

## Cover Art Inspiration

The cover art is a digital mosaic and was thought up, created, and edited by Abel Stephen '22.

The front and back page together symbolize the unity of the Saint Joseph High School Community despite a large amount of school activities being hosted virtually or canceled altogether. The intention of the overall digital mosaic was to not ignore the unfortunate reality of a worldwide pandemic, but embrace the ideas that would flow forth from such a period. The overall theme of the cover art piece lies in congruence with the theme of the 2021 *Vignette* of Resilient Creativity, which embraces the idea that our imagination is not something that should be diverged from reality, but is rather an emanation of our cumulative experiences.

The Cover Art was initially designed using a primitive digital rendering in Adobe Illustrator before making the idea more concrete in Photoshop. Each individual Image was color-graded, color corrected, and a final lut was added to the exported product before rendering the image in TIF lossless compression. If you are viewing online, you have the ability to zoom in and experience the quality of the image yourself.

Special thanks to the *Saint Joseph Evergreen Yearbook* for providing to us a number of pictures used in the mosaic.

# *Vignette*

2021

Volume 60

**Saint Joseph High School**

A Brothers of the Sacred Heart School

145 Plainfield Avenue

Metuchen, New Jersey 08840



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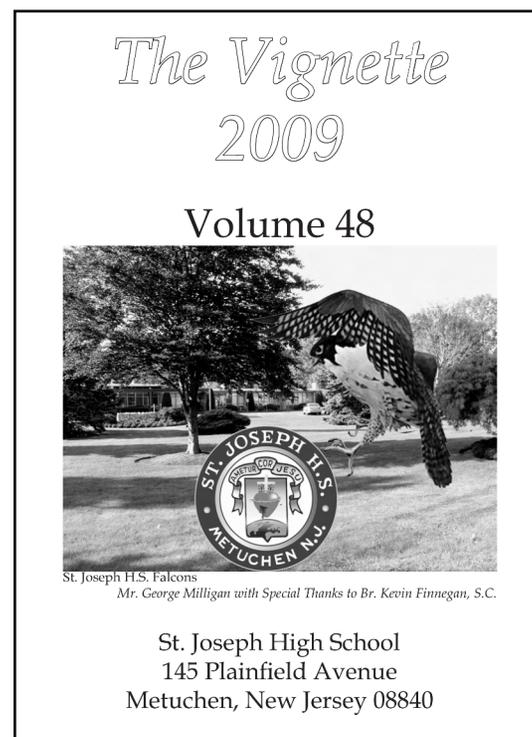
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## 60 Editions, A Legacy Like No Other

The person who sent us this dramatic reading of the 1971 *Vignette*, Michael Richard, lives in Massachusetts and is a retired high school English teacher. He is not an alumnus of St. Joe's. He is a record collector and he found this recording in a recent bulk purchase. It is only because of his effort and generosity that we have this gem. He could have just thrown it away but realized its value to this school. You can listen to the recording by clicking [here](#).



by: Dr. Robert Longhi '81  
Recording courtesy of Mr. Michael Richard



The Above picture is one of 60 cover art pages that have represented the *Vignette* for six decades. This specific volume cover from 2009 is the oldest digitally available edition of the *Vignette*.

Courtesy of stjoes.org

## Editorial: Resilience in Creativity

“Chaos is the score upon which reality is written”  
— Henry Miller

At 162 pages, the 2021 *Vignette* and 60th edition of the student-run magazine of Saint Joseph High School fulfills Henry Miller’s philosophy, that, through the chaos of this unpredictable, often unreliable world, we will be able to witness the inception of something far more profound than mere disorder: creativity out of experience.

Three score years ago, *The Vignette* was founded to showcase the creativity, brilliance, and individuality of the students belonging to Saint Joseph High School. Today, the mission of *The Vignette* is no different. As Editors, club members, and students, we have been extremely fortunate to peruse many pieces of writing, ranging from light hearted poems to captivating narratives, which define our seemingly similar lives, our contrasting experiences, and our school community.

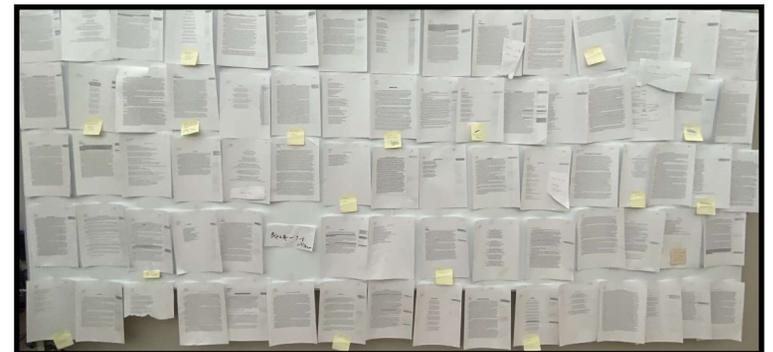
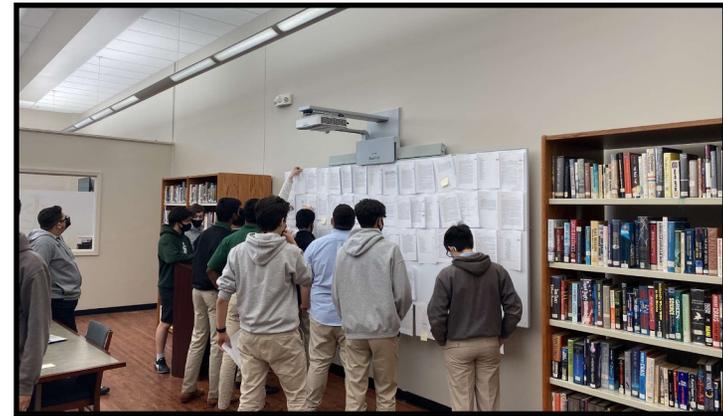
The creativity of this magazine stems from the brilliant minds of each and every student at Saint Joseph High School. From detailed and profound fantasies, to informative and engaging memoirs, to playful and humorous poems, *The Vignette* inspires every student to reach their maximum writing abilities and enables them to share their perspectives on topics they are passionate about.

Despite this year’s unique and challenging circumstances, *The Vignette* staff found a way to continue the magazine’s long tradition of excellence. From weekly meetings during the beginning of the year, to biweekly meetings towards the end of the year, the staff have confronted this unprecedented challenge with tenacity and perseverance.

As our school community continues to grow each year with new students from many different backgrounds, *The Vignette* serves as a pillar for ideas to be showcased and pieces to be acclaimed. Each and every year, *The Vignette* Art and Literary Magazine never fails to impress with its well-crafted pieces and unique perspective.

Long live *The Vignette* for its prescient ability to transform confusion of the pandemic into order, to represent that which goes unseen in the St. Joe’s community. It has given to us the moments and ideas that have transformed Saint Joseph High School from a community into a brotherhood, and will remain a beacon of resilient creativity for us and for generations of Saint Joseph students to come.

*Abhishek Borad '22, Animesh Borad '22, Abel Stephen '22*



### The Storyboarding Process

*Pictured Top, left: The Vignette Staff completing the storyboarding process for the 2021 Vignette; Pictured Bottom, right: the finished storyboard.*

## Hydroxychloroquine Hallucinations

“Open your eyes! What do you remember? Do you remember this year?”

“Yeah, I think I do.”

“Well can you describe it to me?”

“Ok, I’ll try my best. January was pretty uneventful. February too. March was where things started to get interesting. We learned about this virus called COVID-19 in February, but we shut down all travel into the U.S. before it could get here. But of course, that’s not how it played out. By March, we had our first cases. Amazingly, both parties managed to agree on a relief package because they understood the severity of the virus. Additionally, all the major companies pitched in to help, and began donating money to hospitals in need of medical supplies. What was really inspiring was that the American people came together in an impressive effort to fight the spread, with everyone working diligently and making sure they took the necessary precautions. The people who did get infected isolated themselves in their homes out of consideration for others. April was okay, but then May came and we had a massive spike. At its peak, we had 100 new cases a day! I know, it's crazy to think about numbers that high, but it's true. We quickly got that under control though and the government taxed us a one time \$50 fee each to pay for their treatment but we didn’t mind because it’s the right thing to do. June was when we really started to shine. People everywhere went into less fortunate areas and neighborhoods and distributed free COVID tests. It just goes to show that if we all work together, anyone who wants a test can receive one. In July and August, things were easy. We were supposed to have an election, but both candidates agreed to postpone it, opting to work together to tackle the virus. In October, people organized unity rallies where everyone got together and

helped spread positivity. In fact, there were so many good things happening, that everyone was positive. Which reminds me of my current predicament. I started feeling stuffy and sick, and by last Saturday, I had lost my sense of taste and smell. But everyone around me recognized what I had and knew what to do. They took me to the hospital immediately and that’s how I ended up here.”

“Ok, I know what happened. You’re hallucinating from the hydroxychloroquine we gave you. Open your eyes, but for real this time.”

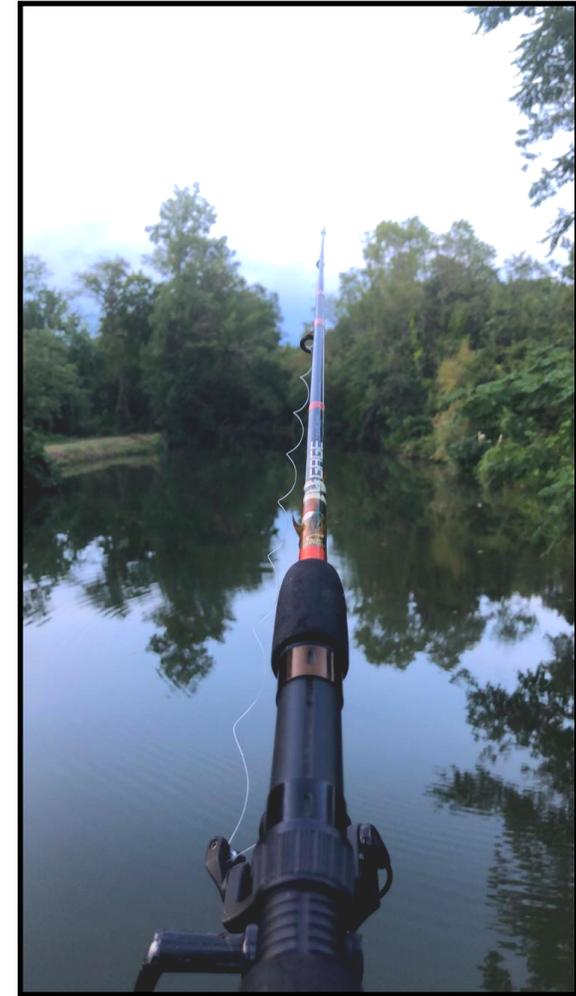
Patient 0234759 opens his eyes for the first time in weeks. In the beginning, they used to call patients by their names. Now, it is just numbers to make it impersonal because they know how it’s going to end. He looks around and sees a small, white room with an array of monitors and various devices. He hears the sound of footsteps and sees a shadow stop at the gap under his door. A nurse clad in full protective gear walks in and looks discouragingly at the state of the patient’s condition. As he fully grasps the reality of the situation he is in, he suddenly finds it hard to breathe and tries to grip the rail of the bed but he cannot move. He never thought that he would be here in this position, and now that it is happening, he has no idea what to say. Maybe if he had lived longer, he would have gained the wisdom necessary to think of his final words, but his life has been cut short, and the end is now. As he fades out of existence, a single word echoes in his mind: “How?”

*Francisco Tellez '22*  
1st Place, Junior Fiction

### **Fishing with Grandpa**

Today I went out to the docks  
To do some angling with Pops.  
Right away Pop caught a huge bass,  
But our early luck just wouldn't last.  
With waning dreams of great fall pike,  
All we could hope for was just one bite.  
I only managed to catch a couple nibbles  
As well as a bad case of the sniffles.  
When our ears and fingers starting to freeze,  
Me and Pops got to shooting the breeze.  
He told me that patience is key,  
And so I kept fishing with glee  
After no fish and many fish stories later,  
My hopes for a decent catch began to waver.  
Once the moon shined it's brilliant light,  
Me and Pops decided to turn in for the night.  
As I laid my head down on the pillow to sleep,  
I realized that these were the best memories to keep.

*Christian Foster '23*  
1st Place, Sophomore Poetry



### **First Person Fishing**

One of the many hobbies my siblings and I picked up over the course of the pandemic was fishing. Amidst the chaos that was 2020, we always knew that there existed a pond a half mile away to which we could escape with a couple of fishing poles and a tackle box.

*Abel Stephen '22*

## Zeus' Favorite Son and the Lightning Bolt

Once there was a child of Zeus named Diodorus. From his birth in his hometown of Dodona, Diodorus was a special child and everyone around him knew it. He was born from a mortal mother, making him a demigod but his mother had been blessed by Zeus long before their affair, making Diodorus even stronger. At two years old, Diodorus was already running around faster than most grown men. By the time he was 14, Diodorus was the strongest man in all of Greece as well as the most skilled fighter with any weapon.

Though most people looked up to him, a lot of people in the Dodona army especially despised him. One day, when he claimed to them that he was a son of Zeus as his mom had told him, the people in the army laughed and jeered at him. His skeptics said that if he was truly a son of Zeus, he would show them some sign of being one. Not being able to provide them with a sign, Diodorus fled home in shame. When he went home, he slammed his door shut, and prayed to his father. A golden radiance encased him and he was lifted into the atmosphere above.

Diodorus was brought to the Olympus throne room. He looked up and saw a figure seated at the middle throne. Diodorus knew at once that it was Zeus, his father. He called out to his father and embraced him. As his father smiled down at him, Diodorus recounted what had happened in the mortal world. Zeus explained to him that since his birth, Diodorus was Zeus' favorite child and since he had prayed, Zeus brought him up to Olympus to be granted any one wish. Diodorus was elated and took some time to carefully come up with his wish. Finally, he decided that there was only one wish that would make him happy as well as present a sign to his townspeople. He told Zeus that he wanted an honor that no other child of the Lightning God had ever had, to ride Zeus' chariot fully equipped with all his gear. Zeus was hesitant and told Diodorus that his wish was too hard to fulfill, but Diodorus reminded him of his word and pleaded with him. Zeus finally gave in and told Diodorus that he could ride the chariot as long as he followed the rules. Zeus told him that he couldn't use the lightning bolts no matter what as they could harm the people of the mortal world. He also told Diodorus that he had to be fully fastened with a helmet and had to keep a firm rein on the wind spirits so that they wouldn't go awry. Zeus said that it wasn't too late to turn back as the ride would be dangerous and Diodorus could be killed. However, Diodorus wasn't listening and was eager to get into the chariot. He hopped in, strapped himself in, and took off before Zeus could say anything.

For the first part of the ride, everything was going well.

Diodorus had the wind spirits well under control and soared above the air blissfully, looking for his hometown. Soon, Diodorus saw it in sight and shouted with joy. He realized that it would be too boring to just show up with a chariot and the people on earth might not even see him riding it. So, he decided to add a little flair to his ride and urged the wind spirits to do loops while he was right above Dodona. A crowd started to build up below him as they stared into the sky. Diodorus believed that the crowd still didn't know it was him so he decided to send a bigger sign. He completely forgot about his father's instructions and turned to the lightning bolt arsenal in the chariot. He scanned the arsenal until he found the largest lightning bolt available, the Master Bolt. With all his strength, he hoisted it up. With a shout of joy, he flung it into the air. From that point on, everything went downhill. The bolt surged upwards with such force that the wind spirits panicked and flew in all different directions. The chariot split down the middle and Diodorus was flung into the air. The lightning bolt, which had seemed to be headed into space, suddenly turned upside down and began to glow. Diodorus had just enough time to think about what a huge mistake he had made before everything exploded.

The lightning bolt sent out jolts of electricity in lines across the globe which were said to form the continental plates. One of the jolts struck Diodorus right in the middle of his heart, and he fell dead to earth. When his body landed, the people of Dodona saw his singed body and realized what had happened. They realized that Diodorus had tried to ride Zeus' chariot and had failed. His doubters felt ashamed of themselves and wept along with the rest of the town. Up on Olympus, Zeus, who had been surveying Diodorus' ride, wept with sorrow and torrential rain fell upon the earth. Zeus vowed that he would never let anyone else ride his chariots or use his lightning bolt. With despair, he roared and turned the used Master Bolt into a constellation in the sky to remember Diodorus. From that point on everyone recognized the constellation of Diodorus in the form of the lightning bolt and were reminded of how foolish he had been.

Aryan Jeena '24

1st Place, Freshman Fiction

## On *Interstellar*

Twelve years ago, Christopher Nolan's film *Interstellar* hit theaters in the US and UK and saw a moderate box office opening weekend of \$108 million, nothing to scoff at but likewise nothing to write home about for the breakthrough director.

Hollywood's reviews of the movie were less than extraordinary, and understandably so. The film at surface level doesn't have much of a hide. Development of minor characters is often traded for intricate expositions and dramatic, predictable cliches aren't exactly difficult to find towards the end of the film. Film critics and directors alike critiqued Nolan's intertwinement of contemporary astrophysics into a sci-fi movie that became, in essence, too difficult to understand.

But Nolan never intended on creating another convenient, conventional sci-fi flick, or succumbing to a money grabber to wear out old stories in deep space or distant galaxies with no personal relevance for the audience. Instead, in its cold detachment from human empathy, *Interstellar* invites us into a different emotion, a different motive for understanding the natural world around us, a calculated, universal indifference and the danger it poses to humanity.

In Nolan's rendition of a possible future, the Earth is slowly dying. Famine and climate change have forced humanity to trade creativity for subsistence farming. NASA has gone underground. Schools no longer are necessary. Instead of looking to the sky with wonder, humans look to the dirt with disdain and disgust. Forced to "expand or explode," NASA sends Joseph A. Cooper, a NASA pilot turned farmer and father of two, hurtling into a black hole along with other astronauts in search of habitable worlds.

Cooper is forced, as many of us often are, to adopt a policy of ignorance towards perceivable emotion. From the complacent goodbye he gives his daughter, Murph before leaving Earth, to the repressed emotions he feels as he watches Murph rapidly age on a television screen from 2000 lightyears away, Cooper believes that, to save humanity, he should ignore that which he has personal attachment to.

However, none of these issues constitute Nolan's salient plot development. *Interstellar* builds itself off of a simple connection between a father and daughter that modulates with the flow of the movie. Even as Cooper searches the universe for a suitable living planet for humanity and his relationship to his daughter Murph falters, his love never fades. In a movie that takes place in a black hole where humanity faces extinction, humanity's last hope becomes not the members of the Endurance crew searching for a new home for humans, but the simple connection between two, insignificant humans. As cliché as it sounds, the fate of the universe rests on love.

If you simply watch it, if you simply try to digest the three hours of film that is *Interstellar*, if you try your very hardest to have a semi-enjoyable time, I can very much assure you that you will not like the movie. The film brings up convoluted questions that it has absolutely no intention of answering. By the end of the movie, you the viewer will be questioning fundamental tenets of existence. The chance that you understand the movie in your first go around is slim and close to none. If by some miracle you do understand the scientific points brought up in the film as well as the psychological issues addressed in the narrative, you will begin to question not the origin of humanity, but its future, and whether we will allow for such a future to exist.

The movie has no happy ending, but I am glad it does not. To give it such a conclusion would be disrespectful to the movie's overall complexity. *Interstellar* shows humanity for what it is. In a global strife, a lone astronaut and his daughter show us what it means to be human what it is to learn, live, sacrifice, fail, and inevitably die. In an unusually dystopian future, Nolan does what so many futuristic sci-fi movies have been incapable of achieving, he envisions the human race for what it is and what it might realistically become.

*Abel Stephen '22*

Nonfiction



### Orion's Nebula

"Here is the Orion Nebula that was taken on 1/21/20. The constellation of Orion is arguably one of the most known constellations out there. Just underneath it's iconic belt is the stunning M42 Nebula."

*Saint Joseph Astronomy Club 2020-2021*

## Greatest Hits

Tick, sways the metronome.  
The band raises their instruments  
Playing loud like no one's home.  
They use them with such immense  
Power, more than they can condone.

Clash, cries the symbol.

The drummer moves his arms,  
Flawlessly as if he hasn't a soul,  
As if he were shuffling cards.

Only his sticks are condoled.

Buzz, rattles the bass.

The bassist creates a backbone  
From the metal of his strings.

Although well known,

He's part of the back where no one goes.

Wail, screams the guitar.

The scales only gain complexity,  
With each note getting higher,  
Enough to fuel the entire city.

Him alone creates the biggest fire.

One Member is missing though,

The role that creates

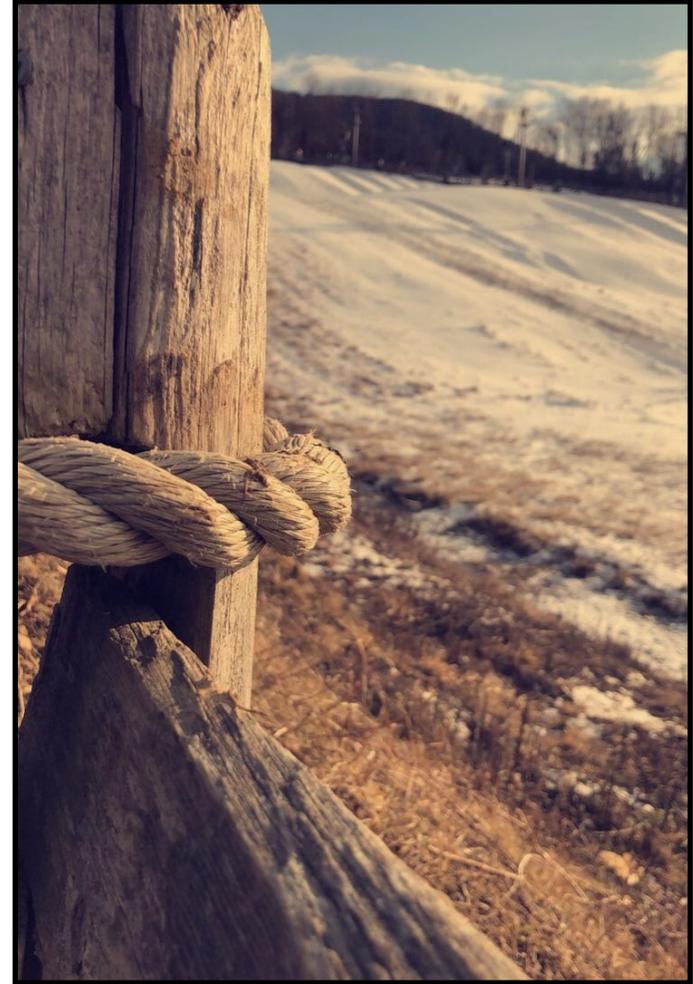
A complete and awesome show.

Three people makes

A band but leaves one area of talent low.

*Kyle Moyer '22*

3rd Place, Junior Poetry



## Out of Focus, Out of Touch

Like many places and people in 2020, the Shawnee mountains seem like a distant dream. I took this image with a 1.4 aperture at 50mm to focus on the roughness of the splintered wood contrasted with the smooth, blurred out mountains. I now wish I focused instead on the mountains and blurred out the wood, as it seems I may not see the Shawnee mountains for a while.

*Abel Stephen '22*

## A Challenged Hunter

A child, born into the world. He couldn't see and never will. His mother's name was on a gravestone. His father, an extravagant hunter, wanted a son able to slay beasts of all lands. He had sacrificed his beloved, only to receive a son with useless eyes. The hunter was tasked with bringing this motherless boy to manhood whilst killing the monsters of the deep woods. He taught the boy how to use weapons without the need of sight. He told of the menacing creatures that existed in the cavernous depths of darkness. He explained the treacheries and deceptions of man.

The boy showed an exponential increase in both intelligence and skill. By the age of 12,, he was able to shoot an arrow on a target, catch a fish with his bare hands, and skin an animal with ease. The hunter had grown quite fond of his son's abilities despite his clear disadvantage. He only wished that his son would've been born a strong, tall man with terrific senses all around.

The boy and his father searched the dark environment each day for the sake of their hunger, and for profit. As they were hunting, the child could sense the creatures nearby. The hunter and his son stopped simultaneously as the slightest crack of a twig alerted them that their agile meal was near. The boy and his father stalked their unknowing prey with incredible stealth. As they approached the seemingly calm animal, the hunter removed the weapon from its scabbard on his back and presented his son with it. He trusted the boy to use the serrated spear to strike the final blow on the graceful creature. The boy gripped and held the sharpened tool in a concentrated position. With his father's breath at his back, he patiently stood, waiting for movement, but strangely heard the focus of a different creature.

The boy quickly turned, throwing the spear at the beastly monster that had suddenly appeared behind him. The hairy monster knocked the annoyance away effortlessly, breaking it in two. The hunter reached for his weapon, but got swatted by the beast and got his back slammed against a tree. The boy could sense that the monster was facing him dead on. It grumbled in anger, staring at the intruder of his land. The boy was forced to make a quick and decisive move. He dove out of the creature's path of attack and grabbed the weaponized end of the spear. He then impaled the beast square in the chest with it, leaving it severely wounded. The hunter had already made a quick recovery from his

assault and jumped on its back to strangle it. The child heard his father struggling with the beast, and started fruitlessly swinging his fists at the creature. In this crazed predicament, the child stumbled across a hard rock of some sort. He took this piece of stone and swung it, hitting the creature in the jaw. You could hear the crack from a mile away. The beast lay there, dead. Both the hunter and his son were exhausted from their tiresome battle. They slumped down next to each other under a thick, shaded tree. The hunter glanced at his worn out son.

He softly patted his son on the head and proceeded to breathlessly say, "That was a fine hunt, my boy."

"A fine hunt indeed," concluded the newly ordained hunter.

*Thomas DeAmorgin '24*  
3rd Place, Freshman Fiction



### Perspective

Despite the fact that this photo seems to be a large expanse with sand dunes on it, it is actually a photo of a canyon wall where the perspective is from the floor looking up to the sky. It helps to emphasize the fact that one must always consider the perspective of anything they are viewing.

*Pranav Tikkawar '23*

## The Great Red Wolf

Each summer, my father and I pursue Great Red Wolves. Although we have never actually seen one up close, we have viewed a distant silhouette and blurred images on the horizon. Being of Lichie Maikoh descent, seeing a Great Red Wolf up close would be remarkable. The Lichie Maikoh are a Navajo subtribe, whose name means Red Wolf. Not all Lichie Maikoh go on the annual wolf hunt. It started as a family tradition, originating with my great grandfather and his brothers. Their children joined, then their grandchildren. Over time the participants dwindled. Grandfather and my Great Uncles became too old for the pursuit. Then, my father's cousins stopped making time for the yearly journey. Four years after my first hunt, it was down to just Father and me. On my first hunt, I carried with me my birthday gift, a camera.

Now, ten years later, the same old DSLR Nikon still accompanies me as I venture across the Chihuahuan Desert. Hopefully, I will finally get some use out of it. Both of us being photographers makes tracking the Great Red Wolf extra special to my father and me. Over the years, my father had done many photo exhibits on the culture of our people. A photo of the rarely ever seen Great Red Wolf would tie it all together. The drive down to the start of our journey was three hours from our home in southern Arizona. We pulled into an abandoned rest stop and unloaded our gear. Together we stepped onto the same trail my great-grandfather used over a hundred years ago. We walked through a vast orange sandy landscape, dotted with green juniper bushes. We kept walking until we saw our first rabbit run by. That was the sign that the start of our yearly adventure had truly begun. At this point, we set rabbit traps every quarter mile, stopping only when it became dark. The next day we retraced our steps and chose the fattest rabbit. The fatter the rabbit, the more appealing prey it would be for the Red Wolf. For days we shadowed the rabbit, hoping the Great Red Wolf would be lured by our bait.

It was late at night on our third day, and I felt the chill of the desert. My father was asleep. I crouched by the embers of our fire and surveyed the landscape. Taking one last scan, I saw a wolf shaped blur. I wasn't sure if it was a Red Wolf, but I ran to wake up my father nonetheless. I shook him till he woke and handed him the binoculars. The wolf was perched on a distant boulder.

I sensed that the Wolf was in pursuit of the fat rabbit for its next meal. Nikon in hand, we took chase. I tried not to get excited but was hopeful this would finally be the year.

We could see the rabbit clearly in the distance now, but the wolf had slipped out of sight. I lift the viewfinder to my right eye. Scanning the landscape through the zoom lens. I saw nothing but an empty desert. I continued surveying what seemed like an eternity. Suddenly, the entire frame of the camera was filled, with the face of the Great Red Wolf. Instinctively I snapped a photograph hoping the flash would stop the Wolf from lunging towards me. Hiding behind the camera, I heard a deafening sound. In a split second, I realized it was the sound of gunfire from my father's rifle. Startled, the Great Wolf retreated from its closest encounter ever with humans. Father and I both looked at the Nikon and saw the image I captured when I snapped the shutter in fear. The light from the flash had illuminated the Wolf's face and captured the vibrant orange in its fur and the ferocious brown of its eyes. At last, an image, the centerpiece that will complete my father's photo exhibit. The image was so powerful that I felt the Wolf's presence at that moment. I realized I would forever feel the presence of the Great Red Wolf.

*Dalton Vassanella '23*  
Fiction



### **A Contemplating Butterfly**

I took this photo while walking around my home, longing to escape the boredom of the rainy day. The dark, muted colors of the butterfly exemplified the day's aura.

*Dr. Robert Longhi '81*

### **Let Me Win**

“Let me win; But if I cannot win; Let me be brave in the attempt.” The first time that I saw this quote was on the back of my brother’s shirt at his county-wide Special Olympics track meet. The quote is the motto of the Special Olympics, and although it refers to the competing athletes, it is a motto that can apply to anyone. My brother, though not as physically or mentally equipped as his peers, can still compete and do his best. His disability does not imply an inability. All people face challenges and hurdles in life, and his hurdle happens to be being on the Autism Spectrum. Throughout my life, I have seen people similar to my brother pitied or seen differently than a neurotypical person, when in fact, he and everyone with a disability should be seen simply as people. They are people with disabilities, not disabled people; their circumstances do not define them. Someone’s cognitive or motor skills or lack thereof should not affect his or her chance to pursue happiness and fulfillment. The life that we live is not defined by the challenges we face, but rather, how we overcome them.

*Holden Harbison '21*

Nonfiction

## Daily Routine

The town of Grayloch was like an aging body. The lungs were the factory. It pulled in clean air and left the sky gray. The harbor was like the mouth of an old man, receiving the same bland, scheduled shipments week after week, meal after meal. The Post Office was the heart, pumping the same life's necessities. Mail was full of taxes, empty newspaper, predictable paychecks, and a needed coupon now and then. The brain was the town hall but rarely did any real thinking.

Every Sunday the only building open was the church. The whole town packed the pews. The priest glides through the motions, reciting the same monotonous sermon. After the mass ends, the congregants leave in peace, and everyone heads home for another weekly ritual. Sunday afternoon dinner may at first seem interesting. It changed up the predictable meals of local seafood, eaten most other days. However, week after week of Sunday's plain ham, becomes tiresome. Almost everyone went to bed early in anticipation of the same routine the new work week brought. Early Monday morning, before the sun rose, it was off to work. Masses of people corralled into overstuffed trolley cars. By the time the trolley arrived at the factory's black iron gates, an unforgiving sun had risen. The inside of the factory is mainly lit with natural light spilling in from huge windows perched high on tall brick walls. Work on the assembly line was as repetitive as everything else in Grayloch, perhaps more. Assignments on the assembly line were handed out on a worker's first day. They were the same on day sixty, day six hundred, and so on. At exactly noon the lunch bell rang, and at twelve-thirty it rang again announcing lunch was over. The day ended as it began, and everyone filed out of the factory.

They silently took the trolley to their stops and walked home under a bright but dreary sunset. By the time George got

home, it was near dusk and the cloudy evening partially hid a glowing moon. He pushed open the door of a plain brick apartment building, one of several on the street. George walked in through the beige-colored entranceway, up to the door of his apartment. Then the most interesting thing in weeks happened to him. His key broke. While the average factory worker was now sitting down to dinner, this worker was locked outside of his apartment. The unforeseen twist of his daily routine ended with George simply retrieving his spare key from his next-door neighbor. They talked briefly about his new insurance and yesterday's daily catch at the fish market. Then after a long day, George finally walked into his apartment and yawned as he proceeded into his living room. Before he could turn on the light, he came upon a shocking scene. A shattered window framed the glowing moon, and everything in the room was gone. In the center of the room was a sealed envelope, dimly lit by the moonlight. Before he opened the envelope, George already knew who had left it. After decades of blending in, they had finally found him.

*Dalton Vassanella '23*

1st Place, Sophomore Fiction

## The Pizza Guy

I was sitting on my bed, doing the usual, playing video games on a call with my friends. There was no school the next day, so we were planning on playing through the early hours of the morning. Excitement was running through my body, since I had the whole house to myself. Parents gone on vacation out of state, and I had complete power. Things that I would not usually do, I was doing. Of course, since I had no clue how to make myself food, I had to order pizza. This was a dream come true for people like me, no parents, no school, food, and video games with my friends.

Through the noises of my friends chattering and the sounds of bullets and explosions through my headphones, I was able to hear the sound of the doorbell ringing. I looked down through my window to the front porch, and as I was expecting, there was a domino's worker waiting for me to open the door. I told my friends I'd be back in a second, and opened the door and gave the man the money in exchange for my pizza.

The night went on, through lots of focusing on the game I was playing and laughter from me and my friends, I was able to see the same domino's car parked right in front my house still there. I found it pretty odd for the man to still be there, since I already gave him the money and he gave me the food I ordered. I grazed it off as nothing and went back to my game.

It was starting to become very late. Many hours passed by since my first suspicion of the car in front of my house that I had forgotten about it. I jerked my head to the left, and saw the same car, but this time, the man was outside, glancing right at me. I jumped back, petrified at what had just happened. My friends questioned my obvious change of tone, but I didn't answer. Me and the pizza delivery man had a stare off for what seemed to be minutes, I turned my head back to my TV and was trying to tell

myself I was just tired. When I turned my head back to the window, the man was nowhere to be seen, but the car was still parked.

Confused and scared, I didn't know what to do. I tried to focus back on the game I was playing, but I just couldn't get it out of my head. Through the loud noises of my headset, I heard a very slight, inaudible noise. I turned down the volume of my speakers, and my heart sank, the door bell was ringing. After minutes of non stop ringing, it turned into banging onto my front door. I sat in my bed, fear ran through the bones of my body. After a while, the man was trying to kick my door down.

Through the efforts of the man, I heard how close he was to success. I ran to my door, locked it, and dialed the police. As I did this, I heard the heart wrenching success of the man of the man kicking the door down. The operator questioned me, and I told her there was an intruder in my house. She advised me to stay put and remain calm as that the police would get there soon. Through the talking on the phone, I heard the pounding of footsteps coming up my stairs. This then reached to my door, where he tried the lock. This of course didn't work, so he resorted to kicking the door open, which was relatively easy. Through the terror I was going through, I saw the man had an unobservable object in his hand. The tall figure bent down to my level, and through the sounds of my frantic screaming, I slightly heard, "I forgot to give you the wings."

*Jack Barnett '23*  
3rd Place, Sophomore Fiction

## A Necromancer's Lullaby

Hush now my little one.  
You've earned your rest.  
Just close your eyes  
And relax your chest.  
Hold onto my hand  
And let out a sigh.  
Drift off to sleep  
While I try not to cry,  
For my work has begun,  
And there's no time to grieve.  
I can bring you back  
If I only believe.  
I know it in my soul:  
there's some fix,  
Some potion or some power  
To bring you across the Styx.  
I'll rob every crypt  
And defile every tomb  
To fill the lonely bed  
Inside your room.  
I'll teach corpses to dance  
Through their dark catacomb,  
For this house is the corpse  
Of what you made was a home.  
There's no rite too vile.  
There's no tome too profane.  
Every sacrilege, a sacrifice,  
To see you smile again,  
And my soul may be damned,  
Frozen nine circles deep,  
But it's worth it to hold you  
And sing you to sleep.  
So, sleep now my little one  
And make no mistake.  
I'll conquer life and death  
Just to see you when you wake.

*Timothy Horan '23*  
Poetry

## Isolated

As I am home resting on my bed,  
I feel that there is a need for things to be said.  
Although we are stuck staying at home,  
I need you to know that you're not alone.  
  
We are entirely in this together,  
Staying with each other as tight as two feathers.  
Although our split may be prolonged,  
We demand everyone to go on strong.  
  
It is like we are all in some odd documentary,  
The one where it gives us fixed boundaries.  
I crave so many things in my normal life.  
The pain is piercing through my heart like a knife.

Six feet apart we must stand clear,  
There is a threat of coming close and near.  
Although we cherish each other very much,  
We cannot bear for each other to touch.

*Arvin Islam-Gomes '22*  
Poetry

## The Spirit's Cursed Wish

In the clearing of the great forest stood a lone willow tree, larger and more beautiful than any other tree in the spirit's garden. Those who touched the tree were granted a single wish, but if you were deemed unworthy, then a wish would only become a curse.

Still, many foolish men and women seek the divine aid of the spirits for selfish and evil reasons, and such was the case of young Vic. He marched through the wonderful forest and laid his eyes upon the lone willow tree, and when he touched it, a deep and commanding voice spoke to him.

“What is your wish?”

The question was simple and sudden, and shocked Vic so much that he fell to the ground. When he looked up to the branches of the willow tree, he saw an owl, whose eyes were a murky abyss, and whose feathers were as dark as the night sky.

“Speak!” ordered the owl, displeased with having to wait for a lower creature.

Vic was shook from his awe and he stated, “I wish to be the fastest boy alive!”

“Why do you wish this, child?” asked the owl, ready to turn the boy away.

Vic lied, “I want to win prize money to support my family,” and then turned away, unable to look the spirit in the eyes much longer.

As the owl looked up from the boy, a great wind swept over the forest, and the leaves of the willow seemed to glow. When the wind subsided, the boy began to confidently walk home, believing that he had successfully tricked the owl. Unfortunately for him, a crow and a raven, two agents of the owl, followed him to verify his honesty.

Vic returned home, and instead of practicing with his new speed, he chose to mock his rivals who were training for the race. He laughed at Rowe, who was far from the fastest kid in town, and he insulted Teddy, who could not keep pace with the others despite his great technique. Finally, he returned home to his parents' large house.

On the day of the race, an owl, a crow, a raven, and an assortment of small creatures stood from a high perch, overlooking the race. Vic was oblivious to their presence, focusing on the crowd that came to see him, but some onlookers noticed how unrelated creatures stood calm among each other, staring intently at the race. They all came to the same conclusion, and feared the eventual wrath of the spirits.

The race started, and Vic ran faster than everyone else, but he stumbled and crashed onto the dirt track. He got up and began to catch up with all the other racers, but he fell again. The children in the audience laughed, and even some less mannered adults smiled. Vic stayed in last, far behind any other racer. Every onlooker took note of him as he scurried off the track.

The crow and raven cocked their heads towards the owl, whose murky eyes showed great amusement.

“The curse?” the owl replied, “Let it be known that Rowe and Teddy will win the race.”

*Vincent Smythe '23*

Fiction

## The Rise and Fall of Melodrama

On June 16, 2017, Lorde released her sophomore album, *Melodrama*, garnering rave reviews from critics and fans alike. Primarily written and produced by Jack Antonoff and Lorde herself, the album is very well-made, but their execution of its concept is arguably its most compelling feature. Lorde seemingly designed it to encapsulate the stages of a romantic relationship and its aftermath, as supported by the songs' lyrical content.

The concept album opens with the song "Green Light," which describes the sensation of yearning for an escape from the attachment to a failed love. In this piece, Lorde sings, "I'm waiting for it, that green light, I want it," referring to how people wish that they would receive a sign to let go of their past lover. The song introduces the main theme of the album, love, but starts at the end of the relationship rather than at the beginning.

Therefore, the second track, "Sober," serves as the first stage of a relationship and depicts an encounter with a new romantic interest where Lorde continually asks, "but what will we do when we're sober?" People generally wonder whether their chemistry with someone is limited to an intoxicated moment or has the potential to develop into love. Following the lingering question in "Sober," "Homemade Dynamite" illustrates the relatable notion of only showing one's "best side" in an initial attempt to captivate a crush. As the relationship progresses, its peak is shown in "The Louvre," where one decides to "blow all [their] friendships / to sit in hell with" a newfound lover. This love has evolved from one excited by intoxicants to one that is motivated by the natural rush that someone experiences with a significant other.

However, for every exhilarating high, one typically encounters a devastating low, as demonstrated in "Liability." This song portrays the stage of love when people feel like a burden on their partner and like "a toy / that people enjoy / 'til all of the tricks don't work anymore." The relationship seems to be nearing its eventual end, which is verified by the following track, "Hard Feelings/Loveless." The first half of this joint song captures the emotion of a romantic relationship's end and states that the only

action that one can take is to "fake it every single day 'til [one does not] need fantasy" to overcome the strong emotions of heartbreak.

The latter half of the joint track describes the "loveless" nature of this generation to antagonize the person that they loved. As the halfway point of the album, "Loveless" signifies a shift in the album from events during a relationship to those following, exemplified by the feelings described in "Sober II (Melodrama)" where people "wonder why [they] bother" to love if it always seems to fail. While "Sober II (Melodrama)" explains the regret of entering a relationship, "Writer in the Dark" assumes that the other person also "rue[s] the day" that they met. Transitioning to a more positive tone, "Supercut" explores the pensive period where one reminisces solely about euphoric memories made with their partner. A heartbroken individual usually will envision "all the magic [their relationship] gave off" and wish for a return to those moments; however, it is only a flashback that does not exhibit the present reality of loneliness.

Shifting to a more hopeful mindset, "Liability (Reprise)" establishes that an individual is "not what [they] thought [they] were," which was previously described as a liability. This realization enables the final song, "Perfect Places," to explore how "all the nights spent / ... trying to find these perfect places" leads one to the discovery that there is no such thing as a state of true, untainted happiness. This desire for satisfaction causes the endless cycle of love to continue—a cycle that *Melodrama* analyzes, allowing the album to possess a timeless quality.

*Matthew DaSilva '22*

Nonfiction



### Horse Head

The infamous Horse Head, pictured above, waits hungrily in the corner of Mr. Harrington's room, ready to devour student whose understanding of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven* or Thomas Paine's *The Crisis* is less than adequate.

*Dalton Vassanella '23*

### The Horse Head

I remember the day we met,  
A September morning I'll never forget.  
I glanced at you, you glared at me,  
and chose me as your enemy.  
What did I do to anger you?  
It's a mystery to this day.  
You stare and stare and stare at me  
With nothing much to say.  
It seems so random to single me out.  
Why did it have to be me?  
Is it my smell? Is it my look?  
Or something else entirely?  
On Halloween you roamed the halls  
Like a stalker in the night.  
Your only goal, it had to be,  
to give me such a fright!  
It must be hard to spend all day  
Consumed by hate for me.  
There are better uses for that time  
Like grazing on the green.  
I wish you well every time  
I leave Mr. Harrington's class.  
I hope one day we will be friends  
And let the anger pass.

*Scott Schmitt '23*

3rd Place, Sophomore Poetry

## Commanding A Dream

I sat relaxed in the backseat of my grandfather's 1982 Mercedes-Benz sedan, mindlessly scanning my surroundings. The smell of perfume and leather permeated throughout the car as my mind drifted off while my grandparents discussed the local town gossip in the front seats. I wasn't entirely sure of the destination of this Sunday drive; however, the smell of sea salt soon saturated my senses. We arrived at the beach, and we all gazed out into the boundless ocean, and in my grandfather's broken English, he uttered "if I can make it in America, so can you."

My grandfather grew up in a small Portuguese fishing village with nine brothers and sisters. His family was extremely poor; he didn't receive any formal education past the age of eight and he only received his first pair of shoes when he was nine years old for his First Communion. Like many other poor children in his village, he fished for sardines, starting when he was only nine years old. Although he didn't have any of the resources richer residents or city-dwellers had, he continued his education by learning how to read and write from his older sister and learned basic arithmetic from a baker while he was an apprentice.

After a childhood marked by hard work and poverty, he had an opportunity to move to Venezuela and apprentice with another baker. He made the difficult decision to leave his family and all that he has ever known in the aspiration of prosperity in the New World. He sailed across the vast ocean of opportunity and established himself as a competent baker, eventually becoming a manager of multiple bakeries in the area. After three years of hard work in Venezuela, he returned to Portugal for two weeks to reconnect with family and friends before he left for another two years in Venezuela. Unwittingly, he met his future wife and proposed only days later. In pursuit of a better life, he yet again sailed across the ocean, this time leaving his love.

At the end of his two year apprenticeship in Venezuela he

moved to the "land of limitless possibilities," and was once again thrust into poverty while living in a rough neighborhood in Queens, New York, trying to establish himself while his wife was in the process of immigrating. After years of eighty hour work weeks and moonlighting in sweatshops across the borough, he sufficiently established himself and his wife finally moved to America. Soon after, they moved to a small Portuguese town on Long Island and he opened a prosperous family fish market and provided a bright future for his children. A life of hard work culminated when both of his children married and he finally decided to retire and moved back to Portugal.

He was always proud of the childhood he gave his children, the childhood he never had. He attributed much of his success to the opportunities he had in America, taunting that "America gave me the inspiration and opportunity to be successful." A true manifestation of the American dream, my grandfather made it through hard work, dedication, and some luck; yet, no matter the circumstances, he overcame.

As we gazed out upon the boundless ocean, I realized that I was standing in the same place where my grandfather made many of his most difficult decisions. Although entirely unknown, he knew that somewhere out in the vastness of the ocean there was a promised land, a land of prosperity and opportunity. Through his hard work and tenacity, he was able to reach the promised land and achieve his American dream. My grandfather enabled future generations to stand on the shoulders of his work, and achieve what he never could.

*Joshua Oliviera '23*

1st Place, Sophomore Nonfiction

## The Bliss Behind a Portrait

As the slanting rays of the setting sun disappeared behind the snow-capped mountains, the blue haze of day faded to reveal the shining stars and the long night that awaited. I was on a sleeper train headed for the villages of Northern India, traveling through the picturesque valleys once inhabited by the mythical beings that many Hindus worship today. I made my way to a relatively small cabin towards the back of the train and quietly placed my belongings on the bottom bunk, making sure not to disturb my three cabin mates, who were already fast asleep. As the train traversed the landscape, the mellow luminescence of the pale crescent moon pierced the cabin and spilled into the hallway, leading me to discover a whole new world – the life beyond my temporary abode.

After probing through my backpack, I grabbed my camera, stooped upon the threshold of my carriage's gangway, and peered out onto the many commoners packed into the adjacent, ramshackle carriage. From infants barely the size of my forearm to elders as wise as Solomon, the local commoners seemed content despite their indigence and lack of material possessions. At the front of the carriage, a child with torn clothes and battered leather slippers laughed with his mother while curiously looking at the stars and noctilucent clouds.

Intrigued by my foreign apparel and a rather large camera, a schoolboy in the adjacent carriage, wearing a decorated headpiece and stained maroon cloth, motioned for me to come over. I crossed the threshold and entered an atmosphere that seemed so far removed from what I was accustomed to. After assessing the crowded carriage, I was promptly greeted by the schoolboy in a mix of Gujarati and Hindi: "Good evening, Bhai! Can you take my photo on your video camera?" Not thinking much of the boy's request, I snapped a photo of him in his attire with the night sky in the background, much to his delight. One-by-one, children and adults alike gathered in a queue and shyly requested their portrait. As I dove deeper into the night, the requests of the commoners grew more extravagant. My supposedly relaxing night would turn into an enduring and arduous night.

The next morning, the train had arrived in Shimla, my final destination. As I proceeded to exit my cabin, I was met with the

smiles of the children from the adjacent carriage, who were pleading for one more photo. I politely refused, as I was quite weary and grumpy from my lack of sleep. After reaching my hotel in the center of the city, I opened my laptop and downloaded hundreds of photos from my camera. I considered deleting the images, as they took up too much space, but then I came across the portrait of the schoolboy. Strangely, I saw more than a schoolboy dressed in ruffled, maroon cloth; I saw a child with a dream, a child dedicated to his faith, and a child searching for hope in the midst of his poverty. As I continued to look empathetically at the portraits from the previous night, I began to understand the true meaning of wealth in life – an individual's happiness.

*Animesh Borad '22*

Nonfiction



### All Aboard!

I captured this photo after exiting the train in the outskirts of Philadelphia. The flowers and the train's contrasting colors created an interesting scene, leaving me in awe.

*Animesh Borad '22*

## Polarization

The political landscape over the last four years has drastically skewed the trajectory of American society for the worse. More and more people view the other side as dangerous to America; In 2004, 29% of Democrats view Republicans as damaging to general societal well-being, and 21% of Republicans view Democrats in the same light. These numbers reached an all-time high recently, rising to 38% for Democrats and to 43% for Republicans. As politics becomes increasingly more important for the livelihoods of people, it is inherently becoming a facet of daily society. Americans have become increasingly more hostile to each other and divisive between each other about issues that, frankly, should not be divisive, like on the effectiveness of masks and even the existence of Covid. The political escalation in recent years has led people shouting down others at gas stations and arbitrarily calling others Nazis. The main cause of polarization recently can be summed up in a few words: poor, non-American leadership.

Well, what is “poor, non-American leadership”? Simply put, it is leadership that does not care about the everyday American and makes politics a game. The game that they play is lowering the bar of American democracy, leading to hostilities between people in everyday life. Presidential candidates have been outright childish, calling each other “clowns” and demanding that the other just “shut up.” It even happens in Congress with distinguished members tearing up copies of the State of the Union Address while just sitting behind the President, and Congressmen blocking the passage of Coronavirus stimulus bills that would benefit hundreds of millions of Americans. Most egregiously, the President claiming that the opponent only won the Presidential election because of fraudulent votes and chastising the media who called the election for his adversary “fake news”. When an unsuccessful presidential candidate does not contact the victor to congratulate them on their win, then there is something severely wrong.

When George H.W. Bush left the office he wrote a note for Bill Clinton saying that he was our president and that he was rooting for his success. Two men of opposite political parties shared a real emotional connection, and, in a time of political division, they exemplified unity, not as Republicans or Democrats, but as American leaders. What Americans need is a President who will serve in our best interests and will replicate the civility that the

Presidents 30 years ago embodied. So, don't sit idly by and watch laughable politicians for your entertainment, but rather engage in the democracy that the founders envisioned 240 years ago, one without two parties that so vehemently despised each other and one with unity and peace between all Americans.

Roman Modhera '22

Nonfiction

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### Between the Divide

Each edition, two student writers with nominally opposing political, social, or economic viewpoints will debate a topical issue in American or international politics.

DISCLAIMER: The Falcon has no intention (and really any need) to indoctrinate students or educate adults on politics. Instead, our intention is to create a platform for healthy debate in a world where politicization and division are often inescapable words and healthy, constructive discussion is difficult to come by.

#### Has Biden Trumped the Pandemic?

By Roman Modhera '22  
Assistant Editor

WASHINGTON D.C.— On Wednesday, President Joe Biden delivered his first 100 days speech before Congress and the American People. Opening up his speech, he made it clear that he would be delivering his speech in front of Madam Secretary and Madam Vice President, something that had never before been uttered before the joint session. The President added that “it's about time” for women of color breaking into positions that they have never held before. The comment was received fairly well, with both parties clapping for VP Kamala Harris.

The transition to the tragedy that struck DC in the January 6th Capital Attacks, which attempted to stop the certification of the electoral college in his favor. He called it the “worst attack on our democracy since the Civil War.” The commander in chief received some flak because of this comment, as throughout history, there have been three Presidential assassinations, dozens of other attempted assassinations, and the September 11th Attack on the Twin Towers, that are all arguably greater attacks on our Democracy. Although these tragedies are detrimental to the American spirit, the Capital Attacks, aimed at stopping the free and fair election that happened in November, were a direct attack and siege upon American Democracy, unlike the other tragedies conservatives may cite.

A huge part of Biden's speech detailed the economic recovery in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. At the time of making the speech, over 12 million Americans have been infected by COVID, with almost 600k of those cases being fatal. Under the Trump Administration, the COVID-19 vaccine was developed by companies like Pfizer, Moderna, and, more controversially, Johnson and Johnson. Biden said that he outperformed his expectations for the vaccine roll out, originally expecting a “two million” in the first 100 days and actually providing “over 220 million

bottom and the middle out,” arguing “prophecies of Reaganomics.”

Although it may not be popular to say this, he's right. Trickle-down historically has not been effective, and, in this recession, we need new, intuitive plans to grow the struggling economy. President Biden also said, surprisingly, that “Vice President Harris and I met regularly in the Oval Office with Democrats and Republicans to discuss the American Jobs Plan.” Democrats and Republicans alike

#### Sparking Debate and Inciting Criticism: Biden's 100 Day Address

By Brian Zafian '22  
Staff Writer

WASHINGTON D.C.— On April 23, 2021, President Joseph Biden gave his speech to Congress and the American people to reflect back on his first 100 days on president and what the future of his administration could look like. The opening to his speech was fairly strong, setting up what he would be talking about: “crisis and opportunity.” About rebuilding our nation and reevaluating our democracy. While his opening was received well, what was seen to follow would receive much criticism.

Biden also introduced the American Families Plan, which provided a more years of free education to US citizens: 2 years of preschool, 1 and a year-olds, and 2 years of community college. This plan will also provide “affordable child care to low- to middle-income families”, “12 weeks of paid family and medical leave”, and will provide a Child Tax Credit for every child in a family. Biden would also like to make the Affordable Care Act permanent, “lower the deductibles for working families”, and “lower prescription drug costs.”

The proposals made by Biden sound good on paper, so why are there so many critics of them? Regarding the American Jobs Plan, critics claim that infrastructure is a local government issue and that the proposal by Biden costs too much, a staggering \$5.5 trillion.

The American Families Plan is criticized out of its \$1.8 trillion price tag. People on both sides agree that America needs to improve its education system, but much of the criticism comes from the higher costs of the plan, such as the Child Tax Credit. Making the American Care Act permanent receives criticism because many believe that it pushes the US into a system of free healthcare, much like the UK or Canada. These critics tend to push more for lowering drug prices to an affordable price, while still allowing pharmaceutical companies to profit.

Finally, the Equality Act receives major criticism for “limiting religious freedom” which is granted in America by the 1st Amendment. If the Equality Act were to be passed, religious schools and organizations could face lawsuits over policies on gay, lesbian, or transgender students.



## Unexpected Controversy?

In revitalizing *The Falcon Newspaper* to represent news that remains prevalent to students, our staff issued a politically center article where students have the opportunity to debate relevant ideas. Despite being well intentioned, the piece was met with controversy from several angles.

The Falcon Newspaper

## My Everything

I don't know if I will ever say  
Everything that happened that day.  
From the look of the sun,  
And how we were having so much fun.

Then, in an instant, it all changed.  
She almost looked deranged,  
"How could you do this?"  
She said with hate.  
"Do what?"  
I had nothing to explicate.

The car ride home was completely silent,  
And my breath was taken away each moment.  
I tried to speak but nothing came out.  
I guess this is what people always talk about .  
You become so close it's hard to imagine  
That something like this could actually happen.

We arrived at my house,  
But I didn't want to get out.  
When I took a long hard look into her eyes,  
That's when I was able to realize  
All these years I had caused her pain,  
But I never meant to drive her insane.

She's my everything, the one I most adore,

So much that my heart would get sore.  
I won't go down without a fight.  
I vow to do what I can to make this right.  
Young love is what they say,  
But I know there's no other way.

*Diego Navas Trujillo '21*

Poetry



**Library Cross**

I took this picture in the passing moments before school began, at a time where none of the students who passed through the Zenga Library seemed to notice the surprising afterimage of an early-morning rain.

*Dr. Robert Longhi '81*

## Autumn's Frost

At the young age of six, my Grandfather and I took a walk to a vast field, as the chilled October air lifted my hair from where it was placed. The blades of grass were layered with bright, fallen leaves, and coated with a dusting of frost. As we walked amongst the white blades, I became intrigued on how our feet made prints in the ice. Almost like a sort of makeshift pathway. I remember laughing and having deep conversations, while throwing the frosted, leather football, ever so slightly numbing my bare hands. I will never forget that lovely day.

For that day was the first of many. Any day that the blades of grass turned white in the early morning, you could bet that the two of us were out there; Among the sounds of autumn. Our footprint path was filled with cries and laughs all along the way to the middle of the vast field. Our brown, leather football was filled with tales and stories, as we kept passing it to one another. Oh, what a great time that was. What a great time indeed.

Six years passed since that first autumn morning, six years exactly. It turned out that morning the blades of grass were once white again. I ran over to my Grandfather's house to ask him to go to the field, uncertain of his response. Without hesitation, he obliged; our pathway that year was made by my footprints, and the lines from his wheelchair. We had another great day on the field, but as he threw the football, he became weary. So we ended up calling that day short. Still, every day that autumn, he took me out onto the white grass. We would talk for hours on end, but as the days grew colder, we had to stop and wait once again for the following Autumn.

The following year, as I walked out onto the white blades of grass, with a football in hand; I began to make the makeshift pathway. Only this time it wasn't as wide. As I tossed the football up into the cold air, I began to remember the stories we used to share this time of year. I hoped to somehow get in touch with him while out in that frosty field. Then I realized, until I see my Grandfather face to face again after this life, those words will just be memories for now. Nothing more. As I gazed down upon a leaf, I came to find myself comparing it to him. One side of the leaf is dead and crippling, while the other side is vibrant and full of life. Even after my grandfather's death and grief, his passing still left behind

with me the joy and happiness of his life. That joy and happiness will never die, and will continue in me, and in all those who knew him. Just like how the leaf comes back in the spring, my Grandfather will always be alive in me.

*Nereo Rossi III '23*

1st Place, Freshman Nonfiction



**Fall Leaves**

I took this picture while enjoying a hike with my family in Ramapo Valley County Reservation in Mahwah, NJ. I believe this photo captures the essence of the autumn season as the beautiful red, orange, and yellow leaves sway gently in the cold, fall air.

*Abhishek Borad '22*

## The Annual First Aid Meet

“Can you pass me the tourniquet?” I needed to act quickly and integrate my fellow scout into the sequence of procedures.

After cleaning the wound, I placed the initial bandaging on the bleeding, then instructed him to maintain pressure.

“Now what should you not do?” I asked.

“Remove the gauze.” he replied.

“Excellent,” I said, “add more instead.” I continued to perform the primary assessment.

As the patrol leader, it was my duty to lead my eight-person patrol through each of the six scenarios that we were assigned. In this simulation, the scoring judge informed us that the patient had fallen off a ten-foot cliff, suffering multiple injuries. Once my crew performed a primary assessment, it was evident that the patient’s right leg was bleeding profusely, in addition to a spinal injury and broken right elbow. Before we began treatment, I asked one scout to call 911 and relay our location and emergency status. After triaging the injuries, I decided to stop the bleeding first, as she was a trauma patient. While assisting one scout with the wound, I advised another to stabilize her head to prevent further aggravation of the spinal injury. Finally, with the help of a third scout, I secured a moldable splint and sling in place for the broken arm joint.

Since my first year in scouting, our troop has participated in the annual First Aid meet in New Jersey for the Boy Scouts of America. In preparation for this competition, scouts learn first aid and trauma skills to manage any medical emergency that might occur during camping trips. After three years participating as a scout, I was given the honor of leading and teaching the patrol. In order to include everyone during each scenario and to avoid overworking any scout, I divided and assigned the different topics and specializations, such as poison or burn victims, head trauma, and heat exhaustion. However, as patrol leader, I was required to know every topic and treatment so that I could effectively triage patients and support the less experienced scouts if needed.

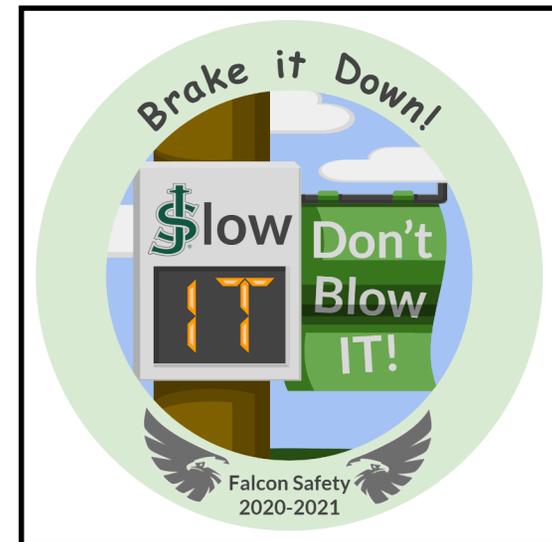
With the event day approaching, I knew that performing under pressure would test not only my leadership but also my teaching skills. Every week for a month, we trained by practicing

every model scenario and different skill. I narrated the procedures and thought process out loud while asking questions and cuing each scout to fulfill his assigned role in a coordinated sequence of decisions and steps. I watched my patrol become faster, more adept, and more confident.

It was exciting for our patrol to place third out of 30 teams that day, but even more gratifying was to see all the hard work paid off in our shared group success.

*Isaac Alexander '21*

Nonfiction



### Slow it, Don't Blow It!

This year, Saint Joseph's Falcons for Safety Chapter led a campaign to promote safe driving among students and members of the surrounding communities. The club disseminated magnets and flyers, aiming to make the community a safer place.

*Falcons for Safety Club 2020-2021*

## The Wonders of Astronomy

Peering through a telescope,  
striving to find hope.  
Searching for constellations up high,  
all while admiring the wondrous night sky.

Setting your eyes on the stars,  
when suddenly you stumble upon Mars.  
Imagining what else is out there,  
like a new form of life or a zodiac so rare.

Observing the yellow tinge of the full moon,  
with its guise like that of a gold doubloon.  
Looking for Apollo's landing site,  
while gazing at the glowing lunar light.

Studying a comet from miles away,  
waiting for it to pass Earth one day.  
With a streak of light trailing behind,  
this flaming ball of ice amazes mankind!

Attempting to discover a brand new galaxy,  
but instead, you enter some made-up fantasy.  
As we explore the vast Milky Way,  
some ponder what God has planned for today.

A stargazer's dream is to know it all,  
so they are in it for the long haul.  
The universe is vast and unknown,  
and it's the astronomer's job to discover new zones.

*Abhishek Borad '22*  
Poetry



### Moongazing

Pictures taken of the moon by Franciso Vazquez '21, Marcus Louis '22, Christopher Wylde '21 and Mr. Roel Mercado on 9/23/2

*Saint Joseph Astronomy Club 2020-2021*

## A Magical Discovery

There are stories, myths, and legends of magic, mythical creatures, and magical objects unleashed onto the world. There are special wands, books, cloaks, and even dragons. Among the many magical artifacts, there was one in particular that was long forgotten. This forgotten item was a backpack that would magically transport whatever the user wished for, although could only grant five wishes before a required cool-down. Legend has it that the wizard Merlin crafted it during Medieval times. The backpack has transitioned its form throughout history, adapting its look to blend in with the changing fashion i. Because of this funky feature, the backpack was lost. My name is William Ryder and today, I found that magic backpack.

It was an early Saturday morning in the Big Apple, the perfect time for a daily jog. Today's destination is Central Park, the best place to gain some steps! After an hour of jogging, I sat down on a park bench near the bridge to take a break. A couple minutes later, I was ready to continue the jog, when I noticed a light out of the corner of my eye. I turned to look and saw a glowing light coming from under the bridge. I wanted to investigate but there was police tape and fencing around the bridge. I knew I shouldn't go past the police tape but I had a weird feeling, telling me that I needed to go in there. I'm gonna get in trouble for this, I thought. After checking to see if anyone was nearby, I jumped the fence and passed under the police tape to locate the origin of the light.

I looked around the area under the bridge but didn't see anything unusual. I was about to leave when I saw another glow. The glow was originating from underneath the dirt, probably buried. I checked around and found a shovel (pretty convenient for me, right?) to dig up whatever was making that light. After digging for some time, I hit something hard. I dug around the object and pulled it out. The shining light came from... a box? As I was about to lift the cover, I heard some voices as people walked nearby and I panicked. I need to get out of here, I thought to myself. When the coast was clear, I slipped out from underneath the bridge and jogged to the subway to get back to my apartment building.

After getting off the train and into my building, I noticed

that the box was getting heavier. Once inside, I opened the box to see what it held. Inside the box was an old backpack, an old letter, two photographs, and some notes with a sketch of the backpack. After examining what was inside, I gingerly picked up the letter and read it.

The letter stated, "To whomever is reading this, then that means that you have found my time capsule. I am writing this from the year of 1899. Inside the box are some special items of mine that I would like to share with you. They may be useless in your time but these were very important to me and it pains me to bury them away. There are two photos in the box. One of the photos is of my family and the other is me standing with my best friend, Logan Allen. I also included the backpack because it is an extraordinary item. Whether it was blessed by God or enchanted by witches, it is an astounding creation! Hope you enjoy this capsule and use the best of the bag! Use this item of magic wisely. Sincerely, Jacob Henry Ryder."

Jacob Henry Ryder... I recognized that name because my great grandfather also had the same name! So that means that I found my great grandfather's capsule in what would be Central Park! I then turned my focus to the backpack and its notes. After I closely analyzed the notes, I picked up the backpack and tried it on. It was a bit heavy in weight, but a good fit nevertheless. I tested this backpack's ability by making a wish for a \$20 bill. After a minute of waiting, I opened the empty bag and found a random \$20 bill. Realizing what had just happened and what is to come, I grinned. Life is only going to get better for me and I hope to enjoy every moment!

*Matthias Hernandez '22*  
2nd Place, Junior Fiction

## Happiness

Why is it that it is so hard to be happy these days?  
It's the mindset we have that determines our ways  
Of life, how we live and how we think  
Because in the end, is life anything without gratitude?  
Gratitude which we consume like a drink  
We choose what determines our mood  
What shall we base our life around?  
The food or the musical sounds  
Our grades and school work  
Or the people we often lurk (with)  
because some say life is too short,  
And others they try and retort  
They say oh we live for seventy years  
So grab a glass and do some cheers  
There's so much to live in life  
Why spend so much time running from pride  
I say, life is like flowers (a flower)  
We prepare so much, but bloom, so little  
People live their lives chasing something  
But are not happy with their progress thusfar  
I believe we should enjoy the little things  
And the little improvement we make  
We should enjoy the little imperfections that we have  
after all, what is it that we are really striving for  
When will we actually be satisfied.  
Chasing perfection is not ideal  
Chasing happiness is  
So why is it, so hard to be happy these days  
We look at other peoples lives,  
we determine that they are happier than us  
But what we don't see online, is their struggles  
We don't see their mental health  
We don't see the adversity they deal with everyday  
So don't worry about other people  
Focus on yourself  
Then, You will achieve true happiness.

Krish Bhatia '22  
Poetry

## Real

Where does imagination meet reality?

I learn, live, sleep, dream, wake, breathe, and repeat.

Reality depends on a single action: *Waking*.  
A singular action to determine what is real,  
to keep the subconscious mind in check.

But what if I can't?

Does a reality exist where what is real is inaccessible,  
and what is accessible is fictitious?

Is this my forsaken residence, **when** I go to escape reality, where I  
am still learning,  
living, sleeping, dreaming, **waking**, breathing and repeating,  
*and repeating?*

Is an escape to this nightmare even possible?

Where but a single action **is impossible**, where ambition is  
indistinguishable from insanity, where solace is forgotten.  
My mind becomes a cell, **and reality** becomes indefinite.  
and all but imagination, **shatters the** only key I once understood,  
an escape that I refuse to remember: *Waking*.

left alive, but not awake,  
in a world that I imagined, in an idea that I am a part of.

Will I learn my lesson from a dream-like hell, or create another  
hell-like dream within a dream?

Would it be to:

Not let your imagination run wild?

Not let your **subconscious mind** consume you?

No—something else, something deeper.

Reality is what we make of it, and really:

Who are *you* to say that I am asleep and you are awake, when

**we're all living a dream?**

Abel Stephen '22  
2nd Place, Junior Poetry

## What Happened to the Titanic?

For more than a century, people have debated over the tragic story of the vessel known as the Titanic. The magnificent luxury ship sunk in 1912 due to cutting costs, unreasonable priorities, and a reckless crew.

First and foremost, researchers on an expedition in 1985 found that the Titanic broke on the ocean surface, as opposed to on impact on the ocean floor. The blame is placed on 3 million rivets along the Titanic's hull that were found to be mainly comprised of slag and metal scraps from working with metal. Slag is generally known as inefficient metal for supporting structures like it was used in the Titanic. It is believed that the Titanic might have been able to withstand the scraping of the iceberg if the rivets had been made of a reliable metal. In hindsight, some of the passengers might have had more time to escape if the Titanic didn't split in half and sink so quickly.

In addition, there were not enough lifeboats to get everyone on board to safety, with emergency boats only accounting for half of the total passengers. This was believed to have been done for cosmetic reasons, but it might have also been used to save costs on the ship. Even with half of the passengers able to be safely rescued, only about 700 ended up surviving. The initial design called for enough lifeboats for all passengers, but the end product did not match the designs. The Titanic planners not only cut costs when possible, but also prioritized cosmetics over general safety. Finally, as the policy for the required amount of lifeboats was based on the ship's weight and not the intended passenger capacity, the massive shortage of lifeboats was legal, which most likely was a big factor in their decision.

Lastly, key members of the Titanic crew were seemingly incompetent. The Titanic was warned by another ship that they were going to be traveling through an ice field, but the message wasn't listed for the captain to receive crew radio operator that received it considered the message not important enough to transmit to the rest of the crew. Had the radio operator relayed the message to the captain, he might have had a chance to correct their course and take a safer route. Additionally, one of the crew members panicked when given orders to move the ship away from an oncoming iceberg patch instead accidentally made a wrong turn, turning the ship directly into the iceberg's path.

Even the captain wasn't past scrutiny, as he had the ship

traveling at 22 knots, way past a safe speed for such a large ship through such a dangerous part of the ocean. As was later confirmed, the Titanic had lots of issues when it came to anything other than standard procedure.

As a result, on the fateful night of April 15, 1912, the Titanic broke in half and plunged into the icy waters of the Atlantic due to a lack of competence in the crew, priority of cosmetics over the safety of the passengers, and shrewd planning which led to an unsafe design.

*Terrence Quinn '24*  
Nonfiction

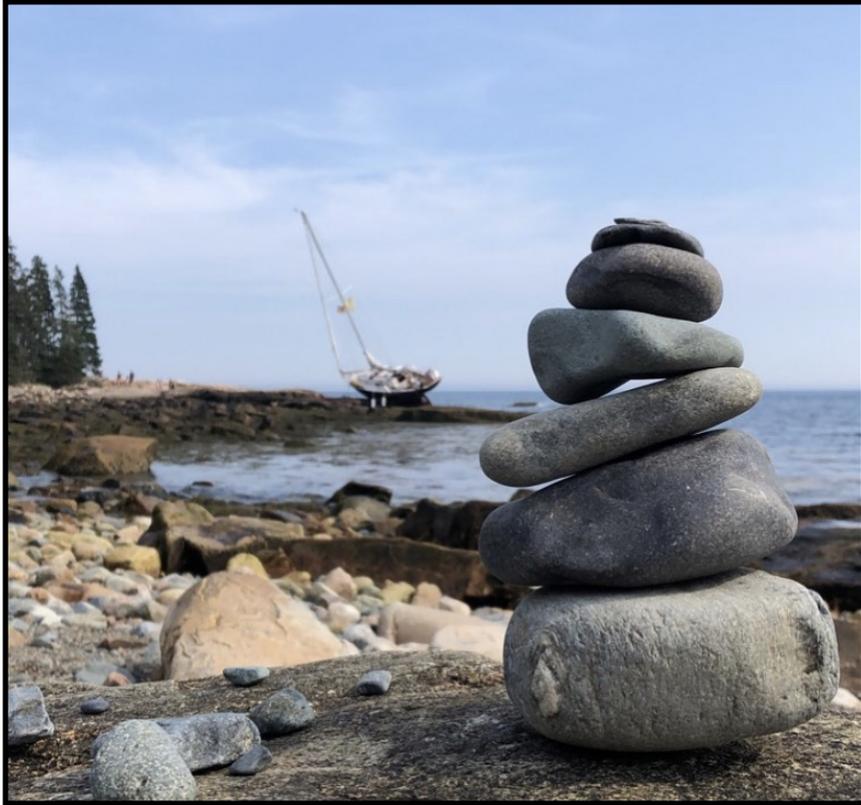


### Cloud Mountain

This photo was snapped in Iceland. The contrast between the house in the bottom left corner and the rest of the picture makes it feel like a place humans have not quite fully explored yet.

*Julian Duteuple '23*

## The Emperor



### Focus

During my trip to Maine, I had stumbled upon a secluded part of the trail I was on. There was a multitude of things that caught my eye but I could not settle on one thing to capture. I wanted the boat, the rocks, the water, and the trees. So I chose my favorite object and made it my focus while having the other objects present but not the central idea of the photo.

*Pranav Tikkawar '23*

“Sir? The boat is ready.”

As he heard this, the emperor of Elba sighed and rose to his feet. Although he had been contemplating and planning this move for months, now that it was finally upon him, he was not sure that he wanted to do it. He had a good life on Elba; in the ten months since he had gotten there, he had accomplished a lot. The island was more sanitary, productive, and well-maintained than it had been in a long time, possibly ever before. The quality of life of his people had improved so much, and he was not sure that he wanted to throw that all away.

However, the emperor had also been hearing rumors from his sources back on the mainland. Although he had been deposed as Emperor of France, he still had many powerful friends back in Europe and was receiving information that the British were planning to move him to a remote island in the southern Atlantic. Even though at the Treaty of Fontainebleau he had been promised sovereignty of Elba until his death, it seemed that the British were planning to renege on this deal. Moreover, if he were to escape back to France his secret allies would attempt to place him back upon the throne and give him a second chance to make France the predominant power in Europe once again.

“Sir? If we are to leave tonight, we must go now; if we wait too long, our gap in the blockade will shut, and we shall miss our opportunity.”

“Yes, yes, I know. Let us go; we must strike while the iron is hot. The allies are divided, squabbling over land. Our opportunity will never be riper. Come. We must make haste; I wish to tell my people of France that their Emperor has returned, that Napoleon has returned.”

*Gregory Bergquist '21*

Fiction

## The Six Seconds that Changed America

The United States Secret Service was founded in 1865 for the sole purpose of defending and protecting our nation's leaders. To become such an agent, you have to complete a two-year intensive training process that many do not pass. The most well-known Secret Service agent in US history is a man named Clint Hill. In his short career, Hill served under the four most influential presidents in modern history. He had a front row seat to the most important and crucial events of the 20th century. However, he is most well known for playing a role in some of the darkest events that this nation has ever seen.

November 22nd, 1963 is a day that will forever be remembered in the history books. President John F. Kennedy was on a trip to Dallas, Texas to campaign for his reelection bid in 1964. As he headed towards Dallas in his open-roof motorcade, President Kennedy was overwhelmed by the support he had received since landing in Texas. A large crowd gathered to watch the motorcade pass by as it headed towards the infamous Dealey Plaza. Everything was going smoothly until a noise that sounded like a firecracker permeated the air. Agent Hill, who was directly behind Kennedy at the time, saw the President grab his throat and scream in pain. He immediately knew that what he had heard was no firecracker. It was a gunshot.

After the first shot had been fired, Agent Hill blacked out completely. However, what he did in the next six seconds that changed America, would define him forever. When the second shot and final, fatal shot rang out, Agent Hill sprung into action, using the two-year training that he had completed just five years prior.

Hill sprinted towards the gunfire and, more importantly, the convertible housing the president. FBI records showed that he reached speeds of 23 miles per hour. As soon as he reached the car, he jumped onto the hood and used his body to shield the Kennedys until they reached a local hospital. Despite his efforts, Hill knew that Kennedy could not be saved.

In the aftermath of that pivotal moment, Agent Hill was saddened and spent the following days bed-ridden. When he walked with the Kennedy family at the funeral, Hill felt guilt and remorse. He felt as though he could have done something more to prevent the deadly assassination. This led to a deep depression.

For the next twenty years, Hill was able to slowly process the events of the Kennedy assassination and finally admitted to himself that he couldn't have done anything more to save the President. This vital realization came when Hill turned to his faith and piety to the Lord. He asked the Lord to give him a sign that he was not at fault. This sign came in 1994 when Hill received a call from Jackie Kennedy. She thanked him for protecting her and her husband that fateful day. Hill was delighted by the special phone call. Today, Secret Service Agent Clint Hill is a bestselling author and motivational speaker. He has inspired many young individuals around the nation with his amazing lectures and speeches. However, his actions in those six seconds that changed America will define him forever.

*Gavin Szilvasi '24*  
Nonfiction



## The Ravine

This photo was taken in Iceland in August 2019. It was a long hike to get to the spot in which I took it, but the view and photo were absolutely worth it.

*Julian Dutemple '23*

## A Remembered Legacy

In the hot and humid weather of summertime in Vancouver, Canada, I woke up in a house with no Xbox, no tv, and, most importantly, no wifi, but, somehow, it was the most memorable and formative three weeks of my childhood. The house belonged to my grandfather, and it was where my mother, her two sisters, and her brother grew up. My grandpa, with almost no money or fluency in English, moved to Canada from India in 1973 and worked tirelessly as a laborer to get a better life, education, and freedom for his kids. Eventually, when those kids grew up and moved to the US, he had to, unfortunately, stay behind for one reason: insulin. He had developed diabetes and needed to stay in Canada to get treatments under their universal healthcare system. But, when I exited my room and entered the kitchen for breakfast, I saw him sitting on the couch in the living room, reading, and he seemed normal, although I now know his pain. He even dared to say, “Let's go to the lake today,” as if it wouldn't have hurt him every step of the way.

So, the whole family decided that it would be a good day to have a picnic by the lake. With the help of the grandparents, the kids made PB&J sandwiches, packed snacks to go, and gathered together some toys to play with by the lake. The gang sauntered down to the lake just a couple of blocks away from the house. We spent the rest of the day by the lake, eating, swimming, or just relaxing, but my grandpa didn't seem interested in any of these things. My grandpa just sat, smiled, and skipped rocks until you could barely still see them, and he quietly gazed upon the seemingly endless lake adorned by willow trees.

After I finished playing tag with my cousins at sundown, I decided to walk over to him and said, “come play with us.” He declined and pointed to the water, and I, to get him to play with us, sat next to him and talked. He dragged me in close, so close I could feel his warmth, but this wasn't a normal kind of warmth. His warmth emanated a certain wisdom and experience. I had felt his soft cotton shirt that had two light white vertical stripes, which slowly faded into light blue and his set of simple black shorts bare of

any name on it. He lived a life void of materialistic items and didn't need them to be happy, for he found happiness from his family.

He reflected on his teenage days in India, where, unlike me, he lived in a village that didn't have much food, entertainment, or family life. He would pass the time there by skipping rocks, just like he was doing now. My grandpa, smiling, turned his head towards me and said, “remember, family and education first, then everything else,” while also authoritatively pointing his finger at me. I nodded in assent. I sat there under his arm and watched the small ripples in the lake calmly approach our feet and then quickly move away. He kept skipping stones with his other arm, and the sound of them impacting the lake reverberated through the air. The melodic splashes and the laughter of my other family members soothed me into a sleep right there under his arm. The last thing I remember was the sun glittering over the water just as it went down.

Looking back, I realized that this was his “I did it” moment, a time where everything he had dreamed of came to fruition. My grandfather was, despite his poor health and detachment, happy, and will always be happy, that all of his hard work materialized in his progeny's better life and his family's success in the western world. Even through tough times like his recent battle with Leukemia, he always kept a smile when his family came to see him, reminding him that his sacrifices as an immigrant were not in vain. Since our conversation, I dedicated myself to honor his legacy by working as hard as he did for his family. And so, I ask you, the reader, to realize that your grandparents had made similar sacrifices to put you in the fortunate position you are in today and to thank them while you still can.

*Roman Modhera '22*

1st Place, Junior Nonfiction

## The One Person I Need

I reject others around me,  
I want to have time to myself,  
Yet, I want to have someone who understands me.  
Succumbing to the darkness is easy for me and somewhat comfortable,  
I'm used to feeling negative, I guess this is how I should stay.

Why should I make an effort to connect with others?  
I've been mocked, teased, disrespected, and pushed around by many.  
Is this how it's supposed to be for the rest of my life?  
Will my life be filled with loneliness, despair, and tears?

Huh? What's that sound? Is that . . .the telephone?  
Have I forgotten this sound? Is my isolation that terrible for me?  
"Hello, who is this?" I asked.  
"It's your bro, Solomon! How are you?" he replied.  
"I called to let you know that I love and miss you. How are you holding up?"  
"Everything is good right now, actually not really, well. .I. .," I sobbed.

Solomon answered, "I know it's been hard since moving from Springfield. So I have a surprise."

"What is it?" I replied.

"Look out your window," he answered.  
My eyes opened wide as I looked out my window.

I dropped the phone, raced to the door and opened it,  
My brother stood on my porch, staring at me with open arms, and I ran straight to them.

Hugging tight to Solomon, I cried, "I love you, Solomon!"  
"I love you too," Solomon answered with tears rolling down his cheeks.

"I know that you live here in paradise, but it ain't your paradise. I want to give you this."

"What is it?" I asked.

He answered, "It's a journal, you can release your thoughts whenever you need to."

I took the journal and gave Solomon one last hug.

Have I forgotten about him, have I closed the blinds for that long?  
How did I not realize there is one person I know who understands me,

I will always remember him now, this journal can change my life,  
For the first time in a long time, I have hope.

*Xavier Daly '22*

Poetry

[00:00:00:00]

“We live our lives taking each second for granted. But what would you do, if you knew how much time you have left?” This was the beginning of Unus Annus, a YouTube channel created on November 15th, 2019 by Ethan Nestor, Mark E. Fischbach, and Amy Nelson. Every day from that day forward onward, they would upload a video to the channel.

These videos were special, no one video was like the other. There would be a timer at the beginning and end of the video, showing how many days, hours, minutes, and seconds they had left. They cooked breakfast with suggestive items, got pepper sprayed, and went ghost hunting. They played children’s games in the dark, drank their own urine with a Life-Straw, and tried helium therapy. They dunked oreos in anything but milk, tried to teach their dogs to play dead, and started a fire with their bare hands. They tested their limits and taught each other various things while having fun along the way. They laughed, they cried, and they feared. They sang the “Disclaimer Song”, did the “Dance of Italy” and had one final sleepover.

In case you do not know, “unus annus” is latin for “one year”. Exactly one year, 365 days, after the channel was created, it would end. This didn’t mean that they would just stop uploading videos. When time ran out, they would be deleting the channel along with every single video on it. And that they did. On November 14th, 2020 at 12AM (PST), at the end of one last 12 hour livestream, time had run out. Unus Annus was finally dead.

Unus Annus was an adventure. A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I was there from the beginning to the end, from when the timer read 365:00:00:00 until 00:00:00:00. If you were there, for even a part of Unus Annus’s life, I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did. “Memento mori” is a latin phrase that means “remember that you will die”. This was the lesson that Unus Annus taught. Nothing lasts forever, so make the most of the time that you have, because the clock keeps ticking for all of us, and it stops for no one. Memento mori. Unus Annus.

*Samuel Makowski '22*  
Nonfiction

## Let Your Soul Run Wild

Let the earth in through your nose  
And out through your mouth.

Look at the sky.  
Look down at your feet.

Look all around,  
Up and down.

See all the different colors  
And all the different names.

Everything is different;  
Nothing is the same.

Now smile big;  
Smile proud.

Push out the darkness  
And let in the light.

Life’s about living  
So be what you want to be.

Impact the world  
with your beautiful songs.

Oh pure little soul,  
Let your soul run wild.

Just be yourself. Who cares who’s watching?  
Be what you want to be and do what you want to do.

Be happy.  
Be kind.

Let your soul run wild and free.

*Michael Cansfield '21*  
3rd Place, Senior Poetry

## For Whom the Bell Tolls

The saying, “For Whom the Bell Tolls”, was one Peter Walsh was familiar with. It all happened in the summer of 1969 in South Carolina when tragedy had struck him. It was July and it had so far been the summer of his life because he finally had a driver’s license as well as all of his friends. In the midst of the joyous time, it had come to a halt when the bell tolled for his mother. She had died of cardiac arrest late at night while taking a stroll. This was the first time that Peter had dealt with death in his family since his grandmother. It was at this moment that his family tree began to diminish. He had already lost his grandparents before, but now it seemed like more bells were to rung. Later that year in December, his two cousins, aunt, and uncle had gone skiing in the mountains. An avalanche crushed them; the only survivors were his uncle who broke his legs and his younger cousin who had only broken his arm. DING, DING! The bell had tolled twice for his loved ones who had died in tragedy. After this, his uncle had turned to smoking as a coping mechanism, but he did it heavily to the point of a pack a week. Midway through March, he had developed lung cancer for which no one could afford treatment since the death of his aunt and mother. He died after half a year of being in the hospital. During this time, Peter’s younger cousin, Randy, came to stay with his father, John, sister, Lizzy, and himself. Times were tough, and they weren’t getting easier; Peter had two part-time jobs, his father worked at the construction site, and his sister worked at the nursing home. Everything seemed good, but it wasn’t easy to manage as Peter and Lizzy had to manage school too. This went on for a while, and in that time Peter used his free time to follow his passion for music. Peter had always liked music of any kind so he saved some money on the side to buy a piano. He learned almost everything about the instrument within a year.

Now, it was 1971, and it had been years since he lost his family members for who he loved greatly. It was good up until November of that year; his sister had been working extra hard, so

she took the night shift at the nursing home. A group of four robbers had broken into the nursing home and before Lizzy could alert the authorities she was tackled to the ground. In the morning, the place was bone dry of heirlooms, and Lizzy was found on the ground with a snapped neck. DING, DING! The bell had tolled another life away to the afterlife. Peter had been greatly hurt by this since he had known his sister for years, and they were very close. He was even more depressed since she wasn’t able to follow her dream of becoming a doctor. His family had been cut down to three members. Since Lizzy had died, they needed more money so John had taken a shady offer to move illegal substances for \$500 a night, and he was tricked by the buyer. He said that he would tell the police, but he was instantly shot when he threatened that. Peter and Randy were the only remaining members, but Peter could only afford his own expenses. He had made the difficult decision to send Randy to foster care instead of making him suffer. Peter had been done with the tolling of the bells, so he was to live by himself for the rest of his life in fear of hearing his future wife be tolled by the bells. Peter had later died in 2002 to old age, and it was his turn for the bells to toll him. Randy lived on, and he was able to live happily, except that he had no more real family left. The remaining member became a successful figure, and he spent his fortune on a memorial to his family, who he missed dearly.

*Raymond McCraney '24*

2nd Place, Freshman Fiction

## 2020: The Momentous Year

2020, a momentous year,

with events transpiring far and near.

We all had “20/20 vision” coming into this year,  
but our vision was blinded, and all we saw was fear.  
Bushfires in Australia and the Amazon clear as day  
spreading and spreading, and wouldn’t give way.

If that wasn’t enough, COVID-19 came around,  
putting communities, states, and nations on lock down.

Socialization became isolation, which soon became deprivation,  
and then came murder hornets, attempting colonization.

For months & months we were stuck in our homes,  
balancing out school and being distracted by our phones.

From virtual graduations to birthday celebrations,  
just take a step back and realize the sensations,  
sensations to be remembered as momentous occasions,  
for all to remember from generation to generation.

Civil unrest within many locations,  
testing the morality of their nations.

People banding together within the streets,

marching down each and every one with their own two feet.

All marching for the same exact same cause,  
in an attempt to expose their nation’s flaws.

Overtime restrictions began to be lifted  
so socializing and crowding became the new addiction.

Again and again people ignored the signs  
and brought us back around seven months in time.

Vaccines are being tested,

companies relentless,

to find out a cure for this virus that tormented,

tormented us and our families

making this year 366 days of tragedy.

Nevertheless, the world is still alive

as 2020 will be a momentous year,

at least in our lives.

*Caeleb Chendorian '24*

2nd Place, Freshman Poetry

## Inspiring Figure

Lewis Hamilton is arguably the greatest Formula 1 driver in the sports' 70 year history. He shows incredible focus, determination and skill during every race. His cool headed personality and humbleness make him such a likeable character among the field. And his off track endeavors raise awareness for issues that are at the forefront of our society.

From his childhood, Lewis always had that natural talent to be a great driver. At the age of just thirteen, he got a phone call from the team principal of the McLaren F1 Team. He had noticed Lewis and wanted Lewis to race for him once he was old enough. Something like this was unheard of back then. When he was in the junior formulas, which are comparable to the minor leagues in baseball, he won both F3 and F2 in his rookie year, beating out drivers who were much more experienced than himself. Everyday, Lewis would call the head of drivers at McLaren asking when he could drive an F1 car. It was that determination and focus that eventually landed him a seat at McLaren for the 2007 season. Lewis nearly won the championship his rookie year, a feat never done before. Ultimately he lost it by just one point. In 2008 he was on the other side of the draw, winning the championship with McLaren by just one point. In 2013, he moved to Mercedes, who, at the time were a relatively unproven team. However this move was the right choice and proved to be a turning point in Lewis' career. He went on to win the drivers championship in 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019, and in 2020. He showed everyone his skill and became statistically the best driver with the most wins, pole positions, podium finishes, and tying the record for most drivers titles at 7.

Lewis has always been a very humble man. Even when he was younger, he never bragged about his skill. Carting and Formula 1 are both very expensive for the average family. His dad Anthony had to work four jobs just to keep Lewis in carting. Lewis and his dad were never the richest family in attendance. They were actually almost always the poorest. They were also always the only black family there.

The two constantly faced racism both on and off the track,

especially for Lewis at school. But that never discouraged the two. Anthony never doubted his son's abilities. Lewis knows what it takes to be the greatest and this is why he is so humble. He always gives his dad the most credit for getting him to where he is today.

Lewis, being the global star he is, has a huge platform to spread messages around to so many people. He is a strong activist of the black lives matter movement, veganism, equal opportunity for all, and climate change. After the death of George Floyd, he asked all his fellow drivers to stand with him in supporting black lives matter. Unfortunately, this has come with backlash from some of the sport's greats, but this has not swayed Hamilton's drive for change. Speaking out about controversial issues was a huge step for Lewis as F1 had largely remained a politically neutral sport. Hamilton also supports many charities such as Save the Children and Education Africa. Lewis even has his own clothing line with Tommy Hilfiger.

Lewis consistently posts and spreads awareness on the most pressing global issues of today, yet he is doing so much inside the sport as well. From speaking out about Breonna Taylor to surpassing Michael Schumacher for the most wins by a F1 driver, Lewis is multifaceted and speaks out for causes he believes in while still maintaining his status as the best F1 driver in the world. No one else has been able to be so unbeatable on the track, and so aware and active outside of it. His focus and determination on and off the track show the type of character that he is and the type of drive that he has. Lewis is truly an inspiration for kids out there who are striving for greatness in whatever they are doing.

Owen Griffin '24

2nd Place, Freshman Nonfiction

## The Day The World Saw Him

It had not been long since the world saw Him,  
When people's moods were somber and the day dim.  
For He was like none other who came before  
He was the son whom Mary bore.  
Yet he was crucified for something he didn't do  
For his presence threatened every corrupt king and Jew.

It had not been long since the world saw Him,  
When blood covered all of Him limb to limb.  
As soldiers beat him with whips and pierced him with spears  
He knew His salvation was growing near.  
People insulted Him and cared little of His name  
While others wailed and bawled as they saw Him in pain.

It had not been long since the world saw Him,  
When peoples' faces were grim.  
His clothes were tattered and covered in mud  
With a crown of thorns laid on a head coated in blood.  
He knew this agonizing pain would soon end.  
And after he proved himself he would ascend

It had not been long since the world saw Him,  
When his time on earth was growing thin.

With his limbs haphazardly attached to the cross,  
He looked down at his followers disheartened by loss.  
He smiled up at his Father with eyes bloodshot,  
As eternal reunion with God was something He sought.

It had not been long since the world saw Him,  
An innocent body murdered as a victim.  
He has died to save us from sin,  
Opening the gates of heaven and leading lost souls in  
He started with a cross on his shoulder  
And ended, being put to rest in the back of a boulder

It had not been long since the world saw Him,  
But now we celebrate his salvation with prayer and hymn.  
For he was resurrected from the dead,  
And soon ascended to heaven like the Apostles have said.  
So to whoever views this and misconstrues  
This poem was not to entertain or amuse,  
But rather represent the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, King of the Jews!

*Jason Magistre '24*  
3rd Place, Freshman Poetry

## Plight of the Bumblebee

The bumblebee flew through the air soaring.  
While he looked for nectar to please the queen,  
Clouds grayed the sky with rain sent down, pouring.  
This would not be a pleasant symphony.  
The bee was barraged by rain drops mid-flight,  
As he tried to retreat back to his nest.  
While humans watched, unaware of his plight,  
The rain had caught him, and choked him to death.  
Korsakov thought he'd live another day,  
But the sky disagreed, and said, "Nay."

*Aleksander Rivera '21*  
1st Place, Senior Poetry



## A Bee's Life

While at NJ's Botanical Gardens, I snapped this photo of a bee pollinating a beautiful orange flower. It made me wonder about how much simpler they live their lives, flying from flower to flower and occasionally returning back to their hives. There's an important lesson that we can learn from these creatures: slow down and to not get caught up in the rush of life.

*Roman Modhera '22*

## The Elegy of Schroedinger's Cat

Oh Albert, Erwin, hand of ruthless Fate!  
With poison you subject your feline friend  
To make a statement and to quell debate.  
But why condemn it with such a cruel end?

A modern Sphinx, your riddle taught mankind  
How one can comprehend the quantum state,  
A certain place electrons are confined.  
Your model and our knowledge we relate.

Who knew a single cat inside a box  
Could, simply with its existence alone,  
Create a never ending paradox  
To help explain to science the unknown?

A thought experiment, yet you impart  
The truth; you're not a figment in my head.  
You will remain within all of our hearts  
No matter if you are alive or dead

*Joseph Derosa '22*  
Poetry

## Reckoning Day

It all started with the rain. It came down in a torrential downpour, millions of droplets landing and spreading their contents across the incognizant plants and animals unfortunate enough to be in their path. As the jetstream blew eastward, thousands more were infected by the acidic mist, although no one knew the complications this seemingly harmless shower would bring.

The submersion of the Polynesian Islands was the final straw for global warming activists around the world. By the year 2041, the average temperature anomaly was over 2°C, signaling the near-complete liquidation of the polar ice caps. After years of public backlash, the world leaders finally came together with a solution.

The plan was simple: the United Nations would authorize the geoengineering technique of atmospheric aerosol injection to help curb the rate of global warming. This would give ample time for world leaders to replace their energy sources with renewable methods. Soon, air tankers filled with the substance took flight and released it throughout the stratosphere.

It was a disaster. The aerosols fell back to Earth in the form of acid rain, poisoning the food and water supplies of the entire globe. The catastrophe, known as Reckoning Day, served as the perfect impetus for a return to primitive ways.

Anarchy spread throughout the streets of every country in the world. Poverty levels and famine soared to unprecedented levels since the dawn of mankind. Resource wars were constantly fought over materials we had once taken for granted.

My hometown of Manhattan was thankfully saved from the worst of the rains; however, paranoia still spread throughout the population, influencing the collapse of the city's internal structure. Three powerful factions arose, based on previously established gangs, and claimed pieces of the city as their own.

Whatever position you had previously held was meaningless, as everyone was now a scavenger, scrounging around abandoned stores looking for anything that may sustain themselves and their family.

Leaving my dilapidated apartment late at night, I continued on my perpetual search for supplies in the deserted city. By departing during the nighttime, I can minimize the risk of encountering other merciless scavengers. Flashlight and backpack in hand, I made my way to the tunnels.

My journeys to the subways have always been fruitful, so I returned once again. Hopping over the turnstile, I made my way towards the forgotten shopping plaza. I chose a seemingly promising restaurant and began rummaging through the empty cardboard boxes and plastic.

Suddenly, an echoing bark emanating from the tracks interrupted my searching. Beams of light broke through the darkness, moving in arbitrary directions. They were searching.

Quickly, I dove for cover behind a pile of boxes, hoping for the patrol to pass. With the barking progressively becoming louder and louder, I held my breath in anticipation. As the light shined on my boxes, I knew it was over.

The Faction had found me.

*Aayush Agnihotri '22*  
3rd Place, Junior Fiction

## Ukrainian Frogman

Never shall I forget  
Kiev, Ukraine 2008,  
A Ukrainian Spetsnaz Regiment  
Men from honor and loyalty,  
Angels from the battlefield  
Including my own grandfather,

Never shall I forget,  
The gloominess of that day  
Erased by the sight of a coat of arms  
Blooming like a rose in a field of darkness  
Emitting honor, integrity, and soul

Never shall I forget,  
That moment when he gave it to me  
When I knew I wanted to be something real,  
I knew  
I wanted to be a SEAL  
He told me “Only you get the final say”  
Being a SEAL  
The Only Easy Day Was Yesterday

Never shall I forget,  
My grandfather’s dying moments

My hero and his victories,  
My only inspiration  
Who would slowly be lost  
And I couldn’t even be there to box my head at his cross

Never shall I forget,  
Every moment of his legacy  
Never shall I forget,  
His face when I told him I wanted to be just like him  
Never shall I forget,  
My first step into SEAL training  
Never shall I forget,  
My first night of Hell Week  
Never shall I forget,  
My Trident dedicated to him

He is my inspiration to fight,  
He is my inspiration to live,  
He is my inspiration to be the best of the best,  
He is my grandfather  
And never shall I forget.

*Dennis Babynyuk '22*

Poetry

## Why Should Bowling be an Olympic Sport?

There are currently forty-four Summer Olympic sports and fifteen Winter Olympic sports. In the past ten years, Basketball 3x3, Breaking, Karate, Marathon Swimming, Golf, Rugby, Skateboarding, Sport Climbing, and Surfing have been added to the Summer Olympic Games. But, why isn't bowling on that list? Many people think of bowling as recreational, when in fact, bowling for competition is a really tough sport. It takes skill to bowl competitively. During a practice session, a competitive bowler may bowl for over three hours amounting to over 20 games. This is an equivalent time and effort to practicing for basketball or football. On the lanes, bowlers can control what happens behind the foul line. Like a successfully executed football play, everything in bowling has to be perfect in order to make a good shot. The physical aspects of bowling such as the approach, the run-up, the swing, the release, the follow through, and balance must be mastered. All of these aspects must be perfected in order to consistently throw a good shot. In addition to the physical aspect, the bowler must understand the events that transpire after the ball leaves his hand. The oil pattern on the lanes and the ball choice have a significant influence on what happens next.

Oil on the lanes is necessary to protect the surface of the wood. What people might not know though, is that certain oil patterns make the sport more difficult by preventing the ball from hooking toward the pins. The oil pattern that recreational bowlers use is called a house shot. In competition, sport oil patterns are used that are extremely difficult and test the bowlers abilities in the basics of bowling. On sport shot, the less the bowler manipulates the bowling ball and swing, the better the outcome. When shooting a sport shot, the only way to strike is with the right ball playing the correct part of the lane.

Adjusting to these oil patterns is the toughest part of the sport. To adjust, first the bowler will try to speed up or slow down

their approach. If that doesn't work, then they will move left or right depending on how hard the ball hit the head pin. Finally, the last resort is to switch bowling balls. Through this painstaking process, we can see how much oil affects the sport of bowling.

Science and physics also play a major part in the sport of bowling. In bowling, hitting the head pin only gives you a better shot at striking, but won't guarantee it. The trajectory angle at which the ball hits the pocket will affect if all ten pins hit each other and fall over. If you spin the ball, you will rarely strike because the ball will just deflect off the pins. The center of weight of the bowling ball must be allowed to roll forward before any hook is created. When the ball rolls on the center of weight, it will start to hook. You want the ball to roll into the pocket at about a 60 angle. Understanding science and physics have an important role in the success of any bowler.

Bowling is a very complex sport and deserves a chance at being included in the Olympics. Bowling requires a tremendous understanding of the science behind the throw. This skill has to be applied in order to succeed. The sport's oil patterns increase the challenge as well. Understanding how to adjust, the science behind bowling, and the physics of bowling will definitely prove to enhance the difficulty level of competition. For these reasons, the Olympic Committee should highly consider bowling as the next Olympic sport.

*Evan Chin '24*

3rd Place, Freshman Nonfiction

## Escape from Responsibility

The birds' raucous chirping irritated Sam as he dragged his rubber soles on the concrete sidewalk, slowly approaching the bus stop at the entrance of his development. The December air persuaded the sophomore to pull his hood over his head and shove his hands in his sweatshirt pocket, warming his ears and fingers. With difficult exams to take and long essays due, Sam had a tedious Friday ahead of him but at least he was not alone in the stress.

"Bro, this test is gonna kill me," Eric whispered groggily.

"Yeah, same." Sam said, "Why does Mrs. Duluth make her tests so complicated?"

"I don't even know," complained Eric, "and Mr. Pearson assigns us this last-minute essay without explaining how to write it."

"Yeah, it's so annoying."

The boys boarded the bus, sat in their usual seats, and immediately laid their heads down on their bags in an attempt to escape the stress of the school day. The rustling of the vehicle startled Sam multiple times, the final time occurring as the bus navigated through the school parking lot and abruptly stopped. Checking the time, Sam realized he only had five minutes to collect his materials from his locker and report to his first class, which was the infamous Mrs. Duluth. Luckily, he arrived as the bell rang.

Eric whispered, "I would rather die than take this test right now." Sam stifled a laugh.

Within five minutes, a test consisting of only short answers was placed on each student's desk, and the class let out a collective sigh. Sam perused the first couple of questions with an empty mind, rendering him unable to produce answers and causing him to become anxious. The sudden boom and calamity outside of the classroom were not aiding his concentration either.

"What even was that?" Sam mumbled to himself.

As if answering his question, the principal hastily

announced over the intercom that everyone must exit the building immediately with their belongings and that school was concluding now. Many of the students were relieved by the fact that they were temporarily granted an escape from their responsibility, but, soon, rumors began circulating about the reason for the unexpected evacuation. Several whispers of bombings and nuclear meltdowns induced a disoriented atmosphere, disrupted by a second announcement.

"Students, there has been a nuclear meltdown a couple of towns over. Everyone must be picked up as soon as possible from school to evacuate the area," echoed across the schoolyard, leaving silence and widespread fear. The sequence of events that followed the announcement seemed to have occurred in mere seconds to Sam. He acted as a speechless bystander while his family picked him up with few possessions, drove to a motel over an hour away, and began planning their new life. Sam did not know what to say or what to think or what to do; he was stunned by the unexpectedness of it all. Sam's life was upended, and his development filled with his childhood memories was deserted, unaffected by human contamination for decades to come.

After thirty years without inhabitants, the rotted wooden streetlight finally gave in and eerily collapsed into the street. In an attempt to reclaim its property, the vegetation previously restricted to the forest consumed the neighborhood, extending its reach to the houses and pavement. The worn-out asphalt and sidewalks were covered and cracked as weeds and moss finally conquered the streets lacking human use. Devoid of traffic and people, silence unlike what this road has seen filled the air, except for the pleasant chirping of a few birds.

*Matthew DaSilva '22*

Fiction

## Falling Upward

The sun rises, the moon falls.  
Simple laws of nature,  
The gods' harmonic song.  
The pines dance along,  
Along in the breeze.  
From nowhere, comes a ringing,  
Ringing, quiet, whispering.  
Space and time seem to freeze.  
The heavens sprinkle no more snow,  
The trees fall not another leaf.  
The blades of grass unflattered,  
Still sway in the breeze.  
From nowhere, there feels a pulling,  
An unpleasant compelling story.  
Compelling to go up,  
Up through the knees.  
It keeps going up,  
Up off the ground,  
Floating up like an innocent dream.  
The ground falls away,  
Escaping beneath the feet.  
The home, the street, the trees,  
Falling while ascending,  
Reduced to simple, little squares.  
The pace of falling steadies,  
Steady like a breeze.

The parks, the towns, the cities,  
Proud, tall and sprawling,  
Disappear beneath the feet.  
The countries, the nations, the borders,  
Steadfast and strong,  
Become only land and sea.  
From the eyes of man,  
The world gently slips away.  
Falling Upward gently, slowly,  
Gently like a breeze.

*Benjamin Beczynski '22*  
1st Place, Junior Poetry



## Red Lines

This image was captured a few years ago on top of the Metuchen parking garage. I captured it because I loved the contrast of the seemingly pitch-black towers against the bright orange tones of the setting sun.

*Julian Dutemple '23*

## Nationals

It was 2018 and my football team and I had just won the NJ State Championship. We were headed down to Florida to compete for the National championship. I knew this once in a lifetime experience gave me an opportunity to have the time of my life, grow closer to my friends, and showcase my talent, and I wasn't about to waste it. football. When we arrived, I was surprised at how different Florida looks compared to Jersey. Where we stayed in Kissimmee, the land was wide and everything looked so clean and fresh. The air just felt and smelt different. Breathing it in just made you feel more relaxed. The first night was one to remember. We spent the night switching between the hot tubs and pools, and we went from room to room playing video games, ordering food and chilling at the fire. After that night we knew we had to start focusing because we had a long week ahead of us. We got news the next night that we were going against Ohio. We knew that we were up for the challenge.

Five minutes into our first game I ran to the endzone in an attempt to score a touchdown. As I crossed the goal line, I got speared in the knee. When I dropped to the ground I felt a pain so great, that it was like nothing I'd ever experienced before. My leg was throbbing and it felt like it was on fire. It was like it was glued to the ground and I couldn't move it. I was carried off of the field and immediately taken to the hospital. The doctors said they couldn't see a thing behind all the swelling and initially claimed all I had was a bruised bone. I could barely even use crutches because any type of movement felt like needles shooting through my leg. I knew it was worse than a bruise and back in Jersey I would have to face this harsh reality. This is where the journey began.

Florida was still a blast, however, I was filled with a mixture of pain and happiness thinking back on it. The joy of being with my best friends was something that brought a smile to my face, but the agony of not being able to play and the incredible pain in my knee put a small scar into the trip. I was forever grateful to have experienced this blessing in Florida, but all I could think of was my knee and how it wasn't healing like the doctor told me it would.

After that long week in Florida it was time to head home and get a reevaluation. I was scheduled for an MRI, but even before the results came back my doctor told me my knee looked pretty bad.

The results showed I fractured the bone above my knee and had a tear in my Meniscus. I was at a loss of words. I knew there was a long road of physical therapy ahead of me, but I still had to focus on schoolwork. The recovery process was different than anything else I had experienced because I had never gone over a week without playing a sport. To recover, I had to stop playing and be patient for 3 months.

I couldn't start PT until my knee was completely healed so I had to use stimulation, heating, icing, and forms of stretching for an entire month. The thing is, when you're healed, you don't actually feel healed. You feel a slight bit better but your injury still feels very weak. Little movements hurt and you have to build yourself back up to where you were before the injury. For two months I was doing nothing other than PT about 4 to 5 times a week and a lot of eating. Without even realizing, I gained a significant amount of weight. I felt the lowest I had ever been, but I knew God had a plan. After 4 long months of hard work, I returned to a semi-normal life.. My injury caused me to gain significant weight and affected other parts of my body. My shins and ankles became weak points, and would require extra work. After a period of about 8 months, all pain was gone and I felt brand new. I abandoned some of my workouts to heal and although it cost me in the long run, I persevered. The injury was long and stressful and took a lot of my happiness, but it made me realize that when you focus and really work for what you want, you can succeed in any area of your life.

*Jeremy DeCaro '24*

Nonfiction

## Lies in the Attention

People who have been exposed to the Covid-19 virus have a higher risk of bodily imbalance, causing them to be unsteady when walking or standing. Did you know that 40% of New York City residents develop lung diseases at the age of 50 due to gas emissions? A study done at the University of Central Florida in 2017 revealed that ever since the first touchscreen phone was invented in 1992, radiation sickness has increased dramatically. When first reading those statements, did you question their validity? Maybe you thought to yourself, *I didn't know that... that's interesting!* You could have also been thinking about how one of your friends or family members would be intrigued if they heard these facts too. If any of these thoughts ran through your mind, you may be a part of a rising global issue.

In case you haven't caught on, none of those facts listed above were of any truth. Statements like those are seen on countless advertisements and headlines of mediocre news articles written by writers who need someone to view their work. They pop up on our phones, we see them on TV, and you can barely shop online without a crazy headline going across the bottom of your screen from attention-craving advertisements. Countless marketing strategies lure us into clicking on pop-ups and telling our friends about wild conspiracy theories we read about online. According to *Psychology Today's* article about "What Makes People So Gullible", the Barnum Effect is one of the most used schemes in the attention-seeking industry.

The Barnum Effect describes information that is so vague and generic, it could apply to virtually anyone. Typically, these statements are used to describe someone's personality and are seen in horoscopes and marketing ads. An example may include a question such as, "Do you feel nervous or insecure if someone stares at you in public?" This "stereotype" would apply to almost everyone. As ridiculous as statements like these may sound, many

people fall for this typical scheme, often because it was under a "recommended for you" tab.

The University of Leicester did a study in 2006 about what causes people's gullibility. They concluded that people who have faced adversity and experienced times of hardship early in their lives tend to be more gullible. These events of tribulation may include the death of loved ones, serious diseases or injuries, or parental divorce. This is because after a series of terrible events happen in your life, it is common to believe that *you* are the source of your troubles. Once people begin to think of themselves as the problem, they tend to become less trusting of themselves and their judgment. Instead, they trust and believe in what advertisers tell them is real.

While keeping in mind the true intentions behind most tempting headlines, you may want to think twice before telling your friends and family a crazy "fact" you read on the internet. As proven before, fancy percentages and college names do not make a fact true. Multiple sources are needed when hearing a faulty rumor from a friend, as well as when a small square appears on the top of your screen telling you your favorite store is having sales that end in the next hour. Especially in a world where companies make a majority of their wealth off of paying for your attention, it is crucial to trust in your judgment and be alert for truth.

*Robert Ilcyn '23*

3rd Place, Sophomore Nonfiction

## A Chilly, Normal, Blissful, Night

It is a chilly night, but he was not accustomed to the climatic volatility of East London. Children roam the streets begging for money while filthy prostitutes exchange hands and enter apartments. A block away, a man snuggles up in a ditch under a jacket that isn't his own. Except for the woman and the man, White Chapel District is empty.

She, like the others, is, or was, respectably pretty, her face was gentle, her clothes modest. She donned a rather inexpensive dress and carried nothing but a small handbag. She was off to work.

Her physical appearance was enough of a facade for her profession, but she could not hide her true self from him. She must have thought that such a trade would save her from the desolate streets of the White Chapel District.

An unforgivable disgrace, this woman. Some believe that the filthy poverty that perpetuates throughout the White Chapel District remains an unmitigated consequence of homelessness and laziness, but here, on this blissful night, he has more respect for the peaceful, homeless man off down Hanbury Street than the mutilated corpse lying directly before him.

The police and the law refuse to understand. They choose justice over efficacy. He purifies their streets, and they give him a bounty in place of the accolades he deserves.

He cleans his knife and stows the red ginger beer bottle away in case he is to write to the law once more. A small girl begging for alms stops in the street.

She screams.

He smiles back.

Sweet terror, seldom does anything ever taste better.

The police are on their way. Understandable, as he is the one who notified them. They shall be here soon. They shall see the bag, but they won't be shocked. After all, they've played this game before, cat and mouse. Over and again.

Oh, how he would love to stay and breathe in the uncertainty as a medical coroner fails to locate her left lung. Oh what he would give to stay and hear one of those fools say that they

seem to be “on the right track.”

But alas, his knife is too sharp to sit for long. He must get to work. There are police to call, children to frighten, streets to cleanse, and victims to meet. It is a chilly night in East London as he steals a last smile at his latest victim.

Jack the Ripper escapes into the night.

*Abel Stephen '22*

Fiction



## The Eye of London

I took this photo while on a trip to Europe with my family back in the summer of 2014. My family and I were admiring the views of the city of London on The London Eye Ferris Wheel. Here, the famous Big Ben stands in all of its glory.

*Abhishek Borad '22*

## It's More Than Just a Game

John scurried to the board, attempting to squeeze in front of the great, amassing crowd to no avail. Eventually, the crowd dispersed, and he found his way to the board. He skimmed over the sheet, searching for his name. He spotted it. "Yes! I made the team!" John thought to himself. He looked to see what his position was. "Secondary second baseman!" John groaned. His joy was instantly engulfed with disappointment. He trudged home and began to practice to correct his faults. Later that night, he switched on the game and attentively watched as his father stepped up to the plate. *CRACK!!* The ball soared high and far. The fielder could only observe as the ball settled in the seats.

"HOME RUN! That's his second of the game. Oh boy! Devin Mysly is on a tear over these past few games," the announcer yelled. *If only I could be like him!* John thought. John had always wanted to be like his father. He watched the rest of the game longingly and then headed to sleep.

His first game was Saturday, and he couldn't wait even if he is only a backup. John practiced every day and trained to his limit in preparation for Saturday.

However, on Saturday, John was on the bench the entire game and didn't even get to play. Even though he didn't play, John was happy that the team had won and still celebrated, but he was disappointed that he wasn't able to contribute. He went home and began to train again when his father came home and noticed his son's sullen appearance.

"What's wrong? Did you lose the game?" He questioned.

"We won the game," John responded.

"Then what's wrong?" His father asked.

"Well, I didn't get to play. I was the backup second baseman." John replied.

"I'm sure you'll get to play in the next game. Now, if you're ready, I can play ball with you," his father said. John was ecstatic! He hardly got to play with his father because of his dad's busy schedule. They raced outside and played ball for the next hour.

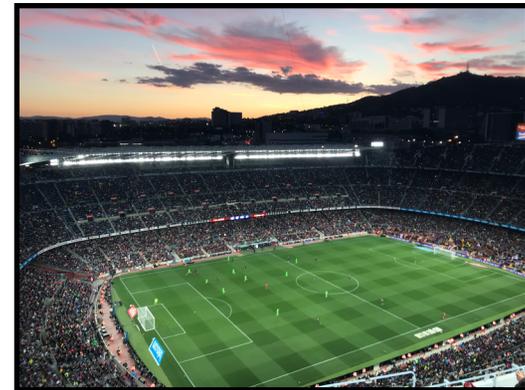
A few weeks later, the starting second baseman felt pain in his ankle, which turned out to be sprained, causing him to miss an entire month of baseball at least. John finally got his chance to play. That Saturday, he didn't make any blunders. He had already knocked in two runs with a massive double and got to bat with a

chance to win the game.

As John stepped up to the plate, he heard his dad yell encouragement. He stepped into the box and tapped the home plate with his bat. The pitcher commenced his windup, and John watched as it sailed outside for a ball. He waved at the next offering. *1-1*, John thought. *It's okay.* He whiffed on the next pitch and watched as two pitches flew high. *3-2.* John stepped out of the box and took a deep breath. The pitch came, and John's eyes brightened. He mustered all of his strength and swung. *CRACK!* John watched as the ball soared high and deep. The outfielder gave chase. He vaulted to catch the ball but missed as it soared over the wall. Home Run! John hoisted his fist into the air. He flew around the bases and met his teammates gathering around home plate. Throughout the following weeks, John played the most impressive game of his life, allowing him to secure the starting role, and help his team win the State Championship!

Jake Stephen '24

Fiction



## Temple of Dreams

I took this photo when I visited the Camp Nou, the stadium of FC Barcelona. That night, as the sun set in the distance and night sky emerged, FC Barcelona won the match against Levante United and lifted the league title in front of 90,000 ecstatic spectators.

Animesh Borad '22

## Pliny's Letter to Tacitus

Pliny's letter to Tacitus is filled with compliments for his fellow poet and happiness that their names are often mentioned together. Pliny looks up to Tacitus and takes pride in them both being in the same league. In my life, I have a person who is to me as Tacitus is to Pliny. This person was under my nose the whole time, and I never even knew it.

It was late August, and I had just gotten my relatively new car: a 1992 Nissan 300ZX. Being extremely passionate about cars and looking for an outlet to vent my pent-up passion for this car, I drove to my childhood best friend's house. However, I was not there for my friend but rather for his father. My friend came out of the house first, followed by his mother. They both appreciated the car for a few minutes, and then his mother decided to go get his father from inside. Thirty seconds later, I saw her walk out, followed by a slightly heavy-set man with no hair and a beard, wearing a red sweater and black sweatpants.

Mr. Drago was a too-many-times-to-count national bike race winner. He worked for his father's company, which he inherited and then sold, and he loves to restore old bikes to their former glory. Unfortunately, he was recently diagnosed with cancer, and was going through chemotherapy, leaving him with an extreme lack of energy. This lack of energy was keeping him from working, both on his job and bikes. Chemo keeping him from doing what he is passionate about was leaving him in a deep depression.

After sitting around outside for a few minutes, we talked about my car and what car my friend was planning on buying. Then, my friend went inside, and I was able to have a one-on-one conversation with his father. He mentioned something to me that I will never forget: "Once you get this close to death, you really have to think about your own mortality." He spoke about how the company he worked for was treating him like a long lost brother, how he missed working on bikes, and how much he hated having

such little energy. He then invited me into his garage. I walked in and smelled the fuel, probably high octane given off by the three restored bikes. The walls were lined with trophies and photos from his racing days, and the floor had more oil stains than stars in the sky. He began telling me about the bikes, but my attention was focused on that wall. Upon that wall was a white BMW racing bike. There were sponsor stickers covering the body panels, and around it were all of his most prestigious trophies.

Mr. Drago began to reminisce about when he raced, when he retired, and when he went back out one more time to show his son that he still had it. He then began to talk about what he wants for when he dies. This enchanted me because I was being given such personal information. I listened as closely as my ears would allow me. Mr. Drago wants his body cremated and to have some of his ashes placed in a metal tube, which would attach to his race bike. The bike would then be sold for racing, and he would be out on the track again, even after he passes.

My appreciation for Mr. Drago skyrocketed that day. What I knew about him from being friends with his son was only the tip of the iceberg. After that, I was truly honored to be in his garage that day. I look up to him, for his passion for bikes and bike racing, but also for teaching me what it all meant to him and how it almost got ripped away. I feel that I look up to Mr. Drago the same way that Pliny looks up to Tacitus, and I hope that starry-eyed amazement never leaves me. That day was truly life-changing for me, and I will never forget any of it.

*Chris Parise '21*

Nonfiction

## Homework

Homework is a very controversial topic between the students, teachers, parents, and schools. Students tend to air on the side of less to no homework, meanwhile teachers tend to air on the side of keeping the same amount of homework, or more homework. After conducting a small survey: most teachers were found to believe in homework, claiming that it helped to reinforce the topics taught in class, and felt that anywhere from 18 to 30 minutes of homework a day for each class. However, what does science say about homework and how much should be assigned?

To answer that question with one answer would not be possible due to the variety of categories that go into this answer (age, types of homework, time, and the individual). Cory Turner, a reporter for NPR, known for leading several research projects including “The Truth about America's Graduation Rate”(2015), “School Money”(2016), as well as his most notable investigation, “The Trouble with TEACH Grants”(2018) decided to look into this. According to his research, there is no correlation between homework and better grades in elementary school(Turner). However, there is a positive correlation shown in middle school and high school(Turner). Yet, this is not evidence that all homework is helpful. Research conducted by Turner, and professor of psychology at Washington University in St. Louis, Henry Roediger III demonstrates the idea of the spacing effect as a good tool for homework. The spacing effect reveals that studying in parts over a longer period of time is more beneficial for memory than studying in shorter periods of time.

Henry Roediger III goes on to add that teachers should give students plenty of little quizzes or homeworks. He believes that instead of teachers having students read textbooks and study notes, they should be having students test themselves at home. National PTA also makes the claim, “ Homework that cannot be done without help is not good homework.” When looking at whether homework is beneficial, one must also look at the amount of time spent on it. The golden standard for the amount of homework needed is known as the “10-minute rule”. The “10-minute rule” recommends a daily maximum of 10 minutes of homework per grade level. For example, 1st grade would be recommended 10 minutes, 2nd grade is 20 minutes, 3rd is 30 minutes, all the way up to 12th grade with 120 minutes daily. This rule, while seeming a

little bit unconventional, is endorsed by both the NEA(National Education Association) and the National PTA.

Therefore, the average homework per class that should be assigned to high schoolers is 11 minutes for freshman, 12 minutes for sophomore, 13 minutes for juniors, and 15 minutes for seniors. At the end of the day, the research conducted shows what is beneficial to the average high school student. It is the job of the teacher to understand his/her students and, if possible, make certain homeworks that would be most beneficial for them.

*Frank Bunks '22*  
Nonfiction



**Rush Hour**

I took this picture after the final bell, aiming to capture the chaos at the end of the school day. After school, students go home and complete their homework or partake in a variety of sports offered at Saint Joseph High School.

*Abhishek Borad '22*

## An Elephant Never Forgets

We had advanced on the enemy as planned, breaking through their initial defenses, but we did not account for their devastating artillery. It shredded through my comrades like scissors through a sheet of paper. The explosions from the rockets caused my whole body to shake, and the constant ringing in my ears unhinged my senses. Smoke filled my trunk and I could barely breathe. I collapsed on the ground, weak from exhaustion and pain as I watched my brothers also fall onto the burning field. Soon, our forces were scattered and confused, but the human commanders neglected their elephant soldiers. They began retreating back to the jungle, leaving me and my fellow elephants to die on that forsaken battlefield. Using what strength I had left, my body's survival instincts took hold and I managed to stand. I ran from the bloodshed, the cries of my brethren following my every step, invoking tears in my eyes. As I fled, I felt resentment towards the human troops, who abandoned us without hesitation. More than that, I felt resentment towards myself, because of my weakness, I couldn't save my elephant friends. I don't know how long or how far I ran, but I kept going and didn't look back until finally, I found an open plain.

Amongst the many animals in the plain, there was a group of elephants who I took refuge with. They were welcoming, sensing I had come seeking safety after a trauma that they did not fully understand, and tried to comfort me. I appreciated their efforts, but their kindness only reminded me of my fallen comrades. I had already lost friends once, I did not want to lose any more. Gathering food was a refreshing task, it distracted me from the loss of my brothers and gave me a new purpose. One day while gathering food however, I stumbled upon a small human.

Initially, I felt the same anger towards this child that I did

towards the army that abandoned me. Humans had betrayed me before, what stops this human from betraying me as well. I kept my distance from the boy, but he continued to return day after day. Eventually, I gave in and allowed him to be close by. The human soon began returning with gifts of food, bringing water and pumpkins. As time passed, I began to trust this human more, as he seemed harmless and friendly.

After a hard day of gathering food for me and my new parade of elephants, I felt exhausted and laid down for a rest under the shade of a large oak tree. When I awoke, I found the child sleeping soundly next to me in a way that felt comforting and protective. The next day though, the boy was wandering around the plain when suddenly he was grabbed from behind by a strange man. I stared for a moment as the boy screamed for help, indecisive over whether to involve myself in human affairs again. However, before my mind could decide, my legs began running towards the child and the strange man. I felt a bizarre sensation and realized that I cared for this human. I swung my trunk at the boy's assailant with the resentment of humans I had been fueled with since the loss of my brethren. Humans had already hurt me and my loved ones already, but I would do my best to make sure they don't hurt this boy.

*Justin Lee '23*

2nd Place, Sophomore Fiction

## The Mysterious Blue

I trip and fall off the harbor  
I'm slowly sinking deeper  
The deep blue tint gets darker  
My surroundings grow bleaker

There's a faint voice shouting  
It's the lighthouse keeper  
His voice sounds distorted  
Like a muffled loudspeaker

"Are you ok? Are you ok?"  
His panicked shouting fades away  
My mind is deep in disarray  
But I'll try to swim to see another day

Which way is up? I do not know?  
I can't figure out which way I shall go  
I'm giving up, it's time to let go  
I let myself sink like lost ship cargo

My air's running out  
There's no hope in trying  
But I see a glare above me  
It's the lighthouse shining

I swim straight up, hoping to reach the surface  
My body is giving up, I start to get nervous  
Keep pushing, keep pushing, I need life, I deserve this  
I hope this attempt to save myself isn't worthless.

I reach up and feel air, my hands break through  
My body fills with air, my lungs feel brand new  
I pull myself up, and look out at the view  
I escaped my death in the mysterious blue

*Matthew Brattole '23*

Poetry



## By the Water

Looking at the massive ocean, outstretching for miles and miles until it disappears, really makes you wonder. Today, we think of endless, infinite space, ironically enough like the great explorers before us who thought the ocean was endless.

*Roman Modhera '22*



### Snowy Morning

As the sun shined and illuminated the snowy, white landscape, I admired how the rays of the sun revealed itself from behind the trees and created a beautiful spectacle to wake up to. I took this photo on an ordinary winter morning in February 2017. After taking this photo, I realized how beautiful nature really is.

*Abhishek Borad '22*

### Cold

The winter wind howls in the night outside.  
I hear the way it whispers secrets to me.  
The memories of seasons past return.  
I love how the winter wind soothes my soul.

The snow covers the land turning it white.  
I am blinded by the light of the sun.  
The reflection of its rays shining through.  
I love how the snow sparkles like starlight.

The warmth of the fire fills my body.  
I am enchanted by how it dances.  
The dark shadows reflect reality.  
I love how the fire brightens the night.

The Christmas tree is ready for Santa.  
I am surrounded by my family.  
The holiday joy is felt by us all.  
I love how Christmas brings us together.

The winter wind calls to me just outside.  
I feel the crunchy snow under my feet.  
The fire inside is fading away.  
I love how Christmas will soon be here.

It is a little chilly out today.  
I think I might just stay inside instead.

*Francisco Vazquez '21*  
2nd Place, Senior Poetry

## SCP-7857

### BY ORDER OF THE OVERSEER COUNCIL:

The following document is classified. Level 4 Clearance or above is necessary for access.

Secure. Contain. Protect.

**Item #:** SCP-7857

**Object Class:** Hazardous

**Threat Level:** Moderate

**Special Containment Procedures:** SCP-7857 is to be kept in an airtight 16m x 16m x 16m avian creature container at Site-14. The container is made of alternating layers of obsidian and ceramic insulation to mitigate the effects of SCP-7857's anomalous properties. At least four armed guards are to patrol the exterior of SCP-7857's enclosure at all times. No personnel are to interact with SCP-7857 outside of testing, and only with clearance from two researchers of Level 4 Clearance or above.

**Description:** SCP-7857 is a 7 meter tall, genderless, vaguely avian creature, resembling a peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*). SCP-7857 emits anomalous thermal radiation from its feathers (average recorded temperature 644°C), with the highest recorded temperature reaching █████°C. SCP-7857 is commonly observed discharging pulses of fire and in rare cases, surges of static electricity from its beak, nape, wings, and talons. The method by which it generates its ambient heat, fire, and electricity is currently unknown. SCP-7857 has been recorded flying at speeds exceeding 450 kilometers per hour (Mach 0.36).

SCP-7857 is highly intelligent, understanding (but not communicating in) Old English, Modern English, and Japanese. SCP-7857 is known to have a general and indiscriminate hostility for all human life, but has been shown to be cooperative when supplied with food. By unknown means, SCP-7857's anomalous properties

are severely dampened in the presence of obsidian rock, in the presence of which it enters a dormant state. It does not seem to be aware of this weakness or of its anomalous properties.

**Discovery:** SCP-7857 was discovered on 12/██/20██ in the ██████████ Prefecture, Japan. SCP-7857 caught the attention of Foundation personnel after several civilian reports arose of a giant avian creature flying near the mountains of ██████████. Multiple Mobile Task Force (MTF) units were dispatched to secure SCP-7857. SCP-7857 was responsible for seventeen MTF casualties and two MTF fatalities. Class-C amnestics were administered to the civilian population.

**Experiment Log SCP-7857-1:** Research trials have begun regarding attempts to harness SCP-7857's anomalous properties as a method of emergency power generation in the event of a mass containment breach.

**Experiment Log SCP-7857-2:** [DATA EXPUNGED]

**Addendum:** Following Incident-7857-1, further testing of SCP-7857 has been discontinued by order of the Overseer Council.

Luke Furnell '23

Fiction

## The American Standard

During his travels throughout the newly-formed United States, the French diplomat Alexis de Tocqueville took particular interest in the casual nature of American interpersonal relations. “If two Englishmen chance to meet at the Antipodes, where they are surrounded by strangers whose language and manners are almost unknown to them,” he observed, “they will first stare at each other with much curiosity and a kind of secret uneasiness” (*Democracy in America*, 1835). Yet, “In America...If they meet by accident, they neither seek nor avoid intercourse; their manner is therefore natural, frank, and open.” This, in fact, we praise as one of the most beneficial defining characteristics of this nation: the absence of a rigid social structure, which in turn engenders comfortability with all sorts of people. This is no land of dukes, marquesses, or barons; none among us are inherently entitled, by some special set of privileges, to higher standards than our peers. Therefore, ours is a society in which we can find no legitimate reason for the wealthiest and the poorest citizens not to aspire to the same educational or career opportunities. In short, de Tocqueville describes one of the more superficial effects of the ideology of the American Dream.

What bearing has this on a discussion of one’s writing style? *Precisely that.* Had this paragraph begun with the more colloquial, “What does this have to do with writing?” it would sound, according to de Tocqueville’s characteristics, infinitely more American. Just as Americans abroad would deal as warmly as in their native land, we feel the arena into which we submit our writing should have no effect on it; the language of the text message is equally appropriate for the academic article. The simple fact is that the American contempt for social hierarchy has infiltrated every aspect of our society. Writing with any eloquence is evidence that one has received some degree of quality education in that matter. It therefore establishes, in the minds of some, two distinct classes: one trained and one untrained. In as much as the trained class exercising its linguistic faculties erects a barrier to the understanding of the untrained class, complex writing presents a fundamental threat to the frankness and accessibility that predominantly characterizes this society.

Therefore, as a population, we should seek to accomplish a good: training the untrained. This is, in a certain regard, an application of the aforementioned ethos of the American Dream. Rather than establish rigid barriers, we ought all to strive closer to the ideal state. Will some have more natural acumen for this than others? Certainly, as in anything. Is the endeavor pointless because it is difficult? To this I

ask: What is the purpose of studying any other complex subject? Chiefly, it is not to gain long-lasting familiarity with Newton’s Laws (or Hammurabi’s, for that matter).

Any qualified pedagog will be the first to admit that the purpose of the subject’s study is not the subject itself, but the heightened analytical skills to be gained from the exercise. The central flaw of the general colloquialization of American writing is that we no longer possess the ability to read anything written at what was once considered an appropriate level for educated members of our society. How, then, could we ever hope to understand the arguments and writings upon which this society is built? Are Locke, Montesquieu, Plato, and even our own constitution to be forever territory uncharted by the majority?

Researchers at Carnegie Mellon University conducted a study in 2016 to determine the contemporary-equivalent reading-levels of various presidential addresses. What they essentially discovered was that the eleventh or twelfth grade standards of Washington and Lincoln have, over the centuries, been reduced to a middle school level. Ranked worst were those of the presidential candidates for that year, whose language, the study found, became simpler as their speaker’s campaigns gained broader appeal, even scraping the depths of the fifth grade. A more stark call to action cannot be formulated. Clearly, the analytical abilities of Americans are so generally dubious that one would be forgiven for wondering whether we should even be entrusted with our sacred political franchise.

Americans demand the highest of their society in all other regards. We see injustice in our land and we agitate for its correction; we see our national test scores plummet and we introduce programs to better the education of our students. Yet, why can we not seem to improve the quality of our collective literary comprehension above that of the formative years? Through the various periods of reform that we have undergone, we clearly comprise a society with sufficient capacity to address whatever presently threatens our values. We must consider the destructive implications of poor writing among these threats.

Giovanni Young-Annunziato '21

2nd Place, Senior Nonfiction

## Mental Battles

In today's world, there is a struggle that many decide to hide or stray away from. We block out this because we believe that we can hide ourselves from this truth. The struggle is mental health, something that destroys many lives especially in young teens. It is impossible to comprehend how we put each other down to the point that some people take their own lives.

I once heard a story of a man who struggled with mental health himself. It's a famous story because he survived a suicide attempt by jumping off the Golden State Bridge, a fate that barely any survive. He told his story and said "the millisecond my hand left that rail there was instant regret..." and that made me realize something. You are the final defense and you are truly the only person in life that has to love yourself.

When a person takes their own life, people question what or who pushed them to cross that line. I think that is a lie. I don't think that people or others push them over the line, but nudge them to it. The only person that can decide if you cross the border between heaven and earth is yourself and God. They may push you up to that line but it is you who stands there and makes the choice of the final step. It's important to know that you are loved and that you have people out there that care about you and will care about you.

God is also a key factor in realizing self worth. God looks down on you daily and it is important to realize that if he can love you through your lowest point to your highest victory, then you must love yourself as well. If there is one message that you should take with you throughout your life and all your hardships, is that out there is always one person that loves you, and that person is God. If God loves you then why can't you love yourself?

*Michael Altobelli '22*  
Nonfiction

## Mr. Robert Craven

I looked after the lives of others.

I was the insurer of the town.

Looking after them like a father,

I made sure that they took few risks.

I, too, took very little chances,

For I was uneasy at the thought of the unfamiliar.

In my youth, my sweetheart made me an offer:

"Run away with me to foreign lands, take a chance on our love."

Knowing of the uncertainty I turned her down

And did not stray from the beaten path.

How I wondered about the fantastic opportunities

And life I could have had with her!

All lost for fear of the unknown.

And to all, I say, "live to the fullest!"

A life without chances, unseens, and uncertainties

Is none at all.

*Jos Parayil '21*  
Poetry

## The Iron Wall

I long to see The Iron Wall in person, but that is near impossible. Even so, that could not stop my fascination. I practically lived at the library, spending hours and hours squinting at the only photograph that existed of The Iron Wall. I studied that little photograph in a dusty encyclopedia until I could close my eyes and see it in vivid detail. The image was black and white, but the written description allowed me to picture it in color. Although hard to tell from the photo, a footnote on the page stated, “The Iron Wall is an incredibly tall structure! It is made of many sheets of metal weathered and rusted by the elements and time, but not one missing”. Much has been written about the physical description. Even after searching the archives, there was not a word to be found on who, how, or when it was built, that reality fascinated me.

If only The Iron Wall was not virtually impossible to reach, more photos might exist. The idea of crossing the world's most expansive desert and densest jungle is a journey only a few ever dared. To date, no satellites have been able to see The Wall. It seemed as if our world ended at The Wall, some people even refer to it as the edge of the world. It was as mysterious as the dark side of the moon and harder to get to.

I have heard many stories of The Wall, often by pestering the elderly at the old folks' home. Several of them recall various versions of the same story. They all refer to an emerging power, having built The Iron Wall to keep everybody out of their sanctuary space as the world began to decay. Present-day Prophets declare that angels came down from heaven and constructed The Iron Wall to keep sinners out. All the myths revolved around their being a better place on the other side of The Wall, immune from human flaws. The fact is there is simply no first-hand account of how or why it was built. The government could provide answers, and academia asks no questions.

The most fascinating part to me is the giant words etched into The Wall's metal that could be seen from miles away. The colossal words formed a poem called Ozymandias. It was The Iron Wall's perplexity. As I said, it's virtually impossible to get to The Iron Wall. However, some devout followers of modern-day prophets attempted pilgrimages. The few that actually made it to The Wall carved their names into its metal surface in an effort to enter into

the light of heaven. When they woke the next day their names were gone, as though a godly power refuted their request. The only words that ever remained on The Wall are the poem's bleak content. Perhaps the builders of The Wall, and writers of the old poem knew the downward direction the world was headed. Modern tyrants lead the way to ruin. Only The Wall may remain. Perhaps if I make it to The Wall and see it with my own eyes, the connection of the poem will become clear, and I will learn what lies beyond The Iron Wall.

*Dalton Vassanella '23*

Fiction



### Roman Influence

I took this photo while touring Segovia, Spain with my family in 2019. I couldn't help but snap a picture of the ancient aqueduct, admiring its architecture and beauty.

*Animesh Borad '22*

## Under the Sun

The sun was beaming on Jim's back on a hot summer day. He couldn't believe that he forgot his sunscreen while packing for his trip. Luckily, he was able to find some shade on the beach from some nearby palm trees. Still, the heat was unbearable to Jim. The only escape from the heat was the ocean, but Jim was reluctant to take a swim. He was terrified of the water, and especially what was in it. In the end, Jim had to overcome his fears and venture into the water.

He slowly walked towards the water. He stopped immediately once his toes touched a wave crashing against the shore. He stood there stone cold still, causing his feet to sink into the sand. After what seemed like hours in his mind, he took one more step forward. Again, he stopped. He needed more time before going into the wretched water. He gave the ocean a long stare while visions of drowning flooded his mind. Every possible deadly scenario ran through his mind. He thought of waves crashing on top of his head, knocking him down to where he couldn't get up. He thought of riptides taking hold of his body and not letting go. He thought of fish hiding beneath the shadows of the water, just waiting for their time to attack. Jim's thoughts shouldn't be interpreted as paranoia, though, for he was close to a watery death just days before.

Jim would've stayed trapped within his own mind, but the sweat falling into his eyes snapped him out of it. He's been in the sun for hours now, and his skin was turning red. This forced him to overcome his fears and take another step inches forwards. He then took another step, and another. He did so until the water reached his knees, and then he stood still with fear. The water was cloudy, and he was unable to see what creatures or rocks laid below. Although time stood still for Jim, it did not stop for nature. The sun kept glaring, the wind kept blowing, and the waves kept crashing. He could not stand still forever.

Jim learned this the hard way, as a wave knocked him both out of his trance and off of his feet. He laid on his back, waves continuing to crash over his face. He quickly got up screaming. He wouldn't let himself die by the hands of the ocean. He ran back to his spot of shade underneath the palm trees, and got back to work. He couldn't let the heat bother him, for he had only a few hours left

until darkness. He had to begin collecting firewood if he wanted to survive. He couldn't rely on a passing boat to save him from his prison called an island.

*Thomas Romond '21*  
1st Place, Senior Fiction



## Umbrella Alley

As I stood outside a restaurant in Budapest, Hungary, I stared into the alley, longing to escape the heat and admire the colorful umbrella awning.

*Animesh Borad '22*

## Life?

Life really pushes me sometimes  
with difficult situations  
And tough decisions that brew regrets.  
I relish the idea of a simple life.  
One where I do not worry,  
One in which my concerns are far to none.  
Life would be so much easier,  
But could that still be considered living?

### Procrastination.

It is sometimes very hard to imagine:  
Getting things done.  
As the dishes will not clean themselves  
And the bed will not be set  
If I continue to stare at the sun.  
  
Why can't I get out of bed?  
The thought of it seems to make me groan.  
It seems like such a simple task.  
"Legs, can you please move?" I ask them.  
But my mind tells me to stay, staring at my phone.

Completing a paper is the hardest of them all.

I am given ample time to do them,  
But I squander that time so unwisely.  
I start the night before, clueless,  
And end up finishing at 4 AM.

I can probably get over this hurdle,  
But it will take work on my behalf to overcome.

As long as I continue to try,  
This impediment will surely meet its end,  
But if relapse is inevitable, I might be done.

Ryan Chan '21

Poetry



## The King of the Courtyard

"A king can find leisure in his courtyard, only if he has the fruit of his kingdom." — Mr. Christopher Haring '05

Photo Courtesy of Justin Lee '23

## A Small Fleet

A small fleet of enemy planes stretched across the beach, dropping small objects as they traveled across.

“Bomb! Bomb! Everybody look out!” Hundreds of cries rang out across the shore as the tiny bundles of destruction began to reach the ground. A multitude of explosions formed in the distance, each of them inching closer to the doomed group of soldiers. The soldiers dropped to their knees and covered their heads, fearing for their lives and praying for a savior.

“Get down! Cover your heads!” They warned each other as the last bomb of the enemy fleet dropped. Once the final explosive detonated, sand from the dunes behind them shot up, rained down onto the fighters, and formed a ripple similar to when a rock is thrown into a pond. Once the sand cleared, the footmen stood up and brushed themselves off; they tried to gain their stability but the shock of the impact affected everyone. Everyone scanned the shore for casualties. There were few deaths but many injuries; the majority of these wounds were located in the limbs and most were not fatal. The injured were carried onto a boat on a stretcher by their comrades, the life draining out of all of the men with every passing second.

“You’ll be ok. You’ll be fine. Just take deep breaths. You’re gonna be fine,” the accompanying soldiers reassured the wounded as they were transported to the boat.

“We got no shot; we have to surrender; we’re surrounded,” the hopeless sergeant reported to the general, heavy-hearted.

“No, we can’t surrender. We can’t let everyone down,” the general answered, determined to be victorious.

“We can’t go on any longer, we have nothing left...” the sergeant replied, trying to be logical with the scenario rather than letting emotion sway his opinion.

“No. I’m in charge, and I say we stay here and hold our ground! We are going to stay right here, even if we are bombed to smithereens!” the general shouted with conviction.

The sergeant saluted the general and left the office, his heart even heavier than before, now knowing that his fate is unshakable. The sun began to set as the last of the casualties were placed inside the boat, ready to be taken away to be properly treated. The physically capable fighters began to set up for the night, either by setting up a flimsy tent to rest in or by lying down on the shoreline in exhaustion. The entire army, knowing they were doomed, slept, possibly for the last time. The sergeant, now aware that yet another fleet of enemy planes was heading for their location, went to his quarters to sleep peacefully, for he was not going to panic. He had no other choice except to go down fighting. He could not run; the enemy had set up multiple forts in the nearby cities, and they would be easily shot down if they dared move. The sergeant, now in bed, glanced at a portrait of his beloved wife. A tear streamed down his face as he took a closer inspection of the photo. I’m going to miss you so much... I love you, he thought, choking up, positive that he would never see her again. Tears filled his eyes as he set the photo aside. He finally turned the lights off, his pillow becoming damp with tears. The memories of his life began flooding his mind. He laid awake all night, wishing he had more time.

*John Spiaggia '21*

3rd Place, Senior Fiction



### Roamin' the Rockies

As I reached the top of the mountain, I felt a sense of relief and calmness, a feeling of sheer accomplishment. In order remember this beautiful moment, I snapped a photo of the mountains piercing the clouds, one of nature's most fascinating scenes.

*Justin Lee '23*

### Skiing Ants

The sun peeks its head just above the snowy mountains,  
Illuminating the sparkling snow, blanketed over the trails.  
Warm smoke leaves the cozy cabin's chimney,  
As the lifts slowly wake, shaking off the morning ice.  
The ants ascend the mighty mountain,  
Reaching the summit with anticipation.  
One by one the ants begin to glide,  
Cutting through the fresh white powder lining the mountain.  
But one veers off, headed straight for the notorious jump,  
As he ascends from the apex feeling free.  
Suddenly a massive figure launches off the summit,  
Leaving two distinguishing marks on the backside of the mountain,  
As both head back to their cabin.

*Joseph Nunziata '22*

Poetry

## A PSA on Nostalgia

It has been a fascination for me for quite some time, just how much nostalgia, this sentimental recollection of our memories, affects our daily lives. This constantly triggered replay of past experiences, deeply embedded into our brains, being a crucial part of our emotional well-being. To my surprise, not many people know about how nostalgia functions and its effect—both positive and negative, on our daily lives.

Scientifically, Nostalgia is an emotion, often triggered by stimuli, such as sound and smell that resembles past experiences that may have been stimulating to the reward center. As we vividly recall these memories, the reward center of our brain releases dopamine and neurochemicals that give us pleasure. Different types of nostalgia work similarly based on this principle. Music is nostalgic because they are naturally stimulating to our amygdala, the emotion center of our brain. We often associate that stimulation with visual imagery, thus making it nostalgic whenever we listen to it. A nostalgia based on the sense of smell came from the relationship between our olfactory bulb, which processes smells, and amygdala. The olfactory bulb constantly inputs sensory information into the amygdala, making smell a main cause of nostalgia. This is why we feel emotional whenever we listen to our childhood songs or that familiar smell of a home kitchen. Knowing this, we can move onto the importance of nostalgia and how it affects our lives.

Nostalgia often evokes optimism and inspiration, and plays an important role in coping with anxiety and tension. We use nostalgia to remind us that life can be better, and there is a meaning to it. Like a trophy on a shelf, a nostalgic memory could be treated as a prize for our existence, a jewel we have found along the way. Many studies have also proven that nostalgia also induces physical

comfort, often in a form of warmth and relaxation. It is common for us to feel a sense of warmth when we smell hot chocolate on a cold rainy day, or when we reminisce about the family fireplace in a freezing cold cabin. These beneficial factors often outshine the sense of loss we feel.

However, nostalgia comes with downsides, and can be destructive to our mental health. A strong nostalgia can often lead to irresponsible behavior from an individual, for them to actively desire and pursue the sweetness of the past and to relive that moment. Nostalgia can also be addictive. It is possible for someone to constantly chase those pleasurable moments of nostalgia, those neurochemicals that are released when we relive that moment, to a degree which the person falls into a cycle of self destruction and refusing to live in the present. We should also avoid comparing our nostalgia to the future, because the future can seem grim. We should use it as a tool to discern and remark on our existence, rather than an unrealistic desire.

Nostalgia makes us more “human”, it makes us stop and contemplate our past. If utilized correctly, it could help us cope through difficult times, bring us warmth during a cold stormy night. A restorative and uncontrolled consumption of nostalgia can only lead to more bitterness and loss. After all, it's better to accept the past and cherish it rather than trying to relive the special experience once more.

*Robin Zhong '22*

2nd Place, Junior Nonfiction

## Dog Years

You have to love the one  
Who forces you to walk in the rain  
Who can't explain  
The joy of circles in the snow  
Who knows how you feel  
And feels what you know

Content to sit beside you  
And quiet the deafening world  
Who is a part of the word "home"  
In all that it means and  
Ever will mean

What could I ask of you now  
So late in the game?  
The beggar, ever grateful  
It seems we have reversed our roles  
And I'm the one who needs from you  
A favor, please, and not commanded  
All that I could, or would request  
Reduced to one word: stay.

*Mr. Paul Caruso*  
Poetry



## Broken Sculpture

The composition of this photo is actually black and white, but taken in color. The stark contrast seemed appropriate for the subject.

*Mr. Paul Caruso*

## In His Shoes

Until recently, I have struggled with the expression mandating that one “walk a mile in another’s shoes” in order to understand a person. Doesn’t the uniqueness of each person make comprehension of any other individual near-impossible? I wondered. Beyond the philosophical reticence, there was a touch of intransigence in my thinking. After all, this younger, impatient version of me watched my older brother deal with the social anxieties associated with autism and was ready to give up on understanding him at all.

A minor, superficial life complication, however, made me understand a portion of what my brother goes through, giving me the grace to open my mind to empathy. That, in turn, inspired me to take action to speed other people’s journey to an awareness of how challenging life can be for some. In my own way, in a school activity I initiated, I have helped others see strength where they once saw weakness and not to be as stuck in their thinking as I once was.

My small glimpse of enlightenment arrived late in high school and was prompted by others’ ugly behavior — taunts and jeers directed at a cleft in my left earlobe. The idea that even friends initiated the mockery was not as bad as the negative attention that the derision drew to my ear. My reaction to the ridicule always followed the same path: I would blush, emit a wry smile, brush off any jibes (mostly retorting with my own ignorant comments), and quickly switch subjects. Throughout my adolescence, I prayed no one would notice the cleft. I hid it and quietly investigated whether to have it surgically removed.

As I matured, I learned that negative attention is what one makes of it. If I continued to follow the same apprehensive

approach whenever my ear was scrutinized, I realized, I would never accept it as part of me and how I was created. With this epiphany, I moved forward, no longer afraid. Today, I wear the cleft on my ear as a badge of understanding and a symbol of my will to cope with adversity.

As a child, I did not understand why my brother would self-talk and perform a “stim” movement in public. I remember being told that he was employing calming mechanisms necessary due to his lack of communicative skills, but the attention it drew from others embarrassed me.

However, after dealing with my own social struggles, I thought again about my brother and his coping mechanisms. I saw how intelligent he was. My heart ached as I saw that he knew that he was different from me and other family members. My pride and love for him deepened as I awakened to his growth and acceptance of himself and his disability. Instead of a negative, I now see his coping behavior when in public as a positive solution.

These insights compelled me to impart this knowledge to my peers. With the full support of my school’s administration, I founded a club dedicated to providing social events between the members of a diverse disabled population and my own school community. At these events, we foster an inclusive and non-judgmental environment for our disabled guests to be who they are. We aim to enlighten fellow students by offering them the opportunity to join in communion with the disabled community.

*Alessandro Pugliese '21*

1st Place, Senior Nonfiction



### Shining Cross

My photograph of the Shining Cross was a quick and spur-of-the-moment picture that I captured when walking before the St. Joseph High School Seal. While appreciating the photo for the seal's significance to our school, I noticed a faint outline of a cross. In an attempt to highlight the radiating cross, I simply utilized the photo editing capabilities that were available on my iPhone from which I took this picture. Being that this is a Catholic school, I think there is even more significance in seeing the cross emanate from the depiction of the bleeding Sacred Heart of Christ in our seal.

*Giovanni Oliveti '24*

### My Refuge

If my room was to have a body part, it would be a mouth.  
 Everyday my room speaks and sometimes even yells.  
 My bed is there to keep me cool when issues go down south.  
 It always says a soft 'good night' and casts a sleeping spell.

A beautiful drawer, painted oak brown, picking clothes for me.  
 No matter what's going on that day, my drawer is always right.  
 The walls around me could be a mirror, and they should be  
 'Cause everyday I see myself in glorious shining light.

My Xbox stands still as I go about life  
 For me to come home and play all day.  
 It's always there for me, when I'm stressed or in strife.  
 I know it will never be gone; it is there to stay.

Everything is temporary; life will eventually proceed,  
 But my room is a place that never changes,  
 A place I will always need.

*Donald Stralkus III '21*

Poetry

## Stepping Up in a Pandemic

There is so much to complain about in 2020: the loss of spring sports, the closing down of school, fewer chances to take the SAT, and the world of uncertainty that we live in. However, nothing good ever comes from living in the past and complaining about things that we have no control over. Instead, we should focus on the positives and look to make the best out of the unfortunate situation that we are faced with.

So many terrible things have stemmed from the pandemic, but plenty of people have stepped up to the challenge. In the midst of the chaos caused by COVID, people everywhere show how we should respond to challenges through their actions. While prominent figures in our society are an example of this type of people because of the large-scale operations that they have started in the past few months, there are people who are much closer to us who have had a similar impact and should be looked at as an example for how we should carry ourselves in these crazy times.

Arguably the most important people in society before the pandemic are our teachers. A teachers' importance has been stressed even more during the past several months. Many people focused on the struggles that students had to deal with at the start of the shutdown towards the end of the school year last year, as the school switched to an online platform for the first time. However, teachers also faced a new challenge, as if they did not have a tough enough job already. The struggle of transitioning from an in-person format to an online format was felt by teachers across the country. Nevertheless, the people that we rely on all the time came through when we needed them the most. Teachers worked hard to make sure that their students got the education that they needed to succeed in life. Many teachers also sacrificed their free time to help students understand material so that they could do well on AP tests. Teachers, as they always do, sacrificed for the benefit of their students and the overall common good.

Teachers were not the only ones, however, to sacrifice for the common good during the pandemic. Many people, including many young people, created fundraisers, drives, and the like to benefit those who were in need. So many amazing stories were shared in the media of children stepping up for people in their community. Seeing these young people do such amazing things was

such an inspiration to so many people and showed that you do not need to be famous to have an important impact.

In the midst of a global pandemic, many different types of people stepped up. From famous athletes and movie stars, teachers, and all the way down to young children, a variety of people exemplified how others should act in situations like the one we are currently living in. Since so many people of different ages, backgrounds, and walks of life have stepped up, it is clear that anyone can have a positive impact on the people around them and provide for the common good.

*Patrick Keefe '21*

Nonfiction



**Ice Leaves**

This image was captured in North Carolina in January 2019 right outside the place my family and I were staying after an ice storm hit the night before. Everything being coated in ice made it look like the world itself was frozen, with the wind not being strong enough to even lightly blow anything around and no cars around because the streets were icy too.

*Julian Dutemple '23*

## Through the Eyes of the Trees

Smoke fills my lungs. Fire burns my skin. Ash covers my face. My home, my family, my friends, all lost by so-called “freedom fighters.” The flag of the demons flies high above me and my broken village. The stars of Satan himself cast upon me. I take a gasp of air as I realize the weight of the situation. I make a quick look around and see the demons taking whatever they find from the torn-apart homes. I see an opportunity. I get up and sprint towards the woods. “HEY!” screams one of the devils. Next thing I know I am under heavy fire from behind. I narrowly made it behind some cover. I check myself for any wounds. Sure enough, one of those hellraisers got me on my side. I grab some loose straw from my hat and tie it around me. Footsteps. A small team of them are rushing into the woods. I quickly try to hide in between a rock and a fallen tree with some leaves on top of me. My heart is racing. The crunching of leaves, the sound of their boots. One of them steps right in front of my face. I held my breath, but I thought they might hear my heart beating. “Let’s go, there’s no one here” proclaims one of them.

“He’ll probably die out there anyway,” says another.

“I’ll catch up with you all later, I want to stay here for a second” explains a soldier.

“Alright, just don’t bring in a disease, okay?” responds another one of them. He nods back and starts walking towards me. My heart is racing even more. I felt I might have a heart attack before he could even get to me. He takes off his helmet and sits down on the fallen tree and looks out at the view. I notice a well-sized rock at my arm’s reach. I need to get out of here. I quickly and quietly grab the rock. I prepare myself for what I’m about to do. “1. 2. 3.” I think to myself. I emerge from the leaves like a whale gasping for breath. I slam the rock with my full force directly at his head. I’m painted in red like war paint. I look at my hands, in disbelief. I look back at the man, realizing the full gravity of my actions. The body falls down, his face turns pale. He grunts and looks at me.

“Please. Help me,” he whispers. I just stare at him with visible guilt. “I need to see my family. I need to get out of this place,” I say nothing. These soldiers are not demons. They are just as human as I am. His eyes slowly roll up. The sun rises again to start another day in Vietnam.

Patrick Scholz '23

Fiction



**"Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"**

**- President Reagan**

As I meandered through a shopping mall in Montreal, I came across a quite important piece of history: the Berlin Wall. For so many, this wall represented division, Communism vs Capitalism, and bloodshed. However, after the fall of the Soviet Union and the reunification of Germany, the broken wall represented freedom, hope, and the power the people have to make a difference.

Animesh Borad '22

## My trip to Harvard Medical School

When I received an email claiming that I got accepted to attend the National Student Leadership Conference (NSLC) at Harvard Medical School to discuss topics in medicine pertinent to young people, I was ecstatic. Visiting the most prominent school in the country and meeting renowned doctors and nurses was an immense honor. However, there was a small part of me that was also wary. I would be staying at an unacquainted place by myself for the first time, and I would have to leave my friends and family for ten days to meet new people while staying there. I was worried that I would not fit in with the other students who were also attending the conference. Despite my misgivings, the first day at the conference eased my concerns. I made new friends who I got to know, and I had many memorable experiences.

On the last day of the conference, emotions were running high. My new friends and I shared such a bond. I knew that I would miss them terribly. One of the instructors picked a movie for us to watch, called *Wit*. The movie was about a young woman who contracted cancer, and the doctors treated her as a guinea pig in a laboratory, not a human person with actual feelings. Once the movie was finished, my friends and I convened and sat in silence before we discussed the film. I reflected on the movie, specifically the importance of treating someone with respect and compassion and the consequences of treating others with indifference and cruelty.

Suddenly, my friend started tearing up and revealed that he was suffering from cancer as well, and he was terrified that he would be treated like the young woman in the movie and die. I was stunned at this revelation. I grew close with him over the conference, and I found it to be a surprise because he was always jubilant. I felt extremely guilty because while I had confided personal problems to him, I never once offered to listen to his problems, even though his problem made all of mine seem trivial.

As I returned home from Boston, I pondered on everything that I went through in my life, and I was ashamed of myself because the trip to Boston helped me to realize that even though someone appears to be happy on the outside, it does not mean that the person is not going through some difficult problems on their own. I promised myself that from then on, I would be more empathetic to

others and appreciate the good in my life more often. During the weeks following my trip to Boston, I would occasionally offer to lend an ear to my friends and family, making sure that they were healthy, both physically and mentally.

*Sanjith Vijayakumar '21*  
3rd Place, Senior Nonfiction



### An Unforgettable Experience

My trip to Harvard Medical School, however short, was truly a profound experience. I made several lasting friends and created many pleasant memories that will last me a lifetime!

*Sanjith Vijayakumar '21*

## Not Just a Snack

Fruit snacks are a delicious snack that many argue if they are actually “healthy” or not. Despite the controversy, we can learn a great deal from these delicious treats. Although it may not seem like it, with some analysis, the assortment of jellied fruit is more than a delicious snack, but a different perspective to humanity.

Humans are like a packet of fruit snacks, a variety pack of different shapes, colors, flavors, and design. They are all created by the same machine, yet they end up being completely different. Even if they look the same, there is always something different about them. If they were all the same, they wouldn't be as enjoyable or tempting. The non-traditional ones are what make the package better, more unique, they may look different in appearance but they are just as good as the others.

Whenever I have any sort of gummies and they are stuck together, my mother always says that they love each other. That is also true for us humans. When we love each other, we stick together. Maybe our friend groups were chosen at birth? Resembling how the gummies were sorted in a package right when they were first made. As social creatures, we like to be around each other because it makes us feel better or simply stand out. There are many on the bottom grouped together, but there is always one stuck at the top by itself.

There is always that one gummy that wants to be different from all the others. This one, in its lonesome, represents the determined people in life who are striving to change or improve themselves. Even though he may or may not be made different from the rest on the outside but on the inside he is dissimilar. He wants to succeed, be the first gummy out of the pack. All of the gummies strive to be like him. We always want to get the highest grade, perform in the best way in our competitions.

At the end of the day, they are all still fruit snacks and are

still in the same package ready for consumption. No matter the shape, size, flavor, color, or design they are still fruit snacks. We are human and should learn to be like fruit snacks: loving, non-discriminating, and sticking together through hard times.

*Tyler Knurek '22*

3rd Place, Junior Fiction



### A Coastal City's Vibrant Market

Among other fresh foods in an outdoor market in Nice, France, there is a kaleidoscopic assortment of candied fruits. The market contains a plethora of items, ranging from homemade soaps to fish captured earlier that morning. However, candied figs and jalapeños are not snacks that I am accustomed to, so this station attracted my attention due to its wide range of colors and uniqueness.

*Matthew DaSilva '22*

## One in The Same

I sharply exhaled with my breath hitting the cold, steel door right ahead of me, leaving behind a ring of condensation. Behind this door lay one of the most notorious criminals in the history of the Republic. I can't believe I have to be the one to interrogate him, I thought, why couldn't I have just stayed home today? My hand trembled as I raised it to the keypad; I grabbed it with my other hand, dropping my notepad and pen on the hard concrete floor to stop it. You can't be this scared, I told myself, you must act strong or else you'll never get anything done. I took one last deep breath and strengthened my resolve, picked up my pad and pen, and opened the door. As I entered the room, I took in my surroundings: the drab gray room was dimly lit by a low-hanging lamp emitting a pitiful light that spread throughout the room, casting shadows on the metal walls and floors. In the middle of the room was a table seating a plain-looking man. How could this be the guy? Am I in the wrong room? This won't be so bad. Many thoughts crossed my mind as I suddenly felt much more comfortable and prepared to interrogate the Man. Our eyes met, he smiled at me, and I sat down.

Two hours passed and I still had made no progress. He prattled on and on to the point where I was no longer registering what he was saying while watching his aged, thin lips open and close to utter nonsensical noises. Suddenly a smirk fell upon his mouth as he noticed my impatience with him. This snapped me out of my hypnotic trance. I was prepared to hear what he said next. The old man changed tune and started to talk about the organization he worked with and its goals. He told me how its goal was to force humanity to 'evolve,' producing a better species to carry on the human race. Its string of crimes was to do just that. I excitedly jotted down notes on what he was telling me, believing that I was finally getting somewhere. Then, he compared his group to us, investigators. I interjected boldly, indignant at such a baseless accusation. He countered by pointing out how both groups wished to enforce their own dogmas across the land. I cried that we

strove to protect and enforce justice throughout the republic. The Man waited for a moment, clearly thinking about what he would say next, then he spoke words that set my blood boiling. He mused that both groups used their power to oppress those who didn't agree with them.

"You're wrong!" I roared, crushing the pen in my palm, ink spilling all over my hand. Then, all was dark.

Moments later, when my superior burst into the room, the hallway light spilled into the room showing how the lightbulb above us had burst, laying scattered across the room. My superior told me that it was time to go, but I pointed out how I barely learned anything. He told me that it was fine and that they had means to make the Man talk, and after that, they had means of making sure he would be 'fixed.' I conceded, acknowledging my superior's rank, but something about what he said seemed all too familiar. I rose and began a solemn march to the lit doorway when I heard a dark voice that stopped me in my tracks,

"See investigator," the Man cooed, his words turning me around and what I saw made my heart stop. The light streaming in flickered across a grin so demented that I thought it could kill me right there. But, the words that left his mouth moments later were even more frightening, touching me to my core and haunting me for the rest of my life,

"We're all really just One in the Same..."

*Ciaran Bubb '21*

2nd Place, Senior Fiction

## Felis Domesticus

Like a vulture he stalks his prey,  
Readying himself for the attack,  
And like a lion kills the creature,  
A scrawny and insignificant mouse.

He is triumphant over his feat,  
Carrying the rodent in his mouth,  
As if he was Caesar during his triumphs,  
Because he has made his mark.

He stands in honor of his ancestors,  
Heroes who have slain mighty beasts,  
And joins their venerable ranks,  
For his mind is set on the legends of old.

Legends of the mighty warriors of long ago,  
Who roamed the grasslands of Africa and,  
Earned their fame through blood sport,  
A most violent game of cat and mouse.

The meaning is not lost on our friend,  
As he makes his way to his "Mistress,"  
And in keeping with the ancient ways,  
Shares his reward with her.

Though the woman may sicken at the sight,  
He looks at his victim with pride,  
For he is no ordinary housecat,  
But the descendant of both lions and tigers.

*Timothy Haklar '23*  
Poetry



## The King of the Sky

I took this photo when visiting an animal sanctuary outside of Juneau, Alaska. The Bald Eagle's golden beak and piercing eyes created a striking and powerful image.

*Animesh Borad'22*

## The 1991 Eruption of Mount Pinatubo

On June 12, 1991, Mount Pinatubo, a volcano situated in the Zambales Mountains in the island nation of the Philippines, erupted. This wasn't particularly new, as the stratovolcano had been experiencing mild eruptions all the way back to April. However, this eruption was unlike the rest. In an explosion of fire and fury, the volcano shot into the air tons of volcanic ash and pumice. The ash cloud quickly spread its way throughout the countryside, where it devastated the local inhabitants. One of the provinces hardest hit by the eruption was Bataan, which had seen its fair share of tragedies over the past century. It was also the hometown of my mother, and she would always recount to me her experiences throughout this catastrophic event.

There was a clear, blue sky early in the morning in Bataan on June 12, 1991, nothing like the dark and ash-covered sky that would be present hours later. My mother was getting ready to go off to class when she felt tremors in the ground. She quickly hid under the kitchen table as the tremors rocked the house. Furniture rolled across the floor, plates smashed to the ground, minor cracks formed in the walls as the tremors kept getting bigger and bigger. Though Bataan had been through a series of earthquakes for the past few months, they felt trivial compared to this one. A few minutes later, the earthquake subsided. As soon as they could feel no more tremors, my mother and her family quickly dashed their way out of the house in order to check the damages it may have sustained during the earthquake. Overall, the damage was nothing too serious compared to what their neighbors had gone through. While many houses were torn down to the ground, the only substantial damage in my family's house was a large crack in the chimney.

A few hours later, when my family's housekeeper was cleaning the outside yard, she saw particles of volcanic ash falling to the ground. When my grandmother and my mother made their way outside the house, they saw a large ash cloud quickly making its

way to Bataan. My mother escorted my grandmother and their housekeeper back into the house as volcanic ash quickly covered the city. Once inside, they closed all the doors and windows that would've let the ash into the house. For two days my family was trapped inside their house, surviving on what little rations they had left. They couldn't leave because hundreds of pounds of volcanic ash covered their only exit. My grandmother sometimes joked that she should've gone to the grocery store that day. On the third day of their "quarantine," my uncle, who was ten years old at the time, suggested that they dug their way out of the house. It took a couple of hours, but soon my family was able to make a clear opening that led outside the house.

My mother was the first to get out, and what she saw shocked her. Bataan, her home of twenty years, was covered in tons of volcanic ash. Many homes were completely covered in pumice, with many buildings falling apart due to the pressure of hoisting up tons of volcanic ash. The river, once a clear, crystal blue color, was now painted a murky black. My family made their way to the nearest shelter, where they could receive food and medical attention. It took weeks for my family to fully recover from the damage, and months for the rest of the country. The volcanic eruption had caused the deaths of eight-hundred Filipinos and had displaced ten-thousand more. Electricity was out for a month, and food and supplies were scarce. Still, my family remained optimistic throughout these troubling times, and in time they recovered. I'll never forget the bravery my mother and her family demonstrated during this harrowing event in their lives.

*Nicholas Justiniani '23*

2nd Place, Sophomore Nonfiction

## Le rêve

C'était une nuit sombre et lugubre,  
Avec le ciel paraissant inquiétant,  
Vous marchez dans les rues effrayé,  
Et vous avez le sentiment que quelque chose d'important est sur le  
point de se produire.

Tu regardes le ciel,  
Et voir les magnifiques étoiles,  
Dont les couleurs changeaient de couleurs,  
Sur chaque manière différente, ils ont été examinés.

Vous voyez de nombreuses nuances de bleu, de rouge ou de violet,  
Même le vert peut être vu, avec des motifs tourbillonnants,  
Et puis, pendant un instant, tu penses que tu as un coup d'oeil,  
De ce que vous croyez être un cercle noir singulier.

Dans l'instant suivant, vous vous réveillez de votre sommeil,  
Et réalisez que ce n'était qu'un rêve.

## The Dream

It was a dark and gloomy night,  
With the sky appearing ominous,  
You are walking out on the streets in fright,  
And you get this feeling that something significant is about to  
happen.

You look up to the sky,  
And see the magnificent stars,  
Whose colors were changing colors,  
Upon every different way they were examined.

You see many shades of blue, red, or purple,  
Even green can be seen, with swirling patterns,  
And then, for a moment, you think that you got a glance,  
Of what you believe was a singular black circle.

In the next moment, you awake from your slumber,  
And realize that it was all just a dream

*Brendan Walsh '22*

Poetry

## Meine Woche mit Foodib

### Sonntag:

Am Sonntag, Foodib und ich sprechen mit eine Katze in einer mysteriösen Höhle. Foodib wird entführt. Um sechs Uhr, Wir essen frühstück.

### Montag:

Am Montag, Foodib und ich naschen einen Snack. Wir machen die Wäsche. Um acht Uhr, Wir gehen spazieren.

### Dienstag:

Am Dienstag, Wir üben Levitation. Um zwei Uhr, Wir spielen uhr. Um sechs Uhr, essen nachmittag.

### Mittwoch:

Am Mittwoch, Foodib und ich videospiele. Um fünf uhr, Wir falten Wäsche. Danach, gehen wir nach draußen.

### Donnerstag:

Am Donnerstag, Foodib und ich Fahren im Bus. Um fünf uhr, wir zeichnen Selbstporträts. Um acht Uhr essen wir zu abend.

### Freitag:

Am Freitag, Foodib und ich fahren zur Schule. Um acht Uhr, Wir lernen deutsch. Am sechs uhr, Wir essen zu Abend.

### Samstag:

Am Samstag, Foodib und ich machen deutsche Hausaufgaben. Um sechs Uhr, Wir sehen fern. Um zwölf Uhr, wir essen Mittag.

[Link](#) to German video project:



## My Week With Foodib

### Sunday:

On Sunday, Foodib and I talk to a cat in a mysterious cave. Foodib is kidnapped. At six o'clock, we have breakfast.

### Monday:

On Monday, Foodib and I have a snack. We do the laundry. At eight o'clock, we're going for a walk.

### Tuesday:

On Tuesday, we practice levitation. At two o'clock we play. At six o'clock we eat Lunch.

### Wednesday:

On Wednesday, Foodib and I play video games. At five o'clock, we're folding laundry. After that, let's go outside.

### Thursday:

On Thursday, Foodib and I go on the Bus. At five o'clock, we are drawing a self portrait. At eight o'clock we have dinner.

### Friday:

On Friday, Foodib and I go to school. At eight o'clock, we're learning German. At six o'clock, we have dinner.

### Saturday:

On Saturday, Foodib and I do German homework. At six o'clock, we're watching TV. At twelve o'clock, we have lunch.

Owen Smyth '24

Nonfiction

## Dreams of Grandeur

I designed and created this bead embroidered evening bag after seeing a similar bag at a high end retail store. After seeing the price tag, I decided I could make one myself. This particular evening bag incorporates thousands of precision cut Japanese seed beads called Delica Beads, several buttons and Swarovski crystal beads, as well as dyed and sliced agate cabochons. The techniques used to produce this piece are called bead embroidery and peyote stitch. The bead design is first drawn roughly on a piece of beading foundation and then the beads are stitched one by one onto the material. Since larger cabochons do not have drilled holes to stitch through, they are faceted in a netting of peyote stitch. These techniques date back to the ancient Egyptians and can also be found in Native American artwork. When all the beads are finally embroidered, the piece is sewn onto a prefabricated evening bag, with a finishing row of beads stitched around the outer edge. Creating this evening bag took me approximately 70+ hours over the course of a cruise while traveling in the Caribbean.

*Ms. Petra Jones*



*Ms. Petra Jones, German teacher  
purse description and photos*

## Reflections

Staring into the looking glass, I see:

A person jaded by an unforgettable year,  
Which forever will be characterized by fear.

Someone hopeful of the promised cure,  
That has attracted us all with its irresistible lure.

A person who has learned loneliness,  
And can tell you that it is quite odious.

Someone rejoicing upon seeing his friend,  
For whom he'll always give his ear to lend.

A person questioning the wisdom of the Divine,  
Especially when the days are without sunshine.

Someone praising the Lord for keeping him alive,  
In a time when it is challenging to thrive.

A person adjusted to online learning,  
Whose effects he has not yet finished discerning.

Someone overjoyed to be back in person,  
Hopeful that the conditions will not worsen.

For although there may be darkness now,  
And every tragedy dims the glimmer of hope,  
So that all feels lost and disoriented,

There is always light at the end of the tunnel.

And in this light I see myself.

*Timothy Haklar '23*

2nd Place, Sophomore Poetry



**Sitting and Pondering**

While visiting the Metropolitan Museum of Art and admiring the gorgeous paintings, this specific one artwork by Thomas Couture stood out to me. I saw something of myself in that schoolboy. It reminded me about the transience of life and told me to make the most of it.

*Roman Modhera '22*



### A Night in Rome

During a late night walking through streets of Rome with a few friends, we stopped to get ice cream at our new favorite gelato shop. But when I turned around, I was surprised to see the Coliseum right behind us. But, it really made me appreciate how far society has come: all the way from building massive structures that house games meant for entertainment to getting ice cream with some friends for some fun. It was a night to never forget.

*Roman Modhera '22*

### Lockdown

A pandemic spreads throughout the globe.  
Hospitals filled with sick people nearly explode.

More cases everyday scare society.

The unknown gives our culture anxiety.

Stores, businesses, and restaurants all close.

Our lowest point in recent years, I suppose .

States shutdown,

But America won't back down.

We distance and we cover up.

America begins to stand up.

We follow guidelines

And the infected number declines.

Slowly the country returns to its previous state.

Wow after that long wait!

Soon enough there will be a cure.

America will be stronger than ever, for sure.

*Donovan Zsak '22*

Poetry

## Perils of College Admissions

Amidst all the usual uncertainties of the college admissions process, seniors this year also have to worry about a global pandemic that has severely altered their lives over the past nine months. In fact, many seniors this year have not even been able to visit many of the colleges that they are applying to. It is flabbergasting to think that the majority of the class of 2021 may be showing up to the first day of the rest of their lives without ever physically seeing the place they will spend their next four years. Some may feel that calling it the first day of the rest of their lives is an overstatement, but it is truly reality. Although they will only be spending four years, it will have a major impact on all students' lives. Where they will end up working and living, what friends they will make, and how they meet possible partners are all things that are very plausible to occur in the mere four years. For months now, seniors have been trying to consummate their applications and resumes so that they will be ready for when they have to submit their applications. Now that the stress of finalizing applications has finally concluded for most, the uneasiness shifts to a different part of the admissions process. Where will I be accepted? This generation long question causes an equal amount of stress on college hopefuls. Not only are they worried about what college they will get into, but will they like it? What if they don't? They could be hundreds of miles away from home with basically all new faces around them. These questions will continue after you are accepted all the way until the day you arrive on campus, and possibly even later. Although understandably worrisome, future college students

must try to understand that these are the same exact fears of almost all of their peers. There is no way to ever know if you will like the school because you have never actually been there. You need to take a leap of faith and trust that things will always work out in one way or another. This skepticism is obviously heightened in these uncharted territories of the COVID-19 virus, but students still must try to keep that same attitude of positivity. Stressing out will truly help nothing, especially in a situation like this where you really cannot change anything. Although easier said than done, this is crucial to the mental health of teenagers applying to college and has become so much more prevalent in a world where we cannot leave our houses without masks and cannot even visit prospective colleges. However, if the COVID-19 virus has taught us anything, it is the vitality of adaptability, which one could benefit from at any time, not only under these contemporary circumstances.

*Sean Gebauer '21*

Nonfiction

## Dreams of Quarantine

It was well into the night as a teen worked at his computer table. An organized mess of notebooks and pencils littered the cramped desk as a small lamp illuminated his tiny workspace. A laptop sat, displaying problems of a topic the student couldn't even remember. The sounds of a gentle rain served as the beat as his pencil scratched out a dreary melody. Another night spent solving equations in his dimly lit room. Another night stuck in his endless routine. The calmness of his room contrasted with the chaos of the world. As he flipped through the pages of homework, the virus blew in the angry winds of nature. People thought the end of the world would come in with fire and brimstone, but no one entertained the idea that the end would be so boring.

Alas, this world wasn't always so terrible. Memories of laughter and parties, of friends and family, enjoying each other's company, flashed through the teen's mind. He remembered the smiles of his friends and the touch of his loved ones all without the rubber on his hands and fabric over his mouth. Days when the cities were buzzing with life, when the world was open, and when life was free. As memories of a time once forgotten filled his mind, the tired teen closed his bleary eyes and drifted off into a peaceful slumber.

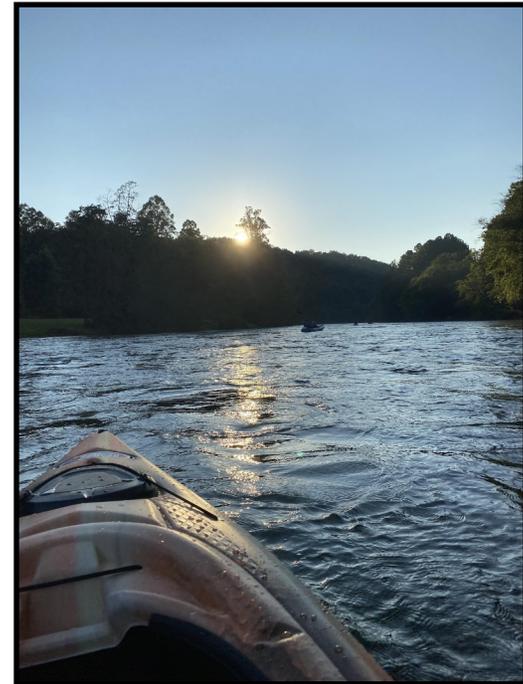
The student dreamed of hanging out with friends, laughing and hugging without a care in the world. They would all walk around town with smiles shining brightly on their faces as they walked close enough together that their shoulders touched. The group would stop at a restaurant for a quick lunch as if nothing was wrong before heading off towards their next destination. Anxieties and fear of death and deadlines were gone, replaced with cheerful jokes and optimism for the future. The days were bright and happy, however, those days have long since passed. Gatherings and parties, physical contact and bare faces, optimism and hope for the future are nothing but memories now. They've become seemingly unattainable dreams that one could never hope to achieve. All those joyous memories lost to the sands of time.

He awoke from his slumber and lifted his head off his desk, the blue light of the computer screen staring at his tired form as if mocking his depressing circumstances. Sweet dreams of a world once passed, replaced with a list of neverending deadlines he

needed to stay up to meet. Gone was the happiness and the fond memories, dread and anxiety for the future soon took its place. The teen felt trapped in a never-ending cycle of sleep and online work as fear slowly crept up his heart. His world was reduced to the prison he calls home. A self-imposed sentence with no hope of parole. Left with no other options, he picked up his pencil and got back to work.

*Matthew San Miguel '22*

Nonfiction



## Serenity & Relaxation

I took a sip of my ice cold soda and set it down in between my legs on the kayak while looking at the disappearing sun. I sat back and just let the waves move me. Ah, yes, this is relaxation.

*Roman Modhera '22*

### **Vignette Staff:**

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Abel Stephen '22

### **Moderators:**

Mr. Paul Caruso  
Dr. Robert Longhi '81



### **Vignette Staff (Cont.)**

The student staff members of the Vignette read a piece aloud and vote on the inclusion of the piece afterwards

*Abel Stephen '22*

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Please scan the QR code on the right to view a full-color version of the *Vignette*. You can access the file storage for our previously issued editions by visiting [www.stjoes.org](http://www.stjoes.org) and then clicking the *Vignette* link in the Clubs & Activities page or by using the link to the right.



## Policy

All students enrolled at SJHS, and all faculty members who work at the school, are encouraged to submit poetry, fiction, nonfiction, artwork, and photography to the literary and arts magazine. Submissions are judged equally on all grade levels. Writing submissions are collected in conjunction with the annual SJHS Robert Frost Writing Contest. First place Robert Frost contest winners, in all grade levels, are published in the magazine. Other writing that is published in the *Vignette*, as well as all the artwork and photography, have been reviewed and approved by the literary staff.

Each student may submit a maximum of five works. Previously published pieces are not eligible. All writing entries must be typed. Each submission (writing, photography, and artwork) must include the following information: student ID number, grade level, title, and category (poetry, fiction, nonfiction, photography, artwork).

Submissions are judged by the *Vignette's* literary and layout staff, which is comprised of students who try out for their positions. The English Department also provides guidance and feedback with regards to critiquing written submissions, as well as judging the winners of the Robert Frost Writing Contest. With the exception of artwork and photography, submissions are not returned. The editors and advisors reserve the right to edit manuscripts for grammar, spelling, punctuation, and clarity.



## Colophon

The *Vignette* is published annually each spring by the literary and art staff of the *Vignette* at Saint Joseph High School. Copies are distributed free to all students and staff at SJHS.

The body copy was set in Merriweather 10 point. Headlines were set in Merriweather 12 point. The *Vignette* was created using LucidPress, Adobe Illustrator, and Adobe Photoshop.

The cover was designed by Abel Stephen '22. Folios were designed by the *Vignette* staff.

This magazine is comprised of 162 pages using a 5.5 x 8.5 inch format.

Thanks to Mr. Paul Caruso & Dr. Robert Longhi '81 for their guidance and support as well as to the members of the English Department for their assistance with submissions. Thanks also to Ms. Nadia Salzer and the students in her art classes for sharing their work.



## *Vignette* Awards

- 2020: ASPA – "First Place with Special Merit"  
"Most Outstanding High School Literary-Art Magazine"
- 2019: ASPA – "First Place with Special Merit"
- 2018: ASPA – "First Place with Special Merit"
- 2017: ASPA – "First Place with Special Merit"
- 2016: ASPA – "First Place with Special Merit"
- 2015: ASPA – "First Place with Special Merit"
- 2014: ASPA – "First Place with Special Merit" &  
"Most Outstanding Private School"
- 2013: ASPA – "First Place with Special Merit" &  
"Most Outstanding Private School"
- 2012: ASPA – "First Place with Special Merit"
- 2011: ASPA – "First Place with Special Merit"
- 2010: ASPA – "First Place with Special Merit"
- 2009: ASPA – "First Place with Special Merit"
- 2008: ASPA – "First Place with Special Merit"
- 2007: ASPA – "First Place with Special Merit"
- 2006: ASPA – "First Place with Special Merit"

## **Dedication**

This year's Vignette is dedicated to Mr. Russ Teller, who served as Director of Maintenance for five years. Many attest to his rare work ethic, which had our school running with seamless efficiency. A colleague and a friend, and someone who genuinely cared for our students, he left the impression with us of what a good man is. We honor him with gratitude for his dedicated service to the school, our mission, and the fellowship of the Saint Joseph community. May he rest in peace in the loving embrace of the Lord.