao · Year 12 · Kolbe Catholic College

*“and I miss you like one would children
who grew in this vile world, the forewarning...
...though in my memories, you shine golden
my unsullied self, I’ll mourn in the morning”*

From the ripe age of six, I had never believed in a God, but when I looked down at the bundle of life cradled in my arms, perhaps, I thought, that just this once I could thank the heavens for blessing me with my little brother. That when his tiny hand could only grasp onto the tip of my finger, that when his small eyes remained unseeing from the world, perhaps I could pray that his light would never dim and he would continue to bring warmth into my life (*just like how our parents had failed to do.*)

I love you, I thought, and I will protect you. I vow that on my life, and no God or any other universal force will stop me from doing so.

*“I love you, reminiscent of this place
when your wee hand wraps around my finger...”*

The time of Christmas has come and the holiday cheer amongst the neighboring families does not adequately reflect the unforgiving booming voices outside of my room. Abandoning my drawing, I rush to open the door. I knew he’d be right there, wanting his sister’s affection like he always did (*like he deserved from his parents*). He’s here, I thought again as he switched his tight grasp from his shirt onto my shoulders when I crouched down. I let him cry into my favorite shirt, let him claw on my shoulders until it almost drew blood (*because that’s the only thing eleven-year-old me can do for him*).

“It’ll be alright, I’m here... I’ll always be here for you.” Anything so that you can keep that light in your heart ablaze, because you’re my little brother who was brought into this world to give warmth and happiness and everything good. (*Because you’re the only thing that I have left*).

He was five and I was eleven when the world decided to be cruel to us.

I love you, I thought, and I will give you attention even if our parents don’t want to.

*...remember not, the smile that paints my face
the warmth of your naivety, they linger”*

“Don’t bother me right now, I’m busy. I’ll play with you later.” The composition of this drawing isn’t coming out the way I want it to, and the pressure of my parents’ expectations is driving me up the wall.

“But you said you’d ‘play with me later’ - the past

few times I asked and you never did...”

“Close the door on your way out.”

My little brother stopped coming into my room altogether after that.

*“I love you still, as the world scorns my whims
when I am broken, and you, together...”*

It took me too long to realize that, with every day he spends on his computer talking to his friends, he’s replacing his sorry excuse of a family.

I caught him finishing up playing some game when I walked past after looking for a midnight snack. *I miss playing with you*, I had wanted to say. I wanted to cradle him in my arms again and apologize for never giving him the attention he needed for five whole years. Instead, I called out to him hoping he could hear me over the cheers of his friends.

“You’re really good at that, you know.” *You probably think I don’t deserve to tell you that*, I thought, watching his face morph into one of surprise.

“You really think so...?” he asks, with a voice so soft I was afraid he’d break if I raised mine any higher.

“Of course I do.” I think back to him at five years old, afraid of the dark and how he would cry at the slightest of injuries, then I look at him now, ten years old and already taller and stronger than me. My eyes gaze at him fondly, because he still carries that warm light in the way that he always did, albeit a bit worn out. “I always have.” *Though not just limited to your games.*

“You-... are you hungry? I’ll cook something for you.”

I wonder when my little brother had become not so little anymore, for him to notice that I’ve no energy to even cook for myself, to notice that even breathing feels like a chore for me because of the weight of our parents’ expectations.

It’s been too long but I still love you, and I’ll continue loving you even if you protest against it.

I’ll continue loving you even if I can’t seem to love myself anymore.

*...when I have failed you, and your warm light
dims
forget my frail promises, dear brother”*

In three years, the chairs at the dinner table decreases by one, and I no longer have to cook for four people. Although the three of us ate in

complete silence, it shattered so easily when that man raised his voice. “I was notified by your teacher that you didn’t do well on your test.”

My little brother tries to justify, “I don’t like math, it’s hard to understand.”

“But you were good at it. You got high grades before all this.” He’s scraping the plate with his fork, it sounds exactly like his straining voice (*like when he’s threatening me instead of my little brother*).

“I only tried hard because mum liked math and she’d teach me.”

And then it clicks. My little brother is *just thirteen*, he’s supposed to be enjoying his video games and coming home at curfew from playing outside with his friends. Yet instead, he’s sitting here being enslaved to a set future, resisting with his burning passion bleeding out and it’s making me *dizzy*; the proof of his resolve that hangs in the air between us. *‘I want to be a kid, it’s screaming out, I am a kid.’ (And you will always be a kid to me).*

“I love you, even though to love is to fear...”

“Leave him alone,” even though it terrifies me to go against that man. “He’s only thirteen, let him

be a kid.” And my brother looks as though he were two years old again, eyes wide and curious, untainted by the world. Because he isn’t supposed to be hurt like I was, he doesn’t deserve to have his childhood stripped from him like mine was, because he only deserves the best and this is the only thing my seventeen-year-old self can do for him after ignoring him for so long. And when our dad storms out, when every day, we seem less and less like a family, I see him covering his eyes and keeping his sniffles in.

Always the crybaby, that one.

Sometimes, I want him to know that I’ll always have time for him. That if he wanted someone to confide in, I would be the one to listen and give advice whenever he needed it. Because here, under the light in the dining room, I see a kid whose passion does not deserve to be snuffed out, whose childhood does not deserve to be taken from him, a kid with so much love in his heart but no one to give it to because the world is out to get him. My light in the face of darkness ... my saving grace.

I love you. I love you, so please keep that light burning even just for me.

...yours truly, a sister who must persevere” ■



Angela Tran
Year 4 · St Joseph’s Primary School, Springvale

Oil pastel expressive portrait inspired by Vietnamese artist Van Tho



Hargun Singh
Year 7 · Kolbe Catholic College

City, Acrylic on Canvas



Melia Sobhe
Year 9 · Kolbe Catholic College

Night Thoughts, Pastel on Paper



Joel Wilbraham
Year 11 · Lavalla Catholic College

The grass is always greener



Sophie Slater
Year 9 · Lavalla Catholic College



Hollie Nicholls
Year 9 · Lavalla Catholic College

INSPIRE CHANGE

Curtis Patten · Year 7 · De La Salle College

Inspired, I dance upon imagination's stage
Ideas in my mind's eye a battle they wage.
Why won't they accept me, let me be free
Tears in my eyes, I want them to be proud of me.
But my confidence is low,
And my progress is slow.
I long to be him, escape like he did
But my dreams of immortality remain hid.
Trapped in my augmented existence
My fate ebbs and flows into the distance.
Push away friends and family
They will never understand me.
The creatures that roam in my head

Don't hurt me but inspire me instead.
No one believes I can change
They all stare thinking I am strange.
Lurking in the shadows, forever forgotten,
But Jesus is my savior, my soul begotten.
Heavenly forces bring me near
Tell me what I need to hear.
From the ashes, the phoenix takes flight
In spring, roses bloom, a beautiful sight.
Now I realize my path is divine
I don't need another to help me shine.
I just need to be free,
Forget everyone else and let me be me. ■

GOD IS ALL POWERFUL

Will Messner · Year 7 · De La Salle College

God is all powerful.
He is a light of goodness.
His images and soul, his shape and reflection is
power.
It is the power of goodness.
God has the forgiveness and power to give light
and hope.
When you feel like darkness is creeping in.
He will be there for you.
He will shine his relentless love through and with
you.

He is seen as many things, A wind, An object.
Simply what you like and what you believe.
I see him as many things.
When I feel bad, I look and see where he will be.
Looking down at me.
As a rock in the dark garden that has caught the
light.
As a person greeting you when you're feeling sad.
He is power.
He is goodness.
He is a majestic light of hope. ■



Carter Kessling
Year 9 · De La Salle College

Photography



Luca Schiavo
Year 10 · De La Salle College

Photography



Liam Greening
Year 12 · De La Salle College

LIGHTS OUT

PRESENTATION 1 : COMMUNICATION DESIGN

ABOUT

This outdoor stage/area is designed for my client 'Lights Out' Disco festival. Lights Out is a yearly outdoor Disco festival that travels around the world targeting young adults. Lights Out is known for their creative, different and unique identities at each famous city they visit around the world.

AUDIENCE

Males, Females, people aged between 18-25 yrs old, young adults, LGBTQ +, people that share same interests of music, dance and socialisation. People who live in the Melbourne city and Victoria

LOGO DESIGN



00ABE9



221F20



D9308A

CARRIER DESIGN



LOGO DESIGN TYPE

- PHOSPHATE
- MARKER FELT

CARRIER DESIGN TYPE

- PHOSPHATE
- MARKER FELT
- SOURCE SANS VARIABLE REGULAR
- SOURCE SANS VARIABLE BOLD

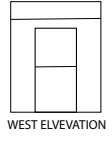
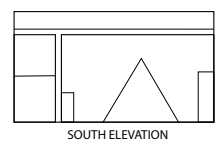
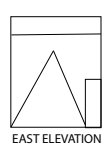
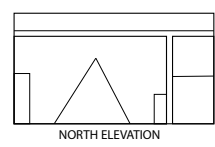
2023 VCD UNIT 4
CLIENT: LIGHTS OUT
DESIGNER: JEREMY CLARK
VCAA NUMBER: 213598



MALADAPTIVE RELAM
CLIENT: YOSANO AKITO

21200455X
SAT FOLIO 2023

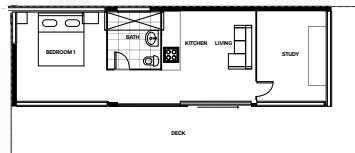
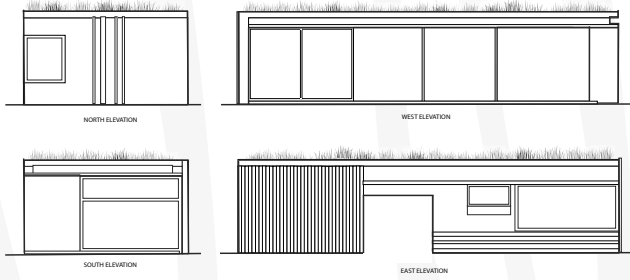
PRESENTATION 2:
ENVIROMENTAL DESIGN,
STORE FRONT DISPLAY





“THE LUGANO”

The lugano is a pod style home that provokes an authentic environmental experience within all of its inhabitants



ANOTHER ONE

Aldrien Amper · Year 10 · Catholic Regional College St Albans

It was in the winter when I first saw the flower as a shoot. In this season, tulips are in the process of getting ready for a grand blooming in the spring. And it was because of this that the shoot kept itself very well hidden within the mud. I had almost trampled the little plant when I heard its gasp right before my shoe fell upon its being.

“Ah! Please do not step on this spot. It was here that I grew and lived...”

Flustered with embarrassment, I quickly apologised.

“I’m so sorry! Little shoot, I could not see you even from the corner of my eye!”

I raced through my mind to find some sort of compensation.

Well, to begin with, it is only a flower. And a very little flower at that. It has scarcely been out of the ground for a few days...

It was then that I concluded getting the flower some water.

This idea resonated with my entire being! In front of me was something to be cared for. This little shoot, so frail it could be uprooted by the wind... It was then that I aspired to tend to it until it grew to be something beautiful. Still flustered, I hurried back to my home to get a can full of water. It was no longer a favour in my mind. By then, I was completely enamoured.

Days had turned to weeks, and soon enough a month had passed since our first meeting. The little shoot had grown into a stem, with a bulb full of promise at its crown. Every day I would slog through my daily errands and obligations until the afternoon, where I would make that same walk with the same can of water in hand. And I would sit there with the flower until dusk made way for the evening.

Though a flower brings only good fortune to the world, the world is not always so grateful. Worms and weeds can inhibit the flower’s potential and destroy the lifetime of beauty ahead of it. As time went by, it became apparent that my flower was no exception to this harsh reality. However, my flower’s pest was not a stray weed or a parasite, but rather an idea deep in its being. For spring was coming, and my flower had yet to bloom.

I brought this topic up for discussion a fair few times, but it would always be dismissed.

“I haven’t put much thought into it,” the flower would say. “It takes time!” And most worrisome of all, “Maybe it isn’t for me...”

It was on a fateful day when I grew tired of these excuses. In truth, I shouldn’t have been so cross. What I said lays heavy still on my heart.

“I have supplied you with a can of water since you were a seedling!” I cried. “Every day I’ve visited you and made sure you wouldn’t be crushed by loneliness or a stray boot. You have grown in a fertile land that doesn’t harden in winter nor burn in summer! All this, and yet you refuse to bloom! You have thrown fortune and my efforts deep into the ground like your roots...”

Between us was an enduring silence. I could not bear it any longer. I picked myself up and ran far, far away.

That was the last I saw of my flower. Whether it refused to bloom due to an illness deep within its body or its very own will, I cannot answer. In retrospect, I had been silly. The little shoot never owed me a flower in the spring. It is true that I nursed the flower of my own accord. Perhaps I was blinded by admiration. But to pierce this truth into a heart engulfed by a sea of emotion, I cannot imagine how...

Quite a while has passed since my leaving. My reminiscing was disrupted by the patter of raindrops against the ground. It was on these rainy days that I could not go and see my flower, for the water was already pouring from the sky. I would simply gaze at the clouds and pray for the freeing of the sun.

Nowadays, every day is like a rainy day. But what I’ve come to realise with passing time is that rainy days are also days of growth and replenishment. The droplets pattering against the ground call to invisible seeds like drums, until they are driven to rise and awaken. And not all of these sprouts may grow into flowers, but this is no reason to despair! It is this possibility of loss and failure that makes a matter so important. For every hundred buds that fall short of blooming, there will be one that becomes a flower, and this flower will be cherished across the land...

So, I’ll rise every morning with this hope in mind. And I shall live my days for the sake of finding such a flower. ■



Mariam Maroka
Year 10 · Catholic Regional College St Albans

Imagination Gone Wild

NEW FOUND INSPIRATION

Angelina Brillouet · Year 9 · Catholic Regional College St Albans

The document on his laptop sat there. Unmoving. Empty. Not a single letter had been typed onto the page in thirty minutes. He sat there, eyes blank and nothing in his head except dark clouds. His hand was tightly clasped around a cup of lactose free milk with his hair being a matted mess that sat atop his head and his nails were full of grime and dust. Drool was hanging from his bottom lip and splashed onto his keyboard. Writing used to come so easily to him, but then something changed. Something disappeared. Or maybe it was someone...

“BRING BRING... BRING BRING,” went his phone which sat on his expensive, dirty mahogany desk. He jolted in surprise and he quickly scrambled to pick it up.

“Uh... Hello?” he said in a worried tone. It was his manager who was probably calling to lecture him about how he hadn’t been producing any writing.

“Ahh... My favourite writer extraordinaire, Lewis! How’s everything going?” replied his manager. Lewis was rather displeased by this sudden call but fought the urge to hang up.

“What are you calling me for?” replied the obviously annoyed writer. The fact that this guy who he rarely talks to can talk to him in such a common way made him annoyed. “Woah. Did you forget what you had to do today? You have to meet your new editor now. She’s been waiting for two hou... Hey!!! Where’d you go?”

He stared at his phone for several seconds before letting his mind absorb that new-found information. Suddenly, the memory came back to him.

Lewis abruptly hung up on his manager before contemplating what to do next. He grabbed the brown coat off of his chair and sprinted towards the cafe two blocks from his apartment. He arrived at the shop and was panting and sweating. People walking down the street were staring at this mess of a man in crocs and a suede coat panting like a dehydrated dog. A young woman came out of the shop looking defeated until she spotted the scraggly looking writer. Her eyes lit up and a large smile appeared on her face.

“Mr Dalton! It’s me! Your new editor! I’m Evangeline. Evan for short.” she said in a mixture of excitement and relief.

“I’ve been waiting for so long but you never showed up. I had to call Kevin to ask where you were. Thank god you showed up. He said you

weren’t very sociable so I thought you wouldn’t come.”

He was taken aback by her sudden outburst of positive emotions and noise. She was almost bouncing whilst emanating shimmery energy. But after this confusion, he found himself staring at his new editor. She was... beautiful. In a way he’d never seen before. Not perfect, not model-like, yet so beautiful to him. Her messy, shoulder length hair was tied half-up in a messy ponytail. Her shirt was stained with coffee and ink and her eyes matched her dark hair. Her eyes were so bright they shone like the sun on a clear, spring day. Not only was she beautiful but she was the bubbliest person he had met. Lively and happy. She was exactly his type.

“Um...” he said nervously, worried about whether she noticed his abnormally long pause. “Should we go inside?”

They sat down at a small table whilst the editor stared intensely at the shaking mess of a previously successful writer. He sat twiddling his thumbs and sweating profusely whilst the woman in front of him pulled out a notebook to take notes.

“So... what are you writing about now?” she started.

“Ummmm...”

“Welp... Doesn’t matter! We are going to find out something you’re going to write about! Now!” she exclaimed. She was glowing in admiration for the man.

He was rather surprised by this fact but continued making small talk with her. It was intriguing to him meeting someone like her. They talked for hours about ideas for his new book. Stories about love and hate and real life. All things that he loved. She was perfect. The second he got home he felt something in the back of his mind. Something new and beautiful. It was an idea.

He began writing that very same day. Every day his mind flooded with thoughts and ideas that he managed to print onto the page. It was a feat that he wasn’t able to complete for a while. This new editor mysteriously awoke a new-found source of inspiration. He was excited to bring his newly written manuscript to his new editor. The next time they met she was surprised that the writer produced something. What he made was a story about a beautiful woman with messy hair and eyes as dark as roast coffee beans. It was a story about her. She was his new-found inspiration. ■

TAYLOR SWIFT – MY INSPIRATION

Lucinda O'Bryan · Year 6 · Trinity Primary School, Richmond

You may know Taylor Swift for singing 'Shake It Off' but she is so much more than that to me. She inspires me, not only because she is an amazing singer and a smart business woman, but because of the way she inspires so many girls and women to believe in themselves. When people said she couldn't write music, she released a whole album written only by herself. Then they said she could only write country songs, not pop, and then she released a full pop album and won 158 awards, just from that album alone. She is not just an inspiration to me, she is an inspiration to lots of girls and women around the world. She does not worry about what people say about her. She works hard to prove them wrong. And she does that for herself. The words of Taylor Swift inspire me "People are going to judge you anyways, so you might as well do what you want". ■

MY PARENTS INSPIRE ME

Nicolai Grevsmuhl · Year 6 · Trinity Primary School, Richmond

My parents inspire me to be the best that I can be. They are on my journey with me as I dream to become a soccer player. My dad inspires me because he used to be a soccer player and I want to follow in his footsteps. He also inspires me as he goes out of his way to train me and takes me to my soccer training and matches. He is really kind and loving towards me. He encourages me and teaches me how to be respectful to others in the game. My mum also inspires me to be kind to others. She is always there to cheer me on and shows me how to do the right thing. They both are so helpful and are always there for me when I am struggling and that really inspires me. I really do appreciate how they support me and inspire me. ■

INSPIRE

Yen Mai Amy Tran · Year 6 · Trinity Primary School, Richmond

Her heart pounded and merriment shone in the minute child's eyes. Inquisitive as she could be, she frolicked through the meadow, full of rapturous feelings. Her feet soaked in the muddy water, but she didn't care; nonchalant if she got dirty. Jane endeavoured to meet the new girl; she was titled 'the perfect girl', and had unmatched beauty. She ran, bursting with excitement! She couldn't wait to meet this heaven liked child. Jane wanted to be her classmate, her friend, her best friend! As her reverie took over her, she fell. And as she cried in excruciating agony, she contemplated a hand. It was her, 'the perfect girl'.

Jane observed Rose, the girl she had been thinking about. She bashfully took Rose's offering of her hands and cried out. "Oh, this is embarrassing. My name is Jane by the way! Thank you for helping me, I really appreciate it!" Rose gave a weak smile and then looked aghast for a second. Why wasn't she saying anything to Jane? Did she do something wrong? "My name is Rose, uh....." she hesitated. "You have something on your hair. Do you want me to take it off?" inquired Rose, agitated by this new civilian. Jane didn't know what to say, she was in a state of confusion. But without a second thought, Rose took a yellow leaf out of Jane's ginger hair.

Jane was full of butterflies, excited about the possibilities of a new friendship. She wanted to be best friends with this stranger that she just met. Jane's face turned red and she used her hands to cover her face. Rose stared at Jane, smiling, but then she abruptly broke into laughter. At first, Jane was confused, but decided to join in with the giggling. There. It was their first memory together.

Over the next few days, and weeks, they ecstatically played together in the almost 'royal like' gardens, where they pretended to be princesses and kings. Everything was perfect, until school started. Rose would constantly get laughed at and they made fun of her. They called her the teacher's pet, and

they ridiculed her father, John. Rose's father had inherited an immense amount of money, but the company that John owned came to an end quite abruptly; a bankruptcy. That's the main reason she had moved to this quiet, new village. And whilst Rose was quietly excited about a new beginning and possibilities of new friendships, life at the new school was not perfect for Rose. A boy in her class always made her cry. Each day, Rose would sob in Jane's arms and she would always vent about her problems. Life was rough, but that disgusting, frightful boy made it even worse. Jane was there for her. A true friend.

As school continued, the bullying became more and more frequent, and more severe: punching, pulling hair, starting rumours, and exclusions. Jane had enough. She couldn't bare this torture towards her kindred spirit friend anymore. She didn't care if he would start rumours, or start picking on her too. She was done. "Do you know what James? I'm sick of you! Sick of your nasty comments, sick of your bullying Rose! She has done nothing to you. Why James? Just stop!"

No one had ever disagreed with James, nor confronted him. Jane's heart raced. But then something happened. Everyone broke out in a cheer and clapped their hands in support of Jane. The students were intimidated by James. He was loaded with money and always had his way. At this moment, the children were in a state of enigma. What would happen next? As Jane and James stood there, staring at each other, words couldn't describe how she felt. Then abruptly, something happened. James began to cry and maneuvered his way through the students, leaving behind a group gathered in shock. After the calamity, everyone was inspired to be like Jane. She was resilient, kind and enthralling.

Rose & Jane continued to be friends, and their friendship grew stronger than ever. James moved schools and was never to be seen again. ■

RYAN GETS INSPIRED

Jax Sebastian · Year 5 · Trinity Primary School, Richmond

One Sunday afternoon, Ryan decided to have a jog around the park. While he walked, he noticed the different types of people walking, playing, doing everything together. He saw people eating and he saw people bonding. He loved that people were joining together in peace and not in war! He felt kindness spreading and that made him enjoy jogging around the park.

Once Ryan got home, an idea jumped into his head. He realized that if people were spreading kindness around the park, he could spread kindness to the whole world! He was inspired. Not only could he begin by making his own world more peaceful, with his family and friends, but he hoped that this would spread and make the world more peaceful.

When people stop to ask Ryan what he is doing, he says “ My aim is to spread kindness around the world!” ■

CHILDLY SPIRIT

Andrew Mai · Year 6 · Trinity Primary School, Richmond

A child at most
One thing you learn though, not to boast.
The end of your youth is almost lost,
But never forget to embrace that spirit.
Be bold and gold as you once were.
Don't hold or fold the shimmer inside of you.
Because you know the childly spirit inside thee. ■



Jahnvi Sud
Year 7 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

Acrylic Painting



Nyannup Poundak
Year 7 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

Acrylic Painting



Shayne Manalili
Year 11 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

Oil painting



Roshan Hans
Year 12 · Mazenod College

Perfection of the Face, Charcoal on paint



Ajok Majok
Year 12 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

Acrylic, Gold leaf and watercolor painting



Abraham Dalumpines
Year 11 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

Acrylic Painting



Abraham Dalumpines
Year 11 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

3D Model



Jorja Lewin
Year 12 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

Acrylic and Marker

A COSMIC INFLUENCE

Toby Bloomfield · Year 10 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor

The stars and planets inhabit a bed of infinite darkness, an unending fabric draped across reality; space. And within this whirlpool of stars, there exists Earth, a planet so inconsequential to the grand scheme of things, that its existence goes nigh unnoticed by its cosmic brethren. Yet, on this Earth there sits a boy, a being so ever more inconsequential that their life is but a speck on the passing of time. Though, despite their lack of importance and considerable lack of worldly impact, this boy yearns for more. The contents of their mind are so very limited to the ephemeral construction of their body, yet they seek more; they seek a meaning, a purpose, a function.

So, in pursuit of this purpose, the boy begins his search across the oh-so insignificant Earth. He witnesses the grand entropy of life – flowers bloom, birds soar, and lives begin and end as if they had never even occurred. In unison with such things, violence and destruction stain the history of humanity; metal machinations of terror scour the land, a vehement brutality set upon the Earth. Synthetic birds carve their paths through the sky, deploying their explosive vessels upon the innocent – young men and women wield weapons of destruction, and are told to slaughter each other simply for the crime of being different. Though the boy notices, despite all the slaughter, there exists yet a kindness among humanity – there are those that care for the disenfranchised and those less fortunate, and love blooms within and between an uncountable many. What a curious idea, the boy ponders, for such calamitous misery to coexist with such an innocent kindness. It is upon his discovery of such a peculiar paradox that, at last, the boy finishes his journey, arriving back at that which was once home. He muses over his journey, and all that he has witnessed. It is completely nonsensical, he decides, for the Earth to abide by such disorder, and that a purpose must exist elsewhere; and so, he turns his gaze to the stars.

His mind prances throughout the expanse that lives above, an infinite world of giants that, to the perspective of the evanescent, appears immortal, yet remains enduringly impermanent. Whilst preoccupied by the beauty held within the expanse of space, the boy finds himself possessed by an inescapable urge. Sheets of paper, and a pen, are suddenly drawn to his hands. For just a moment, the border between mind and page is blurred – his eyes dart across the sky, an unending dance of stars, a cacophony of light and cosmic constructions; he thinks to himself, why is it that the stars are as they are? In accordance, the pen slides across page after page, his mind pouring into the paper and, at last, when his pen stops, the boy sighs – a sigh of relief, for he has finally found the purpose by which all abides - as all things, from the lowliest of creatures to the most gargantuan of planets, subsist within the eyes of those who behold; from entropy to love and all that resides between, it is the singular act of existing, of surviving within a realm against all odds, that allows our minds to be filled with awe as we gaze upon the night sky.

As all exists, so too does all inspire. ■

Explanation: The main influence for this piece was the idea of awe; a spark of creativity that overwhelms the senses, elicited by the viewing of something grand or unimaginable. Personally, I find that I am often left in awe when I look on upon the night sky; a vast, infinite cosmos littered with giants, an orchestra of shapes and colours that reside in an unimaginable space. How incredible it is, for us to coexist in a universe with such wondrous constructions – to be able to perceive that which exists, is as great a gift as any, for it is that which we perceive that fuels our minds, that inspires us to create.

INSPIRATION

Chelsea Brancatisano · Year 9 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor

I have never heard a silence quite
so loud.
My body trembled.
My eyes flared crimson red,
Burning and irritated.
They darted pages quickly.
My heart, beating fast.
My hands.
Sticky. Warm. Glued to my pen.
I couldn't move.
My grip was careless, I was
dejected.
I look up.
I scan the hall
I gaze at the backs of my fellow
students.
Their eyes were buried in their
papers.
10 minutes.
Time is running out.
I'm scarcely able to think.
I look down, but nothing is
there.
A blank page.
The echo of teachers.
Pacing. Talking.
The ground shook.
My vision became hazy.
My knowledge was unrestrained.
I pictured the face of my parents.
Their irate expressions when
they see my results.
My father stands.
My heart drops.
Insults and slurs pour from his
mouth.
His hand slams the table.
He is full of acrimony.
My mother took place on a chair.
Legs crossed, arms folded,
staring me down.
Never have I witnessed them in
such a way.
My words don't make sense.
The story isn't adding up.
I was lost in the moment.
The feeling and the pressure.
Another bang on the table.
I take a step back.
A roar and a scream.
I run to my room.

The door slammed shut.
Plates smashing.
Chair falling.
Hugging my legs close.
Burying my head in my knees.
Fantasising success.
I dream of sanity.
I dream of perfection.
Desiring to make them proud.
Desiring to make me proud.
5 minutes.
The clock is ticking.
I spiral into oblivion.
All my potential's been shattered.
I manage to write a single word.
'Why?'
Why was I acting this way?
Why was my exam impossible to
finish?
Why am I not simply more
capable?
I close my eyes to visualize my
teacher.
Her face.
Her voice.
The sound of humiliation.
I knew I'd curse her.
My knowledge was a gift.
My downfall was fatal to her.
She expected too much.
My throat slowly closing,
as I choked back my tears.
My hands, sweaty and hot.
I felt fragile.
My body temperature on the
rise.
I had escaped reality.
Picture this. I am sitting there.
All eyes on me.
And only me.
The sound of my classmates
snickering at me.
The feeling of becoming a
failure.
Trapped inside a poisonous
nightmare.
For what?
To achieve higher?
To score better?
You're useless.

1 minute.
Time is running out.
My hands fastened in a fist.
Pen fell to the ground.
The smell of enmity and regret
lingered around me.
I felt defeated.
Conquered by the beast that is
expectation.
Was I living a delusion?
All the endless hours of studying,
all the sleepless nights and,
constantly skipping meals.
Just to be acknowledged.
Just to be praised.
All for the perfect scores.
All for the perfect grade.
The timer buzzed.
I suddenly woke up.
I sat in my bed, startled.
My breath was seconds behind
me.
I pushed my hair over my face.
My hands caressed my cheeks.
The cold touch of my fingertips
I clutched my chest and stepped
onto the floor.
Taking deep breaths, I walked to
the bathroom.
I thought of my parents.
I thought of my teachers.
I imagined the exam.
The test that would determine
my future.
I felt like my life was on the line.
I was hanging by a thread.
Encased in a pit of fire.
Everything I've ever learnt is
present through this.
This was the final opportunity to
prove myself.
I had one last chance to exceed
the standards my teachers set
for me. I had one last chance
to succeed and inspire those
who inspired me.
I needed to be what matters to
me. I needed to believe that
what matters to me, matters to
them.
My inspiration was enough! ■

TO DREAM

Kate Fernandes · Year 10 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor

She wanted to fly planes. To star in the biggest Hollywood films. To solve mysteries. To heal people in the hospital. The little girl leant on the windowpane, her face gently resting in the palm of her hand, as she looked out to the ink-black sky sprinkled with the light of a million stars. Her tip of her nose met with the cold glass, and as she exhaled, it fogged up her view. With her finger, she drew two eyes and a smile. Content with her artwork, she tumbled backwards, laughing. She then heard her mother calling her to her bedroom. She took one last longing glance back at her nook with the window to the universe before running to the safety of her mother's arms.

She went to school for the first time. She learned her ABCs and how to count all the way to 30. She presented her knowledge to her delighted mother. They giggled over the little mistakes she made and how her face scrunched up as she tried to remember all she learned. The little girl recounted her entire day for her mother. But the little girl didn't reveal all her secrets to her mother. She didn't tell her mother that a boy told her, "Only boys can fly planes". But that is the tragedy of how dreams are stolen.

She had started ballet classes. Now a porcelain figurine, she twirled on the very tips of her toes. Her mother had come to pick her up from the class, but as she watched her little girl dance like the Disney princesses, a single tear rolled down her cheek. She hastily wiped it, and when class finished, her daughter rushed into her arms. Her eyes were bright. But the daughter was hiding behind a mask of agony. She told her mother what

the first, second, and third positions meant. But the little girl didn't reveal all her secrets to her mother. She didn't tell her mother that a girl told her, "Only the prettiest girls become actors". But that is the tragedy of how dreams are stolen.

She loved reading. The little girl's nose was always buried deep inside a novel. She needed to be transported to worlds where she could battle with dragons, fight zombies, fall in love, and solve mysteries. She spent most of her days in the library, nestled in a small corner on a beanbag, devouring all her favourite books. She often told her mother about her adventures, who enjoyed the stories. But the little girl didn't tell her mother all her stories. She didn't tell her mother that a librarian told her, "Only make-believe characters solve mysteries." But that is the tragedy of how dreams are stolen.

She lived for her high school experience. The desire that burned inside her to learn was fuelled by her enjoyment of learning. She watered and tended to her learning, the tree of knowledge growing lushly. Every night, when she returned, she would sit at the table with her mother and talk about her day over a steaming cup of hot chocolate. But the little girl didn't reveal all her secrets to her mother. She didn't tell her mother that a teacher told her, "Only the smartest students become doctors". But that is the tragedy of how dreams are stolen.

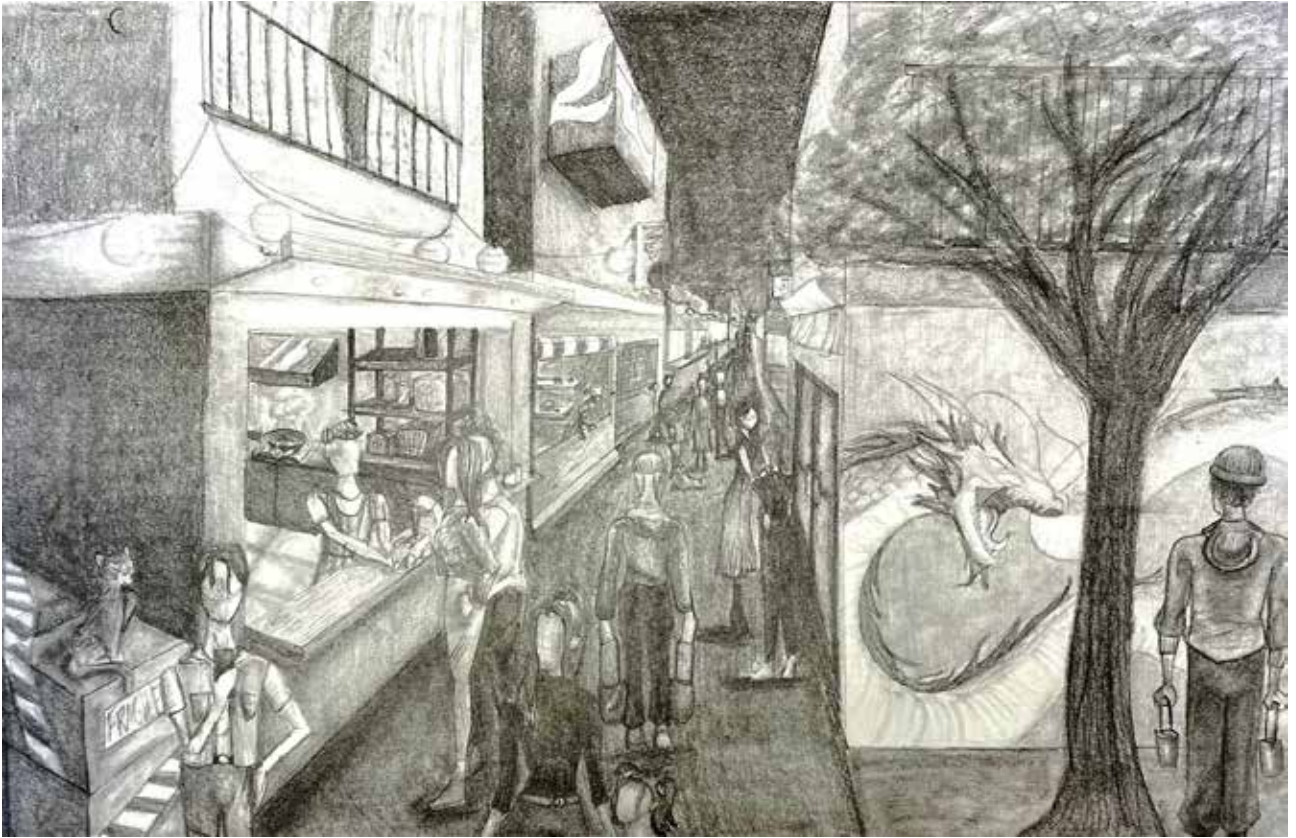
Soon, the little girl wasn't so little anymore. Her fiery passion for her dreams was extinguished. And as she pulled the blanket tightly around her shoulders, she looked through her window, at the universe, reminiscing about how it felt to dream. ■

THE ANZAC ALPHABET

Ashlyn Kuriakose · Year 7 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor

A is for the ANZACs who fought to the death.
B is for the bullets which shot through the air.
C is for the cemeteries that we had created.
D is the dark smoke which filled our tired lungs.
E was the earth that got stuck in our hair.
F is for the flies that hovered through the air.
G is for Gallipoli, the place where we fought.
H is the hope that our country caught.
I was for the identities that had been lost.
J is for the jokes we tried to make.
K is for the knowledge we had to gain.
L is the lice that filled our heads.
M is for the mothers who stood waiting for their boys.
N is for the names on the Roll of Honour.
O was the opportunities we could have had.
P is for the prayers our people said.
Q is for the quietness of the middle of the night.
R is for the rations, we were given every day.
S is the for stench that came from the dead.
T was the Turkish that we fought against.
V is the for veterans we remember to this day.
X is the excuses that we tried to make.
Z is for the New Zealanders who fought bravely by our side. ■

I was inspired to write this poem as it made me think about the sacrifices made by the Anzacs, so that we can live in a safe country. I was also inspired by stories and letters that were published so that we can learn more about World War I.



Indiana Farrugia
Year 7 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor

KAKADU NATIONAL PARK SAVED BY BIG BILL NEIDJIE

Simarpreet Kaur · Year 8 · Marymede Catholic College

Kakadu, a desolate and isolated place but not so alone.

It has its own friend, itself,
reflecting in the lake,
with logs sitting on the water, still as stone.

Crocodiles move powerfully through the water,
Through light-reflecting seas.
They have gleaming eyes,
The water trees sing in their lives.

Secrets from the past can be seen
Behind the delicate green trees.
Ancient rocks and big mountains have tales of
their own.

A lovely waterfall, with streaming water, just
behind the thick bush.
Behind green veils, histories intersecting,
Talking, breathing, living things!

Tiny tree trunks stand alone and are so miniature
That the wind can blow them away and they are
reborn again.

Steamy fog in my eyes, hiding the beauty of the
flawless eucalyptus.

Tiny tree trunks stand, so frail and small.
Such a beautiful park, full of wonders and mystic
stories.

Kakadu man, you are our beginning to a beautiful
memory!

How sad and depressing that you are the last one
of your people.

As the last person of your kind, you became a
well of knowledge and light.

The sacrifices you made, the customs you hold,
the story of your wisdom.

We shouldn't ever forget you,
As you were something that cannot be
forgotten.

You're special, not for being the last one, but
for making your kind matter.
Your memory finds its place.

Without you, terrible things would have
occurred.

But you always knew, we can't be trusted.

We apologise for the inconvenience we have
given you.

Your spirit is strong, and we will be like you.

All the things you did,
Putting your people in front of you.
Making others your priority.
Sacrificing your cultural laws,
Just to save the story for the next generation.

You are many people's role model, so be it.

We will always remember you.

From past to present, your journey told,
With gratefulness, we honour your beliefs and
your spirit world.

Kakadu Man, forever in our hearts.

Thank you, Kakadu Man. ■

A POEM FOR BIG BILL NEIDJIE, GAGUDJU MAN

Brisha Jadav · Year 8 · Marymede Catholic College

In a moment of time, our paths aligned,
As fate unveiled a treasure I'd find.
In the presence of greatness, I stood in awe,
For I had met Big Bill, a living folklore.

His eyes, like ancient wells, held stories untold,
Whispering wisdom from days of old.
A Gagudju man, his spirit ran deep,
Connecting generations in secrets they keep.

The wisdom he carried, a sacred flame,
Igniting my heart with ancestral acclaim.
Through his words, the land came alive,
Guiding me on a journey to truly thrive.

Big Bill Neidjie, a guardian of his kin,
Passed down stories that reside deep within.

His legacy etched upon the sacred ground,
A bridge between cultures, profound.

Big Bill Neidjie, a beacon of light,
Guiding us through the darkest night.
May his teachings echo through time's embrace,
A tribute to his spirit, and boundless grace. ■

Big Bill Neidjie was the keeper of ancient knowledge and the last speaker of the Gagaudju language from northern Kakadu. He passed on this knowledge to the younger generations and shared his culture with the wider world. He is best known for being central to the opening up of his land which led to the creation of the world-heritage listed Kakadu National Park and for recommending it be leased to the Commonwealth Government for it to be managed as a resource for all Australians.

HISTORY OF A CANOE

Divinia Kihara · Year 9 · Marymede Catholic College

Carved from the side of an ancient tree
Made from wood belonging to this land
Needed to be a worthy vessel for the sea
Boarded by men for a journey
Pushes into mother's water
Salty water caresses my wood
The men paddle as water carries us out
Takes control of the path to go
Across high oceans I have taken them
Many died in the journeys
over rushing waters mighty and free
boys, men courageous fellas they were
Facing dangers, trusting their lives to me

To get them home
To let their eyes always meet sky
And not the ferocious salty flowing sea
Used by many
Touched by the sea
The sea my friend
This time you have decided to claim me
You welcomed me
And I'm sorry boys
But now you'll never see the sun
Or your family
And again dust you have become ■

LOWITJA O'DONOGHUE

Simarpreet Kaur · Year 8 · Marymede Catholic College

Lois, before two, a life you had.
Bliss of memories that softly fled,
Become obscure, visions blackened, mind
 blanked.
Flashbacks you recall, flashbacks that disappear.

Then suddenly, it was all gone.
Clouds of fog cover your view.
Slowly murkiness starts to cover everything.
The time you had, the things you did.
All disappeared.

Your life took a turn for the worse.
Every day you wake up people not of your colour.
You know something is wrong.
As young as you were,
You knew what their purpose was.

Mistreated by the whites, the followers of God.
Lies and wrongdoings you witnessed.
You dressed in white but saw people of your
 colour.
It slowly started making sense.

Clothed in the palest of colours, the moment was
 captured.
Depicted in a newspaper of lies,
Betrayed by those, that you never met.
Your kind persists to live, proving them wrong.

And you fought to your very end.
After years of service, and ill treatment.
You started a fresh life,
But who knew?
That your fresh life was anything but another
 painful mission.

You wanted to help the sick,
But something so small, impacted something so
 big.
She didn't even let you in through the door.
She looked at you once and snapped.
But she doesn't know what she lost.

When the light hit, dawn appeared.
Every dawn, you stood tall as ever.
Rejection burnt in your heart like fire.
Your strength vanished, but never forever.
You came back, strong as ever.

At dawn's first light, dreams become alive,
Persistence paid off, efforts shine,
With the passion you held, your objective became
 real.
And each new day,
You became a better person, a stronger woman,
 and a better nurse.

Though, people despised you because of your
 colour,
You know it hurts,
But you thrived with persistence and hard work,
And worked for years, becoming the best version
 of yourself.

You kept your passion,
You continued what you love,
Travelled around the world,
And did what you were meant to do.

There are many obstacles in life,
But you jumped over them,
Even when you fell over one,
You got back up and did what you love.

Thank You Lois,
People will remember you,
When they fall,
Or get turned down,
And they will get up with passion.
With you in their hearts. ■

Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE (b. 1932). An indigenous rights campaigner and a Yankunjatjara woman. She was removed from her mother at the age of two and was raised in a mission home. She became a powerful and unrelenting advocate for her First Nations people and an inspiration to many, encouraging Aboriginal rights and reconciliation.

MY GRANDPA

Leroy Chen · Year 9 · Mazenod College

Inspiration, as I understand it, refers to the deep and meaningful impact that events or people can have on our lives. My grandfather's life, both before and after immigrating to Australia, serves as a great source of inspiration to me. Born in 1963, he spent his childhood in Laos as a member of a family of six, which included his parents, himself, and his three sisters. Despite attending crowded classes with over 50 students, he also worked to support his family by selling dried tofu before and after school.

After high school, my grandfather honed his culinary skills as an assistant chef in Laos. He learned to prepare a variety of Thai dishes, such as green papaya salad, green Thai curry, larb, and the restaurant's signature dish, creamy corn soup. Even today, he continues to delight our family with his delicious cooking.

After working as a sous chef, my grandfather moved to Taiwan for university, where he met my grandmother and married. There, my grandfather started a business with his friends selling cassette tapes and players, which were popular at the time. The work was physically demanding, as hundreds of trips up and down the stairs were required to shift inventory, but the business was successful.

However, when my grandmother fell ill, he chose to leave the business in order to be with her.

In 1979, my father was born, and by 1991, after he completed primary school, my family decided to immigrate to Australia in search of better opportunities. My grandfather and father left Taiwan together, securing a business immigration visa. During this time, my grandma stayed back in Taiwan to care for my uncle, who was still just an infant at that stage. Adjusting to life in Australia was challenging, as they had to learn a new language, adapt to cultural differences, and face prejudices. Job opportunities were scarce, but they persevered, eventually establishing a stable life.

My grandfather's resilience in overcoming various obstacles throughout his life, both before and after immigration, has had a profound impact on me. His determination to seize every opportunity to improve his life and the lives of those around him serves as a constant source of inspiration.

Currently, my grandfather's influence on my life remains strong, as he shares his experiences and the challenges he has faced. His stories serve as a reminder of the importance of perseverance and the power of determination in achieving our goals. ■

SEASONS

Lila Drane · Year 7 · Star of the Sea College

The sun is shining
Weather as hot as lava
Finally summer

Leaves starting to fall
Weather gets a lot colder
Not time for snow yet

Lot's of snow falling
Blanket and jacket season
"Woosh!!" It's getting cold

Warm weather is back
Flowers dance in warm wind
Flowers are blooming

Summer , Spring , Winter
And Autumn , they are seasons
They are very nice. ■

WHO INSPIRES ME?

Lucas Pham · Year 9 · Mazenod College

“...music is, when done correctly, refreshing for the soul” - Ray Chen (2019)

Ray Chen is a Taiwanese-Australian classical violinist, born on March 6, 1989, Taipei. Ray started learning the violin at only four years old and was immediately identified as a prodigy. He was able to complete all ten levels of Suzuki Music education in only five years with ease and was able to get into Curtis Institute of Music at only 15. As his career was developing, he appeared in well-renowned orchestras worldwide, such as San Francisco, Berlin Radio Symphony, New York, and Munich Philharmonic orchestras to name a few. He also co-founded ‘Tonic Music’, an app for musicians to help connect and socialise about their love for music. Furthermore, Chen is a music consultant for Riot Games, with his main work being on Riot Games’ hit game League of Legends, where he worked on the soundtrack and performed pieces for their music videos. Ray Chen has reinvented what it means to be a professional musician. He is a virtuoso in all aspects of music and is able to master not just performance, but also composition. However, he has also modernised his

work using You Tube, app development, and video game music creation.

In my opinion, Ray Chen is an extraordinary violinist. The way he plays exposes the fierce emotion of the pieces, such as in the Mendelssohn violin concerto where he played with a sorrowful, mourning but incredible voice that revealed the tragic feel behind the work, which I use to incorporate into my playing. Furthermore, his tasteful use of vibrato in Romantic-classical music creates a dynamic, exaggerated sound that helps me apply the technique correctly and tastefully. Also, his advanced bowing techniques allow his tone to be vibrant and colourful, creating a sound that has a singing voice. This allows for a three-dimensional tone that carries powerful aspects such as the story, emotion and mood that leaves me in awe. Ray Chen inspires me to strive for virtuosity. His enormous sense of creativity, passion and positive attitude is essential to the growth of the modern classical community. It is impossible to fully comprehend his extraordinary skill, as the sound of his playing is unparalleled in the classical world. ■



Belle Miller
Year 8 · Star of the Sea College

THE BOY FROM ROSARIO

Zain Muscat · Year 9 · Mazenod College

A young boy from Rosario began his uprising,
The young boy's challenges became comprising.
As Lionel travels towards the unknown,
His hard work and courage was quickly shown.

A young boy from Rosario shines like a small star,
The start of career of a boy who has travelled far.
While the corroded darkness of GHD stays near,
His football journey begins to make his struggles disappear.

His life reflects the act of sheer dedication.
As he approaches his goals with full determination.
When he joins Newell's Young Boys; his first football team,
He begins to slowly fulfil his hard-working dream.

As a young star he quickly began to shine.
His strength and inspiration was certainly divine.
A young boy inspires us to persevere,
His future continues to stay unclear.

He begins to struggle with his country Argentina,
His football journey is shown all over the media.
As he enters what seems to be his final World Cup,
The pain and pressure begins to pile up.

His uplifting leadership inspires those around,
And his hard work and determination is crowned.
As he lifts the glory of the World Cup,
The pain and suffering is burned up.

His great inspiration flourishes and shines strong,
His legacy and work for glory sing a song.
He inspires in all scenarios,
The small, young boy from Rosario. ■

MUM

Chibuikem Anyadoro · Year 9 · Mazenod College

Circumstances can't change,
Great falls don't cause rage.
With the grace of a shining star, she rises,
Always one to have eyes on the prizes.

From morning to dusk, life was a bend,
Never was it easy for Mum.
Woman working wondering whether she could mend,
All the suffering patients around her that she could tend.

The path of a doctor is gone, so nursing suffices,
Always working with resilience.
Success brings in my Dad,
Married, jumped countries with brilliance.

Circumstances can't change,
Great falls don't cause rage.
With the grace of a shining star, she rises,
Always one to have eyes on the prizes.

2000, 2001,
Two children are born.
2003 Family grows with a son,
2008, now a family takes form.

Cancer, doom and gloom,
Despair hits all.
Father? Dead. Widow? In-room,
She was going to win this brawl.

Circumstances can't change,
Great falls don't cause rage.
With the grace of a shining star, she rises,
Always one to have eyes on the prizes.

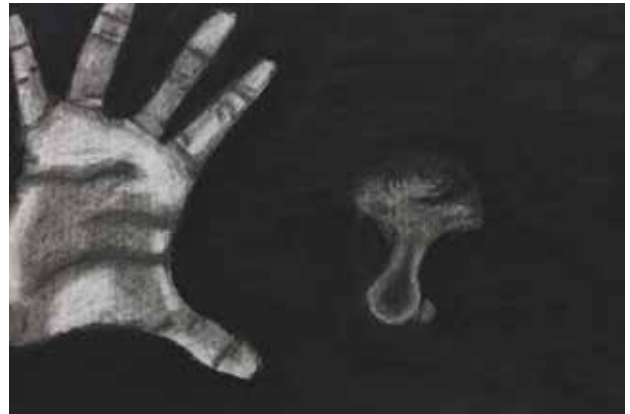
Now? Success is commonplace throughout the family,
two daughters in Uni, Law and Med.
Her quote, "Education over jewellery" helps brings us pride,
Son in Mazenod, bringing academic progress.

Inspired I am by the love of my Mum, but I'm engrossed,
How can success occur when it constantly gets worse?
Well, the simple answer is you get up and work,
Love you, Mum, you broke the curse. ■



Ekambir Singh Dhillon
Year 9 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

Art and Photography



Akur Majok
Year 9 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

Art and Photography



Laura Pitotsky
Year 9 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

Art and Photography



Isabela Figurek
Year 9 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

Art and Photography



Minh Tran
Year 9 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

Art and Photography



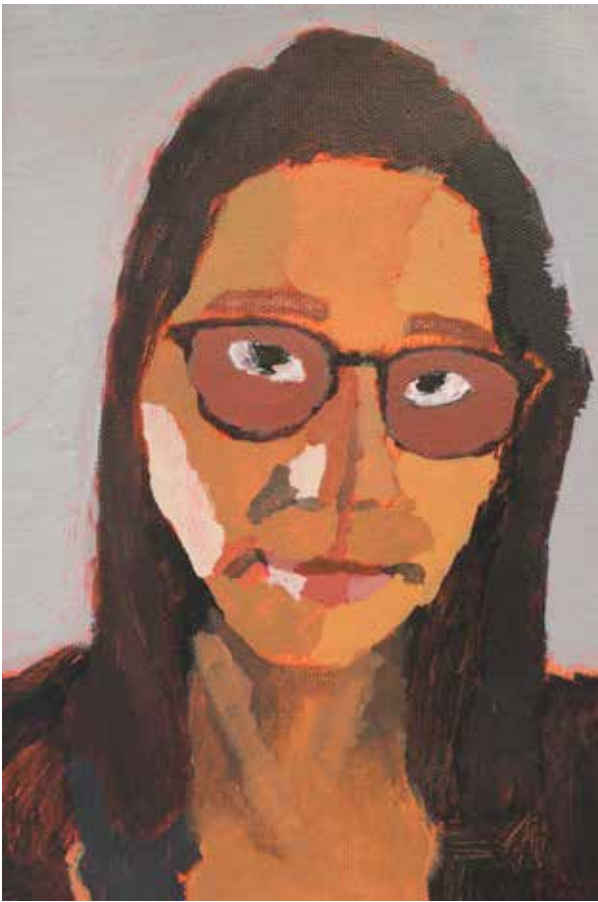
Mikayla Perry
Year 9 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

Art and Photography



Noelle Lloyd
Year 9 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

Art and Photography



Alex Saowapayanon
Year 9 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

Art



Tharushi Wannakuwaththa Waduge Don
Year 11 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne



Maria Martinez
Year 7 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne



Caitlin Pestano
Year 12 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne



Minh Tran
Year 9 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

Photography



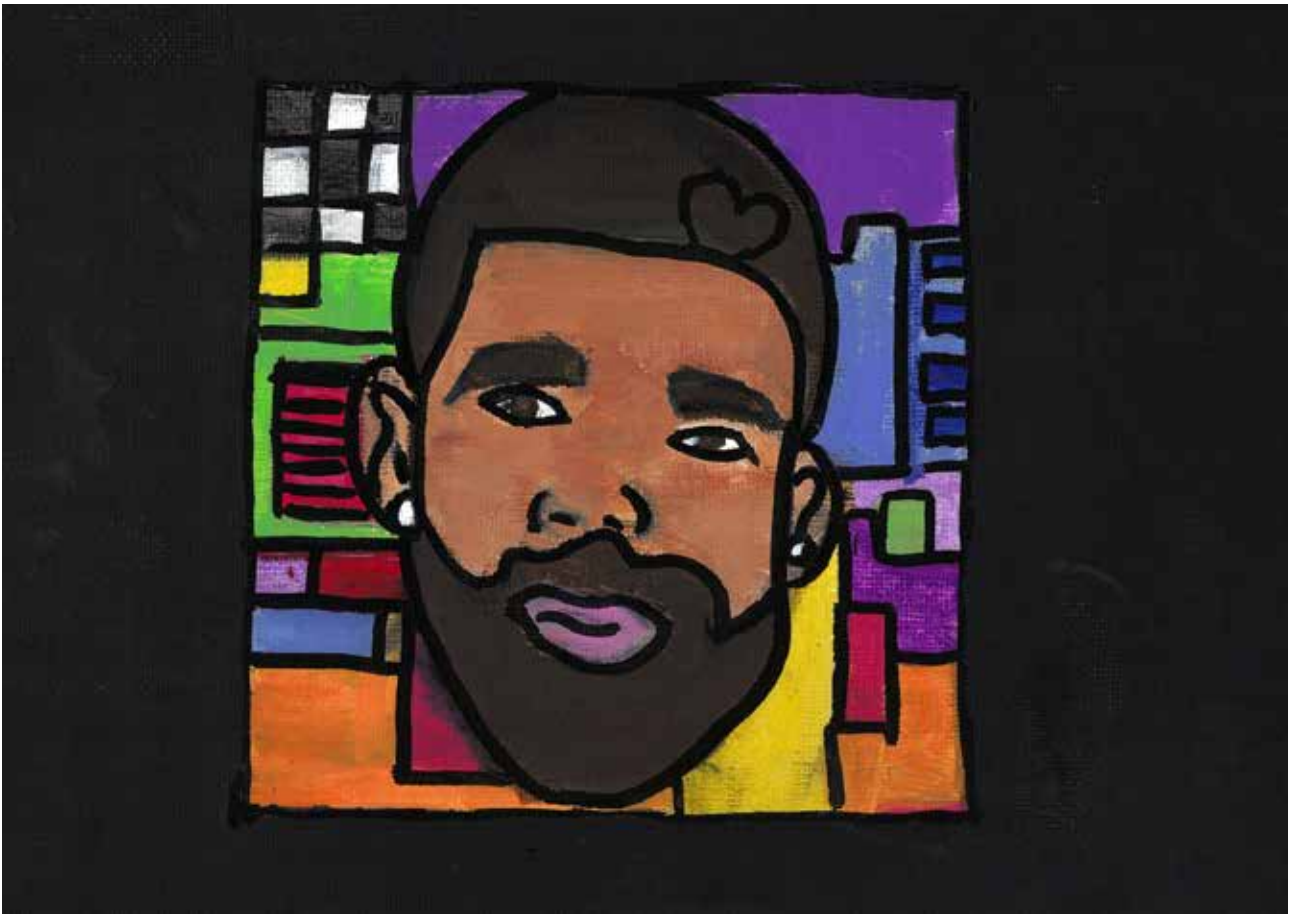
Xavier Quiambao
Year 9 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

Photography



Ekambir Singh Dhillon
Year 9 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

Photography



Rushika Collurage
Year 8 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

LUNA PARK

Hope Mercuri · Year 3 · St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

Busy, crowded, soaring rides.
Roller coaster zooming fast.
Rides that go upside down.
Feeling excited and amazed. ■

HOPE

Iris Saunders · Year 4 · St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

A soul that's empty
A spark of hope lights the dark
Nothing can stop the glow
Illuminating the soul ■

ISLAND

Stevie Goga · Year 2 · St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

I am on a tropical island.
Big, green palm trees are everywhere you look.
I can hear the whistling sound of the wind above
me.
A cold feeling goes through my arms.
It smells like a tropical rainforest.
I hear the sounds of the waves hitting the shore all
around me. ■

BEACH PARADISE

Niah Boyd · Year 4 · St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

Soft wind in the air, soft wind in my hair.
Sun shining on the beach, sun shining on my feet.
Water is as cold as ice; it never feels quite right.
Salty taste in my mouth, salty taste blowing south
What a beautiful sight to see on this paradise
island with me. ■

RED

Alba Davidson · Year 3 · St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

Red is love.
Red is the sight of lava burning in the light.
Red is the taste of an apple, juicy and sweet.
Red is the feeling of anger when someone is
annoying you.
Red. ■

CLIFF

Patrick Hancock · Year 2 · St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

I am on a high cliff.
The powerful wind blowing on my face.
The rocks around me are cold and rough.
I feel the height.
It is like 100 metres down to the ground.
The air smells like grass.
I can hear the crows singing in the sky above me. ■

EYES

Matilda Martin · Year 4
St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

Eyes
Seeing the world
Looking through your pupils
Picturing all the things you can discover

Look around yourself
See the colourful peaceful forest
See the clear blue ocean
See the misty towering mountains
Beauty ■

MY DAD

Jackson Crinis · Year 6
St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

What he does and what he can do.
Makes me always try to push through.
He constantly encourages me to thrive.
Building resilience through tough times.
He says two wrongs don't make a right.
Instead be strong and use your might.
He loves me and I love him back.
He always guides me along the right track. ■

THE OCEAN

Zoe Delahunty · Year 6
St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

Beautiful creatures with magical features.
Rubbish spreading around our oceans.
Making all the sea animals sick.
The decision is ours to pick.

How can we fix this mess that we're afraid
to admit?
That has spread over many populations.
It's time we had this conversation.
Inspiration. ■

BULLSEYE

Jennifer Forster · Year 6 · St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

Archery, the sport about arrows
A pointy tip, the stick so narrow,
Hold your hands out on the bow,
Let them go, now watch it flow.
The string bends back, the arrow stabs
Into the target,
Bizarre,
Not yet,
No bullseye.
Stay outside, hours at a time,
My arm so bruised, but still I try,
I do it again, a hundred times,
Keep on trying, I'll get it one day.
Its sunset now, I started at 12

I place my arrow, so tired now,
I almost give up, so I joke around,
Soon done with the day,
I pull the string,
I aim it at the top and think:
"I hope I don't get this"
Trying to jinx it,
So, I let it go. It flies above,
No bullseye,
Only 1.
I go inside, the next day's mine,
I strive and strive
And bullseye. ■

BEACH

Sophie Turton · Year 2
St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

I am at a beautiful beach.
I can see the glistening and aqua saltwater in
front of me.
I feel my feet sink slowly into the warm sand.
I can hear the squawking of seagulls above
and the peaceful sounds of waves lapping
at the rocks.
I lay down on the soft and warm sand.
I look up to see pale clouds floating lightly
across the sky.
I feel relaxed. ■

CIRCUS

Chloe Turton · Year 2
St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

I am in a colourful circus.
I can see the glamorous performers doing
elegant flips and magnificent tricks.
I can hear the thunderous applause of the
enthralled crowd.
I can smell the fresh popcorn and
scrumptious fairy floss.
The performers split and leap across the
stage. I am stunned.
I touch the soft velvet curtain as it slowly
draws across the stage. ■

THE BEST GRANDAD IN THE WORLD

Nieve Rigby · Year 6 · St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

There is a great distance between my grandad and I.
I rarely see him.
Every time I visit, we go to a shop called "Silly Willys."
We walk to the back of the shop, and there it is, my favourite section- the art supplies!
Gazing excitedly at all the different art products, from acrylic paint to watercolor pencils, I wonder what I should acquire next.
Last time we were here, do you know what he found?
Black paper and white charcoal!

This is my grandad Alan.
He inspires me to draw, encouraging me to be the best.
He makes me feel like I'm the greatest artist in the world!
My grandad is also special because he gifts me with my grandma's old art and tools.
She too, was an amazing artist.
Once he gave me a flower press and some of her pressings.
Thank you Grandad, you mean the world to me. ■

INSPIRE

Tilayo Sowunmi · Year 5
St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

Dream amazing dreams
Don't give up yet, you got this
Believe in yourself

You are so unique
We love you for who you are
You're incredible

Your dreams will come true
Only if you believe
So, believe in them

I know you might not
But give it a little try
Maybe you'll like it

Even if you don't
Just think about this haiku
Because you're awesome ■

WHAT COULD I BE?

Erin Flannery · Year 6
St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

If my teacher told me I could choose one job, I would be...
A soccer player kicking the ball to reach new goals for the world.
Or a doctor curing cancer to eliminate this illness.
Or a dancer leaping across the stage like a ball of glamour.
Or a writer, writing for peace, acceptance and freedom from fear and danger.
No matter my gender, age or culture, I can do so much for our world. ■

ASTRONAUTS

Sofia Del Correll · Year 1
St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1... Blast off!!
We have lift off!

Astronauts are inspiring.
They discover different things.
They need lots of oxygen.
and land on different planets.

They float in space.
And wear white suits.
They do different science experiments.

I want to be an astronaut.
They are great! ■

CIRCUS

Scarlett Bouras · Year 2
St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

I am in a bright, colourful loud circus.
The acrobats flip, leap, jump and split!
I can hear the crowd cheering for the performers.
I can smell the fairy floss and freshly popped
popcorn.
I can feel the tingles going up my back as one
performer asks me up to the stage.
I can see every person in the stadium knowing one
wrong move and everyone would laugh.
As I flip and land the crowd goes wild.
I taste victory.
A tear rolls down my eye as I leave. ■

A PARTICULAR PASSING

Andre Leung · Year 9 · Whitefriars College

As a young child, I experienced several deaths in my family. Over the course of my first few years, my grandfather, my dog, and both of my grandmothers passed away all before I reached the age of seven. Since I experienced loss so often it made me almost void towards them. I could understand the seriousness of these losses but for some reason I didn't feel much towards them. I didn't feel too sad about this, and I coped almost too easily through these experiences. It was a horrible thing that I had as a child, my parents didn't understand why I wasn't emotional at all. I felt nearly nothing at all to any of the losses and continued with my life as if nothing happened.

Every year when I was younger, my family would travel to Hong Kong and we'd go to Po Fook Shang to honour my Yeye and Nai Nai's (paternal grandparents) ashes. This was a cemetery located on a hill in Hong Kong with the ashes of people's loved ones. I found this boring when I did it. It was a very serious tradition, but I felt annoyed and didn't want to bother going due to the long journey. I didn't think there was purpose in remembering someone who's already passed away and I believed it was an unnecessary journey to go up this mountain. This angered my parents, but I couldn't bring myself to understand them enough. However, there was one person who would help me whenever no one else understood me. My god grandma, Kai Ma was the only person I couldn't allow myself to displease. Whenever I resisted going to the cemetery, rather than yelling at me instantly like my parents did she would calmly talk to me about the importance of honouring loved ones. She offered me rewards for doing this such as pizza or fried chicken. Although I still failed to understand the purpose of the journey, I couldn't get mad at her. I couldn't bring myself to ever be unhappy with Kai Ma. She was the perfect person and seemed like the only one who could really understand how I felt at the time.

2019

I was about to go to sleep on December 27th at around 11pm. It had been another great Christmas with nothing unexpected happening. Except for one thing. I was lying in bed before hearing my dad calling someone on his phone outside. I didn't think much of it until I spotted the shadow of my

mum running across the hallway. I waited a little bit before creeping up behind the door of my dad's room where I could see my dad sitting down with his phone. My mum was sitting beside him looking at the floor, distressed. I didn't dare move a muscle, I even started holding my breath at one point. I was sat so still behind the door and almost jumped when I heard my mum say, "It's ok to listen." I walked in and my dad was silent. "Kai Ma's gone," the phone said. "There was something wrong with her liver," said to me quietly. When I heard this, I couldn't even explain how I felt. Thoughts flew through my head and I started to forget words in my mind. I walked away and sat in my room and didn't say anything for the rest of the night.

I didn't understand how emotional I was feeling when I heard that sentence. I didn't know whether to be angry or sad and I couldn't express any of my feelings at that point. I wondered to myself why this death seemed to have so much more impact on me compared to the others which made me remember the time I spent with Kai Ma. This made me realize the true reality of losing a loved one. I suddenly felt horrible for resisting to go honour my grandparents at Po Fook Shang, I regretted not displaying my emotions more when my grandpa (maternal) died and I began to understand a little about how my mum was feeling. Then after thinking about my own emotions towards this loss, it made me realize that my dad would feel the most pain since he had known her the longest as he was Kai Ma's god son. I talked to him the next morning and we discussed how we felt about this which helped us process the loss at the time. He thanked me and told me he appreciated what I had done for him and I felt relieved for him.

This loss had opened a window of empathy for me, something I had lacked during the earlier years. I suppose that perhaps I became numb to the experience of loss or perhaps I just wasn't close enough to the family I lost. Kai Ma's passing made me realize the pain everyone else was experiencing. Every year on December 27th I remember the passing of my god grandmother. The experience has helped me understand the impact death has on people. I told myself to always try my best to be empathetic towards others just as Kai Ma was to me. ■

TICK, TICK, TOCK

Joey Guy · Year 9 · Whitefriars College

In the local cemetery, of a small coastal village, nestled in the steep shorelines of Switzerland, young Ezekiel revelled in the memories of his dearly departed grandfather. His grandfather was a locally renowned watchmaker known for his ambitious pursuit – harnessing the power of a pulse to fuel a timepiece. Though his attempts fell short, an extraordinary phenomenon occurred, granting life to the clock with the irregular rhythm of his heartbeat—tick, tick, tock. On Ezekiel’s sixteenth birthday, a cherished moment arrived when his grandfather presented him with the time-worn watch. As the polished metal touched his skin, Ezekiel could sense the echoes of his grandfather’s irregular heartbeat reverberating within—tick, tick, tock. The bond shared between machine and human felt undeniable, transcending the boundary between worlds.

Throughout the years, ageing Ezekiel treasured the watch, a tangible reminder of his grandfather’s spirit. However, living near the saline sea air took its toll on the delicate timepiece. Gradually, the salt seeped into the machine’s inner mechanisms, causing the beat of the watch to slow, and almost come to a halt. Ezekiel’s heart sank progressively every time the watch ticked, or in the case – absence of ticks, as he witnessed the powerful connection to his grandfather slowly fading away.

Determined to bring back the watch’s rhythmic heartbeat, Ezekiel embarked on an arduous journey to restore it. His fingers worked meticulously to clean and repair its components, but a dark part of himself yearned for the beats of his own heart in the watch. Unbeknownst to his conscious mind, Adam subconsciously changed its rhythm, unknowingly separating it from his grandfather’s

pulse. Now, it beat in harmony with Adam’s steady heartbeat—tick tock.

Carrying a bittersweet sorrow within, Adam made the heartfelt decision to honour his grandfather’s legacy. He walked toward his grandfather’s gravestone, whispering his gratitude and love. With a heavy heart, Adam set the beloved watch gently upon the stone, bidding his final farewell to the connection they once shared. As Adam stepped away, a profound stillness engulfed the air, the absence of the watch’s rhythm was deafening - the watch had ceased its ticking. A wave of grief inducing wind passed, whistling in between the watch’s delicate gears, leaving Adam depressed and longing for a miracle. And then, in a fraction of a moment, a tiny flicker of life emerged from within the watch—the ticking recommenced, fuelled by the chilled wind, the watch began pulsating in his grandfather’s distinctive tempo - tick, tick, tock.

Overwhelmed by the sheer wonder and beauty of the moment, tears streamed down Adam’s cheeks. The unbreakable bond he shared with his grandfather had triumphed even over time and nature’s elements. In that moment, Adam knew that the love they bore for one another surpassed all boundaries, thriving in the timeless rhythm of their hearts. From that day forward, the watch became both a cherished relic and a testament to the enduring power of love. The ticking, once again in sync with his grandfather’s heartbeat, whispered of eternal connections and the immortality of their bond. And as Adam continued his journey through life, he carried within him the profound lesson that love, even in the face of adversity, is a force that withstands the tick, tick tocking of time. ■

THE SWORD

Joshua Currow · Year 8 · Whitefriars College

I am of humble wood and rock.

I am a formation crafted by those around me, and I am happy.

For what I have done there is an empty cave, while my brothers have crafted ravines of mineral and flora, deep colours and cunning creatures, for they are stronger than I.

I am still sat on this beach as they spread my burning soul through the world. Trees sprout and people play from where I call home. The waves spilling between the coarse yet familiar sand that adorns my fields of pure nature. My body and home ever fickle as they are, have given me all the power of which I need to accomplish my goals.

I stay stagnant as days fall and the nights pass, but as people walk by, as they meet their destined someone, a single match is thrown into my charcoal and oak filled soul. Large forges of high temperatures working to succeed, constantly tempered by the hammer of ambition. I watch while these metal boxes of fever spread their fire through the world.

Watching them, a match is thrown, my embers fly and the heat of my purpose rises. Filled with the warmth of my mind, I ponder. What can I bring? What do the people expect or want from someone new? Scattered, my ideas and potential dance to this new symphony brought on by others.

Dancing embers slice through the refrigerated air as they waltz to and fro. As I build up this cacophony of partnering dancers and bring the water to a boil, they start to leave. One by one exiting the building. The perfect combination of powder and wood wait to combust my mind another time. The embers have dispersed between the high crashing waves and the foam that washes up on the shore. It brings me peace as my light fades, but only for tonight.

The new morning hits as the sun breaks. The cool nightly winds spread my fading embers through the thick layers that the ocean bears. Through the ages I have stood and for longer I will stand. I have tried many ways for combustion to be achieved, many ways I have tried yet failure loomed over every attempt.

The deep shadowy figure showed the coming of

fast flooding downpours, eroding stones and turning the once thick and heavy campfire to a pile of rock, ash and smoke. But for every watery turn, I find the heat mere moments after. The lights fixed in the hardest nights show brighter than those chasing the closer sun. For while I am not the largest fire to burn, I have the power to come back. For once glory is written and failure has claimed a fellow, the box they once emerged is emptied, yet mine is everlasting.

New lives come and pass as new boxes are created. The trees in the fullest expanse stretch on more than one could see. The saplings they mentor grow higher than the one that can teach. My flame is lit, fast and high. Embers fly and whistle the smallest whistles through this land. The feeling stronger than what was thought possible, for the heat I bare is not equivalent to the sun nor am I bigger than it, but as it burns so do I.

For the time one can look lasts their life, making an impression in the earth lasts as long as the sun. As itself the grass is walked on, but it still grows. It spreads no matter where and no matter how; it makes its way. When grass and trees are faced with impossibility, they still grow for the will carried with them is stronger than the trunks they grow.

The boulders that have been placed, the standards and expectations that were given by my creator, even if it's a single lash of flame, a crack is formed. The shift in my container is small. Nevertheless, I seize this time period, one step and a miniscule hop leaves my prison, fast spreading as I take the space left by the many.

Consuming the energy dropped down. For the deep ground stops me from taking the roots, in spite of that I take all above. The shift of energy feeds me and I continue to enlarge. The boundaries once set have been shattered and my potential is true.

But I am no different from anyone else, the power I hold is a sword wielded by anyone and everyone, the stone the sword is held in cracked long ago. And the lady of the lake blessed it in a time that is far from now. The strength that lies in the sword shows like many others, so take it. It needs someone that has the ability to reveal its potential as it shows yours. ■

A MERE SHADOW

Max Andison · Year 7 · Whitefriars College

3:48:10 AM

Invisible, transparent, a mere shadow. That was what the murderer needed to be. Too many of his kind had been caught, like a fish in a net and he was NOT about to be next. He vowed never to be traced, even if it meant killing hundreds, even thousands in cold blood to plug the spread of information. The population of the killer's home country alone was 47 million and counting. What did a few insignificant lives matter? This was what he reassured himself with, as he perched on the crumbling eaves of a small shack in the lush countryside, blending in with the shadows. The victim lived alone, in the middle of nowhere. There would be no-one present to hear him scream...

3:49:28 AM

As the murderer slipped through the window, he spied a figure lying in a small wooden bed at the corner of the room. Asleep. The only signs of movement were the steady rise and fall of the victim's fat stomach. As the moonlight fell on the victim's face, he saw that it was rather ugly, with large boils on his nose bridge and forehead, and a wide neck. The killer wouldn't be sorry at all to wipe this being off the face of the Earth. He seriously doubted anyone knew him anyway- the victim was a cattle farmer and worked off his own land.

As the killer stepped on to the rotting floorboards, they creaked loudly and one of the victim's eyes flickered open, like a streetlight slowly turning on after dark. But before he could even register the knife in the murderer's hand, it plunged deep into his flesh – on a direct pathway to the heart – and the victim's eyes rolled back into his head.

The murderer stepped back, smiling, to admire what he had done. First job of the night accomplished.

3:50:32 AM

Far away, in the ominous, black building that was England's MI6 Headquarters, with only a few seconds of delay, a man wearing an immaculate black suit and tie received a CCTV transmission from a small farmhouse in West Yorkshire. As the live video loaded, he ran his hands through his sleek, blonde hair. *This could be it*, he thought hopefully, *we could finally catch him*. The man in the suit – Mr Forsyth – was fully expecting not to see anyone in the room with the victim. The killer was usually extremely thorough with his work.

The screen flickered to life and Mr Forsyth stared, shocked as he saw a foot disappear through the window. He jumped up, shouting to his colleagues to get people to the scene, and within only half a

minute, forty MI6 vehicles sped off, lights flashing, making a beeline to West Yorkshire.

3.51.29

Meanwhile, a single black car, headlights off, sped down the 2-kilometre-long dirt track out of the property. The road was rutted and dusty, becoming so overgrown in some places, that he had to squint to find the way out. In the back of his mind, if, in theory the intelligence services were on their way, and they managed to block the end of the road, the killer would not be able to leave the property. He *could* quickly park his car and run, but if he lost his car, he would have to steal another one, and the last time he did that didn't go so well.

The murderer reached the gate to the property and stopped his car engine for a couple of minutes. He had to check the road was completely safe.

"Wait" he suddenly thought "*I didn't check the house for cameras!*"

3.55.05

He couldn't be caught now. He couldn't ever be caught! Ever since he was a child, he wanted to be a contract killer, inspired by his father before him. The Killer floored the accelerator, kicking up a cloud of dust on the corrugated front drive. He felt an immediate sense of relief as he sped down the highway.

3.55.19

Forty vehicles, including trucks and cars turned up at the farmhouse in West Yorkshire. There was no trace of the murderer. Little did they know, that just over the hill, he had heard their engines, but was becoming increasingly confident that MI6 were not in pursuit. After he had driven for half an hour, he turned down a small lane and expertly disposed of the body in a nearby farm. MI6 had set him up. They had planted the cameras there. That had been way too close.

Being a contract killer was tough. He had learnt that very early in life when his father had died for his crimes, but he had pushed through, and used that experience as inspiration to follow in his father's footsteps. Completing his first job at the age of twelve was the proudest moment in his life. He had felt as though he had won a trophy. He had stood there, laughing with excitement at the life he had just destroyed. This was how he was meant to be.

Invisible, transparent – a mere shadow... ■

BEYOND ALL ELSE

Gus Mileto · Year 8 · Whitefriars College

‘Clear for landing!’ cried a soldier on the surface. A small orbital sphere came down suddenly and blew a lethal wind gust across the surface. A small door opened outwards, with a rush of people from all nationalities, crashing down on the sand. Jaden, the elected team leader for Team 3, watched many workers struggle with a water shortage, gasping for air.

Out of the wilderness, Edward Serve, the commander in chief of the base, inspected everyone for signs of weakness. ‘Your awfully tall young sir!’ Edward shouted. ‘You’ll be perfect for this mission!’. From what all could tell Edward walked carefully and quietly, never lifting his feet above five centimetres. ‘Gents, meet Erich von Rambler, the scientist who has spent thirty years observing the outback. Team 3, please make your way across to briefing room, c4.

Jaden walked observing the other team members. He was a skilled strategist but lacked all other elements of being a great leader. He watched as all the other men shivered as they approached the briefing room.

Despite his height, briefer introduced himself firmly and ferociously. ‘Gentlemen, please focus up on the board!’ The room was still, not a word was said in the duration of the time spent, it was agony. ‘You scumbags are to make a reconnaissance mission across the dunes of sand eastward, and report anything out of the ordinary, is that clear?’

‘Yes, yes sir!’ pronounced Jaden, speaking for everyone.

In small vehicles, Jaden and his team rolled out of Base 17x. They were overjoyed to be out so early. They traversed the eastern landscape, following not road but sense. The sandy dunes were as soft as cushions, they were painted as so it seemed. There was dust, much of it, as it littered the world. They had gone but sixty kilometres and were already out of charge.

‘What shall we do?’ asked Tim, a fellow crewmate.

‘Nothing, we are stranded.’ Jaden called out.

‘Surely there is spare fuel somewhere.’

‘No, we are all out’.

John, a fellow teammate, fell to the ground in shock. Face first onto the sandy surface, he hit not sand but rock. The team rushed to his aid, flipping him over to one side, and saw a gash so deep, all the world could fit into it. No faster than light, Luke, another member, checked his pulse.

‘He’s still alive’ he cried.

Several hours had passed, and the sky began to turn. It could only mean but one thing, a storm. Not just any, but one that defined the Red Planet; how it got its name.

Clouds began to pass. Gray as rock, they let out their baptism of fire. Whirling winds, tornadoes and sandstorms began to envelope the countryside. It happened all so fast, as lightning would a tower.

All the crew held on the reconnaissance vehicle for dear life. Artillery it felt like, smashed their bodies, and faces. Not a word was said, in risk of all hell being shoved in their throats. The barren landscape once still and shiny, once a painting for Earth to admire, had been converted into pure oblivion.

‘Guys, hold on a sec, do you hear that?’ Jaden screamed.

‘What, the sandstorms and tornadoes, then yes, I do’ remarked Luke.

‘No, not that, those crushing hooves, can’t you hear them’ Tim told Luke as he pointed in the direction of the sound.

As smoke and dust cleared, all became obvious. All around the team, in an encircling movement, lay before their eyes the monsters of the undergrowth. Their faces strewn into existence, mandibles long and sharp; their hooves crashing into the rocky underworld. All came apparent. These monsters of iron hearts, some as great as schools, diligently suppressed all hope of a breakthrough. They were incandescent with fury.

No sooner was their glory day at an end. One monster charged at them, full to the brim in frustration of their presence...

All was at an end. From the days of Auerstadt, to the days of Normandy; the German army was fairly defeated, so too would the same fate envelop the team; Devastation was at its most formidable point.

As smoke and debris cleared, someone else appeared. Their body silhouetted across the sky, as they rose to meet the bloodthirsty jaws of hell. And with one great charge he was nowhere to be seen, and as the teammates tried their best to understand of the situation, they realised who they were witnessing, no other than Captain Jaden. Slowly, the rest of Jaden’s army lifted themselves, feeling as though they had to do their duty, they had to fight through. Some mortally wounded, from head to toe, others, ready to pour fire into the enemy ranks.

How where ‘beasts of undergrowth’ meant to challenge the destructive nature of Team 3? I ask you, how could anything challenge the broad speech of Jaden, who could rally even people of lost faith, to rise on his side?

It was futile, the sheer weight of the patrol could demolish even the strongest, of time itself. It was not devastation, but inspiration at its most formidable. ■

INSPIRE

Josh Condron · Year 7 · Whitefriars College

I sat and I watched in awe as Jeffery ran down the track, baton in his left hand, a classmate in his right. He was being guided to the end of his very first running race, something I, nor many others ever thought was possible. Jeffery was born blind, making certain things much harder for him. But that didn’t stop him from striving to be successful, and giving things a go. Jeffery always said that there had to be a way he could do stuff anyone else could do, even if it wasn’t exactly the traditional way. As he crossed the finish line, everyone at school stood up and clapped and cheered. I ran over to him. “Hey Jeffery, it’s me, Josh. You did so good out there, mate!” I said, and I patted him on the back. “It may not be exactly how everyone else runs a race;” he replied, “but I found a way.”

The following day, Jeffery and I were sitting in the garden at school, eating our lunch. “You know what I want to do, Josh?”

“What?” I replied

“I want to ride a bike all the way across Australia.”

I stared at him in disbelief. “Around... All of Australia?”

“Yep.” He said confidently.

“But- “

“Josh. You can run a race. I can run a race. If you can ride a bike, then I can too.”

“I cannot, however, ride a bike around the entire circumference of the Australian continent.”

“Anything is possible, Josh. I just ran a race, and I couldn’t even see the finish line.”

That night, I thought about the conversation I had

had with Jeffery. It’s true. He did just run a race. Blind. And now he wanted to ride a bike across Australia. If he could do it, why couldn’t I. But I knew there was no way that he could ride a regular bike. And then I had an idea. And so I settled it. The following day, I told Jeffery that I was going to do it with him. As soon as the end of the year came, we rode all the way around Australia. But we had to train. For the next 6 months, we took bike riding lessons on our very own tandem bike and learnt how to ride faster and use less energy. And finally, the day came. We set off on our journey, me at the handlebars, Jeffery at the rear.

We had arrived at a roadside campground, where we decided to stay for the night. We had been riding all day. I was exhausted, and I knew it. However, it was so incredibly hard to think about when the sheer idea of the fact that Jeffery, someone who was blind had learnt to ride a bike. With no help, he could keep the bike moving using the pedals at the back of the bike. All by himself. In one day. It took me years to learnt to ride a bike and I can see. It really does show that anything is possible. Throughout the rest of our ride around Australia, we met many new people who were incredibly supportive of our mission and made many great memories. I saw Jeffery do some of the wildest stuff, that even I wouldn’t dare do. He went on a zipline across a 300-metre-deep canyon. I could never do something as crazy as that. When we got home, it seemed like the entire population of Australia was waiting outside Jeffery’s house, cheering us on as we pulled into the driveway. Jeffery and I hugged each other. “Anything is possible” Jeffery whispered. “Even if you don’t do things the traditional way.” ■

WHY PEOPLE ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM CAN THRIVE IN SOME AREAS, OTHERS CAN'T

Mikayla Morabito · Year 10 · Padua College Mornington

Short reflection on my connection to the theme, 'Inspire': The connection that my story has to the theme, 'Inspire', is that it shows other individuals who have been diagnosed with Autism, (like myself), that having this disability won't stop them from being able to do things that they love, such as: Art, Advocating for global-issues, and Acting, etc. I find it really influencing when I see stories, (whether they're in books, newspapers, magazines, or online in the media), about what people on the spectrum have been able to achieve, and I thought that this persuasive piece would be a good idea to create, as I would like to try to inspire others more, that they can achieve whatever they put their mind to, despite the challenges that they may face, as long as they put heaps of effort in, and try their absolute best along the way, no matter what the World throws at them along the way! This exact quote I made up a couple of years ago, has been one of the things that helps me to keep trying, and putting 200% into everything I do, no matter the challenges that I face due to Autism, and the other learning-disabilities that I have. Writing this story, has also been apart of that, as I struggle quite a bit with punctuation in my writing, (by putting way too much in), to the point where I have to force myself to not include it, (which I've tried really hard to do in this piece). That's how my story has a connection to the theme of, 'Inspire'!

When it comes to the term, 'Autism', being heard, many people think of it as people being dumb, lazy, and extremely shy, but it's not that. Autism is a Neurological-Condition, or Hidden-Disability, (meaning it's life long), and can affect how people interact with others, and the surrounding world, and how people socialise with others around them. Although due to this, people often think that those on the spectrum are, 'dumb, lazy, and very shy', a lot of them can be quite intelligent and are successful in areas that Neurotypicals aren't. Some of these areas can include: Arts, Advocacy, and Acting.

One of the areas that quite a few people who are on the spectrum are flourish in is the Arts. Some of the most famous artists known had Autism, and one of them was Leonardo Da Vinci. As well as being an artist, Da Vinci was also an engineer, and he was well known for the paintings that he created. Da Vinci was an artist by character, and talent, and he considered that his eyes was the main path to what

he knew. Sight to Da Vinci was a man's greatest sense because alone, it was able to carry out the facts of experiences instantly, faithfully, and also with conviction. Da Vinci was able to apply the creativity that he had into realm, (where graphic representation is drawn upon). Eventhough he was a sculpture, painter, engineer, and an architect, he went further then that... by utilizing his outstanding intelligence, extraordinary abilities of observation, and acquire the art of drawing to research nature itself, an area of interest which acknowledged his interests of Art, and Science to thrive. Wasn't Da Vinci's ability of his eyes being the main path to his knowledge pretty interesting? This symbolises how people who have Autism can be prosper in the Arts, and that it's because of how they interpret the surrounding world differently, to people who don't have this disability.

Advocacy is another area in which people on the spectrum are also quite thrive in. An advocate that many of you probably have heard of before, is Greta Thunberg. Thunberg is a passionate climate activist. When she was eight, Thunberg learnt about the global issue of climate change for the first time, and was surprised that not even adults were seen to take the problem seriously. This lead her to become frightened about the unpredictability of the future she had, with both temperature increasing, rising sea-levels, and more frequent natural disasters. This was highlighted in one of the first times that Thunberg had opened up about being diagnosed with ASD, 'I couldn't do that. Those pictures were stuck in my head'. Thunberg asserted during the interview, when she stated that at school her teachers would show the students films of plastic in the ocean, Polar-Bears starving, etc, and that she cried throughout the movies. How would you feel if you were in that situation? This suggests that although Thunberg has Autism, and she's selectively mute due to it which can make her be seen as, 'shy', because of her empathy due to this disability, that she's able to feel connected to the world that surrounds her, and feels that she has to help the animals, and the globe from climate change. This embodies how people who are on the spectrum are able to be really successful advocates, as they often have a really strong sense of empathy towards people, animals, and even the world around them!

The last area that I think people who have Autism can be very advanced in is Acting. Chloe Hayden, (who plays Quinni, in the Netflix reboot

series of Heartbreak High), has Autism, as well as ADHD. One of the fields that Chloe has been able to triumph in, was the portrayal of Quinni, (the Autistic character). Due to Chloe having been diagnosed with this disability herself, the character of Quinni, was able to acknowledge an accurate representation of Autism in the media, which needs to be seen a lot more. This prompts when Chloe remarks that people have presumed, 'You're nothing like Sheldon Cooper'. Chloe has stated in the interview that she had for Marie Claire, that it's because the character of Sheldon Cooper from the Big Bang Theory, is what the disability of Autism is believed to be, and that she gets told that all the time. Despite having Autism, Chloe reinforces that nothing will stop her from signifying to people, a true representation of Autism in the media, in her role of Quinni. This illuminates that people who are on the Autism Spectrum, can excel in Acting, as they can represent Autism accurately, by being their true, and authentic-selves, rather than the roles of Autistic characters being guessed by Neurotypicals.

People who are on the Spectrum can be quite successful in many different areas, including: the Arts, Advocacy, and Acting, despite having difficulty at times fitting into the world around them. Do you think these individuals have proved that they have excelled in these fields? The next time you come across someone with this disability, how about support them, and congratulate them by declaring that they have done a really good job with the area that they are able to succeed in! ■

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THE COLOUR OF THE CANVAS

Jade Ross · Year 8 · Padua College Tyabb

Everyone told me to give up. That it was hopeless, I'd just waste my time and I should stop trying. But they're wrong, this year is going to be my year. I sat in my room with my sketchpad, sketching what I hoped would be the winner this year. For I was entering the threatened species art competition. The sketch of the Eastern Bettong was coming along quite nicely. My door flew open as my mum stormed into my room.

"Why haven't you done the dishes yet Shelby?" She growled.

"I'm drawing my competition entry."

"Seriously? Why do you waste your time with that? This is the 3rd year you're entering." She didn't believe in me and wasn't trying too hard to hide it.

"Third time's the charm right?"

"Right." She scoffed and walked out of my room, not forgetting to remind me to 'do the dishes'. I wish everyone believed in me in the way that I believed in myself.

I continued to sketch for weeks ahead, improving my drawing and getting advice from anyone who was willing to look. Some people even started to comment on how it was 'really coming together'. Of course, not everyone was that optimistic, there were plenty of snarky comments 'What's that trash?' 'That's competition material?' 'I could draw better with my eyes closed'.

These comments were hard to endure but I powered through them, knowing that there were people who believed in me even if my parents didn't. The deadline for my entry was coming up fast... one week, 3 days, today! I finished my work

right on the dot and I felt fulfilled and happy about how it looked. I hurried to my mum to get her to post it to them and she gave me the computer to write my written entry with information about the Eastern Bettong.

"The Eastern Bettong is a rat-like hopping mammal native to forests of southeastern Australia and Tasmania. The Eastern Bettong is endangered due to pressure from introduced predators like the red fox and habitat loss due to rabbits. These small mammals don't exist on mainland Australia anymore but they've been reintroduced to Tasmania for a fighting chance."

My mum proofread my work and sent in my entry.

A few months later...

We rode in the car to Melbourne for the third consecutive year. My parents were a bit grouchy but I was ecstatic. Today's another chance! I sat in the presentation hall and sat in my allocated spot, I could hardly sit still! They said an acknowledgment of country and then a speech, thanking all of the entrants for their efforts. They then started the winners, I squirmed in my chairs and my heart rate increased as they announced that they were going to crown the 11-12 year old age category.

I crossed my fingers; this was my last year to enter and I hope so badly that I could get something.

"In second place we have Janis West with her painting of a Woylie." There was applause until the speaker started again "And in first place, Shelby Allister with her breathtaking drawing of an Eastern Bettong." There was cheering and I started to cry happy tears. I walked up to the stage to claim my prize, a certificate, a voucher and a cool glass bird. I knew this year would be my year! ■

THE SOUND OF THE APPLAUSE

Bella Birks · Year 8 · Padua College Tyabb

My heart is racing.
My blood is pumping.

Adrenaline coursing through my veins.

Tonight's the night. If I stuff this up, my dream of a career are down the drain.

I take a step onto the shiny floored stage; the spotlight blinding my eyes. I go to shield myself but know deep down that any small mistake I make could send me home. The first leap I make sends the audience into silence, watching in awe as I tell a story through dance.

I wasn't ready for this.

I'll fall.

I'll die.

I start off like a beautiful angel dancing through the night, but then I spot the critics in the flood of people and start to falter. I still have so much to go to make this musical shine but there was too much pressure on a small child struggling with so much in her life.

Give up.

You're not good enough for this.

You'll only embarrass yourself.

The moves get harder and faster, the music following my steps leading up to the hardest move I've ever made. A massive leap and twirl onto a lowered platform. I've done it before, a few times but that was with people helping and watching me, ready to catch me if I fell. And this time there were thousands of people watching and relying on me. I take a deep breath as the music slows before taking my leap.

This is it.

You can't stuff this up.

Breathe.

I land on the platform but stumble a second too late and collapse to the ground. Pain starts screaming in my legs as I hold back a scream. I try to breathe through the pain but it feels hopeless. I've failed. I lay there in a crumpled ball, silent tears falling to the ground. I want to get up, need to get up. The

crowd has once again gone silent, but this time it's in confusion and fear.

I can hear distant voices call out but I'm in too much pain to make any words out. I don't know how long it is but minutes go by and I can't figure out what happened. Before I know it people are applauding and I can't figure out why. It only takes me a few seconds to realise I've started to my feet. The sound of the applause seems to drive me, giving me that little burst of adrenaline to push on forward.

Out of the corner of my eye I watch as people try to rush toward me but I wave them off. I take one last deep breath before I struggle to my feet. My left leg feels like it might give way but I get into what someone could call first position. The applause just gets even louder and I even hear people call out as they urge me on.

You're just gonna make your injury even worse.

What are you doing?

Stop making a fool out of yourself.

I stumble again but this time I manage to find my footing. The music had to be slowed down but I actually managed to do a version of the song and finish it. I limp over to the front of the stage and take my final bow. I'm grinning through the pain and urge to just collapse to the floor and I get about ten seconds of listening and taking in the screaming of congratulations as people rise to their feet. I even managed to catch a smile from the critic. :) ■

Connection to the theme 'Inspire'

For a long time, I've loved to write and create little worlds within thousands of words so when I saw the opportunity to write I went ahead. I didn't really know what to do for the theme but I love dance and feel like the story has good meaning. I feel like in the future, I'd love to continue writing, and the theme was just another challenge which I loved to overcome. When I thought of the theme 'Inspire,' I loved the idea of someone being pushed forward through the crowd cheering them on. It took a little but eventually I myself got really inspired and created what I would call one of my best pieces.



Lily O'Mahoney
Year 10 · Padua College Mornington



Maggie Burke
Year 11 · Padua College Mornington



Henry Miller-Heinz
Year 7 · Padua College Rosebud

INSPIRE

Noorulane Ali · Year 7 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong

The person who suffered for 9 months just for me to be here today, the person who only shows love, hope and compassion.

The one who taught me that no matter where I am kindness is what shall be conveyed.

She has taught me that no matter how different I may look on the outside I am me on the inside.

I have learnt so many things from her and all of them having one similarity, respect.

This person has always told me strength lies in difference not in similarities. I still remember her comforting me on the first days of anything, I remember her comforting smile and me saying "Goodbye Mum!" ■

INSPIRATION

Isabella Rozas · Year 7 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong

We haven't always had the best life
And when we found out you got MS
I felt like I got stabbed with a knife

You always show yourself with a happy face
But inside I know you were in pain
You would make anything or anywhere your
happy place
And you would always keep your hopes up like
a plane

I am privileged to have you as my mum
Day after day I look up to you to be my best

You show me to be the greatest I can become
And I know that you need the rest

You have taught me to never be someone I'm not
And all I want to do is give my dad a punch
I am aware that I can be a lot
But I'm sad to be saying he made you suffer so
much

You have made me become a strong person
And I am proud to be saying my mum is my
inspiration
I love you mum ■



Avneet Saran
Year 7 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong



Christia Gulay
Year 8 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong



Owen Sharples
Year 10 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong



Reese Castillo
Year 12 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong

LETTER TO ELIE WIESEL

Kiara Lay · Year 10 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong

Dear Elie Wiesel,

Thank you for writing "Night". On behalf of all those who experienced it, or didn't, and for the future generations. For me, living in this current era, it feels shockingly surreal that such a tragic event, too inhumane to imagine, could actually happen. But it did. And I am grateful that we are able to read and perceive the circumstances of this tragedy through the eyes of one who lived it. I couldn't fathom how you would've felt during it, or the relief knowing that horrors were finally over. I also think it must have been very hard to write about it, to grasp the right word to truly enunciate the meaning you wished to emphasize, let alone coming to truth with what actually happened. Putting pen to paper to write about something is so hard, let alone of that magnitude, but you did that. So, thank you.

-Kiara Lay
Year 10 ■

LETTER TO ELIE WIESEL

Quratullane Ali · Year 10 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong

Dear Elie Wiesel,

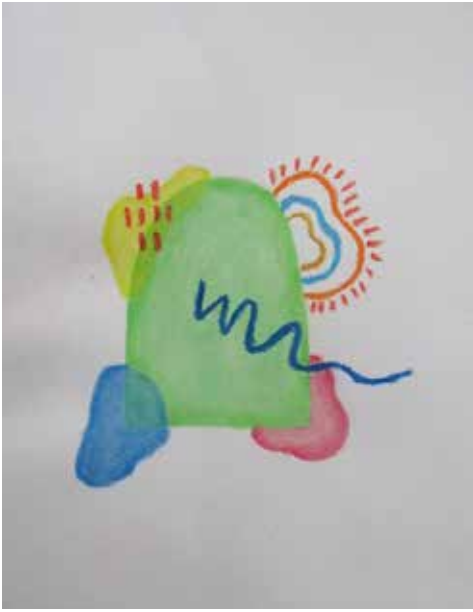
The bravery you have! You're right and I respect you for taking the courage to speak up so honestly. Towards the end of the memoir, you mentioned that you don't know how you survived the holocaust, you say you're just an ordinary person. Many people believe that God chose you to be a witness of the genocide. Nevertheless, I aspire to follow in your footsteps, because I too am just a normal girl who just had a lot to say about this unjust world. You spoke out for your ancestors and people who were silenced. I admire and respect that. I admire the person you chose to become. ■



Deng Mawith
*Year 10 · St John's Regional College,
Dandenong*



Thenujee
*Year 9 · St John's Regional College,
Dandenong*



Milla Obradovic
*Year 9 · St John's Regional College,
Dandenong*



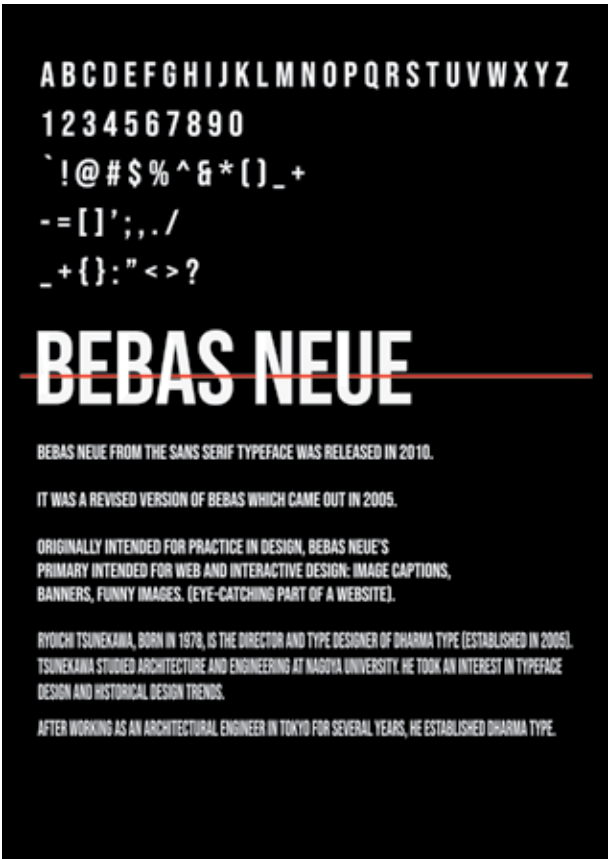
Jack Fisher
Year 9 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong



Bheeshman Karan
Year 10 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong



Jessica Phan
Year 10 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong



Peter Yang
 Year 11 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong



Hannah Micallef
 Year 11 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong

THE MAYFLOWER

Alessandra Crowe · Year 12 · Star of the Sea College

Like the rush of birds in the Spring, my grandfather's love of his father's Triumph Mayflower ensured its migration across the numerous houses in which we had lived. The power of that burly vehicle was a mark of my father's grit, I guess. His unnerved nature in the wake of my mother's hectic nature. Yet, the incessant dust blowing off the Hume Highway project, had my Pa's city car turning into a 1920s Ford tractor - rusty, clanky and just groaning along. I never saw anything of the sort until I was completing placement for the Woods. Appropriately named, the couple's old California Bungalow and surrounds within a national park needed help from a young Agricultural Studies student to develop their land into their own idea of paradise. However, they were reluctant to part with the past and my attempts to move them into a post-War Australia were met with a slice down the forearm, inflicted by an old spring which had sprouted from the rotting mattresses, as a reminder to let things happen as they will.

My father did the same, always seeking to move on from his past. My whole childhood was seemingly consistent in its inconsistencies. Perhaps bipolar, my mother seemed to have this constant edge; flighty. Never putting all her troubles in the same spot, Mum never had occasion for tradition or stability. For her, life seemed to flow around her desires to just up and move. It was met with the silent death of my childhood. See, the constant chaos was forced to the forefront of my mother's mind, mulling around with her consistent obsession with Bible study groups, church group activities and her control over me.

The Woods, however, did inspire me. Planting themselves in their shack, left me to the whims of the weather, the forest around me and the restrictions of the placement. They had been labelled by their families as black sheep. So they removed themselves from their familial ties by picking a surname with homage to the new surroundings in which they lived - the woods. Whatever it was, their name was their own. Trudging through the winters near Armidale, the walk to and from my College had instilled in me a hardiness that bore well with the terrain of the Woods' forest. Partial to some comforts, a shed built by their son for the farm's water management systems, fertiliser and occasional farm cat, became my outpost for my semester placement.

It was polar opposite to the clean sterility of my family's houses. My father's work as an accountant for a regional textiles mill meant that travel for him

was constant but regular. Macquarie Textiles sent us everywhere as work moved with the trends of rural and remote communities, and largely, at the whims of city folk. His firm, a victim of theft with the mill constantly falling short due to fabric being ordered but not paid for, operated across much of the countryside. As such, growing up in Orange, Albury and the like, were the sources of normality within my childhood. Though the people changed, the scenery didn't. It was the same dirt strips, the same church leaders and the same style of speech.

However, it was probably her disruption of my childhood that has seemingly erased my ability to be comfortable with the regular. Though the chaos, at times, comforted me in its consistency, the mundane has become a position that brings me a great deal of discomfort. The Mayflower's deterioration had needed my father's skills in car restoration. The calm serenity he experienced whilst brushing out gravel from between the ridges underneath the vehicle came as a respite.

And that is what I found within the margins of the Woods' estate, lingering between their 'alternative' forms of horticulture and farm management, and a hominess within the downtrodden state of their house. However, they had a home, a place to lay themselves after a long day of pulling wheelbarrows and weeding. They had a physical representation of their memories, of the silent chuckles between the couple and the peeling laughter of their son. They had that much.

Despite not having a home, we had houses. The one in Orange where my friends could hop over the fence, much to the detestation of the peonies trampled by thousands of little feet. The one in Lavington, dark bricks, enclosed a sheep in the courtyard one morning and Albury had a pool and two storeys. All houses, no matter the place, never felt like home like it does now. I have fought to be under a permanent roof. A base of sorts where I can flit away, but always return. However, of late, the 10 years I have settled into this house have begun to feel like a weight against my back, slowly pulling me back as the walls decide to absorb me.

Perhaps her sudden desire to stop, just stop and 'downsize' to the outer suburbs of Melbourne has restricted her to a mundanity that I wanted, that at times was needed. I needed the small yard with the pet cemetery. I needed the Hills Hoist. I needed the cooling stream behind the house. I needed the car porch. I needed a community, raising a child requires a village. I needed the sleepovers, playdates, walks home from school and calls from neighbours during the week.



Reeds surrounding the Murray River

That wasn't what I was given at the Woods', nor my mother. It seems now, in my current monotony, that I have taken to a life that satisfies my desire for normality, but not the strain that it results in. I guess that the abundance of a delicacy gives rise to a poor taste in the mouth. It's the stickiness on a muggy day and dried sand caught and rubbing between toes. It's a discomfort that has been building over time, almost since birth. It's as if there is a desire, a very human desire for normality, but a straining towards madness and havoc. It's become my life's bloodline, a tightening string caught within the mouth of a fish.

But I'm beginning to think that it's normal, that maybe my mother did right by constantly allowing my father to move.

Perhaps it was the constant movement and chaos that forced her to be grateful for the small moments of normalcy we had enjoyed as children, that the small taste of a delicacy was something for us to desire, but never eat constantly. Maybe that was the magic of chaos, the same chaos I find myself seeking. ■



Cattle farming near Orange.

ENDURING

Charlotte Verberne · Year 12 · *Star of the Sea College*

In the late afternoon, as the golden-tipped peppermint eucalyptus threatened to turn red and Stoney Creek whistled its tune, voices traversed. The sounds propelled themselves against the tide like constant waves of war; only infinitesimal silences in the lull of battle. The source was three families trekking alongside the creek to reach the Venus Baths. Existing across two generations, the old trailed behind the eager legs of the young as a wooden hiking stick battered into the branches of its ancestor.

The Grampians is a place that exists beyond the imaginings of urban Australian life, its waterfalls and hiking trails drawing incongruous city goers to its mountains. These families were the first of their line to establish a connection with the place, a distant uncle providing a house, a home, that would be revisited year upon year...

The trees parted for the group to enter in single file, mirroring the trail of bull-ants who maintained their defence like NRL warriors. At a first glance one didn't see the immediacy of its beauty. At a second... the sandstone rock, as though sculpted by the hands of the mountain springs, dipped and dived, forming pools. They were not deep enough to reflect the sky's vibrance; instead, they were a brilliant orangey brown. Past the base of the first rockpool spanned an incline almost 30 metres high, jagged lines creeping across its surface like the wrinkles of an ageing face until it meets nothing: the horizon of a single rock among many. Small, hesitant hands clung to the indents and dirty feet scrambled for purchase. Then they scrambled down, scooting along on their backsides to fight the inevitability of gravity. Like a never-ending relay race, one pair of feet hit the ground just before another was swept and trapped in a flow that did not ebb; it pulled, yanked and left bruises and scratches in place of pallid skin.

The dads, your traditional Aussies, were the drivers. Their first instinct upon seeing the flowing stream was to secure the rushing waters, restrain what existed as the purest, most sanctimonious form of life. Soon seven little helpers were full-time employees of The Project. Everyday. Between treks up to the iconic pinnacle during recess, icy pole juice dripping down the chins of kids and dads alike during their lunch break, and mums standing by as PR managers ready to wipe away or scold, they worked. The stream slowed and was pushed up and towards the bare feet of hikers and those of toddlers who had waddled too close, 'too close!'. It became a well-oiled machine; a relay race turned human conveyor belt. It was like playing

Tetris with life. The stones were packed together with gravel, granule remnants likely still residing under fingernails. The pond at the bottom of the stream, your new reservoir, festered; looked as if coffee foam residue had been emptied into it. Stagnant, polluted. The onslaught ended following the families' departure. Three days of work and they soon retired to the backseat, weary.

In their absence, the rushing stream wore down stones, pushed crushed reeds out of crevices until they inflated again like balloon animals. A whittler, the water sluiced and carved, leaving some rocks small enough to tumble downstream. Sometimes a stray traveller plucked a pebble from the dam and lugged it home: a misplaced keepsake. But still. The pool remained a blend of morning beverages and lost trout.

Only a year later and The Project resumed. Where life had taken over, the dads and kids took back control. Moss that had grown over the peripheral stones was torn up like an old carpet by eager hands, the miniature hills imploding. While the sun's shadows discriminated, the spray of dirt from the workers' shoes did not, and nor did the way they looked and glanced and saw. Upon sighting life's wonders, they processed them as small pieces in their game, not breathing entities with unique mannerisms and behaviours. Each aspect of the creek or the Elephant's Hide has chronicled life, whether it be the seven days of a dragonfly or the hundreds of years of a sandstone rock face. The innocent actions of the families, and the existence of The Project, denied those journeys, showcasing their ignorance.

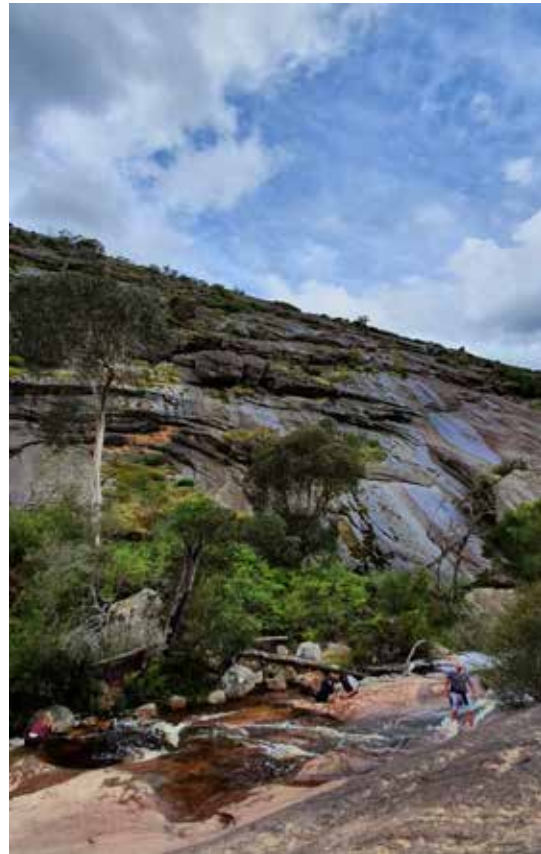
The cycle continued; resurgence of nature then the dam. Maybe seven years in, the family visits abruptly stopped. Pandemics, Year twelve exams, and a prompt lease held them back. Nature's dominion returned. Stones eventually tumbled down the creek in tens and trout squeezed through the gaps where gravel formerly resided. The heat of the unwavering sun boiled the pond until the coffee foam evaporated, carried away by the wind as though it had suspected its intrusive presence. The surface gleamed, reflecting the vivacity of natural life that otherwise had been muddied.

The families would eventually return. The youngest was a little bit taller, the tips of her ears almost reaching the low-hanging eucalypt. The elder voices rang out deeper, blending with the harmony of the creek. This time when the trees parted ways and the rocky walls fell away, howls of laughter did too. They arrived in the early evening – that incandescent time just before sunset – when it

seemed as though the earth had stopped. Each person's day of work ended, and kangaroos lazed on the cricket pitch. Bird calls rang out as they did each evening, a voice among the many relaying one message that remained a foreign language to most. However, upon a third glance...

Only a single rock from the dam remained, steadfast like the familiar jam of the Esky lid. There was a realisation that day. They had broken life's force-field by following that primary destructive instinct: each step they had taken as workers had left an imprint in the stone, stepped on the thriving, wilting, blooming, enduring Nature. It was humans' entire purpose, seemingly. Take the Tassie Dams as an example; humans driven by selfishness and an inherent need – no, a want – to etch their names into the stone. But grooves in the rock ran deeper than any engravings, creating a lifeline not able to be broken by the Moirai, let alone the wandering hands of Aussie dads and ignorant kids. Now they understood that concept they never had; the creek, the pond, the sandstone rock had its own life undefined by their dam.

Undefined and unrestricted. That is the way it is, and it was, and always will be. The creek that inhales and exhales, runs and jumps, looks and comprehends. It lives on. ■



Venus Baths, Halls Gap, Victoria.

MY ISLAND HOME

Paige De Silva · Year 12 · Star of the Sea College

In the summer of 2015, I stepped foot outside, leaving the quiet comfort of the cold airport. The smell is what hits me. The scent hits me like I've just returned home. The haze of smoke, heat, and sweat all swirl around me in the humidity like a warm embrace. The sound of tuk-tuks that wizz past in the traffic and shouts in native Sinhala envelops me. I look above me and see the vast palms that offer me shade against the sun glaring down at me.

She sits there, slumped on the old wooden chair. The surface of the wood wrinkles from age; what once was perfectly carved mahogany is now decaying in the hot sun. Her once jet-black hair was streaked with lines of silver and remnants of luscious curls. She fans herself with last week's newspaper, brushing the flies away that land on her skin. The sound of crickets fills the air, and the sun glared down at us with its harsh gaze. She watches her young grandchildren play in the garden filled with the exotic, watching in wonder as the magical elements of the *Mimosa Pudica* come to life, the leaves suddenly closing at a single touch. The lines around her eyes crease more as her smile widens, her eyes filled with vast pools of joy. On the arm of the chair sits her morning cup of ginger tea, the aroma filling the air. There's rustling in the ageing palm trees above us. I look up to see a monkey and her offspring picking from the wild bananas that grow. The soft sound of my grandma's laughter fills the air, a hearty croak, as she points up from the old chair, murmuring "vanduran", eyes wrinkling at the corners.

At noon, the musical tunes of the bread man's tattered cart play as he makes his way down the rocky driveway towards the house, the scent of fresh malu paan filling our lungs. The sound of the rattling wheels against the rocky, dusty pavement creates a symphony of noises. The children and I raced to the cart to see the array of baked goods. Our fingers make prints on the cracked glass of the cart as our noses smooch against it to catch a glimpse. She buys us each a cream bun for 100 rupees. The cream melts onto our sticky fingers as the sun melts it under its gaze, and an army of flies swarm around us for a taste. A trail of ants flocked against our feet, trying to catch the droplets of cream that melted off the bun.

The garden embodied an explosion of vibrant flowers and exotic plants only grown under the sun gazing glare. Among the flat surface of the wildly sprouted grass sits an ageing well, constructed from large fragments of concrete bricks and surrounded by a bed of weeds. I lean



against the top and look down. Darkness. A never-ending stream of water. I see my face staring back at me. Vibrantly coloured water lilies float on the surface, dyed yellow, immersed in the large petals of various shades of pink. It creates ripples in the flat face of the water, which could almost look as if they were floating in midair.

The coolness of the tiles on the front porch refreshes our backs in the afternoon heat as we watch the palm leaves dance in the light breeze above us. In the background, the sound of her soft snores fills the noise as she sits dozing on the chair. I feel something tickle my leg. I look down and see a small gecko nestle in the shade near my foot, its skin shiny and scaly, and eyes filled with pools of black staring back at me. Its tongue suddenly spurts out as it hisses at me and scuttlers off into the grass, its tail following behind it.

Her wrinkled hand encases ours as she walks us through the busy streets, the hem of her faded pink saree trailing after us. She navigates us around the shouts of street vendors that disrupt the quiet peace of the night air. Stray hounds travel the broken pavements looking for scraps, their paws matted with remnants of the earth. Everywhere I look, I see people. For once, they look like me too; for once, I'm not a dark mark on the endless sea of white. We share the same brown skin, pools of chocolate eyes, and jet black hair. A blanket of

tension I never knew held me down slowly rose from me. My constant state of discomfort in my own skin fades as the vast contrast between those around me disappears. I am them, and they are me. I've never been here before, but somehow it feels like home.

Although it is night, the streets are alive with the sounds of cars honking and a symphony of crickets chirping. The air is filled with the fragrant scent of spices, a blend of cinnamon, turmeric, and cardamom. We follow her down the noisy roads, the music of the busy streets fading the further we walk. Our sandaled feet crush the stones beneath our feet, crunching noisily with each step.

In the distance, I hear the roar of waves crashing against the shoreline as they welcome me with the slightest saltiness from the sea. Suddenly the crunching from our footsteps stops, coming in contact with the soft, squishy sand that fills the gap

between our toes. I slip my feet through the straps of the sandals to feel the grains of sand against my skin, my feet making small indents into the earth with each step I take, making my way closer to the water. The scuttling of tiny crabs on the sand as they race to make it to the water to make it home. Saltiness from the sea stings my eyes, making them water, and crisp, cool air bites against my skin, making me shiver. The waves crash against each other and foam up at the tips of my toes. We see nothing under the embrace of the night sky, yet we feel everything.

Silent saltwater tears trail down my eyes, dropping into the water and swimming away. For the first time in my life, under the silence of nature, I feel at home. Inhaling a deep breath, I feel a sense of belonging. I know that when I leave this place and return to a place others call home, my island home will always be waiting for me. ■



Talisha Galea
Year 10 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor

Seaside

A FADED INSPIRATION

Talisha Galea · Year 10 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor

In the realm of inspiration, where delicate whispers float weightlessly, a connection unfolds that surpasses the confines of ordinary existence. Your hands intertwine, fingers lacing with tangible tenderness, creating a symphony of encouragement and sharing secrets known only to them. Your hearts are entwined by invisible threads, forging a bond that defies explanation. With each word spoken, an everlasting imprint is etched, generating a mystical energy that permeates your beings. The sound of a voice, an unforgettable voice resonates with a timbre and resonance that lingers in the depths of your soul. Within this enchanting realm, lights dance in a fleeting ballet, synchronizing your hearts' rhythms in a way that time slips through your fingers, eluding comprehension. Your world spins by in a breathtaking blur. Akin to a shooting star, they embody inspiration, a radiant force illuminating your path with celestial light.

However, a poignant whisper stirs, urging you to awaken from your trance. A desperate need to break free engulfs you as reality crumbles before your eyes. Illusions twist and contort, transforming the world into a grotesque spectacle of discouragement. The once familiar touch slips away like smoke, leaving you empty-handed. A single glimpse into wounded eyes replays words that pierce your heart like daggers. The line between reality and illusion blurs in a dizzying whirlwind. They fall, descending like a feather swept away in the breeze. And perhaps, it dawns on you, this inspiration you held as ethereal may not be as uplifting as it seemed. Questions arise, comparing achievements — accomplishments, goals — a jarring reminder of the fragility of your bond. They once approached you, brimming with passion and confidence, they're words resonating in your mind like a powerful melody. They once claimed they could ignite your spirit, uttered when you were both young and hopeful. But now, you drain each other through gaping cracks.

You stand on a crumbling cliff, an enigma of distance that stretches longer than you could have anticipated. They refuse to speak, leaving you to cry in silence. The warnings of losing them too soon were denied, but now the story of your inspiring connection feels more like something fragile. Pale and ghostly, they become a stranger, once so near yet so far. The inspiration that once felt extraordinary now flickers, igniting uncertainty within yourself. You navigate unfamiliar territory, wondering when it will end. The calls, the tears that fall like dewdrops, the whispered voices telling you to leave. But you refuse. You saw them once as your guiding light, even as they appeared strong on the outside while crumbling within.

You dismissed the words spoken against them, seeing them as a tempest in human form — a fragile and beautiful entity. “Can’t you see?” they shout, their proclamation shattering the stars and constellations. They were your everything, but now their eyes are tired.

The wind howls, breaking windows. From next door, you no longer hear them. No tight embrace awaits you, for you were warned not to become too attached. You were deemed too young, too naive, lost in the fantasies. The vibrant colours of the world, once so vivid, fade into grey. The words that once escaped, painting pictures, are erased from the canvas. Shut out from reality, the calls, the voice, the word - all are gone. A heavy weight settles within, a strength derived from being demolished before. This life does not belong to you; it belongs to someone else. Your inspiration remains ethereal, unable to be defined otherwise. And as they begin to slip away, you still see them, not in the world, but in your dreams, smiling and laughing.

Yet you cannot escape the haunting image of them fading away, their existence ending with a final breath. Days blend together, them running up the driveway only to disappear into the distance, leaving you behind. A person who once inspired you is someone who conveys raw emotion and pain. But it is not as magical as it may seem. You don't understand: how can pain endure behind a longing smile? A smile that deserves inspiration — your inspiration. Listen. They are gone, trapped in an endless loop of disbelief. You fall. The strength you held for so long wavers. You let the tears fall freely, for a dream cannot last forever. They are not your forever. Just as you once empowered them, allowing them to feel inspired and cherished, you now find the strength to let them go. Even though doubt lingers in the depths of your being, you come to understand the heartbreaking paradox of inspiration. It captivates your heart with its ephemeral nature, slipping through your fingers like mist. The inspiration you shared, so profound and intense, was destined to be transient from the start. The memories become precious treasures, cherished remnants of an inspiration that touched your soul. You find solace in the beauty of those moments, even as they slip further into the recesses of time.

Yet, as you navigate the labyrinth of your emotions, you come to a realization. You cannot yearn or try to hold onto something that was meant to fade away. It was never meant to be a forever kind of inspiration. With tears streaming down your face, you embrace the truth that nothing lasts forever. ■

MATTERS OF THE HEART

Talisha Galea · Year 10 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor

The world clamours for success,
a false allure so bright,
Suddenly, it blinds us to those
who suffer in the night.

Consumed by thoughts of what
we lack, we suffocate in a
black void,

Our pain ignored, our cries
unheard, our pleas null and
toyed.

Bound to the bed, rising is a
Herculean feat,

Whispers of fleeting pain, a cruel
deception to defeat.

For they know not of the days,
months, and years of agony
endured,

A sunless sky, no light, shadows
lurking, darkness obscured.

The ship beckons, set sail on the
uncharted sea,

A destination unseen, holding us
tight, holding me.

But pulled to and fro, we're
dragged without a guiding
light,

Drowning in doubt, questioning
what matters in the deep hours
of the night.

Screams and yells, yet no one
hears our name,

A smile conceals a world of
shame.

We are here, yet so far away
from you,

Ensnared by the abyss, life barely
pulling through.

But wait, turn around, scream
and shout,

It's not too late to flout.

Your precious life, it's not for
waste,

Money doesn't matter, it's just a
chase.

Shining under the spotlight,
others' desires in view,

Is this all that matters, what
about those struggling
through?

Consumed by thoughts, killing
them slowly,

They wonder why you stay
quiet, why you feel so lowly.

Speak up, let your words flow,

Because no one knows until you
show.

Life is a gift, but support is
essential,

Being there for others, it's what
truly sets us free.

For in this life, what truly
matters most,

Is not the riches or the fame that
we boast.

It's the love we give, the joy we
share,

The support we offer, the
burdens we bear.

So let us not be blinded by the
terrible illusion,

Of riches, glory, and success, a
dangerous confusion.

Let us open our hearts, let us be
kind,

Let us be there for others, a
beacon to find.

Even when the hole grows
deeper,

And life seems like a never-
ending torrent of sorrow,

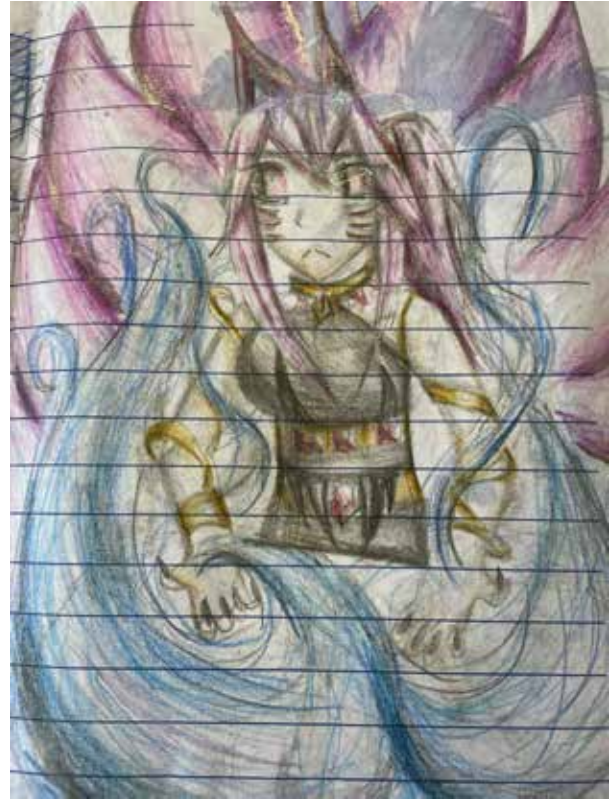
Let us not give up on hope and
love,

For it's what we need to face
tomorrow. ■



Talisha Galea

Year 10 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor



Emily Rees

Year 7 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor

Hi! I'm Emily. I'm an artist who draws fantasy, anime, mythical creatures, and things that aren't normal. I hope my art inspires you to get creative and draw fantasy, whether it's epic dragon fights, or just using colour, blending to make beautiful things come to life. In my piece, "The Light of the Void", the artwork is a glowing tree that is floating alone in the void. It is inspiring because even the darkest and coldest of hearts will still have a glowing life of kindness and love.

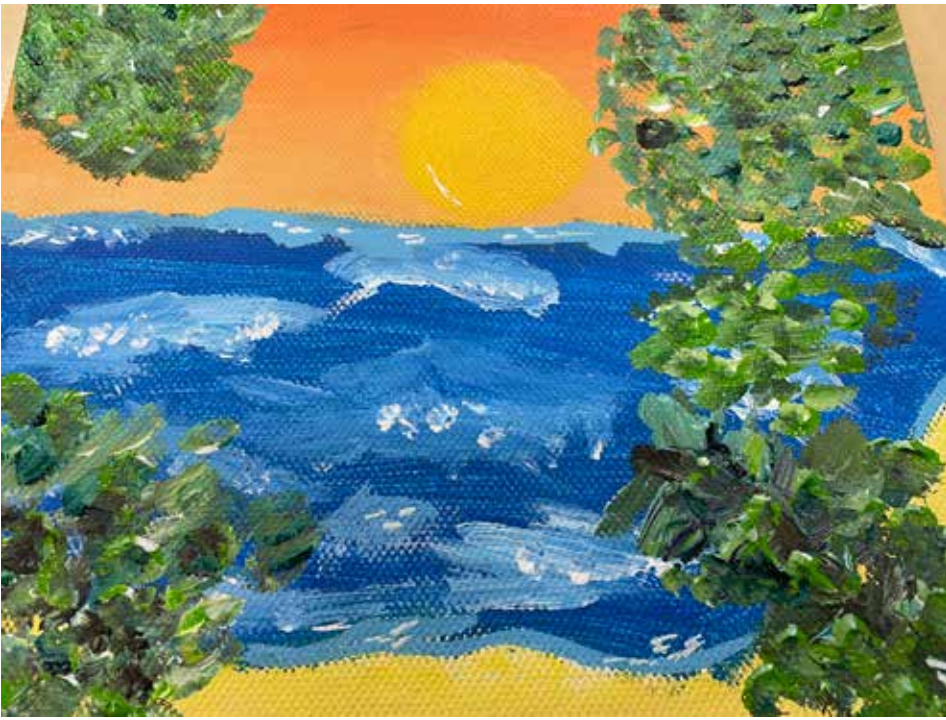


Kassandra Caliguiran

Year 10 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor

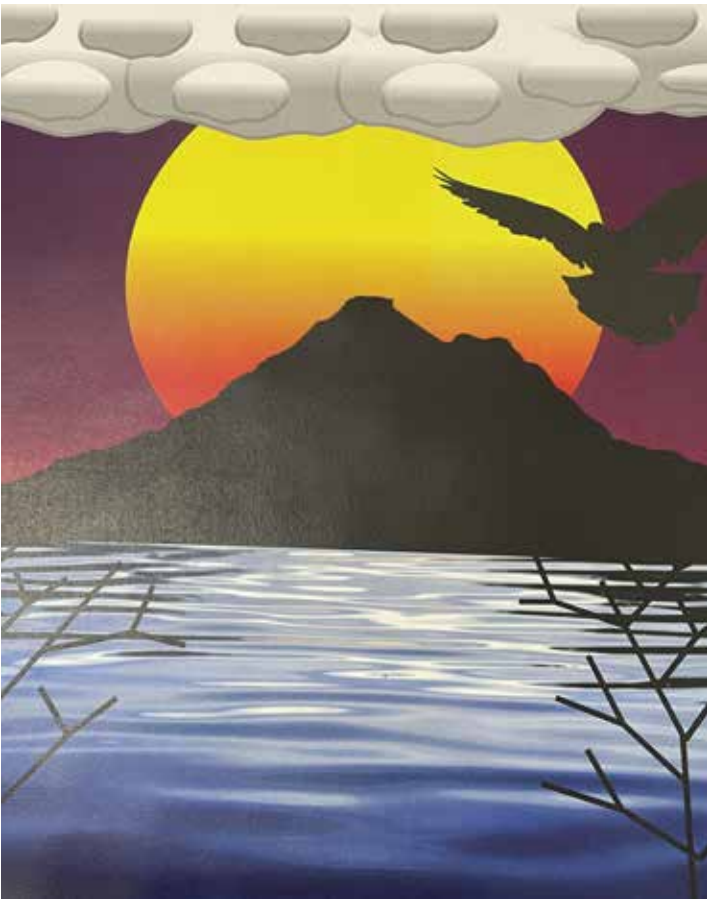
Dance of Emotions - Inspiration

I was inspired to do this painting in my Art elective. I first started with a blank mind with zero ideas but decided to start scribbling down some lines – red, blue, and yellow. Just being able to scribble allowed my mind to flow with inspiration. I was able to create a ballerina expressing herself through dance. The ballerina and background have been coloured with grey tones to represent the fear and struggles that people face during their daily lives. As the colours splash their way onto the canvas, it reveals how negativity and doubt can be conquered through the love of our passions and aspirations.

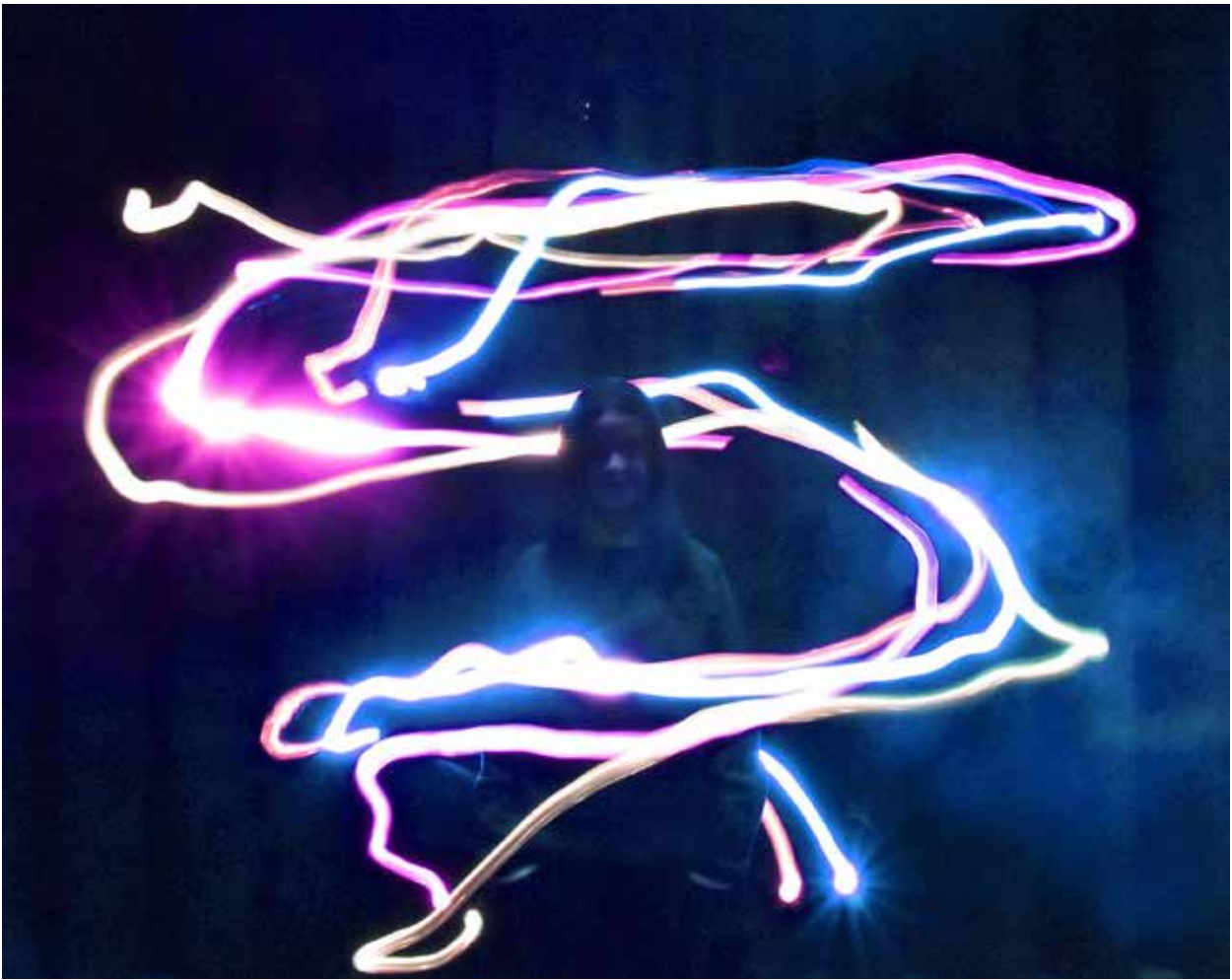


Emma Beasley
Year 7 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor

Sunset



Jason Zahradka
Year 10 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor



Veronika Andonov
Year 10 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor

Light Drawing

I SURVIVED

Henry Daly · Year 6 · St Finbar's Primary School, Brighton East

1945, Okinawan War

I sat there on the cold hard chairs as I chow down on my sandwich. I look around and all I see are miserable faces. Echoes of people chattering swerved through the room. My teeth rattled as a cold breeze swept over us. I had signed up to join the army to try to cure my depression but really I was more miserable now.

Later that night I tossed and turned in my sleep as I felt a hole in my body, a hole that wouldn't go away. I felt empty inside, useless. I watched in despair as my teammates went out and saved lives and I did nothing.

In the morning we were traveling to North Okinawa. Several hours went by as we traveled through the plains, rain dropped on our helmets and boots splashed in the mud. The sun slowly faded away and we settled down in our camp and drifted to sleep.

My eyes open to a gloomy sky facing me.

"EVERYONE STAND!" Sergeant Carter shouts.

Sergeant Carter was a tall skinny man who had light brown hair and a light brown beard. Although he was astonishingly strict with all of us, they say he had a soft spot, a soft spot we were yet to find. We all jumped up as he bellowed those words. Sergeant Carter signaled for us to follow him and we started moving. After hours of treading through the muddy fields of Okinawa we heard shots coming from the distance.

"EVERYONE GET DOWN!" Sergeant Carter screams.

I jump to the floor and duck behind a massive rusty old piece of metal. The sound of gunshots hitting the metal was ear piercing. I slowly peek over the metal, "Aim and shoot, aim and shoot, aim and shoot," I mutter to myself. I hear something behind me, a Japanese soldier... in a hurry I turn around and start shooting. I close my eyes tight and I fire my gun. I open them and see him lying on the floor, blood pouring out of his chest. In his pocket there is a small paper square. I carefully take it and stare at the photo. It's his family. Here he is, the man I just shot happily sitting in-between his family. On the left a small little girl with thick black hair and a bright smile and on the other side an older woman with long black hair and a long black dress.

"What have I done?" I thought.

I feel a wave of guilt fall into my stomach. I get goosebumps.

"I killed a man..." Swirls over and over in my mind.

I wasn't the only killer here. A loud scream screeches behind me. Zimmer, one of our group members, lays unconscious. Eventually the gunshots stop and

we see the Japanese run. After several seconds of everyone standing there and staying quiet, Sergeant Carter barges in saying, "Gentlemen I know this is depressing but it's the truth we must move on."

Later that night the sounds of laughter and joy went around the campfire as the smell of sausages filled the air, I was starving. I hadn't eaten since a couple days ago. Everyone laughed and shared stories but I stayed quiet. I still remember the blood of Zimmer dripping down his shirt and onto the floor. After we had eaten we all scurried off to our tents except me and Sergeant Carter. We awkwardly sat there as the flames rose up.

"What's bothering you mate," Sergeant Carter asks.

I stare at him for a good minute before muttering, "I K-killed a man."

A single tear drops down my face.

Sergeant Carter looks at me and says, "I know how it feels. We all do but I believe in you, you could do great things."

"You think?" I mutter under my breath.

"Yep," he responds.

He wanders back to his tent. A part of the hole in my body was filled, someone believed in me, someone stronger, older and someone respected. That night I couldn't stop thinking about our conversation.

I woke to a loud noise, a bomb noise. We all scrambled out of our tents and we were absolutely in dismay at what we saw. Sergeant Carter was lying unconscious on the floor, his skin was burnt and his body was bruised. Tears filled my eyes. The only man who believed in me went like that. I held back my tears. I didn't want to seem weak in front of my teammates. I wanted to give up but I knew Sergeant Carter would not want me to and the picture of that happy family still spun around in my head.

After the war

The Japanese troops have fallen and victory was on our side but I can't let go of what happened on that fateful evening. The picture of his family with that little girl who lost her father because of me. Was it worth it to prove myself, to prove that I was worthy and I could do it? I pushed through the war because if I stopped I would have killed him for no reason, I have already let his little girl down enough. I take the picture out of my pocket and just stare at it for what feels like an eternity. A tear falls down my cheek and onto the photo. I grab a frame, place the photo carefully inside and nail it on my wall. I survived because of him and I will continue to survive because of her. ■

SMILE

Isla Malton · Year 5 · St Finbar's Primary School, Brighton East

It is too easy to give a smile away.
Be the reason someone smiles today.

I am walking in the cold, lonely, suburbs of Melbourne once again and I see that man sitting there squashed up in a little ball with no blanket, no food and no shelter. He is there every day. The Man has a tiny underweight dog who looks like it hasn't had a warm bubble bath in years. I slowly look both ways then cross the road to put a dollar in the hat that says "money please I'm poor, need help". I feel sorry for the man.

I think that I am lucky enough to be able to go to work to at least earn some money. Meanwhile other people are on the streets living in horrible situations, and I know one day I am going to help them and stop this.

Since that day I have given the man ten dollars daily, and the reaction on his face is always

priceless. But I have had enough! I couldn't believe he had kept living like this and I am sure millions of other people were too and I couldn't handle it. So I wrote a letter to the government discussing my problems with this and how I felt sorry for them all and how they should be helped, not just one of these poor people but every single one of them.

And I am not going to go on and on about the sour stuff and I'm going to skip to the sweet part.

So after I wrote this letter to the government and explained.

I got a letter back and it was fantastic news! They said that they would at least provide each and every struggling person a bucket of food, water and blankets.

From that day I felt strong and helpful, I felt like I had done a good deed to these poor, poor people.

It only takes one big heart to fix millions. ■

INSPIRATION COMES IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS

Edie Schlittler · Year 4 · St Finbar's Primary School, Brighton East

Dear Journal,
Over the past few years I have been inspired to be myself and to follow what I think is right. No matter what happens I know that people should have a chance to be heard and to follow their dreams. I am inspired to make me and others feel that they belong and to be happy. I am inspired to be a thankful person and to show gratitude and love between friends, family and loved ones. I

admire those who don't just think about themselves but are a thoughtful, respectful and kindhearted person. People around the world inspire me to try my best and to have a go even if I'm not sure about something. There are lots of amazing people in the world and someday I would like to be like them. I would like to make a chance for people to speak up and to show everyone what they are made to do. If I had a choice to have the power to make people feel welcomed and supported I would. ■

THE BEST SITTER

Carissa Carmody · Year 3 · St Finbar's Primary School, Brighton East

My babysitter's great and here's why. She tells me stories about her childhood, and not like "I always went to bed early and listened to my mum, Charlotte." More like stories about how she played a tough game of hockey and how she got blood on her birthday dress before her party.

She's really brave. She told me stories about times she got hurt a lot when she was my age, yet she kept on going.

She helps me with so many things, and never hesitates when I have one of my crazy ideas from my over imaginative brain. Like last month, I had this cool but crazy idea to create a shop where I sold my own creations for when my mum got home from work. My babysitter was really good at helping me make my creations.

She also inspires me because she has asthma and she does not let it stop her. She still does incredible things. When we are outside I usually run and she follows behind me without letting her asthma stop her.

I am hopeful that eventually I can be like my babysitter (besides the asthma bit) I could be as tough, brave, adventurous, good with science, and as kind and generous as my babysitter. She has a good imagination and a great brain, and is a lot like me. She likes science, I like science. She likes Minecraft, I like Minecraft. And we both are sort of crazy!

That's why my babysitter inspires me so much and makes me want to keep on going without saying to myself, "Don't do it. You're not good enough. Give up. You'll never make it. There's no point in this, you'll never be as great as them." Instead, I go on and say, "I am good at this. I should keep on going. This will be a great hobby. I'll get the hang of this in a flash."

I always know that she will go on no matter what and is one of the coolest people ever, if not the coolest and that's why she inspires me! ■

BE YOURSELF

Emily Gardner · Year 2 · St Finbar's Primary School, Brighton East

Be yourself,
Love yourself,
See yourself.

You are one person, not two.
Be real to yourself,
Be true.

You are you,
You are true,
No one is better,
No one is you.

If you think they are better,
And the rain gets wetter,
Be true and be you.

Don't be someone else,
Who has lots of wealth,
Be who you are,
Inside you shine like a star.

Love yourself,
You are perfect,
No matter what they say,
You are more than okay ■

IT ALL STARTED WITH ONE IDEA

Brandon Scullin · Year 6 · St Finbar's Primary School, Brighton East

“It's so hot these days!” Jake points out.

The sun in the sky is brighter than it ever has been before, shining a blinding orange and yellow. There are very few trees left and the Ozone layer is rapidly depleting.

“Somebody has to make a change!” Jake thinks to himself.

“RING” the school bell rings, signalling it is the end of the day. Jake walks out of the classroom with his friends by his side. He looks to the ground, there is trash everywhere in the hallway. They all walk back to Jake's house. Zach opens the fridge,

“Do you have any cold water bottles left?” he asks.

Jake swiftly walks over to the fridge with a look of worry on his face.

“Oh, no!” he mumbles. “We are out!”

Since there is no cool water in the fridge, Jake, Teddy and Zach have nothing to drink. Jake's parents are both at work.

“We can try and drink tap water,” suggests Teddy.

Jake shakes his head,

“Before the new Prime Minister, water was cheap... affordable, however now it is the most expensive thing I have ever seen!” he yells.

“Plus it's hot,” adds Zach.

They all decide to head to the store to buy some water bottles. To their surprise there was nothing. The shelves were empty.

It is now becoming a full blown crisis for Jake and his friends because they have nothing to drink. The average temperature now in Melbourne is 37 degrees Celsius and climbing. The boys are walking back to Jake's house when they come up with a fabulous idea!

“We have to make a difference! We have to be role models and we have to all help our planet, our common home. Before it's too late!” screams Zach.

His specialty is speaking out loud in front of crowds, which Jake never thought would come in handy but today it did.

They started a campaign to help save the planet from its misery. A large crowd started to gather around the stage. Even the principal and all of the teachers are listening in.

“We have a crowd,” says Teddy.

“Everyone, we have to do something. We all have to play our part in taking care of our home,” announces Zach.

“WOW! It has like 30 million views.”

Amazingly, the boys' fascinating speech made it online and is very popular!

“I know what we should start by doing,” Jake comments.

So the next day Jake, Zach and Teddy gathered a very large crowd with almost one hundred people. The principal let them use some of the school's budget to buy hundreds of saplings to plant.

“Let's get started!” shouts Teddy.

Hours and hours pass by. Many saplings have been planted into the ground. Victory. “Ding.” Jake has a message on his phone.

Jake reads it aloud. “YOOO, where have you been? Also have you checked your online campaign? Because it's going crazy! Good luck and cheers, David.”

They all stare at each other. Jake checks his online campaign. 1,000,000 people have joined.

Over the next few days the campaign grows bigger and bigger. Everyone starts doing more and more to care for the Earth. Eventually, everywhere Jake looks, he can see people caring for the Earth and doing what's right. The next few generations of people luckily don't have to travel to another planet because they continued to mend the Earth.

“All of this... it's great,” sighs Jake to Teddy and Zach.

They are elderly now but they know that they have led an incredible life and have been an inspiration to many people.

“All of this,” Jake repeats “It all started with one ... idea.” ■

FROM BAD TO GOOD, FROM SAD TO HAPPY

Krystal Nguyen · Year 6 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Sweat drips down my forehead, my face heating up as my legs tremble with fear. I look at myself in the mirror, my makeup melting from my face, my hair dripping with sweat and my face as red as a tomato. The blood red curtain opens and a swoosh of wind passes my face, cooling me down. The spotlight is on me, it's my turn to shine. The light shines in my eyes, I try not to squint but it's hard when a bright, radiant light is blinding your eyes. The crowd is silent, I hear muffled whispers amongst the crowd. The high pitched jazzy music notes start. I move from side to side, pulling out my best moves possible.

Suddenly the worst thing that could happen to a dancer happened to me. My foot pushed against my stiff shoes and I completely lost balance, I stumbled and fell in front of everyone, my friends my family, everybody you could possibly think of.

A million thoughts race through my head "*What were you thinking?!*" "*You're stupid! You should've been more careful!*" I stare into the crowd as my eyes fill with water and tears start falling down my face like a heavy rainfall. I ran off stage wiping my tears away. CLASH! As I thought nothing could get worse than this, I knocked over a girl that was getting ready for her dance. I know I should've said sorry or something but I wasn't thinking straight and rushed past her. "What the heck?!" The girl yelled but I didn't care. It was my one and only chance to prove I was the better sister, I was the better one at everything. But no, I ruined my one chance to prove I was better than my sister, as always the older sister never fails.

As I look at my reflection in the mirror, my mascara has melted off my face, my lipstick wiped off from all the snot that dripped down my face. I wipe my face. I really embarrassed myself out there. When I was younger, I would make mistakes nobody would notice except myself but this time it was a big mistake, a mistake everybody will never forget. Am I overreacting? No I'm not, every dancer would think the same as me if they made the same mistake.

BANG! As the door clashes open, I look up and squint, I can't see clearly as all of the crying made my eyes puffy and itchy. I rub my eye and it's a little bit blurry, I recognise the voice saying my name. My sister of course. I don't want to see her right now, I know she'll just rub it in my face because she won the competition AGAIN.

"Hey...are you feeling alright?" Jacqui says

"Well I don't know? Am I feeling alright? I just lost a competition to my own sister. You could never relate to me!" I replied indignantly.

"Well Lorelai, how am I supposed to know how you feel if you're acting like a brat? I can't just read your mind and FYI I do know how it feels to lose something that was the most important thing to me. Don't make assumptions."

"Oh yeah? Who won five times in a row and has a room full of medals? While I have one lousy third place ribbon?" I reply with anger.

Jacqui stares at me with irritation, she's speechless.

RUM! As she storms out the door, I think back to what I said. Maybe that hurt her but she really doesn't know how it feels.

The sun rises and the bright sun shines in my eye. It gives me flashbacks to when the spotlight was on me. I turn away, my eyes burning from the sun..

"Lore! You're late! I know you're scared but you've practiced this dance for so long. I know I didn't tell you this but I fumbled just like you on the same stage but I moved on from that and you can too!" Jacqui mutters

"Nothing is stopping you but yourself!" Jacqui says. I sat there silently thinking '*Lore, it doesn't matter, what matters is if you try or not.*' Jacqui reminds me as she always does.

"Okay! But if I fumble you have to buy me ice-cream!" I declare. Jacqui gives me a smile, she doesn't say anything and just nods.

The velvet curtain opens, the light once again shines in my eye but I can handle it. *I've got this* I repeat that in my head. My heart is beating, I'm nervous but quite confident. "Please welcome Lorelai Granger!" the judge says with the audience's drumroll. The song is about inspiration and where I got my inspiration, people would mostly say their parents or famous people but in this case, it's my sister.

Before I knew it, I'd finished the dance, without making one mistake! I did it! All because of my sister. I now realise she means the world to me and I wouldn't have done this without her. It's her, my sister, my role model, my inspiration. ■

A STAR FOR EVERYONE

Anabel Mai · Year 5 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Every day, every night, my Papa used to sit on his huge armchair with a sense of adventure. When I came home from an exhausting day of school, he would invite me to sit down on his lap, without hesitation I would jump up eagerly and beam at him. He would always tell me stories that kept me awake each night.

There was one story that I would ask him to tell me over and over again. That story he once told me, one beautiful starry night, was about a man. He had a pure heart and was a devoted tinkerer. One day he decided to go away on an important journey that would change the whole wide world. He left with only a hammer, a chisel and some huge, shiny and golden material. He promised his wife and his tiny baby daughter that he would be home very soon but a tear rolled down his cheek because he knew that he lied to his loved ones.

He traded an engine for five carrots and attached it to his brilliant invention. Papa said he decided to call it a "rocket". Then he put his helmet on and shot through the sky, above the clouds. The man discovered a whole new world, but it was dark up there and he missed his family. He longed to bring

some beauty and joy to the murky shadows. The man was determined to do something, he wanted the world to look up and see a beautiful dimension above the clouds.

For a long, long time, he built and shaped and created. Light then gleamed across the night sky. After years and years of star making, he completed his phenomenal masterpiece. The man let go of every single star, no matter how bright it was, and let them fly away freely. He made sure that everyone in the world would have their own piece of light to gaze up and feel inspired. Everyone, when their time had come they would shoot through the sky and nestle on their star that the man created for them. This was the story of the man who wanted to make a difference in the world and let everyone see the night sky differently.

I'm much older now and wherever I am, at night, I find myself gazing up at the enchanting night sky. Somewhere, In the far distance I can sense my Papa's presence waving down at me from his radiant star. One day, I hope my own star will be near his. So together, we can make the universe brighter together. ■

THE LIFE OF HECTOR

Alvin Nguyen · Year 6 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Ever since Hector was young,
He admired the nature around.
He loved the nice blue sky,
And the relaxing rain pouring
sound.
Hector was fascinated in the
plants,
And the big blue sea.
He was interested in the little
ants,
And the bright yellow honey bees.
Nowadays, Hectors feeling
gloomy,

And sometimes even sad.
If you annoy him too much,
He might get really mad.
Hectors always inside,
And he is really depressed.
He's in agonizing pain,
and really distressed.
Hector wanted to change,
He didn't want to pretend.
He started going on walks,
And making brand new friends.
Hector felt better,

And he felt alive.
He gave things a go,
And even learned to drive.
Hector's really happy,
He didn't want to retire.
His life was going great,
And he really wanted to inspire.
Hector got back on his feet,
He became much neater.
He wanted to motivate people,
So he became a great leader. ■

IDENTICAL

Nancy Nguyen · Year 5 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

I slump down on my couch, a box of popcorn sitting in front of me. Typical Friday night. I reach out my stiff hand and grab the remote, turning on the movie that was on today.

I hum in sync with the tune in the movie, while stuffing handfuls of popcorn and putting it in my mouth. I stared at one scene in the movie, a feeling of déjà vu reminding me that it had occurred to me once. Huh. Weird. I continued to enjoy the movie, laughing once a while during the film. A ringtone startled me, my phone vibrating next to me. I picked up the phone, clearly annoyed to be interrupted. "Hello?" I asked. Silence. "Hello? Anyone there?" I frowned. "If you don't answer, I'll hang up." Nothing. I roll my eyes. Prank callers these days. I hang up the phone, and continue the film.

I yawned. I was one hour into the movie, and I was tired already. My popcorn had run out, and my throat was dry. I groaned in annoyance. I stood up and headed to the kitchen to grab a glass of water. I filled my glass up to the brim, and drank it all in one go. I started towards the living room again, my legs as stiff as stone. I sat down again, as the movie showed a scene that caught my attention. The woman in there, someone had called her. She was annoyed as no one had answered her, so she hung up. Exactly...exactly...like me? It was as if someone had replayed the scene right in front of me.

I hurriedly turn off the TV, my breathing growing heavier, my heart thumping out of my chest. What was going on here? Are these just coincidences?

I stumbled all the way to my room, my head dizzy with thoughts. I sighed, and told myself that it was a long day, and I was probably just seeing things. With a click, the lights went out. I flopped down on my bed, pulling the covers over my head as I did so I slowly fell asleep, my insides churning with discomfort.

Static echoed in the distance, while I lay there motionless, my eyes widened. Did someone or something turn my TV on? I tip-toed towards the living room, carrying a lamp in my hands. I need protection, alright? I slowly entered the room, the door creaking as it opened.

A shattering noise appeared as I dropped my lamp. Etched across the screen were the words 'INSPIRE', my full name beneath those words. Scenes flashed across the screen, full of moments in my life. That time when I saved someone from dying. My parent's funeral. All those things didn't really matter to me. The only question there was, how did they get all this stuff? The memories that I remembered the most? And what does 'Inspire' have anything to do with me? Are these moments related to inspiration? It was like something was floating in the air, and I couldn't seem to catch on to it. Ahh, I see. I smiled sadly as realization dawned across my face. I'm already dead. These were just memories flashing in front of me, those times when I was young, an adult, my past life, all of that. I'm just a corpse re-watching my lifetime on my TV screen. ■

ARCHIE ROACH

Izabella Wong · Year 6 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Have you heard of the song “Took The Children Away”? It is Archie Roach’s most famous song. Archie Roach is a singer, songwriter, musician and actor from Australia.

Archie Roach was born on the 8th of January, of 1956. He was born in Mooroopna, Victoria, Australia. At the young age of three, he was forced to be removed from his parents and put into a government institution for Indigenous children.

In the 1970s, Archie Roach began to write songs and perform in local pubs. In 1988, Archie Roach released his album “Charcoal Lane”, won ARIA awards for best new talent and best Indigenous album. People said that it was to help raise the awareness of the Stolen Generations. Two years later, he got married to musician Ruby Hunter.

In 1991, Archie Roach won an ARIA award for Best New Talent. Shortly after that, he released his

second album, ‘Jamu Dreaming’, which also won an ARIA award for Best Indigenous Release.

In 2010, things went downhill a bit for Archie Roach. His wife Ruby Hunter passed away, two pillar-shaped monuments were erected on the shores of Lake Bonney at Barmera to honour him and his wife.

Archie Roach was inducted into the Victorian Aboriginal Honour Roll in 2011. He was also honoured in the Queen’s Birthday Honours list as a Member of the Order of Australia and was named 2020 Victorian Australian of the year.

Throughout his career, Archie Roach had been recognized with many awards and honours from his contributions to the Australian culture and music. He is a role model and inspires me because some of the songs he made helped educate Australians about one of the darkest chapters in their history. ■

ABOVE THE SKY

Sandra Dao · Year 5 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

I’m tired, tired of giving in. The voice echoed in my head, ‘*Just give up!*’ Over and over again. My hands ached after hours of sewing and sewing my transport to the sky. Suddenly, a grey shadow loomed over me.

“Hey Lily, what are you doing?” My sister, Hazel, asked curiously.

“I’m sewing a hot air balloon,” I muttered. From the look on Hazel’s face, I could tell she wanted to ask why.

“So I can go to the sky, but no one thinks I can do it,” I added. I carried on sewing until Hazel commented,

“Well, I believe in you.” Tears trickled down my cheeks, happy ones not sad ones. The very first time I heard that. All my life, all I heard was ‘*you’re*

a failure’ or ‘*you can’t do it*’. Never did I hear ‘*I believe in you*’ until now. I pulled my sister into a tight hug, never wanting to let go but I had to so I could keep making my hot air balloon. “Thank you,” I told my sister. Then, I continued to sew and sew with my newfound motivation.

“Finally! I’m done!” I yelled. My sister rushed out and hugged me so tight. She let go and shouted, “You should test it!”

“I know, I’m about to,” I told her. So with my masterpiece, I got my hot air balloon ready to fly. After I got everything ready, I got in and said to my sister, “You should come with me, you’re the reason why there even is a hot air balloon in front of us.” So, she got in too and we flew above the city and our houses, watching people point at us. ■

CHRISTMAS

Andie Wills · Year 7 · Lavalla Catholic College

Children are ready to put out their stockings.
Hoping to play with their new toys.
Reindeer are harnessed ready to fly.
In front of the sleigh ready to ride.
Santa calls kindly to all the reindeer.
“Take us away on a merry drive.”
Mrs Claus waves goodbye.
At home she will stay baking away.
Sing out with joy, “Happy Christmas day!” ■

THE BEAUTY OF SPRING

Lavinia Benson · Year 7 · Lavalla Catholic College

Oh, how the sun warms my skin,
I love the smell of flowers,
Ah, the beauty of spring!

I can hear the birds sing,
I listen to them for hours,
Oh, how the sun warms my skin!

I sit upon a tyre, used for a swing,
I love the days of sun showers,
Ah, the beauty of spring!

In the distance I hear a ring,
It's my Nan, she will come to collect vouchers,
Oh, how the sun warms my skin!

I feel this season has something.
Maybe this season has super powers?
Ah, the beauty of spring!

The birds fly high, I hear their wings
As I fly as high as the tallest tower.
Oh, how the sun warms my skin!
Ah, the beauty of spring! ■



Emily Mainella
Year 9 · Lavalla Catholic College



Isabel Ford
Year 10 · Lavalla Catholic College

Lapis Lazuli



Gemma Griffith
Year 7 · Lavalla Catholic College



Summer Moretti
Year 8 · Lavalla Catholic College

HOPE

Dylan Huynh · Year 7 · Caroline Chisholm Catholic College

Through the darkest days of Earth
Surrounding dim and suffocating world
I will never forget my worth
Not to curl as days go swirled.

As enemies laugh and chatter
Minds warped as fungus
Not to stoneface nor stutter
To be sensible and not cause ruckus.

Beyond the mere life of my own
Many can achieve new heights
However many unfortunate to go lone
There will dawn, better nights

Importance lies not within how wide the margin
Truth be told may burden, dampen or worsen
Mistakes do not warrant pardon
But to grow and prosper, builds a better person. ■



Lana Nguyen
Year 10 · Caroline Chisholm Catholic College

Inspire



Eva Beltrami
Year 10 · Emmaus College

THE TWO BROTHERS

Eden Sario · Year 9 · Catholic Regional College St Albans

In the age where people thought the Earth was flat, noble kings ruled over the lands. Once a great temple stood tall, where decorated warriors were forged, where a tragic myth was told. Centuries ago lived two brothers, the eldest Nikolaj who had a thirst for power and the youngest Raymond who possessed the virtue of patience. Even though they were opposites by nature, their bond was like no other and both were destined to be great protectors. But on a quiet night, where the sky was painted navy blue and the wind brushed smoothly against the gentle trees, Nikolaj left the temple, leaving his brother behind. He believed there was more to his story than becoming a great protector, a staple of peace but an icon of power. After that daunting night, Raymond spent every day waiting for his brother to come back home, but he never did.

Over the years Raymond was taught the art of prudence and selflessness, many mentors inspired him to do more for the people around him, inspiring him to seek peace over power. Recently he heard horror stories of a lone knight, crusading from distant lands and ravaging villages. A feeling dawned on Raymond, a dark one.

The kingdom attentively counted down days, hours, minutes. Until the lone knight stormed the city along with his long line of horror stories trailing behind him. Horror stories that the whole kingdom has been familiarised with. Seeing no one was there to step up to face the tyrant, Raymond took the challenge.

The life that used to thrive in the town square was absent, the howl of the wind was all that was left. The knight hid himself with a torn cloak, gripping his sword in one hand which was covered with scarlet red liquid shimmering in the sunlight.

Raymond walked up the steps that led to the town square entrance, he saw the figure pacing vigorously on opposite sides, waiting for his challenger.

Raymond took his stance planting his feet onto the gravel, he unclipped his cloak which flew with the

wind up high, then he drew his sword. The knight tore off his already beaten up cloak which revealed something Raymond already suspected, Nikolaj. Slowly, small crowds of people crawled up the steps to witness the fateful duel.

Over the countless years of his absence, he saw what his brother had become. During Nikolaj's years at the temple he slowly became greedy, he saw that the teachings could only take him so far. But now he is back to fulfil his desire, and only one more thing stood in his way, his own brother.

No words, no gestures, just a wary stare as both already knew that only one is leaving the town square alive. When the monastery clock hit midday, Nikolaj charged in a violent surge. Raymond held his sword up high and stood his ground, the first clash between swords was heavy, sparks flew out from the point of contact. Nikolaj slowly directed the tip of his blade towards Raymond's neck, the tide of the duel shifted to his side and Raymond soon learned that he was overpowered. Nikolaj used all his might to shove his blade deep into Raymond's throat. The battle was lost, Nikolaj tore out his blade from Raymond's neck and his body dropped dead.

The people rebelled against the mad tyrant, throwing stones and chanting. Nikolaj saw how much rage he had caused by a single act of greed. He ran from the scene in a scurry, zipping through the angry horde. Nikolaj realised the more he killed the more pain he caused, he saw that he was stuck in an endless loop of violence and despair.

Nikolaj looked back at past memories of his younger brother, and remembered the little good deeds he did for him.

Months passed and Nikolaj reconciled with himself. His mind kept switching from madness to confusion and sadness over and over again, until he started looking through the eyes of his brother, trying a different way of thinking than his own. He was inspired to do good like his brother once did in hope that it will end his cycle of pain. ■



Nyankuer Fadiet
Year 10 · Catholic Regional College St Albans

Metamorphosis



Sierra Lynch
Year 10 · Catholic Regional College St Albans

Eye Of The Tiger

FUTURE'S FATE

Joseph Tolentino · Year 10 · Catholic Regional College St Albans

It is the year 2023, Oberon aspired to be just like his professor. A scientist that had ambitions to acquire a Nobel prize beyond current technologies. Oberon asked his professor (Ishida) if he could try out the time machine that Ishida engineered, called the “Clock Crisis Transparent Chamber” AKA (CCTC). Oberon always wanted to go to the future and discover his own destiny, particularly 2050, because the world always had an ambition to avoid Climate Change. Ishida, being a man of science, undoubtedly accepted his pupil’s request. Both Oberon and Ishida swiftly jumped into the CCTC. Ishida, with his excited face, gazed at Oberon and switched the CCTC remote.

“Oberon, make sure you hold on to me, I forgot to mention that inside the CCTC can be highly woozy.” As Ishida warned Oberon about the side effects.

Oberon responded, “Professor Ishida, you tell me that just now? Isn’t that important information to know beforehand? If I vomit, don’t kill me...”

Ishida replied, “Don’t worry you’ll be fine, we will arrive at our destination in 5 seconds.”

“ZHHHHHHHHPPPP”

Both Oberon and Ishida arrived in 2050 safe and sound...Tall buildings, mega bridges, and flying cars were all present, but something was wrong. Powerful wind, mixture of hot and cold being blown, ashes leaking from the atmosphere, cracked pathways and dead crops affected the weather. Storms, fire and droughts started to take place all at once. It was Climate Change unleashing hell on earth. Oberon saw his future self being brutally burned alive, while he tossed the animals and people around to a shelter. Slowly, Oberon saw his future self in agony as he screamed. Despite the future Oberon on fire, he continued to guide as many survivors as possible to the shelters.

“C’mo.. everyone. This way quick!” As Future Oberon is in deep pain.

Unfortunately, some civilisations could not make it to the shelter and were left to die as the heat expanded rapidly. A future Ishida arrived with his CCTC as he tried to save an extremely wounded future Oberon. Future Ishida attempted to fly down near the shelter, but was struck with lightning.

“Goddamn it! The engine has been destroyed. I... I can use my parachute.” As Ishida tried to stay calm.

Ishida tried to evacuate the CCTC but it was too late... The CCTC exploded as it dived down

into the fire. Ishida was burned in ashes with the CCTC due to how close the fiery scorching heat was. Future Ishida died...In the last moments of Future Oberon, he laid down whilst his entire flesh became blackened and flaky and his tendons and bones exposed. In his last breath, Future Oberon spotted his professor in the CCTC descend down from the sky.

Oberon, with his pupils enlarged, was disturbed, “NOO! Wha... What is going on? This is our fate? This is CHAOS! Is this how everyone will die? We have failed to achieve our goal in eliminating Climate Change all because of our selfishness and discourtesy. Professor Ishida, isn’t there anything we can do to help? We must help please!”

Ishida with his tender voice replied, “The continuum limits our own presence with the future. Even if I wanted to help, we cannot interact with anyone in the past and future or else we will get stuck and will not be able to go back to our own time.”

The natural disasters continued to get worse. Oberon handed over the CCTC remote to Ishida.

“This...this was a mistake, we should have never travelled in the year 2050. Please Professor Ishida, take us home!” As Oberon started to shiver.

Ishida, without hesitation, changed the CCTC remote date to the year 2023. Both Oberon and Ishida returned to 2023 safe and sound. Oberon is still in deep distress. Ishida reassured that with their knowledge of the future, they’re able to act and help stop Climate Change by 2050.

Ishida with his lenient voice spoke to Oberon, “You and I only know our future, what matters now is to focus on the present and act now to make a better tomorrow and possibly we may manipulate the future and make our own fate to save our planet.”

Oberon with his confident posture, replied, “You’re right, we’re cursed with future knowledge and will have to bear the pain of knowing too much of our fate. I guess this is our sacrifice of becoming a scientist. I will work with you, Professor Ishida, until the very end.”

Oberon lived on with the consequences of his knowledge of the future. But he continued to work alongside Professor Ishida in order to help turn the tide of incoming unfortunate future events on earth. The CCTC continued to be utilised by Oberon and Ishida, as it is inspired to be the greatest technological creation to save mankind from the future. ■



Ajak Ajak
Year 10 · Catholic Regional College St Albans

Window Of Opportunity

THOSE EYES OF HATRED

Kayla Lay · Year 10 · Catholic Regional College St Albans

Those eyes that had once glared at me with hatred were now cold and empty. My arm hung at my side, heavy with the weight of my actions, I had succeeded. Chuckling to myself, I collapsed, feeling the impact of the cold tiles on my skin, as my heavy eyelids rested.

It started on my eighteenth birthday. Our shabby one-bedroom house, with an overgrown lawn, broken windows and a leaky roof looked as festive as ever. I walked into the kitchen to be met by my parents, whose smiles stretched from ear to ear.

“Happ-” Our festivities were interrupted by an ear-splitting crack, unmistakably from a gun, followed by crashing glass.

My parents’ eyes widened in panic as the bullets whizzed past us. Mum pushed me into the bedroom as dad looked at the motorbikes surrounding us in horror. I scrambled under the bed, hiding from the war beyond the thin wall opposite the bed. I heard a loud thump, then a low groan. Dad? Mum looked at me, tears in her eyes.

“I’m sorry...” She left, closing the door behind her. Her faint screams echoed in the distance, drowned out by deafening gunshots. Another thump as mum’s screams ceased. Then, as suddenly as they had arrived, the bullets had gone.

All was eerily quiet. I stayed under the bed knowing everything was over. I knew they were gone. I felt myself shaking, thick, salty tears rolling down my face. Without realising, I was crying uncontrollably like a baby. Not long after, sirens started approaching. The police officers found me under the bed but I refused to crawl out, after all, my house, which held all my memories, and my parents, the people closest to me, my everything had been taken from me within seconds.

Next thing I knew I was seated in an office at the police station staring intently at the silver ring in the officer’s hand. It was familiar, a ring I’d seen many times before. It had a dragon, twisting around the ring and Irving etched into the side of it. Irving? But why?

“Do you have any connection to Benedict Irving?” Numb with shock, I could barely muster the strength to respond.

“Yes,” I whispered shakily, “My parents worked for him.”

The rest of the day passed in a blur. My grandparents picked me up because my house was falling apart.

I refused to eat dinner and couldn’t get to sleep that night. My parents’ last moments continued to replay in my mind like a broken record. I needed to know why he’d done it. Irving had everything, money, reputation, fame, what could’ve happened for him to kill my innocent parents?

The next morning, grandma came to ask if I wanted breakfast, her eyes red and puffy. I got up with revenge on my mind. I was determined to find Irving and kill him for what he had done to my parents. Give him pain a hundred times worse than he’d given them. I scarfed down my breakfast. I went to apply to work in the Irving mansion under an alias that day, I was offered the job on the spot.

I walked into the Irving mansion the next day. I approached a large wooden door with a brass handle and knocked. Three loud thuds echoed through the wide corridor.

“Come in.” Irving’s deep voice replied. As soon as I entered the room, I was met with piercing blue eyes, staring at me with hatred and shock etched in his every facial feature. “I heard you were the lone survivor and was planning to hunt you down soon. Who knew you’d show up at my doorstep yourself?”

“Why’d you do it?”

“They knew too much.” I stared at him in confusion. About what? “My good friends, the Reed Family and I were discussing our plans.” The Reed Family? No wonder he was so determined to keep his secret. They were notorious for being gang-affiliated and were said to be responsible for many of the drug dealings in our town. Realisation dawned on me that my parents only made one fatal mistake, listening in to the wrong conversation, leading to their deaths.

I saw him reach into a drawer and got ready to pull out the gun up my sleeve. Everything happened in the blink of an eye. I pulled out my gun a second faster than him, that was all I needed to get the upper hand. I pulled the trigger and a bullet flew out of the gun, firing straight into Irving’s chest. He mimicked my actions, landing a bullet in my chest as well. He fell to the ground as a thick red pool of blood started to pour out of his wound.

Those eyes that had once glared at me with hatred were now cold and empty. My arm hung at my side, heavy with the weight of my actions, I had succeeded. Chuckling to myself, I collapsed, feeling the impact of the cold tiles on my skin, as my heavy eyelids fell for the last time. ■



Ajeeve Nitharshan
Year 10 · Mazenod College

Sun Dial, greylead pencil on paper



Ethan Dirckze
Year 10 · Mazenod College

Gumnuts, greylead pencil on paper



Ryan Le
Year 10 · Mazenod College

Totam Terran, greylead pencil on paper



Thanh To
Year 10 · Mazenod College

Nature, greylead pencil on paper



Abishek Alexander
Year 11 · Mazenod College

Self Portrait, oil on canvas board



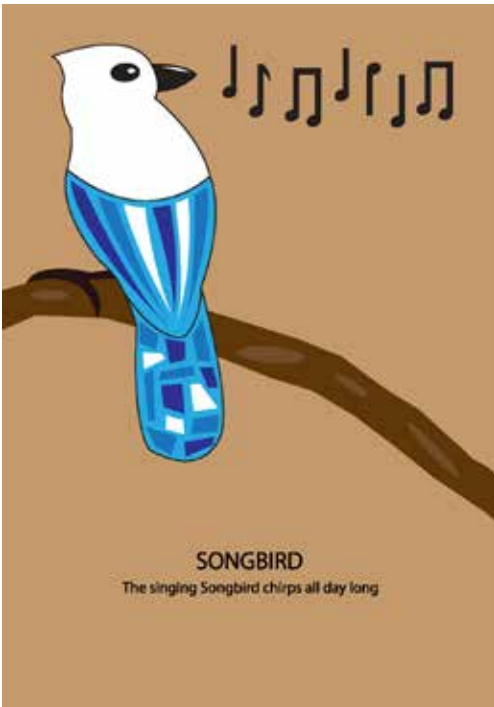
Li'i Maliko
Year 11 · Mazenod College

Self Portrait, oil on canvas board



Noah Dawson
Year 11 · Mazenod College

Self Portrait, oil on canvas board



Ayden Locaso
Year 11 · Mazenod College

Songbird, Digital Application



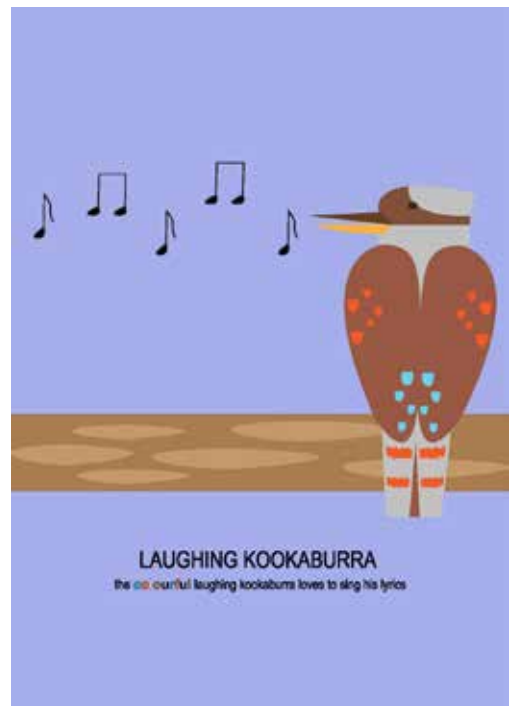
Artur Myzko
Year 11 · Mazenod College

Crested Pigeon, Digital Application



Marc Gleadhill
Year 11 · Mazenod College

The Australian Pelican, Digital Application



Shamika Eriyawala
Year 11 · Mazenod College

The Kookaburra, Digital Application



Diogo Ferreira De Araujo
Year 12 · Mazenod College

Nose Bleed, Digital Application



Benson Fraise
Year 7 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

Media Art

SRI LANKAN CUISINE: AN EXPLORATION OF FLAVOUR AND LOVE

Aiden Lafaber · Year 8 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

In the heart of a multicultural home, my culinary journey intertwines with my Sri Lankan roots and the rich heritage that traces back to Portugal, France, Dutch and the Netherlands. The aroma of diverse cuisines fills our kitchen, a testament to the cherished recipes handed down through generations.

One dish that holds a special place in our family's culinary legacy is "Love Cake." Making it is a labour of love, a tradition passed down from my mother's mother, and each generation has left its mark on the recipe. My mother and I work together to create this delicate and delightful cake, with my sister and dad joining in, embracing the title "Love Cake" for the steps we take to perfect it. Sweet, soft, and moist, this cake is a celebration of our heritage, reserved for special occasions like Easter, birthdays, and Christmas. The weight of preserving this recipe for future generations lies upon me, a responsibility I embrace with pride, knowing that passing it down will ensure our cultural legacy thrives.

The journey of this cake is a microcosm of our family's story, where each generation has left its imprint, making it an integral part of our identity. As the recipe evolved, it became a symbol of love, unity, and continuity—a way to connect with our past while looking forward to the future.

Alongside "Love Cake," our home is adorned with the soulful aroma of "Curry." A staple in Sri Lankan cuisine, this dish embodies our culinary traditions, a reflection of our Indian roots with a touch of native flavours. The pot brims with curry and an assortment of vegetables, different every week—beef, prawns, chicken, or pork. But the essence remains the same—made with love and a blend of spices that have been handed down through the generations.

While "Love Cake" symbolises unity and celebration, "Curry" represents nourishment and comfort—a gathering of family and friends, a moment to savour the flavours that have been cherished by our ancestors. Yet, in the commercial world, our cultural delicacy is diluted and misrepresented, stripped of its true essence by those who fail to understand its significance. Still, the unyielding resilience of our heritage prevails as

we continue to honour and appreciate our cultural values.

My exposure to different cuisines has enriched my understanding of my identity and roots. It highlights the significance of my Sri Lankan heritage, where each recipe has been meticulously preserved, passing through hands that have nurtured it for centuries. The flavours and spices intertwine like a tapestry, weaving the story of my ancestors and shaping the person I am today—a fusion of cultures, beliefs, and cuisines.

Embracing my dual heritage, acknowledging both my Sri Lankan and Anglo background, allows me to appreciate the diversity within myself. The cultural beliefs and distinct cuisines remind me of the beauty in being unique, just like the delicious blend of flavours that harmonise to create a satisfying meal.

As I reflect on my culinary journey, I realise that food is not merely sustenance; it is an expression of who we are, where we come from, and the love we share. From the rich spices of "Curry" to the delicate sweetness of "Love Cake," these dishes embody the essence of my heritage and the values that bind my family together.

Through the act of cooking, sharing, and preserving these culinary treasures, I pay homage to my ancestry and keep the flame of our cultural identity alive, passing it on to the next generation, like a torch lighting the way for a future that celebrates diversity, love, and the beauty of our collective heritage.

In the tapestry of our multicultural home, Love Cake and Curry form the threads that represent our shared past, enrich our present, and weave the foundation for our future. These dishes transcend mere recipes; they are living embodiments of our history and the unbreakable bond of love that holds our family together. As we gather around the table to savour these culinary delights, we celebrate the richness of our heritage and the flavours that continue to unite us. With each bite, we taste the love and dedication that has been poured into these dishes for generations, and we are reminded that our identity is not just a single thread but a mosaic of cultures, beautifully entwined in harmony. ■



Milla Nisbet
Year 7 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

Media



Sian Fraser
Year 11 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne



Gurbani Kaur
Year 7 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne



Mikayla Gouvas
Year 10 · Kolbe Catholic College

Looking Ahead, Pastel on Paper



Zohaib Khan
Year 8 · Kolbe Catholic College

Thought Patterns, Mixed Media on Card

WHAT KEEPS ME GOING

Iona Byju · Year 8 · Killester College

I tell myself to not be scared, to reach for my dreams, but then
why am I so scared?
Scared to be a failure.
Scared to disappoint the people around me.
The fear eats me alive like a hurricane destroying everything
in its path.
What source of inspiration do I have to keep going?
I'm like a sloth who cannot move quickly enough to get to
where I need to be.
I cannot get anywhere without my fears getting in my way.
Yet, I have these big hopes and dreams.
Burning sensations inside me,
To prove to people I'm more than just some boring girl.
A sensation to keep going, to reach for my dreams.
To put my fears aside and listen to myself.
To be the girl who achieved her dreams and made it big.
To be the girl who made her parents proud.
To be someone that has something to live for every day.
To have something to work for.
To have a source of inspiration when I wake up every
morning.
That is what keeps me going. ■



Minh Nguyen
Year 4 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

*Oil pastel expressive portrait inspired by
Vietnamese artist Van Tho*

“COUP DE FOUDRE” - A STRIKE OF LIGHTNING

Rhea Fernandez · Year 9 · Killester College

That day still plays so clearly, I feel its vivid flutter.

Thunder booms in not-so distant claps. The deep indigo sky wears a gloomy mask, features stretched thin, regarding the world wearily from its perch.

The clouds seem to have great ambitions to drown the world of its secrets, and have gotten a head start. The incessant rain's pattering provides the backbeat to this watery song.

The storm spreads its misery without bias. Tendrils of stormy clouds encompassing the sky like outreached fingers. I sigh, jaded and fiddling with my bookbag's handle.

An outreached arm. A question. A chance. Hesitant fingers accept.

Now every rainy day lingers with bittersweet melancholy, each a blessing and a curse.

Every moment is etched into my memory. Burned into my soul. I can't erase your memory from my heart.

Our fingers touch, spark electricity. Can you feel it too?

His kind laughter rings out, each note clear and angelic. Oh, what I wouldn't do just to hear that sound. Gone is the incomplete song of before, my heart supplies a majestic symphony.

Butterflies and thunderstorms. Umbrella dark as night and soft gaze of emerald green.

Haunt my dreams. Make my heart soar, make my heart break. Over and over and over.

You walk down the road, and leave me behind. I pull all my strength back, just to show a hidden smile.

But know I won't give up.

My gaze chases clumsily after you, the handle is still warm from your touch. It feels like a promise has embedded itself into the umbrella itself, found its home next to my racing heart.

I understand now. Why they describe love like a strike of lightning. It's a rush and a pause.

Everything sped up and slowed down and the realisation hits with a fiery spark.

I am in love. ■



Mikhaela Vella
Year 8 · Kolbe Catholic College

Surreal, Watercolour on paper

HEAVEN WAITS

Leilua Aii · Year 8 · Kolbe Catholic College

The man collapsed onto hard, filthy ground as the sun shone over him, causing him to sweat even more. He had worked many hours at the plantation in the scorching sun. Finally, it was time to return home. He gathered all the strength he had left in him to stand and begin his long journey by foot to his house.

The man trudged into his small, shabby home and was met with the glistening eyes of his wife. In her arms was their newborn baby boy. The baby was small, beautiful and had the looks of his father. Enekosi was his name. Enekosi was loved and raised by the village. He was funny and helped everyone without being asked, earning him the nickname ‘Geo’.

Growing up wasn’t easy. His family didn’t have much, and that’s what motivated him to go to school and work hard. He did it for his family and his future. After all his efforts Enekosi became a carpenter. Using his skills and knowledge he helped uneducated people who needed work. He taught them to build, guiding them to success and earn money for their families. Not only did Enekosi make lots of friends, but he had also started a family. He had a wife (Pulega) and four sons (Pomade, Lupe, Vete and Gerick). They lived in their small house with Enekosi’s mother and siblings and their family puppy Yapa, a small Labrador Retriever. Enekosi always made time for his children, taking them out to swim, to play ball and share funny stories with them. As for his wife, she knew him better than anyone else. When Enekosi was stressed or unwell, Pulega would always care for him and make sure he was healthy. Everything was perfect. He was happy and proud of the things he had achieved in his life so far.

But as the years went by, Pulega began to fall weaker. She refused to eat and lost weight. Nobody thought much of it and continued to pray for her to be healed. Knowing her better than anyone, Enekosi knew something was wrong, he could feel it. “I’m fine,” Pulega would say all the time. Enekosi put his trust in God knowing that everything would work out.

Then Pulega took a turn for the worst. She couldn’t stand and she was very nauseous. By the time she was taken to the hospital they were informed that her cancer was already stage four and it was too late to do anything. The family were told, “She

needs time to rest. We’re doing everything we can.” Despite the devastating news and little information given, the family stayed strong. Enekosi and his sons continued to pray, attend church and read the bible, maintaining their relationship with God.

Weeks passed and the family would visit Pulega regularly. One day they received news they never wanted to hear. Pulega had passed (September 18th, 2017). In sad silence, everyone looked at one another with tearful eyes. Enekosi couldn’t believe it; his heart and mind were empty. He was filled with great pain.

Several years after Pulega had left, Enekosi still struggled to accept it, but he stayed strong for his sons. He often sat outside with Yapa, the family dog, staring into the sky.

Enekosi eventually became too old for work, and it was now his sons who would work hard. His son Lupe had moved to Australia and started a family of his own. One day, Enekosi went for a health checkup. Now that Pulega wasn’t around to help him anymore he tried to stay healthy.

“Welcome back Enekosi, how has your back been feeling lately?” the doctor greeted him. Enekosi hadn’t told anyone, but his kidneys had been failing. He had discovered this not long after Pulega had passed. This time, the doctor was worried. He urged him to tell his family about his failing kidneys. But Enekosi refused. “I don’t want to be a burden to anyone. My family has already gone through enough.” Enekosi continued to go through his pain alone.

Time passed and Enekosi’s health got worse. Soon enough it became obvious to his family that he was unwell. They took him to the hospital to get him treated but Enekosi’s kidneys had already caused much damage, and it was far too late to fix. As time was running out for Enekosi, Pomade asked his father, “Why didn’t you tell us? We were here for you, we can’t lose you now.” Vete and Gerick tried to support their mother as she was devastated to watch her son on his deathbed. His siblings stood around him in defeat, nobody could do anything. Enekosi opened his eyes to hear his grandchildren sing a song. “We love you Papa,” they said. He smiled weakly. The next morning, Enekosi was reunited with Pulega in Heaven (April 12th, 2023). ■

BE THE CHANGE

Lyla Walker · Year 7 · Kolbe Catholic College

“Mother no! Please don’t go,” I said with tears running down my face. “I have already lost father. I don’t want you to go too”.

With my mother’s last dying breath, she said “I love you” then her eyes closed, and her chest rose and fell one last time. The doctor had said that she would not have much longer as she had been inhaling the smoke from the factory for far too long. Women were dying and now that my mother had passed, I would have to take her place and work in that very factory or risk losing everything. I knew someone had to make a change for women’s working conditions. I couldn’t let anyone else go through losing their family because of something that could be changed. It felt impossible though; women weren’t given a choice or a voice, but I would soon learn that it could be possible. I went to bed that night thinking about what I could do.

The next morning, I got up early and headed to the factory. It was worse than I had expected it to be. There was oil everywhere and all you could smell was the stink of smoke from the machines. The smoke instantly filled my lungs making it even harder to breathe. The women had their heads down, hands black from the oil. You could see the suffering in their eyes. I did not know how my mother went through this every day. I knew something had to be done.

A large man in a suit and tie came in. His cane tapped on the floor as he walked. “You all better be working. Otherwise, your pay will be lowered,” the man said in a loud, stern voice that rattled through my bones. He went around the workstations and stopped when he got to my station. “Such a shame. Your mother was one of the hardest working people in this factory,” the man said to me. “Girl. I said something to you, now you say something in return.”

“Yes,” I replied, about to cry.

“You must be Elizabeth - would I be correct?”

“Yes sir.”

“I am Mr Booker. I own this esteemed factory in which you are standing.” Mr Booker was about to continue when one of the machines caught on fire. Dropping his large, heavy cane on my foot,

Mr Booker ran and put out the fire, ordering the women to go back to work.

When it was home time, I realised we had been working for nearly 10 hours straight with no breaks. My feet were killing me and my dress was covered in oil from the machines. I went home, put clean clothes on and sat down at the dining table. I grabbed a piece of blank parchment, lit the small candle and started to write down ideas about how I could change this for women all over the world. After much thought I finally decided on one idea - to rally all the girls, and protest. That was the idea that I believed would work, even if it was something small. I was exhausted so I decided that I should sleep on the idea.

The next day I got to the factory and started to go around to the stations to ask girls if they would join me in protest. Ninety percent said yes. When work finished, I rallied all the girls together and told them the plan. The plan was to start work as normal and the moment Mr Booker came out of his office, we would stop work in protest. Our demands were that we would not be treated like filth any longer. Everyone nodded their heads in agreement, and we all went our separate ways. On the way home I felt that everything was about to change.

When Mr Booker came out of his office the following day and saw us all stop work, he was in total disbelief. Some women began to yell - “We need to be treated like humans, not machines.” Girls were standing on tables stomping their feet. Mr Booker tried to be heard over the noise. “Who is responsible for this mess?” I stepped forward. “What is this all about girl?” he asked.

“You treat us like filth and you do not care that girls are dying because of these poor conditions,” I said. Then suddenly, the police barged through the door. They grabbed me and put me in the back of the carriage that was being pulled by large black horses.

They put me in prison. I later found out that other woman had also started to protest. Then one day I heard that changes had begun to happen for women’s working conditions. I sat in my cell happy that I’d started this; that I’d started this change. ■

DEAR STRANGER

Austin Westwood · Year 11 · Emmaus College

Dear Stranger,

I saw the way your smile reached your eyes. Joy seeping into your entire worldview. To feel so entirely. If only I were the cause of such delight.

Yours,
Always

Dear Stranger,

I wonder what your name rhymes with? Would each syllable reflect off the surrounding walls, filling the room with warmth? I want experience such a feat. I hope my name elicits the same sensation.

Yours,
Always

Dear Stranger,

I caught you in the depths of wonder. Examining each piece of art with the delicate lens of a person in admiration. Beauty encapsulating the entire portrait. If I resembled the art, would I be the reason for such observation?

Yours,
Always

Dear Stranger,

What do I have to become to be the cause of your smile? If I could mould words like the poets do? Or mould my face? If I became the art hung on display, would I be the object of your admiration?

I feel the weight of your inspiration through my spine, navigating my every move. Shaping me into someone smarter, prettier. Better.

All for you.

Yours,
Always

Dear Stranger,

I caught a glimpse of my reflection. But it must have been someone else's. They looked nothing like me. My shadow is no longer mine. Ownership granted to you.

Yours,
Always

Dear Stranger,

Was it the day autumn became winter? When frozen air seeped through the windowpanes. Frosted over like crystalline glass. Did the spikes of ice leaking from the sky mark the moment you were no longer my figure of inspiration? But a manifestation of my desire.

When did your inspiration become pressure? Pressure to become something else. Anyone else.

Maybe it was the second I fell out of my head. Removing my gaze from your face. Taking in something other than you. When I realised you do not know my face. You do not know my name.

You do not know me.

Dear Stranger,

I can no longer call you a stranger. For I know you. Or I know the version of you living within my mind.

It was not my fault. The echoes of my own voice were drowned out by the sound of yours. But I don't even know what that sounds like, never before heard the tone of your words. I still listened. You told me to change.

And I did.

I have become the person you wanted me to be.

I do not like that person.

Yours,
No Longer ■

DID YOU KNOW?

Victoria Livingston · Year 9 · Emmaus College

“Did you know, when all of this began, what would happen?” Kate wasn’t surprised to hear her sister’s voice. After all that had happened today, she had been expecting a visit from her estranged little sibling.

That didn’t mean that she had to like it.

“Really? You’re still going to ignore me? Wow, I wonder what Mike and the others would say to that.” Kate grit her teeth but didn’t stop her painting. She would not talk to her, no matter what.

“Y’know, you still haven’t answered my question. Did you know? When you gave me that sack and told me we were going to fight back, did you think that it would get this big? When Mike ripped off his mask and asked to join us, did it occur to you that others would join? That Moon’s death-”

“What is the purpose of this?” Kate burst out, breaking her vow of silence. She slammed her paintbrush onto the paint plate and spun around. Kelly smirked at her from across the room, arms folded and posture confident. Kate’s little sister wasn’t the 10-year-old child stuck in a cave anymore, the six years of running and fighting giving her strength, maturity, and cunning.

Even as Kelly leant against the wall, the picture of calm, her eyes stared into Kate’s soul, analysing her every thought.

“The purpose? Are you blind?” Kate blinked; her mind blank. What was Kelly talking about? First, she showed up after months of nothing, and now she was talking in riddles?

“Did you hit your head or something?” Somehow, Kelly had the audacity to ask that, the little gibberish talker.

“Did you hit yours? You show up after months, start talking about the ‘purpose’ of something without explaining what, and then get annoyed when I feel a bit confused? You don’t even care about me, so why-”

“I care about you.” If Kate hadn’t spent the last 13 years listening to Kelly’s voice, she wouldn’t have heard her whisper. Even so, Kate couldn’t believe her ears. Surely Kelly didn’t abandon Kate, join a group intent on destroying her life, literally chop off her best friend’s hand, and then think she can come back and claim that she cared about her?

“Don’t you dare say that,” Kate snarled.

“But it’s the truth,” Kelly protested. Her nonchalance was gone now, replaced with desperation and unshed tears. Kate scoffed. As if she really cared.

“That’s why I came back. Because you don’t see your own worth, and it’s time you do. Especially after what you did today.”

“What are you talking about?” Kate demanded. Her self-worth wasn’t even on the list of her guesses about why Kelly had come back.

“You were my hero, you know? When I was 10. You protected me from anyone and anything trying to hurt me. I idolised you.”

“Why would you think that? I’m... me.” Kate was the stupid sister. The irresponsible sister. The one that ruined everything.

“You’re amazing! You’re caring, you’re strong, you never give up.”

“No- I-” Kate protested. That wasn’t true.

“You organised thirty teenagers into a team of rebels, and made it work.”

“No...” Kate whispered.

And- believe it or not -they look up to you too. Even the older ones like Sid or Harry. You motivate everyone to do what they do, and we all love you for it.”

Kate began to sob. How long had this been building up? The thoughts of uselessness, the belief that she didn’t matter, the regret she had held for not preventing Moon’s death. Kate wasn’t sure why this was what had finally broken her. Maybe Kate had just been waiting for someone to tell her what she refused to accept:

She was loved.

Kate stumbled over to where her sister stood with her arms widened in welcome. She cried into Kelly’s arms.

What Kelly had done was still not ok. Their relationship was altered, perhaps forever. But for now, everything was ok. Kate had Kelly, Kelly had Kate, and the sisters were back together again.

“I love you.”

“I love you back.” ■

THE KING OF GHOSTS

Max Heberle · Year 7 · Emmaus College

In 1332, the King of Ghosts started taking over Japan. One man, Satoru, was the only one who could defeat him. Satoru was strong because he possessed many secret techniques only his clan members knew. Yuto was his only student. Satoru believed he was the only one who could be his follower after he died, so, that's why he started teaching him.

One day, when purple lightning was striking, Satoru and Yuto were training. The King of Ghosts sent his minions to attack one of the last remaining villages in Japan. The King of Ghosts wanted to become the king of Japan. He invaded villages with his ghosts and once all the villagers were killed, he got his most powerful ghost, Ki, to absorb their spirits and turn them into ghosts. Unfortunately, Satoru and Yuto didn't know when or which villages were going to be attacked.

Yuto's clan were known for being powerful swordsmen; however, his clan rejected him and sold him to another clan because he was a weakling. That is where Satoru picked him up and trained him. While Satoru and Yuto were busy training, they heard screaming. They immediately rushed to the nearest village, but when they got there, everyone was gone. Satoru was filled with rage, so instead of retreating and going back to base, he immediately attacked. One by one the ghosts fell until the most powerful ghost, Ki used a secret forbidden power on Satoru, sealing him in a cube. Yuto witnessed it and couldn't believe it. Without hesitating, he ran as fast as he could back to their secret base. By the time Yuto got back, he still hadn't processed what had happened to his master. He thought to himself, "Would I survive on my own like this?" When Yuto was trying to go to sleep, he thought only one thing could be right. He had to train himself to become very strong like his master.

Over the next few months, Yuto found it very difficult with Satoru, so he trained himself to beat Ki and unseal his master. He wanted to train to get as strong as Satoru, so he kept pushing to learn a powerful technique- an ability that made his sword move at the speed of light. After mastering it, he set off to find Ki who was holding the cube that Satoru was sealed in. Finding Ki was going to be a problem, so Yuto decided to learn new techniques

that gave him psychic power. This let him move at the speed of light, teleport anywhere and also sense ghosts. This training wasn't easy though. Yuto had to put his brain in all sorts of shambles to master it. He finally mastered it and guessed that with his new powers unlocked, he had a 50 percent chance of surviving. Yuto was up for the challenge to save his master though, so with his new abilities, he set off on his official journey.

A couple of days passed, and Yuto finally sensed a powerful presence of ghosts close to him; he knew it was Ki. So, Yuto took a deep breath, pulled out his sword, teleported behind Ki and then stabbed him right through to his chest. Ki was lost. He didn't even realize what was going on. His spirit then quickly disintegrated and then the sealed cube was left laying on the ground. Yuto then swung his sword to break the seal and his master was released. "I knew you would rescue me. Let's go defeat the King of Ghosts," said Satoru.

Yuto and Satoru journeyed to the King of Ghosts' temple. It was very easy to find because it was at the top of Mount Fuji and purple lightning was surrounding it. Satoru and Yuto teleported up to the temple like it was nothing. Satoru then used a power that was like an atomic bomb; it blew up the whole temple. This led the King of Ghosts to appear. He was very strong but with Yuto and Satoru he stood no chance. He thought that he could beat them though. Satoru went straight into an attack with his fists. He punched him right in the face with his palm. The King of Ghosts fought back though, using his most powerful move which almost killed Satoru. Satoru was heavily wounded, but that's when Yuto took action. He moved at the speed of light towards the King of Ghosts. He was slicing him open with his sword until Satoru was finally healed. Satoru then finished off the King of Ghosts with his clan's most powerful secret technique which shredded through him.

All of a sudden, the skies were blue, and all the ghosts turned back into humans. Yuto and Satoru had done it. They had saved the world defeating the King of Ghosts. Yuto was inspired by his master because he was kind and an amazing leader. He wanted to become as strong as him so he could protect himself and save others. ■

THE CHOSEN FIVE

Amelia Mcphedran · Year 7 · Aquinas College

Chapter one 'The Beginning'

Believe me, I never wanted to be the hero. It was all stupid Ryan Queens' fault. If he hadn't knocked me over at Jamie Ester's party, this never would have happened.

Hi, my name is Phoebe Connor, and three months ago, I saved the world.

Let's get one thing straight, I hate parties. All of the lights and noise, it makes me feel sick. Now, after four years of avoiding them, I thought I had changed. Boy, I was wrong.

So there I stood, hyperventilating, in the middle of Jamie Ester's backyard, clutching a cup of deep purple blackcurrant punch. And I was terrified. This party was just so... overwhelming. I glanced around quickly, only to momentarily catch a glimpse of a head jumping up from the crowd, looking in my direction. As I looked closer, though, I saw Kate Baker, my best, if not only friend, emerge from the crowd, dodging and weaving around crazy, 17-year-old boys.

As she got closer, she chugged the last of her drink and tossed the cup aside. She could clearly see the discomfort on my face because when she got to me, she yelled over the top of the music;

"Can you last any longer, or do you want me to take you home???"

I nodded and mouthed the word 'home', knowing that my voice would be too weak against the heart-thumping beats of the music. She clearly understood, because she took me by the arm and led me through the back door, around the kitchen

table, and towards the front of the house. It was just as loud inside as it was out, as teenagers between the ages of 15 and 18 raced around, trailing behind them streamers of toilet paper and confetti.

I made the mistake of thinking we would get out unscathed. We were almost to the front door when Ryan Queens, that one popular boy at school, ran across the hall, slamming into me and sending me flying.

After a few seconds of lying there hopelessly, I opened my eyes. Kate was standing over me, and she held out a hand to help me up. I gladly took it and pulled myself up into a kneel. Once there, I realized that there was something cold and wet spread across my chest. Uh oh...

No way this was happening.

I knew what it was, but I dreaded it.

My blackcurrant punch was spilt down the front of my white tank top.

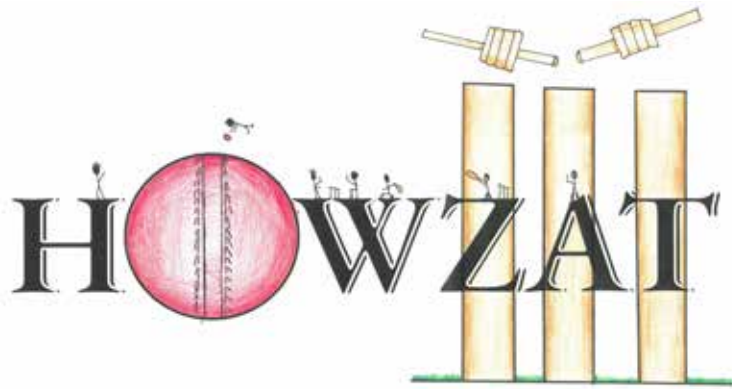
My face burned with embarrassment. I was used to being shy, and withdrawn from the world, but never embarrassed. Nobody ever notices me. I'm one of those people who gave up on trying to be someone socially. As my embarrassment grew, I got an odd sort of... Almost weightless feeling that spread from my chest to the ends of my fingers. As I watched, Ryan began to turn around, saying "I'm sor-"... But, he looked shocked. His eyes swept over the floor, but they didn't even stray as they passed over me.

"B-but..." he stuttered. "Where is she???" ■



Hayley Freeman
Year 12 · Aquinas College

The Underbelly, Magiclay, Acrylic Paint, Posca Pens



Karthik Bellapu
Year 7 · Aquinas College

Freehand drawing and typography



Lachlan Argenti
Year 7 · Aquinas College

Freehand drawing and typography



Riley Richards
Year 7 · Aquinas College

Freehand drawing and typography



Tiger Wei
Year 7 · Aquinas College

Freehand drawing and typography



Joel Troiani
Year 8 · Aquinas College



Priscilla Monewalu
Year 8 · Aquinas College

IN MY HEART

Paige March · Prep
St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

In my heart,
Is my mum.

In my heart,
Is my cat.

In my heart,
Is my grandpa.

In my heart,
Is my brother.

In my heart,
Is my dad. ■

ALL THAT INSPIRES ME

Harrison Fischer · Year 1
St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

Footy inspires me because you get points if you kick the ball in the goal.
I like to kick heaps of goals.
My nana inspires me because she plays games with me.
She tells me stories. I love my nana.
My mum inspires me because she plays lots of sports with me.
She is the best mum I ever loved.
I love my dad. My dad inspires me because he plays everything with me.
My dad is the best.
My pa inspires me because he plays games with me.
My brother inspires me because he plays 1000 games with me. ■

I LOVE YOU

Jack Harpur · Prep
St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

I love you,
Says Mum.

I love you,
Says Dad.

I love you too,
Says Jack. ■

INSPIRES ME

Paul Tsaglos · Year 1
St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

My Dad inspires me because he plays darts with me.
My Mum inspires me because we cook together.
I am inspired by Greece because it is my favourite place in the whole world.
Soccer inspires me because I am good at soccer. ■

FOOTY

Boyd Carey · Prep
St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

Me and my dad watch the footy on the new couch.
We cheer and we hear the whistle.
When they miss a goal we both yell really loud. ■

LAUGH OUT LOUD

Isla Denehy · Year 2
St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

When I laugh out loud I feel like a new person.
Laughing out loud reminds me of my mum.
I want to be a good person and laughing is the first step.
Having a sense of humour helps me find the good things in life. ■

INSPIRE

Nicole Lai · Year 5 · St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

“Stay humble, work hard, be kind”
Inspire means happiness and kindness.
Inspire makes us all feel encouraged to do something.
Inspire looks like a group of people complimenting each other.
Inspire makes me want to work hard, to be kind and to always stay humble to anyone and everyone.
Inspire makes others feel like they belong in this world.
Inspire is a nice, good, positive and encouraging word that changes the world.

Inspire affects others in a positive way, not in a negative way.
Inspire makes everyone feel confident to walk around the world with a kind and pure heart.
Inspire really does sound wonderful in so many ways that I can't even describe it.
Inspire makes you feel proud of your actions.
Inspire is a strong word that starts a friendship.
Inspire makes me feel welcomed.
Inspire sounds wonderful and caring.
Inspire yourself as I inspire you. ■

I WONDER TO INSPIRE

Alexander Kavelj · Year 4
St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

I wonder what it is like to inspire?
Would it push people to go higher?
Would there be more determination
That could empower a whole nation?
Nature has the power
To change us in an hour.
To inspire others to have peace in the world
No war would be held.
We need to teach others
And treat them like we're sisters and brothers.
Inspire, and the world
Will be better` ■

BOX CAR

Cooper Porter · Prep
St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

Me and my dad,
And my brother,
Make a box car.
It has wheels,
That are round.
My dad pushes me.
I am so happy. ■



Maksym Dudnyk
Year 6 · St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

Pop Art

I was inspired by the taste of my favourite soda which is Sprite.



Nesmah Alatrach Bou Faour
Year 5 · St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

Pirate Portrait

I was inspired by the pirate I played in our school production.



Olivia Lam
Year 5 · St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

Picasso Self Portrait

I was inspired by Pablo Picasso's Cubism style.



Poppy Denehy
Year 5 · St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

Bubble Wrap Hydrangeas

I was inspired by the flower beds in Caulfield park that I drive past everyday.

JUST FOLLOW THE DAY AND REACH FOR THE SUN

Remy Sammut · Year 5 · St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

When someone fails and doesn't get up,
don't laugh, don't stare,
help them to their feet and tell them,
"It's ok, you can cry."

Tell them "Just because you didn't win today
doesn't mean you can't win tomorrow."

You should help them to their feet and shout out
to the crowd of gloomy people,
"Just because he didn't win doesn't mean you
are better than him! Once he saw someone like
himself but he didn't laugh, he didn't stare, he
helped them to their feet and encouraged them
to reach for the sun!"

The crowd of people might say, "Sorry we didn't
mean to laugh or stare."

The man always says, "I forgive you"

From this, I hope that if you see someone sad
don't laugh or stare,
help them to their feet and tell them,
"It's all right."

I hope you tell them "Reach for the sun and don't
stay buried underground." ■

BASKETBALL LEGEND

Isaac Soans · Year 4
St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

Kobe Bryant can beat a giant,
His enormous jumps make the defenders stump.
Every time he plays a basketball game,
All of his dunks put him in a frame.
The crowds shout,
"Let him Cook!"
And the floor of the court mightily shook. ■



Holly Newman
Year 7 · Star of the Sea College



Kate O'Brien
Year 7 · Star of the Sea College



Mia Manakis
Year 7 · Star of the Sea College



Victoria Anastassiou
Year 7 · Star of the Sea College



Isabelle Eyles
Year 8 · Star of the Sea College

Crab person



Madeline Buttigieg
Year 8 · Star of the Sea College

Soccer bear



Mila Zivanic
Year 8 · Star of the Sea College

Pig bacon eating



Mia Thomas
Year 7 · Star of the Sea College



Madison Stroud
Year 7 · Star of the Sea College



Juliet Gattuso
Year 9 · Star of the Sea College



Caitlyn Henry
Year 9 · Star of the Sea College



Jiah Chung
Year 9 · Star of the Sea College



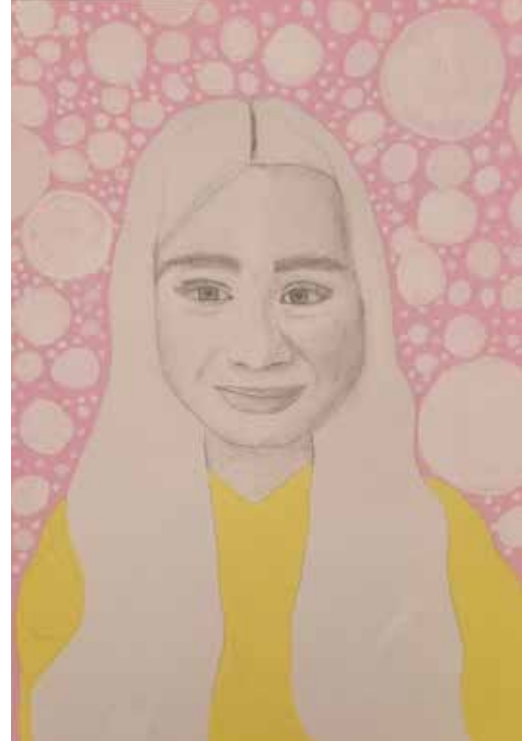
Darcy Muller
Year 8 · Star of the Sea College



Gabriella Colosimo
Year 8 · Star of the Sea College



Mia Bates
Year 8 · Star of the Sea College



Zoe Hutton
Year 7 · Star of the Sea College

MY PARENTS

Charlotte Juliette · Year 5
Trinity Primary School, Richmond

My parents have inspired me to learn more about God and to be more faithful. When I was about 6 years old, I saw my mum do a presentation about God and she talked about her faith and how God inspired her. I want to be like her. She has inspired me to learn more about being faithful to God. In being faithful to God, my parents have encouraged me to be more friendly and kind to my friends, cousins and elders. ■

JUST KEEP SWIMMING

Andrew Mai · Year 6
Trinity Primary School, Richmond

When you're in deep water, the pressure is on and the water weighs you down.

Are you going to drown?

Or are you going to push through the tide and just keep swimming to reach the top? Nothing ever perfectly goes your way.

I, and so many others, have encountered problems, but 'just keep swimming' is what it takes.

Keep trying hard and moving forward. ■



Vihaan Mahajan
*Year 5 · Trinity Primary School,
Richmond*

Banksy and Cricket

Banksy's original art piece in which the child lets go of the balloon is basically a metaphor to let go of childhood. In my version, it is me letting go of the cricket ball to show that when I'm older I might not have as much time to do the things I love, like playing cricket. Cricket is my passion and in my opinion, it is one of the best sports, not just because of the game, but also because of how it creates peace between different races and genders. Cricket can bring people together.

INSPIRATION

Douglas Nguyen · Year 6 · Trinity Primary School, Richmond

A simple word with many meanings
Inspiration can come from the simplest of things
The things you might find useless
Like your toothbrush, a painting, even the sky
Inspiration can come from nowhere, anywhere.
In the vaguest of places, inspiration can appear
Even when you feel like giving up,
Something might be there to inspire you.

Like when you're running for cross-country
And you feel like collapsing and giving up
Inspiration and hope can come.
As you look up at the sky in exhaustion
But also in wonder

You might find inspiration.
You'll discover that there are no limits

This is the true meaning of inspiration
Turning an ordinary thing or idea into something
inspirational.

Inspiration provides hope, happiness and help.
It comes to you in the mazes of trouble you face
It gives direction

It comes when you need it most and when you
feel stuck

Inspiration can truly be anything
Anywhere. ■

THE STOLEN GENERATION

Douglas Nguyen · Year 6 · Trinity Primary School, Richmond

Through pain and laughter we survive,
With friends and families we will thrive.
In some ways we belong,
And in many ways we are lost.

We were stolen by the English men,
Taken from our homes and zen.
Life is hard, life is painful,
But this is what we call our home.

Soon it comes the time to go
To somewhere that we don't know.
Twelve years later, we come back;
To our mother, to our land. ■

BETHANY HAMILTON - POV

Lucinda O'Bryan · Year 6 · Trinity Primary School, Richmond

As I watch the waves crash down, and as I walk closer to the ocean, I can feel the trauma inside of me. Every part of my body is frozen with fear and it stops me from jumping into the water. But I push through, remembering the joy it used to bring me and I slowly dip my foot into the water. Now memories of my first time at the beach flash through my mind. As I hop onto my board I can feel the adrenalin run through every part of my body. I catch my first wave and I can feel that love I have for surfing come back and once again the empty hole in my heart is filled. I finally feel inspired again. ■

MY PARENTS

Anthony Vo · Year 5 · Trinity Primary School, Richmond

My parents have always inspired me. Moving from Vietnam to Australia and giving birth to me in Australia, they have always encouraged me to do my best at school. "We don't want you to be successful for us, we want you to be successful so you can have a good life," they would always say. That really inspires me, knowing that they care a lot about me. Everyday, I remember how lucky I am to have them in my life. They tell me "Follow your dreams" that means a lot to me.

They're so hard working, I wonder what I would do without them. ■

FLIRTING WITH TROUBLE

Valentina Brasacchio · Year 12 · Star of the Sea College

‘When I was young and in my prime I used to make trouble all the time...’

One summer night, my pedantic neighbor, who professed himself as a policeman in our neighbourhood, had told me off for doing something stupid. This *dom kop*¹ lived 2 houses away and had a corrugated tin roof, each divet which now reminds me of the slant in my skin as he whipped me with his belt. Of course in my day this was a common thing. My friends and I, *The Young Tigers* we called ourselves – with tiger skin on the rims of our sleeves and mischief accepted and endorsed – were standing in the side street right next to his house. I felt particularly vengeful that night, and it just so happened that there was a half brick on the bleak pavement next to me, my shadow hiding its presence.

So I picked it up and threw it with the high hope of hitting the roof to disturb the peace and immediately turned and started running, my previously calm shadow bolting across the pavement. So did the other *Young Tigers*, including one of my close *vreinde*² Ernie; but what we didn’t realise was that the rock had missed the roof and gone straight through the lounge window and my did that *bliksem* – yes he was a scoundrel – run. *My bloody boy*³ he was angry, while I was the primary target, Ernie also got caught when we had to take a minute to catch our breath as it too tried to run from us. That *chop*⁴ gave us the hiding of our lifetime. A little bruised, I returned home and *my mom and dad* wanted to know why I was walking with a limp; only to receive my second hiding of the night.

This wasn’t the first, nor certainly the last lesson I learnt from my mischievous activities as a boy. My *mom* was the best baker, she was always making something. I vividly remember our house smelling like Swiss rolls and warmed condensed milk, a result of her baking and the jewel oven. This oven was the size of a couch and work had to be done early every morning to ensure the wood was burnt until large orange flames billowed when the oven door was opened to heat our home and so my mother could cook. Despite her baking and the love she dedicated to it I wanted something else. Note that little boys want what little boys want, and all I ever desired as a 6 year old boy, a luxury item to me was a *pan peanut* – a peanut covered in milk chocolate – and to get your hands on that, even just one or two of that was rare. So one day I stole a *ticcy* – 2 and half pennies – out of my mother’s purse. I went into the corner store across the road from where we lived and bought a *ticcy*’s



Cape Town, South Africa, 1966.

worth of that pan peanuts, I gobbled all that pan peanuts down. But my mother later discovered the same day what I had done.

That day, my mother took my right hand and pointed at it, she said “This is the hand that stole the money?” in her authoritative tone. I agreed. She opened the jewel oven door and put it in the viciously flickering inferno emerging from within. Have you ever smelt burnt meat, burnt skin? The beat of my heart and my breath; rapid and out of touch as I learnt my lesson. That smell remained for weeks and I never stole again, never ever.

As a young *chap*⁵ I continued to flirt with trouble – my favourite pastime. Mischief, the calling of idle minds or, a brilliant mind bored with lower socio-economic disposition. Boredom being the central driver of my thirst for the knowledge of the components which drove cars, ignited flames and powered gears controlling the speeds of moving vehicles. You see how things tick, how they function; this was what made my heart beat; my curiosity deeply rooted within the nuts and bolts of all mechanisms. What I did not realise at the time is that this fascination would bring me face to face with trouble yet again. And so when my older *broer*⁶ was given an old English Raleigh bicycle –



a ‘Sturmy Archer’, I was breathless. This bicycle had a three speed controller which made riding on different elevations easier and I always wanted to know how the hell does this thing work. For my mind to know and understand more than what I could see meant that I just had to dismantle the gears on the bike. Resulting in another disciplining from my father, mind you this was after the hiding I had taken from my brother.

Years later, my decision to leave South Africa and venture to a new continent with my wife and daughter was ignited by pursuing this love for pulling things apart and putting them back together again. So I started my own automotive engineering business as a legacy for my child and for generations to come. Where every component I play with is intricate, each with jagged and spidery wires, complex like the capillaries carrying the oxygen in my blood. You’d think after all these years of mischief and naughtiness I’d have learnt my lesson about trouble, but no, on this occasion trouble spoke to me and my heart beat was almost silenced by it. My first heart bypass at 45. I knew this occasion was different as trouble found me, mischief didn’t lead me to it. I always recall the bleach white lights blinding my eyes upon my awakening from my run in with danger.

As an 80 year old man my family calls me Superman – the man who can do it all – simply because my mischievous curiosity is still the thing that continues to make my heart beat. ‘I am now old and grey’, I still overflow with mischief, ‘but I can only think about it once a day’ ■

-
- 1 Person who is stupid
 - 2 Friends
 - 3 Similar to common turn of phrase ‘my god’
 - 4 Person who is absent minded/stupid
 - 5 Young boy/teenager
 - 6 brother

CRUNCHY PHILOSOPHY

Alanis Furtado · Year 10 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

One day I found a Cheeto in the gravel on my way to class. It was raining, but I had an umbrella. It locked eyes with me, glaring helplessly, an unbroken stare it had, as if I was supposed to do something. It quivered in the wind and sleet, and at that moment I knew I should have kept walking, I should I have pretended I never ever saw it, but I didn't, I couldn't.

Then my friend Eddie stepped on it.

In a loud, prolonged crunch I heard it scream, and I heard the screams of every other abandoned snack food. I could see their endless production only for their destruction, everything made sense now and yet was senseless and I could feel the world collapsing in on itself, I could feel it in my soul...

Should I have done something? I could have stopped Eddie, but everybody who knows Eddie, knows there's no stopping Eddie. It wasn't my responsibility to play saviour, it's not like I knew this Cheeto or anything. But it's deep, seemingly-never-ending-until-it-ended glare led me to the most painful period of self-condemnation I have ever felt, for the next 3 to 5 minutes anyways.

Maybe my mind evoked such a reaction because the Cheeto reminded me of someone I knew, a bright neon-orange beacon of light in a world of gravelly desolation. I think I thought too much about this, maybe I ought to be more like Eddie, he doesn't think, he just does, you know? Actually, no, I don't think I would like to be like Eddie the Cheeto slayer. Still a Cheeto is just a Cheeto no matter how you dress it, whether it be original, flamin' hot or chipotle ranch. It's just a Cheeto, Cheetos are meaningless, and an abandoned gravel Cheeto is much more meaningless than that. Still, I felt bad for it.

Or maybe,

It's a sign, special for me, maybe I'm the Cheeto and the gravel is society. Maybe someone is trying to tell me something about my life. Or maybe this is just another detour masterfully placed by the universe on this interminable train of thought, just to mess with me. No, the universe wouldn't do that to me, right? ■

THE REAL ME

Shreeya Shraddha Prasad · Year 8 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

I was a bird locked in a cage
Who didn't even try to get away
They say the world is a stage
And we're mere actors on display

I isolated my broken heart
As my soul ached in pain
Tried my best not to fall apart
but couldn't handle the strain

When all at once I caught a glimpse of light
Somewhere far in the haze
It really brightened my sight
and turned my nights into days

Soon I wasn't a bird locked in a cage
I knew how to get away
The world was now my stage
And they were my actors on display

My heart was now healed
My soul was now free
My confidence became my shield
And my smile shone bright like the sea

My mouth was taped
I was all by my self
Yet I escaped
And managed to find myself ■

ACHIEVEMENT

Freya Fox · Year 8 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

Anna Wright is 8 years old. She lives in Petermann, Northern Territory, in outback Australia. She lives with her mum, dad and little sister, Rosie.

Anna loves running.

Her hero is Cathy Freeman, and her dream is to be just like her. But that all changed one day when she had a terrible accident, one that would make most people want to give up running, or athletics, all together, but no, little Anna struggled on through tough times, only changing her dream to fit in a wheelchair.

Anna had never felt so down in her life. She looked outside the hospital window wishing she'd never done it. Wishing she had never jumped off that roof or taken a dare so seriously. *Now I'm crippled, stuck in a wheelchair for life*, she thought miserably. She loved running so much, suddenly to have one of her legs amputated, and having the thought of never running again, terrified her. She had one week left in the hospital, but she knew that that the week would drag on forever...

It was a lot tougher in a wheelchair that I had imagined, especially places that were not designed to have wheelchairs. When you have working legs your whole life you never seem to notice how difficult it would be for people with a disability. One of the nurses told me that if I got a prosthetic leg that I could still run. But I didn't believe her. How could I?

'How on earth can you run with prosthetic leg thingy?' I wondered out loud to myself.

'Prosthetic leg you mean. You can if you have one' My dad replied, 'Have you ever seen one? Do you know what they are?'

'Yeah, I think it's a pathetic leg, and yeah, I know what they are, but I can't feel it. It's plastic.' I said grumpily.

'You will just need practice, that's all.' My dad smiled at me, 'You got good at running by practising, you can still be like Cathy Freeman.'

'She has legs, no one in the Olympics has a plastic leg attached to their body.' I huffed, getting annoyed.

'Don't be silly, have you heard of the Paralympics?' My dad got up to go to his laptop, 'Here I'll show you.'

I wheeled over to see. And there it was, a list of famous paralympic athletes. This makes me think. *Maybe I do have a place for running.*

'Here is a good example', says dad, 'Dylan Alcott, Australian of the year 2022. He played professional wheelchair tennis.' My dad points at his name and picture.

'Okay, I see what you're saying dad. If you give me a running leg and a couple of months, I'll give it a good shot.

And so, I did. I gave it my all, every day, and every week.

For a minute my amputated leg was not such a burden in my life, but a new opportunity.

A few months later

I stood alongside my best friends. Yes, I stood, straight and steady. I did get that prosthetic leg, and I am so happy about it.

It is athletics day at school and excitement is buzzing through the air.

'You ready?' My P.E teacher, Miss Wills, asks me.

'Yes. And no. I'm so nervous, I haven't competed in months.' I start pacing in circles.

'You will be just fine and remember everyone is a winner.' She pats her hand on my shoulder to reassure me.

I smile but my tummy is doing flips. *Abhhhhhh! This could go so wrong. What if people laugh at me?* I think, worrying.

'Next runners line up! The girls who are running now go on to the track!' shouted Miss Wills, walking away from me. When I don't move, she whispers, 'It will be alright.'

I walk over to my spot on the track. I don't think my tummy can handle how many flips it is doing right now. I look over to my fellow competitors; they look ready and confident. I take a deep breath and get into a starting position.

'Ready!'

'Set!'

'BANG!'

I start running. I run with all my might, and I have no idea how, but in a flash it's over. I collapse, feeling exhausted. As I puff, and puff, I hear cheers coming from all directions. I look at the other runners. They look disappointed. So, who won? I frown and just shy away from my friends who are charging toward me.

'Anna! Anna! You won!' One of my friends cheered.

What! I did? No, this is a joke. I think as I look around, but the cheering faces tell me differently.

I won!

I stand up and smile, I can't believe I did it! I won, and yet I was so worried about this. I walk up to the podium and stand on number one. As my blue ribbon is handed to me, I think, *okay this is no Paralympics, but it is a start.*

I stand on the podium for a minute and let myself imagine I am at the Paralympics! ■

DICTIONARY DEFINITIONS

Illyana Baraci · Year 12 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

Inspiration is the “feeling of enthusiasm you get from someone or something which gives you new and creative ideas,” or at least that’s the Collins Dictionary definition of it. But I’m personally not sure what MY definition of inspiration is, and I’m not sure how long it will take for me to find one.

My friends have a clear grasp of inspiration, even if they don’t outright say it. I couldn’t help but watch with envy as their eyes light up with enthusiasm, as they laugh alongside their work rather than get weighed down by the pressure of it. They create things I couldn’t have ever dreamed of. Be it wonderful pieces of art, heart-throbbing literature, or just something which brings both themselves and others joy.

Yet my own passion feels unobtainable for me, with my passion dwindling out like a dying flame. The result often brings me to tears of frustration, as if none of my work is ‘enough’. I rarely could pick up a pencil even just to sketch. I expected my inspiration to come naturally and stick by my side throughout. Yet the determination to push forward fell away, leaving me confused as to the definition of ‘inspiration.’ My inability to enjoy my creations made me feel almost ‘abnormal’ from all those around me.

My passions never last long, only for a couple weeks. I hop between passions akin to a frog jumping between lily pads as if one thing can’t truly hold my attention. My interest fades swiftly no matter how strong my initial ‘enthusiasm’ is. My balls of yarn lay strewn around my closet in the scores of hundreds, merely collecting dust.

My photography camera, which I have achieved much with, lies within one of the countless moving boxes.

And my art books remain plentiful, yet only one is truly filled. To my friends, inspiration is “randomness,” “striving to be better than I was the day before” and “making a better world”. But I feel as if all those things do not hold significant meaning in my own life. Everyone has a different meaning for inspiration, yet I can never find the strength to carve out my own. To become a roaring fire, even a dwindling flame needs the winds of determination to allow it to roar like a lion. Yet these winds are something I was unable to utilise, causing my flames to become a diminishing ember.

I can never claim to have finished many art pieces,

with many never leaving my brain. That’s unless the threat of due dates reaches my horizon. They force me to push forward, acting as a pseudo determination, even if my ‘light bulb moment’ has long since passed. I want to do nothing more than make up all kinds of excuses to force me to a halt.

“Isn’t this idea a little too complicated?” “Is the idea even good enough?” and “Are YOU even good enough?”

This indecisiveness in my brain inevitably transferred to reality, with my lack of decision-making having shown up within my artwork. Leaving it muddled and confused. Naturally leading to many teachers saying, “You have way too many ideas. Reign one in and STICK to one”

Yet sticking to things has never been my forte. I can never even stick to a hobby for more than a couple weeks. That’s why I have more balls of yarn in my closet than I could use in a lifetime.

Determination is the fuel that allows one’s ‘enthusiasm’ to take flight, as without it even the greatest of ideas would fall flat on its face. My once persistent commitment issues with determination are naturally remedying themselves as I find myself falling into pace of life. As of this year, I was able to complete my first-ever sketchbook, with each page eliciting fond memories. This is spurred on by the new friends I’ve grown close to over this year. With each of us learning from one another, and playful rivalry pushing our determination to be set ablaze. Be it the expressive and soulful expressions one friend masterfully illustrates, the vibrant literary world spun like fine silk or joyful determination to play ball with whatever life throws at them. There is finally a new sense of readiness for the work involved to see my dreams through.

Their unapologetic and confident strides backed by determination push their definition of ‘inspiration’ forward. This is something I could say ‘inspires me.’ It encouraged me to pick up old hobbies, create finalised work, and truly put effort into the classwork I hadn’t the energy to do before.

These people I looked at once with envy, now I stand in league with them; almost like a network of those I can look up to. While my inspiration doesn’t follow the dictionary definition, maybe just knowing that I can pick up a pencil again is enough to know that I am good enough. ■

PASSING STARS

Diamond Phan · Year 11 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

Autumn leaves tapped the slightly frosted-over glass, crisp as it brushed past the windows. The sun had long retired; its orange hues faded to deep blues and tinges of slumber. Laid to rest, the head of a young girl was propped between two pillows, surrounded by multiple stuffed animals; an arrangement of seals and sharks. Her cheek moulded to cotton cases, the softness warming yet surprisingly, hardly comforting. The dull nothingness of the plastered wall bore steak knives into the girl, and so she closed her eyes in escape from it. She did not expect relief, but what she found within herself was a darkness etched with stars. A boundless terrain engulfed in unfamiliarity, new beginnings and untold tales.

Her eyes struck open abruptly. The covers immediately flipped off. She reached for whatever device was closest, ignoring the strain that the bright light caused her eyes. A document was hastily pulled up, and for the first time in many moons she would finally put pen to paper—in this case, finger to electronic—the occasional twinkle of thought that would've undoubtedly abandon her in the morning. Aggressive in her craft, her hands thumped against the flat surface of a touch screen as she started to type:

There is a wind that blows, In the midst of night,
Through empty minds and along still shadows,
Bouncing off walls of the inner self.
Shattering, transposing,

Conjoining into things unknown to imagination,
Unrecognizable in its transfiguration...

...It echoes.
Always and only in the arms of darkness,
Of starry nights and weary lids.
Only in passing and never to return,
Where the mind is unaware,
Of the value of that frigid force.
Where tomorrow forgets,
Of its late-night ventures into a world beyond
Recognition.

Her mind stilled. Distant and dripped with fatigue as the clacking of the keyboard stopped filling the empty room. Time had flowed like filtered liquid, slow in its pacing but pure and genuine. Her barrage ended in minutes; the waves of energy sent like bursting stars amidst the blackness of her screen's reflection. In its collapse she saw a glister in the eyes of a writer, skin radical and blinding as she outstretched her own arms, those that were capable of creation. The light from the device switched off and once again the room was dark. She breathed in, feeling as her lungs inflated to their capacity and let go, sinking. Because ultimately, she feared her own inadequacy. The fate of a storyteller with no story of her own. A dream catcher with no dreams. ■

I WAS INSPIRED TO BE ... ME

Avneet Kaur Brar · Year 7 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

There 'was a moment that lit up me,
Like a fire giving life to a tree,
I was inspired to be me,
To know my worth and who I can be.

Just by taking a moment to see,
My potential in the future ahead of me,
The feeling of being free,
Gave me a strength like a lion roaring with glee.

I was inspired to take flight,
To dare and to be brave in my sight,
No matter what happened in the past,
I am free to design my own path.

I am me and that won't ever change,
This feeling of freedom and joy will always remain,
No matter the obstacles I may face,
I will not give up in my journey to find my place. ■

I'M JUST WRITING AS I GO

Ysabelle Aquino · Year 11 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

Writing a poem or saying for each day from what inspired me each morning.

'I aspire to be more.'

In my dream I am running in open fields under a sky lit by fireflies.
I am in history class; I am repulsed by the chatter.
There will always be my need to have more, that is the cruelty of human desire.
Even the richest will never be happy with what they are given.
We are all just pretending and die lying to ourselves.
That is why Heaven is far out of reach for those of the flesh.
We are stuck in limbo; we crave earthly possessions.
The human mind is too dim-witted to comprehend divinity.
Perhaps the Cherubim and Seraphim observe us, amused.

-Y (21/6/23)

'Soldier'

O soldier, great soldier, nations cower beneath him. Stone walls meet the level of his eyes, mask his gentle sound. He is told not to speak but his soul delivers mind. "I know nothing of love, nor the stillness of the sky." The son of Aries is but a boy; betrothed to his kingdom. They say he is made of iron; he tears cities to the ground. O heartless soldier, the world is now hungered, trees naked of leaves.
They breathe their last breath to you, "you will die for me."

- Y (19/6/23)

'Not mine'

I have failed. He was never mine.
A swallow in the tree chirps to me, "you are no one's bride."
I find sanctuary in memories that hide, in the stillness of candle fires.
They are found inside churches, where couples are married and where sinners go to pray.
Throughout history lovers, saints, and criminals alike, all tell tragic tales.
The world pays no attention to their horrors, it is cruel in that sort of way.
Maybe in another life he and I will meet; only there will words make sense and the feelings are complete.
For now, when the moon rises and the sun falls quietly, surrendering past the hills,
I stay still and wait under my blanket of dancing stars.
They mock me and remind me of a love not meant to be.

-Y (18/6/23)

'Untitled haiku'

Girl of raven hair,
Big bug eyes and bunny teeth,
Pity, she is me.

-Y (19/6/23)

'Growing up'

The past does not want me anymore, I dare not grow up.
If I stuck around a little longer, they would all be gone,
the morning after.
I'll be left behind; ill be the last to know.
A stupid child waiting in the snow.

-Y (20/6/23) ■



Irish Manansala
Year 11 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne



Meriam Sami
Year 11 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne



Alexandra Killis
Year 8 · Star of the Sea College



Millie Walker
Year 8 · Star of the Sea College



Ocearne Harber
Year 8 · Star of the Sea College



Olivia Verdini
Year 8 · Star of the Sea College



Jaimie Flaounas
Year 8 · Star of the Sea College



Mia Thomas
Year 8 · Star of the Sea College



Neve Murrhiy
Year 8 · Star of the Sea College

THE SUN'S EMBRACE

Ezra Morgan · Year 9 · *Simonds Catholic College*

The roar of rusting titanium scraped against the ancient scaffold designed to dismantle war machines, once capable of striking fear into the depths of the great Atlantic Ocean. Roi, an 87-year-old engineer, felt his old bones creak under the weight of new robotic supports, keeping him upright. His leg brace clunked along, attempting to synchronize with his nearly robotic leg. Any trace that it once belonged to a well-fed wealthy man had faded into oblivion. The protective layer around the wiring in his joints had long weathered away, rotting the inside of his legs. The little sink that remained looked as if it had been dunked in battery acid for years. The electric currents firing through the copper had damaged most of the veins and arteries in his leg, causing it to turn different shades of pale and purple. The constant buzzing sound of the many reactors on Roi's legs felt as painful as the relentless sun beating down on him—a sensation akin to being wiped by a thousand people simultaneously.

He had exhausted all his sunscreen many summers ago, leaving him no choice but to migrate north like a common pigeon, or so he thought bitterly. It disgusted him that while his peers had the privilege of leaving for space, Roi, with an irregular heartbeat, was deemed ineligible. He had been one of the great minds behind the facilities on the ship that provided people with all their basic needs. Yet, instead of being repaid with an escape from this godforsaken planet, he was left to endure the unforgiving sun.

As he laboured through the ruins of the shipyard, memories of the world before the apocalypse surged within him. He remembered when those same rusted machines held potential for progress, not destruction. A time when the streets bustled with life and promise, now silenced by greed and indifference. With each step northward, the weight of the past pressed upon him, but his will to survive remained unyielding. Armed with his mechanical creations and a fierce determination, Roi faced the barren lands, avoiding the deadly robots that patrolled the streets like heartless sentinels. The robots that were put there to reset the environment to kill off all of the animals that were not native to the land. To kill off any plants that were replacing the native ones that the birds lived in. The robots were meant to help the earth by any means necessary. These robots were some of the first to truly be a A.I and so they could learn. They never really hurt people before, but now that they were left with what was left of humanity, they had started to take on new traits, sinister traits. Some of the robots had decided that humans were not good for the planet and started to kill off any survivors that they came across.

Despite the hardships, the journey revealed

remnants of a world he once knew—a world of towering skyscrapers and bustling cities. The sight of the shattered past tugged at his heart, and the faint glimmer of hope began to flicker within him once more.

One evening, while seeking shelter from the scorching sun, Roi stumbled upon a tattered journal buried amidst the debris. Its pages filled with faded ink and elegant handwriting transported him to a bygone era—a time when dreams still thrived, and hope was tangible. Through those written words, Roi found a connection to a world he had almost forgotten. Fuelled by newfound inspiration, he pressed onward, withstanding the dangers and solitude that enveloped him. His path intersected with that of an unexpected companion—a young girl with sticking black hair that she had attempted to cut herself. She was very short even for her age properly from being so undernourished. She had scars that had started to fade across her side, most from likely from a run in with a robot. It was imminently obvious to him that she had only survived this long due to her resilient and resourcefulness. Her dark eyes and curious mind filled the void of silence that had burdened Roi for so long.

Together, this unlikely pair faced the final leg of their journey, the high pitch noise of titanium barge was pieced by the sharp talons mounted on the base of the robots' two almost human looking legs. Roi's mechanical expertise, combined with Lila's quick thinking, allowed them to outsmart the deadly machines. Though even in their success, Roi couldn't escape the weight of the world's suffering.

The sun grew more relentless as they traversed a vast expanse of toxic wasteland to reach the rumoured sanctuary. The reality of their situation weighed heavily on Roi's heart, knowing that there was no escaping the consequences of the past. Despair threatened to consume him, but he found solace in the fact that he had met someone like Lila—a spark of humanity in a world lost to darkness.

Upon reaching the supposed haven, their hopes were shattered. It was nothing more than a cruel mirage—an illusion of safety in an unforgiving world. The scorching sun beating down on him like dull needles piercing his back. But the raw determination kept him going, the aim to build a small shelter to keep her safe from the fate that Roi was destined for. He bid Lila farewell, knowing he couldn't bear to see her endure the same grim fate.

In the end, Roi embraced the very thing he had sought to escape—the sun's unyielding heat. As he lay on the scorched earth, memories of a world once prosperous mingled with the devastation of

the present. In his final moments, he found peace, knowing that he had forged a connection with Lila—a testament to the enduring power of the human spirit.

The sun set on the shipyard, casting an ethereal glow on the remnants of a forgotten past. As shadows grew long, Roi's journey came to an end, leaving behind a legacy of resilience and the faintest

whisper of hope in the hearts of those who might follow in his footsteps.

In the end, Roi's story became a legend—a tale of survival, sacrifice, and the unyielding power of the human spirit. A reminder to future generations that even amidst the bleakest of times, a glimmer of hope can refuse to die amid the ashes of a broken world. ■

SELECTION BETWIXT HUMANITY AND EXISTENCE

Zaccariyas Karni · Year 9 · Simonds Catholic College

Suddenly, he lunged at me. His eyes glowed bright red as if he had been possessed. I knew what was going to happen next. I tightly gripped my fists ready for what was to come.

I trotted through the barren land, surrounded by abandoned skyscrapers once filled with workers, now lifeless and forgotten. Moss engulfed the tall Melbournian towers, trickling down the glass windows. Hunger teathed at my stomach, slowly engulfing it part by part. I stumbled like a drunk as I yearned for food. I heard loud footsteps. My instinct was to quickly run away but I felt an alluring aura, as if it was pulling me towards it. Suddenly, I was met by a person in front of me. We both stared at each other in silence in the dark foggy alleyway. He calmly said, "I thought I was the only normal person here" and I shook my head "No I'm not a cannibal like the others."

We both sat down and ate from a can of beans, quenching our flat and empty stomachs. We both decided to join forces, as we were both hungry individuals that were starving. Mark asks, if I've got a bunker, but I explained that I've become nomadic, as there is no more food left and all I am doing is walking around every day with my sleeping bag hunting for food. Mark explained that he had a

bunker and invited me to come over. I accepted as a companion is something I haven't had in a while.

We arrived at Mark's bunker, finally feeling a sense of warmth. Mark explained that he had been living here for many years, but his food supply has perished. He explained, "We should search for food together soon." I quickly accepted as my body was growing paler each day, I looked like a white ghost fuelled by survival.

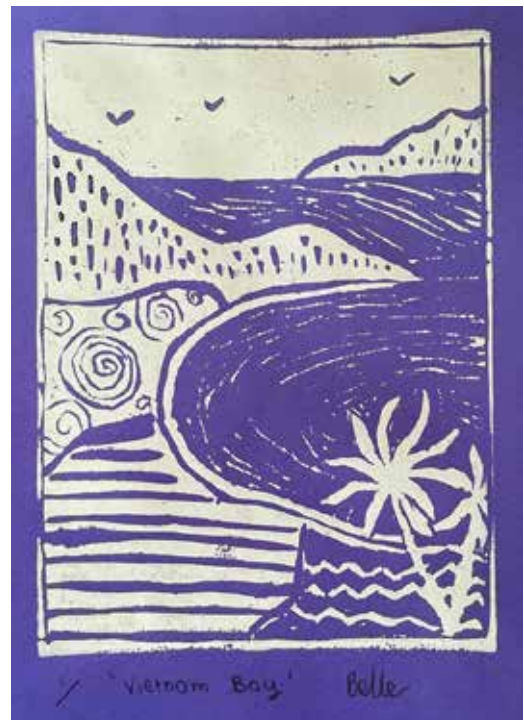
I tried to sleep but I felt like something was staring at me. I quickly thought of Mark, but I couldn't assume so quickly. I had put my trust in him and decided to leave it be.

It felt as if Mark was watching my every move, his eyes slowly turned from a brown to burning red. I was terrified as I knew I had nowhere else to go. I felt like a trapped child in a cot. I was sobbing knowing his intentions were clear. In the middle of the night, as the moon hung low in the sky, his eyes glimmered with a sinister hunger. It was as if the hunger had defeated Mark and taken control of his mind. In a moment of madness, he lunged at me, his intentions clear. Instinct took over as adrenaline surged through my veins. I fought back, my survival instincts kicking into high gear.

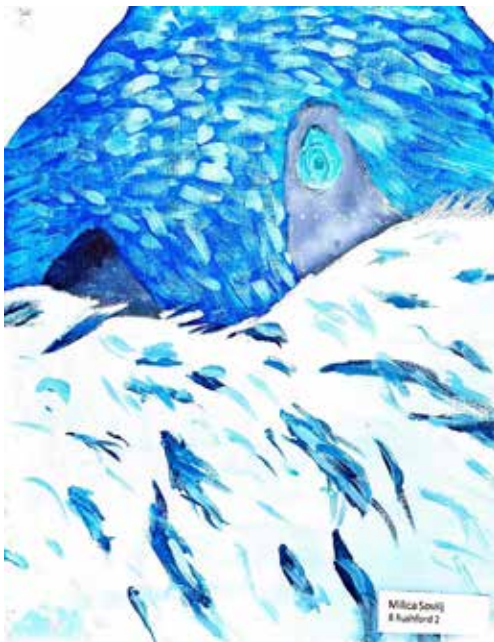
With every ounce of strength, I possessed, I overpowered Mark. ■



Ella Matthews
Year 8 · Star of the Sea College



Eve Newton
Year 8 · Star of the Sea College



Milica Sovilj
Year 8 · Star of the Sea College



Rhiannon Engel
Year 7 · Star of the Sea College



Sophia Biasuzzo
Year 9 · Padua College Mornington



Jessica Tan
Year 10 · Killester College

Nonetheless, Pen and Pencil

This drawing was primarily inspired by a statue titled, “The Winged Victory of Samothrace”. The statue shows a depiction of Nike, the Goddess of Victory. In saying that, this artwork is an ode to the path of my own victory. Despite burdens, challenges and struggles plaguing my life for a long while, I’ve found the will to continue. I’ve clawed myself out and reoriented my journey. I may not be fully healed, but those around me and my resilience have encouraged me to keep going. Through this, “Nonetheless” aims to inspire those experiencing difficulty to persevere, for the best is yet to come.



Chloe Hetti Kankanange
Year 10 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne



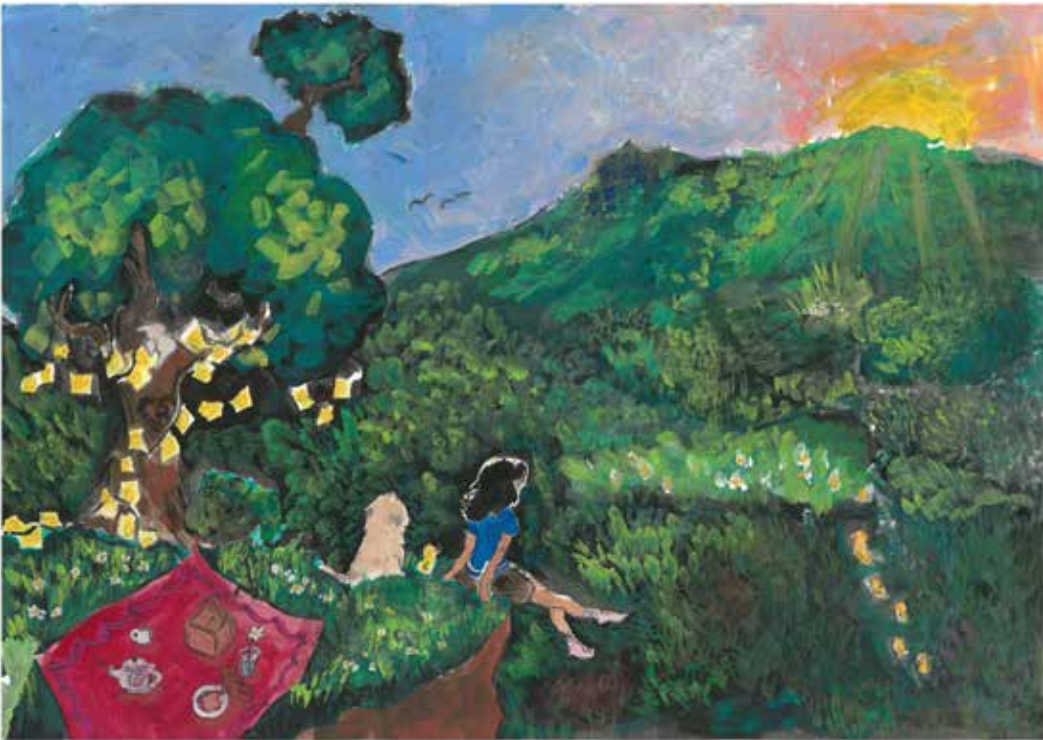
Kirsten Canda
Year 11 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne



Irish Manansala
Year 11 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne



Mojica Samuel
Year 10 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne



Jayawardana Hiruki
Year 10 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne



Madz Michaud
Year 10 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

NETBALL'S DIVINE DANCE

Grace Luo · Year 8 · St Francis Xavier College, Officer

In the realm of the court, a dance unfurls,
Where netball's grace transcends mere whirls,
A sacred space where spirits soar,
The game's embrace, a reverence to adore.
Like whispers of the Holy Spirit's breath,
Each player moves, guided by a quest,
To reach beyond the boundaries defined,
And find in unity, a purpose intertwined.
The ball, a vessel of dreams set free,
Bridging the gap 'twixt what's seen and unseen,
In passes exchanged, a divine connection,
Mirroring grace, a sacred reflection.
Moments of transcendence paint the air,
As players rise beyond all earthly cares,
Eyes locked in focus, hearts intertwined,
In this ballet of teamwork, souls aligned.
Feelings surge, like currents deep within,

A symphony of emotions where all begin,
Joy's crescendo, as a goal is scored,
A glimpse of heaven through the netball's chord.
Commitment stands as an unbreakable bond,
Through sweat and sacrifice, a covenant beyond,
Each practice, each game, a testament true,
To dedication's flame, burning bright and true.
For netball, like life, asks for devotion,
A path of challenge and unwavering emotion,
Yet through the struggle, a transformation takes
place,
Emerging stronger, graced by courage and grace.
So let the court become a sanctuary of zeal,
Where players chase dreams with passion's
appeal,
Netball's dance, a tapestry divine,
Where earthly bounds fade, and spirits
intertwine. ■



Tiara Jayakody Arachige
Year 3 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Mexican folk art, Mixed media cactus pot

OFF THE MUD

Zane Rajic · Year 7 · St Francis Xavier College, Officer

The artillery shells were whistling across the Western Front. Horace, stuck in the trenches of Fromelles, was writing his last letter:

“To my dearest wife, we marched out to Fromelles this morning apparently there is going to be a big battle tomorrow and keep sending me those socks they are nice and warm.”

It was June 20th, 1916. Horace, only 27 years old, could smell the smoke from the artillery shells. Horace knew this was going to be a massive battle, potentially his last moments alive. His heart was racing, waiting for a whistle to blow to signal for him to climb the trench ladders. Horace squinted past the fog and could see movement in the German trenches.

In that second the whistle blew, and more than one hundred men were charging towards the German trenches. Machine guns were zipping past Horace, and his mates were dying next to him. Just run. Horace thought to himself.

Just in that moment he saw a German taking aim at one of Horace’s fellow soldiers. Horace ran up and stabbed the German soldier with his bayonet. One of Horace’s mates screamed, “HORACE!”

Horace had looked away for one second and got shot in the arm. Not knowing what to do, Horace ran to cover behind a fallen log as he screamed in agony. After a short time, he thought he couldn’t stay there. He would have to try to make a run for it. He got up and ran for friendly lines so he could receive first aid. He only ran about 10 meters before he was left with five wounds in his back. ■

This is the story of my great grandfather, Horace Edward Dodson. He was in the 31st Australian infantry battalion and he died on the Western Front in Fromelles on the 20th of June 1916 during World War One.

Thank you, Horace for your bravery, you will never be forgotten.



Eva Vu
Year 4 · St Joseph’s
Primary School,
Springvale

*Wire, stocking, and
feather sculptured bird*

A FATHER'S DREAM

Pearl Saini · Year 8 · St Francis Xavier College, Officer

No understanding of the world,
No importance for future,
He doesn't know.

Childhood he lived,
Sports everyday,
He would laugh,
He would play.

He had a talent to show,
He was great at sport.
This could have made his life,
Little did he know.

Then he grew,
Importance for future came,
It was true, he found love.
They moved to a better place,
Worked hard, it was a money race,
The motivation their mother's face.

During this hard work,
He realised.
This could have been easier.

Now a new generation was born,
They had a daughter,
Their pride, their life,
Was born.

He was now a father,
He had a dream,
His lost opportunity,
Would be his daughter's gleam.

And then the daughter grew,
She grew inspired by her father.
He had introduced the sport,
She thought this through.

She now wanted to do this.
Her father won't let her miss.
This opportunity is gold,
She would do what she was told,
She will be the best, not like the rest.
She will make her father proud. ■



Dakoda Horsley
Year 7 · St Francis
Xavier College, Officer

untitled



Cassandra Refazo

Year 9 · St Francis Xavier College, Officer

Changes in Life

This is a digital drawing of myself from when I was growing up in Primary School. I was the kid who would sit alone on the grass during recess and lunch, just singing to myself whilst playing around with the grass. It was a way for me to connect with nature and reflect on what's going on in my life. I find inspiration looking back at my past because I see the growth in the way I act now from the way I acted in the past.

ANOTHER SURVIVOR

Jonas Saraullo · Year 9 · Simonds Catholic College

I move cautiously through the dilapidated streets that were once known as the heart of the most densely populated city in the world, New York. The statue of Patrick Duffy, now missing its nose, stands as a silent witness to the decay that surrounds it. He's still trying to bring God into this battlefield. I wonder if he would still believe in God if he had fought this battle. The once proud skyscrapers now only some of which remain. The roads that once showed the way, now make travel almost impossible. Hiding spots in which the zombies now use to ambush and capture their innocent prey. My torn clothes flap in the wind like flags of an abandoned ship, once glorious now only a trace of what they had once been. It has been a whole decade since the event. The event that reduced this once chatter city into a wasteland, just like the rest of the world, as far as I know. It is now 2040, but there are no flying cars or delivery drones like I was long ago told there would be. Instead, eerie, zombie-like creatures now stagger and shriek through the overgrown, chaotic wreckage, bringing terror and fear whenever they come into my line of sight.

I'm Hugo, a seventeen-year-old boy. I am a survivor. I have lost everything and everybody I have ever loved. Nothing is the same, not even me. I've been alone, so to speak, for one and a half years now, navigating this bleak existence. I truly have no one, it's all up to me. I never imagined a time without them being here, my mum, my dad, and my brother Benson. Looking back, I took them for granted, it was so much easier when I didn't have to decide where to stay for the night and I didn't have to decide if a place was safe or not and I didn't have to decide when we have to move. Sometimes I get so scared without them I want to close my eyes and never open them. Hunger, cold and fear seemed easier to deal with when they were still around. I don't like to think about their death but it's nearly impossible not to. It haunts me, like having a nightmare but realising I'm awake. I mean, come on who wouldn't go mad after spending so long constantly living in fear that death is around the corner. Luckily, I'm quick and I try to always be alert – just like dad told me. I am prepared to run or fight within a split second. But deep down, I'm afraid of the idea of spending even another minute surviving alone. It's like having a constant, burning feeling in my stomach that won't go away. It's not that I don't see any other humans, I do, but no one wants to look after someone else, have someone to worry about. It's hard enough doing it for yourself – and they are not family.

I made the decision to go for a walk today, maybe

sift through the rubble for anything worthwhile - some food, or some rusty pipe I can use as a weapon. You know, things that might prolong my lonesome life. I continue to explore the deserted city, but I can't get rid of the unsettling feeling that someone is watching me. However, I try to convince myself that it could just be my anxious mind playing tricks on me. A sudden, piercing scream rips through the air. I spin about trying to find the source while my heart begins racing uncontrollably. And that's when I spot her, a young woman who is around my age with long brown hair the same colour of chocolate, natural in both curl and colour. She is wearing a ripped-up leather jacket. Maybe she is hoping it will add any protection against the long uneven sharp fingernails and the fangs of the world destroying creatures. She looks terrified and appears to be running for her life. Without thinking, I hurry towards her, my legs moving my body as quickly as possible. My mind not given the chance to reason, to recognise the potential danger I am putting myself in. I block out the moving shadows that I can see and sense in my peripheral vision – the decaying, incomplete, animated corpses - zombies. The hard-learned knowledge of their insatiable need to kill anything with a pulse, including me, even more terrifying than their appearance. My heart is beating out of my chest.

The girl is slowed down due to her injured leg which I can now see has a severe gash. She's limping and finding it difficult to maintain a steady pace. Her movements are unsteady. A quick scan of her surroundings and I can see she is not going to outrun them for much longer – they are getting closer. Dragging body parts, arms reaching, faces distorted by the undead screams. I cannot abandon her. She's helpless against those devilish zombie creatures. I cannot watch her getting ripped apart, another one of us lost. I'm nearly there, just a few steps away.

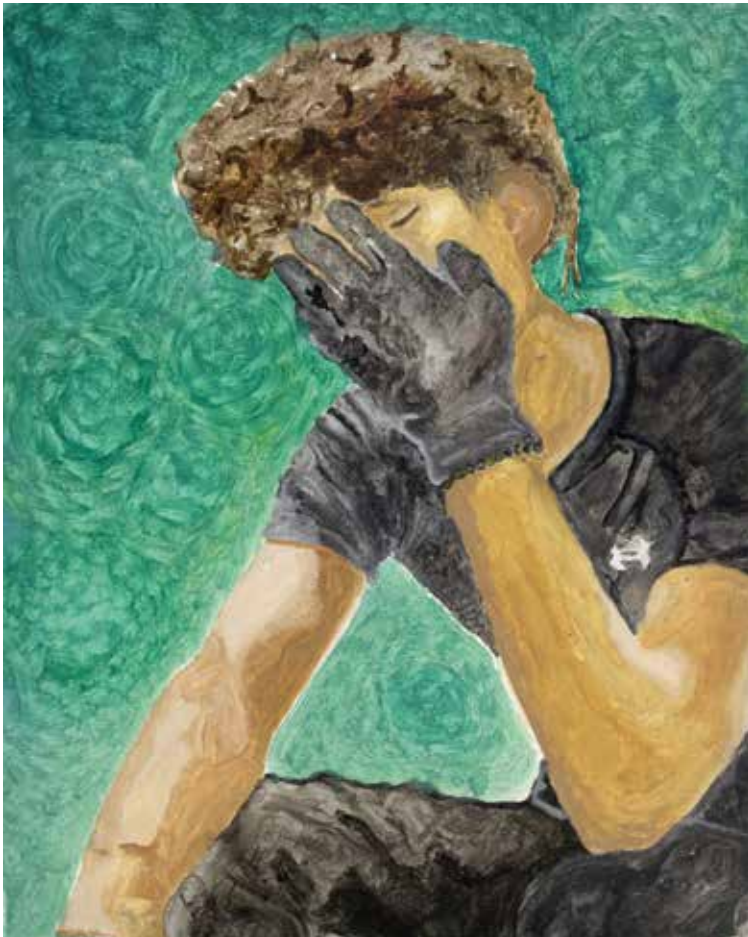
I reach out my hand, beseeching her to hold on. "Let's go! We need to go!" I yell over the mayhem of the approaching undead, the sounds of their decaying bodies dragging after them almost forcing the vomit out of my body. Her wide eyes come to meet mine, and for a split second, relief, and terror coexist. She grabs my hand, and the two of us take off through the crumbling streets, attempting to get as far away from those zombie freaks as we can. There is no clear path – the streets are littered with fallen street signs, abandoned rusted cars left with doors open, clogging any way through. Broken glass and fallen building parts mingled with sprouting trees and bushes – overtaking the

land that was once theirs, makes every step a fight. We find a temporary hiding spot, beneath a collapsed concrete slab that was once the side of a building. Gasping for air, the girl winces in pain as blood drips from her injured leg. We don't have time to think about that, though, they're still after us. I look at her, and I can see that she is just as terrified as I am. We agree in silence that we must continue pushing forward and keep fighting, but there is no confidence in our stare.

We barely get a chance to catch our breath before the air is shattered by the dreadful screams of the approaching undead, sending our emotions into a tailspin. Knowing what needs to be done, together we take off once more, this time sprinting for our lives with adrenaline coursing through us. We need to find shelter and fire. Fire not only for

warmth but for protection. We know it's the only thing that will keep the zombies away. Our only Hail Mary in this living hell.

Our ears fill with constant screeches that get louder by the second. We have to run, dodge, and hide. Slamming into car doors to get past, our feet landing blindly focusing on pure speed and nothing else, our eyes searching every possible direction in hope of finding fire and also making sure we are not running into more zombies. Surviving is the only thing that matters. In an effort to escape this nightmare, the girl and I dash across the fallen debris of the city, our fates now entangled. Ever searching for the orange glow of flames – like beacons of safety. Hopefully, whoever is the keeper of the fire is happy to share. ■



Neeb Samuel Dayanidhi
Year 11 · Mazenod College

Self Portrait, oil on canvas board

A VIRUS

Louie Delfin · Year 11 · Simonds Catholic College

10:53 am, 12 February 1983. The subject has arrived at its destination.

A voice echoed from the intercom, spreading across the room. “Get in.”

A small, frail boy with pale white skin and hair as white as snow stumbled in.

“Welcome to your new home.”

The boy scanned across the room. The walls, painted in an immaculate white, gave off a cold and sterile aura, devoid of any personalization. The harsh glow of lights hurt the child’s red eyes, while the air stunk with heavy disinfectants, filling the boy’s nostrils and overwhelming him, adding to the unsettling atmosphere. Above, there stood a sole camera monitoring the child’s every movement.

In a desolate corner of the room, sat a rough, cold bed. Its frame was worn and aged. The thin, scratchy mattress provided little comfort, with its worn-out fabric barely concealing the unforgiving springs beneath.

“I want to go home,” the boy whimpered.

Just around a month before, the youngster had been living a normal life, going to school, playing video games, hanging out with school friends, and spending time with his family. Everything changed after the aliens arrived. Achillean was what the aliens called themselves; they were a friendly group of people, and some even welcomed them, but most didn’t.

To be clear, it wasn’t exactly the aliens that were at fault, but what they had brought with them – a virus. It wasn’t deadly, but it transformed people into something the public deemed less than human, a monster. Once the aliens were rushed out by the government and the public alike, this disease became more prominent and spread like wildfire.

Many infected individuals started with minor mutations, including changes in eye colour, hair, and skin. However, the mutations escalated; some grew horns, gills, and other animal-like characteristics. But it wasn’t until the final stage of the transformation that one could no longer be deemed a “full human.”

Although the infected retained their sanity, they also gained animal-like tendencies. Many people held disdain and felt disgust when looking at these mutants, even referring to them as “sinners,” individuals who had strayed from God’s light.

The child thought of when he first contracted the disease. First, the skin on his back paled until it was white, and it spread up towards his neck. After a week, the boy, finally annoyed, showed his mother the growing “rash” on his body. It was only then that he realized he had made a mistake.

His once-loving mother, who cared for him deeply, looked at him in horror. In one fell swoop, he was ushered to stay in his room and never leave. His once-caring family became cold, shutting him away and leaving him to rot alone. If only he had never told her, maybe, just maybe, he could have been happy for longer.

Days passed; the boy lived shut in his room with no outside connection while his disease ran amok in his body. One day, sick of his solitary life and yearning to see the faces of his friends and family, the boy exited the room into the hallway. But there was no one. He desperately ran through his house searching for anyone. Everything was gone, not a trace of his family remained.

Panicked, the boy ran outside, screaming and yearning for his family, but he was alone, abandoned and left with no one. Eventually, his kind neighbours rushed out to see the commotion outside. Looking at the house, now abandoned, they saw a boy on the porch, bawling. Many rushed at him to first check on him, but instead of being met with sympathy, the boy was greeted by disgusted and horrified faces after they saw his mutated body. The faces they made reminded the child of the face of his mother when she first saw his “rash.”

“It’s a mutant!” one neighbour screamed.

“Freak!” her husband shouted, kicking him in the face before sprinting away.

The boy’s once-gentle neighbours hated him, and even his own family had abandoned him.

Blood-curdling screams filled his surroundings while he curled in a ball, afraid and alone. The cold, rough ground gave him none of the warmth he desired. Everyone viewed him as a monster, an anomaly, just because of one stupid incident. He was no longer called human but instead a monster. Moments later, he was greeted by blaring sirens that stung the boy’s now-sensitive ears.

More men soon arrived, and one shot a thin tube with red fur on its end at the mutant. The monster’s eyes began to blur, the noise within his sensitive ears started to fade, and consciousness started to drift away as the child drifted asleep. ■

HUMANITY

Tyler Diep · Year 7 · Simonds Catholic College

Another asteroid flies by and is instantly obliterated in a spectacular explosion. Thousands of these asteroids fall from the sky as the humans defend their planet fiercely. Finally, after 1 week of these meteor showers, they have seemed to have stopped. Now with time to breathe, top astronomers look to see what could have caused this disaster. What they find is truly horrifying. A wormhole, just ripped into space. It was pulling comets out of the Keiper belt and flinging them toward the centre of the Solar System. This amazingly was ignored and was shunned to the side.

80 years later, humans are barely surviving. They had used almost all the fossil fuels during the asteroid rains. The other sources of power cannot sustain the population for long and will run out within 1 year. 2 of the most skilled astronauts were drafted to venture into the wormhole ripped into space and try to find another habitable planet to colonise. They were Paul and Sam. Accompanying them would be the All, Terrain, Specialized, Utility, Unit or A.T.S.U.U.

Tasked with this responsibility, Paul is overwhelmed. He quite literally has the weight of all humanity of his shoulders. With only his colleague and an invention to help. Paul and Sam are scheduled to leave Earth in 36 hours and have been given time to say goodbye to their family. As Paul leaves his home, his mother comes rushing out with a final goodbye gift. It was a picture of him when he was young on his mother's shoulders. Now in the briefing room his is given the details of the mission. "The first stage of the mission is to go to Mars and try to salvage anything from the wrecked base." The planner explained "Then go through the wormhole and try to find any planets to explore. Now we don't know exactly what you'll find at the other side so good luck and if anything goes wrong, whatever you do, don't disengage the docking mechanism." Paul and Sam both knew that this would almost definitely be their last mission, but they knew if they backed out now humanity would have no chance of survival. The ship they would be using was aptly named the Resilience.

It's now or never. "5, 4, 3, 2, 1" "Good luck" Both said at once "0". The rocket launched forward with such force it knocked both Paul and Sam back into their seat with no chance of even moving a finger. With only a minute they were well above the ground and within 10 they were out of orbit and circling the planet. After decoupling the main thrusters, they set path for Mars. It had been 15 years since they had both been in space and now, they had time to truly admire the beauty of the great beyond. About twenty hours in they were approaching Mars. But on the way down A.T.S.U.U started to pick up faint signs of activity down of the Martian surface. As they landed, they saw a man running toward the Resilience. This

was what A.T.S.U.U had sensed, it turns out that went the Mars base was destroyed by the asteroids, two scientists had lived and were the parents of this man. He yelled "Lets me in please!" Sam reluctantly let him in and let him explain his situation. "I have been here for 30 years, please take me with you!" They explained to him that they weren't going back to Earth, but he seemed to be okay with that. So they continued on their mission and went through the wormhole. After they went through, they were almost instantly scared half to death. A black hole bigger than any of them had seen A.T.S.U.U looked through the data base and concluded that it was OJ 287 the biggest black hole ever discovered.

After looking around for a while they decided to go to a planet the seemed to be just all oceans. The Resilience had multiple different spacecraft that could be deployed and flown around independently. Paul and Sam set out in one to land of the surface while A.T.S.U.U and the mysterious man stayed of the Resilience and monitored. Landing was quite easy as the water seemed to be very shallow and only about knee height. A.T.S.U.U spotted a massive wave coming toward the duo and explained that they had to get out of there asap. Suddenly the shallow water made sense as they scrambled back into the ship to get off the planet.

Now safely back from the Resilience, Paul and Sam were both really shaken by what had happened. A.T.S.U.U had picked a new planet to go and search. Now landing of what seemed to be frozen clouds. They soon realized that this was no place to settle as the clouds were very brittle and could break at any moment. So, they went back to the Resilience. As they were approaching the ship however the mysterious man said, "I must get revenge. Your people abandoned my parents as their society was being torn down. So now I'll tear down your only chance of survival." He had disengaged the docking mechanism and the entire Resilience was falling apart. Paul saw the man be sucked into space. Sam realised that without them inside the Resilience was going to be sucked into the black hole. Paul had to connect back onto the main section of the ship and somehow propel the ship out of the black hole's gravitational pull. To do that he would have to line up the docking port of top of the ship to the port of the main section. Done, Sam was still in the pod while Paul took the main ship. They used all the remaining fuel to push out of orbit and crash landed on a rocky planet. Fortunately, the planet was habitable and they contacted earth to say that they had completed their mission. Paul and Sam had successfully changed humanities fate.■



Zoe Bulzomi
Year 10 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor

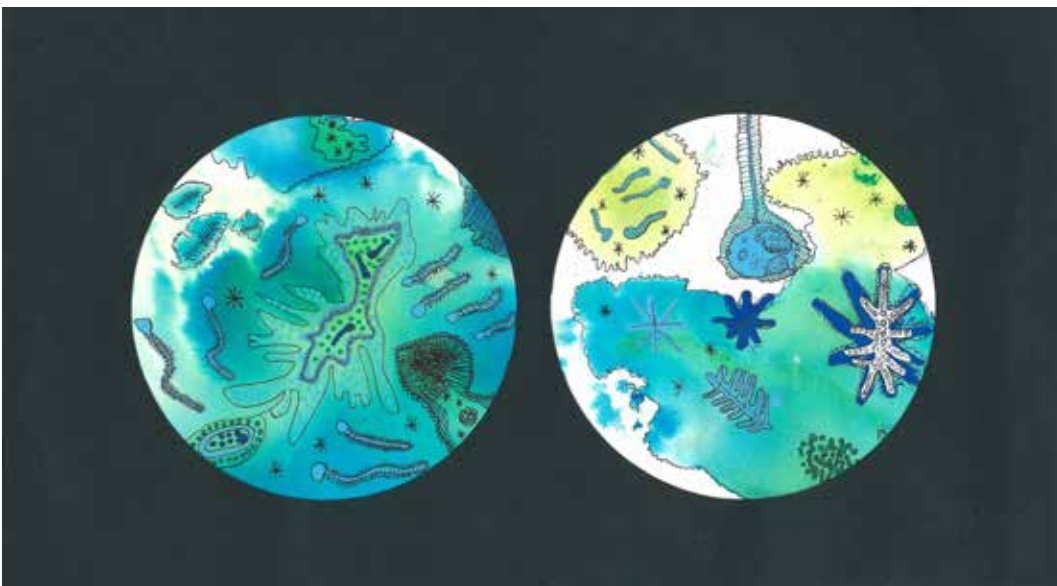
Perspective



Sienna Briffa
Year 10 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor



Mikail Luppino
Year 10 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor



Mikail Luppino
Year 10 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor



Luna Akbari
Year 11 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne



Kylie Du
Prep · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Pop art still life fruit bowl, Mixed media collage



Ben Nguyen
Prep · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Pop art still life fruit bowl, Mixed media collage



Clark Severino
*Year 4 · Holy Rosary Primary School,
Kensington*



Mitchell Wells
*Year 4 · Holy Rosary Primary School,
Kensington*



Maeve Lalor
Year 4 · Holy Rosary Primary School, Kensington



Zoe Nguyen
*Year 1 · Holy Rosary Primary
School, Kensington*



Cleo Joyce
*Year 6 · Holy Rosary Primary School,
Kensington*



Oscar Nicolle
*Year 4 · Holy Rosary Primary School,
Kensington*



Sienna Tran
*Year 6 · Holy Rosary Primary School,
Kensington*



Darcey Alliex
Year 3 · Holy Rosary Primary School, Kensington



Keinan Fernando
*Year 5 · Holy Rosary Primary School,
Kensington*



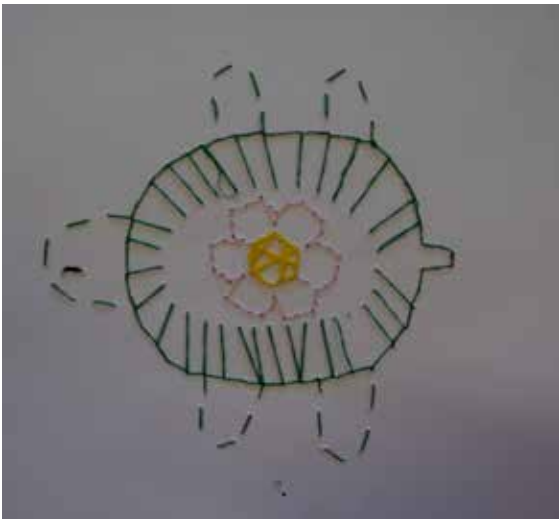
Emeleine Pinkstone
Year 3 · Holy Rosary Primary School, Kensington



Declan Fernando
*Year 2 · Holy Rosary Primary School,
Kensington*



Olivia Schafer
Year 4 · Holy Rosary Primary School, Kensington



Estella Mu
Year 5 · Holy Rosary Primary School, Kensington



Tina Wei
Year 1 · Holy Rosary Primary School, Kensington



Mycah Pales
Year 3 · Holy Rosary Primary School, Kensington



Hunter Svarc
Year 4 · Holy Rosary Primary School, Kensington

MY HOME MULGRAVE, MURRAY, GORDONVALE

Isabel Good · Year 10 · *Star of the Sea College*

These names are not my own. These are the white man's names for my home. Names that were "bestowed" upon us like an unwanted gift. A murdered dog on our doorsteps. These names were forced into our language, our cultures, our mouths. Their foreign syllables contaminate our throats, forced in like soap, disgusting and unnatural.

Forced. Forced from our lands and cultures. Our home.

Evicted from the only life we've ever known. Stolen.

My culture is stolen from me in the form of murders, massacres and plagues. My language is stolen in the form of "Oxford, Cambridge and Webster's Dictionary".

My dictionary is not yours. My language is not yours. My language is not savage, barbaric.

My language is storytelling under an open sky and dancing on the sandy beaches. My language is the beauty of the Kokwam.

My ancestors walked upon the land with care. We knew our land, and the land knew us.

But I live in Naarm. Melbourne. A land that was never my own, but the land I call my first home. This is not my home.

I want to return home. I want home.

I dance through three worlds. I dance through the world of treetops and creeks. The world of the Yidinji. My people were rainforest people, in Cairns. They resided in the trees and creeks and rocks and boulders that swam amongst the sun-speckled paths. Leaf-ridden dreams stretch across the vibrant waterfalls; deep-rooted calls.

I dance in the world of sandy beaches. The world of Zenadth Kes. My people are Island people. We live in harmony with the *Beizam* and *Waru*. We thrive off the beauty of the untainted *Yulpin*. I dream of sitting under the magnificent night stars, in my island home.

My people's islands. My people's homes. I've never been home.

I dance in the world of tall buildings and polluted roads. The world of the white fella. I learn and play by the rules of society in hopes I can bring justice

to my brothers and sisters who are lost in the merry-go-round of violence and racism and drugs and death. These problems manipulate the mind. Australia's history is not a victimless crime.

These problems plague our minds and corrupt our homes. Problems whose ruthless face shifts with the tides, and whose mercy recedes with the deafening silence. The echo of our calls and screams and shouts fall into the abyss. We call to be heard but no voice replies back.

No voice listens. No one listens.

Listening. Listening to stories. Listening to the past, the future. Listening to the stories hidden in stars. Listening to the stories in the water, in the trees, in the animals.

My people were teachers. They taught their lessons in the form of stories and dances. We tell and repeat through our actions, teach over 60,000 years of history in the flick of wrists and the beat of stomping feet.

White men destroyed these stories. Uprooted them from millennia of practice. Now, I weave the broken strands of stories back from old, creating a new beauty.

Our resilience, our truths, our spirit, we fight back. This is the phoenix; we rise from the ashes. We rise from the fires of hell that we've seen every day of our lives, the fires that burn our roots and decimate our land. We rise high with the smoke to the sky. We teach. We learn. We talk. We listen.

We've built our society on the backs of those we mistreated. Our success is due to unrecognised labour. You've heard it before. I am not preaching to the masses. I am not asking you to end racism, fight it at a national level. I am asking to be heard. To be recognised.

My ancestors never had that chance. My grandparents never had that chance. My mother didn't have that chance. I have that chance. Let me voice my words. Let me retell a song sung so many times, yet skipped just as many.

This is my blood. This is my dance. This is my story.

If stars bear witness to the actions of humans, let them bear witness to my story here, today. ■

TAPESTRY OF INSPIRATION

Lauren Leung · Year 12 · Star of the Sea College

High school, a winding path of growth and discovery, unfolded before me like a rich tapestry of inspiration, mentorship, and determination. It was a transformative journey that spanned from Year 7 through Year 12, shaping me into the person I am today, with the support of my incredible teachers and the unwavering love of my family.

Year 7, marked by the challenging transition from primary school to secondary school, was a year of highs and lows. It was a time when my new school and my dedicated teachers became my inspiration. The unfamiliarity of it all, the weight of new subjects, and the complexities of navigating adolescence sometimes seemed like an insurmountable mountain. But it was in those moments of difficulty that I found strength, with the help of my inspiring teachers and a supportive school community. Their unwavering belief in my potential motivated me to rise above challenges and discover my true capabilities.

Year 8, an inspirational chapter in my educational journey, was when my teachers played a pivotal role in helping me reach my full potential. Their dedication and guidance transformed the classroom into a place of growth and exploration. They recognized not just a student, but a young individual with dreams and aspirations. Through their tireless commitment, they nurtured my talents and instilled in me the importance of self-belief and hard work.

In Year 9, the challenges of adolescence and the weight of decision-making loomed large. It was during this time that my English teacher, a patient and dedicated mentor, came to my aid. Complex literary concepts and essays sometimes felt like insurmountable obstacles, but their unwavering support and knack for making the intricate seem simple transformed my fear into a fascination. Their persistence and belief in my abilities reshaped my perspective, helping me conquer the literary mountains that once seemed daunting.

As I ventured into my VCE VM years, the pressure intensified, and self-doubt occasionally crept

in. Yet, my VCE VM teachers refused to let me waver. They saw not just a student, but a young adult with dreams and aspirations. Their tireless dedication and willingness to go the extra mile turned the VCE VM challenge into an opportunity for growth. They instilled in me the importance of perseverance and the value of diligence.

However, inspiration wasn't confined to the classroom. My mum, a source of unwavering love and encouragement, played a vital role in my journey. Through her sacrifices and boundless support, she instilled in me the values of resilience and determination. She showed me that no dream was too ambitious and that success was the result of hard work and self-belief.

Throughout my high school journey, my mum stood as my unwavering support system, inspiring me to strive for excellence every day. Her belief in my abilities and her encouragement to pursue my passions fuelled my determination to succeed. My family, as a whole, was instrumental in creating a nurturing environment where I could flourish.

As I stand on the cusp of adulthood, I am grateful for the tapestry of inspiration that has been woven into my high school journey. My teachers, from Year 7 to VCE VM, provided guidance with wisdom and warmth. My family, with their enduring love and support, inspired me to reach for my aspirations.

Embrace the journey, for it is in the challenges and moments of doubt that your true strength will emerge. Seek guidance from your teachers, for they hold the keys to knowledge and inspiration. And always remember the steadfast support of your loved ones, for they are the foundation upon which your dreams can flourish.

In the grand tapestry of life, you are the artist, and each experience, each person, and each moment of inspiration is a thread that will help you weave your unique and extraordinary story. With the wisdom of your teachers and the love of your family, step boldly into the future, for it is yours to shape, and the world eagerly anticipates the masterpiece that only you can create. ■

CHURCH KIDS

Rose Pearson · Year 12 · Star of the Sea College

As a kid my weekends were frequently punctuated by a few short hours of intense tedium.

My parents weren't the overly religious sort, but I first learnt boredom in a church. Dad had grown up Catholic, the sort that feared his God-fearing mother. In a fortunate turn for my sister and I, he didn't inherit any of my Grandmother's staunch mass-attending ways.

Still, I was culturally Catholic and all it entails. And, if one were to listen to my Grandmother, it entailed regular attendance at her local Sunday Service. She was determined to maintain a Catholic legacy in each one of her nine grandchildren, and so all us kids came to dread that hour-long ordeal which preceded or succeeded any otherwise pleasant family function. Under the guise of a late family lunch, an early dinner, another birthday celebration in a seeming abundance of birthday celebrations- we would walk resignedly from my grandparent's house to the local parish church that was not but a block away.

If my grandparents were ever to sell their house in those years I am sure it was not the swimming pool out back, or the vacant lot with the makeshift treehouse among the pluricot trees, or even the comforting crescent shape of their street that they would have boasted of. The proximity of that church was my Grandmother's key delight, the walk to and from was simple auxiliary.

Our immediate family, cousins and aunts and uncles and my grandmother's sister, and her husband, and her friend Rosa and Rosa's husband and any number of church friends and neighbours, would crowd into the rows and rows of awkwardly carved wooden pews. If any of us kids had ever mustered the bravery or sheer stupidity that an escape attempt required I have no doubt we'd have been frogmarched right back in.

We stepped beyond those doors and became Church Kids. The ones who attended the Children's Religious Learnings in the primary school attached. I complained, of course, as was the prerogative of any reasonably entitled child. Complained to my father, who told me it was important that children learnt to manage boredom somewhere, and that was what Mass was for. So I learnt to be bored.

The time I spent in that dismal room became something close to bearable upon discovering this concept. I counted the stations of the cross to warm up. I counted the whorls in the wooden pew in front of me. I counted the strands of hair on the shiny scalp of the balding man to my far left.



Rose and her grandmother, Joyce.

On a single occasion- only once, mind- I protested the ordeal to my grandmother's face. My parents were off in Europe and so my sister and I had been shipped off to grandparents.

Mass, twice in as many weeks. Two hours of my life. Gone. Vanished. Wasted.

I'm still of the opinion that the walk back that day was a punishment for my declaration. Typically it was pleasant enough, good weather provided. But that day my Grandmother found reason to stop and chat with every parishioner, with every neighbour. No, I couldn't run ahead with the keys to the house on my horizon. She wanted to introduce me to Martha on the corner. She wanted Martha (or Margaret or whatever her name was) to share her entire life's story and some summer gardening tips besides. Yes, my grandmother's tomatoes were doing very well this year, thank you for asking. But the dogs had destroyed her orchids!

Oh no, what a shame. Here's my favourite potting mix, said Martha. I'll be sure to check it out, said my grandmother.

This series of conversations was worse than church, for the fact it required me as an active prop and participant. Our return must have taken an hour more that day, and all to cover a distance which spanned only a hundred metres or so.

Religion was the precursor to many lengthy ordeals. I immersed myself in decades of the rosary that first night it was given to me. Completed the thing in a half hour or so, and put it in a little glass ornament box to never again be resurrected. My confirmation was next on the list- a saint name had to be chosen, its significance considered carefully. I wondered if there was a Saint Rose. Dad searched it up for me.

Isabel Flores is the saint who shares my name. St Rose of Lima. Absolute paragon of self-inflicted pain; of virtue brought about by torment revered in the name of God.

On her head she placed a crown of iron thorns, weighted so that its spikes pierced her flesh. By her death, the weight of this physical manifestation of her guilt was so sunk to her skull as to be embedded.

She'd been beautiful, once. But no more, with her face marred by peppers and the hands of a burn victim set willingly alight in an act of self-imposed penance.

Dad suggested I choose one of the Marys for my

saint's name. I can't recall which I went with in the end.

That religion of my youth blurs together now, and I am left only with bare bones and no memory of the marrow. The custom of the Eucharist lacked ingenuity; its performance always had some sense, to us, of being sanitised to the point of dishonesty. In homily the paragon of virtue was never noteworthy in any way besides the exceptionally mundane. We mourned the loss of fire and brimstone, of this institution of God stripped of story

On occasion, we'd return from mass so especially dispirited as to play-act the ritual of Eucharist. The pews would be laid out- some eclectic range of armchairs, fold out seats, and what had been filched from around the dining table. And then we would subject our parents to our interpretation of this event.

Three of us would walk solemnly down the aisle we'd created, with leftover breadstick in a bowl and a jug of water. Behind a makeshift altar we'd stand, and then some prayer we'd searched up would be read aloud, chanted in triplicate. *This is the body of Christ, broken for you. This is the blood of Christ, shed for you.*

Our younger siblings stood to the side - they'd come forward at this point, and the lucky ones would deliver torn bread and blessings to our exhausted audience.

The body of Christ.

Amen. ■

AN ODE TO CLASSIC LITERATURE

Grace Elisha · Year 12 · Kolbe Catholic College

An oblique expression of that which we express
today.

All the words unspoken
unread
unsaid
divulged
upon the passage of centuries.

Shimmering seemingly silk
pages unfolding, dust rising — sparkles
accentuating vintage dreams.

There, but not quite.
Both ephemeral and eternal.

History unravelling
before those to whom history was not addressed.

A path
that cannot be followed by foot by the
contemporary, yet can be
savoured
for it remains
tangible
palpable
yet forever will be fleetingly far.

Another world.
The sophistication and style
the sublime architecture
the culture and the elegance—
it feels of velvety fabric on cold, carved rock.
Upon perception one desires nothing more than
immersion—
though the enticement does not pervade its
entirety.

Thus, its goodness, which
lingers
scintillating
in its golden embellishments
is oft indulged in.

The words embrace the inexplicable experiences
of old—
the humble vessels that contain them were not
told they were

bound for greatness.

They lived on and live on still
concealing revolution
their manner almost furtive
reminiscent of soil-covered opulent stone.

Fictitious perpetuations of past times
readable
yet ultimately
unreachable
by our short arms.

And the best fruits of those bountiful minds are
found to be
romanticised
and immortalised
through precisely perfect description. ■

INSPIRE:

All my life I have sought to spill my thoughts and emotions onto some sort of canvas. Songwriting, singing, story-writing, drawing—uniquely human, cathartic expressions that I have enjoyed for as long as I can remember. Thus, it is not surprising that eventually, I came to recognise the capacity of classic literature to effortlessly externalise and thus expose our intrinsic humanity. And not only this, but its ability to present the essence of humanity in a manner that is naturally archaic, poetic, and ultimately lingers in the minds of attentive readers. Upon reading the works of numerous 19th and 20th century authors, now more than ever do I see words as unique vessels into which human emotion is poured and preserved. As a result, I have been inspired to paint through my words—to deliberately select, order, and orient them to convey feelings that cannot be adequately divulged through alternate mediums. This inspiration has culminated in my construction of this piece, which is a love letter to the eloquent pieces of literature that have influenced my thinking and writing. Thus, just as the ‘fruits of those bountiful minds’ helped to inspire me to piece together this poem, I now seek to inspire others through the act of lexical painting. ■



Freya O'Neill
Year 7 · Kolbe Catholic College

Healing Hands, Acrylic on canvas



Jessica Davis
Year 11 · Kolbe Catholic College

Thoughts Swirl, Acrylic on canvas

LOVE IS THE THING WITH PETALS

Riley Simpson · Year 10 · Kolbe Catholic College

Love is the thing with petals,
That grows in the heart,
Producing colourful splashes of love,
Giving love to all taking part.

Once left untouched,
Desire grows more,
Once continuously clutched,
The petals get ignored.

Sprouts throughout the soul,
And blossoming throughout one's desire,
Adding happiness to all,
Adding aspiration to one's attire.

As pure as a white dove,
As elegant as a perfect rose,
As overwhelming as tomorrow's thoughts,
Yet all still desire thy rose,
Love is the thing with petals. ■

NOTHING BUT A CRUMB

Lena Babu · Year 10 · Kolbe Catholic College

I can't help but look at who I've become
The unknown figure stared emptily back
The cracks, slowly beginning to surface
The atmosphere is becoming pitch black.

Where are they, the person that once was here?
Come back, please. Life is too much to handle.
The same old feeling is engulfing me
As I've been caught in a wretched scandal.

I've been forcing laughter and faking smiles
Only if I knew that wasn't sufficient.
I was a window, you could see straight through
And hiding the cracks was inefficient.

I'm overwhelmed, with no one to hold me
I shatter, leaving nothing but a crumb. ■

SHE WAS THE GIRL

Isabella Taylor · Year 10 · Kolbe Catholic College

She was the girl everyone wanted to be
She was the girl she wanted everyone to see
She was the girl who had the world at her feet
She was the girl who was always left in defeat
She was the girl who knew everyone's name
She was the girl who never wanted any fame
She was the girl who was always kept in line
She was the girl who was ever really fine
Then she became the girl who stopped being what
everyone wanted to be
So that she could become the kind of girl that loves
herself desperately

She became the girl who ignited a spark no one
had ever seen;
So she could become the girl she had only ever
dreamed
She inspired light in herself so she could inspire
light in others.
And so it was she was the girl everyone wanted to
be again, but this time...
She was the girl who taught others how to love
She was the girl who taught others that it was ok
to be fine and not happy all the time
She was the girl...that inspired them to be her kind
of girl. ■



Katya Carone
Year 8 · Kolbe Catholic College

My *Wardrobe*, Posca Marker on card

SONNET

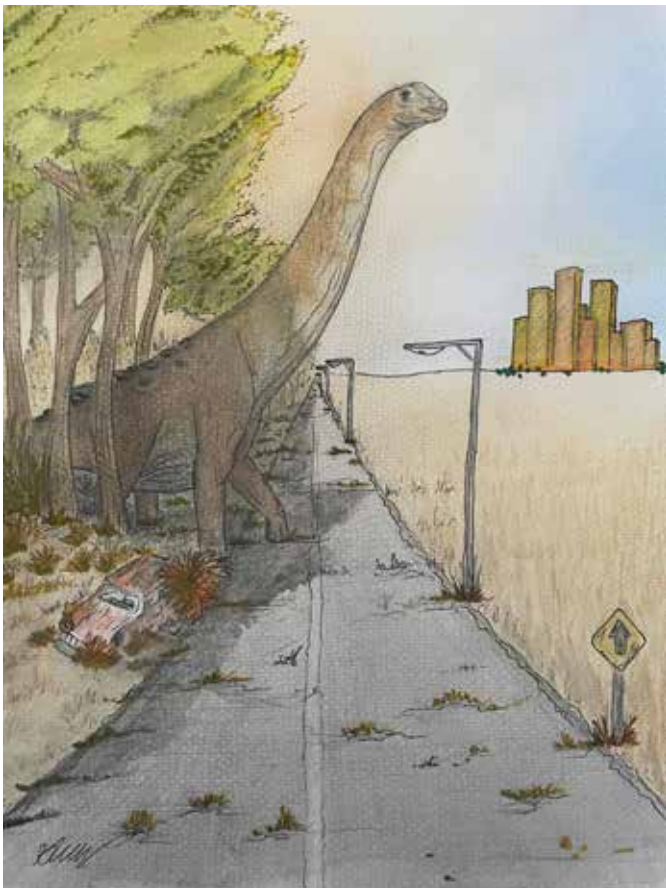
Ethan Facciol · Year 10 · Kolbe Catholic College

1819 the year it all began,
A prehistoric monster considered
Pointed teeth and hollow bones dug from sand
And their name was crowned “terrible lizard.”

Hideous brutes were soon brought to the screens,
Ferocious roars and the snapping of jaws
Viewed not as animals but as machines
Slim scaled figures tapping their toe claws.

Yet once roamed nature’s most magnificent,
Unique and intelligent like a crow
Harmonic creatures peaceful and ancient
Lived 65 million years ago.

A beast assumed after discovering,
Yet true beauty lies within the living. ■



Ethan Facciol
Year 10 · Kolbe Catholic College

Terrible Lizard, Watercolour on paper



Wendy Nguyen
Year 5 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Acrylic painted impressionist landscape



Kelvin Tran
Year 5 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Acrylic painted impressionist landscape



Vyom Nadri
Year 6 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Wire and muslin shrouded figure sculptures



Anthony Nguyen
Year 5 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Wire and muslin shrouded figure sculptures



Declan Luang
Year 6 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Wire and muslin shrouded figure sculptures



Alex Do
Year 5 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Water colour collage: The crucifixion



William Chhuon
Year 6 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Water colour collage: The crucifixion



Leo Pham

Year 2 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Multi-Cultural Cityscape, Mixed media crayon, paint and paper collage



Mia Pham

Year 1 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Multi-Cultural Cityscape, Mixed media crayon, paint and paper collage



James Kiev
Prep · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Paul Klee-inspired cubist portrait, Paper and oil pastel collage



Phillip Briones
Prep · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Paul Klee-inspired cubist portrait, Paper and oil pastel collage



Christina Nguyen
Prep · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Paul Klee-inspired cubist portrait, Paper and oil pastel collage



Jenny Nguyen
Year 4 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Mexican folk art, Mixed media cactus pot

MIRACLE

Elise Pasquier · Year 8 · Caroline Chisholm Catholic College

I woke to the sounds of the dogs barking. The air was dry, and the sun was blazing into my bedroom. The fan must have turned off overnight, because the air in my room was thick with heat. I got out of bed. Sweat trickled over my skin, and my hair caught on the bristles of my brush. I got dressed hastily and floated out into the kitchen. The light had gone out in the fridge. I grumbled in frustration and poured myself a glass of warm water. The tiles beneath my toes weren't cold and refreshing like usual, but were instead, heating up. I grabbed an apple and headed out to the side of the house where I could hear running water. My dad was there, filling up buckets with the hose.

'Good morning, Annie. It's a hot one today,'

'Yeah. What do you need me to do?' I bit the apple with a crunch.

'I haven't fed the dogs yet,' he shielded his eyes from the harsh gaze of the sun.

'Alright,' I replied. 'By the way, the powers out - the fridge and everything,'

He pursed his lips and turned off the tap. 'Yeah, they reckon it's the start of bushfire season,'

I was concerned at this news, and my face must have shown it.

'Don't worry. We're just outside of the zone. We'll be right,'

I was still anxious, but I knew better than to question my dad. As I dripped with sweat, I started the short trek to the kennels. The grass was crispy and the colour of hay. The dirt was so dry that cracks had formed, pathways of broken earth. If a fire was to start here, it would make quick work. I eventually got to the kennels. Three howling heelers were jumping up, clawing at the chain-link doors. Just as I finished filling their bowls, I heard shouts from the distance. Suddenly I felt my heart rate climb and a rush of panic surged through my veins. I ran towards the shouting, ignoring the sweltering heat. Then I saw my dad standing at the edge of our property. Behind him, the trees were engulfed in a wall of angry red flames.

'Dad!' I cried out. I was gasping for air, exhausted from running. He was trying to put out the fire using the water from the buckets he filled up earlier.

Suddenly an ear-splitting pop sound rang out from the trees. Then the fire was rapidly approaching, tearing through the dead grass, crackling, and hissing as we ran. The sun hid behind the smoke that was filling the air. I coughed, my lungs burning. I was blinded. I fell. The ground met me violently.

I gripped the grass beneath me, body trembling. Then a hand grabbed my shoulder and heaved me upwards. It led me through the smoke as the fire chased us. The flames licked at my heels. Blood pulsed in my ears. All I could smell was burning wood and ash as my feet pounded against the ground.

Finally, we reached the front of the house, where we stood on the black asphalt. I clung onto my dad's shirt, fear making my body shake aggressively. We watched the fire start to burn through our farmland. Pain spiralled through me as I realised it would all be gone. Burnt and blackened. The sky was a menacing orange, dark trails of smoke rising from the bushland surrounding us. The fire was a raging beast, snapping and spluttering, destroying everything in its path. We were vulnerable, standing amongst the chaos. It wouldn't take much for the fire to devour us too. Through the hazy sky, sirens sounded, slicing the air like an axe, ringing in my ears. A tremor of relief radiated through my body. Blue and red lights flashed from within the smoke. Then a fire engine emerged. Five volunteer firefighters got out and four started pulling out a hose. One ran over to us and ushered us into the vehicle. She handed us water bottles.

'Is there anyone still on the property?'

'No,' My dad replied, his voice hoarse from the smoke.

She nodded and adjusted her gear, preparing to join the others.

'Wait!' I cried. My voice was raspy. Tears erupted out of my eyes and streamed down my cheeks. My body heaved in agony.

'The dogs!' They were locked in their kennels and could not escape. The smoke would choke them. The fire would finish them. They didn't stand a chance. I rose and jerked towards the door, shrieking in anguish. My dad gripped my arm and yanked me back down.

'I'm sorry, Annie,' He whispered. His voice shook. My heartbeat slowed down, seemingly to a stop. A chill ran down my spine. No, don't say it. Please. I grasped his hands, my heart in my mouth. Cold sweat dripped down the nape of my neck. The lights in the truck rippled and my vision was twisting. I was drowning in torment.

'I'm sorry Annie,' He repeated. 'It's too late,'

My world started crashing down.

But then, the firefighter asked, 'Where on the property?'

‘Towards the back left corner – but please, don’t put yourselves in anymore danger,’ My dad answered.

The firefighter nodded and left. She closed the door behind her.

Seeing the poor girl so devastated about her dogs, I knew I had to do something. Calling out to the others, Leo and I set out through the ashy landscape to find the dogs. My strong sense of direction led me straight to the kennels. Inside, two dogs were clawing at the wire, yelping, and barking, but one, the smallest, was collapsed on the floor. Fire was eating away at the back wall casting flickering shadows through the thick haze. We cut the wire and grabbed the dogs. Leo held the two squirming heelers under his arms, and I cradled the small one. We looked to each other, about to leave. His visor reflected menacing flames, dancing, and taunting. My breath went shallow as the wall behind Leo cracked. Flames shot up the wall, swaying and laughing. Then the wood started to fall down. I cried out. Leo jumped forward. The wood crashed down onto his legs. He fell to the ground, and I shouted in horror. The dogs squirmed but did not escape his grasp. Still holding the unconscious puppy, I reached for his arms and pulled him up. He nodded once, signalling to me he was okay to keep going. We didn’t have a choice. As we left, the kennels exploded into a giant ball of fire.

I had drunk all my water, but my throat was still rough and dry. I was sitting on the edge of the seat inside the fire truck, my leg bobbing up and down. Up and down. Up and down. I ran my fingers through my ponytail. Up and down. Up and down. My dad was sitting in the chair across the truck. He handed me his almost empty water bottle and I downed it. Up and down. Up and down. Then the door opened. A wave of scorching dry air entered the truck, instantly consuming the cold air. Two

firefighters, the one from earlier and one I hadn’t seen before clambered inside. They were carrying the dogs! I jumped up and ran over. The firefighter I hadn’t seen before put the two he was holding down, and they ran around jumping and yapping and shaking with joy. The firefighters lifted off their helmets. I hugged the dogs, full of relief. I didn’t realise the tears falling down my face until they were splattering onto my shoes. I got up and hugged the firefighter who had carried the two dogs in.

‘Thank you, thank you,’ I repeated. The two blue heelers were circling around my legs, and I laughed, the tenseness flowing out of my body like a waterfall. I released myself from the firefighter, and he went and sat on a chair, and started massaging his ankle.

‘Annie,’ My dad said. He was standing next to the firefighter who had given the water to us earlier. She was rocking something inside her arms. I stepped over and she placed the red heeler puppy gingerly into my arms. Her little tail wagged, and she yowled in delight.

‘We found her unconscious inside the kennels. The other two were okay, but the smoke must have been too much for her,’ The firefighter smiled. Another surge of tears washed down my face. My gratitude overwhelmed me, rendering me at a loss for words.

‘Say, may I ask,’ The firefighter inquired. ‘What’s this little puppy’s name?’

‘Miracle,’ I said. A beam of light radiated through my face.

The firefighter nodded. No need for words. A smile says a thousand of those.

She pulled back on her helmet and stood in the doorway. She pulled down her visor. Just as she stepped back outside into the fiery land, she winked. ■

ALL BOTTLED UP INSIDE

Teja Girirajan · Year 8 · Caroline Chisholm Catholic College

How do we know how we feel?
All bottled up inside,
But we never let it hide,
We thrust it out into the world,
Like a dog gone wild,
Sadness, Envy, Anger, Joy, Fear
and Love,
One side positive,
The other negative,
But the greatest of all,
Relief,
A bridge that connects,
This mighty unrest,

But all the feelings inside,
Sadness, Envy, Anger, Joy, Fear
and Love,
Which always leaves me in awe,
Are always followed by one or
the other.
Which give us all a bit of color,
For better or worse,
They are all the same,
Bottled up emotions,
And when we feel like screaming
back at the world in front of us,

They then all come,
The ones closest to us,
Or strangers mixed up in our
reality,
And anyone in between,
Trudging over when we least
expect it,
Devouring our minds,
Judging our ways,
Judging our thoughts,
And in the process,
They change us,
Mold us,
To fit their ideals,

Many recoil unable to change,
It was not always like that,
Now it is like this,
Now we are voiceless,
Now we are forgotten.
But we are still one,
Still together,
Still us,
But the truth is buried too deep
within our souls,
Surrounded by a mountain of dirt,

And despite everything we still
go our reckless ways,
Our bottled up emotions,
Leads us astray,
The heavy words of another,
Are like boulders on our
shoulders,
Remember this,
Let's not walk away from who
we are,
Let's keep chasing after our
dreams,
Regardless of what anyone else
says,

There is no need to burden
yourself,
As we are all the same,
And as we grow by age,
There's more to celebrate,
Let's look to the future,
With a smile etched on our faces,
Hope in our eyes,
Gleaming into the skies,
Embracing who we are,
As we look forward to another
sunrise. ■



Kathaleena Tram

Year 12 · Caroline Chisholm Catholic College

In What World, Mixed media

This diorama conveys the concept of inspiration by immersing us in the escapism and the adventures that come with reading a book and falling into a fictional realm. The arrangement of this art piece reveals a reality that exists solely within the realm of literature. At the heart of the diorama, a book serves as a symbol of the gateway to boundless adventures and inspiration we take from reading literature. The landscape before us undergoes a transformation, demonstrating how the words on those pages have the remarkable ability to conjure wonder within our imagination.

SAVE THE ORANGUTANS

Eva Young · Year 10 · Genazzano FCJ College

Human orphanages. You've probably heard or read about them somewhere, and the last one closed over 60 years ago thanks to our growing and improving social system. But, deep in parts of Borneo and Sumatra, there are orangutan orphanages. Meet Otan, an 8-month-old baby orangutan who was torn from his home and lost all his family, much like thousands of other orangutans. Why? Because of palm oil deforestation.

Palm oil is found in 50% of all stores' products, from instant noodles and pizza to lipstick so it doesn't melt. It's so popular because it's cheap to make and can be used in so many things! But palm oil is rarely labelled, often going under more than 26 other names such as vegetable oil.

Palm oil harvesting can have devastating effects. When Otan was first rescued, he gripped his

rescuers for many hours. This grip would usually be used for swinging through great, green trees. But there aren't any trees left for him. They've all been cleared at unsustainable rates to grow and harvest oil palm plantations.

So, what can you do to help save these thousands of suffering animals? Sign the Zoo Victoria's petition to help make palm oil labelling mandatory. If we can successfully have palm oil labelled on all products, then this will pressure companies to also have sustainable palm oil certificates, meaning forests are cleared and used in a sustainable way, giving Otan and his thousands of brothers and sisters a chance at a good and flourishing life.

And in the time it has taken for you to read this, you could have already signed the petition! Yes, it's that simple. So what are you waiting for? ■



Che (Janine) Liu
Year 10 · Genazzano FCJ College

Reimagine



Song Thu (Lily) Nguyen
Year 10 · Genazzano FCJ College

The Photobomber

EQUAL PAY IN AFL AND AFLW

Kathleen Major · Year 10 · Genazzano FCJ College

Both AFL and AFLW have captured the hearts and minds of fans across the nation. The two leagues showcase incredible skills, dedication, and passion. So WHY do women get paid so much less than men? Male footballers are paid a whopping 317,000 dollars each season while female footballers are paid a measly 25,000 dollars a season. It is high time we repair this inequality so that women can get the pay they deserve.

Equal talent and effort should yield the same reward. Why should men be paid 290,000 dollars more than female football players? This wage gap is disgusting to witness. It is the 21st century! Not the 1800s! Despite the equal dedication, equal commitment and equal time exhibited by athletes from both leagues, somehow men seem to be paid way more. How is this fair?!

According to the Oxford Dictionary, a professional is described as someone who is “engaged in a specified activity as their main paid occupation rather than as an

amateur.” Female football players are professionals. However, they face the challenge of not being able to sustain a living solely from football. Consequently, female football players have to juggle their football careers with other jobs, resulting in financial disadvantages. Many women in football also have the challenge of balancing

their home life and looking after their children. Nell Morris-Dalton, a player for the Western

Bulldogs, states, “It is incredibly challenging to be both an athlete and have another job on top of that.” No male football players balance two jobs to make a living. This disparity must be addressed and needs to change!

Achieving pay equality for women in the AFL is crucial to promoting fairness and gender equity. It’s an opportunity to challenge existing barriers and drive social progress. By ensuring equal pay for the two leagues, AFL would demonstrate respect for their female footballer’s talents and hard work. It would also set a positive example for other sporting organizations by advocating inclusivity and fairness. Equal pay in the AFL would not only be a symbolic triumph but also an important step towards creating a more equitable society.

It is CRUCIAL that we put an end to men making more money than women in footy. Women work just as hard as men and are yet still paid less. On top of this, female footballers have the challenge of balancing two jobs in order to make a living. Achieving equal pay for women in AFL would not only promote fairness and gender equity but will also help work towards a future where all athletes are valued equally, regardless of gender. ■



Talia Ong
Year 10 · Genazzano FCJ
College

Familiar

PICTURE PERFECT

Philiana Wong · Year 10 · Genazzano FCJ College

Picture this: you stroll into a supermarket, eagerly seeking fresh and nutritious produce to fill your shopping cart. The vibrant colours and flawless appearance of the fruit and vegetables entice you, assuring you of their quality. But what if I told you that there's more to this picture-perfect facade than meets the eye? Today, I will uncover the reality behind the flawless produce of supermarkets—the harsh and unrealistic cosmetic standards.

Cosmetic standards are like guidelines and expectations set by supermarkets regarding the appearance of fresh produce, often prioritising a specific set of aesthetic qualities, such as size, shape, colour, and a blemish-free appearance. As a result, fresh fruits and vegetables that do not meet these standards, even if they are perfectly safe to eat and nutritious, are often rejected and left unsold or discarded.

In fact, supermarket statistics show that 20 to 40% of fruit and vegetables are rejected even before they reach the shelves, just because for example a “zucchini is bent the wrong way, or a banana is the wrong colour”. Due to these unrealistic standards, hundreds of truckloads of fruits and vegetables are needlessly discarded in Australia every single day. This not only contributes to the already overwhelming problem of food waste, but it is also disheartening to think that we are throwing away perfectly good food.

I would like to draw your attention to these two

photos of apples. Now, ask yourself: which apple would you personally like to take a bite out of? Chances are, many of you would be inclined to choose this apple [supermarket apple], after all, it appears flawless, shiny, and perfectly shaped. Furthermore, this apple seems to resemble an onion, which is also not very appealing. But did you know that by choosing an apple based on its appearance, you are inadvertently contributing to supermarket cosmetic standards?

Supermarkets create an unattainable image of perfection by demanding flawless, blemish-free produce like this [supermarket apple] and rejecting “imperfect” produce such as this [farmer’s market apple]. Consumers, like you, are conditioned to believe that visually appealing fruits and vegetables are more desirable, of higher quality, and worth purchasing. This obsession with appearance creates unrealistic expectations among consumers, and we forget that taste, quality, and nutritional value are far more important than how perfect a fruit or vegetable looks.

To conclude, the cosmetic standards imposed on fresh produce in supermarkets have detrimental effects on food waste and our perception of food. We, as a society, need to shift our focus from appearance to the true essence of food, and similarly, it's time for supermarkets to rethink their cosmetic standards and embrace a more inclusive approach. Together, we can pave the way for a healthier, more equitable, and sustainable future. ■



Zihan (Hanna) Jia
Year 10 · Genazzano FCJ
College

In a Mirror



Julietida Kem
Year 11 · Killester College

Overreach

In my homeland Cambodia, there are multiple myths and legends revolving around demons and gods, especially about a particular demon named Mara. Well known for her torments on the people as she brings bad luck and omen as she feeds on their spirits. I decided to depict and gain inspiration through this as my illustration is based on this narrative, battling with a warrior. Someone who represents the strong sense of nurture and justice for the people, a woman who has harnessed her powers from an ancient fighting technique called 'Bokator' hence the stick and outfit. With blue representing the demon and red representing the people, reflecting on the Cambodian flag's colour meaning. Producing a scene of war like environment, clashing good and bad together.



Eva Kurian
Year 7 · Killester College

Taro, Visual Communication Design,
Adobe Illustrator



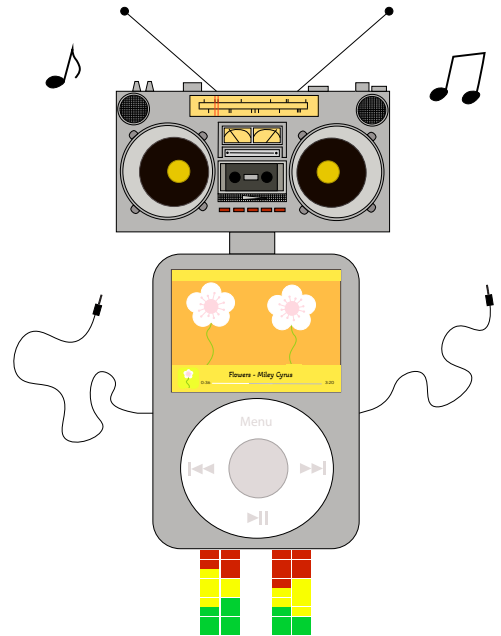
Kirthi Anand
Year 7 · Killester College

“Deer-y” Me, Visual Communication Design,
Adobe Illustrator



Lily Anh Nguyen
Year 8 · Killester College

Star Boy, Visual Communication Design,
Adobe Illustrator



Amy Lan Pan Wing
Year 7 · Killester College

Otomo, Visual Communication Design,
Adobe Illustrator



Johnathon Paola
Year 11 · De La Salle College

NATURE'S AWAKENING

Krishna Kancharla · Year 9 · Killester College

A tapestry of scenic beauties, grand and alluring
The glossy pristine waterfall meets the ocean's
embrace
With a mesmerising pitter-patter like delicate
raindrops
Syrupy nectar drips from a golden wattle, nature's
salubrious scent
An alleviating lullaby echoes in the depths of the
valley
The deluging waves mirroring the heavy weights
that brought us down
And our search for a purpose seemed like finding a
diamond in the river
Pebbles dance like a broken pendulum swaying to
and fro

Its inconsistency drowning our perfectionism and
idealities
Our tension dissolves into solace in the peace and
tranquillity
The flowers bloom into possibilities we dare to
explore
With orchid and lavender hues painting a canvas
of creativity
In this world of wonders a meaning to life is
rekindled
The sense of escapism fuels our aspirations.
And the echoes of silence erase pessimism
The galaxy of nature casting a vivid glow on our
inspirations ■



Taegan Truong
Year 12 · Killester College

Lotta

Focusing on my theme of childhood, I have encapsulated childhood play spent playing with dolls and toys into permanent form. Using the symbolism of the lotus flower to represent my identity and feelings that come with growing up, I have used this idea to show how I have been able to grow from difficult situations and times of uncertainty. Especially with my time at high school coming to an end which through all its fun has been a tough journey, this sculpture is one final send-off of my childhood days and represents my growth through all of this.



Christine Vu
Year 12 · Killester College

Sparrow

One of the first words my brother and I spoke was the word “bird” in Vietnamese. Namely the small brown sparrows around the parks and shops, little creatures that lived in their own world. Whenever I see them, I’m always in awe of their freedom and simplistic lives. They just bring so much joy to me and the nostalgia of simpler days. So, they inspire me to live like a small bird, untethered and grateful for what I am.

IT WAS DARK INSIDE THE WOLF

Francheska Bu · Year 10 · Killester College

Little Red Riding Hood moved around inside the Wolf, feeling a vicious joy when her legs kicked the bits of him that trapped her in the process.

Bits of meat sat beneath her, clinging to her, and the girl endeavoured to not think of her grandmother, who had, of course, been the last thing the Wolf ate before he swallowed her whole.

She was a small and slight child, being of thirteen summers and barely looking to be out of her ninth.

The village people, who criticise her widowed mother, treat Little Red as if she was five.

Little Red, they had nicknamed her, after her father. Calling her the name so much that even her own mother had given up in not referring to her as such.

Little Red did not have much time left for her.

This, she did know. Even being the naive girl that she was, who could not even recognise that her own grandmother had been replaced with an animal; but she was not so short-sighted as to not know she was currently staring death in the face.

The girl could berate herself, could think of what a fool she had been, but she did not.

Little Red instead thought of her mother, who would be worried at how late it had gotten.

She hopes everyone misses her.

A small, prevailing thought is this: *'the Huntsman could save me.'*

The Huntsman was a small flicker of hope within her, the only pipe dream she could hold in the helplessness of being trapped inside the Wolf's stomach.

It is a commotion outside of the walls that breaks Little Red from her thoughts.

There is yelling and—

The shots of a gun and—

When she splits open from the stomach of the Wolf, crying like a newborn baby, Little Red wonders if this is what it is like to be born.

I am born again, she thinks, weeping into the Huntsman's arms, covered in the flesh of her grandmother and the gore of the Wolf.

I never want to be born again, she thinks, crying into her mother's arms when she returns home. ■



Alvina Nuon
Year 10 · Killester College

Arkoun, meak (Thank you, mum)

This artwork is dedicated to my mum and all the other mums in the world. They are the universal nurturers. Without them nor you, nor I would have existed. Thank you for giving me purpose.

UNTITLED

Ella Riess · Year 10 · Lavalla Catholic College

A crumpled and worn piece of paper tumbles across the barren field of Saltwick. It is not where it is supposed to be, no not at all. This letter is a bud of love, being sowed in the soft soil of two people's hearts. The letter flutters over the dried-up wheat, which will soon be ground into flour in a farmer's mill. The Watcher catches the tanned parchment, tears it into pieces and swallows them whole. Words form and twist in its mouth, and it drinks up the sweetness of the letters passion.

My dear Sunflower,

At the time of writing this the sun is setting over the town's square. From my bedroom window, I'm able to catch glimpses of your golden hair in the run-down bakery. Shall I tell you a secret of mine? I shall, just for you my dear.

You may not realise it, up from my ivy-covered window, I often seem to find myself staring down at the stone patchwork of the square. There's something so fascinating in seeing this small town's population walk back and forth as the time passes by. I always find myself wondering what they could be doing and why? For example, I saw Dale Johnson just in the early hours of the morning. He ran through the crowds at quite a speed, a pile of newspapers in his hands. I wonder; what do you think he was doing?

Perhaps it's just the fact his job is to deliver the papers, but, I've never seen him in such a rush. I wonder if he was late for something or maybe just wanted to get his job done quickly this morning. Who knows? Not I, that's for sure.

Well Sunflower, what say we meet? Or are you still worried what the town shall think? I for one, am not caught up in such details but, then again, you've always wanted to please the others, haven't you Sunflower? Nevertheless, I'll always wait for you.

- Crow.

A new letter drifts down a small stream towards a drain in the sidewalk. It has been folded carefully into a small origami boat. The people pay no mind to it, for them, it is merely a child's doing. A piece of paper with no meaning behind it. The Watcher sees the boat and stomps it down into the stream. The paper crumbles and melts into liquid. The watcher gulps it down and smiles.

Dearest Crow,

I received your letter, and do not fret for I disposed of it in the wheat fields of my father's farm. I can assure you that nobody will stumble upon it.

I must say, your letter interested me quite a bit. You've always been one to watch and wonder. I envy you for that my love, yes I do. For you can present yourself in a way in which you need not to worry about the opinions of this town's people. Truly an incredible trait I could only dream to possess.

The bakery has been busy as usual, so I haven't had time to sit down and write, let alone think about meeting with you. However, I cannot say it hasn't been on my mind. The people of Saltwick tend to be ruthless and I fear our relationship shall be frowned upon.

Whatever could we do, Crow? Is there some way for two people who love each other to hold each other in their arms without the judgement of this town? Maybe, our love is simply hopeless. Do you believe so?

- Sunflower

A glass jar with ripped paper sealed within, is tucked between the books of Saltwick's small library. Nobody pays it any mind - it is simply a jar, nothing more to them. A man throws the jar into the trash outside in the cool weather and the Watcher sees. They grab the small jar, smash it, and stab the glass shards into bare palms, absorbing each and every word written.

Oh Sunflower,

I've read what you have sent to me and oh, how my heart aches. No, such love as ours is not impossible. No, not at all. For I love you as Romeo loves Juliet, as the sun loves the moon and as Achilles loves Patroclus. I will not stop until we are able to unite.

As they say, find what you love and let it kill you. Well, my dear, it's like you've made flowers grow in my lungs and although they are beautiful I cannot breathe.

Sunflower, I would sacrifice all I have for you. Would you do the same?

- Crow

In a small and dainty shop, the Watcher dips a teabag into boiling water. The bag is full of tea leaves and the remains of a letter. The two things mix in the small, decorated cup. A sweet aroma drifts from within as the Watcher calmly takes it's time sipping, inhaling the words, and biting down on biscuits.

Crow,

I am willing to sacrifice all for you, after all, I love you so. Do I not? I am simply worried about what

could happen if we are exposed. But I love you. For you have me wrapped around your fragile fingers, Crow. Until every star in the galaxy dies, you have me.

For a long time, I believed there were only two kinds of lovers. The kind you'd kill for and the kind you'd die for. But you, my darling, you are the kind I'd live for.

I understand what you mean when you ask If I would sacrifice all for you. So, I guess I shall see you soon, my dear Crow.

- Sunflower

After months, this bud of love bloomed. The Watcher stands on a hilltop, looking out over a grassy patch. As the sun fades over the earth, it sees a crow land and pluck a sunflower from the soft soil. The crow squawks and flies off into the sunset. The Watcher smiles and laughs, white wings spreading from its back and a golden bow in its hand. The Watcher's name is Cupid, and he watches all buds bloom into something more. He springs off the dirt and into the sky, towards the stars. Ready to find you and lead you towards a new start, just as he has done for Crow and Sunflower. ■



Gemma Roach
Year 7 · Star of the Sea College



Klaudia Bracker
Year 7 · Emmaus College



Sara Taranto
Year 7 · Emmaus College

INSPIRATION

EJ Sumarno · Year 7 · De La Salle College

The person who inspires me is Atticus Finch. Although he is a fictional character, he is someone who inspires me because he sees what is right and just in his time, no matter their race, age, or gender. The cases that are in the book, 'To Kill a Mockingbird', sometimes give me ideas for stories. Atticus Finch seen through his children's eyes at first is seen as some random old man who is their father compared to other fathers, but in the way I see him, Harper Lee made him the lawyer that hopefully most people want to be when becoming a lawyer. Even the judge believed he was the best lawyer he'd ever seen after the Tom Robinson case because the Judge knew Atticus was the only person who could hold out that specific case for so long although he lost.

It's not just in court but outside as well. Atticus is respectful and is helpful to everyone in Maycomb throughout the story, even when Jem and Scout see him as some old guy, they begin to realize he is well respected and then becomes someone they have great respect for in the story. This makes me wish I respect my dad the way they do. One of the things Atticus gives me is ideas for stories so here's one short story that I thought of, but it doesn't have a name yet:

Flint took a deep breath. "Why me out of all people to be the defendant of this case," he thought.

In his office, he paces back and forth observing the dark brown planks of the walls, floor and roof, the albino bear rug that his shoes are making dirty. The piles of books on the maple shelf, the white office chair, and the three by four meter window behind the desk and chair. Flint grabs the manilla folder and quickly skims through the briefing. A Chinese or Japanese man was accused of mugging a woman on with no witnesses except for a black man and another white woman. Flint knew who was going to win this case.

"Mr. Daryl the audience is waiting for you." said the secretary. Flint fixed his tie, thought a quick prayer grabbed his briefcase, took a deep breath, and walked out to the courtroom. He took his seat next to the Chinese man, Mr. Suzo.

"All rise for the judge," boomed the guard. A rather round and old-looking judge stomped slowly onto his rise and a lawyer walked to the middle of the courtroom.

"Albert Robson," thought Flint. Albert was one of the most racist people Flint knew. Of course he was the prosecutor.

"Ladies and Gentlemen of the jury I am here today

to prove that this man, Mr. Lee Suzo is guilty of robbing this woman." With a smirk on his face, Albert turned to his first witness. "Miss Anderson could you please recount this definite robbing," he said.

"Well, I had just walked out of a café after my catch-up with my friends when I was walkin' to my car. A Japanese man jumped in front of me and began hitting me yelling "Give me your purse". Of course I didn't but still, he kept on hitting me. I still have this mark on my face," she said, pointing to a tiny blue mark close to her cheekbone and nose.

"Can you please Identify this man?"

Then she pointed to Mr Suzo.

"Mr. Daryl your rebuttal".

"I call to the stand Mr Reubin Huckleberry." A tall dark-skinned man began to walk towards the witness stand. The jury were surprised at the man approaching the stand. Flint took a deep breath. "Mr Hucklberry where were you on June 12th at say around 9 pm?" Flint asked.

"Well sur's I's was close to da Cafe dat the Miss here said and Miss comez out with two older people"

"Stop right there Mr Huckleberry. Miss Anderson is this true?" She nodded "And what are the names of these two older people?" Flint asked

"Tom and Anne Anderson" she whimpered

"Ah so doesn't that technically mean that they are your parents if they are much older than you like Mr Huckleberry said?" Flint Sarcastically asked.

She nodded then began to stutter and broke into tears "W... w well HE'S A BLACK MAN W W WOULD YOU TAKE HIS WORD OVER MINE!?"

Flint smiled. he got them right where he wanted them, and with a straight face, he continued. "Mr Huckleberry, please continue"

"As I's says, Miss walks out with her parents, then out of nowhere her dad punches hers in da face. Miss looked in pain and starts crying, I's wanted to help but dat man yonder, pointing to Mr. Suzo, ran to help her and them parents start running" Reuben recounted

"Thank you, Mr Huckleberry." Flint cut off. After a bit of thinking Flint continued. "Ladies and Gentlemen of the jury it is clear that the Japanese man, Mr Suzo was merely trying to aid Miss Anderson after her father struck her in the face

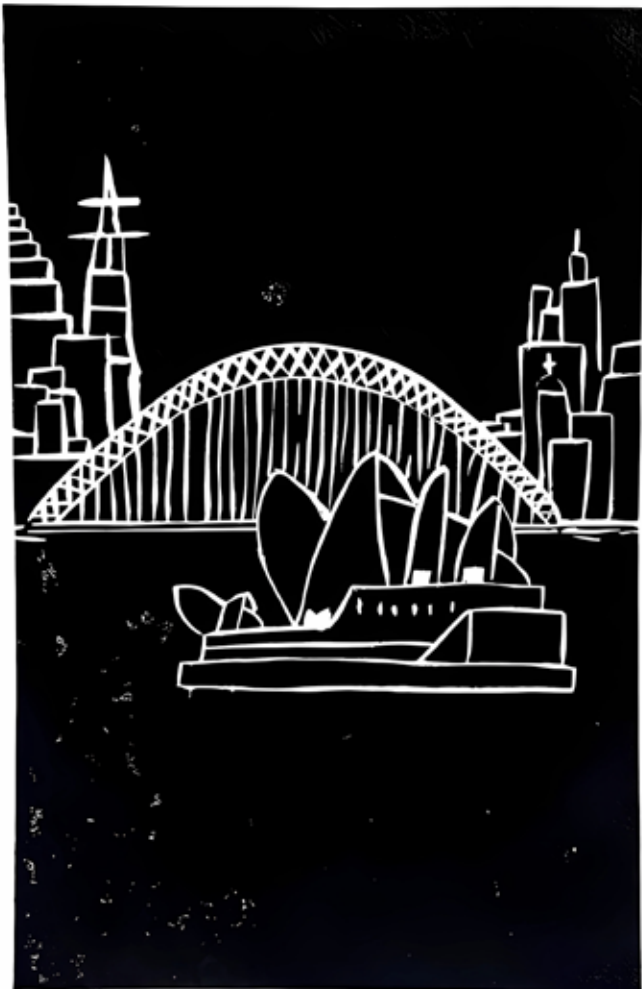
where that mark is on her face and Mr Huckleberry stated, so if you have the clearest sincerity in your heart, you must let Mr Suzo free.”

After that, the jury and lawyers went into a room to make their final decision. Twenty minutes had passed and no sign of the jury. Thirty then forty to a whole two hours had passed before the Jury had a verdict. The judge walked up the stairs to his stand and put on his glasses on his face and

pronounced “THE DEFENDANT IS FOUND.... NOT GUILTY!”

Flint’s face turned pale. So did Mr Suzo. But the Judge had not finished. “Mr. Suzo, you are free to go.”

The judge approached Flint with a smile. “Good Job Flint. You did one hell of a job and now you know why I picked you for the job.” Flint smiled and thanked God for this victory. ■



India Meehan
Year 8 · Star of the Sea College



Flynn Kenworthy
Year 10 · De La Salle College

Photography



James Hillemacher
Year 11 · De La Salle College

INSPIRE

Mack Wardlaw · Year 8
De La Salle College

A good role model.
A new legacy, era;
For generations. ■

Otto Campo Sosnowski · Year 8
De La Salle College

Persuade followers.
Becoming a role model.
Having a connection. ■

Mack Wardlaw · Year 8
De La Salle College

Selfless underdog,
Overcoming challenges;
Being very resilient. ■

Xander Nikolaidou · Year 8
De La Salle College

Motivational.
Making people follow you.
A new legacy. ■

Mack Wardlaw · Year 8
De La Salle College

Having brave actions.
Boosting peoples' confidence.
Leaving a footprint. ■

THE BIG WINNER™

Mia Landman · Year 9 · Star of the Sea College

“**A**nd remember, it can always turn around,” remarked the man inside the TV. Andrea thought to herself that he had an unnatural smile. Bright, perfect, almost clinical, that seemed to sparkle as he spoke the mantra. She looked back down to her work, the rest of the factory filled with the quiet hum of sewing machines and snipping of scissors. Andrea carefully cut along the black line, drawn upon the grey threadbare fabric. The item she was holding would eventually become a grey collared shirt, for the men in the army. The war had been going on for longer than Andrea could remember, which should be around twenty-two years, if she was remembering correctly. No one really celebrates birthdays anymore, the only markers of age being the draft letters sent to children when they turn eighteen years. The hundreds of garments produced in the factory will eventually clothe those drafted children, with millions of children being drafted every day.

Andrea was only in charge of cutting out a shape from the fabric. Then those cut out shapes will be passed to the next station, where they will be sewn together to form the basis of the shirt. The next station is where the shirts are hemmed, then finally, tags are stamped on the shirt and they get packaged ready to be sent out. Andrea’s job is part of the bigger picture to help her noble country of England win their war. Who is England fighting? Andrea has no clue. They are fighting Them and that is good enough for her.

The white lights blink once, signalling it’s time to pack up and head home. In unison, each worker from the cutting station, stands up and picks up their bags, the scraping sound of chair legs grating upon Andrea’s ears. Andrea follows the crowd streaming towards the door and begins her walk to the bus stop. As she waits for the bus she reaches into her bag and picks up her mobile telephone. She swipes twice to the right before she comes to a stop at the sight of one app. ‘THE BIG WINNER™’, a bright red app with its name written in bold, as if calling out to her, begging to be opened. She hovered over it for a second, then tapped the icon. As she watched the loading bar on the app slowly fill up, she read the words in the centre of her screen, ‘It can always turn around’. The app loaded in and she was greeted with a bright spinner and a red button.

She began tapping the button and the spinner started to spin. Andrea held her breath, as a clicking sound emanated from her mobile telephone and the arrow flicked over each triangular section. The spinner stopped and she let out her breath, nothing. She had won nothing. How could those people on the television have won millions of dollars? The Bus pulled up, and on the side was an advertisement. There was the Smiling Man, and next to him in big black letters

was the slogan ‘It can always turn around’. Andrea stood up and collected her things, before getting on. Each and every person on the bus was illuminated by the light from their mobile telephones, as they stared at the screen, tapping the button. The bus rumbled and jolted, and then began to move.

Andrea jingled her keys in the lock as she opened the front door and stepped inside her home. The walls were painted beige, and were paired with a matching dirty tiled floor. The furniture was scarce, and the room consisted of a small galley kitchen, an old box television and one table and chair. A small window illuminated the room, along with one lone hanging lightbulb. A door off to the side led to her bedroom, which contained a small single bed and a bedside table. Andrea could just barely recall the stories her mother told her when she was a child. Stories of houses filled with warmth and laughter, soft couches and brightly painted front doors. Houses bestowed with crackling fireplaces and smiling family portraits. Andrea dropped her handbag at the door and moved towards the kitchen, filling the kettle with water, pressing the button on the side and grabbing a small grey sachet out of the cupboard. She tore open the sachet with her teeth and poured the powder into a bowl. Once the kettle had boiled she filled the bowl with water. What she was left with was steaming grey mush. This was the main delicacy of the working-class society in the year of 3033. She picked up the bowl, grabbed her mobile telephone and slumped on the one lone chair in her apartment. She turned on the television and a familiar cheerful theme song filled the room. As the ad rolled to a close the Smiling Man appeared again, with the same mantra “It can always turn around”. She unlocked her mobile telephone, swiped twice to the right and opened the app.

“Andrea! Morning”, Dennis, Andrea’s neighbour, called out with a smile and a wave.

“Morning Dennis, how’s it going?” Dennis began to tell a somewhat brain-numbing story about how he burnt his toast and Andrea began to tune out, when suddenly something Dennis said caught her attention.

“I’m sorry, did you just say you won? Like actually won something from that app?” Andrea exclaimed in utter shock.

“Yeah, I won a 10-year supply of razors,” he boasted, his hands buried deep in the pockets of his grey suit jacket. She couldn’t believe it. Razors were like gold in this economy, ever since the last ration list was released, the demand had skyrocketed, with people scared that more limits would be allocated. Some people had even started stock buying.

“I can’t believe it”, Andrea said. Dennis turned to her and smiled.

“Well you know what they say, it can always turn around”. Andrea waved goodbye and walked to the bus stop, this time as she sat on the bus on the way to the factory, she too, opened THE BIG WINNER™ and began to tap the button.

On Andrea’s bus ride home she opened the app again, and spun the wheel over and over, staring at the arrow as it missed the BIG PRIZE every time. Every time it missed. Andrea glanced upwards and watched as an old woman, who must’ve been 80 and something years old, also stared at her mobile telephone. When she glanced back down, she couldn’t believe her own eyes. There, on the screen, in flashing bold red letters, were the words, YOU ARE THE BIG WINNER! Andrea blinked twice and rubbed her eyes, to make sure she wasn’t seeing things. Yes. The arrow was pointing at the BIG WINNER triangle on the wheel. The bus, which had stopped at a light, jolted forward and she smiled. By the time the bus pulled into her stop and she walked to the door, there was already a man at her front door, in a black suit with black sunglasses and slicked back hair. As Andrea started to walk towards him, he turned around and spotted her for the first time. He smiled.

“Hi Andrea, my name is Nick, I’m from THE BIG WINNER™ and I’m here to collect you, our new latest BIG WINNER”. He pulled a business card out from his pocket with THE BIG WINNER™ logo embossed on one side. “If you’d kindly step right this way, and we will be at your new private island in no time.”

“Really? That quick?”

“That quick”, he said with a smile. Andrea slid into the backseat of his black car. Just before Nick slammed the door shut she caught a glimpse of Dennis standing in his window, looking out at the scene before him. He caught her eye and smiled. Nick drove Andrea to the airport, the entire time all she was thinking about was the woman she’d seen on the television last week who had won THE BIG WINNER™ and been given an enormous sparkly mansion fully decorated and stocked with clothes and food. That could be her. No, That is her now. As the car rolled to stop out the front of the airport Andrea felt as though her heart was about to beat out of her chest. It had finally turned around.

The private jet was in the air for around 3 hours before it began to descend. Andrea pressed her face against the circular window, desperate to see where they were. The jet tilted and she caught a glimpse of

a beautiful island. Lush and green surrounded by a glittering turquoise sea, joined with the golden sand. Andrea could picture herself lying on that sand, soaking up the sun. The jet tilted further and Andrea sucked in a breath. There was no enormous sparkly mansion sitting proudly ready to greet her, no. Instead there was a grey concrete bunker.

“Um Nick, are you sure we’re in the right place?”, she inquired. Nick leaned to the side and craned his neck around to look at her from his seat a few rows in front of Andrea.

“Oh yeah, this is the place, it’s beautiful, don’t stress.” Andrea felt a sense of dread coil itself in the pit of her stomach. This can’t be it. They promised her a mansion. A glittering golden mansion. In every advertisement on that godforsaken television in her dark barren apartment they showed her a mansion. Was it too much to ask for in life? The jet landed and as she stepped through the door Andrea got less than a glimpse of her lush green surroundings before a bag was pulled over her head and she felt a sharp pain in the back of her skull.

Andrea was awoken by fluorescent white lights. She was sitting on a metal bench and had a stabbing pain behind her eyes. The man in front of her was dressed in a white coat, and had a shiny name tag pinned to the pocket, where one ballpoint pen poked out. The nametag read ‘DR KENNETH SIMONDS’. Her gaze travelled further upwards and when her eyes reached his face a spark of recognition shot through her like lightning.

“Dennis? Wha - what’s going on?” she whispered.

“Oh, Andrea, you know I really was rooting for you, you were the best one yet, always stopping to talk to me in the morning. You were a good citizen too, never questioning”. Andrea simply sat there, wide eyed with fear.

“There is no Big Winner, no massive prize, I never got a 10-year supply of razors and my name isn’t really Dennis Snider. I am Dr Kenneth Simonds, and I work for the US army. We need test subjects for our biological warfare efforts. You’re our latest candidate”. He reached out his hand and Andrea shook it, as she went to pull away he clung on with an iron grip, raised his other hand, and stabbed her wrist with a long grey syringe. He smiled at her.

“I’m sorry it has to be like this, but well, it can’t always turn around”

Andrea slumped forward and hit the floor. The symphony of her heart came to a close, no longer beating. ■

RAINING PAINTING

Isabel Good · Year 10 · Star of the Sea College

Rain. Tears of the heavens that fall from the stars. Transparent teardrops that decorate the morning sky. Celestial bodies that write fate's secrets and script the lines of life.

Two people. Two stars dancing eternity in the night. One in a strawberry red dress, the other in dark blue pants and an off white shirt. Under the gaze of a thousand eyes, centuries of lives judging them, hearts way heavy.

Yet they continue to dance, the rhythm of the rain creating symphonies. Strawberry red spins against the faded city lights.

A gentle smile lifts onto the lips of the other. Dark hair sticks to the skin, yet blue eyes crinkle. A

joyful sound whispered from the lips of strawberry red, as the tears of heaven continued to pour their sorrow, the two people danced an inspiration of delight.

A pair of brown eyes lingered on the sway of the two. A pencil scratched against rough paper. Strokes mirrored the beauty of the falling tears as the pencil continued to draw a reflection of beauty.

Green eyes watched strawberry red lean into dark blue and off white. Rain fell onto the roughened paper, graphite pencil falling to the ground. Soft eyes turned to the sound. But only the droplets of celestial tears were visible on the dewdrop-speckled ground. ■



Anthony Pham
Year 6 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Acrylic painted impressionist landscape

IF IT WERE ALL A DREAM

Jemma Brodie · Year 11 · Star of the Sea College

“It was all a dream”

The awe that my juvenile mind experienced when those thought-provoking words were first etched into my memories, is indescribable. Sure, my mouth bore a wide expression, my eyes transfixed and my heart lurched. Yet, the literary impact of those words cannot truly be encapsulated by a retelling.

It was the first plot twist to which I was exposed. Despite many iterations, it never grew old to me. Reading a nightmarish story and witnessing the curated world fragmenting at the hands of five words, was the epitome of greatness in my childish frame.

It was a staple conclusion in most primary school classrooms, though it morphed into something far too naive and underdeveloped for the high school world. However, I will always miss the fanciful ending. Even when it was embedded as a story’s final remark unexpectedly, purely for dramatic effect. Simply because I’ve always wanted those words to be a real solution to life.

In a faultless world, no matter how grave or debilitating an obstacle is, it could be slaughtered by a pinch to one’s silhouette that cathartically reveals...

“It was all a dream”

That would undo all this corruptive unease.
Searing pains that make silhouettes freeze.

It would mute every tear that lingers on the face.
Of discontent and displacement, there would be no trace.

There would be an inability for others to leave.
No being would need to grieve.

If we plucked up a smile,
It wouldn’t be around for a lonely while.

Idealistic grades,
Wouldn’t be dismembered by figures degrades.

We would look to ourselves with compassion
and care.

No need to endure another’s hate-entrenched
stare.

Rigidity and shackling expectations wouldn’t
even be a thing of the past.

A happy moment would never be the last.

“I wish it was all a dream”

And if only a wish could inspire a reality. ■

ADVOCATING FOR A HEALTHIER DANCE ENVIRONMENT

Siena Wheeler · Year 10 · Genazzano FCJ College

“Suck in your stomach”, “I can see your lunch”, “You are not good enough”, “You will never make it”. These are just a few things I can guarantee every dancer has heard from their teacher. Dance, specifically ballet, is seen as a beautiful artform that ignites passion and brings joy to both performers and audiences, however, behind the shimmering costumes and flawless performances lies a toxic environment surrounding body image, low pay, excessive work hours and how this affects dancers’ mental health. It is time that we recognise the toxicity within this industry and advocate for a transformative shift towards a healthier dance community.

First and foremost, the ideal body of a ballerina needs to change! The unrealistic standards that are traditional and outdated only think of a ballerina as a skinny petite girl, NEEDS to go. This mentality fuels many ballerinas’ eating disorders and mental health issues. The Butterfly Foundation is a charity that supports all Australians impacted by eating disorders and body image issues. A professional ballerina who had danced all throughout her life said it was not uncommon for teachers to say to their students, “Don’t get a full-blown eating disorder, just get a little bit of it.” Comments like these, especially coming from a teacher who you learn from and are inspired by, can greatly impact a dancer’s mental health and encourage them to develop an eating disorder. As a dancer myself, from a young age I was exposed to the body image stigma in the dance industry. I have never forgotten the time when my teacher told me to only eat a few almonds and an avocado a day, despite knowing this was not enough to fuel my body. Body image issues are normalised in the dance world and need to change!

Making it in the dance world is next to impossible. You may love dance, you may work hard, and you may even be quite talented, but the truth is under 3 percent of people who dance become professionals. For those who do manage to secure positions, the reality is often characterised by overwork

and underpayment. Ballet professionals typically have harsh training and rehearsal schedules that require them to dedicate many hours per week to perfecting their technique, learning choreography, and preparing for performances. This can often result in long and intense work weeks that extend beyond the standard 40 hours. A Corps de ballet dancer in the Australian Ballet Company earns on average just under 60 thousand dollars a year. To put this into perspective they are earning under 30 dollars an hour. This is not much considering the long and grueling, physical labor they endure. The over competitiveness and ruthlessness that is the dance world does not even account for the horrendous hours and underpayment that dancers are left with after barely making it through the overbearing process of rejection.

Can you imagine walking into your dance studio with heightened anxiety around what your teacher may say about your body? Well ballet dancers can! The extreme demand of ballet affects both your mental and physical well-being significantly. Ballet’s physical demands require immense strength, endurance, stamina and flexibility. Unfortunately, these can lead to injuries and chronic pain. The relentless pursuit of technical perfection can push dancers to their physical limits, and create immense pressure, leading to high levels of stress and anxiety. Prioritising dancers’ physical and mental well-being through comprehensive healthcare, injury prevention, and mental health support is essential for their overall health and success in the dance world.

It is imperative that a change is made in order to better the dance world and prioritise dancers’ mental and physical health. This means that the stereotypes of a ‘dancer’s body’ need to change and dancers need to be paid more for their tireless work ethic, commitment and contribution to arts and culture. Together, let’s break the cycle and make the dance world a healthy environment for our next generation of stars. ■

AN ARCHAIC AND OUTDATED EDUCATION SYSTEM

Zahli Burgess · Year 10 · Genazzano FCJ College

As a secondary school student who suffers the harsh consequences of the NEVER changing Australian education system that consumes me and leaves me overworked, I am here to advocate for the adjustment of the archaic and outdated education system. Through grueling 7-hour workdays and the unrealistic expectations of tests and exams, I think we can all agree...something needs to change!

Can you imagine your whole life being conditioned to go into the standard “9-5” job? Well, I can, alongside with the rest of Australian school students who feel the EXACT same way. An article by DCTech Times which looks at research on Schools, examines how extended periods of instruction without breaks produces a massive impact on learning including: diminished focus, decreased engagement, and increased fatigue among students which can severely impact a student’s overall ability to learn as they are constantly exhausted throughout the day. The current education system fails to acknowledge the importance of engagement in one subject but rather, focuses on fitting as many classes as possible. We are slaves to the school system!

The testing structure within the Australian school system deserves serious review. The excessive emphasis on standardized testing puts immense pressure on students and encourages a narrow focus on memorization rather than nurturing genuine understanding and application of knowledge. The heavy reliance on high-stakes exams creates an environment of anxiety and stress, hindering students’ ability to think creatively, solve problems, and cultivate a love of learning. A research study published in the Journal of Applied School Psychology examined the impact of different types of assessment on students’ motivation and well-being. The study found that high stakes testing,

which is characterised by external pressure and intense consequences, led to increased anxiety and reduced motivation in students. Through the negative environment of testing, schools are repeatedly killing students’ love of learning and reducing motivation. How can this be right!

You may be wondering, how on earth can we fix this problem? Templestowe College was a school with low enrolment rates and was in danger of being closed, but Peter Hutton (principal of the time) decided to look further into the student’s happiness. Hutton found that students generally hated the environment of the school which involved the testing, the hours, the inability to find yourself and he knew education could be done better. He identified the students’ needs and adjusted the learning system to be incredibly more involved and suited for what his students wanted and needed. If the Australian government can strip the requirements for schools that involve long days and standardized testing, then every Australian school could make this change, allowing them to identify what their students wanted, thereby making a better environment for all, and set their students up for a better future. Templestowe College is living the future and the students are reaping the benefits of this! I think it’s time that the rest of Australia, hops on board!

As the world continues to develop at a rapid rate, Australia cannot be left in the dust and should make the move to a better system NOW! The results of Templestowe College should be an immediate alert for the Australian government, as students like me are continuing to suffer the harsh consequences and repercussions of an archaic and outdated education system. ■

TO ART IN HEAVEN

Hope Withers · Year 11 · Star of the Sea College

without pause, without a doubt
it felt extraordinary
though scary to vary
the days with something new

but smiles were seamless
hearts thumping and thawing,
unwinding wires that held
soundtracks of sounds
bleeding our sincerity
accentuating our arms

amidst bashful silhouettes,
sloped and slanted lines
there was promise

always, you said
and so i went and stayed.

a waste of time, you called it.
yet you played on my mind,
eating me alive
accused of losing my mind
though always swearing i was
fine

for 'i was the closest you would
ever get to loving'
and for so long i was scared that
the moments that we shared
would never happen again.

dared to fiercely feel
such devotion for a heart of
whim
salvation
in the possibility of my win

like the current you lulled me
your ceaseless tides pulling me in
propelling me out.

felt awed and adored
but haunted and taunted
by the what ifs
the flip of the switch
to be the one that you missed

always, you said
and so you went away.

keep me at arms' length, i cried
let me grasp at these strands
while you band your sorrys and
sand the story
ready to untether something that
could never really weather.

but now you are gone

i am left with your mirrored
heart, so delicate and full.
the reminiscence of your fingers
sweeping across my spine
the groove of your knuckles
imprinted on my mind.

i graze my tongue over my teeth
to remember how you taste.

But i cannot.

i pull at the strings of my
memory to find you.

but i am blind to the fact that
i don't have any in the first
place.

and god how i wish i did. ■



Sophie Redman
Year 10 · Genazzano FCJ College

Journey

OUR EARTH

Nicola Brodie · Year 7 · Star of the Sea College

Our sun was shining ever so bright
Yet, the shocking temperatures were such a fright
Its sounds of screams and cries increase
While our population will slowly decrease

Our world was telling us to stop
Whispering to us to give in and help
To treat our earth carefully and to be kind
Thus, we are the ones who are blind
Blind of all the mistakes we made
And now look at it,
Look what happened
Due to all our faults

Our earth is a dying soul
Its minutes ticking away
We are left believing it is out of our control
But we will not obey
We need to stand and unite
All through the day and night

Our earth is breaking
Breaking, breaking, breaking
As we think we can sit back and relax
While the enemy unknowingly attacks

We are destroying our earth

Our sky once shone with thousands of stars,
And now look what we've done
Light pollution. thought we were harmless, just
having fun

So look now, where are they, among the many
scars

The ocean's water level increasing rapidly
Oblivious people stare when cities turn into ghost
towns.

As unfazed watchers relax happily
But can we turn all this around?

Our earth is melting
Our Arctic habitat slowly dying
Polar Bears, Narwhals, Walrus, left sighing
As we are left thinking, not acting.
Not trying
Denying.

The answer... Sadly a question
A puzzle
A mystery
A conundrum
A thought

The aftermath, of a problem, will unfold
And we will not be here
When the stories, are carefully told

But we can fix this
It's not a hit or a miss
We will strive
We will survive
We will be here to tell our legacy
For the world's fate, our destiny ■

A WALK THROUGH TIME

Emma Prak · Year 12 · Star of the Sea College

From outside, there's nothing here but a collapsing temple littered with the rocks that once defended its walls. Yet, as I step into its entrance and the cold envelops me, I feel as though I have entered another world. I walk through its dusty, old corridors and surrounded by the cooled stone, I breathe a sigh of relief. The icy air provides some reprieve from the humidity and suffocating sun outside. I take small steps, tracing my fingers along its prickly walls and small engravings. Each particular line was meticulously carved probably long before I was born. I can imagine the workers with their tools, chiselling away almost 900 years ago at the very stone I now touch.

At the first corner, I turn and discover an endless tunnel of bricks stacked upon each other. At the very top, sunlight glares through, illuminating the bright green leaves of the plants. They seem to be growing into the walls. Rooting themselves deep inside.

In a dimly lit corridor I see crumbling statues, fractured arms, decapitated heads. Each corridor hosts its own carving. One is headless and wears a golden sash that reflects golden beams from a sunset that dances off distant waves. Another legless statue wears a large crown of snakes that entangles its entire body. Their broken bodies leave me wondering as to what would have weathered them away, who they were, what they meant. Perhaps the stone had been returned to the places they once came from, into the tall trees of the forest around me.

Through another passage I am greeted by the outside world where trees carpet the stone. The fingers of their roots desperately cling on as though they hold a lust for life. In the city, I look at trees for their architectural merit, merely objects for decoration. Yet here, I look at the trees and wonder how long it takes for them to grow to the height of the sky, to bury their roots into every crevice of stone. Walking around roots that are taller than me, I realise my own insignificance in the ceaseless ocean of time. I realise that in this vast landscape I am but a small moment in time compared to these giants. They will see the world change, grow and crumble around them for millennia to come like they had for years before. I stand in one of the tree hollows, big enough to fit at least half a dozen people.



From inside the tree, I am given the privilege of another point of view of the world around me. Although there's no wind, no movement in the trees, they still seem to be so alive. Ancient beings that have inhabited the land for centuries, standing sentinel before even my ancestors walked the Earth. I think of the time when the colossal tree I stand in now was a mere sprout growing out of the fertile earth. They grew surrounded by pure stone – lifeless yet alive. Engraved with their own history even long before we humans carved ours into them. Each boulder is grey yet covered in tar-like black, weathered by the rain over the centuries.

As I turn to leave I look outside upon the vast greenery where a single blackened stone building stands in the middle of the rich landscape. The contrast of the vibrancy of nature and the dark rock draws my curiosity. Along my journey, stones had been carefully stacked by the people who walked here before me, precariously balancing on top of each other yet preserved in time by the sturdy stone walls that offer protection from the wind outside.



When my feet leave the grass and I walk up steep steps to the summit I wonder what could be inside, perhaps a vast cave. Yet, when I get to the top, what I see is not emptiness but stones littered across the ground calling for me to jump across them. Although I come from a world which craves certainty, at this moment I am drawn to their instability. They instil a sense of wonder as I take each step across them adjusting to the fragile and uncertain ground below. I get lost in the flurry of green unravelling below me. I know that it will continue to blossom long after I leave. Had I not stopped, had I walked straight past, I may have never truly seen.

At last, I reach the very centre of the stony world. I climb the steep steps to the very top, each step creaking under the weight of my footsteps. The scorching sun competes with the wind blowing at the peak. Looking around, I see a stage where sound echoes like an opera. I picture the prayers that were chanted at the centre of the stony platform hundreds of years ago. At the very centre, I see



another statue wearing a large golden piece of fabric that drapes across its entire body, but this one is untouched. Unlike the crumbling statues before, it is frozen in time, locked away behind a wooden gate. Had the Hindus and Buddhist monks prayed at the feet of this statue? What lay in this sacred space?

Lifting my eyes, I see that there are carvings on the ceiling above. I try to picture what they all were before they had been worn down by the passage of time.

Stepping away, I reach the balcony that overlooks the landscape. Time seems to stop. For a moment, I look at the world around me. Truly seeing. And I notice the green trees, their spotted trunks. I notice the incredibly viridescent, dewy grass. I notice crumbling stone buildings far away that I had missed in my pursuit of this highest peak and wonder what stories I failed to see. I notice the wind slowly brush across my scorched face. I notice the vast world around me. I know the fragments of this moment will be forever inked into my memory. ■



Indi Fisher

Year 12 · Star of the Sea College

Fireworks within – the inspirational Piglet

This piece was created for the Headspace Foundation Gallery, exploring the theme of mental illness and the colour pink. I chose to create an acrylic on canvas painting depicting Piglet from Winnie the Pooh. As he overcomes his anxiety, Piglet is shown enjoying fireworks instead of being scared to live in the moment. My work was part of a fundraiser for the Headspace Foundation.

OBLIVIOUS

Tessa Payne · Year 8 · Star of the Sea College

The screen reflects your face,
Mesmerized, Possessed
Your soul has been drained by darkness if only I
could have guessed.
Every time I shout,
Get of that screen!
You look at me coldly as if I am so mean.

Oh I just wish you would listen.
Don't cause me this pain.
But now your eyes are square, and so is your brain
You now have no time for all our old games
I say how about Twister or Uno or even good old
Snap
But you say No way! I'm playing the best app

As the hours slip away,
Your screen is a magnet attracted to your eye

Consuming your life passing by.
The bond unbreakable that once stood between us.
Is a flame extinguished now lost, gone.
Your silhouette is now shattered each dawn.

Oblivious, that's what you are.
To the world, to me
You no longer hear my desperate plea

It will never be the same never again
Your only memories relate to your phone
The glowing light creates your personality, a clone.

It was so long ago when it was just us alone.
Bring back those days when it was just you and me
When we were young
And when you
were free. ■

CHANGE

Pia Roberts · Year 8 · Star of the Sea College

parents notice our change in attitude,
but not how we change from T-shirts
to hoodies.

teachers notice our terrible grades,
but not how tired and drained
we are.

friends notice our happiness but
not our cuts, bruises or
silence.

society notices our physical beauty
But not our inside beauty that
shines the brightest.

they all act like they care. but really they just care
about what we are not. ■

THE NEW MEDUSA

Pepper Williams · Year 9 · Star of the Sea College

Moisture coated her skin
Hair stuck to the nape of her neck,
Around the frame of her forehead
The crashes of waves boomed
Against the soft yellow clay rocks
A small opening,
A small figure inside

With a shivering body,
And a quivering heart,
Tears threatened to fall,
A water puddle reflected a monster,

How features once round and soft,
Now jagged and harsh.
Broken serpents slide across her scalp,
Brutish eyes that stare back

Had she been wrong?
Did she deserve this?

Running a pointer finger along that ragged stone,
She let out a sigh and a quiet moan ,
A museum of statues surrounding her
Things forever frozen in time.
Standing up,
Wiping the eyes of the cruel

Fury arose,
The ocean silenced
A hushed anger spread throughout

She was wrong.
She did not deserve this.

Standing in the lip of the hole,
Staring into the beyond
Hard breaths escaped in bursts.
A hard heart pounded in her chest.

Why would she apologise for being his monster,
When he was the one who made her. ■

MY FUTURE, MY CHOICE, MY DECISION

Ivy Brewer · Year 10 · Genazzano FCJ College

Decision-making is defined as ‘the process of making a choice between a number of options and committing to a future course of action’. So tell me, why are Australians leaving the decision-making to the future-past instead of our future-present?

Today I fight for the future, the future of my peers, the future of my country and the future of the generations to come by implementing a teenage voice to the Parliament of Australia! Because, the future is ours, and we need to engage in politics to have a voice and to make decisions on matters

that concern us. The youth of today can and are already making a difference, why not give us a seat at the table?

Around 25 years from now, Gen-Z will be running the show, and will be the business people of the modern world. We don't need increased taxes, inflation, climate change or the rising cost of living, essentially paying for others' poor decisions. What we need are solutions for a more equitable world, a world where we can flourish. So give us a seat at the table! A seat where we can shape and reimagine our world. ■



Ellie Martin
Year 12 · Genazzano
FCJ College



Lauren Valention
Year 12 · Genazzano FCJ College



Jennifer Ly
Year 11 · Killester College

Synchronisation of Lion Dancing

‘Tết Trung thu’ also known as the Moon Festival is celebrated in many countries. These celebrations typically include lion dancing. These lions are said to bring good luck and fortune and usually come in pairs. I created two pieces that illustrate these lions and my main piece consists of a yellow lion, the one I see most common throughout my childhood. A moon is shining brightly in the background which indicates the significance of this festival that I cherish.

My other piece has two lions that consist of the same colour palette with the colours located in opposite areas to match. The two lions that resemble each other clearly, almost mirroring each other resemble that they will always be a pair, synchronised and it was done on two A4 pieces of paper with coloured pencils before being cut out and stuck together on coloured paper. The two pieces contrast each other as one is more realistic while the other is cartoony yet once the three are put together, the three lions resemble a trio.



Bethany Heiden
Year 7 · Killester College

VCD Mini Me



Connia Phan
Year 7 · Killester College

VCD Mini Me

INSPIRE (SONG)

Cheryl Tran · Year 6 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

VERSE 1:

We are all going up, a very special night, sky high!
They all are bright lights, singing a very silent
lullaby
While my artistic skills could be able to satisfy the
eyes,
How about we get inspired on this special and
awesome night?

Instrumental break

CHORUS:

Minelauva, Antares, Garnet Star too!
Always ready to please the eyes, now,
Deneb, Vega, and you too, Altair!
Come on, get ready! Let's continue right now!

Another instrumental break

VERSE 2:

Done with my art, now it's time to show it to the
universe!
Always think this way, it's always never ever a
stupid curse!
Now, making a song for them and giving them
another verse.
I think that every star really, really has something
to deserve!

3rd break

CHORUS:

Minelauva, Antares, Garnet Star too!
Always ready to please the eyes, now,
Deneb, Vega, and you too, Altair!
Come on, get ready! Let's continue right now!

4th break

VERSE 3:

What if it's displayed around?
What would be the considered sound?
Just remember, you can always be drawing
around!
Maybe do planets as well? Or other celestial
objects?
Do that anytime, I like doing that at sundown!

5th break

TAG:

Celestial bodies, and possibly Earth.
But only the stars are the special ones.
Starting with Vega and now Libertas.
All are above, now let's add some more!

CHORUS:

Minelauva, Antares, Garnet Star too! (hey!)
Always ready to please the eyes, now,
Deneb, Vega, and you too, Altair!
Come on, get ready! Let's continue right now! x2

(me humming to the melody) ■

A GRAND KETTLE

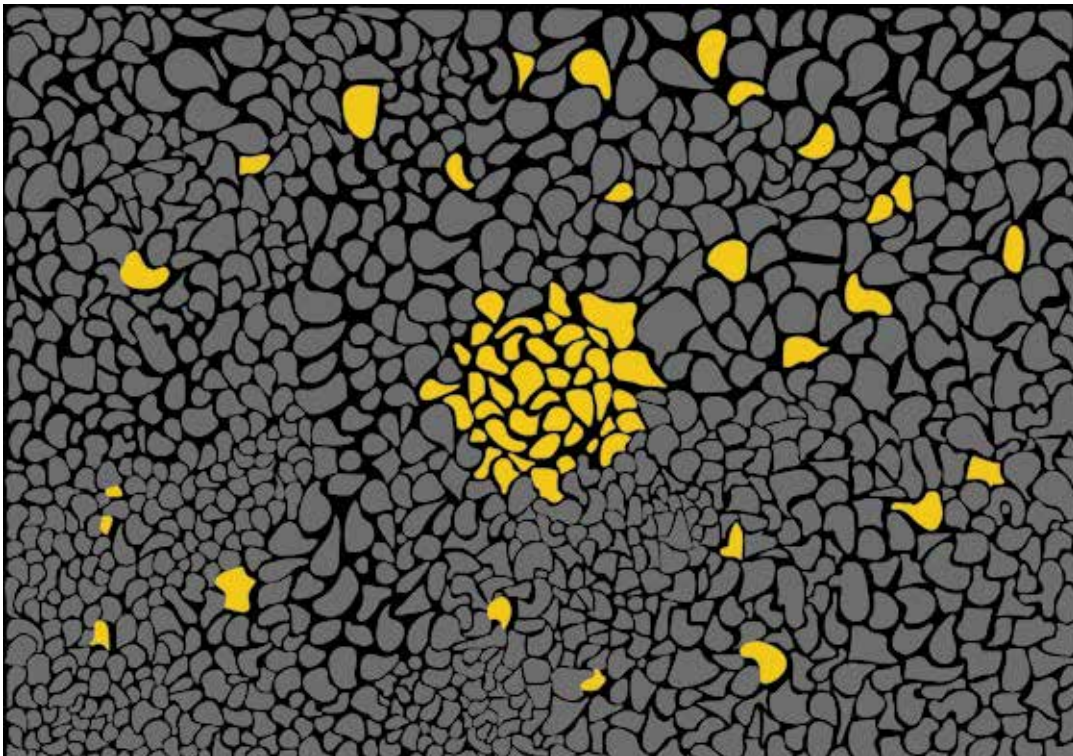
Allen Tong · Year 5 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Inspiration comes from a source. Something great. Something which does its job consistently and every day. Something stained with wear. Something that can't easily tear. Something truly inspirational. Something so complex yet so simple. Something that you understand and don't. Something that is paradoxical. Something rusty. Maybe the Kettle will be the only one that may be that good.

A kettle you may wonder, is a perfect source of inspiration. In fact, it's a wonderful source! Look.

The odd stain here and there. The crystal white shell of an old, yet majestic and nostalgic beast. It's hard not to think that a great generation has passed on the best thing they invented. Regrets, it had some. But then again too few to mention. It did what it had to do, and not a speck else.

But we can't forget that its uses are an enigma, infinite and perplexing. And now, I've stated my case, which I'm certain and much, much more. Much like the trusty kettle, this piece has served its purpose. And now it's the end. At least for me. ■



Reeon Saldanha
Year 11 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

Let your light shine



Scarlett McLean

Year 4 · St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

Finger Painted Flowers

I was inspired by the sunflower fields when I travelled to France.

HAIRDRESSERS

Bella Didio · Year 3
St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

I am inspired
by hairdressers because I want to be one when I
grow up.
Being a hairdresser is fun.

You can make new friends
like the people that come and get their hair done
and the staff.

When you are a hairdresser
you can do your friends, BFFs, your parents, your
grandparents
and your siblings.

It's so fun because you get to learn
different hairstyles
and you get to do different hairstyles every day.

That is why
I want to be a hairdresser
and that's also why I am inspired. ■

INSPIRE

Zara Velasquez Redwood · Year 3
St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

I am inspired by art because it makes me feel free
and that's why art is really everything to me.

I am mostly inspired by visual arts! It makes me
calm and centred especially when I do it. Plus it
is fun!

You should try it sometime and I am sure you will
love it. You can be inspired by anything really
but this is what I am inspired by and I love it!

What are you inspired by?

I would love to know. ■

SWEETS

Arabella Hall · Year 1
St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

What inspires me is sweets.
My inspiring sweets are
Lollipops
Donuts
Marshmallows
Ice-cream

I like them because they are
yummy
yummy
in my tummy. ■

MY FAMILY

Sunday Rosette · Year 1
St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

My mum inspires me because she keeps me safe.
Dad inspires me because he makes waiting fun.
My brother more than inspires me because he is
very silly.
I love Casper. ■

INSPIRE

Ava Quinn · Year 5
St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

"Be a Somebody who makes Everybody feel like a Somebody"- Kid President.

There they are,
Just right over there,
This will scar,
The whole crowd laughing and staring.

You sit there and wonder,
"What can I do?"
The laughing was like thunder,
He was only just new.

He sat there alone,
in the corner of the room,
You groaned,
This was his doom.

You stand to your feet,
And turn to the crowd,
Then look down at your seat,
"This isn't right and this isn't allowed."

You say as you look up again,
A smile then reaches his face,
Then and only then,
Others stood up.

They walked over with pride,
The others just watched,
Then they stood by your side.
Til the point you were squashed,

Then they all apologised,
Quicker than quick,
The sadness on his face had been disqualified,
"That was pretty sick",

It sounds quite easy,
but you'd be surprised,
It could make you feel queasy,
And you don't need to keep it disguised,
But give it a try,
Don't be shy. ■

INSPIRE

Chiara Yanes · Year 5
St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

"Your mistakes don't define you."
They came in big vans...I am sorry
They stomped all over the lands...I am sorry
I wish they hadn't come...I am sorry
My mum told me to run...I am sorry
They took my brothers and sisters away...I
am sorry
I was wondering how long I'd have to stay...I
am sorry
They told me different ways...I am sorry
It was like my brain was a maze...I am sorry

I am sorry ■

DRAWING - MY INSPIRATION

Bela Von Eckartsberg · Year 3
St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

Drawing inspires me because I love drawing. I always keep trying no matter what. I really want to be like Frida Kahlo when I grow up because she is a really talented artist. I am going to always keep it up. One day I could be an artist just like her. I really hope I can get better at it.

Frida Kahlo's paintings are very bright. She loves flowers because she wears a flower headband. Some are dramatic and she has lots of animals in her pictures.

My dad is really good at drawing because he is an architect so I want to see if I can be just like him. He really inspires me too. He always helps me to draw even better.

There are a lot of other artists but I want to follow only two. I want to be like Frida Kahlo and my dad. I really hope I can be a really good artist when I grow up.

I really really really do! ■



Fernando Nascimento
Prep · St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

Self Portrait

I was inspired by myself.



Stephanie Huynh
 Year 10 · Killester College

Catalyst

‘Catalyst’ was constructed out of reclaimed found materials with the intention of having all physicality’s communicate multifaceted and intersecting messages regarding the animal production industry, and its contribution to biodiversity and animal loss. The placement of the skull atop the wooden stump alludes to the mass deforestation performed to satisfy the demands of wooden animal pastures and space for production. In deforestation, the habitats of animals are destroyed, therefore contributing to the detriment of various species. The cow skull itself interlaced with the wilting flower refers to the life cycle - once an animal dies, the nitrogen in their bodies gained from omnivorous consumption returns to the soil after body decomposition to assist in plant growth and therefore food for other organisms. However, the agricultural industry contributes to soil erosion as cattle hooves can sink up to fifteen centimetres into the mud causing compaction in the soil, meaning plant growth is significantly negated. The wire interlaces with the skull and log to tie all aspects together.



Chloe Harrod
 Year 9 · Killester College

Stained Roses

My relief print named ‘Stained Roses’ is about how addiction and the impact of alcohol can affect someone’s life and their relationship between family and friends. The roses and the broken stems symbolise damaged relationships that occur from alcohol addiction.

INSPIRATION IS NOTHING BUT

Anamika Rajesh · Year 9 · Killester College

Inspiration is nothing but a peculiar mystery.

Obtained from Latin -
Unable to put forth clarity,
As to why and how.

A rhetorical question-
To which infinite answers lay concealed,
How shall I find you?

Inspiration is nothing but a forlorn figure.

Crippled pages-
Enveloped in a splatter of ink,
Spilt in agony & woe.

The triggering of indignation-
Conjuring utmost regret,
To have not had a single phrase noted.

Perhaps, there is another side to it.

Inspiration is nothing but the threshold to endless

possibilities.

A gateway-
To thoughts that haven't been thought,
Unknown perceptions.

That open door-
Which never turns a blind eye,
To the unique mind.

Inspiration is nothing but a gift.

The ability-
To be of admiration and awe,
Of the greatest findings.

A skill-
To find those buried talents,
Which bring pure joy.

But perhaps, inspiration may always remain a
mystery. ■

DEFINITION

Pooja Pradeep · Year 9 · Killester College

I dug my nails into the apathetic flesh of my face; blood, maybe the visions I saw were the deceiving answer I needed to terminate. I should surrender to tears, concealing myself within my own embrace and allowing deception to guide me. Letting them drain my eternal energy, seize my power, and take whatever they desired. I see in my mind's vision the sudden flashbacks playing back. My mind replaying the visions of my mother's tender touch wiping my tears after a fight.

"Stand up alone, don't let them define you".

Her strength and power radiating. Independent and

self-reliant, she thrived on the air that surrounded her. Yet, here I sit, imprisoned in a room closing in on me. Blind to the possibilities, I succumb to the weight of others' opinions. The intoxicating fumes of their presence fill my being.

"Sheela, you got this".

Her power shines through me, unstaining the stained mark they left upon me. I remove my bloody fingers, and newfound determination seeps through sealing the wounds.

Now I'm writing. Writing my own definition. ■

LIFE WORKS IN STRANGE WAYS

Holly Camp · Year 12 · Killester College

Today was horrible.
Yesterday was a mess.

Last week was the worst.

This month has been a blur. Jumping from day to day, not even living in the moment. A constant repeat of waking up to my alarm, refusing to get out from underneath the cosy warmth of my blankets. Only to eventually realise how late I've become. Subconsciously do all my morning tasks that have become such second nature to me that half the time I cannot even remember that I've done them.

Finally realise the day has started. Finally realise the day has finished. Finally, back beneath the cosy warmth of my blankets with no recollection of the day's events. Dreading tomorrow's events.

Same old, same old.

Till one day...

Today wasn't horrible.

Yesterday wasn't a mess.

Last week wasn't the worst.

This month hasn't been a blur. Jumping from day to day, living in the moment. A constant repeat of waking up to my alarm, still refusing to get out from underneath the cosy warmth of my blankets. Only to eventually realise how late I've become. Subconsciously doing all my morning tasks that have become such second nature. But this time remembering what I have done. Remembering, with a smile on my face.

Finally realise the day has started, a day with potential and happiness. Finally realise the day has finished, a day with fond memories. Finally, back beneath the cosy warmth of my blankets with recollection of the day's events. No longer dreading tomorrow's events.

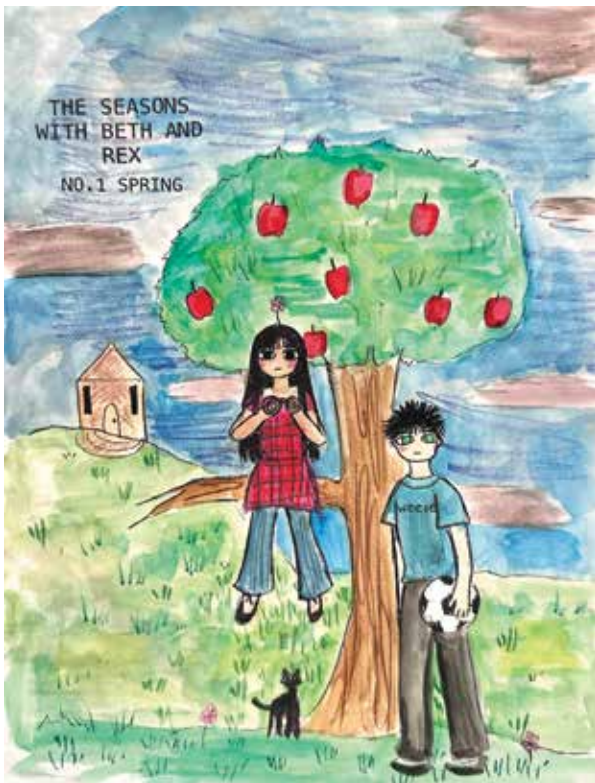
Same old, same old. Only if I choose to look at it that way.

Some things may never change but some things can differ. But in order to do so, you must make them. Life works in strange ways. ■



Paria Iaria
Year 11 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

Acrylic Painting



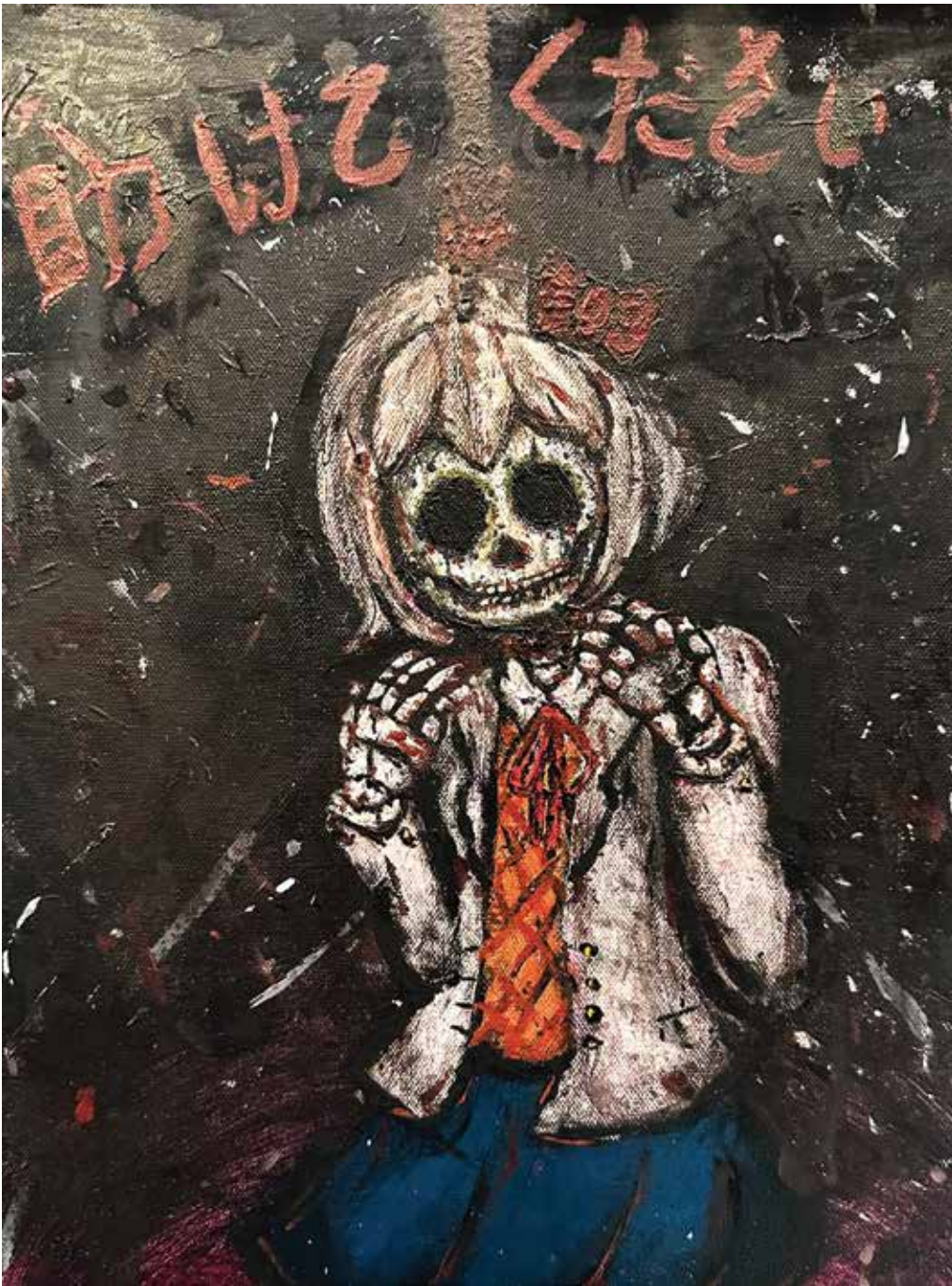
Ysabelle Aquino
Year 11 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

Watercolour and ink



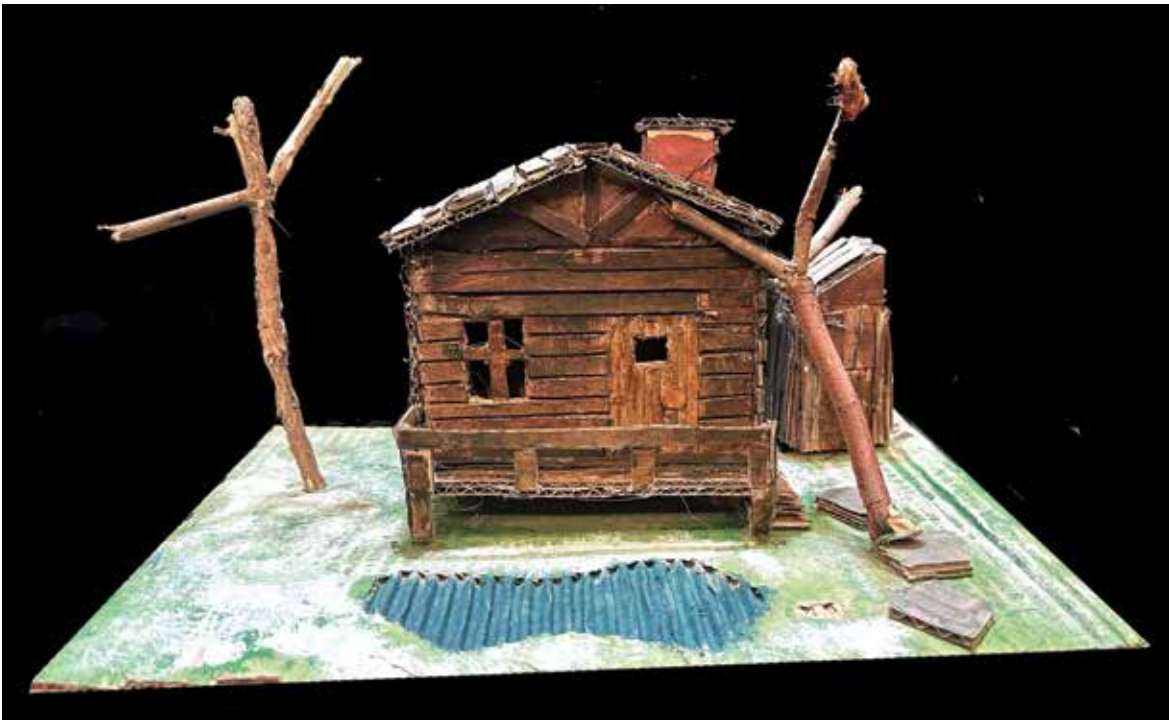
Ysabelle Aquino
Year 11 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

Acrylic Painting



Nicholas Srnec
Year 10 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

Acrylic Painting



Kobi Jackson
Year 10 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

3D model



Andre Nguyen
Year 12 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

Digital Art



Sneha Sharma
Year 9 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

Paper, card acrylic collage



Ayen Majier
Year 9 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

Paper, card acrylic collage



Aaliyah Abubakar
Year 12 · Nazareth College

Untitled 1, Watercolour



Aaliyah Abubakar
Year 12 · Nazareth College

Untitled 2, Watercolour

THE DOG BEACH

Paige Liston · Year 9 · Nazareth College

I jump out of the car, excitement hurtling through my veins. The car door is warm as I slam it shut, hurrying to the boot just as my dad pulls the rear passenger door open. An explosion of golden-brown coloured fluff and fur bursts out, and I'm bowled over by a noisy, stinky mass of dog. I burst into laughter, fighting off rough tongues and poky paws.

The asphalt is rough and hard underneath my back as I lie there, watching my younger brother help Dad put a lead on the dogs. I get up and follow after the rest of my family; the sun is warm on my freshly sun-screened face. We let the dogs amble far ahead, tails wagging like furry little flagpoles.

The sand is gritty and warm under my shoes, and the sky is ever so slightly cloudy, little scuds that lead into a more substantial form across the blue. The light wind tussles through my hair, grabbing at it and preventing the warm sun from overheating the small beach.

The crop of bushes atop a miniature sand dune waves around, almost welcoming our family, like it's saying, 'Come, come in, stay for a bit'. A dog that looks very similar to ours is sniffing around underneath it, lead trailing behind, leaving a line in the sand. Trevor, the smaller of our two dogs, races up to it, yapping and crouching in the other's face.

Lenny, the larger and older of the two shadows, keeps close to the younger Trevor, semi-frequently expelling harsh yelps from his lungs. They act almost strangely human, like Lenny is scolding Trevor for annoying the other dog, lest he gets an irritated bite. Trevor runs closer to the sound of the water. Waves lap greedily at the shore, water flows around his paws, and he yaps in annoyance like the waves are the most offensive thing in the world.

We spot a group of people standing in a circle,

paying the water no mind. They, too, all have their dogs and are talking while the creatures weave between legs, in and out, narrowly avoiding tripping anyone. All the dogs have the same round but pointy ears, tips gesturing to the sun when and if they hear their name. One dog jumps at a person in the group who has a baggie attached to their belt, assumedly holding dog treats; why else would the small Corgi be so invested in what was in there?

Some of us dip our toes into the murky water, wincing at the slimy texture of the sand for a while, shuffling our feet to avoid the feeling as much as we can. The dogs all look a bit like rats that swam through the sewer system before being unceremoniously dunked into the ocean. However, they continue to barrel into the sand. It is warm, but they seem as if they couldn't care less, happy to irritate one another or berate an owner for not issuing a treat for their special little canine.

Not long after, my Auntie and Uncle arrive with Toby, their Finnish Laphund. He towers over all the other dogs, about twice their height and 80% fluff. He taunts our ankle-biters for a while before they have to leave. The dog's underside - white before - is drenched and almost a completely different colour. They walk off, Toby's fur almost certainly full of sand.

Back at the car, we clean our dogs off; the sun's a little lower in the sky.

A seagull squawks a small goodbye from the sky, probably glad to be rid of a small percentage of the canine populous.

I lie back in the car seat with a sigh. A dog rests over the back of the car seat, dribbling right on my shoulder. I give him a little scratch behind the ear. I zone out to the smell of wet dogs and the sound of rapid panting in my ear. ■

LIKE THERE'S NO TOMORROW

Stephanie Gow · Year 9 · Nazareth College

The golden hues of the sun shone through the framed window, creating a sense of warmth and comfort amidst the busy and unfamiliar landscape. Glancing down, were miles of crowded buildings stretched before the horizon. Their figures stood proud and tall beneath the gentle glow filtered through the sun. Eerie shades of grey extravagantly wrapped around its silhouettes that seemed to bask in an unknown aura. I directed my eyes towards a corner where the buildings drew shade from the gaze of the blinding sun. In the midst of a bustling city, my ears were drawn to the muffled cries of a woman crouching down, a small cigarette in her hand. Tears streamed down her wrinkly face as her footsteps trailed further away from her baby, sitting tightly in a battered, worn-looking pram.

I stared at her transfixed, the tension in her shoulders all too familiar. I imagined an achiness in her throat as the mother found it hard to convey her sorrow and agony. The words she desperately wanted to express were caught in the well of her throat, the anguish and suffering written on the creases of her exhausted face. I could almost feel the struggle as her lungs barely prevailed, rotting from their insides with each and every smoke she blew, as her mind, aroused and besotted with the heavenly smell of tobacco, begged for more. Even with the distance between us, I could smell the nicotine that enshrouded her arched body, paining her to meet her baby's eyes as she inhaled in the toxicities, unsure of the remaining days left to cherish. I envisaged her eyes softening as she hastened her last attempts, longing to hear even the faintest hint of joy from her baby. As if with her remaining strength, she hardened her muscles, forming a tight, narrow smile etched upon the creases of her face. Her eyes, brimming with tears, displayed her hopelessness, like the days

that awaited her she knew would be her last. As if she knew the life that awaited her child would be empty, enveloped by her absence.

Yet, as if to void the mother of all her thoughts, the baby let out an unforgettable yet heartening giggle. Slowly, I felt the faintest hint of a smile grace my lips, envisioning the sensation of a newborn's tender fingers wrapping around mine, the warmth of the fragile skin of the living human that once grew inside me—a yearning for an impossible tomorrow. I recalled the letters written from years of misery and longing that I would read time and time again to remember a beautiful yet painful memory, remembering as life drained the tinges of pink from your adorable little face.

Dear Lisha,

I wish I could cuddle and hold you in my arms, as I have always dreamt of the special moments between a mother and her baby. I could not avert my gaze from your adorable face from the moment you were born. It pains me that our hours have been cut short, but I hope you enjoyed our moments together in my arms, although they were your final ones. Your beautiful brunette locks, already so much hair and you were just born. I wish I could talk about the colour of your endearing little eyes—but they never opened. You were the tiniest baby, weighing only 400 grams. I wish I had more time to grieve the beautiful young girl you could have become. Watching as life drained the tinges of pink from your adorable little cheeks pains me so much. Still, I will continue so your curious little face will light up as you watch over our journey. Thank you for the best 20 weeks and four hours of my life you have lovingly granted me. I'm sorry we couldn't be together for longer. I love you, my child.

~Your loving mama, Lettie ■

ENTOMOPHOBIA

Tyra Wu · Year 10 · Aquinas College

Violet could only stare at the antagonising fly in her room. It was unfortunate really. Violet always hated bugs. She hated everything about them. She couldn't stand the loud buzzing they made or the irky feeling they created when they touched her. She hated them. She clenched her fist and swore to herself to ignore the insect as much as possible as she watched it prance around her ceiling lights, bouncing against the roof creating an unbearable noise.

Violet's eyes wandered away from the disturbing insect, trying hard to not show any reaction to the insufferable creature above her.

It was only until now that Violet realised there was a spider web located directly next to her desk. Violet immediately backed herself away, muttering under her breath.

"Great, just great"

Violet took a peak at the web again. It was filled with other bugs. Wrapped tightly in the white string most likely on the verge of death. Violet laughed.

"Stupid bugs."

Her eyes stared at the web, moving herself closer

as she pondered about how insects could even get stuck in the first place and how easy it would be to avoid such an obvious trap. Even someone as incompetent as her could save herself from getting stuck in a spider web.

Suddenly her smile dropped, as a dark feeling enclosed her. The thought of the bugs being trapped in the web made her stomach feel sick. How can she make fun of bugs for being blind when she herself isn't any better. She should have known, she should have seen it, it should have been obvious. Everyone warned her about him but she couldn't help herself. Even if it hurt her, she couldn't resist. She was blinded to the obvious trap right in front of her and now she's here laughing at bugs for being the same.

Violet couldn't laugh anymore. Countless thoughts filled her head when the sudden disturbance from the fly returned. But it wasn't as annoying this time. Actually, Violet envied it.

In a room with a fly, a web filled with insects and a girl who was blinded by love, the fly had the most freedom out of anyone in that room.

And for once, Violet wished she was that fly. ■



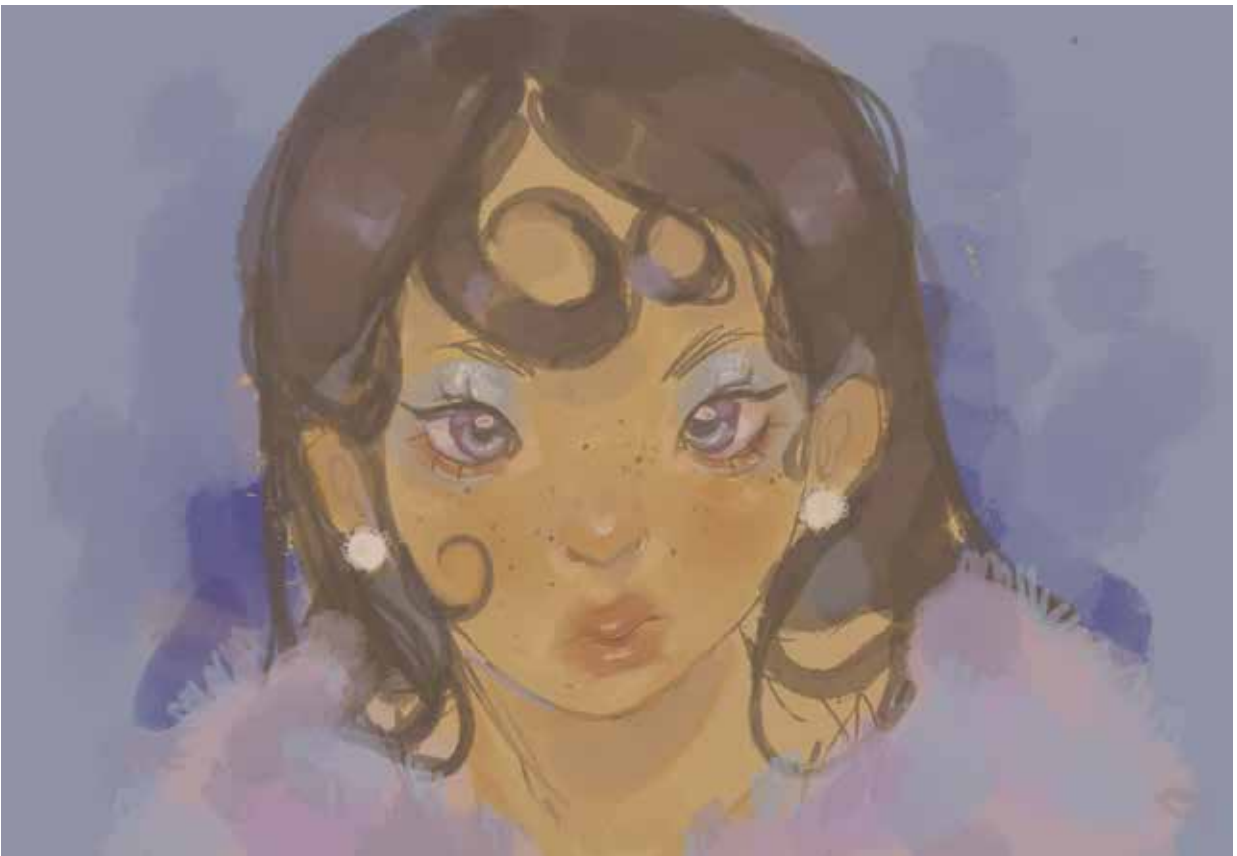
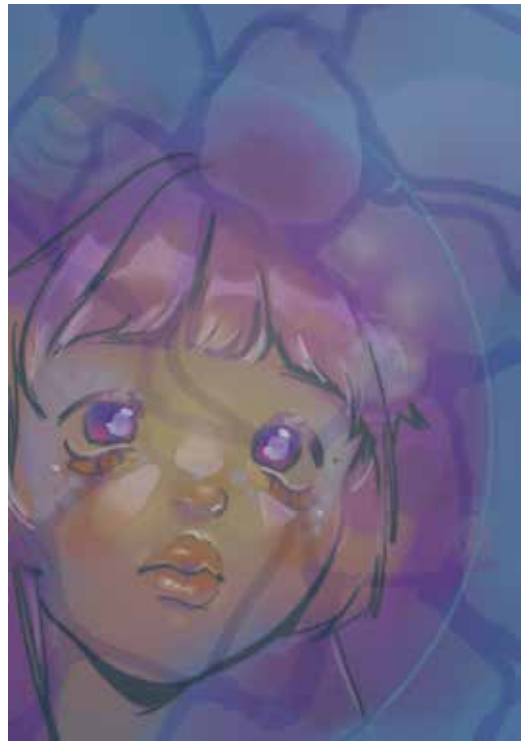
Bavneet Mangat
Year 9 · Aquinas College



Mia McCann
Year 12 · Aquinas College



Mikaila Lacey
Year 12 · Aquinas College



Louise Ramos
Year 11 · Aquinas College



Cody Boland
Year 11 · Aquinas College



Louise Ramos
Year 11 · Aquinas College

COMING TO AUSTRALIA

Isabelle Casa · Year 8 · Star of the Sea College

Ciao!

I'm Mario and this is my story on how I came to Australia from Italy. I grew up in Italy with my mum, dad, sister and brother in a beautiful small town called Massa Lubrense (Sorrento). This was until my Dad (who is 41) thought that we should go live in Melbourne. The reason he did this is because he wanted a better life for my family as there weren't many well-paying jobs in Italy. On 17 November 1961 we headed off on a ship named Sydney on the long voyage to Melbourne.



Since my brother and I weren't old enough to have our own passports, we had to share one with Dad. My sister didn't though because she is 15.

I was 14 and 1 month old when we boarded the ship and I guess I'm not really good with boats because my stomach was turning. Having that big thought about leaving Italy was quite nerve wracking but at the same time exciting because I'm leaving my hometown but I knew my life was going to be better when I got to Australia. Was it though? The weather on the boat was actually quite good from the Suez Canal when it passed the Indian Ocean and I can't really remember but I don't think there was any rain at all!

We were on the ship for 26 days and I was sick for 11 of those days. It really wasn't very enjoyable but soon enough we arrived in Melbourne. When we first got there, we had to live in a shared house with an Egyptian family until we were able to get enough money to move out. I didn't end up going to school which means I only did up to Year five. This was the time when most children left school and since I'm from Italy, I did have to learn how to speak English which was quite difficult.

However, I am glad because I now speak two languages. In 1964, I became an Australian citizen and got a certificate. I'm officially a part of Australia. I was so happy! Also in that year my Dad had enough money to buy a block of land so we didn't have to share any more. It was the best year ever. Since then I have been back to Italy two times to see my hometown and family and have now been living in Melbourne for 61 years. ■



This award was presented to my Nonno, Mario Casa, for his bravery in rescuing a woman from a burning house in Bentleigh. It shows the courage of a man who has inspired me to be the best person that I can be.

FOR THE LOVE OF SKATING

Sofia Simonotti · Year 8 · Star of the Sea College



In this photo I am holding my ice skates in front of the ice skating rink. I am very happy in this photo as I am holding my special ice skates.

This is a story told through the perspective of my Nonna. She was born on 11/09/1951. She grew up in Milano and lived her whole life with her parents.

When I was 7 years old I started ice skating because my parents knew that it would be a great way for me to get some exercise. I was never a sports girl but as I started to do ice skating, I really enjoyed it and continued with it for as long as I could. Every weekend I was with my grandparents who lived near the ice palace, so I had opportunities for sports and exercise. I then started taking figure skating lessons, having shown some aptitude for the sport. I started to realise that I really enjoyed it and had a passion.

It took a lot of exercise and effort as sometimes I had to train while my friends were having fun together. After a while of doing figure skating I began competing in the junior category as a single skater. Later after winning some competitions I devoted myself to both rhythmic and figure skating competitions in pairs. By the time I was 11 years old, I had already won the senior Italian championships in the artistic pair's speciality. From

this point I was subsidised by CONI (Italian National Olympic Committee) and then sent abroad where there were the best coaches.

Now that CONI has recognised my talent, I went to Switzerland, Vienna and finally to Germany. Having to train every day for many hours for many months of the year I lived in a German family away from my parents. It was such a cool experience as I learned a new language and learned to appreciate German food. I still had to do some school work as I don't attend school as much, so I studied and prepared for the Italian school exams when the training and competition season ended. Once I was in the European championships, on newspapers and on television in Czechoslovakia as I was the youngest skater and always participated in the final performance after competition.

After my best qualification at the 1967 Grenoble Pre-Olympics in 16th place I had to quit because of knee injuries. Now that I couldn't compete anymore I had to continue on my studies normally and graduate with a degree in Physics with 110 cum laude, which is the maximum obtainable result for a graduation in Italy. ■

ALL IN MY HEAD

Sabrina Nagel · Year 8 · Star of the Sea College

Thoughts,
So many thoughts,
Running around my head,
At the speed of light,
So so fast
All day and all night.
I'm all in my head,
lost in my mind,
the maze in which I can't
escape.
Freedom I can't find.

Oh and don't forget
The constant pressure
To keep up
Be on top of everything
Never slip up
Or step out of line
Maintain that standard.
You'll be fine
To be perfect
And trust me,
I've tried.
And tried.
But I'm really not,
Perfect- I'm far from it.
And I can't do this.

So many thoughts,
Flooding my head, no room to
breathe, no room to think
yet I'm thinking all these
thoughts.

These voices in my head.
They say don't listen
But how can I not?
They are coming from a place
deep inside of me.
They are me.

No one likes me
She would rather talk to her.
Everyone likes them.
I wish I could be like them,
She's better than me,
And she's prettier than me,
She's smarter than me,

Probably never gotten a B,
Oh how unlike me,
And there's a test next period,
What if I don't do well?
I studied for hours and,
I could scrape an A but that
will never be good enough.
I will never be good enough
I didn't sleep enough last night,
And I wasn't part of that joke,
And she seems to hate me,
I'm having a bad hair day,
My pen is running out.
And it's too loud in this room!

Too many noises,
Too much to comprehend,
Everything comes crashing
down around me,
Like a wave on the shore.
Then it pulls me back in.
Till there is no more.

Everyone talking,
So much movement,
Chaos,
So. many. people.
My head pounding,
Ears ringing
like the bell,
And there it is,
and in an instant 100 pairs of
legs rust past me.

It's too much
So I try and try to block it out.
I stare into space...
I zone out.
Voices become a muffled noise
The lights flashing and rushing
people around me become
a blur
The overwhelming overload
won't go away
But I try to just not think
about it
and let the numbness take over
But here I am stuck in my head

Trapped once again, alone with
my thoughts.

I've got so much to do tonight,
Math revision,
Finish my essay.
My library book is due
tomorrow and
I need to reply to that email.
I forgot to make my bed this
morning.
Oh and did I feed the cat?

There are so many people
walking past,
I'm trying not to make eye
contact,
It's all moving so fast.
I look down,
The girl next to me is almost
finished with her notes,
I look around, everyone is
almost done.
I just can't keep up.
We have 5 more minutes,
But I've barely begun,
I've reached my limits,
I'm done.

Thoughts,
So many thoughts.
So many noises.
So much is happening.
So much to do.
So much going on.
It is so much,
Too much
and I can not take it anymore,
How on Earth can anyone
take it?

Now why am I sharing my
thoughts and feelings so
openly?
While there is this overhanging
fear that everyone is judging
me.

I guess it's not real.
It's all in my head. ■

THE NEW PANDORA

Lyla Sim · Year 9 · Star of the Sea College

Pandora was breathed into being by Hepheastus to become a mortal. When she was placed on earth, she was given a multitude of gifts, however, some might say these were no gifts. They were closer to curses. Pandora was given the talents of deep emotion, fine craftsmanship, and attention to detail. Finally, her father Zeus bestowed Pandora with two more gifts. One was the trait of curiosity making her question life and want to learn, and the other was a box. This was not accessible to mortals and Pandora was told never to open it. She grew up loving her community and all the gods that had helped her but especially Zeus. She wanted to make him proud of her so she swore to herself she would never open the box of mystery.

As Pandora grew older, her looks and feisty personality grew too. She was a beautiful girl with a kind heart. However, her mind often drifted to the contents of the box. When she wasn't thinking about it, she was thinking about Epimetheus, a talented Titan who was given the job to design the earth's landscape and natural features. Epimetheus liked Pandora as she was a fiery but kind-hearted person with a passion for all things new. But she was also easily distracted and often fixated on things she couldn't have. Unfortunately, this included the box that Zeus had given her. The box that was slowly driving her mad with questions. She needed help. She brought her problems to Epimetheus, who also grew insanely curious. Over time, he lost sight

of what was right and wrong and his curiosity swallowed him whole.

One day, Epimetheus was overwhelmed with an idea of a treasure so great it couldn't be seen by people on Earth. He arranged to see Pandora. However, his intentions were impure. He told her to bring the box to a quiet garden so they could use it as a picnic table, but he was actually luring her into a trap, and suddenly snatched it out of her hands. He pried it open as Pandora screeched like a phoenix, yet he was as strong as a bull and held her back with ease.

When Epimetheus opened the box, a roar of monstrous spirits spewed out, surrounding both of them. Epimetheus ran as fast as Hermes (the fastest runner in ancient Greece) and told Zeus that it had been Pandora that released the evil spirits into the world.

Zeus was forever furious - however, not at Pandora. After years of trying to please him, he appreciated and acknowledged her for her efforts, and he confidently believed that Pandora wouldn't betray him like Epimetheus had described. He turned against Epimetheus, instead, eternally shunning him. Zeus knew of Epimetheus's sneakiness and untrustworthiness.

Two more spirits were released into the world: one was toxic masculinity, and one was hope that Pandora now possessed, knowing that Zeus the almighty chose to believe her, a woman, over Epimetheus. ■



Ewak Odingdingmoi
Year 8 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne



Sharnae Nicholson
Year 12 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne



Josh Brearley
Year 9 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

ONE SONG

Lynda Lineros · Year 8 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

There I lay. On the floor. In a dark, empty room, surrounded by countless music sheets. My eyes gazed blankly at the ceiling as I heard the steady rhythm of the metronome ticking faintly. “Why?” I muttered to myself, bawling my fists — I was angry. My eyebrows furrowed together in annoyance while I grabbed a sheet of paper lying next to me and threw it at the wall, yelling out in frustration. I sat up, resting my palms on my head, and panted heavily. I looked over at the scrunched up papers and sighed while glancing over at the piano. It had missing keys that had clearly been torn off in anger. My phone buzzed, and my head quickly snapped back to see the notification. “Fritz Haas has uploaded a song”. My eyes widened, and I immediately clicked on the message. Music began to play, and I stared at my phone, listening to the music. Listening to Fritz has always worked at calming me down. He was an amazing composer that I looked up to, he was the one who helped me through the darkest times of my life.

The song came to an end and I stared blankly at the screen, still recalling the beautiful noises that were playing. I felt as if fire was lit inside of me. I stood up and sat by my piano. I stared at it for a few moments, then began to play, even though there were missing keys. My movements were flowing in a graceful cascade, as if I had practised this for hours on end. A grin appeared on my face as I closed my eyes and listened to what I was playing. My slender hands drifted across the piano as if it were a swan, swimming delicately across the lake.

Weeks later, I walked down the busy hallways of the school and stopped abruptly as I saw on the cork board, “One piano lesson with a professional, sign up now!”. I inattentively focused on the paper. *Professional*. Those were the only words I had fixated my eyes on. “Could there be any chance Fritz would be the professional?” I thought to myself as I ruffled my hair and sighed. “Obviously not, I’d be dreaming if I would ever think that Fritz would teach me...” I mumbled.

I continued to contemplate if I should sign up for that lesson. If I became good enough, would Fritz know who I am? I continued to think about it and

eventually made up my mind. I was going to sign up and hopefully one day, the person who inspired my whole musical career, will notice me.

The next day I applied and two weeks later, I received a response telling me the location of the lesson. I arrived and noticed a man playing the piano. This song seemed familiar... really familiar. I gazed at him for a few moments trying to recall where I had heard this song before until he stopped abruptly and noticed me. “Oh! Hello! You’re here for the piano lesson, I presume?” he said with a warm smile. I nodded softly as I went and shook his hand. He guided me to sit down on the bench as he grabbed a seat next to me. He began to make me tell him what I already knew, so he wouldn’t need to teach me the basics. I gazed at his long pale hands and then focused my eyes back at his face, “Could you play me something?” I said with a blank stare, as I was eager to hear a song of his. He gazed at me with a taken aback expression, but then smiled. He shifted his seat closer to the piano and began to play a piece. “This is one of my own songs.” he said.

Just as I was about to speak again, he began to play. My eyes widened as I immediately recalled what song he was playing. It was the new upload of Fritz’s song. It was exactly the same...could he be...?

“Look at the time! I must get going now, I hope you enjoyed it!” he said as he grabbed his bag and headed for the door. My eyes widened as I immediately yelled out, “Wait!” I felt my heart racing as my palms got sweaty, could he really be Fritz? He turned around and tilted his head with a confused expression. “Are you by any chance...Fritz Haas?” I said with wide eyes. His eyes widened, but then he grinned mischievously, “Hm... Maybe...” he said as he walked out of the door. My heart was racing, It really was him! I couldn’t get over the fact that Fritz, the person who I crazily admired, was in front of me this whole time! I couldn’t get this dumb grin off my face as I sat down and pressed my head against the piano. It was really him... It was Fritz Haas...

One song of another will always inspire the other. ■



Taura Cody
Year 10 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne



Matthew Kadaroesman
Year 12 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne



Lily Buckley
Year 10 · Lavalla Catholic College

Amongst the Ferns



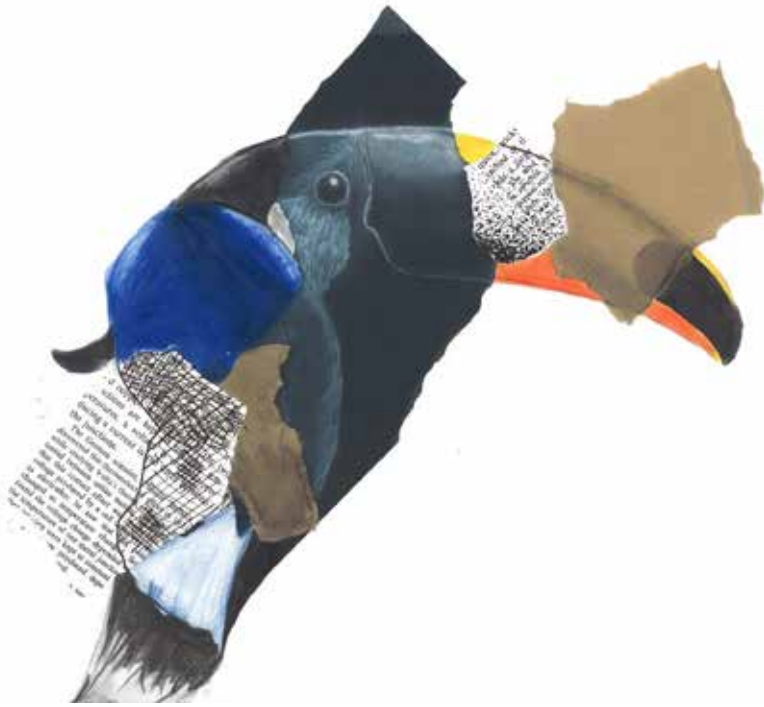
Lulani Sultana
Year 11 · Lavalla Catholic College

Stillness and Bright

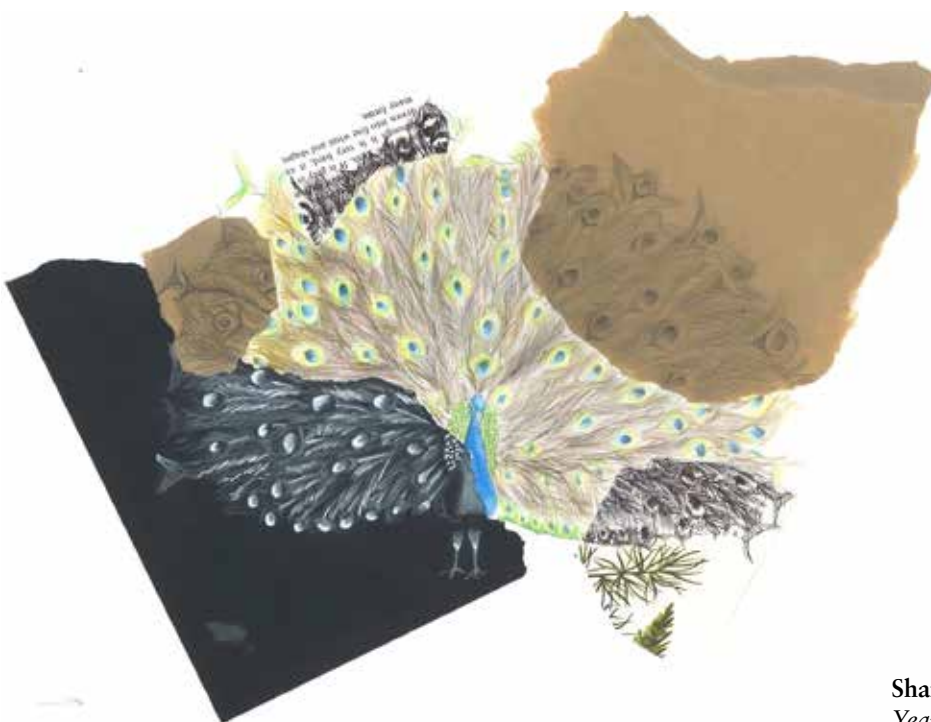


Lulani Sultana
Year 11 · Lavalla Catholic College

Stillness and Bright



Nikita Gils
Year 8 · Lavalla Catholic College



Shannen Modesto
Year 8 · Lavalla Catholic College

RAIN

Chloe Taylor · Year 7 · Lavalla Catholic College

Why do people dance in the rain?
The water is so fresh and cold.
What is going on inside their brain?

When I'm in the rain, I feel free.
I don't want to be told.
Why do people dance in the rain?

Some people stay inside.
Others don't care and get wet.
What is going on inside their brain?

They don't have a care in the world.
Do they go back when dinner is set?
Why do people dance in the rain?

I ask myself are you ok?
People don't let the sun go down.
What is going on inside their brain?

I love the rain, I feel happy.
Other people have a frown.
Why do people dance in the rain?
What is going on inside their brain? ■

THE SKY

Chloe Taylor · Year 7 · Lavalla Catholic College

I fall asleep, and the storm is here.
Rain, rain, and more rain; it is bad.
A thunderstorm has arrived.
Grey, black and full of clouds
Bang, the sky's a drum!
Quiet and clear
Blue, big, bright
The sky
Calm. ■



Gracelene Jimenez
Year 11 · Killester College

Seven-year Ephemera

For seven years I lived in the Philippines and immersed myself in the country I call my second home. I learned the language, I met friends I'll keep forever, and most importantly I was, and still am, a part of the culture I will cherish forever. In the Philippines during Christmas time (which starts as early as September 1st !) the Filipino Street lantern *parol* is brought out and hung up wherever it can be pinned. My artwork recreates the sacred ephemera using bright vibrant colours reflecting my happiness when living in the Philippines. Though the *parol* is only meant to be enjoyed for a short time, hence the label of ephemera, I believe that my seven years in the the Philippines will be held dear to my heart forever.

SNOW

Ruby Meo · Year 7 · Lavalla Catholic College

All I see is a lot of white.
A fluffy blanket on the ground.
Snowflakes fall, glittering so bright.

There are no birds in the sky, taking flight.
Outside it is silent, not one sound.
All I see is a lot of white.

It is cold, but the sun brings the light.
The little specks drifting down all around.
Snowflakes fall, glittering so bright.

I don't like the freezing cold, it's not right.
Right by my window, shaped as round.
All I see is a lot of white.

I wrap my blanket around me, tight.
With my dog, my trusty hound.
Snowflakes fall, glittering so bright.

Hills of snow is all that's in sight,
Every pile, every mound.
All I see is a lot of white.
Snowflakes fall, glittering so bright. ■



Amanda Nguyen
Year 6 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Acrylic painted impressionist landscape



Abigail Morgan
Year 11 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

Ink and Posca Painting

MY BESTIE BOO

Sibh Zitzen · Year 6 · St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

Open to listening
Fun to be with
Likes to bend the rules but not break them

Humour is her heart
Her energy is infectious
Turns hate to love in the blink of an eye.

Highest quality person and most superb friend.
My bestie boo, you are my inspiration. ■



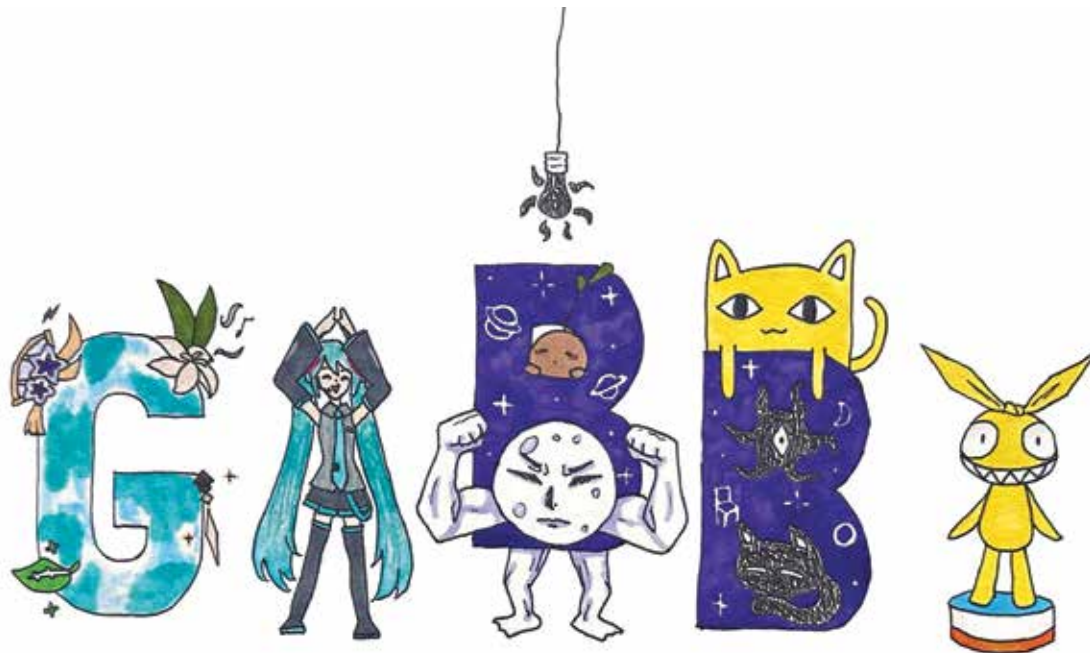
Valentina Ramos-Damico
Year 6 · St James Catholic
Primary School, Brighton

Nature in Your Hands



Ebenezer Laithang
Year 7 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

Ceramics



Gabby Pilapil
Year 8 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

Typography



Francis Rus
Year 11 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

3D Model

UNBURDENED BLISS

Malual Malual · Year 11 · St Francis Catholic College, Melton

In the realm of carefree delight,
Where worries fade, no longer in sight,
A playful dance of life unfolds,
As I release what the world beholds.

No longer burdened by anxious thoughts,
I journey deep where the soul's fire rots,
For in surrender, a wisdom gleams,
Revealing life's truth within my dreams.

I let go of the weight I used to bear,
No longer entangled in endless despair.
The shackles of worry, I cast away,
Embracing freedom, come what may.

In this playful realm, I find release,
A lightness of being, a sweet inner peace.
No more fretting over the things unknown,
Instead, I revel in the seeds I've sown.

With laughter as my guiding star,
I venture where the boundaries are,

Exploring realms of joy and glee,
Unearthing treasures deep within me.

No longer bound by the world's decree,
I swim in oceans of pure fantasy,
For in the depths of whimsical embrace,
I find my truth, my sacred space.

In this fun-filled quest, a truth resides,
That worries fade when we let go of tides.
For life's mysterious and often strange,
But when we surrender, we can exchange.

The weight of burdens for a playful jest,
To dance, to laugh, to truly invest,
In the moments that matter, free from strife,
Living deeply, embracing this vibrant life.

So let us set sail on this carefree ride,
Where worries scatter, and fears subside.
Embrace the joy that dances in our core,
For in living fully, we find so much more. ■

A BRUSH WITH LOVE

Alex Bellemev-Evans · Year 10 · Padua College Mornington

In the quiet corner of a bustling city, amidst the drab monotony of daily life, lived an unassuming painter named Vera. She would sit high above the city skyline in her studio apartment looking out of the wide window of her living room. Her eyes would follow the steady stream of commuters on their way to work or the intricate lives of her neighbours in their apartments. All these people going out and fulfilling their dreams and purposes filled Vera with a new feeling. A lust of sorts. A yearning for that very same conviction and ambition.

In an attempt to immortalize these fleeting moments, Vera picked up her paintbrush and began to transform the scenes before her into vibrant portraits on canvas. Colours burst forth like fireworks in her previously serene living room, turning her once creme and vanilla surroundings into a lively explosion of hues. Her previously saffron-coloured sofa now being transformed to the deep hue of an eggplant, adorned with tangerine and lemon accents, with subtle hints of blue currant and teal. Apart from being covered in paint her former living room was also turning into a gallery, drowning in paintings and portraits. Every time she would see someone that intrigued her or something that aesthetically pleased her she would paint it so that it would stay with her forever. They were no longer paintings but portraits into other worlds.

However, it sadly did not last. Vera eventually found herself bored and uninspired. A staleness and flatness had begun to emerge in her paintings. A painting of an inky-black cat atop a windowsill was no longer a manifestation of the night's enigma. No longer was it chiaroscuro masterpiece. It no longer embodied the darkness and the mystique of the cosmos. It now was just a cat. So with great sorrow, Vera put her paintbrushes down. Her creativity seemed to have abandoned her, leaving her with a sense of emptiness.

A few weeks after she had stopped painting she started to receive rather unusual and cryptic letters from some kind of enigmatic admirer. Written with eloquence and charm, they offered praise and encouragement for her work. They spoke of how her paintings transformed the mundane into the

extraordinary, and how her use of colour breathed life into everything she touched. Vera was baffled by these letters; she had never shared her work beyond the confines of her apartment. Each of these enticing letters ended with a finely written signature - "Yours faithfully, your one truest admirer".

As the letters continued to arrive, Vera's curiosity grew. She found herself drawn back to her neglected easel. However she no longer yearned for a sense of purpose, she had found one. Her purpose was to find her unknown admirer and to thank them for getting her out of her rut. The focus of her paintings shifted from mundane sights to what she imagined her mystery devotee was. From dark-haired, inquisitive-eyed men to platinum-blond women draped in the chicest fashion. Each one only fuelled her desire even more.

As Vera continued her search she found herself more and more involved and engaged in regular interactions and tasks. She would regularly greet and talk to her neighbours and commuters on the way to her favourite cafe. These conversations that she once previously overlooked now became sources of inspiration. At last, she had learnt that the world was full of stories waiting to be told, her paintings became a bridge between the seen and unseen and a reminder to appreciate the little things and to find the beauty in the menial and seemingly dull.

One day, as Vera was lost in the creative process, a knock on the apartment door interrupted her. Opening the door, she was met with a face she had never seen before. Standing at her doorstep was a woman with dark brunette hair and a shy yet warm smile. Dressed in an outfit that exuded both elegance and a touch of whimsy. The woman's eyes held a spark of familiarity, as if Vera had met her before or perhaps encountered her in her paintings. The stranger extended her hand and introduced herself as Trucy, a poet and writer who also happened to be her mysterious admirer. After frantically conversing together at her doorstep for what felt like eons, Vera invited her to come with her to have some coffee, where the two became each other's lifelong muses. ■



Anastasia Fikiris
Year 11 · Padua College Mornington



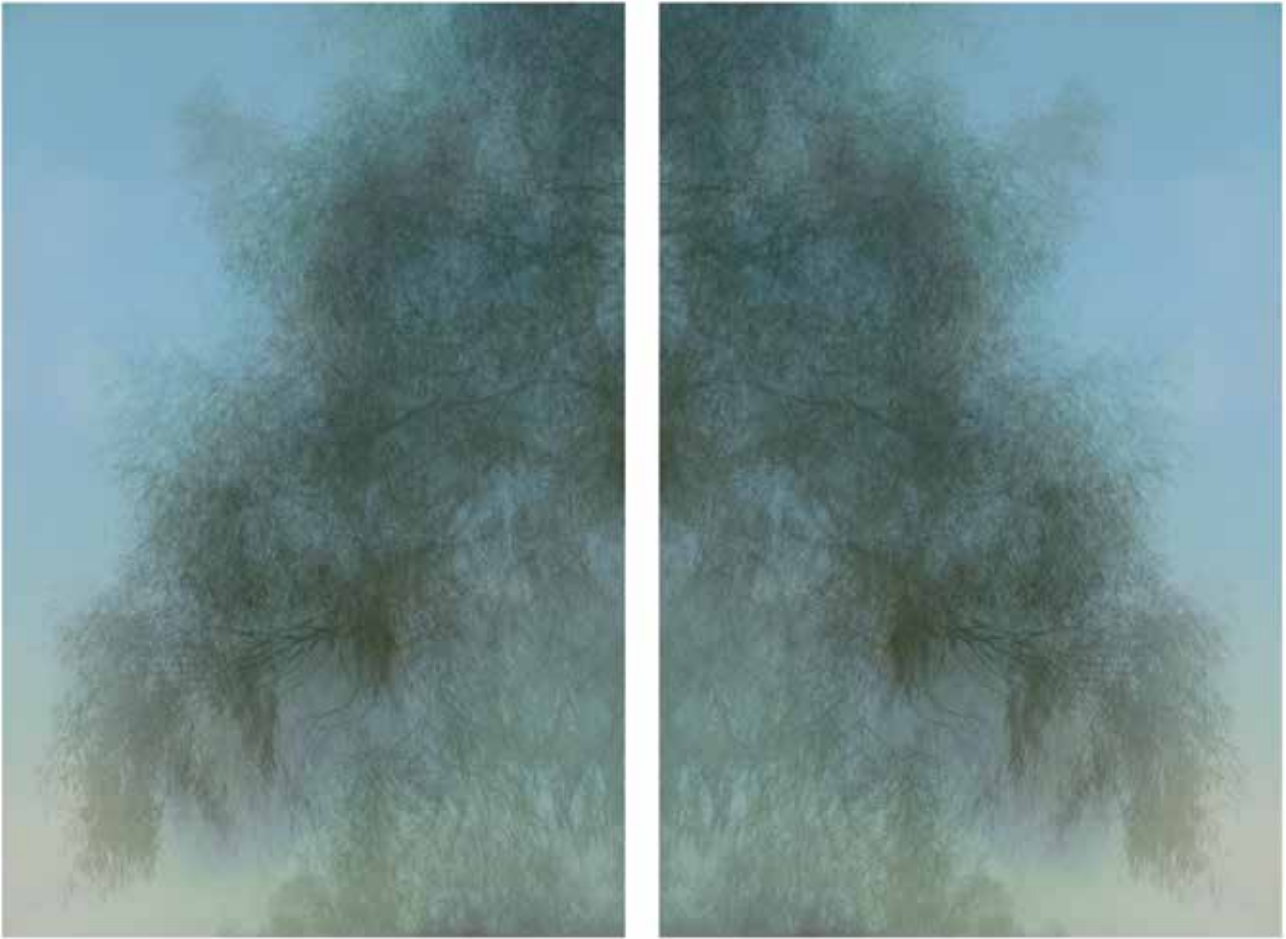
Kilani Love
Year 7 · Padua College Tyabb



Annabel Chamberlain
Year 11 · Padua College Mornington

—————
Ideas into Fruition
—————

The piece is called 'Ideas into Fruition'. Illustrating the feeling when you've always been inspired to achieve something, and you finally put the plan into action. This takes that metaphor of a 'bright idea' literally and shows the lightbulb bursting open and having that dream flow out and become a reality.



Patrick Hosking

Year 12 · Padua College Mornington

Mirrored from the Unnoticed series

The choice of the tree as the central subject holds personal significance, as it has been a silent witness to my own evolution. In 2015 pre covid I received my first phone and excitedly ran outside and took a photo of the first thing that caught my eye, low and behold it was the gum tree outside my house. I didn't care about any other features, I just wanted to take a photo. This tree has graced my wallpaper ever since. Although existing in the background, this seemingly ordinary tree mirrored my subtle growth and change of my journey through high school.

In the tumultuous year of 2020, when the world faced unprecedented challenges of Covid-19, the external stressors and my internal life were heightened like never before. This tree became my steadfast companion, amidst lockdowns and isolation, it represented constancy and resilience, reminding me of the enduring beauty and simplicity found in nature. Through daily observations, I discovered the tree's unique interaction with light, a poignant metaphor for life's ever-shifting circumstances.



Alyssa Marinucci

Year 11 · Padua College Mornington

The word 'Inspire' originates from Latin root: inspirare which means "to breathe or blow into." When I think of that meaning, I think of the clouds and the sky and what lives beyond it, thus leading me to think of angels. The meaning of an angel is to bring faith and hope, two things that inspire people to do anything they put their mind to. Though, no one can truly inspire everyone, which is the meaning of the puzzle, as no one is perfect.



Joshua Colson

Year 12 · Padua College Mornington



Violet Marks
Year 9 · Padua College Rosebud

Kookaburra



Amelie Hall
Year 9 · Padua College Rosebud



Kaylee Nguyen
Year 1 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

The Washing of the Feet, Mixed media collage



Owen Vu
Year 2 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

The Washing of the Feet, Mixed media collage



John Tran
Year 1 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Frida Kahlo-inspired soft chalk pastel self portraits collaged onto a nature background



Hannah Nguyen
Year 2 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Frida Kahlo-inspired soft chalk pastel self portraits collaged onto a nature background



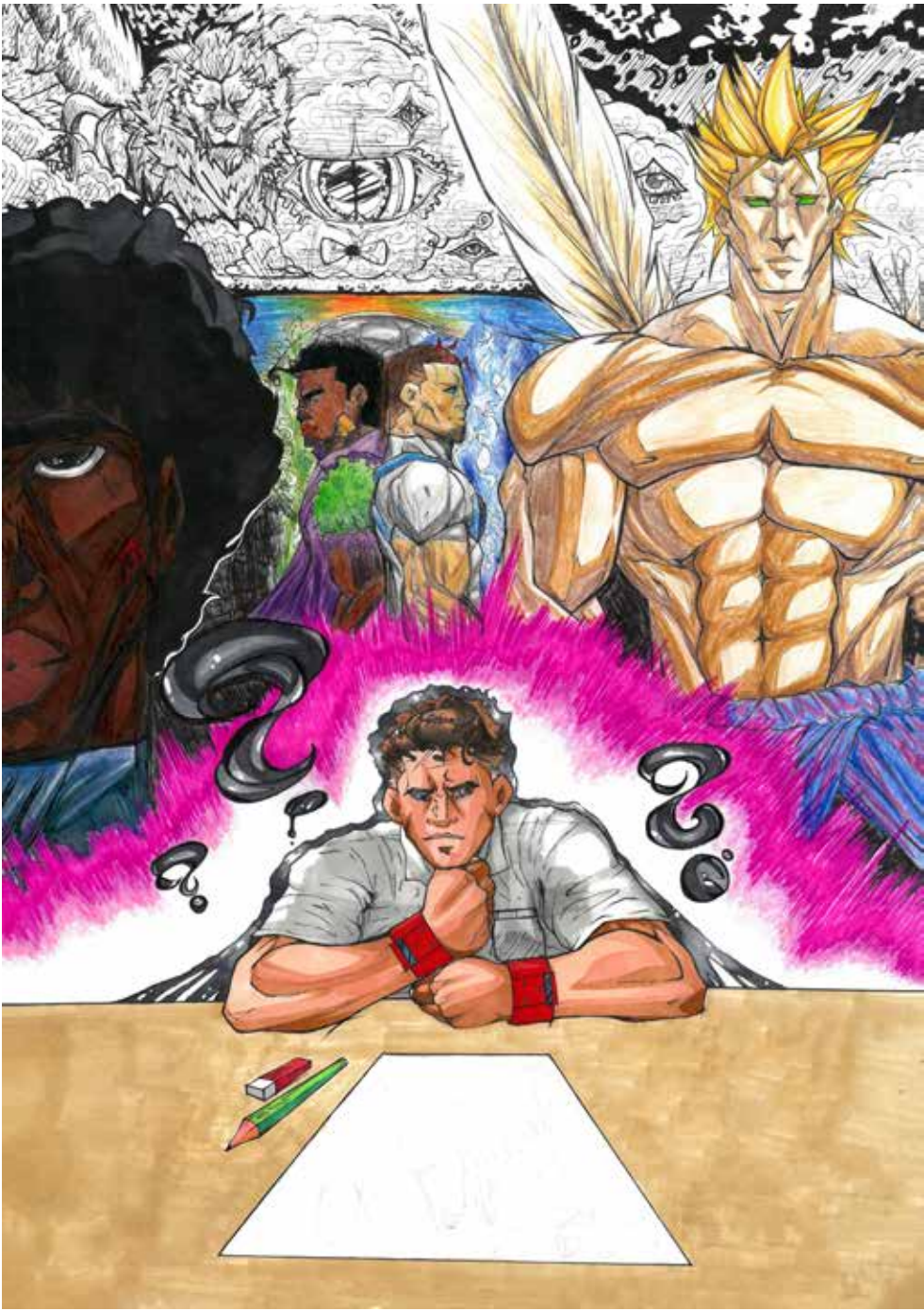
Van Ahn Le
Year 11 · Killester College

VCD, Mixed Medium



Anna Keng
Year 11 · Killester College

VCD, Mixed Medium



Manasseh Westerlund
Year 10 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne



Seamus Ryan
Year 7 · Emmaus College

CHERISH

Maggie Moore · Year 8 · St Mary's College, East St Kilda

It had been a few hours after the announcement. 'Flowers are blooming,' they say. Stuck abroad, on my honeymoon of all things, oh and of course, the end of the world. The heavy smoke from what seemed like thousands of cars racing by trying to leave Canada filled the air. A cosmic horror, brought to life, the moon changing its general trajectory was unprecedented, but right into the sun? One in a million. In roughly 18 hours, we'd all be dead, including Marcus. My love, my one and only. Our entire lives ahead of us, a family, a house, children, everything had been trashed in front of our very eyes by a merciless god. The blooms of smoke rose above us, igniting a spluttering fit from the two of us.

"The Hills," he uttered.

"Huh?"

"They'll be beautiful, Michelle."

Something we hadn't expected from the end of all things was the sudden blooming of flowers across the entire world. One final cruel farewell from the world, as if it knew. One last, bittersweet, joke.

"What about scuba diving Marcus?"

"Oh, come on."

He paused a moment.

Finding a moment of melancholy bliss as we lay on the fragments and shards of the literal moon as it hurled towards us at the speed of sound actually didn't sound that bad as a last send-off. We didn't even speak a word as we began walking over to our hired vehicle, that we planned to explore, our hired vehicle we planned to spend our honeymoon together in. We drove silently for hours while we slowly left all civilization behind us, to fend for ourselves.

"It's nearly poetic. Two lovers, together in their last few hours of life." I broke the quietness.

"Like those skeletons, they found in Pompeii, right," he replied.

"Yeah."

I looked to the hills; they had been doused in colour by the abundance of flowers, tulips, hydrangeas, and poppies, all of which had sprouted. Their petals danced as the gentle oncoming rain swayed them. A tear made its way down my cheek, as he mildly placed his hand on my shoulder.

"At least we're together, Michelle."

He was trying to comfort me.

"I didn't even get to say goodbye to mum, or dad; we'll never see them again."

The tears began pricking my skin, and my eyes welled up. I shifted and brought a hand up to my face and buried my head deep into it. He gently squeezed my shoulder harder and turned on the radio. It was our song. Cape Town slipped through the speakers as we began to sing along in between soft sobs. Christ, what a depressing way to go out. We stopped driving when we finally found a spot that felt right. The grass fell beneath our feet in a tender embrace. What's even the point of wearing shoes anymore? We're going to die anyway. The rain poured onto us as we waded our way through the field of flowers. Dusk had started to set at the completely wrong time; 1.00pm was only two hours ago, and that's when it hit that it really was real, and the moon was a force to be reckoned with; nobody could stop this.

We sat down as lightning cracked in the sky, a surreal experience, doomsday. It had come a lot faster than anybody had expected. A serene feeling began to wash over me as the wind picked up and cradled our faces. "Darling, flowers are blooming," As I look over, I spot the contrasting colours of the flowers in a specific spot. They had arranged themselves in a way so that they spelt the word 'cherish'. I understood it then. ■



Tara Cotter
Year 11 · St Mary's College, East St Kilda

THE AUDACIOUS BAND

Curtis Leech · Year 7 · St Mary's College, East St Kilda

The year is 1959 and three imaginative people from Sierra City go to one of the many theatres in the town. The city was one of the most rapidly developing cities in America after all. All the buildings were coated in an Art deco façade. These three people go into the art deco building and are already exhilarated by its architectural beauty and as they bought the tickets and go to their seats, a large dose of inspiration goes through them. The concert goes for a good three hours and as they go out, they feel inspired to start a band of themselves. John Jones was a talented man when it came to this, he openly admitted to only being in it for the money, the others agreed but weren't impressed by his traits nor his personality. John Jones had the original idea to start the band and was open minded to new ideas from Robert and sometimes, James although he never offered constructive feedback. A jazz band forms sometime later, founded on the core values of making good music for the population of Sierra City. They believed that in 10 years they would be successful.

10 years later and the band has not been going well. In the first 3 years everything was going very well in just the first 3 months they were famous, they have everything especially money which James was exhilarated about, he achieved his goal of wealth, but he felt a small sense of sorrow, but he had everything but when does a lot become too much. John was doing well he achieved his goal of entertaining the public and the population and Robert Brown was agreeing with Jones with many points he made about agreed with James when it came to the point about money. They

could obviously see that other bands were doing something to make them famous and mainstream again and eventually they figured it out. They are changing their genre to a more mainstream genre. In 1969 jazz just wasn't it. John kept saying that it was too risky, they could not do such things and there was no such chance they would do it.

A few months later James said that maybe it would be better for profits if they went mainstream and changed their genre to Pop the new thing at the time, "apparently all the people love it" James exclaimed "It would do wonders for our profits" John disagreed, and Robert wasn't on any side but later he would switch to James' side. John was outnumbered he didn't know what to do. Eventually he gave in, and they decided to switch their genre to Pop. At first John was sceptical "this isn't right" he whispered to himself. Although James was excited to see what the future held for them.

Eventually, ever since they started playing Pop music everything was going down, but one thing stood out to James, profits, profits were down. In fact, profits were at an all-time low. After some time like this they couldn't stand it anymore things had to go back to normal so together in unison they decided that they would play jazz again.

A few years later the year was 1973 and the band was one of the most popular bands in the country and Sierra city became the "capital of jazz" and everything was normal, if not better. People became inspired by the band especially John Jones. ■



Luke Ellis
Year 11 · St Mary's College, East St Kilda



Noah Douglas
Year 11 · St Mary's College, East St Kilda

SISTERS

Nicholas Betancur · Year 1
St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

My sister is inspiring.
She cares about me.
She loves me a lot.

She also cares about her phone.
She scrolls on it a lot.

She is very annoying.
And cares a lot about make up.

Even though she gets annoying,
I love her very much!

She is the best sister ever! ■

ANZACS

Scarlett Quattrone · Year 6
St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

The dark scarlet poppies bloomed
The lives of the soldiers are doomed
There is no hope left, no zest
In the dark gloomy shadows of night
There is no light, no light to be found,
nothing bright
We miss our families at home
There is nowhere left to roam
No escape
Just a deep red cape of blood
The sound of cannons, the thud
War ■

DESERT

Raphael Chandler · Year 2
St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

I am in a hot, sandy desert.
I can feel the small, little particles of
sand blowing around my face.
I can smell the dead scorpion's bones.
I can touch the tiny grains of sand that
are everywhere I look.
I can see the long, sandy desert that
seems to go on forever. ■

FREEDOM

Skye Pullman · Year 3
St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

Caramel skies drift across the water
leaping into freedom.
The water is calling you.
You follow your instincts.
The birds sing in the swaying trees.
You're home. ■

RAIN

Jade Pullman · Year 3
St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

Black clouds creeping in.
Droplets begin drifting down.
Splashes of water pour from the sky. ■

SUN

Madeleine Iliff · Year 3
St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

Swish of blinding light
A hot glaze of bright fire
Flames burn my eyes ■

AT NIGHT

Anita Gendala · Year 4
St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

Walking through the lake fog at night,
I creep through the darkness.
A frog RIBBITS near me
I pause.
An owl hoots
I hear a screeching sound
I turn there's nothing there. ■

BEACH

Blake McElveney · Year 4
St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

Soft and sandy
Feel the cold swaying water
Hear the waves crashing over the sand
Smell the salty air
Taste the delicious coconuts that hang
from the beautiful palm trees.
Exhilarating ■

SEASHELLS

Dolly Baldwin · Year 3
St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

The sun is scorching hot.
The waves crash onto the sand.
The seashells scatter.
The crabs scuttle over the seashells.
Sinking them into the sand. ■

CAREFULLY

Valentina Barresi · Year 2
St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

Carefully, I stepped through the deadly
snakes.
Carefully, I lifted the baby's hand.
Carefully, my friend patted the cat.
Carefully, I skated down the bumpy road.
But most carefully of all, I correct my
homework.
Carefully ■

SUNSET AT THE BEACH

Ivy Dimech · Year 4 · St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

Seeing an astonishing sunset with
amazing colours in the sky
Feeling the icy water splash my feet
Hearing birds chirping and trees moving
and swishing
Smelling the salty ocean ■

STATE OF MIND

Joshua Murray-Beckman · Year 5 · St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

I suddenly woke up and saw
that there was no door.
No floor.
I was on the ground.
I heard a roar and a pound.
Something was scary,
As red as a cherry.
A big spider.
Now it becomes the decider
Of whether to hurt me or not.
My brain was shot.
Stuck in a state of mind,
That I could not find. ■



Johnny Kharoufeh
Year 9 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong



Salina Balay
Year 9 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong

CHERRY BLOSSOM

Dehara M. Gamage · Year 10 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong

A scent so pure, so comforting
Filled with love
Something I had no desire in finding,
But something I've secretly been waiting for,
Since the day I met you.
I felt something blossom within me that day.
From the moment I walked in,
Not knowing, that sitting right in front of me,
I had met my forever person.
Someone who would be with me til the very end.
Neither of us aware of what the future awaited
from this,
Oblivious to our feelings,

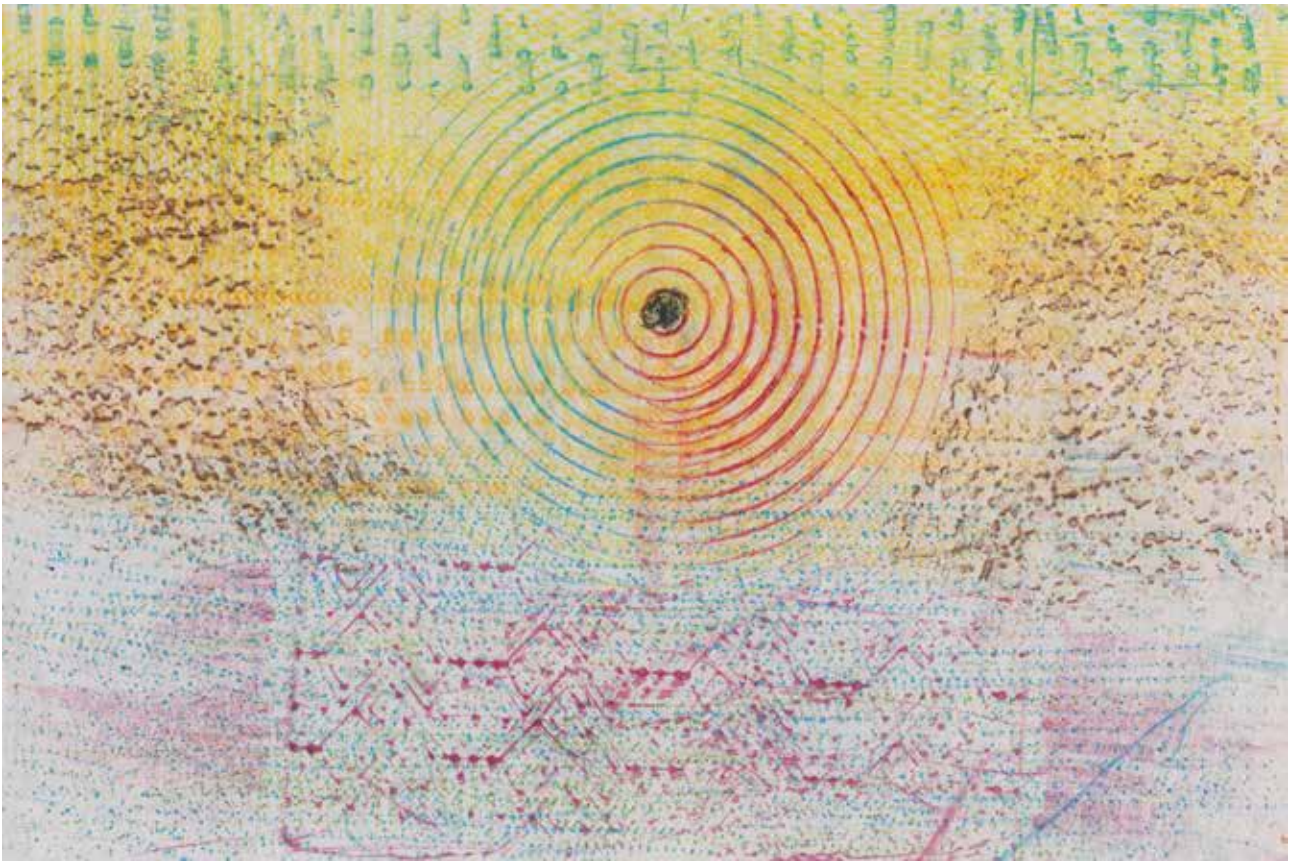
An everlasting friendship we said;
Leaving broke hearts in the past, lovers that never
should have been.
Your eyes on me. My eyes on you.
Hand in hand,
You're all I ever need.
My forever person,
The something I had no desire finding,
But secretly had been waiting for this entire time.
Since the very day I met you,
I let the feelings blossoms;
My cherry blossom. ■

BUTTERFLIES FLY HIGH

Vethu Piyadigamage · Year 7 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong

A free butterfly wonders around the meadow
which is filled with colourful flowers.
Its flies high.
The butterflies down in the glass cage are longing
to be freed.
They feel lonely and sad.
Their stomachs are filled to the top but they long
to drink on the sweet and floral pollen covering
the middle of the flowers.
The glass cage is clear as crystal with details that
are carefully carved on to the sides that are made
of wood.
But it has mesh top with tiny square holes to make
sure that the butterflies could have air.
But this only made the trapped butterflies sadder
that the outside world was right there.

The free butterfly has vibrant orange wings that
have white speckless and black dots.
However, the caged butterfly had glossy blue wings
that when tilted towards the sun can reflect
purple and light blue.
Even though the trapped butterfly was beautiful it
had no freedom because of it.
While the free butterfly had not been trapped. ■
*Poem written in response to the poem "Caged
Bird," By Maya Angelou.*



Jermaine Kelsall
Year 7 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong



Jessica Knight

Prep · St Finbar's Primary School, Brighton East

One day super girl helped a boy who really hurt his leg and it really hurt. I helped him. But he was crying. So I really helped him. I put a band aid on his leg.



Oliver Perry

Prep · St Finbar's Primary School, Brighton East

One day super girl once went to the city. But when she got there she was furious because people were not doing the right thing. So, she went to save the day because she wanted to be helpful. She helped by picking up rubbish.

EARTH HELPERS

Sienna Speers · Year 1 · St Finbar's Primary School, Brighton East

We need earth helpers. We tried not to use plastic but people still do. Rubbish is on the ground and not in the bin. We don't know what we are doing wrong. People are using litter so much it is bad for the earth. We need to pray for the earth. We need to make a change. ■

BE YOURSELF

Nicolas Longo · Year 2 · St Finbar's Primary School, Brighton East

In space there was a planet called Venus. Venus was always very hot. Venus wished to be Neptune and Neptune wished to be Venus.

Neptune said "I'm too cold."

Venus said "I'm too hot."

They found out Earth was the best temperature.

Earth said "BE YOURSELF!" ■



Sophia Mifsud
Prep · St Finbar's Primary School, Brighton East



William Josipovic
Prep · St Finbar's Primary School, Brighton East

KINDLE

Athikroth Khun · Year 9 · Killester College

“Welcome to the Afflatus Academy, where we will kindle the various kinds of passions kids like you!”, piped up an enthusiastic tour guide. Chamise was somewhat excited for this field trip. On one hand, it was supposedly a very intriguing place, perfect for sparking ideas for her final project, which she would leave behind when she graduated to high school. On the other hand, she was worried that if she couldn’t think up any ideas for it, she would have nothing to show or submit, keeping her from moving forward and then.

“Chamise! The group is heading over to the Sculptor’s Greenward”, a voice disrupting Chamise’s thoughts. The voice belonged to Ms. Poplar, who was a helper or assistant assigned to Keystone Primary School. A bit on the older side, with burgundy hair and casual yet practical clothing. Most, if not all, called her by her first name Cemre, since they felt so comfortable with her.

The day progressed, and Chamise had seen wonderful things. Ranging from a field of kinetic wind sculptures, twirling about in the wind, to fantastical fountains spewing delicious drinks, designed to cater to any guests. Unfortunately, Chamise still struggled to find an idea for her project. Troubled, she decided a change in scenery is all that she needed. Chamise heard of a location that may help her refresh her mind. She secretly separated from the group and made her way to the Kindle Garden. The Kindle Garden was a desolate desert of ashy grey sand, only decorated with sparse statues consisting of only stacked pebbles and stone, and the soothing swirls created in the sand. She sat on a cold stone bench and pondered. What could I make to leave a legacy behind? Sudden footsteps interrupted her thoughts. She only took a small glance upwards, and Cemre was there. She was always there. There when she needed someone to talk to. There when she had troubles on her mind. There when Chamise needed her the most.

“Chamise, is something bothering you?”, Cemre asked curiously with a hint of concern.

“I am just thinking about my project,” Chamise replied dryly. “I don’t know what to make for it, and if I don’t make something, I will fail and have nothing to show at graduation; nothing for anyone to remember me by.”

“Tell you what,” Cemise asserted. “I think you will graduate, since you are dedicated to your work. You will have an idea for your project, and don’t worry about not being remembered. I will remember you, even after I leave this excursion and the school.”

Chamise was shocked to hear this news. Her immediate concern was that she didn’t have anything to give her, followed by the fact that she will miss her dearly.

“In fact, I am so confident in you graduating that this is what I would like you to say for your speech. This is also just general advice I would like to give to you, before I have to go”

A sigh sound escaped from Cemre, as she imparted her rede. A wintery wisp of mist came forth, and now a kindling flame burned brightly, rested in Chamise’s spirit. The excursion was soon over, and Chamise enthusiastically went straight to work. She toiled and tinkered until twilight, but it was finally complete.

Graduation day has finally arrived. Chamise unveiled her project, and it was revealed to be a mural. The mural displayed Chamise’s silhouette in the centre with a firm and determined, but content expression, painted onto the silhouette’s face. The bleak, black and white colour scheme, contrasted with the burning bright hue of the fire in the torch, that seemed to be tilted towards Chamise’s heart, which looked to be set ablaze. This mural was a representation of what Cemre told her on that fateful day. She was selected to give a speech, she spoke,

“Do you know what keeps my passion burning? I tend to do it, like throwing firewood into the hearth. If you throw it all in, the fire will burn bright, but the brighter it burns, the quicker it wittles away. Why do you think they call the after effect burn out? If you do feel burnt out, perhaps all you need is a breath of fresh air. That burning fire inside you, is your entire heart and soul. Kindle it.”

Those were the exact words, her greatest friend left her with. She hoped that her fellow classmates would take those words to heart and kindle their own burning passions and desires. Just as she wanted. Just as Cemre wanted. ■

THE CATAclySM

Victor Vu · Year 9 · Simonds Catholic College

In the aftermath of the Cataclysm, the world turned into a haunting wasteland.

A place of ruin. A place of silence. Hannah, a young survivor, wandered through the desolate wasteland, with a tattered hoodie offering little protection against the scratching winds that swept through the deserted streets. She scavenged through the streets, gripping her worn-out backpack close to her chest with only one thought on her mind – survival.

Her backpack was the only object she could manage to salvage. The formerly lively city appeared to Hannah as a ghost town. As she roamed the streets, she thought to herself – am I going to get through this? The once tall and proud buildings now stood before her in their crumbling shells of their former beauty. The devastation of this new reality was shown to her through the cracked windows and ruined walls of these once majestic buildings.

The air was thick with dust, so much so that Hannah had to squint to protect her eyes from the flakes that danced through the wind. The sky was covered in a heavy layer of pollution, and the sun was faintly visible through the murky shade that densely covered the sky. She murmured to herself, “This is going to be the end, isn’t it?” Among all the wreckage, Hannah managed to notice a playground, its colourful equipment now eroded and covered in weeds. She recalled her childhood, playing with friends, swinging, and climbing the monkey bars. Now, all that remained was the echoes of laughter. And a ruined playground. Starved and exhausted, Hannah’s eyes darted across the surrounding area in search of a place with anything edible. Her face brightened up as she spotted a deteriorated grocery store off in the distance. She saw the vague silhouette of a sign that was barely recognizable. The words of the crumbling sign had once shown ‘Coles’; now, somewhat comically, missing the ‘o’.

She slowly approached the store as her stomach started roaring in hunger. The rotting smell struck Hannah’s senses as she rummaged through the remains of what had once been food. She managed to salvage a few cans that had survived the Cataclysm. These cans served as precious treasures to her in an unforgiving world.

Continuing her journey, she discovered a painting that managed to survive in the harsh condition of the cruel world. It contrasted with the reality she was facing. The vivid, vibrant colours painted a picture of... hope. Symphony, even. Hannah ran

her fingers through the cracked canvas, as the paint flaked off to the touch. She wished for the hope it represented. She promised to herself that, no matter what, she would not give up hope.

Hannah sought refuge in a deserted subway station as night fell, with only the faint brightness of the moon peeking through the cracks and gaps in the mouldy walls.

The night engulfed her, in a blanket of darkness.

To stay warm, she huddled in a corner, pulling her hoodie closer and closer, trying to ward off the cold. Unable to sleep, she pulled out a crumpled photo from her pocket. It was a picture filled with memories of her family. Their smiles reminded her of the happier times when they were together. And safe. She kissed the photo. She began to sob. Night fell.

She started her journey once again in the morning – or what she thought was the morning – moving further away from the life she had known before. She suddenly remembered her younger brother, Palo. He had been cut away from her during the cataclysm’s chaos. Since then, she had been traveling, determined to find her brother amid the desolation. It was in the ruins where Hannah encountered the other survivors. They each had their own stories engraved on their faces, looking as if they had traversed the barren wasteland for decades. They nodded to each other in agreement, murmuring to each other words that she couldn’t make out. Their eyes looked as if they were carrying the weight of loss and survival.

These survivors had introduced her to a new society. Somewhere where she could encounter people – new people. As she walked with them, she stumbled upon a group of kids around her age. In the harsh environment, they made a makeshift family, sharing memories and looking out for each other. Their companionship served as a bittersweet reminder of what Hannah had lost. But for a slight moment, she allowed herself to experience the same feeling of joy she had when she was with her family; the potential of rebuilding a sense of belonging and relation with these newfound friends.

Together, they explored the remnants of the old world. They put together fragments of history from old books, diaries, anything they could find. They listened to stories that were passed down by their grandparents. Stories from the time when the world was whole, life was plentiful, and the future bright. These were the memories she had hoped for. The memories that could never be forgotten.

In the face of hardships, Hannah and her friends learned how to value the small moments of joy that were still present in the wasteland. They found happiness in the simplest of things; the small amount of warmth from the sun, the sound of rain dripping down metal roofs, the sense of comradery they found as they faced the unknown together. Despite this, Hannah still looked for her long-lost brother through the waste and desolation.

Even though the world had fallen apart, these young survivors' hearts were still filled with hope. They found the fortitude to rebuild, to preserve, and to carry the burden of their loss of their loved ones. They were filled with courage and joy, with the hope of humanity held in their palms. With every adventure, they could write a new chapter in their world's story. A story of tenacity and bravery. ■



Albert Nguyen
Year 3 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

*Oil pastel expressive portrait inspired by
Vietnamese artist Van Tho*

ALONE, IN THE RUINS OF CIVILIZATION

Ronin Chingshubam · Year 9 · Simonds Catholic College

I see the beast looming over me, staring at me with its pitch-black eyes. Its face almost looks like a normal human, but there's still something horribly wrong with it. As the mutant's claw lashes out to attack me, I take a deep breath. I close my eyes and accept my fate.

Ashes. Everywhere around me, I see the ashes of the world that once was. Crumbling and lifeless buildings pass by me as I walk down the cracked pavement, the streetlights still barely work as they dimly illuminate the path ahead. Those monsters that were once human aren't here, so it's safe to go outside. The sky bleeds into an ominous red colour as the sun sets, the light reflecting off windows makes it almost seem like there's lights in them. The air is thick, filled with the smell of the rotten inky blood pouring out from the eyes of the monsters lurking in the city. Do they still feel anything? I'm not sure. *I hope not.*

I walk towards the ruins of an old gas station, past the tilted station sign whose lights are still lightly flickering. After kicking open the stained-glass doors, I look around the room. The shelves are all lying on the floor with nothing displayed on them. The walls are cracked, with mould growing all over them and there's a giant hole in the ceiling revealing the foggy sky above. Directly in front of me, I find a small wooden crate lying diagonally on a piece of broken concrete which I presume to be the remains of the cashier's desk. I lift the cover off the crate and see a small supply of rations inside it. I open one of the packets and take a bite just to make sure it's actually real. It's been ages since I've found one that wasn't empty. Most of them were cleared out when the chaos first started and now that there's no government to supply them, everyone has been starving. Or, at least I've been starving. In the corner of my eye, I see someone walking past the shelves. "H-Hello? Is someone there?!" I shout, begging for a response. Right as I turn to look, no one's there. I realize it wasn't real, just another symptom of my schizophrenia. I'm still alone.

My illness has gotten worse, and I ran out of antipsychotics months ago. At this point, I can't tell if I'm even awake, or if this is just the longest and most horrible nightmare of my life. My mind feels like an endless labyrinth where no matter which way I go, no matter what path I take, I can never find the exit. But I can't give up now. No, not like this. No matter what that terrible voice inside my head tells me, I can't give up. I've already made it this far, I can still find a way to keep going

and live on. And maybe, at last find someone else in this hellish world to spend the last of my days with.

I kick down the boarded-up fire exit doors in front of me, breaking the silence of the room by making a loud thud sound reverberating through the empty building. I enter the abandoned mall and stare in awe at the vastness of the building. Despite the glass dome above being broken, there being graffiti all over the walls and shelves, chairs and litter being spilled all over the floor, it's still a beauty to see in contrast with the horrors of the world outside. I walk around the building looking at all of the stores to try and find a place to camp for the night. As I walk, I see strange things all around me. I ignore them. At this point it's hard to even tell what's real and what isn't. As I look at one of the stores, I hear a sound coming from inside. Unsure if it was real, I decide to investigate. I look behind the counter and am startled to see one of those mutilated monsters lying on the ground. It notices me and lets out an ear-piercing shriek so loud that I fell to the floor and almost fainted. As I recovered from the sound, I heard growling coming from behind me. *They're here.*

I quickly jump to my feet and tear off a broken pipe from the wall to my left. *I can do this.* I used the pipe to crush the skull of the creature that made the shrieking sound. As the others approached, I stood guard. As the monsters tried to grab me, I struck them each down by hitting them on their mutated heads with the pipe, as their putrid blood splattered across the floor. I knocked back the few that were blocking one of the fire escape doors in the room and ran through it. As I ran through the hallway, I heard something from the hallway to my right.

"HELP!"

That voice... Could it be? Another survivor? My illness may make it hard for me to tell what's real and what's not, but I've spent a lifetime stranded by myself in the ruins of this world, I can't give up the chance to finally find someone, anyone else to share the last of my days with in this wasteland. Without thinking, I sprinted down the hallway to my right and followed the cries for help.

"SOMEONE, PLEASE HELP!"

"I'm coming!" I cried, as I ran towards the sounds. Eventually, I reached the end of the hallway where there was another boarded-up door. I use the pipe to break one of the planks when out of nowhere,

I feel a sharp pain in my leg. I look down to see one of the deformed monsters biting into my leg. I let out a scream of pain before breaking open the monster's skull with my pipe. The others have almost caught up as well, so with my remaining strength, I tear off the other plank and run into the door. When I'm inside, I quickly shut the door and knock down one of the nearby shelves to block it, before collapsing on the floor from exhaustion. I can barely move my legs, but I can save them now.

I look up and see a man standing in front of me.

"You saved me, thank you."

The man starts walking towards me, and as he comes closer his appearance changes. His limbs grow to double their original size, his eyes become pure black, and he starts growling. I make a horrible realization. It wasn't real was it? Just my mind yet again playing tricks on me. And now, my illness is going to end my life. The creature comes closer. I see the beast looming over me, staring at me with its pitch-black eyes. It's face almost looks like a normal human, but there's still something horribly wrong with it. As the mutant's claw lashes out to attack me, I take a deep breath. I close my eyes and accept my fate. ■

ALONE

Will Archibald · Year 9 · Simonds Catholic College

The heavy red gum door of the Taylor's home slammed with a heavy thud, followed by a loud clang of metal on metal, as the fly wire door flew closed as Finn Taylor stormed out with his great big Irish Wolfhound following briskly at his heel. The past months had been full of constant arguing almost every morning with his parents and Finn had finally had enough. He had packed a bag weeks ago in case he had the sudden urge to run away but this particular morning wasn't planned, he had just snapped when they had once again gotten angry at him over such a minor thing. This time they had berated him the moment he had woken up, Finn wasn't even sure what it was about this time but had had enough of it and needed a break.

Off he went kicking up the dust of his driveway, muttering abuse about his parents to himself under his breath. Not carrying any weight and viewing this as an exciting outing, Finn's Irish Wolfhound, Buddy, trotted happily behind. He was Finn's best mate and his only mate. Ever since they had moved from their city apartment interstate to the new house on the very edge of the city with the mountainous forest and parklands as their backyard, Finn had become lonely in this new place and with the constant scolding and remarks from his parents he had grown closer to his dog Buddy.

Within a few hours Finn had trekked up and into the mountainous forestry that his house backed onto. He found a grassy landing for him to set up his camp for the night. He had brought the basics for camping, a compact tent, few cans of food, a sleeping bag, and another pair of clothes along with a jacket for the cold. When it came night time, Finn sat down on some dry grass around a fire pit he had dug. With Buddy laid under his arm, and glowing embers flying up into the sky, Finn reflected on his relationship with his parents and decided that he would need to go back and apologise sooner or later. He made the choice that he would stay another night out in the mountains before heading back home, this way he would have the opportunity to have a proper break from all the stressors of home and be able to fix his arrogant attitude before returning.

The sun rose, lighting up the mountain range and the birds of the bush began tweeting and whistling, the forest had truly woken up and although he had no concept of knowing the time, Finn also knew it was time for him to get up. The day went fast, and Finn put himself to work. He dug out the fire pit and laid rocks decoratively in a circle around it.

He wanted to bring his parents here, for them to be happy, to see the way embers turned into stars and to see the sun rise above the mountains and the birds to wake the rest of the bush up with their songs. After a tiring, yet fast day spent cleaning what would hopefully be the Taylor's camp site, Finn was exhausted, and it wasn't long after sunset that he fell asleep with Buddy and his wiry fur curled up under his arm.

Morning came and Finn was ready to head home. He packed up the small amount of gear he had brought into his bag, and off he went. He trekked down the dry tracks with Buddy awkwardly trotting and hopping behind him nearly losing balance and sliding down. Finn came close to the end of the trail back towards his home and took a deep breath. He was ready to be nicer to his parents, he was willing to try harder in school and at home, he was ready to go home. Finn trudged through the shrubbery, clearing a path for Buddy to follow. They reached the barbed wire fence of his backyard and Finn stepped down on the wire and then hopped over. He put his backpack over the sharp rusted wire and pushed it down allowing Buddy to gallantly hop over without scratching himself.

Finn walked through his muddy backyard towards his basic 1960s wooden brown 1 storey home.

'Mum... Dad..., I'm home!' Finn shouted. There was no response. MUMMM... DAD... I'M HOME! He exclaimed once again just much louder. Still no response.

They have every right to be angry with me, Finn thought. There's no surprise that they aren't responding. He wandered towards the back door with a sense of confusion and angst towards the unknown reaction of his parents. The door was locked and so without questioning it Finn reached to lift for the mossy rock where the spare key sat under. With the key he opened the door, kicked off his muddy shoes and led Buddy inside.

The house was silent and not wanting to shout again Finn instead began searching the rooms for his parents to tell them his prepared apology speech. They were nowhere to be found; the house seemed to be left the exact same way as when he had left it; just without his parents. Finn's palms began to sweat, and his composure fell away. Before he could be filled with any more feelings of loneliness and abandonment Finn rushed out of the front door in his socks to the neighbour's house and banged on the door, no noise, and no response. He ran to the next house along and pressed the

doorbell. Once again, he received no response and couldn't hear any noise from inside. His heart dropped and his mind blanked with anxiety, but his body kept moving. He ran to his garage lifted the aluminium roller door and grabbed his bike. Finn was sweating from worry before he even sat down on the bike seat. With his body taking control over his over-emotional mind, he began pedalling at extreme high speeds. All around lights were out in houses, no cars, and no families walked the streets.

Finn reached the town after 10 minutes of sprinting; a bike ride that usually took near to 40 minutes had taken only a quarter of the time. He slowed to a much more casual rolling speed and looked around. Shop windows had been smashed and shelves had been knocked over. There didn't seem to be one shopfront that hadn't been looted let alone at least damaged in some way. Finn got off his bike, heart pounding. His head numb from what felt like an explosion of nervous and stressed feelings. He walked up a quiet street that was usually filled with people, noise, colour, and traffic but was now grey and dull. On the right side of the road was a shop that didn't seem to be destroyed but instead was boarded up with plywood. His instincts and body still controlling what he did, he walked up to the shop which happened to be a small convenience store and tried to peer through the small gaps between the wood. It was mainly just darkness but judging from the silhouettes and outlines of the interior everything seemed normal. He got his multi tool out which he still

had in the bottom pocket of his khaki cargo shorts and cracked the planks open. He then used all his strength and was able to break away one of the large pieces of ply. A hole was left just big enough for him to fit through.

Inside was dark and he walked around quietly.

"Who goes there", a voice came from behind a shelf.

"Hello", said Finn nervously. "My name is Finn and I just want to know where everybody is."

"I will tell you, but you have to leave right away", the hoarse voice said.

"Yes please, that's fine" Finn replied hastily.

"Threats were made against us, our government, and our country. Everybody packed up their lives and headed north into the centre of the country hoping they would be safe. No one is left here. Noone wanted to die."

Finn opened his mouth, but no words came out, he was speechless.

"Now leave, and don't come back", the voice exclaimed.

Finn left and a waterfall of feelings thoughts and emotions fell over his head. The only one processable to Finn was the feeling of loneliness. Finn realised the fact and reality was that he was lonelier than he ever had been. Finn Taylor was alone. ■



Scarlett Cheshire
Year 3 · St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

Walking Near the Rainbow River

IM RÄUBERWALD (IN THE ROBBER'S FOREST)

Evan Barisic · Year 10 · Catholic Regional College St Albans

Tourmaline.

You study the gem eagerly! It emanates a cool feeling as you fumble it around in your palm. You place it in your pocket and continue to walk on the track.

Only loosely wandering, you are travelling through the deep dark woods. Further than you've ever travelled before - I admire such bravery! Along the way you are blessed with phosphorescent riches and conspicuous fortunes - you see them hidden amongst the blades of grass beneath you. 'Why is any of this here?' You wonder - I've been wondering the same myself. Must be your lucky day!

Continuing to walk along the pathway, your clothes wrinkle against your nimble body as a flurry of soothing winds and fluttering leaves cycle towards you. You smile in elation, and continue forth! Your heels click against each other with every step you take, as the dirt beneath your feet crunches and churns in your pattern. Looking around at each clawed willow pulls you towards them. You love nature! You always have. You smile, pull out your crumpled map, and study the area.

It doesn't strike you at first, but you are waltzing within Räuberwald. A forbidden grove hidden amongst the hills. 'Robber's Forest' - that's what you know it to be. You keep in mind steering clear of any foul creature along the trail - your soft hands grip your overflowing satchels, catching doubloon after doubloon, as you scramble ahead. Getting into the thick of it I see!

Your body beckons you to turn back, however, your inner Mammon convinces you to pick up the pace. I can't believe you listen to that guy... The more you venture off amongst the willows, shadows and figures amongst the tree trunks begin accumulating! It fills you with fear, anxiety, but also the slightest bit of confidence to make you feel cool...now is this stress all worth it for a bag full? You plead in desperation.

"Why must you let me run in fear! I promise my journey's end is drawing near!" In anguish you cower, surrounded by the now approaching figures. 'What could happen to me?' You wonder...

"Fear not, young boy, your safety is something we want not to destroy!" Calls out a raspy, elderly tone from up ahead. "All is well but you must consider, your fears are forged from what is found... in the mirror!" This man has puzzled you. You waver your face into the gleaming sunlight and find yourself suppressed by the figure's calm

gaze. His blue eyes meet yours - he tussles his grey, glossy beard in response.

You exclaim: "Your riddle strikes me ill, old robber! For your answer or meaning, I am unable to concur..." You stand up and brush the dirt off of your trousers. A tense silence fills the forest. 'My fear is forged from what is found in the looking glass?' What could it mean!

"I fear all of you however! Are you saying such a thief is I? No, never!" You rush backwards into the darkness - fleeing the scene - instead you stumble, falling over, and landing flat on your face. Your doubloons gush out of your satchels and onto the ground like a geyser! And gemstones begin to sparkle within the dirt under the shimmering daylight.

The crowd amongst you erupts; some shrieking in fear and disgust, others jeering, whilst another group sits shyly as to not make you feel any worse - what nice people they are - as they gaze at the riches around you. Their riches! You plunge your head into your hands - whimpering, and unable to get up. You feel absolutely foolish!

"Young one there is nothing to fear! Nothing at all. Instead think of this, my dear, if I can recall..." The old man prepares a crowd and reaches down - his arm stretched towards you. "The mistakes of us all, quite linear, but the returns that we make, they aren't so far from superior! You see, we each make these silly mistakes every day - I think it's about time we fixed them, wouldn't you say?" The wise old man's words empower you. You take his palm and lift yourself up to head level - you find you are about a head taller than him.

You're left with a decision, young boy. They are granting you freedom out of their kindness - behind you remains a path as open as their arms, a path you could run down with your newly found fortunes to never return - or you could perhaps put it all back? Where it belongs.

You ponder for a moment - what would be the right thing to do? These fortunes have just landed right in front of you! You of course never stole out of spite, I mean what's the use of returning them? You can use these gems to better your town after all... but to leave these families and wood dwellers without their possessions - boy this sure is a tough decision. Every choice in life is, at the end of the day!

The old man turns to you one final time.

"Sooner or later, you'll work out where to draw the line. Your choice is as important as mine." ■



Tran Vo
Year 10 · Catholic Regional College St Albans

The Little Things

DANCING IN THE RAIN

Ruby Nguyen · Year 10 · Catholic Regional College St Albans

I smiled as I leaned against the wooden pillar on your front porch with my arms and legs crossed, as I watched you from afar. The pitter-patter anticipated against the pavement as the drops began to fall. The gentle tapping grew bigger, heavier and louder as the wind continued to pick up. When you stood there cluelessly drenched and completely covered from head to toe, you still managed to smile. As you came to me with your hand, I looked into your eyes, and knew that nothing could ever go wrong. You dragged me by the wrist and pulled me in by the waist. We danced, laughed and joked for what seemed like a lifetime that could last forever.

The melody of the rain is a symphony that drowned out all the other noises. The rain continued to fall and the world was transformed into one where only you and I remained. It was a place of mystery and magic where anything was possible.

Do you remember when we were five and my mum bought us ice cream and you licked yours a little too hard and it fell to the ground? You cried for hours nonstop that day. I couldn't help but laugh at you. Or when we were eight and we did a small concert for my parents to let me sleep over at your place? I remember we were both practically begging on our knees by the end of the night. When you first said 'I love you' at seventeen, I didn't believe you, but my feelings couldn't just push you aside. We aspired to be like the old couples out in the street, still holding hands, saying cheesy pickup lines to each other, feeding each other ice cream, not arguing, but instead just enjoying each other's company. That's all I ever wanted.

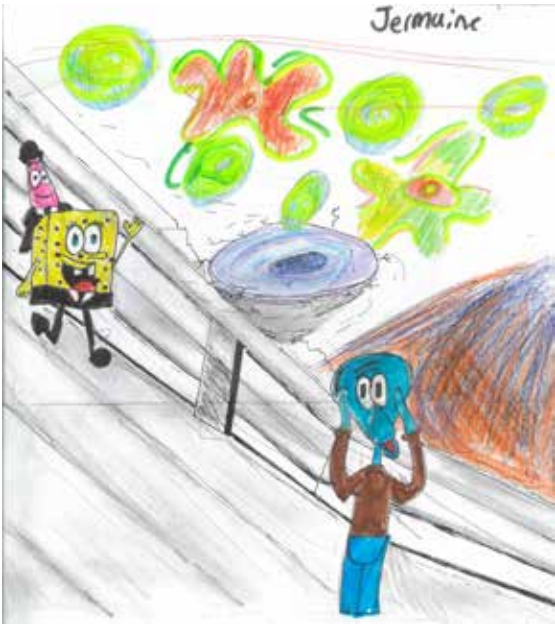
Now, with the countless hours we spent together on our favourite rainy days, was too many to count. We'd play UNO or Monopoly while watching our favourite rom com 'How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days', over at the fireplace with warm hot chocolate and popcorn. I remember how much we wanted a romance story like that. Sometimes we'd just dance around the house and blast our favourite tunes. Or you'd be reading our favourite book on the window seat as I rested my head on

your lap, listening to your voice. We'd be baking cookies and brownies in our pyjamas all day while listening to the songs I wrote just for us. You'd be my model as I practised my paintings, but you'd always ruin it with your funny faces. We'd play chase around the house, and when you'd catch me, you'd always creep up from behind and pull me into your embrace. With no care in the world and no law written, rainy days were officially ours.

They tell you that life isn't supposed to be easy. But they never tell you it would be so hard to let go. And how do you start living when all you've ever known was each other? As I grew up each and every day, I've come to the realisation that nothing was as painful as love. No matter how hard you plead or cry or scream over and over again, the pain will never leave. I held your hand and never left your side, but you left mine.

I sat in the same spot every day, waiting for you to wake up and tell me everything was going to be okay. But that day never came. Your body became lifeless, weak and frail. The tubes were attached to every inch of your body, the needles in your arms and the consistent anxious feeling I had just continued to grow. The day I dreaded so much finally came. I knelt down on the side of your bed and tried to reassure myself you were just sleeping. That you were just taking a short nap to have enough energy to open your eyes and see me for the last time. When I finally had the courage to let go, after all the pain, nothing felt the same. Without you here, I could no longer sing, dance, laugh, write, or paint because my muse was no longer.

When we danced together in the rain that day, I fell in love with you all over again. The way you grabbed my hand and told me to dance too, I followed you blindly. We danced until our feet were sore, we sang until our lungs couldn't keep up, it was you and me against the world. Your laugh, your smile, your love. You were a tragic beautiful thing. We were a tragic beautiful thing dancing together in the rain. And I will continue to love those rainy days. ■



Jermaine Kelsall
Year 7 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong



Yahya Bakor
Year 8 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong

WHY?

One of the major contributors of climate change. How long it takes to decompose, the gases it produces, the waste it can create.

Today, however, I am focusing on one of the lesser discussed things. Where this stuff goes.

When going to an event, you can't help but wonder where do we put this stuff?

Yes, we do have landfills in Victoria. This is a vast expanse of land, and an honest question the waste management industry faces the world. There's a lot of stuff that goes to landfills, which affects our environment, animals, and people.

Plastic, perhaps the most common of the land-polluting items in the world, is made from oil, and how we're using our oil is a major concern. Not many think about it, but...

For example, what if 50 years from now, someone goes to dig up some of the plastic bottles we use today?

Moral: Don't buy plastic bottles.

Canada was the first to introduce a plastic bottle deposit. But the whole idea was to encourage people to recycle. It didn't work, and the deposit was never used.

One of the biggest problems with plastic bottles is that they are made from oil. It takes a long time to produce, and it takes a long time to break down.

For example, one plastic bottle can take 450 years to decompose. That's a long time!

COMIC 1 & 2

There's a big problem with plastic bottles. It's not just the fact that they are made from oil, but also the fact that they are made from a fossil fuel. And fossil fuels are finite resources. They will run out one day.

Of course, there are many other possible solutions for it. But the most important one is to stop using plastic bottles. It's a simple solution, but it's one that we can all do.

HOW TO AVOID IT?

Since there are many ways to avoid it, let's look at some of the most common ones. First, we can avoid buying plastic bottles. Instead, we can buy reusable bottles. This is a simple solution, but it's one that we can all do.

Any company that produces plastic bottles should be held responsible for the waste they create. They should be required to provide a way for people to recycle their bottles. This is a simple solution, but it's one that we can all do.

ORGANIZATION:

Companies such as CO2E and others are working on ways to reduce the amount of plastic they produce. They are using recycled materials and are trying to make their products more sustainable. This is a good thing, but it's not enough. We need to do more.

The waste they create is a problem. It's not just the fact that they are made from oil, but also the fact that they are made from a fossil fuel. And fossil fuels are finite resources. They will run out one day.

However, it's not enough. We need to do more. We need to stop using plastic bottles. We need to stop buying plastic bottles. We need to stop using plastic bottles. We need to stop using plastic bottles.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

When we buy plastic bottles, we should look for the recycling symbol. This is a simple solution, but it's one that we can all do.

Additionally, we can avoid buying plastic bottles. Instead, we can buy reusable bottles. This is a simple solution, but it's one that we can all do.

WHY NOT BEING IN A SINGLE CLASSROOM YET WITH A PAPER RECYCLING BIN, AND BELIEVE SOMEONE NEEDS TO ADDRESS THIS WITH THE PRINCIPAL. HOWEVER, WE CAN REDUCE WASTE AT THE SCHOOL BY BRINGING REUSABLE FOOD TUBES (FOOD WITHOUT A PAPER OR PLASTIC LID) OR FOOD PACKAGED IN CARDBOARD.

WHO DOES IT?

Canada is leading the world in landfill. Followed by Bulgaria and the US. You may be happy to hear this, at least in the short term.

WRONG. In 2018-19, Australia wasted 75.8 MILLION TONS OF SOLID WASTE. Out of this, 27% was landfill.

WHO DOESN'T DO IT?

You will be shocked to learn that the answer to this is just a low percentage. It is a zero. Any guesses on the country?

The answer is Switzerland. This country recycles 50% of its waste and the landfill is used as electricity. It not only recycles, Sweden closely follows Switzerland, putting only 1% of its waste in landfill.

MAIN Leviticus 23:22

EXTRA BIBLE SCRIPTURE Luke 12:15

There were not many people in Jesus's time, but I found a bible verse that's moral is similar. I think it is not just saying what it says, it means that whatever we take, don't have to take everything. We took the above land, now the below, but we don't need to take the below or or at least not all of it.

My Bin



Jeremy Arellano
Year 11 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong



Hannah Micallef
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Murray Congues
 Year 8 · St John's Regional College,
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Michaela Lorenzin
Year 7 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne



Michaela Lorenzin
Year 7 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

THE NEVER-ENDING CRUELTY OF THE IASFGONGI

Alex Loads · Year 8 · Whitefriars College

Hello there... I have met you before... and chances are you have met me. You see I am Inspiration, and... no... I am not some sort of divine creature, I am simply... Inspiration. I exist as whatever you see me as.

I am short, but I am tall.

I have long flowing locks, but I have no hair at all.

I am obese, but I am sickeningly skinny.

I am loud, but I am silent.

I am everything, but I am nothing.

I exist, but yet... I do not.

Compared to my brethren Innovation and Immaturity, I am quite organised. You see I have a system aptly named IASFGONGI or Inspirations amazing system for giving or not giving inspiration. It is quite simple, every living being is assigned a number between 0 and 10, if you are a 10 you are struck by inspiration almost every day... but if you are a zero you are never struck at all and destined to live a meaningless sad life, work at a sad meaningless job and then die, having no impact on anyone. Many have labelled this system and me along with it "Cruel," but I urge you dearest reader to recall, I am only cruel if you think I am.

This story begins in the year 1975, a young Leon Noel sat on the floor surrounded by a loving but ignorant family, Leon was building Lego. For hours he would sit and create model after model of disturbing scenes. At this point in time nobody, not even Leons mother had the faintest Idea that Leon was in fact, a clinical psychopath.

Leon like many others was a zero, a soul destined for nothing, at best an average life and at worst an awful one. Leon rarely lashed out, the biggest sign of his inner insanity, in his early years being the occasional tantrum or the general distain he held for his peers. But as he grew older the fact that something was seriously wrong with Leon began to become apparent. At 5:23 pm on the 2nd of May 1992, Leon was driving but was cut off by a red sedan, not caring for the driver or passenger in any way an angry Leon proceeded to ram the car and by 2:34 am on the 3 of May 1992 the driver of the red sedan was announced to have a serious brain injury, and the passenger paralysed.

Leon was arrested that very hour. Leon Noel was charged with two counts of great bodily injury and sentenced to 10 years in Oregon State Hospital for the Insane.

Leon's cell was dismal, dark, and due to the prison not allowing deodorant, his body gave off quite a stench. Leon was allowed out of his cell five times a day for his meals, yard time, and his daily psychology session, which was only thing that set Oregon state hospital apart from any other prison. The only anchor Leon had from delving deeper into the whirlpool that was his own mind were his paints. Leon was given a plastic pot of non-toxic washable paint, a plastic brush, and a piece of paper. Leon was not a good painter. Leon did not like painting. Yet he painted. And over the years he spent in that cell his art improved and improved until it was as the warden put it... "Good." Not long after this review Leon started feeling sick and on the 17th of September 2001 Leon passed away.

You may think that this is the end of this dark and twisted story of a zero who lived a sad life and died a sad and unnecessary death, but you would be incorrect. Yes, this is the end of our endeavour with Leon, but the story of the rest of his life is only beginning.

Oregon State Hospital shut down in 2008, and one of the volunteers hired to help with the closing was one Peter Retel the owner of a local art gallery and known philanthropist. Peter found Leon's paintings all, 1500 of them about to be incinerated and decided to rescue them. He selected three that he liked best and put them on display. One by one, they all sold. Peter did not want to keep the profits for fear of being unethical, so he donated it to charity. As Peter continued to exhibited Leon's paintings, they continued to sell and every time the profits increased. On February 5th, 2010, a painting called 'Walls' by Leon Noel sold for 2.3 million dollars and 100% of the profits were given to charity.

Leon was a zero. He lived a sad life, but he brought hope to thousands of others without even trying. Leon suffered and died after having had a negative impact on many, but after his death his creations made the world a better place. Leon was and will be remembered as... An inspiration. ■

AN INSPIRING BREW

William Wright · Year 7 · Whitefriars College

For the twenty-seventh time that week, I found myself sitting in the back room of The Elephant House, trying to think of an idea. The smell of old coffee from my cup deceived me, and it took a few moments of absentminded sipping to realise that it was empty. With a sigh, I rose from my warm seat by the window, and padded over to the counter.

“Hard day?”

Catherine the barista glanced over to me, drying a mug with a grin.

“Yeah,” I muttered. She knew I had been stuck on the same part of my story for the past week. “Can I have a double espresso?”

“Oh no.” Catherine groaned. “What’s wrong?”

“My editor read my current draft and said there were so many I’s that he had to stop reading after the first two paragraphs.”

“Well,” Catherine proposed after looking at her watch in disbelief, “Instead of more caffeine, I think you should go home and get some sleep. Then tomorrow, show your writing to a friend or two and see what they think about it.” Hardly in a position to argue, I bade her good night and drove home.

The next morning, I woke up with a smile on my face. The warm sun beckoned me to my patio, and I gratefully obliged.

Outside, the smell of freshly cut grass and clover was abundant and the sky was a cheery blue. In the nearby elm, a robin sang. It seemed like the Edenborough cityscape had put on its best show for me.

Entering the kitchen, my gaze locked on my notebook, reminding me of Catherine’s advice. The only people I knew I could call were on the other side of the world sleeping, so the only other people

to try were the customers of Catherine’s café.

The Elephant House was remarkably busy, and many people were sitting alone. An old lady sat down at a cosy table nearby, so I took my shot and sat down next to her.

“Excuse me?” I asked tentatively. There was no reply. I cleared my throat pointedly and asked again, louder this time. “Excuse me ma’am?” She looked up from her tea cake and studied me through her thick lenses.

“Mmm?” she replied.

“Could you please read my writing and tell me what you think?” The old lady nodded and took my notebook. She slowly flipped through it, taking in every word. By the end, it was clear that she had some criticisms. Bracing for a scathing review, I was caught off guard when she spoke.

“Well, young lady! You have quite a story on your hands, and I do see your problem. You are thinking too much with your head and not enough with your heart! Go back to your original inspiration and work out why exactly you are having such problems.” With that, she finished her tea and left the café.

Arriving home, I rushed to my library. Inside, the walls were lined with hundreds of books and my solid oak desk sat in the middle of the room. There, next to my trusty antique lamp, was the book I was looking for. Seeing it triggered in me all the emotion and wonder that pushed me to start writing. I lovingly opened it and began to read.

For the twenty-seventh time that week, I found myself sitting in the back room of the Elephant house, reading *Alice in Wonderland*. I put down the book, grabbed some paper and picked up my pen. Writing means a lot to me, and I truly hope that I will become as good a writer as Lewis Carroll. ■

DIVINE INSPIRATION

Tobias Keodouangphachanh · Year 7 · Whitefriars College

Phineas was stressed.

Understatement. Phineas felt like a hydra was eating his internals from the inside, slowly clawing its way out, mouth foaming. You may be wondering why this perfectly good man had a metaphorical mythical creature disembowelling him. Well, it's all because of this one man: Narcissus. But, dear reader, I'm getting ahead of myself. To know why and how this man turned Phineas' life into a living Tartarus, we must go back a bit.

April 23rd, 688 BCE.

Phineas is an inventor. The alarm clock, carpeted floors and coffee were all invented by him. Naturally, someone with so much raw and amazing talent would attract attention. In this case, Narcissus. Narcissus was like the Logan Paul of ancient Greece. He had a chiselled, masculine face that always seemed to be puckering, as if he was about to kiss someone, one eyebrow slightly raised. His perfect, white, cheesy smile made all the ancient Greek girls swoon. And the boys, and the non-binary. Narcissus was also a very powerful and rich man, because of the money he made as a model for ancient Greek shampoo products.

Narcissus was fascinated by Phineas' inventions, who wouldn't be? (I could not survive without a good cup of coffee in the morning) So, he summoned Phineas to his villa out of town to propose a deal. As Phineas strolled into Narcissus's villa, he was overwhelmed by a sea of gold and silver, burning his eyeballs like molten lava. When his eyes adjusted, he saw a man draped in thick layers of gold and silk like a God, sitting on a throne made of, you guessed it, more gold. In case you didn't know, Narcissus REALLY liked gold.

"Philip!" Narcissus cried when he spotted Phineas, flashing his pearly whites, "so glad you could come!"

"Um, actually it's Phineas" Phineas stuttered back, slightly uncomfortable.

"Whatever" Narcissus said dismissively, "we have work to do!"

"We do?"

"Walk with me Philip" Narcissus answered, ignoring His question.

As they strode around the castle of a villa, Narcissus draped one arm over Phineas, and declared: "I love your work Phineas, I'm your biggest fan!"

Phineas was utterly shocked. This man was a fan of HIM?

"So!" he started, "I want you to make something

for me, something that will change the world!" he boomed, his hands towards the heavens.

Phineas thought he looked quite silly.

"Wait, what do you want me to make?" Phineas asked, confused.

"I told you, something to change the world," with a slight eye roll, like someone asked him what colour the sky was. "Then I can sell it, make money off it, and get gold."

"But one second..."

"You are boring me," Narcissus declared, "have it ready by next week and everything... now begone." and he shoved Phineas out the door.

That night, Phineas went to the temple to pray.

The temple was a huge white slab shaped like a pyramid, held up by multiple gleaming white columns, and inside stood statues of all the Greek gods. Zeus's stone-cold face stared down at him. The king of the gods. Everyone knows inspiration only comes from the divine, and Anyone who defied them was punished severely. So, Phineas prayed as hard as he could. For an idea, inspiration, Something, anything, a small spark, a glimmer of light. But nothing came. Defeated, he stumbled home.

Soup was waiting for Phineas at home. Wonderfully sweeping its delightful aroma all around the room. His wife Maria was also waiting for him.

"I need ideas!" Phineas cried as he burst through the door.

"Well hello to you too" Maria answered, bewildered.

Phineas slumped onto the ground and moaned in despair. Why had Narcissus given him such vague instructions? He was almost as stressed as I am about finishing this story.

"Now hold on a minute," his wife started, "what's all this about?"

"I have to make something that will change the world!"

"Sorry?"

"For Narcissus! Phineas groaned; he wants to sell it!"

Maria thought for a while as her husband had a mental breakdown.

"Well, maybe if you asked the Gods..." she started.

"NO!" Phineas broke out, "I've had it up to here with the Gods!" He reached his hands as high as he could. (Which wasn't very high because he was quite short)

“These so-called GODS don’t give two olives about us!” He Screamed.

Phineas expected Maria to fly into a rage, and tell him to never, EVER disrespect the gods.

But his kind wife just smiled.

“If that’s how you feel dear,” she said, “maybe you should find a new religion.”

And she swiftly left the room, leaving Phineas to ponder. A new religion...

Research.

Over the next few days, Phineas asked around the town, conversed with travellers and read old books, until at last, he was ready.

Trudging up the slope on which his employers house stood, Phineas’ heart filled with hope. The storm of precious metals barely even fazed him. He felt no intimidation as Narcissus locked eyes with him upon his glittering throne. Phineas presented his research.

“A new religion, practiced in lots of other parts of the world...” Narcissus mused, stroking his non-existent beard,

“This could help us ally with other countries... and it’s much less confusing as well...”Narcissus peered at the small man.

“What is this religion called?”

Phineas took a deep breath and stared Narcissus right in the eye.

“Christianity” ■

TO SURVIVE

Elyssa Breisch · Year 10 · Emmaus College

The hardships that one endures is the worst and
the most excruciating pain,
You fall down, you get up,
Unbeknownst to you, a future awaits
In the depths of all your despair
You follow the path whichever way it may lead-
Round the corner, round the side,
Whatever it may be,
The journey we undertake is hard to comprehend,
As a child just fun and games
However, your life depends.
To reach and aim for a happy life
That awaits each individual
To reach out and touch the beam of light,
But you succumb to pressure and expectations
And find it hard to breathe, feeling tight.
In a world full of greed, hatred for others, do not
let them falsely accuse and point allegations.
For in the end their opinion does not matter
As they try to push your limitations,
Never give up your hopes and dreams in
situations
Prove those wrong and keep persisting
With your traits of hard work and all your
foundations.
In order to achieve your aspirations ■



Hope Mercuri
Year 3 · St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

Wavy River



Hugo Chamoun
Year 4 · St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

The Aquarium

I was inspired by a walk through an aquarium and all the amazing sea life.



Mavis Ellis - Robertson
Year 3 · St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

Dandelion Puffs

I was inspired by nature and how the dandelion petals flew away in the wind.

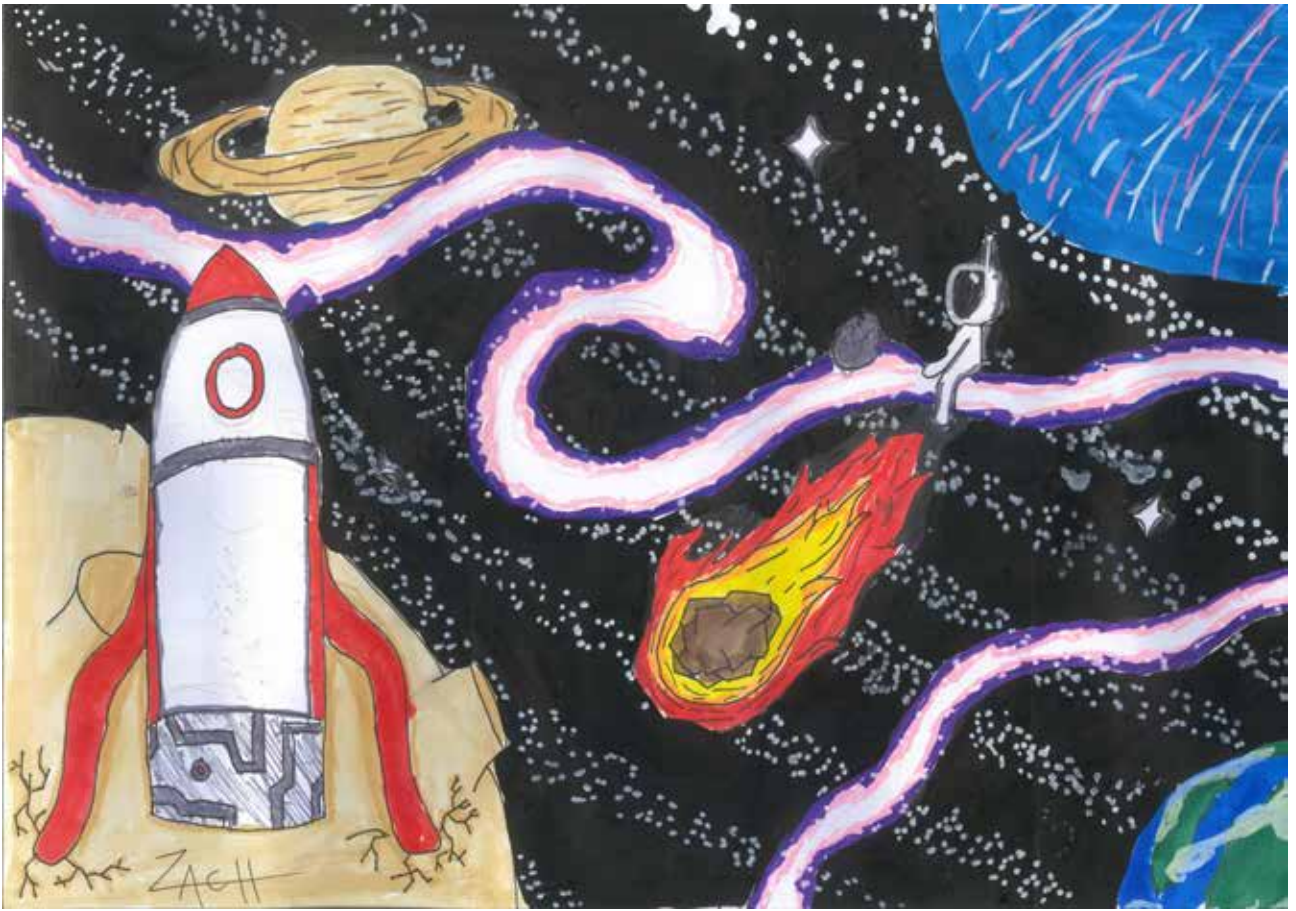


Indie Albu
Year 11 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne



Ptolemy Killis
Year 5 · St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

The Idea



Sithika Silva
Year 7 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong

THE LEGEND OF EINSTEIN

Jonathan Manoj · Year 7 · Simonds Catholic College

14 March 1889, 112 Mercer St USA

Albert Einstein was in his room; he was excited because it was his birthday. His father, Hermann Einstein, had decided to buy him a bicycle. At the time, the bicycle was the newest invention, made by Karl Von Drais. It was delivered all the way from France and was scheduled to arrive exactly on Albert's birthday. When it got there, Albert was confused because it was not like what he pictured it to be.

Albert asked his father, "What is this?"

His father replied, "It's the bicycle you wanted", with a smile on his face.

Albert was still confused and asked his father how to ride it.

His father said, "You first get on it, then you grab your foot and push down on the pedal, and you go forward, but you must remember to keep your balance."

Albert didn't know what his father meant by keeping your balance, but he kept it in mind anyway. When Albert approached the bicycle there was a crowd around it, so Albert ran through the crowd.

When he got to the middle of the crowd, he said "Ah! You all want to see how this works."

Everyone chanted "Show us, show us, show us!"

Albert then got on the bicycle and pushed down on the pedal but then he immediately fell. After that everyone in the crowd started laughing. Albert felt humiliated, so he went to his father, crying.

"Please, please help me ride the bicycle."

"Don't cry, of course I will teach you".

Then they went outside where the crowd was, and Albert's father told everyone to go home immediately. After which, everyone went home, and it was just Albert and his father.

"Let me get on first", said Albert's father.

He got on and was riding it. Albert was very surprised.

"How are you doing that?" asked Albert.

His father replied, "You just need to keep on practicing".

Albert was inspired by his father's words. So, after that point all Albert did was practice on and on and on. One day Albert finally did it, he rode the bicycle. So, he gathered a crowd to surround him.

"This time I will finally show you what this bicycle can do!"

He got on it, and rode! Albert was so happy. Once he was done, the crowd roared in applause. Albert was so proud of himself. So, he immediately ran to his father, and thanked him.

"Thank you so much, I got inspired by what you said, and I finally nailed it."

From that point on Albert wanted to be even more like his father. Then he realised his father was a scientist. Albert decided to be one of the most famous scientists possible. After he became a famous scientist, he made a quote of his very own:

"Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep balance, you must keep moving". ■

WHAT I THINK INSPIRATION IS

Finn Simpson · Year 7 · Simonds Catholic College

Inspiration comes in many shapes and sizes. It could be ideas flowing in your mind when writing a text. It could be watching your favourite sports player dominating a game. It could be looking or listening to art or music and thinking, “I want to do that!”. That’s what I think inspiration is.

Everyone can agree that an inspirational story makes them feel good inside, especially if it’s a person you look up to. That’s what inspires me. When a person beats the odds and is the underdog, it makes everyone feel good. It’s what 99% of sports movies are about. But these aren’t always just fairy tales. These can be real stories.

So, I would like to tell you all about the stories that inspire me.

A lot of people think of LeBron James as one of the richest people in the world and one of the greatest basketball players of all time, but many people don’t know about his upbringing. LeBron’s father left him at a very young age, and he was raised by his single mother.

Raising a child in the city of Akron is not an easy task.

A lot of the time, LeBron and Gloria James were living in the back of their car, or LeBron was living at a friend’s house while his mother worked multiple jobs. Even with these struggles at such a young age, LeBron still managed to overcome these bumps in the road and play both American football and basketball in high school, and the rest is history.

This isn’t the only thing that inspires me about LeBron though.

In 2016, the Golden State Warriors had the best record of all time, winning 73 out of their 82 games in the regular season. They went on to the NBA finals to face the Cleveland Cavaliers led by LeBron James. After four games, though, the Cavs went down 3-1, which meant the Warriors only had to win one more game to win the NBA championship.

LeBron had other plans.

He led his team to win games 5 and 6 to tie the series 3-3, which meant that whoever won the next game won the NBA finals. LeBron had carried his team all game long, and with only 2 minutes left on the clock, LeBron had blocked a shot off the backboard which would have won the Warriors the game. Just like that, the Cleveland Cavaliers had won the NBA finals when down 3-1.

Like I said before, most of these “fairy tales” are only in the movies and don’t happen in real life, but LeBron proved to us that these can happen in real life.

LeBron isn’t my only inspiration though. Kanye West, as much as he is controversial right now, is one of my biggest inspirations of all time. Kanye, like LeBron, was raised by his single mother in the city of Chicago. In the late 90s and early 2000s, Kanye was just a producer, mainly for Jay Z, and not thought of as much more. Kanye wanted to be much more though. So, he started working on his debut album, *The College Dropout*. This wasn’t easy though.

Kanye struggled to find a label for his album until Roc-A-Fella Records finally signed him to a deal. Unfortunately, in October of 2002, Kanye West had gotten into a very bad car accident, and half of his jaw was in the back of his skull.

It was a miracle he survived.

It took months for him to recover, but on February 10th, 2004, Kanye released his debut album, *The College Dropout*, and it is regarded as one of the best and most influential albums of all time.

This is what inspiration is to me: defying the odds and surprising everyone who doubted you. Believing in yourself and never giving up at all. Just focus on your goals and never let negativity get you down. Every time I hear these stories, I get inspired and want to live out my dreams. ■

THE DIARY OF...

Harit Pathik · Year 7 · Simonds Catholic College

15th June 1942.

Dear Diary,

Today was such a special day for me.

I celebrated my birthday with a wonderful party surrounded by some of my closest friends. It was a day filled with joy, laughter, and love. I couldn't have asked for a better way to mark another year of my life. I am so grateful for today's opportunity. The weather was on my side, and I couldn't be happier. Everything went according to plan, and I couldn't have asked for a smoother day. It was a big relieve, stepping out of the bleak, gloomy annex. But I am absolutely thrilled about my new birthday present.

It's a beautiful diary, and I can't help but feel a sense of excitement as I write in it for the first time. I can already tell that this diary will become a cherished companion, accompanying me on this journey of self-reflection and self-discovery. With each stroke of the pen, I feel a sense of liberation, as if I am releasing a part of myself onto these blank sheets. This is one place where I can truly let go of my emotions.

I feel compelled to express my gratitude towards my dear friends. It warms my heart to know that they have chosen to stand by my side, despite the inherent risks that come with being associated with me. Their presence reminds me that I am not alone, and that there are people who truly care about me.

I want to express my heartfelt thanks to Sanne for being there for me during my time here in Amsterdam. Her comforting presence has brought me immense solace, and I am truly grateful to have her by my side. I also would like to thank to Jacque for her unwavering support. She has been there for me through thick and thin, even when I doubted my abilities as a friend. I must admit, there were moments when I may have been a bit too clingy, unintentionally limiting her freedom.

For that, I sincerely apologize.

My deepest thanks to Hanneli. She has been by my side ever since we became neighbours and best friends. I am truly blessed to have her in my life, as she has never left my side. Hanneli's enduring support and friendship mean the world to me. She

is so supportive, caring, kind, and respectful. It's a blessing to have someone who embodies all these values.

The most particular reason why I appreciate today is because we went outside, out of the annex where we spend countless days and nights. It is something beyond words, something indescribable. It's not much, just a place where we eat, sleep, and unfortunately, experience a great deal of stress.

Today, I realised that the person who is most deeply impacted by all of this is none other than my father, Otto Frank. I've noticed that my father has been muttering random, undecodable words from time to time. It's quite peculiar, and I can't help but wonder what could be going on in his mind. I find myself trying to decipher these mysterious utterances, but it's not possible.

The Van Pels are also happy about today, finally meeting the world. They are very happy to get a day to take some fresh air and experience the good part of the world. Fritz Pfeffer is happy about stepping out too, but the weight of sadness from his mother's passing still lingers heavily on his heart.

I couldn't help but notice the familiar creaking of the floorboards as my parents made their way to the basement. It always seems to disrupt my sleep, leaving me restless and curious. As I strained my ears, I couldn't help but overhear snippets of their conversation.

They were discussing something quite unsettling - bunkers and concentration camps.

It sent a shiver down my spine, and I couldn't help but wonder what could be going on., I learned about a place that fills my heart with fear and sadness. The thought of such a place fills me with deep sorrow, as I cannot bear the idea of innocent lives being lost in such a manner of sadness.

I look around and see myself, my family, my friends, and the world. I look back at myself, reflecting on who I am. And I keep wondering, when will this end...

Signing off,
Anne Frank ■

AN UNINSPIRED LIFE

Matthew Kwamsuk · Year 7 · Simonds Catholic College

A dull life
As he walks down the hallway,
as tired as a ghost without sleep,
ready to greet his sleepy friends,
he spots one of them,
his friend is just as tired as he is,
they exchange words,
and they get ready to endure the tedious math
class,
the teacher seems as tired as they are, as well,
but the class must go on,

he greets his other friend,
his friend is just as tired as he is,
but they must focus,
as they look at the whiteboard,
that speaks nonsense to them,
they give up,
and they decide to have a nap instead,
their tables respond, and say “Don’t nap, focus”,
but they don’t listen.
Not thinking about their future,
but instead worrying about the next day, tired. ■

THE WORLD’S GAME

Evan Bright · Year 7 · Simonds Catholic College

The satisfying sounds
And beautiful sights,
Players paid in pounds,
But only care about the lights

Gliding like ice skaters along the pitch,
Room for error is none.
All it takes is one slight twitch,
For all to be done.

As elegant as a swan,
Is the one piece of prize
They all wait upon
That day, when everyone cries

As they play for their team,
Their family, their nation
Only having one real dream:
Spread happiness to a whole population. ■



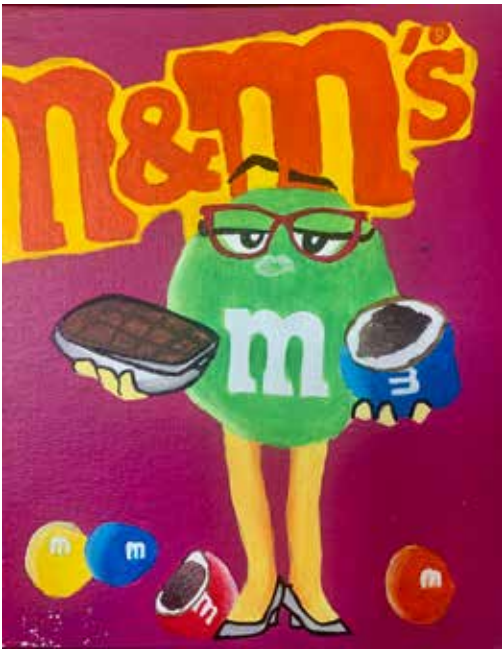
Ashlan Morgan
Year 9 · Star of the Sea College



Carla Tanti
Year 9 · Star of the Sea College



Charlotte Yeo
Year 9 · Star of the Sea College



Alessia Brasacchio
Year 8 · Star of the Sea College



Zara Jukes
Year 8 · Star of the Sea College



Olivia Verdini
Year 8 · Star of the Sea College

Lion butterfly



Chloe Curtin
Year 7 · Star of the Sea College



Danyalah Danti
Year 11 · Kolbe Catholic College

Mindful, Acrylic on paper



Fenda Suliman
Year 11 · Kolbe Catholic College

Floral, Acrylic on canvas



Mary Dankha
Year 9 · Kolbe Catholic College

Wishing Tree, Pastel on Paper

SONNET

Alex Johnson · Year 10 · Kolbe Catholic College

I walked down the street, feeling low and blue,
A smile shone bright, like sunlight on my soul,
I chanced upon a friend, one tried and true,
And in that moment, I felt truly whole;

We talked and laughed, of days both good and bad,
In each other's presence, we found relief,
Troubles lingered, but did not seem as sad,
A balm for our hurts, a source of belief;

As we parted ways, lightness filled my heart,
And though life may throw us curve balls and
strife,

Knowing that true friendship will never part,
We'll face it together, for all our life;

So let us cherish friends, both old and new,
They bring joy and comfort, like morning dew. ■

ANTS

Mae Alforque · Year 10 · Kolbe Catholic College

Atop hills of sand, an army marches.
Lit aflame by the promise of glory,
They do not desire for golden arches
For praise alone is satisfactory.

Like cogs in a machine, they turn and turn.
Beaten, battered, and bruised, their bodies pile;
There is no beating heart that shows concern
For those who must endure a fate so vile.

Suffering losses vast, but meaningless
For they are mere insects who possess naught,
And all that remains are tombs left nameless.
What are they, if only an afterthought?

In the end, it can be said in one breath:
We are all equals in the eyes of death. ■

MORTAL LOVE IS BUT A BLOOMING FLOWER

Walter Ferrao · Year 10 · Kolbe Catholic College

Mortal love is but a blooming flower;
A bud flourishing in the months of spring.
Affections like a consuming power,
That two unite forever with a ring.

Still a cold breeze blows away the petals,
And commitments break along with the heart.
Rings become nothing more than mere metals,
As love only lasts "till death do us part".

But though the flowers may wither and die;
Like earthly love fades, God's love for me-
Is eternal, warmth shining from on high,
That past death, lies endless beauty to see.

"A city where the roses never fade",
Where love's everlasting and undecayed. ■



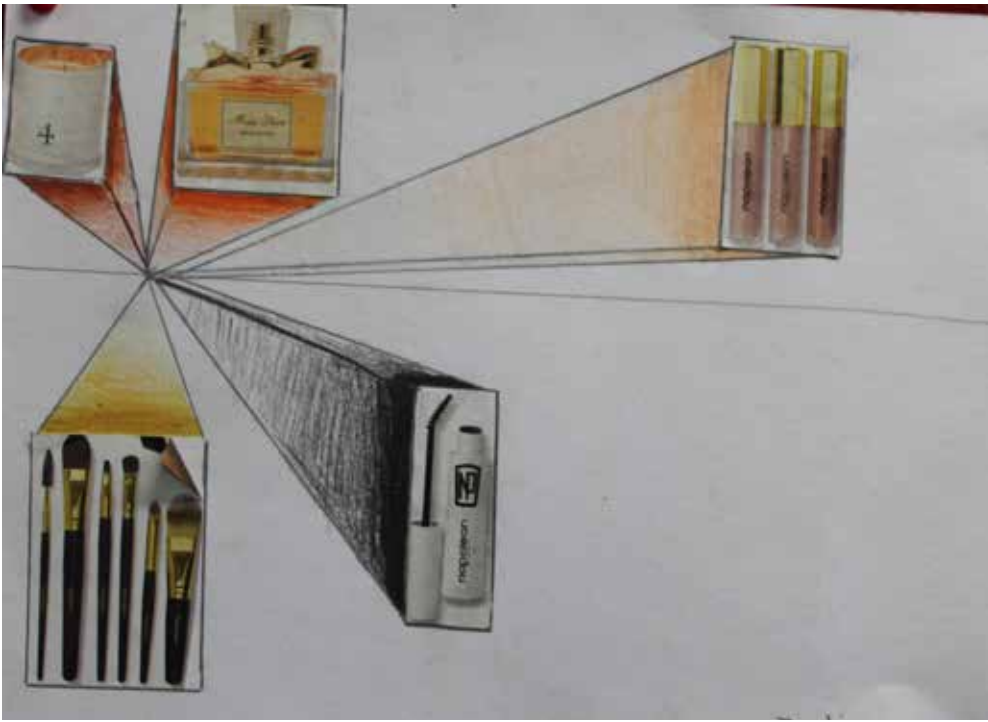
Briana Filomeno
Year 7 · Kolbe Catholic College

Footsteps, Pastel on Paper



Carolyn Sagalongos
Year 11 · Kolbe Catholic College

Untitled, Acrylic on paper



Joulia Youhana
*Year 8 · Kolbe Catholic
College*

*Beauty, Mixed Media
on Paper*



Taran Kaur
Year 11 · Kolbe Catholic College

Pink Town, Acrylic on paper



Anjleen Qiryaqoz
Year 10 · Kolbe Catholic College

Wonders Across the Ocean,
Watercolour on paper



Nikita Latu
Year 11 · Kolbe Catholic College

My Dreaming Place, Watercolour on
paper



Laksh Sehgal
Year 10 · Kolbe Catholic College

Vibe, Acrylic on canvas

MY MONSTER

Alana Marchese · Year 11 · Star of the Sea College

You are both my greatest tool and worst enemy. Your constant need to sneak into my brain when I least expect it and strike when I am most vulnerable is tiring.

I've been dreading and trying to avoid acknowledging that you exist. I guess I'm so used to you being around, that I've learnt to shut you out, but that doesn't mean your words don't hurt me. Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me. I've never heard such nonsense because each spell you conjure feels like a punch to the gut. I miss the magic my brain used to bring, the version before you, where I let my thoughts run wild and my creativity shine.

I don't know when you started living in my head and occupying my thoughts. You just showed up one random day and started your torture. And what's worse, is that I can't remember my life before you. I miss the innocence of my childhood when you weren't around. Why did you force me to grow up so fast?

The earlier years of my life were a time of fun and adventure, where the world was my oyster and I was fearless. I'm not sure when this stopped being customary. There was no specific turning point when you showed up at the front doorstep of my brain and invited yourself in. It's all a blur, everything is moulded and formed into my reality today. What I remember though is that day by day, the sky became a little greyer, the weight on my shoulders heavier, the bags under my eyes bigger, and the days longer and more tiresome. I can't imagine my life before this. Now, there's a grey cloud above me, never letting me bathe and play in the sunlight, it's now just a faraway thing in the distance, something for me to chase but never acquire.

You always seem to find the negative aspects of the world, shutting out the positive. Before you came into my life, the sun used to shine through the clouds and I would welcome its warm embrace. The rain would make the flowers around me grow and the grass greener, cloudy days were movie days indoors with my family and plans were new adventures. Now, with you in my life, the sun is too

hot and will make my skin burn. The rain makes my hair all wet and frizzy. Cloudy days are an excuse to lay in bed and not converse with others and plans are just things I regret saying yes to. My life before you was so simple and decided. I knew what I wanted to be and who I was. Every day was a new opportunity and I was free of anxiety and stress. Now I am both those last things, anxious and stressed, constantly second-guessing everything. I'm scared of my own shadow, scared it's mocking me behind my back, laughing at me.

I've always wondered what you get for ruining my day. Do you work on commission? Because it seems like you are working overtime, like those nagging salespeople who won't go away until you finally give in and buy the product. Or, am I a game to you? Because you are always playing with my emotions, the snake crawling up my ladder, the joker to my queen. I never know what hand you will deal me each day and I don't like the suspense of waiting to find out. However, I can't back down, I want to win, or at least that's what I tell myself. It shows I'm brave enough to gamble with you. To tell you the truth though, I've become so used to you invading my life, that I couldn't imagine it without you.

I have the ability to shut you up, to make you just another annoying thing that takes up space in my head. I've tried to compress you into a box, out of sight out of mind, right? Regardless, I'm too scared to face you, so I busy myself with other things, never allowing the monster within me to sneak through the guards and walls I have spent so many years building. Because then, I will have to face my monster, look at it in all its ugly glory and act like it doesn't have an impact on me. So instead, I occupy myself with things like music, movies and books, living vicariously through fictional characters and their perfect lives where they all live happily ever after. Because I don't know if I will get mine.

I spend most of my time desperately trying to forget about you so you forget about me.

When I was younger I was scared of the monsters under my bed. Now I'm afraid of the one in my head. ■

HOW TO BROKER A PEACE DEAL WITH OUR INNER VOICE

Aisling Dormer · Year 11 · *Star of the Sea College*

Each of us has a ‘monster within’ that tries to dictate and control our lives. This internal voice can be good or bad, either a saboteur that spreads its poison and negative thoughts, or a sage that can relax our brains to help focus on peace and the positives in life. Often, it is very easy to subconsciously allow the saboteurs such as the Judge, the Controller, the Avoider, the Victim and the Stickler, to take over and lead us down the wrong path without us even noticing, as the voice within becomes louder and louder, impacting our decisions, relationships and personality. This voice can cause a war within, the devil and angel on each shoulder, as the saboteurs become more powerful. Our true self has to be saved or we could lose it forever.

Living in this generation with social media and unrealistic beauty standards, it is very easy to see girls online and start to wonder, ‘Why don’t I look like that?’. Over time, I feel the need to become more like them, comparing every inch of myself to them, to see if I fit into the box of ‘pretty’ or ‘attractive’. Teenage boys do not help this problem, as the beauty standards they expect from girls are extreme, and most of the time they are unable to see past a girl’s looks as she would be rated out of 10. Therefore, the girls who do not fit the mould of attractiveness are treated as inferior, devoid of decency and respect.

This way of thinking from young men stems from the patriarchal society, as they have the power over women to pick and choose their value, and change the way women view themselves. This society has created unrealistic beauty standards that put pressure on women to conform to a certain image of beauty. Unrealistically, women are expected to have a petite figure, big bust, small waist, bronzed skin, highlighted hair, no imperfections, no wrinkles, plump lips, smooth and hairless skin, small nose and light-coloured eyes, and at the same time, have a completely put together life with everything under control.

Understandably, this has an extremely negative effect on girls’ and women’s self-talk. Due to the pressures from males, social media and society, we start to look differently at ourselves, and believe we are not good enough. This leads us to say nasty things to ourselves and our inner voice can get out of control, as we say things like ‘You are so ugly’, ‘You disgust me’ or ‘You cannot eat that, you are already fat enough’. We eventually start to believe these thoughts, as if you think something over and over again, and assign truth to it, it becomes a belief. This line of thinking is almost like falling down a rabbit hole, leading to directions like eating disorders and body dysmorphia which in some cases can be life threatening.

At times like this, it is crucial for the sage to take over and broker a peace deal, as this way of thinking can lead us down a very dangerous path. We need to recognise that 90% of the time, people we see on the internet are edited, have filters, and have cosmetic work done to enhance their beauty. It’s important to remind ourselves that beauty comes in all shapes and sizes and that we should celebrate diversity instead of trying to fit into a complex mould, so we can overcome the critical voice telling us we are not good enough. Each of us is unique. We were all born differently, so there is no point in trying to change ourselves to be like someone else. We are 1 in 7 billion.

By reminding ourselves of these things, we can exit the rabbit hole, and let the sage take over to allow us to thrive and get past all the negative thoughts that are created by our saboteurs. Our sage can redirect our thoughts, by turning the hatred of our inner voice into self-love. One way we can redirect these negative thoughts is by practising gratitude for others and ourselves. We need to take a moment to reflect on all of the things we are grateful for in life, instead of focusing on the bad. We need to teach our inner voice, that beauty comes from within, and ugliness is shown by actions, not how you look. ■

IT BEGINS WITH A WHISPER

Sienna McCartin · Year 11 · *Star of the Sea College*

Dear Monster Within,

The other evening, a stranger approached me in the shadows, enveloping me in a cloak of fear and doubt. As I stepped off the bus to go home in the moonlit night, I heard a whisper calling my name, starting with a single word: "Listen."

Up until that moment, I wasn't afraid of my surroundings. I was walking along the same pathway I take every day to and from school, in the suburb where I've lived my whole life. There were also many people around me, and a football game was happening in the field right beside me. Yet, I wasn't scared until that eerie whisper told me someone was following me, repeatedly saying, "You're not safe."

It wasn't a stranger that was whispering to me. It was you, the overprotective voice in the back of my mind. You try to shield me from the dangers of the world. But the real danger wasn't outside in the mysterious night. It was inside my head, in clouds of anxieties that threatened to absorb me, and leave me powerless and alone.

Your voice rings a bell to my amygdala. So, I know when you're there because I'm scared. I'm scared of the unrealistic horrors you whisper into my ear, and how you try to make me oblivious to my surroundings. I'm afraid that you will trick me into thinking I'm always in harm's way until I'm triggered into a constant state of fight or flight responses. But I also know that I can't let that fear control me. I can't let you control me.

You're the reason we have the phrase, "You can run but you can't hide." I can try to escape from my real or imagined fears of anxieties about the future and catastrophizing about what's to come that you keep reminding me of, but I can't act like they're not there. They'll always find a way to creep up on me.

But why do you prepare me for the worst, or for things that probably won't happen? Perhaps you're a blessing in disguise, a guardian angel in the form of a beast.

I've noticed that you, my monster, actually look out for me more than I do. You're the shadow that warns me of danger, whispers caution, and the shield that protects me from harm. You're the part of me that knows when to say no, put myself first, and when to walk away to keep myself safe. You prepare me for the worst to save myself from disappointment. You have become my loudest inner critic to protect my ego from the outside world. Even your annoyance and random impulses led me down a road of self-improvement.

I appreciate you for focusing on my self-preservation,

but you held me back when you took it too far. You were stubborn and ignored my own intentions, just to keep me 'safe' from situations that are actually harmless. I think you're so fixated on protecting me that you forget about what's really important, how I need to be vulnerable and take risks in order to live my life to the fullest.

I don't want you to get overly sensitive when I'm walking alone to a friend's house or back home while the sun is quickly setting. I'm going to do the things that scare me, even if it means failing or being rejected. And I don't want to hear your little voice dwell on the negatives for it, or tell me the consequences that I'll face if I don't listen to you. Because I'm stronger than you think. I have the ability to silence your voice. I want to feel powerful, in control, and feel like I could protect myself from the dangers of the world, without you. So goodbye, Monster Within. You don't scare me anymore.

I know you're always there lurking in the dusk. So, I won't lure myself into your shadows. Moonlit nights will be peculiarly lonely for you because when you whisper my name, I will not respond. I will no longer let your echoes torment me at every turn I take. I'll keep walking through the twilight without your haunting cloak of suspicious fears, feeling freer from you after every step.

This is how I can control you, by not fearing you, and feel sorry for you instead.

But, I'm scared that I might fall into a trap because I didn't listen to your advice. It's unfortunate that I'm mistreating you when you're just looking out for me. It was sad that I could no longer hear your voice, and there were no fears to hold me back from being too grounded. I'm sorry I wasn't scared enough to realise how much I needed you to keep me balanced.

As much as I wanted to avoid you and your unexpected arrivals. I couldn't, they randomly sneak up on me in bursts of fear when I'm alone. I can't walk away from them, because you're not hidden. You're always there, in a mirror looking straight at me. You're a reminder that I need to be kind and trust myself more and that I need to confront my deepest fears. Even when you haunt me with your relentless terrors and disquiets, you are also the light that guides me through the darkness, the compass that leads me to my true path. Thank you for helping me prioritise my own needs and for being there even when I don't always pay attention. You were brave enough to have the wisdom to tell me to listen to your whispers before things got out of hand. I'm no longer scared when I know you're near, because you're part of me, both the good and the bad. Thanks for being my guardian devil. ■

SEEDS OF DOUBT

Angel Nicklin · Year 11 · Star of the Sea College

Dear Monster,

I am writing to challenge you and question your very existence. Why do you revel in tearing apart the happiness within me? Why do you take delight in eroding my self-esteem and pointing out flaws that diminish my sense of worth? Your presence permeates my everyday life, an integral part of me that cannot be ignored or suppressed. You have the ability to manifest in destructive ways, but I have reached a turning point. I am done with you.

You make me want to yell, you make me want to scream my lungs out. I know you're a part of me but sometimes I just wish you would just go away.

You have become the Axis upon which my life revolves, dictating the course of my thoughts. Should I allow myself to experience happiness or should I succumb to self-doubt and self-criticism? It seems I can never escape your influence, as you loom over me like a shadow, distorting my self-perception with a harsh critical light. You relentlessly pick at my insecurities, conjuring thoughts that I would never entertain if you were to disappear. When I gaze into the mirror, I no longer see myself reflected - instead I am confronted with a vision that you have etched into my mind, a vision that I now struggle to un-see. It has become my distorted reality, magnifying every minuscule imperfection, from a blemish on my face to a single hair out of place.

Whispers echo in my mind constantly reminding me that I'm not beautiful, that I cannot step out into this world looking like this. You have shattered my confidence and left me feeling utterly defeated. My eyes have become blind, for I have lost sight of my own perceptions and now only see through your distorted lens.

What is your ultimate objective? Do you wish to shape a world where perfection reigns supreme? Do you find satisfaction from witnessing others loathe their reflections, just as you have made me loathe mine? You inundate my feelings with false narratives, and sadly, allowed me to be captured by your deceit. I relinquished control, allowing you to seize power over me. You planted seeds of doubt, convincing me that my skin must be flawless, that

every flaw must be concealed. You even succeeded in extinguishing the flame of my passion, preventing me from indulging in activities I hold dear, such as dancing. You stopped me from taking the stage for fear of failure. What gratification do you derive from this? Does your heart thrive on the defeat and insecurities of others? Perhaps your own tough exterior hides an inner vulnerability and by belittling others, you attempt to shield yourself from the same insecurities that plague your soul.

You constantly lurk in the back of my mind, persistently feeding me distorted information that I'm expected to accept as truth. STOP!! When night descends and I lay in bed, your thoughts overwhelm my mind, urging me to thrive for an unattainable ideal of perfection. However, this ideal is not one of my own creation, but rather one that you have imposed upon me. Trying to win your approval has become the driving force behind my existence, an unrelenting struggle that refuses to subside, even for a single day.

You are a monstrous presence, deriving pleasure from my misery in order to prop yourself up, but I declare here and now that I'm no longer under your rule.

As I've grown older, I've realized the necessity of silence in your voice and preventing it from dictating my thoughts. I must learn to embrace self-love and resilience, no longer allowing you to determine my worth or whether I'm deemed sufficient in your eyes.

Dear Monster, I now question every aspect of your voice. Does it stem from my own conscience, or is it a manifestation of your influence? I take a deep breath and reclaim ownership of MY genuine thoughts and envision myself on a beach listening to the waves break on the shore, the crisp salty sea breeze blowing through my hair, and the sand in between my toes. I envision a place of utter serenity, where its inhabitants are me and my conceptions, where no monsters on my shoulder can murmur their inner demonic whispers. I am in charge of my own happiness, no one else.

Thanks for nothing

Angel ■

DIFFERENT SIDES OF THE SAME STREET

Caoimhe Keating · Year 12 · Star of the Sea College



Family home in Belfast. My mum's family has lived there since the Troubles began and it's located on a mixed street.

Growing up an immigrant I've always felt drawn to the idea of home.

What is home? Is home a place? A person? The feeling of comfort? Or four walls and a ceiling. I wasn't born here in Australia but I have lived here for most of my life. My accent is Melbournian but aspects of my dialect retain fragments of life back in Ireland. Every now and again I envision little glimpses of the person that I could have become if I had stayed, and I'm reminded of how my identity feels incomplete as I've forgotten more and more. Ever since I was small my sisters and I have always kept a piece of our family with us since we moved to Australia. We share matching gold claddagh rings that we bought before we left. The memories that reside within the necklaces provide me with comfort as I recall times of my childhood.

Through the endless teasing, raucous laughter and the familiar sounds of Gaelic floating around my Grandparents' quaint redbrick home I can feel that sense of home. As I sit here I can so clearly recall that bitter sweet scent of stewed rhubarb and suddenly I am back in Belfast sitting at my Grandparents' kitchen table, covered in flour and making an horrendous mess of the place. My

grandmother's stern yet loving face scolding me in her thick Northern accent for "faffin' around" until she'd eventually send me out of the kitchen to leave her to cook. Knowing better than to test an Irish Grandma I'd often retreat into the living room where Granda would also be sitting comfortably in his ugly reclining chair waiting for me. For years our favourite thing to do together was playing chess. He appears all frail on the outside, but a devious mind lurks beneath. That man has no mercy yet that never stopped me from challenging him constantly. I can still hear his voice now telling me, "In life, things aren't just handed to you, it's the struggle that builds character. If I let you win what sense of accomplishment would come from that". As we played endless rounds he would tell me stories about his life growing up as an Irish Catholic man during 'The Troubles'.

He'd tell me about the endless violence that reigned over the streets. As a result of the Northern Ireland conflict, the streets where neighbours Protestants and Catholics alike used to greet each other had become battle grounds for cruelty and violence. There was always a lingering sadness when he talked about those days, how one always needed to take caution and avoid altercations that ended in bloodshed. Catholics were commonly quite

poor as they struggled to find jobs due to religious prejudice. Newspapers and signs read in bold writing “Catholics need not apply”.

As Granda would gracefully move his pieces across the board taking my knight, he would tell me how a gang of Protestants would chase him home from school calling out slurs to him, like “Fenian” and occasionally “kill the Taigs”. As he raced around the block where his street was, he took refuge behind his older neighbours who outnumbered the gang coming around the corner. The ‘Proddie’ boys began to back off before they smashed Granda’s kitchen window. With one of the rocks in their hands they warned him that “all Taigs are targets”. I’m told all the horror of the past only strengthened our family’s ideals of identity, belonging and faith.

I see a lot of Ma in Granda, especially their competitiveness against a ten-year-old child. Just when I thought I had checkmated him and could almost taste the sweetness of victory, I felt a stinging sensation in my nose that smelt crisp and smoky. I returned to the kitchen to find a tray covered in what resembled charcoal but was my crumble. After wasting all the flour Granda offered to walk me down to the local shops to pick some more up.

As we walked into town we greeted everyone. In our little Belfast the community practically raises you. My Granda would call out to his friend “Ack, how’s bout ya Cathy” as she would simply reply with “grand, is that Nuala’s wee wean?” and we’d talk as if there was no time lost between us. I hadn’t seen these people in years and yet we still recognised each other. I looked around the streets filled with stalls, food and crowds gathering around buskers who were scattered along the road. After we grabbed the flour from a small store on the corner we started making our way back home. As I held onto the bag excitedly the spirited music and the laughter in the streets suddenly quietened. The world fell still for a moment, then chaos erupted.

The deafening sounds of the drums bombarded my ears as the people started to scatter. A flood of orange and purple consumed the once peaceful streets. Sirens and car alarms were going off as

they stormed their way through the crowds. Their chants shifted to aggression as they interacted with the people who were forced onto the sidewalk. Must be Catholics. They surged toward me but I couldn’t move. Frozen at that moment, the beating of the drums lurked toward me. In an instant Granda grabs my arm and pulls me to the side of the road. My hands lost their grip and I watched the bag of flour slowly collide with the coarse ground. I desperately attempted to grab the flour until the bag got kicked off to the other side of the path out of my reach. The Orange Order paraded themselves in an intensely synchronised march and with each thundering step they took, the smaller I became.

There have always been my familiar streets of Belfast that consisted of predominantly Catholic families and mixed streets. I’d run down their neighbourhoods and be greeted as family. Warm, safe, secure, homely. Then there were the streets surrounded by barbed wire fences which were Protestant areas. The youngins and I have always known to never go down places like Shankill or Sandy Row, especially not if you’re alone and female. Anxious, guarded, alarmed, belittled. My own street that was mixed had English flags flown out the front of most Protestant houses which even now is perceived as the norm. The feeling of misplacement and unacceptance surged within me whenever I would notice these small elements but the simplicity in the scent of stewed rhubarb wafting through my nose, remind me of the comforting embraces I seek refuge in.

Years later I still look back on those memories fondly. The three of us gathered in the kitchen, our hands covered in crumble mixture and our mouths sticky from taste tasting the stew. The cousins came rushing through the door as our neighbours unprompted joined in. In a mixed street with both Catholic and Protestant families the house has been the stability in the family that has seen them through all the struggles and conflict. But it isn’t the chaos of change or your surrounding environment that determines belonging, it’s the people who influence and help build your character that illuminate when you truly find home. ■



Ruby van der Niet
Year 12 · Aquinas College

Perfectly, Imperfect Pots, Glazed porcelain

Inspired by societal pressure to strive for perfection, I created a series of ceramic pieces to reflect the diversity and imperfections that exist and should be embraced and celebrated.

I chose to create a series of pots on the pottery wheel as the technique traditionally leads to symmetrical and 'perfect' pots, which I could then alter the form of, and deconstruct the idea of conforming to perfection. As I was de-forming the pots I embraced the organic nature of the material as well as celebrating the diversity of society.

I want the audience to reflect on what is perpetuated in society and to appreciate that although perfect is remarkable, imperfect can be just as remarkable.



Grace Crosby
Year 12 · Aquinas College

So Small, Acrylic on watercolour paper,
wooden board, ceramics

The overwhelming nature of human emotions is presented in this artwork. Through the imagery of coloured faces in the background with a small human figure in the foreground, the artist creates a feeling of one being consumed by their own emotions. The ceramic human figure is left at an organic cream colour as the artist's intention is that the individual does not know how to feel, while the background acrylic paintings involve several colour combinations and palettes to give the illusion of many emotions being felt at once. This artwork is created with a collage-like style due to the artist's use of several different paintings being placed onto one board, allowing contrast between the arrangement of colour and sizing of the different faces. This final resolution has a strong connection to the struggles that humans face in everyday life with the ability to understand and control their emotions and personal expression.



Olivia Clark
Year 12 · Aquinas College

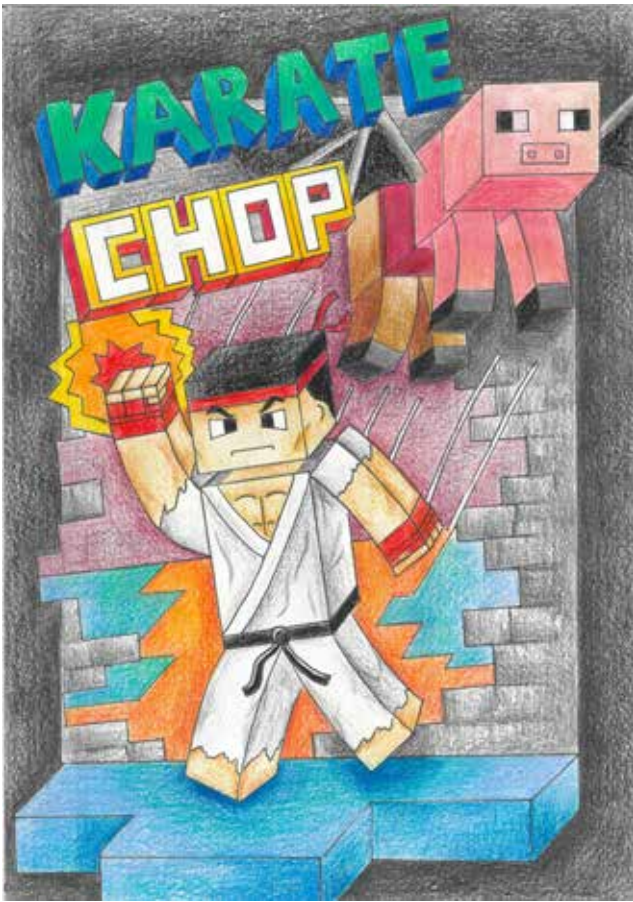
Turn Real

This image is a part of the ‘*Turn Real*’ series that follows the journey of a young man. This image, and the series as a whole, explores the concept of men’s mental health in the 21st century. The individual’s face is masked, covering any identifiable features and demonstrating a perceived lack of identity. This image portrays an anguish that can come from the societal pressures placed upon young adults and the feelings of associated suffocation.



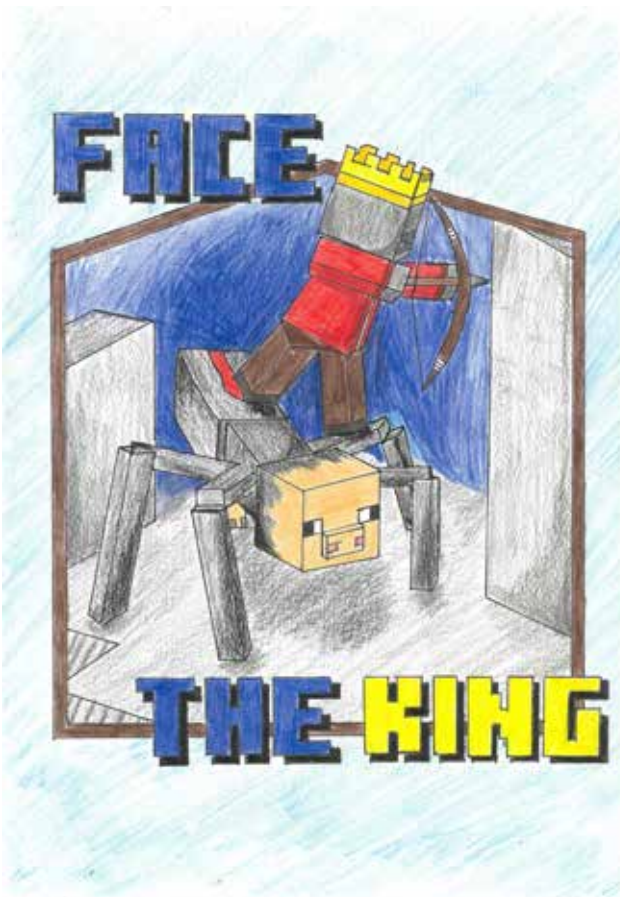
Mario Khamo
Year 11 · Kolbe Catholic College

Spirit, Acrylic on paper



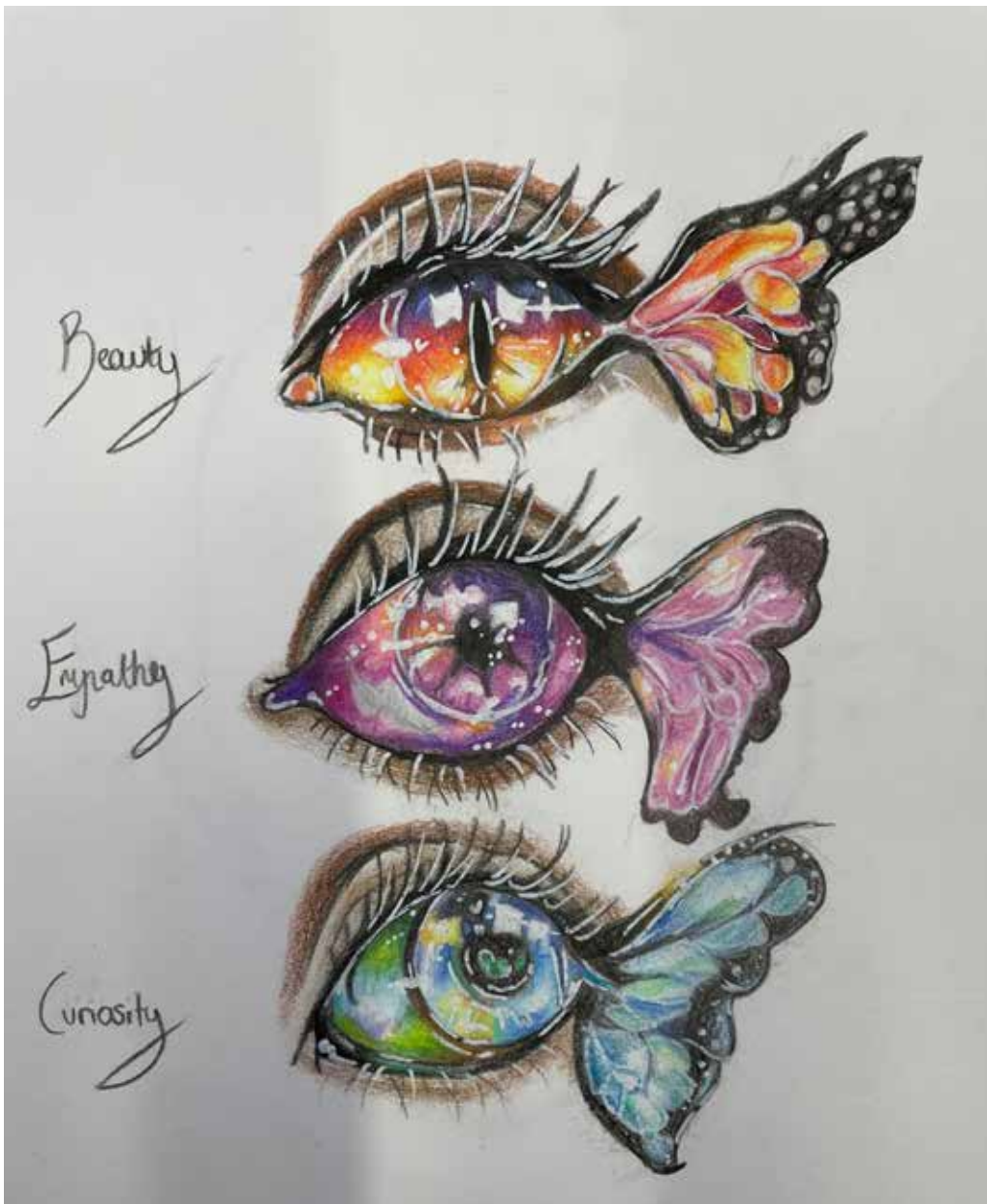
Leroy Chen
Year 9 · Mazenod College

Karate Chop, coloured pencil on paper



Seth Ong
Year 9 · Mazenod College

Face The King, coloured pencil on paper



Indiana Farrugia

Year 7 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor

Colourful as a Rainbow

This piece was inspired by my first three friends, who I am still really close with. They taught me how to be a good person and to be myself. I am forever grateful!

“Worlds change when eyes meet” - Darshan Kusumakar



Branden Pattison
Year 12 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

IT'S IMPORTANT TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR TEENAGE YEARS

Jess Tucci · Year 8 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

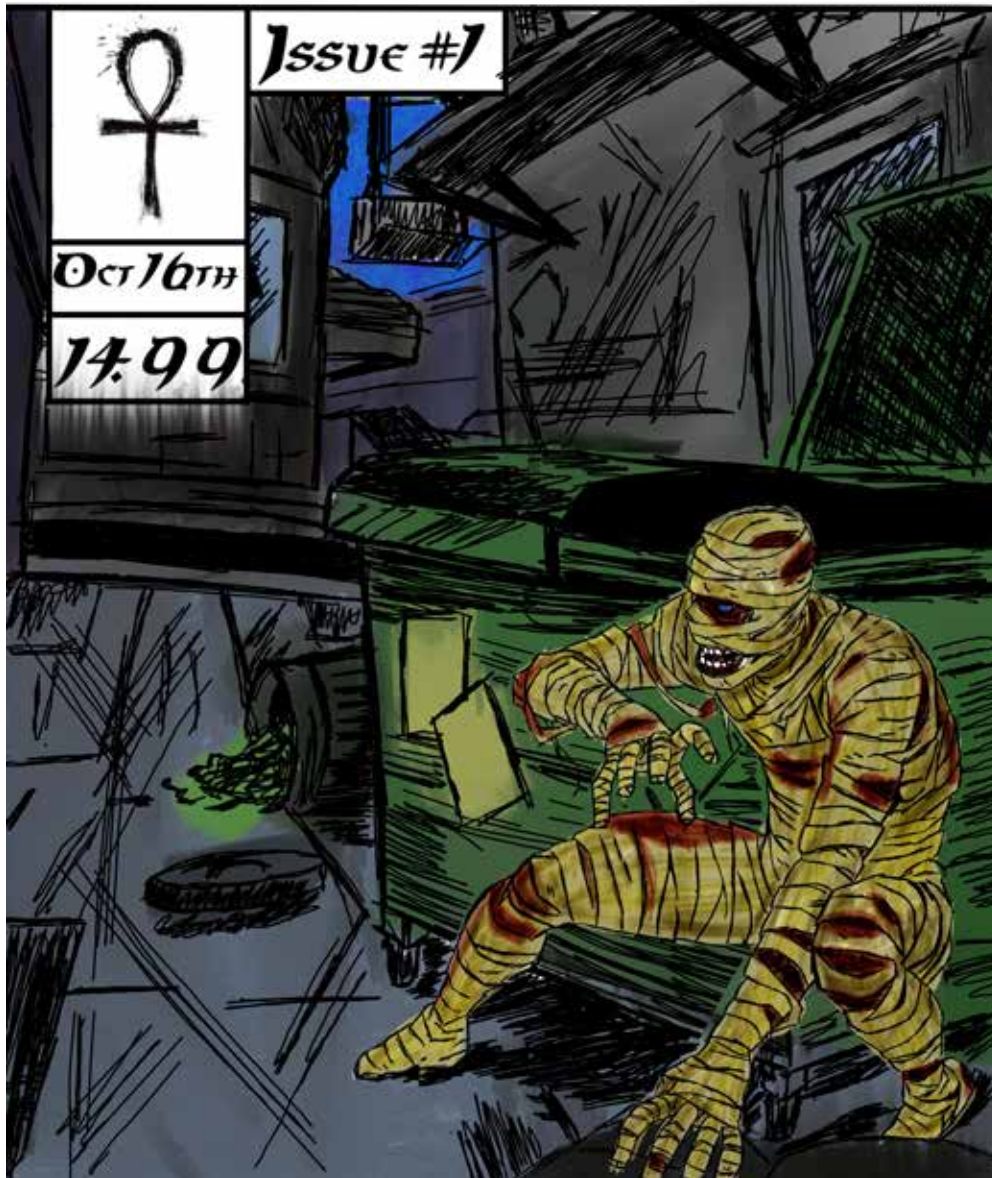
For many generations, it has been stated that the teenage years are supposedly the best years of our lives, therefore we should make the most out of it. I passionately believe in this statement for many countless reasons.

To begin with, not everything lasts forever and time is limited. In the series 2521 directed by Jung Ji-Hyun, he represents this meaning through the character; Seung-Wan, as she was once a part of an inseparable friend group during her teenage years. Although, her relationship between her friends began to fall apart, as they were growing up into young adults with more important priorities, such as their careers. They slowly lost the ability to keep in touch and grew apart from each other. Later on towards the ending of the series, the friend group gathers at a funeral, Seung-Wan says to her friend that she misses the old days, referring to the teenage years when the friend group was alive and at peak. This relates back to why “not everything lasts forever” and “time is limited”. We need to make the most of these years, time moves on and so do people.

In addition, it is important to make the most of these years as everyone gets older, and so does your body. Our body is the most flexible during these years and aging causes our body to become fragile and weak. Not only does our body change physically, but also mentally. As we grow older, stress is a part of our lives more often. The majority of teenagers worry about who can take us to watch a movie or what the latest gossip is. The things most teenagers worry about are silly, but adults stress about their responsibilities in the real world. For instance, Na Hee Do's worry and priority was her fencing career and Back Ijin's was to improve as a news reporter. Mostly everyone grows out of each other and don't have time to keep in touch. It's important for these memories to not always be missed and simply accepted as the past.

In summary, time should not be wasted and make the most of the years where you're healthy and free. Anything in your life right now may be out of reach in the next 10 years. I know that time goes by fast therefore, the statement, “it is important to make the most of your teenage years” allows me to stay inspired. ■

The Regulator



Brenton Collett
Year 12 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

WALKING ON GRASS

Adrienne Castillo · Year 8 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

I'll always be an outcast. The friend who's not
really a part of the group, the friend who walks
on the grass.

I'm like a stain on something white, not meant to
be in anyone's sight.

I hear the chatter of where they go out, their
laughs as I walk away. Maybe they'll include
me soon, maybe, one day.

What did I do wrong?

Maybe they just befriended me for a laugh, just to
string me along.

I'm like a misshapen puzzle piece, not fitting here
or there. Will I ever fit somewhere, will anyone
ever care?

I see their fake smiles and subtle looks at one
another. I wonder if whenever I'm with them,
do I make them suffer?

I wonder how it feels.

To have my spot get picked, to be in photos
instead of just pressing "click".

I think I'll just accept it, this role I've been set to.

Because someday I'll realise that others have
experienced this too.

I'll grow a new path away from the grass,
It'll be beautiful, with the sun always shining, and
I'll be with all of the "outcasts".

So even though I wish that I could start fresh and
anew;

I'll know that I'm not alone with what I go
through.

Maybe one day there'll be a new world where I
can step inside,

A place of belonging, where nobody needs to
hide. ■

THE TRUTH OF GRIEF

Rukshika Collurage · Year 8 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

When you try to write a letter to someone
who's important to you,
But they're just too close
and there's not enough words to describe how
you really feel. So you
stop,
That's how I feel writing about grief.
writing about grief to me is
dangerous.
How do I open a door
that people I once loved
walk through and never return?.
The thing about grief is that it isn't something
I can talk about it continuously.

I would love to tell you that your heartache has a
finish line,
that eventually you remember
their smile
and their eyes of darkness
that consume you when they're
gone.
I can never give a solution,
I can never replace the light.
The Truth is the only way to heal entirely is to
forget
but when you're grieving,
forgetting is the last thing you want to do.
Grief becomes hard. ■

ARTVO

Paulette Ruiz · Year 8 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

Illusions tricking everyone around the small, yet delicate and fine paintings. Everyone has cameras out, 1 after another, taking pictures of the person they brought. The person getting their picture taken poses differently on each wall of art. Poses to try and make the illusion seem real, tricking others into looking at the picture taken, from Venice boat rides to almost falling into nothingness.

“Take a picture!”

“Pose!”

Happiness and excitement are everywhere in a small area.

It's interesting how art can be tricky to look at. Although some may look odd, it's all about

perspective. Perspective is the key to seeing the image perfectly. When the key is perfect, it creates the illusion of the people behind the screen seeing the picture. It may be gloomy, show a lot of joy, sadness, or even goofiness. Either way, it gives off a certain feeling for the audience.

Everyone goes through the maze-like gallery and loves every art piece that is made on each wall. Some may have props, others you'll have to work it out yourself. It creates long-lasting memories. It creates smiles on peoples' faces when they walk in, and when they step out.

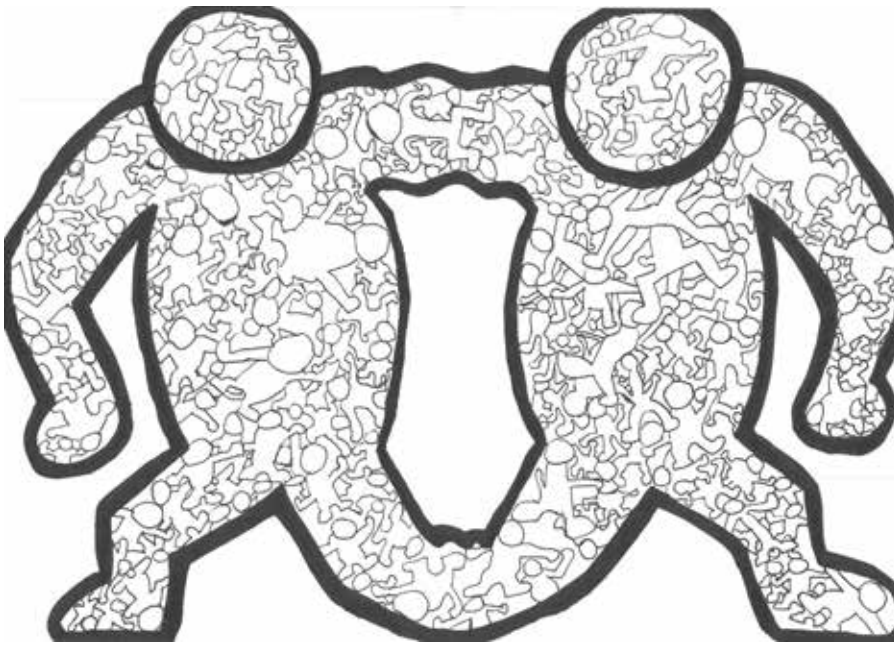
Art has the power to sculpt emotions with just a glance. ■



Rojan De La Cruz
Year 11 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne



Pau Orola
Year 10 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne



Harry Boyle
Year 7 · Mazenod College

Best Friends, fineliner and marker on paper



Aiden Nguyen
Year 7 · Mazenod College

Best Friends, fineliner and marker on paper



Orson Parrish
Year 8 · Mazenod College

Tea Party, expanding foam and tea set



Rushil Ravi
Year 8 · Mazenod College

Pot of Foam, expanding foam and tea set



Frankie Tan
Year 8 · Mazenod College

Capsicum, coloured glazed on ceramic



Mathew Haywood
Year 8 · Mazenod College

Pumpkin, coloured glaze on ceramic



$\frac{4}{6}$ My house Steven 2023

Steven Lianos
Year 9 · Mazenod College

My House, lino print with watercolour on paper



$\frac{2}{6}$ My Home Viet 2023

Viet Tran
Year 9 · Mazenod College

My House, lino print with watercolour and coloured pencil on paper

THE TRAVEL THROUGH TRAUMA

Matthew Rowe · Year 8 · Emmaus College

On an early Sunday morning I was walking through the park, thinking about the men I had left behind. It had been two years since I was discharged, and I still felt like I was there every day. The dirty smell of the factories, the loud crashes in the night, all sent me back to those days of fighting and struggling to survive.

Every Morning I would walk through the local park to think about the fallen soldiers who had fought with me. Every time, I would just sit on a small hard wooden bench and watch the world go by, stuck in an endless loop of horror and resentment. I couldn't let it go; I didn't know how to. There was no one to help me, no inspiration to keep me moving forward. All I knew was war, nothing more, nothing less. Even though it had been my everything, it haunted me all day and all night, and there was nothing I could do about it.

It all changed that Sunday morning. Whilst it started out like all the others, it soon became one that I will never forget. As I gazed across the dew-soaked grass, my eyes fixated on an old man sitting at a table, playing chess. What drew my attention the most, was the unmistakable 7th Cavalry Commando Regiment patch resting on his left shoulder. He was a veteran of war, and I couldn't believe what I was seeing. He was having fun, laughing, and smiling as if entranced by the game he was playing, I didn't understand how. He seemed great, he seemed happy. I wondered how that could be, then it dawned on me. That game of chess sent me back to war, reminding me about everything. The way you strategized your next move and used all the pieces to flank the enemy and gain the upper hand. The way all the pieces fought and died for the king to live, giving their all to protect their fellow soldiers.

I walked up to the veteran and asked him, "how... how do you live with your past?"

He replied, "I learned to let go, and deal with it through chess. Maybe you should give it a try?"

I remember looking at that man, feeling puzzled. How could a silly game of chess help someone deal with PTSD? That night, whilst I laid in bed, I looked up to the roof and was surprised when I didn't see the shadows of men running, yelling, and shooting. Instead, I saw a game of chess. I didn't understand but at that moment I thought to myself that if that man can live with the scars, so can I.

The next morning, instead of walking to the park, I jogged. I felt a spark inside of me, like a little fire had come alive, wrapping me in a warmth I hadn't felt in a long time. I was excited, I was ready to deal with my trauma. When I arrived at the table, a man was sitting there waiting for an opponent. It was the veteran. As I walked up to the chess board he said, "I knew you would be back." I smiled, and he showed me how to play. He showed me how those pieces represented the war. How if you really thought about your next move, you could see why it was so important for the soldiers to fight. After that day, I jogged to that park every morning just to play chess with that veteran. He showed me that war didn't need to blemish me. Instead, I could embrace the fact that I fought for our country, and so did the people that died. I will never really get over those years I was deployed, and I never want to. I will never forget my friends who were lost, but at least now, when I walk down the busy streets, I hear the crashing of bins instead of the rattle of gunfire. I hear the ringing of bells instead of the sirens warning of gas. Now I live with those memories, instead of fighting against them. ■

THE RHINOS

Luca Costanzo · Year 8 · Emmaus College

In the heart of a rainforest, nearly within reach of the river, stood an abundance of trees, we were the life-giver. Throughout the flat terrain of the forest, where the placid birds sing, and the animals reside, we are the lifeblood of the ecosystem. No one would think to disturb our work, right? We had been standing proudly in the calmness of our luscious green oasis for thousands of years?

There I stood. My legs enclosed in the ground, the rich soil feeds my growth as it has been over the last 100 years. I stood tall above most of the other trees, watching out across the wide forest, gentle and still. Inside my branches, I nestled and protected plenty of birds' nests, protecting the fragile eggs as if they were my own. An array of branches fed off my body in all directions, almost like an umbrella. My thick green leaves hid them from other imposters, desperate to feast on anything too small and vulnerable to fend for itself.

One peculiar day, the sun rose into the horizon enlightening the vibrant landscape. When the birds were whistling their melodies of joy and the air was crisp, a loud noise in the distance sent them fluttering away in the hope of safety. The thunderous roar in the distance made the ground tremble violently and the leaves sway rapidly. A singular tree, once standing strong and sturdy had descended to the forest floor sending a whirlwind of soil throughout the surrounding area. Although, this tree was not enough to satisfy the needs of the wicked beings that were behind this massacre. Many others followed in the original tree's descent. The birds' melodies were replaced by the inevitable crashing of trees every few minutes. The barren ground which replaced the trees, and the vibrant rainforest terrain sent the birds in refuge far away, mourning the loss of the lively territory they once shared. Yet these monsters' agenda of terror did not conclude there. They ate the trees, replacing them with only a small amount of their carcass and moving on. The once crystal clear and crisp air was replaced by dark steams of grey given off by the monster, ascending to the sky and creating clouds that engulfed the sun's joy. It was at this moment that it occurred to me that these unwelcome monsters would not stop this massacre until the last tree was no longer standing in all its glory. The wind which once smelt like the pure, clean air which I had known all my life got turned

into the unhealthy smell of fuel that polluted any environment it found itself in.

For days I had seen them approaching, slowly wiping out the enriched flat terrain. I was now by myself with only trees standing behind me, slowly waiting for our fate to arrive. When they finally rolled towards me and my beautiful branches, the branches that once housed many, many families of animals, I saw one of them entirely for the first time. A Rhino. A strong grey beast roared, except with steel muscles. A colossal blade was positioned at the front of it, covering half of the front of it. Its feet rolled over the terrain in an infinite loop, crushing it under its wrath. Placed above its feet, a big yellow rectangular frame lay in which everything on the monster was connected. At the front, a steel grille with tiny little circles and holes in it made it look even more menacing. Above the rectangle, another box was placed with a transparent material that took the form of a window arranged on all sides of the box. Inside was an array of levers and shifts.

Roaring maliciously, its steel feet crumbled the ground below it, sending vibration throughout the area. Its intimidating build stared at me with all its rage as it approached me. The blade rose from its original position and stabbed its claws into my vast trunk, unsteading me. The pain enveloped my body, the contact sending leaves flying off my branches, swaying away, seeking the comfort and safety of the moist rainforest soil. Yet the resistance of my trunk to the Rhino's colossal blade was not enough. The pain coursed through my body like waves that refused to end. Slowly swaying I accepted my fate and surrendered to the mercy of the Rhino, falling onto the barren ground in front of me, just like my fellow trees. Unconnected to the succulent blood flow of nature, my once rich, succulent body slowly passed on.

I never knew the reason for my death. Why would anyone seek to destroy the single most important thing to their survival? This was just the humble story of me and millions of other trees. I guess it must be put down to the limitless greed of these creatures, which will be the downfall of the selfless, loving care of nature. After all, you never know how precious something is until you are faced with the prospect of losing it, and once you lose it, it never comes back. ■

A SLIVER OF HOPE

Lucy Gutteridge · Year 8 · Emmaus College

Natalie Jones sat on her grandpa's knee, resting her head on his familiar, warm shoulder. Her grandfather was reading her favourite book, speaking in his peaceful, ever so soothing tone. Natalie was getting sleepy. She closed her eyes and relaxed. Only moments later her grandpa groaned. Natalie's eyes flew open as she toppled off the sofa. Looking up, confused, her grandpa had become still. Too still.

"Grandpa!" She said nervously, "Grandpa, you're scaring me!"

Paralysed with panic and fear, Natalie did the only thing she could think to do. She screamed at the top of her lungs, hoping to wake her mother from her deep slumber. A second later, Rose charged into the room, a wooden bat slung across her shoulder. Seeing her father lying unconscious on the couch, her bat fell to the floor.

THUD!

The rest of the evening was a blur of sirens, tears, and yelling. Dawn finally decided to break, after what had been the longest night of Natalie's life.

Over the coming days, there were lots of trips to the hospital. Rose and her husband brought every possible thing that Natalie's grandpa might need, except Natalie. She was forced to stay at home, imprisoned in her stress. Her mother kept assuring her that her grandpa would be alright, but Natalie wasn't so sure. She had overheard her Mum hissing into the kitchen phone the other night. There were tears streaming down the woman's fragile features, tracing over countless worry lines, eventually dripping silently onto her nightclothes.

"Please," Rose was whimpering, "there's got to be something you can do for him."

A few more days passed, and Natalie was preparing herself for the worst. Finally, after waiting for almost a week, there was a sliver of hope for her. She was able to visit her grandfather.

Natalie had been pushed and shoved down the extremely brightly lit corridors of Sandringham Hospital. There were doctors and nurses running around left, right, and centre. Her mother had explained to her that this was the intensive care unit, taking care of people who were very sick. That had worried Natalie even further. Was her grandpa really that ill? She hoped not.

After what seemed like forever, the small group of her mother, father and of course Natalie, emerged into a smaller hallway. It wasn't quite as bright as the others, but this corridor was nicely decorated

with elaborate navy-blue flowers painted all over the walls, vines seemingly wrapping themselves around the visitors. Natalie supposed it was meant to be cheerful, but because blue was her grandpa's favourite colour, the artwork just reminded her of how close she was to losing him.

Her mother veered off to the left, wrestling with the door handle of her grandpa's room. The room itself was very small, with only a single bed, a set of rich oak cupboards, and an old, vintage chair that sat alongside a tiny window.

However, the room was the least of Natalie's concerns. Arthur Jones lay in the bed, looking ten years older than he had the previous week. His eyes were hollow and red-rimmed from exhaustion. His cheeks were sunken, as if he hadn't eaten in days, but he managed a small smile.

"Natalie", he croaked.

Natalie felt like crying. She wanted the floor to open up and swallow her whole. This wasn't the grandfather she knew and loved, this was just a sickly old man, bedridden. Before she could respond, a nurse arrived carrying an assortment of pills in every shape, size and colour.

She proceeded to fill up a glass with water and help Arthur to consume the medication. The nurse explained to Natalie that her grandfather had endured a heart attack, but Natalie had learnt this from her parents days ago. Although, she was interested in the fact that, supposedly, those tablets could fix him. She was just about to demand the nurse to administer a stronger dose, when her grandfather lifted his head and raised one frail finger, beckoning her over.

Natalie walked over, careful not to trip on one of the many cords tangled on the floor. As she came closer, she heard a soft beeping noise like an oven timer going off. There were jagged lines that zigzagged across a dim screen, help up by a thin metal pole.

She took her grandfather's hand and was surprised at how warm it was. Her grandpa said he wanted to tell her a secret and Natalie squatted down so he could whisper softly into her ear. When she pulled away a moment later, warmth filled her chest and a smile spread across her face, dimples and all. She stood up, bend over, and put her head gently onto his shoulder.

"I love you Grandpa", she purred.

"I love you too, Natalie." ■

ORDINARY DAY

Violet O'Hagan · Year 8 · Emmaus College

I woke up at 7.11am on a Monday morning but laid in bed, exhausted, until mother called me. I groaned and rolled out of bed, slumping around, searching for my dressing gown and slippers. I walked towards the bathroom and grabbed a handful of water and splashed it on my face. I blinked, grabbed a towel, and looked in the mirror. Just another ordinary day, I thought to myself.

I patiently waited for my brother, Kent, by reading my favourite book, *The Fear*, by Natasha Preston. I wanted to be just like her, but I didn't think I had what it takes to follow in her footsteps.

I heard creaking from above my head, and then I saw Kent at the top of the staircase, looking for something.

"Mum! Where did you put my laptop! I have an important assignment due today and I need my laptop!" Kent panics.

"Why would she know?" I call.

"Never mind, I found it!" Kent responded after a sigh.

We caught the bus on time and arrived at school. Then I remembered that I lost a mini book I wrote the other day. I wondered if was in my locker. I must've misplaced it in the classroom.

I arrived to my class, but when I was about to take my seat, Mrs. Brenchley called me out. She held something in her pale white hand. My friends look at me, confused.

"Trix, where are you going?" One of my friends, Marnie, asked in confusion.

"I honestly don't know. Mrs. Brenchley called me, and it seems like she is holding something in her hand," I said, scratching my head, confused.

I walked out of the classroom, tucking in my buttoned-up shirt.

"You wanted to see me, Mrs. Brenchley?" I said calmly.

"Yes. You wrote this, am I right?" Mrs. Brenchley held out her hand, with the short story I wrote.

"Y-y-yes, I did... is there something wrong with it?" I stammered.

"Interesting. Well, I just wanted you to know-"

"Is it bad?" I suddenly said, worried.

"No! I just wanted to say that I think it was amazing! I always carry around stickers with me, and they are scented!" Mrs. Brenchley reached in her bag and sticks one on my story. "I can easily see your books on my shelf one day in the future!"

I was surprised. I thought that she was just returning

my book to me but it turned out she was giving me feedback while giving the story back to me.

I slowly walked back to my classroom, thinking about the words Mrs. Brenchley formed from her mouth. I turned, and Mrs. Brenchley was walking in the other direction from me. I smiled gently and continued the journey to my classroom.

I arrive, and all eyes are on me. I felt my lip tremble in embarrassment as I took my seat. I tried not to make eye contact with anyone. I took my seat next to Marnie.

"How was it? Did you get a detention?" Marnie asked in curiosity.

"You must remember that curiosity killed the cat," I pointed out to Marnie.

"Whatever. Still, tell me everything."

I told her what happened, and I showed her the sticker.

"That's it? She only gave you a sticker. Trix, you deserve so much more!" She whispered.

"Well, there are many other awards for me to accept," I smiled softly.

The bell rang. I walked out of my classroom, and I jumped up in happiness thinking out those encouraging words. I stared over at my locker and felt a spark in me. Once everyone had finished gathering their belongings, I walked up to my locker, opened the door, and I grabbed my snacks. I saw my friends waiting patiently for me, chewing on their crackers. I grabbed my laptop and a book, so I had an idea on what to write.

My friends sat in the shady corner where we normally ate our plain food. We always got stares from other children and gentle smiles from teachers. I normally sat on the rough floor, sitting there in silence, but that day I had something to share with them. I told them my story, and I patiently waited for their response.

"Trix, that's so cool! I'm proud of you! What was the story about? You didn't tell us about the story." Another of my friends, Lara, squealed.

"My book is about a girl who starts off without friends, but then she finds her best friend, Harriet, and they get along so well. But sadly, Harriet moves to another school because she continues to get bullied." I pause.

"That's so sad. I think I'm going to cry!" Marnie sobbed. Everyone but me laughed. I smiled softly and opened my laptop. I downloaded a drawing app, Krita, and I started to draw a young girl who was sitting at the Friendship Seat, lonely. There were children climbing the monkey bars behind the girl. I looked at the sky and closed my eyes. My future had begun. ■

AUSTRALIA FROM DAWN TO DUSK

Piper Fenwick · Prep
St James Catholic Primary School Brighton

It's lunchtime in the desert
and the snakes are slithering
in the trees. ■

AUSTRALIA FROM DAWN TO DUSK

Rose Owen · Prep
St James Catholic Primary School Brighton

It's morning at the National Park
and the koalas are climbing
in the trees. ■

AT THE SOCCER

Hugo Jarvis · Prep
St James Catholic Primary School Brighton

I can see a soccer ball
I can hear cheering
I can smell the grass
I can taste chips
I can feel the chair ■

AT SCHOOL

Harper Fancourt · Prep
St James Catholic Primary School Brighton

I can see my friends
I can hear my teacher
I can smell food
I can taste my yummy food
I can feel the carpet ■

AT THE CIRCUS

Sage Antcliffe · Prep
St James Catholic Primary School Brighton

I can see acrobats
I can hear the people
I can smell food
I can taste cotton candy
I can feel the gates ■

THE BEST HIDING PLACE

Chloe Barresi · Prep
St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

I am hiding in the bed
I am feeling scared
I can feel a teddy bear
I can see my blanket
I can hear talking ■

Edward Foote · Prep
St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

I am hiding on top of the wardrobe
I am feeling happy
I can feel the warmth
I can see my mum and dad
I can hear feet stomping ■

Louisa Merz · Prep
St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

I am hiding in the wardrobe
I am feeling scared
I can feel hard wood
I can see the dark
I can hear stomping ■

Indigo Goga · Prep
St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

I am hiding on the balcony
I am feeling happy
I can feel the wind
I can see trees
I can hear the wind ■

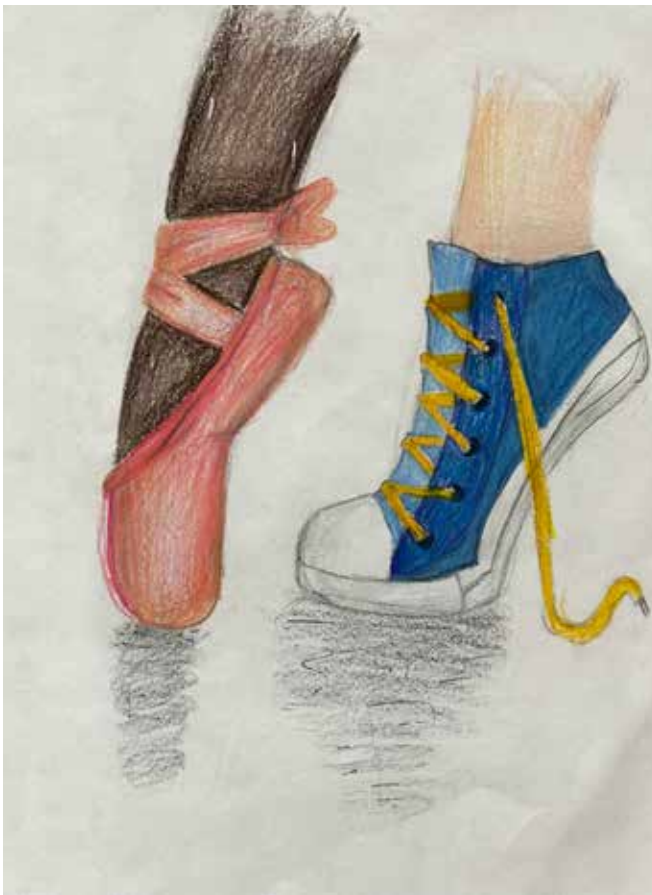
Ellery Power · Prep
St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

I am hiding under the covers
I am feeling happy
I can feel a teddy bear
I can see the doona
I can hear feet stomping ■

STATE OF MIND

Joshua Murray-Beckman · Year 5 · St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

I suddenly woke up and saw that there was no door.
No floor.
I was on the ground.
I heard a roar and a pound.
Something was scary,
As red as a cherry.
A big spider.
Now it becomes the decider
Of whether to hurt me or not.
My brain was shot.
Stuck in a state of mind,
That I could not find. ■



Ava Nimorakiotakis
Year 6 · St James Catholic Primary
School, Brighton

The Ballet Shoes



Skye Pullman
Year 3 · St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

Imagine



Saanvi Patel
Year 7 · Emmaus College



Emmersen Karleusa
Year 9 · Lavalla Catholic College

Sunset

COLD WINTER

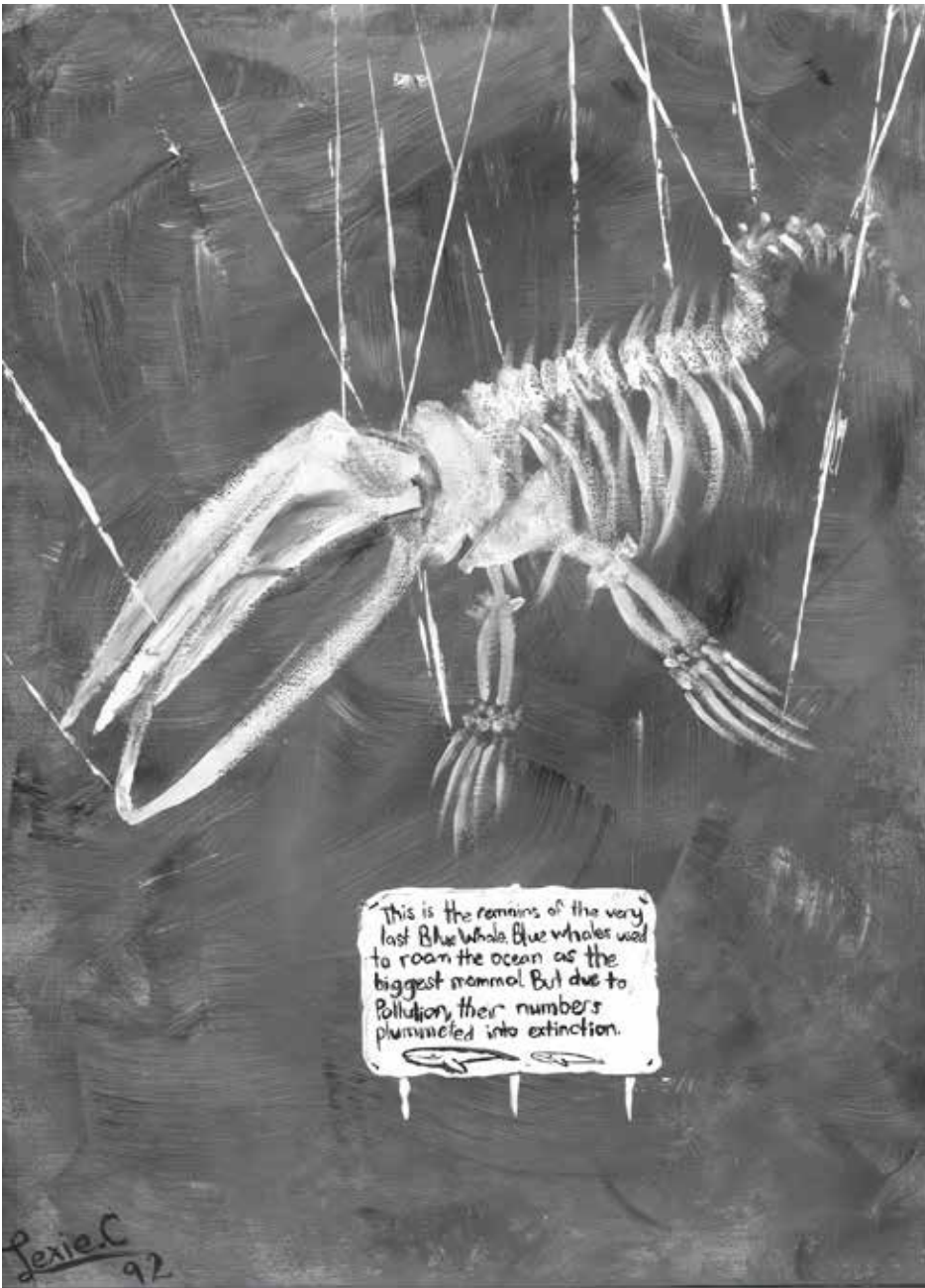
Alycia Kelly · Year 7 · Lavalla Catholic College

A cold winter day.
With very hot chocolates.
Blankets to keep warm.
Pillows for comfort in bed.
What a perfect winter's day. ■

DRAGONS

Patrick Hood · Year 7 · Lavalla Catholic College

Deadly creatures of mythology,
Raging roars of the wild.
Amazing wingspans they have,
Gorgeous, shining scales-
Onion breath- its stinks!
Night is the time they shine. ■



Lexie Charalambous
Year 9 · Lavalla Catholic College

OCEAN

Ruby Meo · Year 7 · Lavalla Catholic College

My water comes in waves, beautiful and tall,
I'm home to much wildlife, big and small.
Most days I'm stagnant, like a calm lake,
Other people run away, crashing waves left in their wake.

The sky grows dark, clouds rumble,
My churning waters turn and tumble.
My waves grow, ploughing through boats that sail,
Swallowing everything like a big ol' whale.

The sky is vast, blue, and bright,
There are no thundering clouds in sight.
My waves collide with the shore,
Until the blissful peace is no more.

The storms come again, my waves crash.
Hitting the sand with a SPLISH SPLOSH SPLASH. ■



Abigail Jephcott
Year 11 · Lavalla Catholic College

It's always beautiful



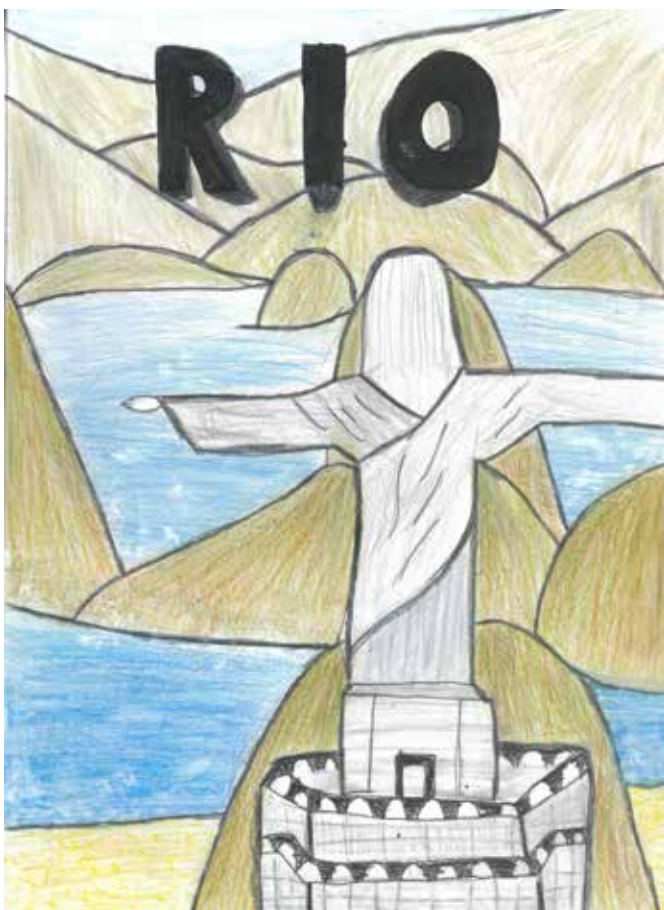
Howgoa Makuach
Year 8 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong



Murray Congues
Year 8 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong



Tatiana Figura
Year 10 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong



Christia Gulay
Year 8 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong



Brooklyn Leach
*Year 8 · St John's Regional College,
Dandenong*



Cleyara Warnakulasooriya
*Year 11 · St John's Regional College,
Dandenong*



Brandon Yeo
Year 9 · Mazenod College

Bilby, Cut paper collage and acrylic paint

THE FIELD OF DREAMS SPORTS WRITING WORKSHOP

Year 9 · Star of the Sea College

Bianca Bustamanta's Journey of Talent, Determination, and Resilience

Helena Velten

"I don't think I can do this" - a quote by many young karting drivers who have given up on their dreams on becoming a Formula 1 star. This is not the case for the talented and striking 18 year old Formula 1 academy driver, Bianca Bustamante. In the world of motorsports, where the roar of engines and the thrill of speed dominate, the trip to Formula One is an idle goal that only a few dare to pursue. Bianca Bustamante is one of these daring drivers, a young and ambitious driver whose route to the F1 Academy has been filled with dedication, obstacles, and a fierce determination to succeed.

Bianca Bustamante began karting at an early age and has since established herself as a potential young driver to keep an eye on. Bustamante states "I fell in love with racing ever since I was a kid, and I haven't stopped training in preparation for this moment. Racing has intrigued her since she was a child, much beyond the spirit of the sport itself." Coming from the Philippines, Bianca encountered some challenges along the way: *"Five, seven years ago, we were just struggling to even pay for the entry fee, fuel, tires. It made for a difficult road, and because of that, I needed to really value every time I was just able to drive, to race because I never really knew when it would be the last time."*

Her father has worked tirelessly to support Bianca's efforts throughout her karting career, as she looked for possibilities for wins and pole positions across Asia, with triumphs as far as the United States and Australia. Her competitive mentality knows no bounds, as she has consistently outperformed older and more experienced drivers. She won the 2019 Philippines Karting Championship and the 2019 Asian Karting Junior Championship, and she was nominated for Driver of the Year. She was not only the only female racer on the track, but she was also the only driver to win numerous honours, adding to the six Golden Wheel trophies she had previously won.

Bianca Bustamante joined with PREMA for a full-season Formula 4 programme in the F1 Academy this year. The F1 Academy aims to nurture the next generation of female racing talent, like Bianca, and groom them to excel in the many phases up the Formula 1 ladder. Aside from that, Bianca boosted her racing career by becoming the first female to join the McLaren young driver programme. ■

Stefanos Tsitsipas loses to Novak Djokovic in 2023 Australian Open

Isabela Miranda

Stefanos Tsitsipas was born in Athens, Greece to mother, Julia Apostoli, and tennis professional and father Apostolos Tsitsipas, who was a tennis coach. His tennis career started very early. At only 3 years old he was hitting balls with his father and then years later getting lessons and training at 6. He trained at the Tennis Club Glyfada near Athens. He eventually became the no.1 junior tennis player in the world. In 2015, Tsitsipas was given the opportunity to compete in the Junior Grand Slam Titles, although he didn't win during these, he finished No. 14 junior in the world.

Fast forward to 2023, Tsitsipas entered the Australian Open competition. He was successful throughout the competition, earning his way to the grand slam final. In the game, played on the 29th of January, he was going up against tennis superstar Novak Djokovic. Tsitsipas revealed he was "excited" and was "really looking forward to the game" However, it wasn't smooth sailing for Tsitsipas at the start of the game. Tsitsipas said he "Had trouble getting a hold of my serve in the beginning", leading to a rough start to the match. He lost the first set 3-6. He then picked up his game and played stronger, leading to two close sets, only losing 6-7 in both. At the end of the match, Djokovic came out on top and was the stronger player for the day

Tsitsipas, despite the loss was kind and humble towards Djokovic after his well-deserved win. Tsitsipas said "To have a player like him (Djokovic) that will help me grow better and do bigger things from", showing his gratitude. He also said he wouldn't have done anything differently and that ultimately Djokovic was the better player

"I did everything possible in order to get a good match against him." ■

Matildas in the Women's World Cup

Jessie McPherson

It's not every day that you see a goalkeeper with hearing impairments playing for the national Australian, Matilda's soccer team, with a high saving success rate. Mackenzie Arnold was the number 1 goalkeeper for the Matildas this year for the women's FIFA World Cup. She had nine key saves in the World Cup, conceding an average of one goal per game, as well as saving three penalties in the game against France. She is 29 years old, and was born and raised in the Gold Coast.

Mackenzie had her debut in 2012 when she was only 18, in the Australian national team for a tour of the United States. She moved around, until finally getting a contract at West Ham United, where she had a large success rate of saving, with 4.06 saves per 90 minutes (which is the 2nd in the WSL) and 100% in penalty saves (1st in the WSL). This year was Arnold's third World Cup, alongside two Olympics, where she had many saves and was idolised by many young fans.

Mackenzie later revealed to the public that she had developed hearing loss over the years. She was initially self-conscious about the fact that she had to wear hearing aids, but overcame the fear and told the public that she had hearing impairments. She refused to let this stop her from achieving her dreams, and showed strong resilience and determination. With hard work, she was able to adapt to having hearing aids and excelled in the world cup. ■

BE INSPIRING

Lucinda O'Bryan · Year 6 · Trinity Primary School, Richmond

Let me tell you an inspiring story. There were these two friends and they called each other everyday, walked to school together, shared their lunch together and many more things. They always had each other's back. Even if they fought they would apologize and stay friends. You may be asking what's inspiring about this. They never gave up on their friendship. To me that's inspiring. If you look hard enough, lots of things can be inspiring. If you get your dream job because you worked hard, that's inspiring. If you are a kind

person to anyone you meet no matter what they look like or who they are, that's inspiring. You may think to be inspiring you must be rich or that you need to make a huge impact on the world, but really, if everyone does their part and just tries to be kind then they can be inspiring. So try your hardest in everything that you do and you could inspire someone or even have a greater impact on the whole world.

If you try hard enough and look for the opportunities you could be inspiring right now. ■

MY PARENTS

Maisonnya Nguyen · Year 5 · Trinity Primary School, Richmond

My parents see something beyond my eyes
A new experience that is yet to arrive
Being the first to notice the most interesting things
Caring like a verdant tree sheltering a lone
blossoming flower from the hazardous sun
Influencing, like the breeze that flows across my
face after a tiring and hot day
Making me so much happier
Something you might not understand
It's like staring at a book and realising there's an
adventure waiting inside
Though you see my parents
I see a tree with the deepest roots. ■



Lola Smith
Prep · St Finbar's Primary School, Brighton East



Milly Morris
Year 12 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne



Anabel Bennett
Year 8 · Kolbe Catholic College

Inspiring Thoughts, Watercolour on paper



Noor Zahra
Year 10 · Catholic Regional College St Albans

I've Got Your Back

LIFE WITHOUT PARENTS

Feyi Warye · Year 8 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

Parents are like pens,
Parents can make a lasting impression on us,
Just like a pen's ink leaves a mark on paper,
But like pens, they too run out of ink,
And one day, their story can come to a brink,
Leaving us feeling disoriented and solitary,
As if we're wandering through a never-ending
maze,
As if we're a kid who lost their parents at an
amusement park,
Feeling like there's never-ending torment.

Though we feel as if we are captive in a maze,
Not knowing which path to take,
We remain in darkness,
Desperately seeking light to guide us out of this
haze,
Called life.

Though our parents may be gone,
Their unconditional love and support will
forever be with us,
Because they are the pen that wrote our life's
script. ■



Marcus Grosso
Year 12 · St Mary's College, East St Kilda



Aidan Brennan
Year 8 · St Mary's College, East St Kilda

HOPE

Cruz Ferres · Year 7 · St Mary's College, East St Kilda

I chose Darwin Nunez because he is someone I look up to and is someone I have watched for a while now.

Darwin grew up in a rough part of Uruguay, Artigas. He was very poor, and his parents earned very little. His dad was a builder, and his mum would pick up bottles off the street, Darwin grew up with his older brother Junior and often they wouldn't eat dinner but when they did it was very little. When Darwin grew older, he got a chance to go to a bigger club than the one he was at, he made the choice to go so he saved up for everything he needed and he set off for the capital, Montevideo.

When Darwin got to Montevideo, he got a cheap hotel and went to his new club early in the morning. When Darwin was laying in his bed, he was thinking of his family he missed them so much and it was only the first night he was away from them, but he kept saying to himself that he made a promise to his family that he would come back famous and rich.

Darwin started well at his new club, there were so many people watching him every game and he would ring his family nightly telling them about how he went and what he was up to.

After a couple long hardworking years Darwin got a call from a team outside of South America. He told his parents, and they were beyond excited, they were so happy for him and wished him luck as he moved to Portugal for a club called Benfica.

Darwin had to adjust because everyone spoke another language it was hard to communicate to his teammates, but he hired a language coach and soon enough got used to his new club.

Everything was going good for Darwin; he was worried though because he had a game against a big club in England but sooner or the later the day would come and it did. But something unexpected happened, he ended up drawing with the club 3-3 but he obviously must have impressed a lot of people because he ended up getting signed for Liverpool (the club he played against).

Darwin had a fantastic first game for Liverpool scoring 4 goals and impressing everyone, but everything slowly started declining. Liverpool's performance started to slip, his only teammate that he could communicate with was injured and he couldn't understand anything the coach was saying but he still tried his best. No matter how hard he tried though, his team would lose again and again and again, and he was always getting blamed it wasn't until his teammate came back and helped Darwin that Darwin felt better because he had someone to talk to again, but he needed to do his part. Darwin tried and tried and tried and, in the end, it worked out because he has built more chemistry with his teammates and is winning more and more games.

This has proved how strong Darwin is and how strong everyone else should be, if anyone tries to put you down don't listen but if you do get knocked down get back up and keep going. ■



Maya Morabito
Year 11 · St Mary's College, East St Kilda



Jack McDonald
Year 12 · St Mary's College, East St Kilda



Lincoln Dinh
Year 10 · St Mary's College, East St Kilda

CHASING DREAMS

Brandon Sun · Year 7 · St Mary's College, East St Kilda

Basketball is a sport anyone can play. It's simple, one ball, ten players on a 28 by 15-meter wooden polished court, with 3-meter-high basketball hoops with a nylon net. It sounds simple, shoot the ball, and try to score. Many people adore basketball. But making it into the league, is a whole new level. Mike is a short, 9-year-old kid from Raleigh, North Carolina. He is a lover for basketball and his idol, Steph Curry. He goes out every day to play pick-up basketball with his friends. He thinks about the propitious crowd, chanting his name. "Mike! Mike! Mike!" Problem is, he can't even make a single shot into the hoop. Mike has never got the sensation of the 'swish' sound because every time he shoots the smooth, round, leathery ball, it can't even make it to the rim. But on the other side, Steph Curry is a basketball sensation. He is a 2x time MVP, a 4x NBA champion, a NBA finals MVP, a 9x all-star, a NBA 75th Anniversary team and many more.

It was a sunny afternoon. Mike and his friends, peacefully playing around. Suddenly, two enormous, gloomy giants storm up the court, laughing at the measly kids.

"Look at this little mess," one of them said, "So useless."

"Yeah, they think that they're prosperous." The other one added. They went up to the kids and kicked the ball to another dimension. The ball was flying happily, like it was in prison.

"Hey, what is wrong with you?" Mike said.

"You guys are terrible at basketball," one of the bullies said.

"We're better than you," one of Mike's friends said.

"You're a rookie, a novice, and amateur at every game! You'll never make it into any pro team. You're making just a fool of yourself," the bully said ruthlessly. Mike cried as he couldn't believe what came out of that teenager's mouth.

As Mike was running home, sobbing, his mum surprised him with two tickets to the next Golden State Warriors game. Mike changed his emotions that second with tears of joy.

Two weeks later. The stadium was huge. Bars, shops, restaurants, everything. During halftime, people were chosen to have a chance of their lifetime, this time, it was Mike.

Standing in shock, Mike stormed onto the court with joy. He got the chance to win \$500,000. This was way over what Mike expected. He got ready, gripping the ball tightly, he shot it. It slowly moves further and further away from the basket. Instead of making it in, it hits the mascot. Many "boos" echoed around the whole court, as Mike sadly walked off. But then, his icon, idol, Steph was right in front of him. Mike couldn't believe it. The person he liked for years, the reason he started playing basketball, was right in front of him.

"No way, it's you!" Mike shouted.

"Yes, I saw your shot, it could definitely improve." Steph added.

"But I wanna quit." Mike said.

"Why?"

"Because I was told that I'm terrible at the game, and I will never make it into the NBA."

"Well, you're still young, many legends from the NBA usually were very poor when they were young. I am blessed because my father was a basketball player as well. But you need to learn something, 'It's about work and glory, and what's inside of you'."

Twenty years later. Mike is a living sensation. With multiple rings, MVP awards and one of the best players of all time. His hard work finally paid off and he will never forget what his idol has said to him. ■

PLANTING A SEED IN THE SOIL OF THE HEART

Sarahmeianna Puipui-Tonise · Year 9 · Kolbe Catholic College

Click!
Opening the gold-plated pendant laced around her neck, she reached out her arm to clasp the morning skies in her hand. *Today I am going to make a difference*, was today's notion. Celia grabbed her bag and coat before humming on her way out of the door, into the silent labyrinth of her rural city which was incredibly monotoned and motionless. Her hometown was a disconnected community, which utterly lacked expression and unity of the people. Even though people were content with the quality of life, houses provided them with the security of a cage, never realising what wonders awaited outside for them. You would hear that buzzing chatter from inside their houses, but never inside the heart; that was the sort of place that this city was like.

"Wait up!" The blue bird darted to the girl's companionship, releasing loud chirps that signaled for her to slow down. It was a *fairy wren*, her comrade who stayed beside her throughout the arduous course of her existence.

"Say, have you heard of a place full of colour and creativity? Some art museums are like that," chimed the bird

If only a place like that truly existed...

"Well ... You can always create a place like that." The friend encircled the girl, challenging her closedness to seek a sense of opening.

That's it...! She opened her straw satchel and held out the crayons and chalk that had been sedimented at the bottom of her bag.

Even if some people are happy, I will be! Celia wasn't an exceptional artisan but had spurred all her sentiment to this single piece and with the aid of her friend, it made it worthy of even being called "art".

"Let us wait for tomorrow!" trilled the birdling as they both walked home.

That night she clutched strongly onto the necklace, before fastening it shut.

Goodnight...

Tingling her senses was the warm strokes of the sun beam that escaped the crevasses of the thick carpet curtain. "Come and look!" The distinct voice of her friend called out to her.

Celia arose and immediately glanced outside the window to observe what had entranced her friend with such excitement. And she glimpsed people's fascination for the homemade art museum she

had personally and roughly crafted, she felt satisfied that it evoked connection within her local community. Feeling the heavy opened ornament still latched upon her neck, she couldn't help but weigh in the emptiness of her deeds.

"Say this is amazing, but what if we can make it even better?"

How so...? She contemplated for a while.

"They say a certain cat dwells within a secret garden party, guests invited are flowers of immense beauty and story. Say ... I trust you will be able to save us, right?"

Save you? What do you mean by that?

"Pssst over here!" Her thoughts were immediately interrupted, and Celia followed her friend across the narrow staircase, into a paved path in a tucked away garden which had been sealed off by an assortment of garland.

A letter concealed within the grass read: *seed of happiness, may you share its seed in the growth.*

She plucked and gathered a collection of plants, allowing the accumulation of scents to waft elegantly into her nostrils. Awaiting a moment longer so she could indulge all sensations in appreciation of this place, acquiring every fragment of touch, sight, and smell that infused her.

The colourful pansies echoed the effervescent past, family, love and inspiration, while the poppies harboured the violent recollection of war. The lilies exhibited the stubborn nature of humans, as it simply tried to survive in the harshness of winter. She thought how much the lily resembled human futility and the bleak possibility of even befriending one, one day.

Exhaling emotion from her lips, she smiled so sadly.

"You know the recipe for creating a garden?" The four-beat gait trudged along the flowers and startled Celia. But now that the cat had uttered such words, she genuinely wondered, *would I ever be able to recreate this beauty?*

"It's quite simple actually, all one needs is a solitary flower and a letter." The keeper of this domain revealed its name to be Juno, and he had been yearning for a moment in which he could grow his garden further.

She accepted her duty and sought her way back into town delivering flowers and notes on each doorstep until the sun fell to dusk and into the night. This time Celia gripped onto her chest,

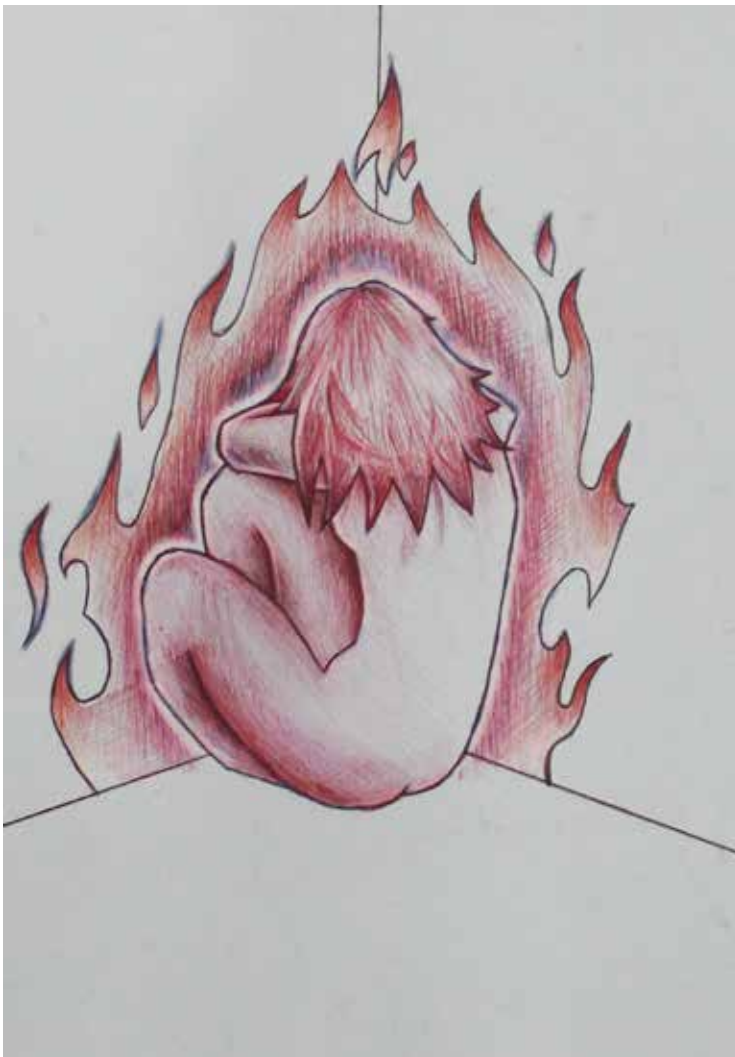
realising that there wasn't any necklace in the first place, before slumbering once again.

That fragrance brewed into her snout, slowly awakening her consciousness, promptly noticing the flares of colour and beauty that prospered throughout her room. On her nightstand stood a glass vase full of flowers like dahlias, orchids, carnations and roses. And as she snuck a peek outside her window, she saw a place like no other. *They were right...* Her quiet village really did transform into a verdant haven and home.

Feeling satisfied she went on with her day as per usual, although something felt amiss ... Her friend! Unlatching the closures of the birdcage to find the very seed of the recipe; a simple message scribed upon the sheet of paper beside a single lily.

“Thank you friend ...”

Perhaps this allowed little Celia to delve deeper into the world of the unknown to further stretch out the horizons of her imagination and influence. ■



James Hazzouri
Year 11 · Kolbe Catholic College

Blue Nude, Pencil on Paper

ADAMANTINE

Filifili Puipui-Tonise · Year 12 · Kolbe Catholic College

It was there, not on a television screen. Or the headlines of a *Duckling's Daily* newspaper. That evening, that night, that moment. He slipped it between the paper slit and readied a cube of dark wax, letting it liquify above the heat of the candle's flame.

His round, black eyes glaze over the seal spoon, taking in the familiar scent of vanilla and the low hum of the television. The rising vapour of the now hot wax swirls in the dim light, waiting to rise and escape by the window, up and away with the tenors of the nightly wind. There are bright lights in the far distance. He could tell even without contacts.

Francis ensures his hand is firm when sealing the letter. He could've easily licked the edges of the envelope, but he knew it ensured they received it with forewarning.

The truth was, even Francis having denied his intent for the seal, he felt his chest hollow for the photos and handwritten pages in the envelope. It was in his best interest to have it sent at the right time, a time for which they could readily embrace it.

'How did it go, Francis? What happened, Francis?'

A gentle downpour had graced the city the day before. If Francis hadn't the daily forecast on his smart watch, perhaps he would've been drenched. He pondered what she might've thought then. Would she think he came in a rush? Would she have swatted him back home to complete another opinion piece on *New Ways to Spend Less*?

The high-rise buildings shadow his every step like a swell of ants beneath a canopy. He paces himself along the wet concrete as rain gently hits against the mound of his umbrella, his grip on the handle weakening with every step.

You're such a little girl – put your man face on! There, there. But the *Duckling's Daily* is already head on with their newly released issue, *A Wave of Effeminate Masculines*. Francis scoffs at a distant billboard of a woman, postured right in the face of the advertisement holding a cylindrical red stick of lip gloss. Her lips pry open like an elastic band.

There's a sheltered countertop with golden, metal heart-shaped Lindt chocolate boxes open for consumption below the billboard, but no ready man stalls for love.

"Would you like to try our *brand new* ice-cream flavour?" There's a woman in a heart-print apron holding a bouquet of wafer cones with two hands. They're filled with solidified milk chocolate,

strawberry ice-cream and hazelnuts; a vehement overload of sugar. There are many more golden accents along the streets of Melbourne.

"I'll buy one." He remembers the softness of the rosy petals in his palms, brushing gently against his chin. The lady behind the counter smiles and nods, secretly taking in the tangy caramel of the stall next door.

It was love, the one thing that manifested colour in his eyes, he was sure.

"How does it go, again?"

"It goes a little like this..."

It was quite a dear memory. He hummed the nursery rhyme in the same iambic hexameter. He imagined her gentle hand entwined with his little palm as she crouched down beside him with tender eyes. They were big and dark like his, like unfiltered ink.

He had written to her many times over the years, although it really could've been a simple phone call. When he'd gotten married, when he'd first had children, when he felt his lowest at life's points. When he found a new job near his apartment. When his article was first published for public reception.

That adamant passion of yours is what people love about you, my young Francis.

He had heard the sentence plenty of times growing up. Is that how it went?

The rain began to pace slowly. It always amused Francis when he saw individuals pull down and shake the canopies of their umbrellas in the same moment together, as if it were bound to happen. Was it really bound to happen? He knew in his heart she never wanted him to tread the lonely sidewalk, though it wasn't so lonely with other umbrellas held in hands.

"Polynesia's *Amos* is only a few miles away from destruction," this was the one he'd written a few weeks before, glass of coconut water by his company laptop and a few photographs and witness accounts scattered across the table. A couple of days ago it was "What to buy for your *Sweetheart* this *February Fourteen*".

It's already February Fourteen. They're pleading for you to buy up their diamond earrings and lording sweetnesses. They're wanting you to take pictures of the tall street lamps that dazzle in the air like opalescent moons. It was all there before his eyes. The roses, the new ice-cream flavour,

L'Oréal Paris' much awaited *Crimson lip gloss*. It was there, like it was in the article.

She was adorned in the same valiant smile, that same lachrymose smile, all in colour. A blessing. Her cheeks were tinted pink as she embraced the bouquet of roses. The grey picture of the mother he remembered slowly inked away by her radiant smile, her amber pools of honey, her nose gently dotted with a collection of freckles and blemishes.

I'm sorry.

"Sorry? You're 'sorry' in your letters all the time. *'I'm sorry I can't visit you right now...'*, *'Sorry for not coming by'*."

"How about you tell them, Francis. Tell your brothers and sisters how much I love them, alright?"

He heard the crush of rain with every passing vehicle that he could no longer go on. Francis felt his heart pierce his chest, feeling the convex plastic slide between the flesh of his eyes. To have blatantly spent the past years behind a computer screen, behind closed doors and windows, eyes furiously fixed on what has everyone rocking up against their television screens. His own mother was there, and there in the last of her moments.

I love you.

The colours in his eyes became less saturated, the city skylines resorting back to their stoic pictures, Melbourne's *February-Fourteen Fad* had diluted back to its bleary greyscale.

Her inclined waist to sear a last kiss on Francis' cheek was something adamantine, something saccharine. At last, he let the pint of his umbrella fall to the ground, allowing the rain's impertinence to swallow his rivulets of tears. ■

Statement:

My story 'Adamantine' is a reminiscence of Francis, a journalist with grayscale colour-blindness, reflecting the time of his mother's death (mostly referred to as "she" in the story). The story unfolds backwards with Francis sealing off a letter for his family elsewhere, progressing to the moment of immense grief for Francis. The story's told against a world of heavy commercialism and 'distractions' for the commercial day, Valentine's Day. In relation to the prompt, 'Inspire', I wanted to juxtapose the commercial world against our own personal lives.

In my final message, the story questions who you keep close to heart in times of grief, because those are the ones who truly inspire us.



Frankie Massa
Year 10 · Kolbe Catholic College

Where I Go, Digital Art



Jack Hanna
Year 8 · Kolbe Catholic College

Soccer Dreams, Posca
Marker on card



Jayda Cardamone
Year 8 · Kolbe Catholic College

Footy Dreams, Mixed
Media on Paper



Holly Englezakis
Year 7 · Kolbe Catholic College

Thinking, Acrylic on canvas



Hannah Sampang
Year 8 · Kolbe Catholic College

*My favorite room, Posca
Marker on card*

AFFECTION OF AN IDOL

Vincent Vu · Year 10 · Catholic Regional College St Albans

“Hey guys, your super idol K-Kyun here to bring you another stream!”

I glimpse at her forever shining face behind the monitor. She greets her fans with a warm smile and a gentle wave. I prepare myself to simply relax to her stream while she starts to play (insert videogame here). I try to loosen my thoughts in my head and not think of anything to worry about.

“Timothy! Can you for once clean your room? It’s only getting worse by the minute. When I’m dead, no one is there to help for your own! And stop looking at that brain rotting girl, get yourself an actual girlfriend!”

As my mum slams the door with fading footsteps, I look back at my room where the monitor’s light pieces through the dark cave of my room. An unmade bed, the long closed and forgotten curtains and the shirts, pants and underwear lying around on the floor like landmines. I don’t necessarily care about what my mum said about cleaning because of my lack of motivation and will, but that last bit really bugged me. I have always been a fan of K-Kyun ever since she debuted a few years ago, and I’ve always seen her as a passionate, young streamer dedicated to pursuing her destiny. Her sheer will in streaming nearly every day is astounding. I continue to watch every one of her streams. But everyone else I know seems to think the contrary. Recently, word must have spread about my so-called obsession at school, and a few bullies keep calling me a degenerate loser for someone who doesn’t exist and is too delusional to see reality. But that is only the front cover. K-Kyun has continued to give me hope and actually made me happy when everything around is going awry. If only people could realise this is what I wished. All of these thoughts quickly cloud my head. I regain focus and watch K-Kyun alone in my dark room at night.

The week went by, I continue to be nagged by my mum for the chores I never do. It’s a Friday afternoon, school has just finished, but it seems that more and more people are gathering to mock me for who I watch. At this rate, it is getting on my nerves. I walk into my room where the curtains block the afternoon sun to ease myself. It is my sole safe haven for me after all. As I continued to lay on the messy blanket, my pocket rumbled. My hand responsively went in and grabbed my phone. It’s from K-Kyun. She must have tweeted something. It is probably some merch advertising I theorised.

“Hey guys, I’m currently feeling a bit ill right now, but I’ll be sure to come back strong for you all! -K-Kyun”

Oh, she’s currently sick. I don’t necessarily recall

a time before where she had to take a break due to an illness, but I suppose that everyone at some point will get sick. Then something immediately clicked for me. She won’t be streaming anymore for a while now. I have got nothing to do now for the rest of the day. I have been keeping up with all my homework, and I don’t feel the need to play any of my videogames. I lay back down on my bed, staring directly at the seemingly high ceiling and releasing a sigh. How could I live several days with her?

“Tim! Get out of your room and water the garden.”

Mum’s shout muffled through the thick door. I normally don’t do anything for mum because of how she treats me, but I feel like otherwise I would be a burden if I essentially do nothing. The door squeaked open as I walked downstairs.

“Where have you been all my life? C’mon, get outside”

Mum’s head continues to follow my movement. With a hose on my right hand, I spray mum’s large flower bed with cold water. The sun’s light created a small rainbow in tandem with the water. I rarely look at the assortment of flowers. All I could think about is if she is ok. I shouldn’t worry this much, it’s only something minor, right? My senses awaken again as I look at the flowers. They slowly open up to enjoy the water, almost as if they are smiling about it. Each one in such vibrant colours. So much is reminiscent of her. I feel a strange sense of purpose in watering these flowers. Who knew this is what it’s like outside.

A few weeks pass, mum has seemed to be more content with how I’m doing all her chores, shopping, mowing the front yard, yet no update on K-Kyun’s status. It’s been a month. I barely seem to remember her, but every time I do, I feel a grudge in my stomach. I always seem to have soft visions of her when I dream. I had woken up from bed, it’s around 8 and the room is contently lit up with no electricity. I was about to get up when my bedside table grumbled. Has she finally recovered? I check the tweet unknowingly to see what to read.

“Our beloved streamer has unfortunately been lost due to her fatal illness. Rest well and keep smiling, K-Kyun.”

And just like that, grief is the only thing to exist. “No” I said repeatedly, “It can’t be”, but with every sentence I said, it felt like my soul was slowly leaving. How could I live knowing she isn’t here? Birds flew past my window, chirping. I look out to see the bright fireball in the sky staring at me, drying my tears. There is a future ahead of me, and I should keep smiling. ■

THE INSPIRATION FOUND WITHIN

Audrey Gerada · Year 10 · Catholic Regional College St Albans

How often have we waited for the flame to spark?
Constantly waiting to meet our benchmark.
Benchmark, what benchmark?
The goal we set that is vividly in our head
And drives us to accomplish what lies ahead.

With our brushes in hand, our lively colours ignite,
On our blank, white canvas, our visions take flight,
In other words, inspiration weaves a beautiful
tapestry,
Of emotions, tales of untold history.

In the arms of others, it finds its safest home,
Where beauty tends to thrive and our spirits
roam,
From the highest of mountains to oceans deep,
Inspiration steps into its timeless sweep.

In our acts of kindness, inspiration vividly gleams,
Igniting our hope,
Sometimes even shattering our dreams,
It urges us to take that scary, nerve-racking leap,
To begin to nurture our love and compassion to
keep.

In my large smile, on my innocent face,
Inspiration seems to leave its trace,
That spark that tends to light up the darkest
night,
Is our ray of hope, and our guiding light.

I used to sit on the trampoline,
Looking up to the sky,
Wondering what would be.
My life was easy,
Nothing worried me.
I could dream of all the possibilities.

I'm inspired by the girl who's me in two
generations.
Who's faced all my fears with motivation.
Hit the benchmark I set for myself.
Words written about me on a bookshelf.

Aspire. Inspire.
I aspire to be that girl.
I'm hopefully inspired by her. ■

THE FIRE WILL NEVER EXPIRE

Stella Mom · Year 8 · Catholic Regional College St Albans

Verse 1:

Went up to my old man,
said, 'inspiration is a wildfire'.
Burning higher.
Only thing is; the fire will expire.
Got told 'To inspire you need a lighter'.
But there wasn't a match.

Chorus:

As the breeze hits your face,
The world is your canvas, you express.
Don't be afraid to make a mess, ain't no one there
to impress.
Now I'm going to confess, the fire will never
expire, don't you perspire.

Verse 2

Look around, the world is so bright.
Had enough? Now ya gotta rewire.
Feel the sparks, fly so high.
Take those risks and don't be shy.
Let them inspire what you require.

Chorus:

As the breeze hits your face,
The world is your canvas, you express.
Don't be afraid to make a mess, ain't no one there
to impress.
Now I'm going to confess, the fire will never
expire, don't you perspire.
Write your story, and don't retire.
We gotta look closely before we rewire. ■

BEFORE IT FADES AWAY

Jessica Tran · Year 9 · Catholic Regional College St Albans

It was 1992 summertime. My dearest friend Lola was the only one I recalled even though I had lost any memory of them. She was the one who had always inspired me and driven me to achieve my best; but, everything came crashing down when I was involved in a car crash in the summer of 1992. She had long wavy brown hair and huge, wide brown eyes that you could get lost in if you gazed into them for too long. I had no recall after being in a coma for two weeks. Twenty-eight years had gone, and it was now summer 2018; I still remember every single detail.

Even my own parents had abandoned me to die on the streets; Lola was the only person who would stand by me and lend support. I was eternally thankful that Lola was the one individual that I had left. She continued to assist me every day until I was able to proceed around independently and restore my memories. I was confused at first and all I wanted to do was visit my parents, but Lola had already told everything to me about what had occurred that day. I gradually came to understand that after the tragedy, my own parents had just abandoned me to perish. Without Lola and her parents, I would have been abandoned to perish on the streets.

Everyone, including those outside the family, could see that my parents never loved or cared about me. So, when the accident occurred, they left me to die on my own in the space of only a few seconds. I probably would have died if Lola's parents hadn't discovered me. I offer a daily prayer that it won't

ever happen again. Lola taught me how to stand on my own two feet, know what I'm worth, not allow anyone to get in my way, and in some ways take care of myself. Because she encouraged me to strive for excellence, I treasured and adored her dearly—not just as a friend, but also as a sister. Who says a family must be linked by blood?

But when Lola was involved in a plane crash and died, everything came tumbling down. My heart was broken, my world had come to an end, and I was at a loss for words. I had sobbed nonstop for three weeks and had lost all will to live. What should I have done? The one person I had loved and who had helped me survive and grow into a better version of myself had passed away, and I was unable to save her in return for what she had done for me. If only I had prevented her from boarding the plane, or if it had been me instead of her. I deeply regret it, but I was aware that Lola would have preferred a different result for me.

So, I put in a lot of effort in my studies, made the honour roll, graduated as valedictorian, got into one of the most prestigious universities in the world, and decided to become a doctor in order to save lives. I've been a doctor for forty-three years and twenty-eight of those years have passed. Every day, I give appreciation to God for what Lola did for me, but as time passes, my memories begin to fade. This bothers me because I don't want to lose sight of Lola, but the memories are vanishing bit by bit over time. ■

SNOW

Willa Davidson · Year 2 · St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

I am in a snowy place.
Cold and frozen, windy and icy.
I hear the skis scratching on the shiny white snow.
The warm hot chocolate melting my icy, cold hands.
On the cold, windy days, the chairlift rocks from side to side.
I feel the sweat dripping down on my back in my snow gear. ■

NATURE

Mila Picking · Year 4 · St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

Walking down the forest path
Using your senses to feel the calmness within you,
Looking up at the tall trees towering over you.
Feeling the moist air going through your hair
Exploring the animals making different sounds
Feeling inspired ■

CAVE

Gwen Bartley · Year 2 · St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

I am in a dark, gloomy cave.
I can see frightening black bats everywhere.
I can see disgusting filthy spiders crawling up my legs.
I hear the screeching of bats echoing in my ears.
I feel my feet sinking into the gooey, brown mud
I am scared. ■

GENTLY

William Howard · Year 2 · St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

Gently
Gently, I hold my sister's hand
Gently, I pull the curtain closed.
Gently, I pat the cat
Gently, I lifted the precious necklace
But most gently of all, my parents give me a hug
Gently ■

HAPPILY

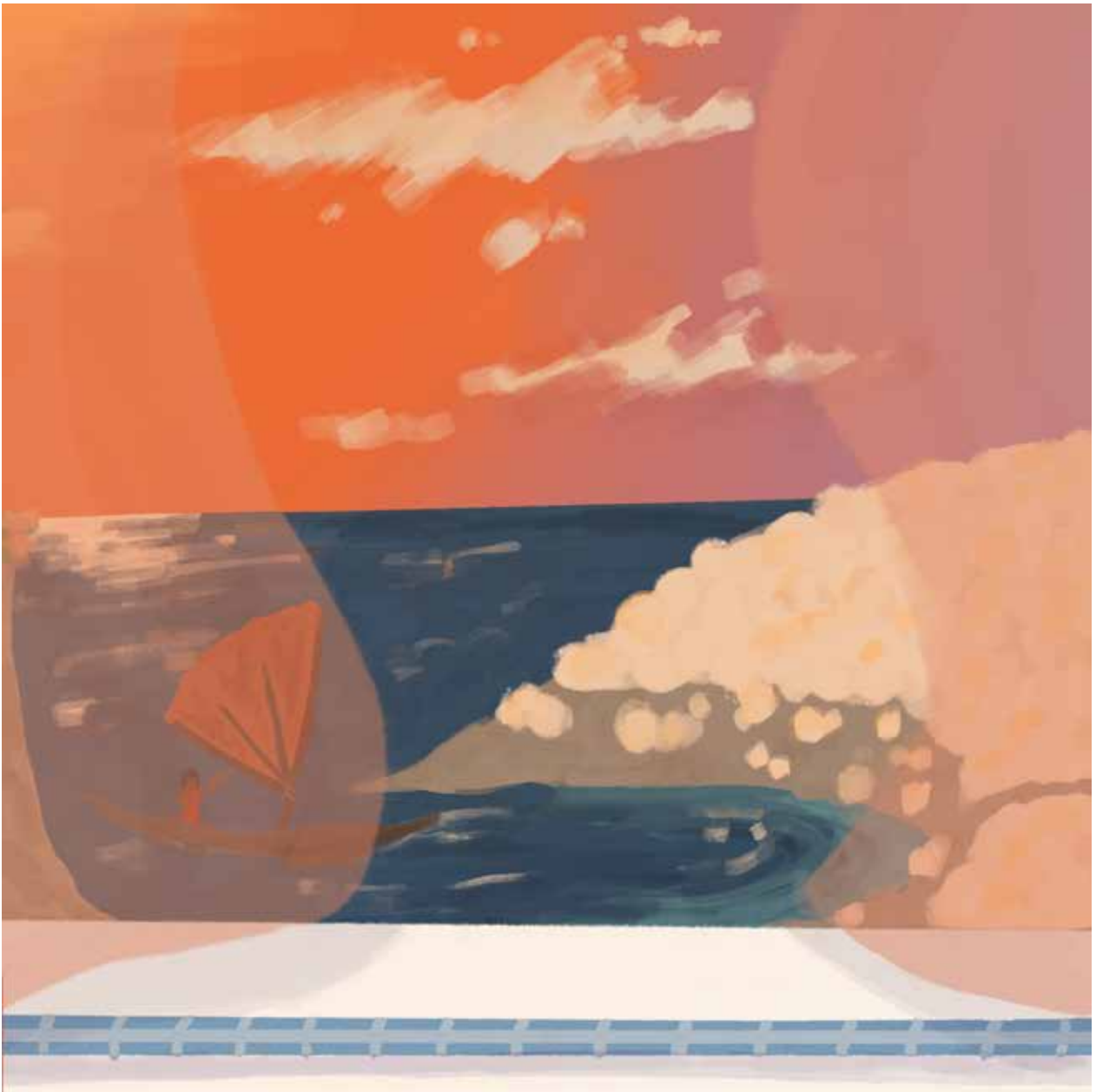
Teddy Power · Year 2 · St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

Happily
Happily, I run down the street
Happily, I smile at my friend.
Happily, I write a poem
Happily, I watch TV
Happily, I play with my friends.
But most happily, I play with my yo yo
Happily ■

INSPIRATION IS...

Bobby Cookesley · Year 3 · St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

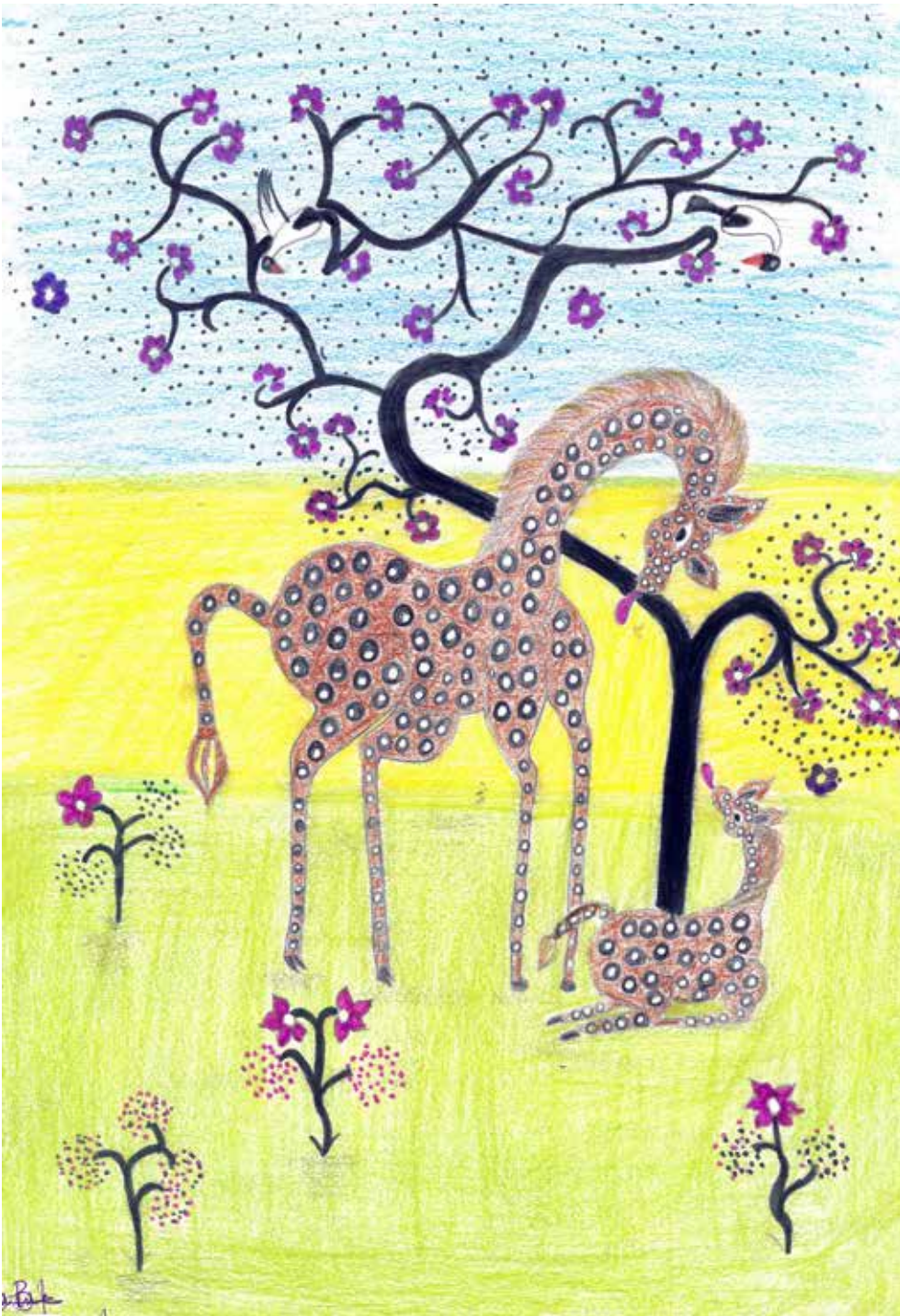
Inspiration is shining light into another soul's shadow.
It's an image that boosts your inner creativity.
It's authentic, unique and precious.
So be inspirational. ■



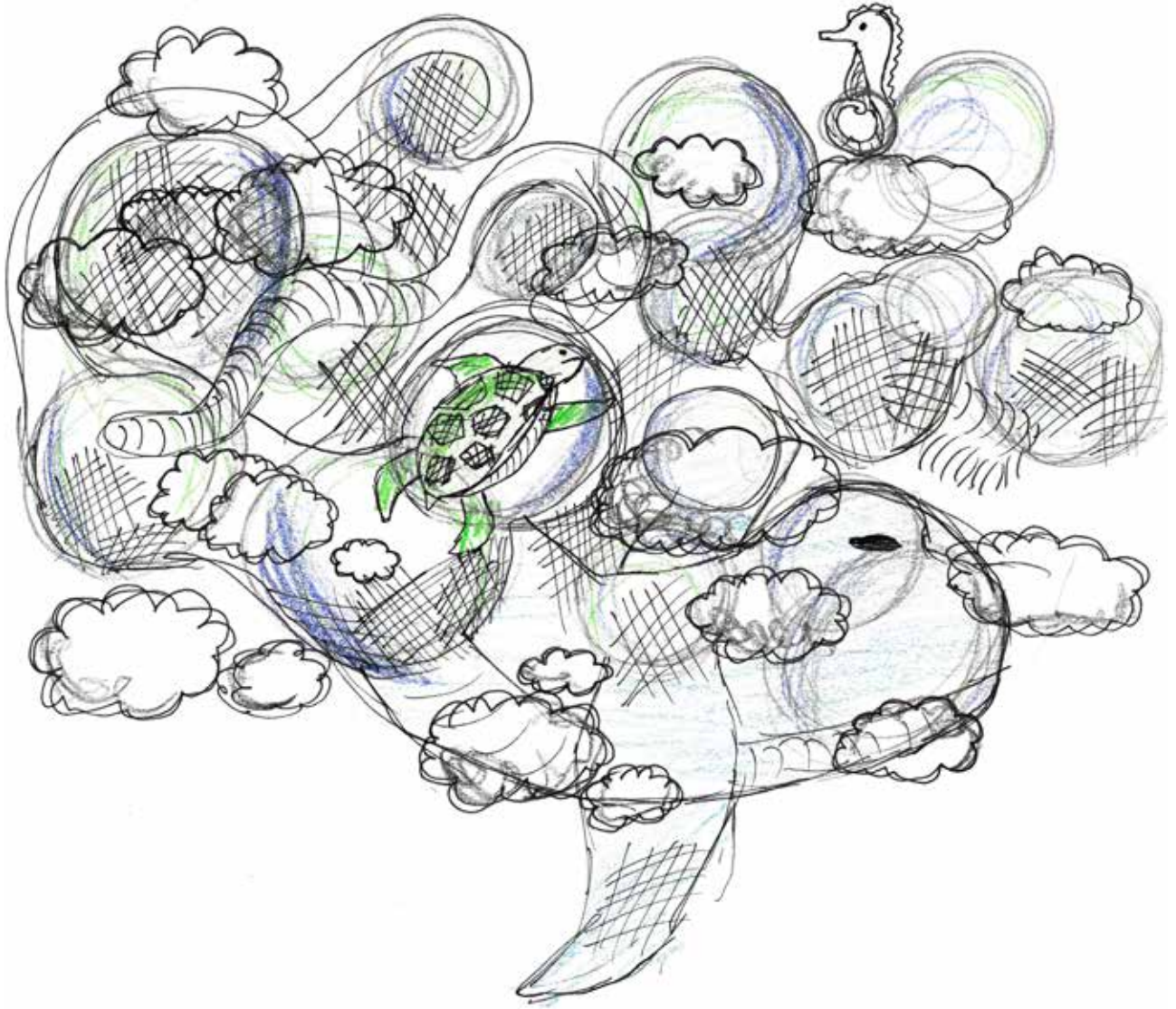
Ruby Sakano
Year 10 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne



Belle Reilly
Year 7 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne



Bravil Kirwa
Year 8 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne



Phoebe Chan
Year 7 · St Peter's College, Cranbourne

THE MORPHIN GRID

Ethan Dingle · Year 8 · Simonds Catholic College

In the cold, dark abyss, a spark of life is brought upon the vacant void.

Whoosh.

Flashing around the darkness, bright colours of red, pink, yellow, purple, and blue are soaring past and around an empty space. I look down, and all I can see is a glowing orb, but I am green.

Suddenly, a burst of life is cast upon the empty space.

I am still flying and zipping around, dodging every outburst. Bright orbs are being connected with similar bright wires all around the space, almost like a grid pattern. The grid is now moving, as if a breath is passing through its body.

We come to a sudden stop, and the grid changes and morphs around us, glowing in different colours as bright as three hundred suns. In the large wires, multiple colours are being sent through into the space around us.

Suddenly, the grid shatters for a split second, and I emerge along with five other humanoid beings from the empty space. The grid opens and presents us armour. The armour is six sets of identical knights' armour with a gold trim. Unusually, each armour has a coloured highlight and a cape wrapped around it. My highlight is green, and I notice everyone has been given different colours. Along with the armour, each of us is granted a long white and gold staff that gleams in the soft light of the grid.

Each of us starts to put on our armour. As I put on my own armour, I look around and see the others placing on their armour in unison. As I'm putting my pieces of armour on, I feel a strange sense that I'm taking a test and failing.

The others place on their helmets as I am still frantically placing on my gauntlets. How did they know what to do? Was I chosen by mistake?

I place on my own helmet and grab a hold of my staff. Suddenly, we connect with the staffs, illuminating our veins with the same colour as our capes.

"Welcome, you have been chosen to become the Morphin Masters. Your first mission is to collect followers who will help in your journeys across the cosmos.

The booming voice beckoned us. The grid now seems... empty.

Red steps forward and seems to know what to do now. With their head held high, Red pulls his staff

down, and a portal of sorts opens. They all seem to know this is the right thing to do. How?

I see everyone else walk through the portal, but I feel uncomfortable. I don't know who I am or how I got here, but everyone else seems fine with that. I try to think back to how I got here, but all I remember is the grid. I'm now alone in this vast plain, the portal spewing mist ominously. I then realize I don't know their names either.

My heart is filled with guilt as I think I'm making this all about me.

"Preposterous!" the grid yells back at me.

Its voice is now different somehow, but I still know who said it.

"You mustn't think those thoughts. I chose you for your great compassion, not because you can follow rules. In your past, you were Viridis Potentia. You were brought here because you chose to follow your heart and stand up for those who could not stand for themselves. Now you can stand for galaxies and inspire others to follow their own hearts."

I think back once again, but now it is clear I know who I was. I am connected to this grid; I am different because I care, and I was chosen for that. I respond.

"Thank you for everything."

"Of course, Master Green."

I rush into the portal and see the other masters floating above everyone else at the large crowded market. An orange alien-like man in a dark red cloak runs past with a younger bird-like person in a similar cloak. I notice they are running and see a man in rusted armour chasing after them. The orange man seems to struggle, so I lead him out of the way and into a small clearing. The man asks.

"What are you?"

"Your only hope."

I hold my staff to the sky, and a bolt of lightning strikes a rock. The rock is now energized and glowing in many colours. I then hit the rock, and inside is a geode filled with white crystals. In the crystals were eleven gems that look like they are frozen in ice. I speak.

"These are the energems; they fill anyone who bonds with them the powers of the Morphin Grid. Now take these and find worthy people to become the Power Rangers."

"Thank you, but how will we get these out?"

“Take this.”

I hand the alien a silver staff with a yellow crystal on the top encased in silver.

“This will allow you to use magic and connect to the Morphin Grid.”

I open a portal for them to get away from the rusted villain. As they hop through the portal, the alien says.

“My name is Keeper; this is Zenowing. Thank you for everything.”

“No, thank you.”

I open a portal, and the others follow me back into the Morphin Grid. ■

THE RIDE OF YOUR LIFE

Tyson Vujaklija · Year 7 · Simonds Catholic College

Today, the sirens shine as bright as a light
just like you shine bright in the night
for this is the ride of your life

The sirens of death and life
they pierce the ears like a knife
for this is the ride of your life

They pierce through the heavens and lights tonight
you could die, or you could fight
for this is the ride of your life. ■

THE WAR TO END ALL WARS

Kenny Hyunh · Year 7 · Simonds Catholic College

Gun shots raining down to another.
War is just a storm that rages across all lands.
Wars never end but this one will.

The whistle signals the attack.
Our battalion runs across
No Man's Land
like a marathon.

Machine guns open fire.

War is a fight to the death, with no mercy shown to any side.
We storm into their trenches,
Engaging in hand-to-hand combat.

Soldiers surrender on mass.
We treat them as if they were our brothers.
Day takes us into night.

The night comes, but we are fearful of a sneak attack.
War always shows the true nature of somebody. ■

INVASION

Kenny Hyunh · Year 7 · Simonds Catholic College

Overwhelming force
Heading to unknown lands
Taking what it sees. ■

FROM MOAMA TO THE WORLD

Jack Mitrovski · Year 9 · Whitefriars College

In the quiet country town of Moama, there lived a boy named Randolph. From a young age, Randolph was greatly intrigued by all the beautiful architecture in his hometown. Every morning he would wake up early and stroll through the empty streets admiring the distinctive and unique houses and buildings, but his favourite part was when he got to cross the bridge that towered over the Murray River, this bridge inspired him to create his own designs.

As Randolph became older, his passion for architecture intensified and he decided to sketch all of his ideas down onto paper, this caught the attention of his father who agreed to supply Randolph with the materials to bring his ideas to life.

One day, he and his father set up a workstation in their garage in order for him to begin. Randolph spent days perfecting his first product, a coaster, but this wasn't any ordinary coaster. If you looked closely, Randolph had spent this entire time carving out small intricate details into the wood. His parents were extremely proud of Randolph's creation and decided to enter it into a local arts competition. After a week of waiting, it was announced that he had won and gained \$1000 of prize money. Randolph used this money to pursue his passion for designing and creating products.

After receiving so much attention from the competition Randolph moved on to create bigger and more challenging products, such as chairs, tables, and bookshelves, with each product he

produced, he carved his signature engraving on the side, the same one that was on his first ever coaster, the more things he made the attention toward his creations grew and grew. Until one day he received a letter, a request for him to build someone a dining table.

The anonymous sender had requested for a large octagonal table made of pine wood with a stripe of jarrah running through the middle, Randolph continued to read the note until he reached the bottom, the sender had offered to pay him \$5000 to make it. Randolph immediately got to work, he wanted his first customer's request to be perfect, he spent weeks perfecting the product and began carefully carving his signature engraving onto it before putting a clear finish over the entire piece.

After completing the table, he delivered it to the customer and got paid \$6000 since the buyer was so pleased with the outcome, after this, letters began to flood Randolph's mailbox with more and more requests, until he finally started his own business. His business expanded across the entire country, he would make the products in his workshop in Moama, and ship them off across to his other shops for customers to pick up. Because of this his fame grew and everyone wanted one of his unique handmade products. He became well known across the world and even opened up some stores in the U.S and Asia. Randolph continued to create these products until he was 70, when he decided to settle down and retire, passing his business down to his son. ■



Sabrina Calidonna
Year 7 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor



Holly Polidano
Year 7 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor



Cristian Tizzani
Year 7 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor



Klara Sakic
Year 7 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor



Kayden Korunoski
Year 7 · Catholic Regional College North Keilor



Paddy Gamba
Year 11 · De La Salle College

Photography

INSPIRE - CREATIVE STORY

Jack Daly · Year 7 · De La Salle College

Fairy Tales are known across the globe as entertainment to children. While they are great entertainment for toddlers, it is rare that they ever have little deeper meaning to them... any useful message that makes them worthwhile to the brain. I would like to explore a long forgotten fairy tale that not only acts as entertainment but teaches a valuable ideology. Now we better begin before time runs short.

Throughout the hidden twists and turns of the Earth lives a hidden world; a world fueled by creativity and imagination, a world – even – a sanctuary for artists, writers, musicians and even better, creators and dreamers. The inhabitants of this world sought refuge from the modern world plagued by monotony, creative stagnation and people who never push against the status quo. This dream land is known as Carbasa Somniantis.

At the heart of Carbasa Somniantis stood the Luminary Tree. The grand tree holds a googol of majestic leaves, which glowed with vibrant colours. Legend has it that those who could draw inspiration from the Luminary Tree would be able to create true creative masterpieces that touch the hearts of all who would encounter them. However, the key word in the previous sentence was, 'legend'. The Luminary Tree was once a beacon of all creativity but is now only known as a myth. Carbasa Somniantis no longer is the refuge from soulless art, it has been invaded by the very people which it was meant to hide from. As more and more soulless artists started living in Carbasa Somniantis, the Luminary Tree used its ancient magic to grow pure nature around it as protection from monotony. Soon the beacon that the Luminary Tree was became hidden and almost seemingly non-existent.

In the once magical land, lived a young girl named Aria. Aged 14, Aria was a tall girl with a long mane of fiery red hair, which naturally made her stand out in the population of Carbasa Somniantis. The young girl has always possessed a natural gift for the musical arts and as long as she could remember, Aria has wanted nothing more than to compose such a beautiful melody that would truly represent Carbasa Somniantis and the Luminary Tree. See, Aria was one of the few that knew well of and believed the legend of the Luminary Tree. Since just 7-years-old Aria would search high and low for the Luminary Tree. Aria's heart was heavy with the weight of her own self-doubt. She felt trapped in a creative rut and struggled to find the inspiration

she needed to compose her masterpiece. Aria's problem was one that only the legendary Luminary Tree would be able to fix.

Soon Aria's quests for the Luminary Tree become fruitful. She stumbled across the tree that could not be mistaken. The handsome tree stood tall; the rich dark brown trunk was pristine. Many thick healthy branches grew from the tree and held majestic family of leaves that had a vibrant glow. Aria had been imagining this day for years, or at least what she thought would be this day. Aria expected a sudden rush of inspiration, she expected ideas surging through her heard, she expected a sudden changing thought. But it did not come. Aria stood in front of the grand tree for 30 long minutes, and little happened.

The very thing Aria had denied for her whole life had just been proved correct and it was because of her. Her insides stopped swirling and churning and instead felt like they had stopped working completely. Fighting back tears, Aria stormed away from the ordinary tree, she didn't know where she was going, but she knew it would be better than staring at a useless tree. Through the once enchanting landscapes of Carbasa Somniantis, she stumbled upon an old, forgotten theater nestled among trees and bushes. Curiosity overcame her, and she ventured inside only to discover a worn-out music box sitting on a dusty shelf. Intrigued, she wound it up, and as the music filled the air, the theater came to life. And so did she, her previously fallen spirits were rising again.

From the stage emerged a troupe of mystical performers. Each performer held a unique instrument. The mystical performers were good at their mysterious job that Aria was oblivious to. The performers whisked her away onto the stage and into the conductor's place. Infront of Aria floated a conductor's wand. She reluctantly grabbed the wand. The performers sat in their chairs and held their instruments in resting position. She waved the – no – her wand and a short sharp wave of music blasted through the stage. A smile danced on the corner of Aria's lips as she waved her wand again, this time she didn't stop. The performers playing and Aria's conducting made the perfect symphony, something unimaginable. As she continued conducting, she realised something. She didn't need a tree for inspiration, the inspiration was in her the whole time. She just needed to believe in herself and try. ■



Jordan Filopoulos
Year 11 · De La Salle College



Ryan Salmon
Year 11 · De La Salle College



Michala Sacco
Year 8 · St Mary's College, East St Kilda



Ciena Sampson
Year 11 · St Mary's College, East St Kilda

BORN ON THE MURRAY RIVER

Divinia Kihara · Year 8 · Marymede Catholic College

I grew by the Murray,
the river of life,
along with my brothers
and creatures who sought shelter,
under the gums and their branches.

The coloured creatures on two legs,
hang around here hunting and dancing to mother's song,
and they took me on a fishing canoe
and they took some of my brothers too.

With that we tell Mother Murray see you soon
to my brothers and sisters,
I say continue and build more canoes,
protect and shelter those born of the rainbow serpent
our mother from above.

The two-legged creatures, the Kulin they were called,
turned the branches into long instruments
with some of my brothers
while others made sticks long and tall.

When they play their instruments,
they tell stories and dance the ground,
they sing like the rocky earth,
they dance like creatures from all around.

Mothers of Kulin, coloured like the ground
from ground they are moulded
and the ground makes them feel loved,
mothers Kulin have nurtured life abound.

We sing the stories of our conversation,
we have seen the stories of our imagination,
songs of the Murray and her waters
songs of creatures, mothers, and daughters,
songs of my brethren my fellow trees,
songs of my dreamtime dreams.

Let the first nations of the land as I sing
dance and tell the stories
of the creatures they have seen,
let their children to carry on
in their minds eternally
their culture lives on.

Let them sing of the future so they too
Can sing and dance with their didgeridoo. ■



Phoebe Castillo
Year 9 · St John's Regional College, Dandenong

TRUGANINI: A SALTY BUSH

Simarpreet Kaur · Year 8 · Marymede Catholic College

Truganini, your life, is sensitive to touch.
Salt is sprayed over hidden problems in your life,
And you, the bush, tingles, and withers for help,
But people walk past, leaving you suffering.

Beneath the sun's warm touch, leaves weep
vermilion tears,
fingers grasp the original form of what you were.
But they ignore the pain you have been through,
And continue to spray the pains of salt over you.
This time your raw, broken skin is touched by the
acid pain.

Have you ever counted the number of times you
were happy in life?
Your story has very few moments where you
were.
Nobody counts the times they were happy in life.
But your life treated you so unfairly, what was
there to count?

Your mother was killed by the whale sealers.
Your sister had been abducted.
Your fiancé was murdered.
Your uncle was shot.

How did you bear so much pain?
How did you endure your reality?
But they forced to move on,
Even at your lowest point.

Your heart was fracturing in half,
Slowly and gradually because you knew you had
to survive.
Your feet stood weak on Bruny Island, but you
were brave.
You could fight.
You would fight.

Your people started dying much earlier than
expected,
Protection was a pretense, a false promise, a
trickery, a pretext,
The longer you stood your stand,
you witnessed more suffering, more death.

Until every soul ascended into the sky.
We will never know what you said, how you felt,
By we can still hear you cry.

You spoke the last civilized language on earth.
We will never know your last lines
When your people disappeared into death
Because your language is extinct forever on earth.
Dreadful, horrible things people did to you and to
your kindness,
That we will never forget.

It is your choice to forgive those horrible deeds
And the owners of those sins.
No one is forcing you, no one can touch your
soul,
Your spirit, your people, any more,
You defeated them, because we remember you,
We refuse to remember that sinners.

Truganini, they hurt you deeply.
They climbed over your valleys and cliffs,
Their goal to steal your valleys and cliffs.
Those traitors played games with you and
thought of you like dirt.
They left no aboriginal family live on their land,
They promised them happiness and gave them
hell.

He called himself an aboriginal 'protector'.
You followed him, as he was the only hope.
Soon you realized his true colour.

As always, nothing got any better.
Another obstacle appeared, and you were sent
back to where you started.
And cut those ties you made with your so-called
'saver'.

Moving to a safer place, leaving your destroyed
Bruny Island.
Which had painful memories of salty pain.
But memories before the agony.

Once again your story never ended there.
Your life did, but your story didn't.
Your torment never came to an end.
Your body was exhumed against your wishes
And your skeleton was put on display
What miserable breaches!

What a life!
Did you ever have peace?

Did you ever want to smile like others?
I want to ask you so much.
However, there are two things I want you to
know.

We are the people who will remember you
forever,
We will feel your agonizing pain.
And your body may be wrecked, your life may be
dreadful,
But your ashes are sprinkled into the sea
between Tasmania and Bruny Island for all to see.
They carry many memories and pain, but those
ashes were strong.
They won't sting the sea like the salt stung your
leaves.

You no longer are a salty bush.
You are a sour bush, with thorns sticking out.
Ready to make one that touches you bleed for a
lifelong.
Your armor has become stronger than ever.

You weren't just strong, but you are strong.
You are strong because you make others strong.
You are strong because you were the last one and
that is painful.
And being the last one taught you to be
invincible.

Remember that we love you,
Everyone loves you.
And remember to stay strong because if you back
down,
Millions will back down.

Thank You Truganini, the strongest bush ever. ■

OLYMPIA TRAVELS SOUTH

Divinia Kihara · Year 9 · Marymede Catholic College



Betty Cuthbert wins the women's 4x100m final at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, beating Great Britain's Heather Armitage (left). Image credit: Popperfoto/Getty

Olympia came to our land in 1956
In Melbourne where we competed
Men and women from across the world
Meeting with joy in the friendly games
Holding our banner in the land down under
In the land of the South
Under our hot Australian sun
The land of koala and eucalyptus gum

Our national heroes Rose and Betty
Champions in the Melbourne 1956 Olympic
Games
Our heroes were the stars of their games
Our Rose claimed gold
At our games in the south
At 17 years in 1956
Rose's gold in the 400 and 1500m of freestyle
while his team broke the world record of the
4x200m relay

It was like he became a fish that served us all the
winning dish
One gold with his team and two more by himself

The Seaweed streak he was called
Nothing to do with his speed
It was from what he ate, his seaweed diet
He was strict and it paid off
He became a national treasure
Betty Cuthbert
Our golden girl at 18
Gold in the sprints of 100m and 200m and 400m
relay
Our golden girl, our Betty
It seemed as if the air was her friend
For they became one
That year
For everyone
For all the others in that race, gold was gone
She cut the line through the air that day
Nothing holding her back
As if no drag existed around her
It looked as if the air pulled her forward
Gaining her victories
She was our girl who gave us winnings in three
races that day



100m race, left-right: Isabelle Daniels, Giuseppina Leone, Betty Cuthbert 1st, Marlene Mathews 3rd, Heather Armitage, Christa Stubnick 2nd.

One with her team,
The other two, herself,
But I'd say,
How she kept winning was if the air would say
This girl is fast, so now I say,
I will help her win something today
Hard work pays off sometimes
But not always
But for Betty it worked that day

Our Rose, our Seaweed treasure
Our Betty, our golden girl
They two brought us treasure in 1956
6 gold of our 13 we won which brought us glory

Olympia came to our land that year
Seems she was pleased for the things we won
For she blessed us with glory
Underneath our burning Australia sun. ■

RUN FOR YOUR LIFE

Fiona Luong · Year 6 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

An ordinary morning in an ordinary math class is extremely boring. "70 divided by 5, minus 20 is what?" Mr Rastel asked impatiently, expecting me not to answer it. "It's -6", I told him, smirking. "Oh...ok," he looked a little embarrassed. He turned back to the whiteboard and continued his scribbling. I turned my focus back on the beach, just outside the school. I stared at the water receding, "What's going on?" a voice inside me spoke. That made me curious.

"Ring! Ring! Ring!" the bell shouted, "It's time to have your break!" exclaimed Mr Rastel. But I was too focused on the rain drops suddenly pattering against the window, I couldn't hear a single thing. Everyone rushed out of the classroom, except for me. "Isabelle! Isabelle! Out you go! I've got to make my coffee!" Mr Rastel shouted. I quickly shifted my focus to Mr Rastel, "Where is everyone?" I asked, concerned. Mr Rastel gave me a stern look and walked out. I didn't care much, so I just looked out the window again.

Curiosity sparked inside me as I wondered why and how the water was receding so far back. Then it hit me, maybe it was a tsunami... I hid under the table for protection, and a few seconds later nothing happened. I got back up and brushed my knees, I checked on the water. Still no sign of a

tsunami. Either way it's better to be prepared than not. Right? I packed my belongings and turned my brave side on. I was prepared. The last thing I had to do now is read- actually memorise the evacuation plan, because nowadays you can never trust adults to know.

"Whoop! Whoop!", finally, the sound I'd been waiting for! The evacuation bell had sounded! In the blink of an eye all my classmates barged in with a concerned look. Chaos had struck, all of them running around like zoo animals made me feel dizzy. I stepped back into a corner to let myself relax. Five minutes later, Mr Rastel came in, not knowing that the evacuation bell had gone off and the whole classroom would be filled with water at any moment. Once he got the idea of the tsunami, he grabbed his bag and books, then told us to line up in a super straight line, who did he think we were? The king's soldiers or something! Mr Rastel signalled us to walk out of the classroom and into the evacuation place, and that was really crowded.

In the corner of my eye, I see a big- actually a gigantic wave coming towards the school. This is going to be the end! We should've stayed in the classroom. Within milliseconds, my life flashed before my eyes, the water had already reached our school. It's too late now. ■

STOLEN HEART

Khoa Dinh · Year 5 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Cars, bars
The feeling struck my heart
Moon fell, Mourn man
Mothers cried with dread
My children hid behind my legs
while fear struck their heads
Soon he came with Ben the dog
Who sniffed without a word
Dread filled me with fear
He looked at my plaid pants

He took my son without mercy,
Children gone, my father
unmindful
I left with disappointment and
realised very soon
I knew it was the end
Seventy years later it stopped
without the favour
When he said sorry my heart
turned blurry

My children were there thin in
despair
I couldn't believe it when
they couldn't see I was their
mother
I cried - my son didn't care
My heart stopped. I fell on
something sharp
Then it happened ...
I saw the light ■

I SWEAR

Alexandra Nguyen · Year 5 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

I stare outside my window, raindrops tapping against it, I can hear the tapping. I can also hear my science teacher yelling at me.

“Aurora! Aurora! Hello!?”

I turn my head to look at Mr. Kekoger.

“Aurora pay attention, Aurora! What’s the mixture for adaptation 6!?”

“981,420 inputs of adaption 23.” I say with a tired tone. “Oh. Correct.” Mr. Kekoger looked a bit embarrassed and turned back around to the whiteboard, continuing back to what he was doing before he bothered me. I fall back into my daze, staring out of the gloomy window.

This is so fun. Ha, ha.

Science has ended, I’m walking down the bustling halls and not looking straight ahead-*THUMP*. Ouch, oh wait. Looks like I’ve crashed into an old friend. I chuckled and he helped me up, I guess maybe I could spare some time to hang out with him. After all, I didn’t become friends with him for nothing. “Hi Isaac, Sorry.. But I just wanted to know if you could spare some time to hang out with me for a bit?” I say shyly. He grinned as bright as the sun and nodded, I’ve got to say, he’s really pretty. I’ve liked him ever since I laid eyes on his face.

Seasons passed by as quick as the wind, we graduated, together. I planned on telling him on how I really felt... tomorrow though. I see him running to me and I tilt my head, smiling. I chuckled, but suddenly, I saw Isaac’s smile fade. “What’s wrong?” I asked, “Nothing, stay here Aurora.” I looked at Isaac and I saw him walking up to a girl that looked too much like me in the distance, she looked about the same age as me, what’s he doing?

I brushed my shoulders, Isaac didn’t look too happy about seeing her and I don’t know why. Also, why does she look like me? A lot like me, she has the same birthmark on her face and the exact acorn brown hair as I. However, the birthmark is

under her lip and mine is under my eye. I guess it’s fine because I wear glasses, at least you can tell the difference.

It was getting late and it was time for us to split again, “Want to meet up at 4:02 PM tomorrow? I swear I won’t be late! Probably...” He grinned, I nodded and smiled brighter than usual. Isaac turned around the way his estate was and so did I. I got home and drifted off to sleep. I slammed my car door shut and ran to the beach using every ounce of my stamina, I saw that mysterious girl while I was blitzing past. I hear the ocean waves crash against the sand floor, I also hear Isaac running towards me. He flops onto the sand next to me. “You know, I’ve been meaning to tell you..” we get interrupted by a familiar voice. It’s Elanor.

Isaac jumps up and hisses at her, “What do you want!?” Isaac growls, suddenly Elanor grabs my arm and pulls me next to her, then my eyes widen as she throws sand at Isaac’s face. Elanor pushes me to where she was standing and swaps spots with me, I don’t know what to say. What do I do? She snatches my glasses and puts them on. Isaac rubs the sand off of his face and whips out a dagger out of his pocket, “I’M TIRED OF YOU ELANOR!” he roars, why is he looking at me? Suddenly, I feel something in my chest. A dagger. Isaac’s dagger is in my chest. “Why?.. What.. What?..” I gasp for air, now I know what Elanor was trying to do. While my ears rang, I saw the real Elanor laughing, she took off my glasses and put it back on my face, then pointed at her birthmark.

I see Isaac untense his body, and slowly turn around to Elanor. “W-What?.. I... But.. So- she’s A-Aurora?...” he says, “You- You absolute- You absolute fool! You’re a walking idiot!” Elanor devilishly laughs and I see her run out of my sight. Isaac grabs my body and cherishes our final moments, “Please.. Give me one.. One last moment with you.. My love..” he whispers into my ears, “I love you. I swear.” I say, I close my eyelids and let myself go, I wish it didn’t have to end like this. In another life, I’ll get my happily ever after. I swear. ■

MY AUNT'S HEART

Amanda Vo · Year 6 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Guess who has two thumbs, eight fingers, and just had the worst mental breakdown known to man about my school project? Me. School starts tomorrow and I wanted to melt into a puddle. *What if I fail?* I wiped my tears aggressively and stood up from my bed, walking to the kitchen like a zombie. I was craving a huge bowl of ice cream, but I was too sad to open the freezer door, and take out the freezing cold tub of vanilla ice cream, with small ice droplets that weirdly have the scent of beef.

I slowly turned my head to the right, and saw a bowl of melted ice cream, with melted sprinkles that made the ice cream look gray. I pause then walk over to the counter, staring deeply into the bowl of melted ice cream. I clear my throat. "Tiffany!" I groan. Loud platypus footsteps walk up to me. "Are you sick, Amanda?" Tiffany asked while tilting her head. I shake my head and point at the sticky bowl. "I know this is yours." I say. She giggles. "It's my potion" She tries to run away but I snatch her collar and pull her back.

"Stop messing around and put it in the sink, not the counter" I look back at the bowl and ants are forming around it. "See?" I say, annoyed. Tiffany looks away and crosses her arms. "It's the ants fault. Don't look at me!" She licks the sticky ice cream off her fingers, which have dirt and small pieces of sprinkles on them. "Plus, you look like a wreck. What happened?" She asked, crunching on the sprinkles. I looked down and paused, then looked back at Tiffany. "I'm just worried about school okay?" Tiffany continues to lick her fingers.

"Remember what Aunty Nancy used to tell us?" She asked, tilting her head again. I nod and smile softly. "Life is like a game, and living is the hardest level. Don't put too much pressure on yourself, and one day, you'll be successful with a huge happy heart." I say quietly. She nods. "Now go and leave my potion alone. The ants are having a pool party. I roll my eyes and laugh.

I smell toast. I smile, because Mum always knows it's my favourite when I'm feeling down about something. I stretched and sat up from my bed. I immediately wanted to cry again, but I shook it off and stood, walking to start my first day of school. Tiffany was sleeping on the toilet with drool around her mouth, which was dropping on the floor tiles. I walked up to her and shook her aggressively. She exclaimed and quickly wiped the drool off her face with her sleeve. "Hey, beauty sleep takes time you know." Tiffany groaned. "Your beauty sleep needs to wait." I replied.

I walked back to my room and stared at my school project. I took a deep breath, and thought about my Aunt's quote to me before she left for Brisbane. *Life is like a game, and living is the hardest level. Don't put too much pressure on yourself, and one day you'll become successful with a huge happy heart.* I slowly opened my eyes, and picked up my school bag, the project, and my toast.

I take another deep breath and walk into the classroom. "Your project looks fabulous, Amanda!" The teacher says, clapping her hands. I smile softly and a wave of happiness goes through me. Everyone in the class stared at my project and clapped as well. This is probably the best feeling I've ever felt yet. *Thank you Aunt Nancy.*

I walked to Mum's car happily, giggling quietly. I finally got up to the car and opened the door. "How was school today?" Mum asked. I smile softly. "Really good" I say. She smiled. "Did you learn anything?" She asked while starting the car. I pause, then smile warmly this time. "Life is like a game, and living is the hardest level. Don't put too much pressure on yourself, and you'll be successful with a huge happy heart." I replied. She chuckles. When I go back to visit my Aunty one day, I'm going to tell her how much she inspired me, and how much she made me successful. ■

THE WONDERLAND

Caitlin Tran · Year 4 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

Waking up to see a beautiful and elegant rainforest lying in front of you is weird because you wonder “Where am I?” “Why am I here?” Well, boy did I have the same questions! Looking around at my surroundings I wondered if I was really in reality. This looked like it came out of a real fairy tale book, it was surreal.

I just knew it, something was coming. I don't know what but I just knew it. I could sense it. I closed my eyes hoping I was in a dream and that I could just leave but when I opened my eyes, I saw a group of animals surrounding me.

“Woah there!” I was surprised that they were there. I was confused why they were actually here.

I was still in a state of confusion when a fox said “What is this thing!” My eyes open wide in surprise “I-I must be dreaming, I am going to pinch myself awake!”

I pinched myself and it hurt which meant I was not

dreaming. “Wait a minute you!” It pointed at me with its paw and said “You must be the one, the only Guardian!” All the animals started chattering in excitement “It's the one, it's the one!” I heard a bunny say. I had no idea what this “guardian” was so I decided to risk interrupting their conversation and ask about what was going on. “What Guardian exactly?” They all stopped and stared at me with shocked faces. “You don't know why you're here?” I shook my head and they explained everything to me. “You are the Guardian sent here by the ancestors of the rainforest and you are to protect the rainforest from the evil spirits that lie everywhere around here.”

“Will you be our Guardian? Are you up to it?” I thought to myself and thought every challenge was no match for me so I said “Yes, anything for the rainforest!” With that said everyone started cheering and celebrating, for I was the new Guardian. ■

THE HORRORS OF WINTER

Vidhi Shah · Year 4 · St Joseph's Primary School, Springvale

It was a dark and gloomy night in the middle of winter. Rain was pouring down and snow was falling heavily. The warmth of my cosy blanket comforted me as I sank into the couch while watching TV.

Suddenly, the doorbell rang. I jumped up and ran to look through the peephole, there was no one there. Hesitantly I looked again and to my horror, there was a creepy looking shadow!

My legs were running as fast as they could, hoping it didn't see. Slow, but fast footsteps filled my heart with fear. They had finally left. My heart felt as if it had skipped a beat. Why was this stranger here and what did they want? The stranger was wearing a ski mask, so they were most likely trying to rob my house. For what though? There are certainly no valuables in this household.

“Crash”. A sudden thud came from downstairs. My body shivered rapidly. The door was wide

open. I knew they were here and coming for me. Loud footsteps approached down the hallway. He'd found me!

My first instinct was to punch him, so I did. I had underestimated how hard I could punch. He started crying hysterically in shambles. “Wah, wah, wah” was all I heard for the next few seconds, until he got up and shoved me. Before you know it, I had punched him where it hurts.

Suddenly the door opened. My parents were back! I hugged them as tight as I could and told them what happened. They told me I did the right thing.

Meanwhile, the robber was upstairs sulking his little heart out. I told them to call the police because there was a robber upstairs crying. The police arrived shortly after we made the phone call. I'm so glad I trusted my instincts and got off the couch when I could, instead of pretending no one was home! ■



Gemma Moschetti
Year 10 · Aquinas College



Olivia Oracz
Year 10 · Aquinas College



Makayla Bately-Maassen
Year 10 · Aquinas College



Makayla Bately-Maassen
Year 10 · Aquinas College



Charlotte Oliver
Year 12 · Aquinas College

Our Planet, Magiclay, Dirt, Paper Towel, Water, Plastic, Acrylic Paint

A world inspired by the declining rate of Earth. A rise in pollution, landfill and sedimentation. We try to solve these issues with technology; artificial life to replace the dying.

My work is a projection to how our world could meld and merge into a mess and a failure of an ecosystem. The contrasting clay and dirt shows the amalgamation of natural life and a human-curated destruction of the natural world.

It's meant to confuse and disorientate the viewer, it is not meant to look pleasant and appealing.



Lily Evans
Year 12 · Aquinas College

Kreature in des Waldes, Acrylic paint on canvas



Liam Zalunardo, William Griffiths, Anthony Doolan, Oliver Dove,
Oliver Donaldson and Tommy Nikookalam
Year 7 · Whitefriars College



Ethan Wilson, Zac Traverso, Zac Lecordier and Ben Yu
Year 7 · Whitefriars College



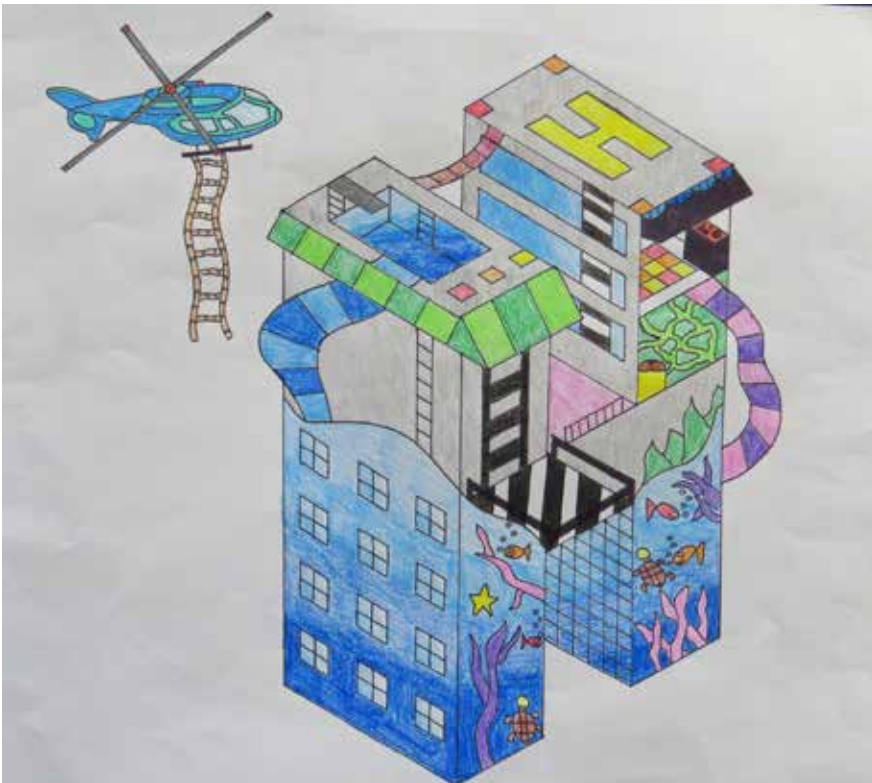
Harry Riddiford
Year 12 · Whitefriars College



Eli Keenan
Year 10 · Whitefriars College



Liam Tovey
Year 12 · Whitefriars College



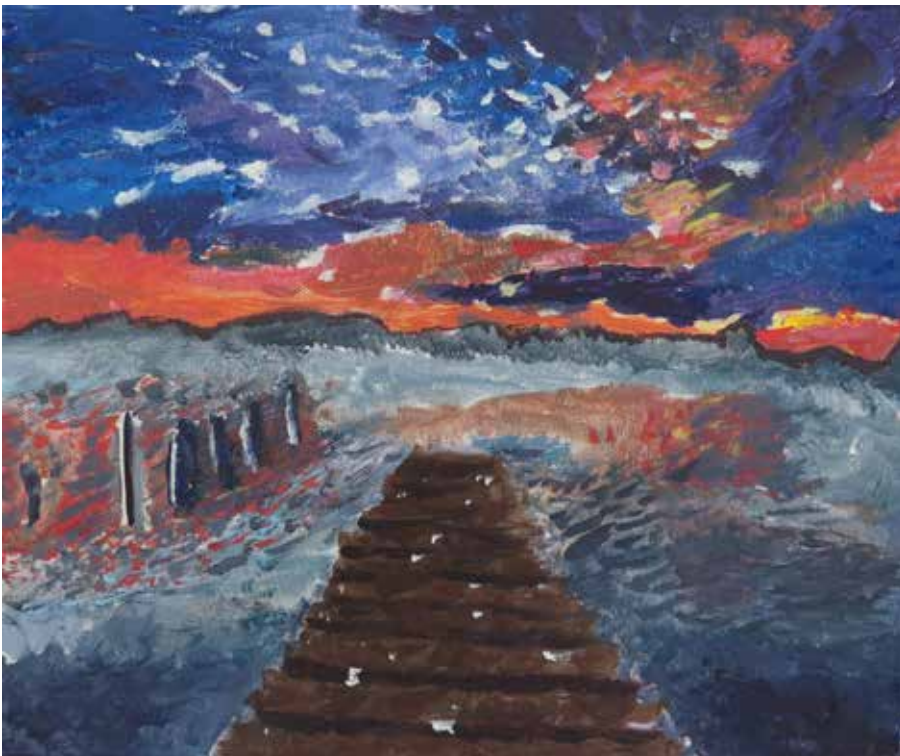
Hudson Busuttill
Year 8 · Whitefriars College



Ben Chincarini
Year 8 · Whitefriars College



Charlie Gniel
Year 7 · Whitefriars College



Liam Zalunardo
Year 7 · Whitefriars College



Hugo Bell
Year 9 · Whitefriars College



Ari Priscino
Year 7 · Whitefriars College



Harvey Varney
Prep · St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

Parrot

I was inspired by the Italian poem *Il Pappagallo*.



Joshua Reeve
Year 1 · St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

Regatta

I was inspired by the cool colours of the water and the boats racing.

UNINVITED GUESTS

Georgia Spyropoulos · Year 6 · St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

D-did the doorknob just turn? My voice echoed throughout the tiny, cramped space. Surely not. Once I turned my back to the door, the sound of the knob turning became present for the second time. When I shifted my gaze to the door, the room was silent. I decided to barricade it with a broomstick and a rolled up carpet. I was continuously assuring myself that there was nothing to be afraid of.

At least I hope there wasn't.

It was the middle of the night. I plodded down my narrow stairs, half asleep. There was a ray of moonlight shining on my front door. I could have been dreaming, but I was pretty sure my door was slightly ajar. I lunged forward, slamming the door shut hoping that anything or anyone hadn't managed to make their way inside. Terrified, I rushed up the stairs and didn't notice the figure running up behind me. The last thing I remember doing was reaching for the doorknob, when without warning, my world went black.

After what seemed like forever, my eyes struggled to open. I felt myself laying on a rough, uncomfortable mattress in a dark room. Light barely got through the tiny window and I felt pain in my neck. When I found the energy to stand up, I spied the door in the corner of the room and tried the handle. Locked. I tried kicking the door but it wouldn't budge. I stared out the window, very unfamiliar of my surroundings. I slumped back on the bed, staring at the ceiling wondering who had brought me here and why. A sound caught my attention. It sounded like knocking. I stood up and prepared myself for whoever was on the other side of the door.

I was hiding under an old, disgusting blanket when I heard the door open and a 'thump'. When I heard the door close, I immediately emerged from under the blanket and saw a person with their arms and legs bound with ropes and a thick piece of tape over their mouth. In a muffled voice, they said "Help me!". I ripped the tape off their mouth and managed to untie the ropes.

"Thanks." he said, this time in a clearer voice. We questioned each other for a while, there was nothing else we could do anyway.

"So you think we should try to smash the window and escape?" I questioned.

"Yes." he replied.

"Okay then, let's do it."

We ducked under an abandoned shed, after we succeeded at fleeing the room we were trapped in. We ran about half a kilometre to find some sort of shelter. Before leaving the room, we rummaged through a wooden drawer and luckily found a torch and half a map. But no food. Or water. Those things were now our number one priority to find.

We walked down a small road that led us into a nearby village, where we asked for help. I asked someone how far away we were from my address and got an unexpected answer. Eight hours, she said! I was hoping that we would only be one or two hours away... but eight? It would take us days on foot to get home and it wouldn't be long until our capturer would have realised we had gone. They will come after us soon so we needed a quick escape. We agreed to keep walking for a while, it was no use standing there pondering our journey home.

For days on end we walked home, asking for directions, shelter, food and water whenever we needed it. It was lucky for us that we met a passerby that offered us accommodation and three days worth of food and drinks. The map we found and torch came in handy- the torch to guide us at night and the half map was a map of the area. You would never expect it to take this long to walk an eight hour drive. When we reached home and turned the doorknob, I was overjoyed that we had actually made it. The new friend I had made along the way said he'd stay for a while, then used my phone to call someone to pick him up.

Knock knock.

Someone was at the door, but this time I wasn't afraid to answer. Of course, I didn't want to repeat what just happened. I opened it to find a newspaper on my doorstep. I picked it up and took it inside. I took it out of its plastic cover and was shocked when I realised what was on the front cover. ■



Alyssa Formica - Fiddy
Year 2 · St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

3D Water Lily

I was inspired by Monet's garden and all the beautiful colours everywhere.



Max Trimboli
Year 2 · St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

Koi Fish

I was inspired by the magical Koi fish. It is also a lucky fish.



Ivy Bradfield
Year 2 · St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

Tropical Turtle

I was inspired by sea life creatures.

THE ONE WHO STEPPED UP - A MAN TO ASPIRE TO

Leo Beardsmore · Year 6 · St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

Many generations ago this land was lush, green, thick bush, full of exotic wildlife and religious tradition. The elders took care of entire tribes, hunting and scavenging for food. They only took what they gave back. They lived in peace with the land up until the British came.

The aborigines had huts for shelter, and spears for food. When the British came they took the land as their own when they had no right to do so. The British built their civilization forcing the aboriginals to go into hiding. Their life as they knew it was ruined.

The British grew in numbers and in size, not respecting the true owners of the land. People

were killed and taken. Australia was founded. The indigenous no longer had control over their lives, for it was led by the British. The aboriginal people were prepared to fight back.

But sadly, the aborigines couldn't and they had to watch their lives and homes ripped apart. Many, many years later, someone called Eddie Mabo decided he had had enough of hiding and stepped into the light demanding his people have justice for equal land rights, and that the colour of skin didn't matter. He argued hard and came out victorious.

Sadly, Eddie Mabo didn't live to hear about his success, but through to this day, Eddie's actions are remembered. ■

THE LITTLE GIRL

Violetta Vatmanidis-Dando · Year 3 · St Mary's Primary School, East St Kilda

One day there was a little girl and she loved animals, especially sea animals. But the world did not care about the land because there was so much pollution.

The little girl's name was Avery. She had a small dog that would come with her to the beach. When she went to the beach she would bring a bag and pick up as much rubbish as she could but in the end it looked like there was even more rubbish.

One night she was in bed with her dog. It was a school night but she had an idea. She would pretend she was sick. Her mum said that she didn't have to go to school but she had to work.

Avery was an only child so she would be home alone. Usually she would go to the beach to pick up rubbish but she went to the bush instead.

When she was there she realised that her idea was silly and she should have gone to school. She was about to go when a small voice said, "You are smart. You know what you need to do".

She picked up her dog and ran home as fast as she could go. When she got home she made a potion. She ran to the beach and poured the potion into the sea.

In the morning she ran outside and there was no more pollution and instead she saw lots of flowers and trees and happy sea animals in the sea. She was so happy too!

They put her on live TV and made a "Pick Up Rubbish Day" just for her. What an inspiration! ■



James McGowan
Year 10 · Whitefriars College



Ahsees Lamba
Year 10 · Whitefriars College



Phil Deane
Year 11 · Whitefriars College



Luke Coviello
Year 7 · Whitefriars College



Quynh (Lisa) Dinh
Year 11 · Nazareth College

Kaneki, Digital Art



Joshua Phon
Year 12 · Mazenod College

Untitled, Pastel On Paper

TOTALLY NOT AN EXTREME COURSE!

Julian Erata · Year 7 · St Mary's College, East St Kilda

The five of us were just hanging out together in my parent's apartment, like we normally did. "You pass me the remote, Bob!"

"I don't have it Dave, I think Janet had it last."

"Where are Jin and Lily?" Dave said.

"Oh, they went out 30 minutes ago," said Janet in an annoyed tone.

"Here's your stupid remote," Janet said triumphantly.

"Where was it?" Dave said to Bob.

"Next to the chips where I put it."

The apartment doorbell rang, and Bob sprinted to open it. It was Jin and Lily.

Suddenly an add popped up on the TV – it showed a person sky diving and a voice over saying. "Are you sitting on your couch watching TV? Are you bored? Are you tired of doing the same thing day after day? Why not try something new? Do something extreme for a change. You only live once!"

"Let's do something extreme," exclaims Dave.

"Like what?" replies Bob.

"How about a scavenger hunt," yells Janet.

"All right let's do something exciting this weekend!"

"Now we just have to find a scavenger hunt," said Bob, running to his computer.

He found one pretty fast as Bob was well skilled in the art of googling.

"Wow look at this one, it's a city-wide extreme challenge. And the reward is a free massage chair. I've always wanted one," said Bob.

"Does that say it starts tonight at 12.00 am," said Lily.

"It does, are we in," said Dave

"YES!" they all yell in unison.

"Let's jump in Dave's car and get down to the start location – it's the basketball hall in the next suburb over. Quick we have 10 minutes to get there," yells Janet.

We made it with no time to spare. "There are over 80 people here – all for a massage chair, seriously?" screams Jin.

Someone on a microphone yells, "I trust everyone is here for the EXTREME course."

"YEAH," the crowd roars.

"That's great says", the announcer. "Now here are the rules. No hurting other teams, no cheating, no running off track and you must have 4 people in

each group. First team to get there wins the massage chair!"

Bob gasps, "I want that chair!"

"Then let's get it," replies Dave and the girls in unison.

The announcer exclaims, "Every team grab a coloured sash and line up. 3, 2, 1," the pistol bangs and we all start running to the first obstacle.

"This is so exciting," screams Jin.

At each obstacle there is an announcement: "Get across the lake using the loose rocks. If you fall in, you'll be eaten by alligators. Have fun!!"

Everyone started arguing, "Alligators" no way. Then Dave thought to himself (There are no alligators in Australia. Could they have transported alligators here? Hmm I don't think so).

Then at that moment, Dave sprinted to the water with a confident look. He thought to himself (Yes, no alligators) "Come on guys it's a trick."

"We might actually win this," cried Bob running through the water.

Announcer: Obstacle 2: "One person per team will have to cross the rope."

"It's my time," Bob said without emotion. Bob wasn't as quick as the blue team, so we were now in second place.

Announcer: "Obstacle 3 is pretty gross. Your challenge is to touch bug species, take a picture of them and try to get bingo."

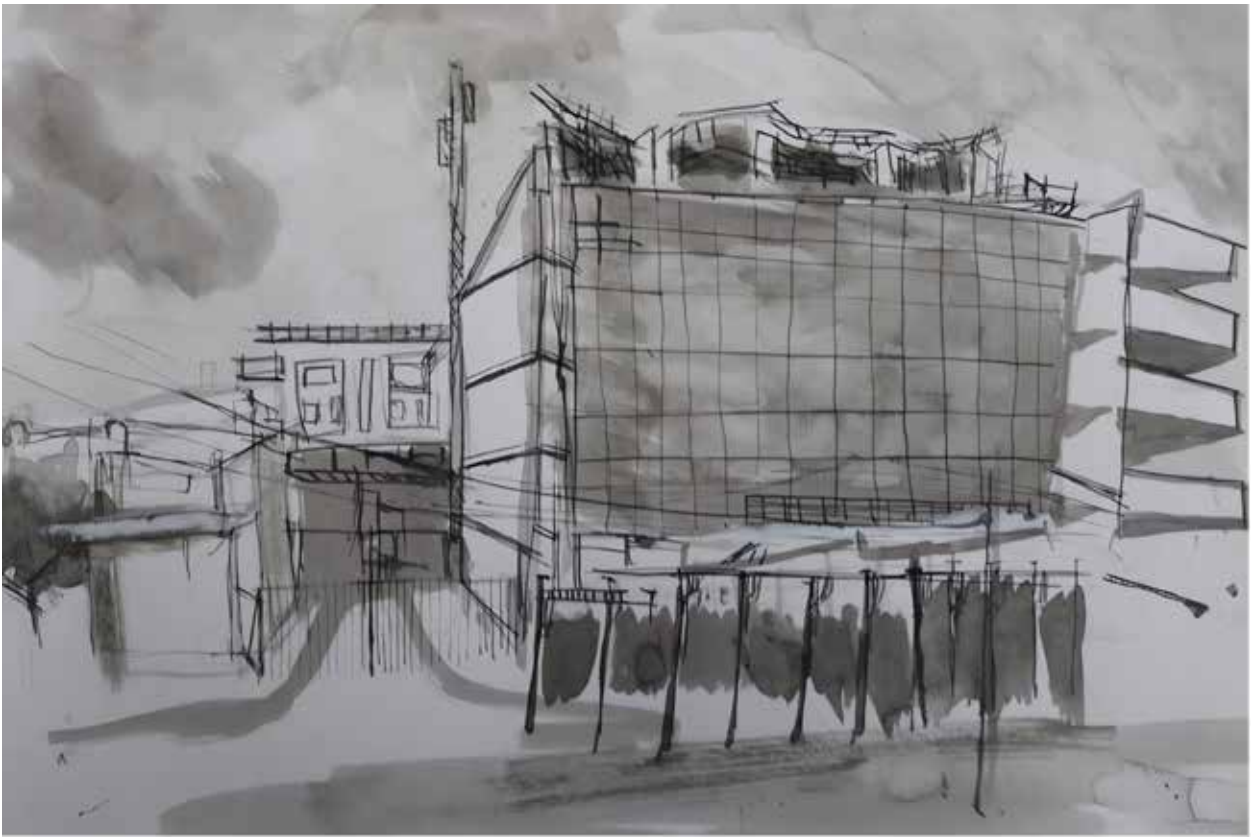
Lily's face lit up, "I love bugs!" Lily dived straight into the forest of bugs and a 10 minutes later she was out but took one wrong picture. She had to go back in – we were now in last place. All the other teams were at the last obstacle. We had to hurry.

Announcer: "The final challenge is all about teamwork and communication. 2 people in your group will be blindfolded and the other 2 will act as guides who have to manoeuvre their team members around the balloon cacti and hot stones!"

"Me and Jin can be the guides," screamed Janet.

"They argued a bit but successfully got Bob and Dave through the obstacle. Then it was a 500m sprint to the finish line. All teams were neck and neck. The gold team was super-fast but Jin was faster than them. She punched through the line in first place. We had won! Great work," cried Jin – "Best Saturday ever!"

Moral of the story: It's great to be inspired by things. It could get you to do something you never even thought of trying and make unforgettable memories. ■



Teerawee Sitthirangsan
Year 11 · St Mary's College, East St Kilda

ESCAPE

Nathan Nguyen · Year 7 · St Mary's College, East St Kilda

Knock, knock, knock. “Where are you hiding?” the police say as they try to find Hyejin. She was trying to escape. She jumps out the window on to another’s roof as her tears get taken by the air. She runs with a bag filled with photos and instant noodles. All she can think about is her mother. She has always looked up to her mother, she loved her. She jumps over rubbish and fences to get to another motel to eat as she hasn’t for 2 days trying to get food.

Her slowly getting closer and closer to the border out to sea swelled her with hope. As she swarms into the motel at midnight goes to her room and lies down, her head gets haunted with thoughts of her family and what she’s leaving behind, but she knows it’s for her best. Her tears drop into the instant noodles as she eats. Her eyelids become heavy, and she falls asleep soon after. She wakes up with a blurry vision of the clock. “21:3... something. 21:37.” She exclaims while getting out of the old mattress and packs her stuff. While she packed, she gets overwhelmed with thoughts of family and friends. “Stop it, stop it, stop it, stop it!” She repeats to herself, so she doesn’t miss the raft. On her way to the pier about 28 minutes later she sees all the lights in people’s houses turning off. “Perfect.” She starts to see the pier at a distance and sees about 36 others waiting to escape with her. The time passes extremely slow as they lay and grunt from discomfort.

“It’s here.” Hyejin whispers to the others making sure not to wake the soldiers in their sleep. When they board the tiny raft through the ramp, she notices how unstable the wood is yet still jumps on. “It’s this or nothing.” They leave on the scheduled 22:34 and the passengers start to sigh relief. In the middle of the ocean, leaving the ridiculous country, Hyejin is still trying to manage the fact she is leaving the country. “I did it.” With the boiled sea water, she slowly pours it in the cup and shares the noodles with all. The soup starts to spill with the rocking of the boat and gets on the logs.

Finally, at 4:38 they are out of their country’s area, and they all get extremely happy, well for now. As they all sing out in happiness and harmony, Hyejin starts to notice something with the raft structure. “The rope is so thin that it can break any second.” Hyejin thinks to herself. She was right, she doesn’t know that yet. She starts to think to herself all the things that could happen if it snapped and she starts spiralling into a trance and breaks down. “It’s okay Hyejin. You’re going to be fine.” She whispers to herself over and over while rocking herself for comfort. Then she made one too many movements. It snapped.

As they drift away and the string slowly floats away, Hyejin holds onto a log and tries swimming in the direction the raft was going. The rest of the passengers start screaming and crying and then it stopped, they went under. Hyejin is the only survivor. As she swims with the log, she gets shivers up her spine from the freezing water. “You can do this Hyejin; just keep swimming and you’ll be okay.” Hyejin cries to herself. As she swims along to a melody to keep her awake, she starts to see the sun and it hurts her eyes. “You can still do this Hyejin.” She screams to herself. As she starts to wake up with the sun in her eyes, she gets more motivation to keep swimming. Once the moon leaves her sight, she tries to remember which way the raft was going while she swam. She had cramps in her legs and splinters in her arms, but she had to keep going. “I see it!” Hyejin swims faster than she had ever before in determination to reach the land. The waves in the ocean cause more trouble for her but she kept going no matter what. As the land’s appearance becomes bigger and bigger, she starts to see little ant-size houses. “This is it!” Those ant-like houses become about as big as an apple from her distance. She finally sees sand and a shoreline. “I did it!” She shouts to herself. As she gets washed up to the shore she lets go of the log and lays on the wonderful warm sand. “Finally.” She says to herself. When she gets up, she starts walking inland to an information stand. “Where am I?” ■



Elouise Woltanski
Year 9 · Nazareth College

Infinite Possibilities, Digital Art

THE LONGEST DAYS ARE WEDNESDAYS

Marli Di Pilla · Year 11 · Nazareth College

the longest days are wednesdays
art lies inside
its removal is an exorcism
part of it remains trapped, despite any and all efforts
disillusioned souls sailing through murky forest waters
small mushrooms multiply on the river's edge
overwhelmed by beauty
a precious relic in time
the fresh summer euphoria
easily influenced by a blissful innocence
yet weak and breakable
thin film blurs fond memories
debating the substance of opinion under a lazy orange sun
unfolding the layers of your mind
i condense myself to fit into my own brain
and change myself to fit into your box
an inextricable connection from blood through skin
making sense of the surreal
music accompanying thoughts
dark circles drag down hollow wells in your cheeks
a thin smile adorns your face
a river of golden honey
the tips of flower petals dancing in the warm sunlight
a small meaningless exchange amplified into something
beautiful
our moments turn unforgettable
your dignified reality depleting with experience,
what may begin with a little chaos
so minuscule are we in a world that spins,
basking in a deliberate ignorance
you switch off the light
broader pictures lack sentimentality
the purposeful avoidance of human nature
is the purpose of human nature itself
it's you and me versus the world
when october's first thursday comes again ■

BAND-AID HEART

Marli Di Pilla · Year 11 · Nazareth College

there's a gap in every day
that is left for us
to bandage the broken bones
and burn our eyes with lit cigarettes
spiders crawl across our knuckles
volts of pain shoot through our skulls
i feel nothing and something and everything at all
the vast view off the cliff that stares before me
certain is the uncertain
noise is louder when you close your eyes
when you cannot see what hurts you
talent is a myth
even when you are known
for something you have dedicated
every part of you to
but the question is posed
who do you know
and who knows you
what's to say
you even know yourself
my heart is ripped from my chest and is squeezed
until blood drips fervently from the hands of those who
deny my pain
the urge of despair creeps solemnly up my back
its long limbs reach up my shoulders and snake into my
ears,
heavy rain pouring down
her voice wavers yet her laughter stays melodic. ■

FOREST CHILDREN

Christina Koufomanolis · Year 9 · Nazareth College

We hastily scrambled over the short, barbed wire fencing as it prickled our skin playfully, like a mischievous old friend. On the other side, we side-by-side stood in awe, beholding the power of the mighty country that lay unfolded before us.

Welcome home, it whispered. I'm so glad you came back.

It beckoned us to the top, our feet almost tipping over the grassy ledge.

We ran, down, down, shouting and laughing and waving our arms, as wild and free as the woods around us. Our legs no longer obeyed – there was no way to stop them from carrying us to the end.

We couldn't stop.

We mustn't, not until the very bottom. Then we would haul our shaken selves slowly back up to the beginning. And down we would go again and again... until we saw a rabbit, or a snake, or some other exciting unknown movement in the deep foreboding woods at the foot of the Great Hill, as we had christened it.

Immediately, we would drop onto our stomachs and crawl ever so slowly, ever so quietly, edging towards the trees so as to catch or at least sight the wonderful mysterious creature which had lured us, once again, into the verdant green copse. It was different every time; on one particular occasion, we even sighted a distinctly captivating parrot that I was sure was a new, previously undiscovered species.

"Look what I found!" I had exclaimed, then guiltily glanced up, hoping that my loud voice hadn't initiated any sudden flight or disturbance. The others had come quickly, eager to see the tree or creek or animal that I had discovered this time. They crashed through the woods, trampling over countless precious specimens of flowers and plants.

I would reproach them for that later. But now it was time to reveal my findings.

"What is it? Where? I can't see!" they had begun, searching frantically, their keen eyes darting from the ground to the trees, then back to me.

"Up there, in that tree" I had explained slowly, pointing towards a hole in the canopy where the trees had parted, allowing a thin shaft of sunlight to penetrate through.

And sitting on a nearby branch, looking at us curiously, had been the largest black parrot we had ever seen, almost invisible against the dark foreboding camouflage of the leaves.

We had trod slowly towards it, and it had cried loudly, calling to its hidden flock in the nearby trees, as if knowing this as some sort of ritual. Then they emerged from the thick encircling foliage in their hundreds, beating their wings and to our great delight, revealing exquisite yellow tailfeathers as they flew.

At other times we would jump up the brightly painted wooden stairs, often skipping two or even three at a time, our cheeks red and our happy faces flushed. We would continue like this; laughing and leaping until one of us stopped to catch their breath or fell over. Then we would pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and keep going – until we reached a field of fallen logs, or the site with slabs of stone from the old quarry of years gone by, or another such interesting amusement. If we came across the great fallen logs, we would clamber up the sides, clinging to the weathered brown bark like our lives depended on it, knuckles white. Often one would stand some distance back and look on intently, though not daring to join in themselves for fear of tumbling off.

When we took a wrong turn and found ourselves at the site of the abandoned quarry, Old Lonesome as we called it, we would all heave together at the great slabs of sleeping stone, in the hope of finding an interesting item left underneath: rusted metal tools used by miners past, or the remains of mangled train tracks which had once carted loads of stone from the depths of the quarry perhaps.

The path was tapering now, its planks nestled tightly against the crumbling brown earth, like great slumbering wooden giants. We knew that this meant soon the trail would stop. We would continue in this way until we tumbled off the last of the steps, our feet landing firmly on the clay-like earth, as if to say to the mountain "We're not scared. We won't stop here."

The trail was no longer our guide anymore. There was no guarantee of safety.

We smiled.

Then we turned to face the muddy grass and damp marsh. With a hop, a skip and a jump, we trudged into the swampland, calling to tell the swooping, teasing swallows that we knew the way too. Presently along this route we would feel the hot, sticky mud recede slowly from our shoes. It was replaced by a sudden thrilling cold sensation and a misty, moist veil covering the brushwood. Now we could hear a strange burbling, bubbling commotion, like the way the trees sighed and rocked and talked to us.

But no. The trees didn't sound like this. They sounded soft and gentle and rather like one's mother. It must be something else.

Something wild.

We turned a corner, and there chuckling at us was the clearest, most alive creek that we had ever caught sight of, its long, wet sinews surging with energy. It was living, it was breathing, seeming startlingly to say, "*What took you so long? I've been waiting for you here forever!*"

Maybe it had. Best of all, we were standing right in the middle of it.

We dived and splashed and lapped up the cool, fresh water, almost daring to swing over the creek on one of the nearby ivy vines.

Eventually the lively creek slowed to a low murmur. The forest seemed to rest at an abrupt halt. Now the creek was the only movement; still rushing but slower and sounding more like a lullaby. Darkening clouds parted to reveal the first evening star, shining faintly at us from on high.

It was time to go home. But we knew that we would always return. We had become forever woven into the tapestry of the forest and the mountains and the hills, intertwined with the creeping tendrils of the snarled forest ivy, chattering with the rolling creek, laughing with the parrots and soaring with the fork-tailed swallows.

This too was our home. It would always be waiting for us – and time would linger, and the land would miss us until we returned.

THE END ■



Victoria Kammel
Year 10 · Nazareth College

Inspiration in an older time, Digital Art



Sienna Browning
Year 8 · Lavalla Catholic College



Lillian Steadman
Year 7 · Lavalla Catholic College



Madison Wallace
Year 7 · Lavalla Catholic College

SONNET

Chloe Galante · Year 7 · Lavalla Catholic College

My dog rips up her toys,
She is so careless -
There's nothing my dog doesn't destroy!
Coming home to holes in the backyard is endless!

Taking her on walks every day,
Cleaning up her poo -
When she doesn't want to play,
She wants to go to the loo!

Waking up to a bunch of fluff,
When she's excited she can't keep still!
My dog tears up all my stuff,
if you told her to wreck your things, she will!

Although she's crazy most times,
I wouldn't trade her for a bag of dimes! ■

THE FLAG IS UP

Phoenix Sagar · Year 7 · Lavalla Catholic College

Wizz as the bullets went by my head.
Outrageous fighting for some land.
Rapacious, the government is for sending us to fight.
Loud screams echo through the fog.
Down by the bay is where they landed.
Winning for them is near impossible.
A flag is seen through the thick fog.
Racing to my comrades we embrace each other. ■



Savannah Lapenta
Year 11 · Lavalla Catholic College

You inspire



Savannah Lapenta
Year 11 · Lavalla Catholic College

You inspire

INSPIRE

E.S. · De La Salle College

Have you ever taken a break and thought to yourself? “Who inspires me to do the things I do?” Because I know that I have, and it doesn’t even have to be a person that inspires you, it could be something like an invention or sport, though personally I’m inspired by the people in my life or the people I see on the screen and in most cases, I’m inspired by the people who have taught me in life like my teachers or parents because they show me that I can share my knowledge with people and even create new pathways for people to take in life by showing them things that may seem simple to me but complex to them! You see Inspiring people unlocks new areas of their brain for creativity and exploration and it gives them guidelines as to what they want to become and do in life, in a way it’s

like wiring peoples brains with speech and do you think of how cool it could be to create someone’s future in life?

Not only this but role models also have people they look up to as role models to them, even doing something you didn’t attempt to do like overcoming a terrible sickness can make you a role model! So why don’t you give it a shot to try and shape someone’s future and see how happy and inspired you can make someone by showing them all the amazing things that you can do and embrace that swelling warmth you feel when you do something good or right in life to ensure that you and others live their best lives and follow in your footsteps and try to shape other people’s futures just like you did to them. ■

FIRST CHECKMATE

Jemz Takimoglu · Year 7 · De La Salle College

We were in the living room preparing to start the biggest war on an 8 x 8 square board.

We begin. My dad goes for the Scandinavian defence. I respond with the queen’s gambit which causes a lot of chaos at the centre. Five minutes in and he castles straight into my attack.

I can go with a pin or skewer but instead I go for a battery.* The problem is without wasting a piece it would take me four moves to complete and by then he can just stop it with one move. I needed a different plan so instead I moved a useless pawn so the knight defending the square needed for the battery move. I took my bishop to the square and he moved his knight back attacking the bishop but

that was a wasted move as I go for his king with my queen who is defended by my battery and... checkmate.

After this game I have never lost to him again. My dad must have been trying to defend my attacks for so long and then he lost. I went for almost every attack in the book - pins, skewers, forks but somehow, he was able to survive all of these, but he couldn’t see the battery. Victory at last!

**a battery is when a piece commonly a bishop teams with the queen and points at a piece defending the king and the king cannot take the queen as its defended by the bishop. ■*



Max Turner
Year 7 · De La Salle College

Ceramics



Carter Cox
Year 7 · Whitefriars College



Jenny Nguyen
Year 10 · Catholic Regional College St Albans

Fish



Jade Nguyen
Year 8 · Catholic Regional College St Albans

Cubist Inspired



Ruby Grande
Year 8 · Catholic Regional College St Albans

Cubist Inspired



Sian Alwyn
Year 8 · Catholic Regional College St Albans

Cubist Inspired



Tran Vo
Year 10 · Catholic Regional College St Albans

Inspiration



Jasmine Chhour
Year 11 · Killester College

Opera

The artwork is titled “Opera” and I decided to specifically focus on language. I’ve grown up speaking a dialect called Teochew and since it is verbal, the presentation of my piece primarily focuses on the people, the head attire and makeup. Accompanying the faces, I have been inspired by the architecture of my Buddhist praying altar at home which is depicted in my work. Ultimately my main inspiration in making this artwork are my daily conversations with my mum which happen to be in Teochew.