



# *LEGACY*

**The Wellington Middle School Literary Magazine**

**Spring 2020**



*Dedicated To: Those on The Front Lines of the COVID-19 Response  
& to The Class of 2024*

*Editors:*

*Hannah Guffrey ('26)*

*Sabrina Bong ('25)*

*Rowan Hubbard ('24)*

*Ayla Kocak ('24)*

*Callie Syzllgie ('24)*

*Art Director:*

*Rowan Hubbard :)*

*Layout and Design:*

*Sabrina Bong*

*Advisor:*

*Marianne Crowley*

*A special thank you to Ms. Young for helping us with the artwork and artist statements.*

**Odes**

Ode To The Dandelion: <i>Alexa Fischer</i> ('24) . . . . .	3
Ode To Libraries: <i>Rowan Hubbard</i> ('24) . . . . .	3
Ode To Music: <i>Ayla Kocak</i> ('24) . . . . .	4
Ode To Softball: <i>Madeline Meimaridis</i> ('24) . . . . .	5
Ode To The Past: <i>Lynn Zheng</i> ('24) . . . . .	6

**Poems**

Sisyphus In The Rain: <i>Henry Allen</i> ('24) . . . . .	8
If One Day My Clock Broke: <i>Ayla Kocack</i> ('24) . . . . .	9
The Poem With No Title: <i>Ayla Kocack</i> ('24) . . . . .	9
The Life of An Autobiography: <i>Armaan Chaudhary</i> ('24) . . . . .	10
Rambling Autobiography: <i>Emma Cooke</i> ('24) . . . . .	10
Darkness: <i>John Hu</i> ('23) . . . . .	11
Shooting Star: <i>John Hu</i> ('23) . . . . .	11
Flower: <i>Lynn Zheng</i> ('24) . . . . .	12
Rabbit In The Night: <i>Lynn Zheng</i> ('24) . . . . .	12

**Short Stories**

Umbria: <i>Henry Allen</i> ('24) . . . . .	13
The Woods: <i>Hannah Guffery</i> ('26) . . . . .	18
An Unexpected Vacation: <i>Alexa Ray</i> ('25) . . . . .	22

**Essays**

Inside Fear: <i>Katherine Armitage</i> ('25) . . . . .	25
Tranquility: <i>Hannah Guffery</i> ('26) . . . . .	25
Peace: In Two Vignettes: <i>Annie Shen</i> ('26) . . . . .	26
On The Banks of The River: <i>Sabrina Bong</i> ('25) . . . . .	27

**Art**

<i>Rowan Hubbard: Memory Painting</i> ('24) . . . . .	7
<i>Micah Suchland-Windbust: Watercolor</i> ('26) . . . . .	12
<i>Bo Huang: Watercolor</i> ('26) . . . . .	17

*Sophia Kramer: Inkblot Painting ('24)* . . . . . 21

*Bo Huang: Tree of Life Narrative ('26)* . . . . . 29

*Vincent Vegas : Tree of Life Narrative ('26)* . . . . . 30

*Annie Shen: Tree of Life Narrative ('26)* . . . . . 31

*Eleanor Kirsner: Tree of Life Narrative ('26)* . . . . . 32

*Grant Spirko: Alphabet Photography ('25)* . . . . . 33

*Hussein Ali-Ali: Memory Painting ('24)* . . . . . 34

*Emerson Thompson: Memory Painting ('24)* . . . . . 35

*Vivienne Bond: Anne of Green Gables Painting ('25)* . . . . . 36

*Alexa Fischer ('24)*

---

### **Ode to the Dandelion**

Why do we hate dandelions?  
They may not be the most beautiful of flowers  
but they are far from ugly  
They grow, offering a gift of sunshine  
But only to be shooed away  
Told they are unwanted, enemies, weeds  
Killed because they were searching for a place to belong  
And blind to their light  
We refused to give them that place,  
Seeing only a pest  
Instead of destroying them, let them flourish  
Let them dance among garden roses and zinnias  
Or dot a spiky green yard with happiness  
They will bring joy with their cheerful yellow  
Grant you wishes with pure magical fluff  
And heal you with tea from their roots  
Look through a different lense  
And see what they have to offer  
Instead of throwing them away  
Only because you were told they are weeds

*Rowan Hubbard ('24)*

---

### **Ode to Libraries**

Adventure lays quiet, waiting to pounce.  
In between its crisp layers, you get lost  
Twisting and winding your way around page numbers and chapter titles.  
Taken around to unknown places, that are boasting with beautiful sights  
On your quest to find buried treasure, fluorescent neon heads pop out of hideaways,  
They call for you to give them the attention they think they deserve.  
If you start a conversation with them,  
they roughly drag you towards a burrow  
Just as it feels that you will never see the sun again,

You float calmly to where you were,  
 or where you were going,  
 or where you wanted to have been.  
 Something looks familiar, so you keep moving,  
 You move from the white waterfalls to crimson trees.  
 Finally, before your magical night turns to a regular day,  
 You reach a cradle that looks so strange and unfamiliar  
 But it reminds you of twenty-thousand memories,  
 Inside the cradle is a pink creature, indistinguishable.  
 It growls when you approach, but you know not to be deterred  
 Together you and the pink creature leap through a cloud,  
 up, up, and away you go, to the moon and back.  
 The skies are a plethora of blues you and the creature admire  
 When you turn to ask a question, he has disappeared into the clouds.  
 And then, and only then, you see something that catches your eye.  
 A rainbow, pulling you in to see what's at its end.  
 But no matter how long you spend traversing the colorful path,  
 The end of the rainbow never comes.

*Ayla Kocak ('24)*

---

### **Ode to Music**

Listen

All around you

There is more than

Just sound and noise

There is music

Music makes us dance and sing

Let go of fears and worries

Allow ourselves to breathe

Music frees the song inside us

The song we thought was trapped

Music is the sun

When the sky is black

Music is the breeze  
When the air is still  
When everyone is pulled apart  
Music makes us one

Even when we're cornered  
And under lock and key  
Music can release us  
Music sets us free

*Madeline Meimaridis ('24)*

---

### **Ode to Softball**

The sun is glaring down  
And heat sizzles into my skin.  
I am standing in a sea of lush green grass,  
Far away from the batting mound,  
I look up to see  
The sky as blue as an irises petal.  
Then comes a bright neon softball,  
It's lightning speed rushing towards me.  
Adrenaline kicks in and I'm off,  
Legs pumping,  
Wind in my hair,  
Eyes never leaving the ball.  
I halt and everything slows,  
Planting my feet into the soft dirt  
Reaching up towards the ball,  
It comes closer and I lunge-  
My glove comes in contact with the ball  
And a sharp pain races through my hand.  
I react quickly,  
Positioning my legs,  
Taking the ball with my free hand.  
I turn towards second base  
And make eye contact with my teammate



I thrust the ball forward.  
 It leaves my fingertips  
 Heading for the base  
 Where the runner is speeding towards.  
 The ball slices through the air,  
 And lands in the glove  
 Of my teammate.  
 The ball is caught,  
 The runner is out,  
 And the game is won.

*Lynn Zheng, ('24)*

---

### **Ode to The Past**

The past is a realm of thoughts, out of our reach, yet bound to us at all times.  
 It pursues us, never letting us out of its line of sight.  
 The Memories constantly come, ambushing the conscience on the worst of days,  
 as a snake would suddenly lunge at its oblivious victim.  
 Snapping at the brain, imprinting itself into the mind, like an angry tattoo.  
 Such simpler times, riddled only by the smallest of problems.  
 Drifting through the past, forgetting perplexities, if only for a moment.  
 Although visiting the past is tranquil, living in it is like sleeping in a lion's den.  
 Since we are ripped back to reality, leaving us barren tundras with nothing but shards of hope.  
 Yet even though we are aware of the dangers of overstaying, we still let ourselves fall prey to it.  
 It is strong medicine; too much is fatal.  
 In The Kingdom of Regrets, it is like the walls, taking us in, promising comfort,  
 coaxing us to stay, only to ensnare us, like a venus fly trap seizing its quarry.  
 The deeper the wound of the present, the more we yearn for the past.  
 The past is a realm of thoughts, out of our reach, yet bound to us at all times.  
 It pursues us, never letting us out of its line of sight.  
 The Memories constantly come, ambushing the conscience on the worst of days,  
 as a snake would suddenly lunge at its oblivious victim.  
 Snapping at the brain, imprinting itself into the mind, like an angry tattoo.  
 Such simpler times, riddled only by the smallest of problems.  
 Drifting through the past, forgetting perplexities, if only for a moment.  
 Although visiting the past is tranquil, living in it is like sleeping in a lion's den.

Since we are ripped back to reality, leaving us barren tundras with nothing but shards of hope.  
Yet even though we are aware of the dangers of overstaying, we still let ourselves fall prey to it.  
It is strong medicine; too much is fatal.

In The Kingdom of Regrets, it is like the walls, taking us in, promising comfort,  
coaxing us to stay, only to ensnare us, like a venus fly trap seizing its quarry.  
The deeper the wound of the present, the more we yearn for the past



*Rowan Hubbard ('24) ~ Memory Painting*

*Henry Allen ('24)*

---

**Sisyphus in the Rain**

School was rain  
A deluge from the heavens  
Its meaning incomprehensible  
Making misery of our days  
But not until it was almost gone  
Our land cracked and arid  
Yet we are bored to tears  
Did we realize what we had

For school was not all about chemistry  
It was also the bonds between us  
The jokes and rumors and trips  
And the memories that were forged  
Now we hide out in our homes  
Waiting for the day  
We can go outside  
And back into the rain

We have been Sisyphus  
Pushing our assigned boulders  
With no end nor meaning in sight  
All cursing this fated task  
Crafted with care and wisdom  
But now that we are  
On our lonely peaks  
We are left alone with  
The boulder and the mountain

Now straining under the boulder's weight  
We must navigate our own  
Towering hellish mountain  
Learning from each push  
Without the support we had  
Before the boulder falls from our grasp

And we are thrust down the mountain  
 Onto our next undertaking  
 With what we took from the rain

*Ayla Kocak ('24)*

### **If One Day My Clock Broke**

If one day my clock broke  
 How would I know the time?  
 Would the sun still rise and fall  
 Would the sun come out at all?  
 Would the moon hang in the sky  
 Or get confused and say  
 Goodbye?

If one day my clock broke  
 How would we all age?  
 Would everything be stopped  
 Would we be trapped inside a  
 Cage?

If one day my clock broke  
 And the sun forgot to rise  
 If the moon ignored the stars  
 Would the world meet its demise?

If one day my clock broke  
 Would the story end?  
 When did it begin?  
 If it didn't, and it won't  
 Then when?

If one day my clock broke  
 Would there still be time to  
 Kill?

If one day my clock broke  
 Then would time stand still?

### **The Poem With No Title**

This poem has no title  
 So what is it about?  
 I don't know  
 Read and we'll find out  
 All poems have titles  
 Right?  
 Wrong  
 This one does not  
 (obviously)  
 If a poem has no title  
 Then does it have content?  
 Yes  
 Just read  
 Then guess  
 Does it matter?  
 No  
 But this poem *should*  
 Have a title  
 I'll think of one now  
 Stop reading  
 Please go

*Armaan Chaudhary ('24)*

---

### **The Life Of An Autobiography (A Prose Poem)**

I was born in 2006 while people were still feeling shocked at the events that took place on 9/11. I love cakes with messages on them. I care for my family's lives as my own. I have witnessed the passion in my friend's eyes as they succeeded in everything I strive to become. Today, I got up to find my life three steps ahead of me, yet I find my years fading away like a leaf burning in a fire. I ask questions that no one wants to hear. I have to "grow up" and "be a man" for no reason but to hide my emotions and interests. While entering my home, I smelled the furniture and the sawdust approached my eyes. They became watery and hard to keep in after a long day; I let the water run down my face. I dread making choices that seek a change in my life. I love being competitive. I love making songs that no one will hear. Life states that I need an unnecessary amount of help if I'm not the top of anything I pursue. Being compared to was a major part of childhood, it took years for our community to realize that people have strengths that can't be judged. I lived my life saying it's ok when it really wasn't. When people ask what I'm going to do with my life, I say that I'm going to live it till I die.

*Emma Cooke ('24)*

---

### **Rambling Autobiography (A Prose Poem)**

September 13, 2005; the day I was born in Columbus, Ohio. I have 3 sisters, a mom, a dad, and a dog. When I was three years old, I started preschool at Wellington. I was mad at my parents for holding me back a grade; now I count it as a blessing. When I was 10, I traveled to the Cayman Islands; it immediately became my favorite vacation spot because of the beautiful crystal clear water. When I was eight, I went to my first concert. I have a love for music; it feels like an escape from the world whenever I listen to it. After fourth grade I refused to ever write in cursive again. When I turned four, I broke my sister's arm. When I was nine, my sister and I figured out that eating raw cookie dough tastes better than when it is cooked. I love Graeters Buckeye Blitz ice cream. I enjoy road trips with my family. I am grateful to be able to play tennis four times a week. I do not like going to school. Sunshine and summer makes me happy. Rain and winter make me sad. Fall is my favorite season. Spring reminds me of sickness. I have always dreamed of having a large impact on someone's life, it was not until recently when I realized that someone was me.

John Hu ('23)

---

### Darkness

The last light disappeared  
 From the distant windows  
 Everything is devoured by darkness  
 And dissolved at night

Sin and humanity  
 Beauty and ugliness  
 Justice and evil  
 ...

The darkness of night  
 Calms the roaring waves inside us  
 We finally ask ourselves  
 Who are we

Without the masks of daylight  
 Without the restraints from others  
 We truly see the real us  
 As being part of the darkness

We were born in dark  
 But thirst for light  
 We praise humanity  
 But abandon it in desires

We believe in absurd faiths  
 To satisfy ourselves with acceptance  
 While millions of truths  
 Were buried under benefits

This is who we are  
 As Incarnation  
 Of Darkness

### Shooting Star

In the eyes of others  
 It's a beautiful and lovely moment  
 In your opinion  
 It's the brilliance of life

Nobody knows your name  
 Because you are just an ordinary star  
 Even a small piece of a leaf  
 Could block your elegance

You could have chosen  
 To stay on your orbit  
 And face your life peacefully  
 But you didn't

Into the night  
 You glided across the endless sky  
 Flaming your own body and shining the  
 splendid light  
 And slowly fading away

Under the horizon  
 Thousands of eyes admired  
 But do they know  
 How much have you sacrificed for these  
 seconds

By giving up all you have  
 you lighten up the gloomy sky  
 At last on your epitaph  
 You wrote down the eternity of life

Lynn Zheng ('24)

---

### Flower

A flower stands apart from the others.  
Small and frail, its colors fading.  
Nothing to reach for when pummeled by the rain.  
Nothing to hold it strong when battered by the sun.  
Forced to stand alone until the day it can't support itself anymore.

### Rabbit in The Night

The rabbit crawled out of its hole,  
submerged in the starless night.  
Never once does anything give it a glance,  
for it disappoints them.  
Left behind in the night,  
as the night is all that it can see.  
While the sun binds everything together,  
the dark is the only thing that holds the rabbit.  
In the moonlight, a patch of flowers cling on to each other.  
And the rabbit feels the bitter remains of hope torn from its grasp.



Micah Suchland-Windbust ('26) ~Watercolor

Henry Allen ('24)

---

### Umbria

Returning from the last day of finals, Lila was ecstatic. Her sophomore year was over, and the lowan plains sang beautifully in the summer wind. The occasional fluffy white cloud dotted the perfect blue afternoon sky. Lila set her backpack down while stepping into her garden with Marc, Lila's younger brother. This summer, Lila hoped to finally get some work done in her garden.

Something had to be done. Weeds overtook the lovely oranges, yellows, and blues of the oasis. Going out to the center of her petite round garden, Lila opened her toolbox. She found her shovel after rifling through its contents for a minute. As she started her routine of digging and pulling weeds, something caught her eye. Under a chunk of ivy was a hint of metal.

Wiping away the layer of dirt covering what seemed to be a box, she called out to Marc, who, at this point, continued to the front of their humble abode.

"Marc! I found something! Come ov-." However, as any respectable young brother would do, Marc ignored his sister. He had video games to attend to, after all. The boys were waiting.

"-here! Hey, I know you can hear me! You little piece of..." Lila stood up. Seeing the potential disaster for what it was, he responded.

"Fine! But it better be worth my time." Lila watched with disdain as Marc walked over spitefully slow, a grin lit his face. Lila took a bit of time to inspect the box. She saw an ornate ancient steel jewelry box radiating a mysterious aura. A few moments after she picked up the strange object, a voice entered Lila's head.

*Oh, thank God! Someone came.* Lila dropped the box and let out a yelp. She grabbed the small pointed garden shovel in a swift reaction. Panic surged through her head as she tried to puzzle together what happened. Seeing this, Marc rushed over.

"What was that? Are you okay? What happened?"

"That box. When I touched it, there was a voice. Stay away from it." Marc scoffed and reached towards the box. However, when he saw the seriousness in Lila's wide eyes, he stepped back. Marc's expression grew to fear, but he was a curious child. Where Lila laid back in fear, curiosity drove Marc to grab the box.

"Wait, stop!"

"Oh no, I have to see what frightened my big sis." He held the box for a moment of over-the-top courage, and his shoulders slumped. He handed it back to Lila and said, "He said to give it back to you."



*Oh, you're back. Great! I have found myself in a predicament here. My name is Obaan, and I am trapped in a place of monsters and demons. If you were so lovely as to open this box and help me get out of here, I could graciously reward you.*

Lila grimaced, but she was over the shock. She lowered the garden shovel and put it in her pocket.

"What did it say?"

Lila sighed and collected her thoughts. This day was weird. "Someone's trapped in there. He wants us to help him get out."

"Oh, come on now. Open it!" said Marc.

Lila took a deep breath. "How about we think this over for a minute?"

Lila swore she heard Obaan sigh. *You seem reluctant. I suppose I have been a bit forward, but it's been forever since I have gotten to talk to someone. Look, I'm stuck, and if you open this box, I'll make it worth your while.*

Lila did not know if it was the end of finals or Marc's curious face or something else, but she responded, "Sure. Let's open the box." Lila and Marc tried to find a latch. After a few seconds, Marc dug his small hands through the crack and opened the box.

At once, the wind stopped. The sky turned black. The leaves on the trees became a translucent grey. Looking about this new world, Lila saw an alien shadow realm of Iowa. The vibrant grass was now a sickly black. The landscape had changed. Yet there were still trees, rivers, and hills, only they were different, eerie versions of themselves. In the distance stood a massive mountain, with what seemed to be an outline of a cave partway up.

The voice of Obaan brought Lila back to reality, or rather, a twisted version of it. *Welcome to Umbria. The shadow of reality. The place of the damned and those who prey on them.*

"What is this, Obaan? You never mentioned this would happen. Tell us where you are and get us out of here." Marc was silent. His demeanor was half awe and half terror. Lila reached to comfort the poor soul, but a terrifying roar rang out over the landscape. Lila and Marc dove for cover.

A grotesque flying behemoth soared over the dreary scenery. Its malformed head turned towards the pair. With no hope of hiding, Lila and Marc bolted. Lila was never an athlete. Yet something about being chased by an unholy pterodactyl with its jaws wide open made her run at speeds faster than imaginable. Marc went deathly quiet beyond his staggered breath.

The beast was ever closer, and Marc was getting tired. Obaan's commanding voice popped into Lila's mind. *Here's a bit of advice. Stand still. They only see movement.* Lila looked back to the horror behind her and tackled Marc to the ground. They laid there motionless.

Lila clamped down on Marc's mouth. "Shh... Don't move."

The flying beast drifted past. Realizing its prey was gone, it reared its wings and perched on one of the lifeless trees. Its pure black eyes flickered around.

“Lila, what’s happening?” Marc whispered as he adjusted his arm. Its eyes flickered towards the quiet commotion.

“Talk later.” Lila’s hand gripped harder yet on Marc’s mouth. She tried to become as still as possible. After a few seconds, the creature lost interest and flew into the distance. Lila’s grip on Marc loosened, and she cautiously sat up.

“What was that? Where are we?”

Lila sighed, “Look. There are larger forces at play here. Keep calm and follow me to that cave.” Lila pointed to the outline of the cave halfway up the mountain. For some reason, she felt a pull. Usually, she might take a break and think about her strange situation, but there was still some helpless soul trapped in this place he called Umbria.

Lila helped Marc up and started to lead him to the cave. Ahead, there was a large thicket of spruce where the hike would start. As the pair crept through the shadows ever closer to the cave, Lila attempted to explain the situation to Marc from the voice that every so often popped into her head. Lila kept her eyes vigilant as they progressed up the mountain. Yet under the thick canopy of gray branches, nothing moved in the darkness. Thirty minutes passed, and the cave was in sight. A hundred yards away, their freedoms seemed to lie.

Marc grinned. “When I get back, I’m going to eat a hamburger and french fries.”

Lila, whose fatigue was starting to show, beamed at the thought. “Man, I would kill for a hamburger right now.”

Only as Lila’s mouth salivated, loud stomps sounded behind her. She dove just in time for a bear-like monstrosity to pounce and have its massive maw miss its target. Marc stood paralyzed for a moment, and Obaan’s voice came into her head with a simple,

*Run.*

Fueled by the adrenaline high of her lifetime, Lila shouted, “Run!” Marc snapped out of his surprise, and the two bolted towards the cave entrance. The monstrous ash-gray bear charged after them.

A hundred feet. Ninety feet. Seventy feet. Sixty feet. Fifty. Forty. Thirty.

BOOM! The bear tackled Marc. Yet where Lila’s old sense of panic would have hit, urgency took its place. Lila fumbled through her pockets and pulled out her stout garden shovel as a dagger. She lunged in the split second she had and stabbed it into the bear’s eyes. The bear let out an eerie screech as it fell on its side.

Lila jerked back as the beast fell still. Marc climbed out from under it with scratch marks all over his body. She looked back at the corpse. The horrifying sight of the dead creature repulsed the animal lover in Lila. She gagged and looked away.

Marc laughed in spite of himself, "You always were into nature. I never knew you had it in you."

"Neither did I. Let's go! We're almost out of here." The two turned and walked into the cave to meet their final ordeal.

Inside the cave was a massive cavern with corridors shooting off into a larger complex. Torches hung on sconces that were spaced evenly along the charcoal stone walls, which illuminated a central chamber. A runic circle sat in the center of this chamber with elaborate designs, which matched the ones on the box.

In the center was a man with startling red eyes. His white tuxedo seemed untouched by dirt. It struck Lila that this Obaan may not have been the 'damsel in distress' she expected. Obaan's eyes took in Lila and Marc. With a familiar voice, he called out. "Well, you finally showed up."

He gestured for the pair to walk forward, "Now, let us get to business, shall we? Lila, you stand here, and Marc over there." Before this miserable day, she would not have even believed in magic and runes. But with the sights Lila witnessed this day, the belief seemed to be a false hope.

With Marc lagging cautiously behind, Lila looked into Obaan's eyes. They were cold and calculating. In an instant, she knew her peril. This creature was a monster, akin to the beasts outside. Unfortunately, Lila found herself stuck in its maw. The most capable monster was a cunning and cruel one. She stopped for a moment.

Obaan smirked, seeing Lila's thoughts. "We could rule the world, you know." He looked down and traced some of the runes. "If this ritual succeeds, you would have power beyond comprehension. Think about it for a moment."

Obaan continued despite the slow shaking of Lila's head. "Don't pretend you aren't tempted. If one of you is sacrificed willingly, their soul can be drawn to complete a ritual that can bring us both home. Any old fool can do this. This circle here is my Magna Carta, and if you would be so kind, I would share it with you."

Lila repeated to herself what he said, and realized the idiocy of Obaan. She thought *Any old fool could do this? Perhaps I can? But will I have to sacrifice?* Lila smirked to herself for a moment as Obaan realized his mistake. He sighed, "Oh, you're no fun. You'll have to be broken."

Tendrils of possession crept into Lila's mind. She needed to think quickly; seconds were all she had. The two looked at each other, and Marc recognized Lila's plan. He was always the clever one. "Do it." Lila understood and, although she did not know what to do, any old fool could do it. With tears creeping their way out of her eyes, she reached out and tried to pull on Marc's soul, whatever that meant. Only Lila was surprised to find a force there, ready for the taking. She could not take it. Lila was messing with her brother's life.

Marc nodded anxiously. “Do it! Better you than him.” Lila winced and took it. The runes burned a brilliant blue as Marc’s eyes rolled back and his body crumpled to the floor. His pale corpse took its last breath with a slight smile, “Goodbye, sis.”

Energy Lila never felt before inundated her. The blood in her veins matched the blue of the runes. Lila’s eyes narrowed with supreme focus. Obaan’s eyes widened with fear. “No, please, we can talk this out!” Those were the last words Lila heard before she extended her arm of power and brought down the ceiling. Rocks and debris tumbled to the cavern floor.

“Any old fool can do it.” She snapped her fingers. “At what cost?”

Lila staggered into the summer fields of Iowa. She would have taken a moment to have a reprieve, but incomprehensible mystical power swirled through her. Lila fell to her knees as the wind picked up. Clouds from out of nowhere converged and blotted out the blue sky. Rain poured in tandem with her tears. Lila’s rage flared. Why was it Marc who had to die? Lightning shot down onto her pristine garden. The vibrant flowers exploded into wilted shreds.

What had she done? Who had she become? Lila knew she stopped a great evil, but she hardly felt like herself anymore. She looked down to see tears fall onto her hands. Was she any better than Obaan? Lila looked up into the downpour, where she saw movement. Sitting right beside her in ghostly form was Marc. Marc’s incorporeal arm sat around Lila’s neck, consoling. “I’ll always be with you, sis.”



*Bo Huang ('26) ~ Watercolor*

*Hannah Guffrey ('26)*

---

### The Woods

Fiona's chores had not been done for a week, and Mrs. Sprine was giving her a long lecture as she peeled potatoes. As her hands worked away, she let her thoughts wander.

She had never been like the rest of her family. Her hair was a shocking yellow, unlike her family's typical mousy brown. She was a daydreamer, too, never in the present. And she was barely allowed outdoors.

She was snapped back to the present by her mother's sharp scolding. Looking down at the potato in her hands, she saw merely a small knob.

"What are you doing?" Mrs. Sprine cried. "Wasting a perfectly good potato, that's what! If you can't simply peel potatoes, why don't you go out to the fields with your brothers? Maybe then you would be of some use."

Both of them knew that the fields were strictly men's work, while housekeeping was women's work. And because of this tradition, Mrs. Sprine's mouth dropped open as Fiona removed her apron and started out the door.

\* \* \*

Fiona ran. It had been weeks since she had last ran, and she soon realized that she didn't know the way to the fields her father and brothers were working on. She had never been this far from home. Her mother had never trusted her with running errands, even though she was a full fourteen now, and she scarcely went outside. Now, as she approached a thicket of trees, she stopped short. She did not know this path, and had not heard the many warnings of its twists and turns, branching off in different directions so frequently that even the most seasoned traveler had many a time gotten lost. No, she had left so quickly that she had not heard her mother's voice calling out from behind her, "Steer clear of the woods! You may never come back!" She did not know any of that, so off she went.

The path was peaceful, with a carpet of green grass soft on her feet. She had not taken time to put shoes on before departure, but doubted that they would have done any good anyway. Nearly fully deteriorated as they were, it was unlikely that they would have helped to protect her feet, and she saw no need for them while walking on the soft ground. She had never seen woods before, and the gentle green light filtering in through the trees made them appear magical. She spun slowly in a circle, taking it all in; the graceful curves of the branches, the pale designs of the bark, and the bushels of wildflowers dotting the ground. Overhead she could hear the song of a bird, piercing through the gentle hum of the murmuring leaves.

The trees themselves had not seen a visitor for some time, and there was much excitement swishing through the branches. The flowers bobbed their heads to each other, and many birds rose in song, projecting their pleasure down the trail. Far ahead, all of the plants waited in anticipation for the girl with hair like sun-dried straw in the tomato-red dress. Thousands of silent breaths were held as she took another step forward.

\* \* \*

Mr. Sprine sighed. Standing erect, he hollered to his sons. The sun lay low in the horizon. It was time to head back before dark. The path home would be unnavigable without any light.

As the boys bounded towards him, he did a head count. Seven. All are present, like always, he assumed. But he was a poor counter, and the oldest was counted twice.

They made it home just as the last rays of sun disappeared from the sky. The door was open, a rectangle of light. Mrs. Sprine was standing in the doorway, wiping her eyes with her handkerchief.

\* \* \*

Joseph figured he would tend to the far side of the field. Typically unkempt, the back corner was usually forgotten. Today he would straighten it out.

He was both the youngest and most focused of his brothers. In two years he would be permitted to use the plow, but for today he pulled all of the weeds by hand. Through the heat of the day he worked, bent over, pausing occasionally to stretch his back. When the sun grew lesser he smiled, yanking at a faster rate. It was only when he realized that he could barely see his hands that it occurred to him how late it was.

“Pappa?” he hollered.

There was no response, and he had probably left a while ago. How Joseph had been forgotten, he had no clue. There was always a counting, and the missing were always sought after. He thought about what next to do. The daylight was growing scarce, and it was unlikely that he would be able to make it home. And, in addition, he had never paid much attention to the paths and turns his father had taken, for he had figured he would never need them. Now he was wrong. As the sun sank even farther, he wished for his mother, for his brothers, for anyone. Standing out in the darkening field, he had never felt more alone.

He started walking. “After all,” he figured, “what good am I going to do just standing here?”

As a path materialized in front of him, he could not make out the trees surrounding it. He stepped forward through the pitch black, unaware that he had entered the woods.

\* \* \*

Cougars roam the woods at night. Slinking through the trees, he sensed pain. Like a shadow, he leapt from treetop to treetop, sliding down a trunk to shelter behind a rock. Human

pain. Sniffing the aroma as it filled his nostrils, he smiled. Strong, young boy, tender and delicious. "Seems to have taken a stumble," the cougar mused. "I can surely put him out of his misery."

Then he saw a flash of red.

\* \* \*

Fiona had spent the day dancing in the sunbeams, frolicking through the flowers and leaning against the trees, but now, as the sun drooped low, the plants tensed. There was a second child in the woods.

The news spread like wildfire, the easy, carefree mood and casual conversation now gone. Two children in the woods. What did this mean? And with dark upon us. Would these two children share the same grim fate as many before them? Would newly sown plants witness their first sighting of the grim tradition which befell every human left in the woods after dark? But the girl is so kind. And the boy, poor thing, is lost. What will happen? Will they survive? And, is there anything we can do?

Fiona sensed the unease. As darkness fell, the murmurs of the grasses seemed more frantic and the trees tossed violently, although she couldn't fathom why. And then all of the plants gasped.

The cougar had smelled the boy.

\* \* \*

It was hard to miss. Hovering right in front of her face, Fiona had never seen anything like it. A firefly, giver of light, a beacon piercing through the darkness. She longed to hold it close. It was soon joined by another, and another, until a great ball of glowing hope trembled just beyond her reach.

She stepped closer, extending her hand towards it. It inched backwards, beckoning for her to follow. And she did.

It led her deeper into the woods, around corners and under fallen branches. It soon veered off of the path, and she veered off the path with it. As she approached a clearing, a crumpled shape came into view. Her brother.

\* \* \*

The cougar hated the color red. He had always despised it. The last he had seen of his parents, it was the reason he would always hunt in the dark.

The red fabric swooped towards the boy, illuminated by dozens of fireflies. The wearer helped the boy to his feet and, led by the light, they both fled.

He let them go.

\* \* \*

They ran. Neither child knew from what they were running, but the zipping fireflies and the anxious whispers of the plants hurried them along. Hand in hand, brother and sister ran for their lives. Whether or not they became tired, they did not care, and they kept running.

\* \* \*

Dark had fallen, and Mr. and Mrs. Sprine remained on the porch. They had sent their children to bed long ago and there were no protests, not tonight. They waited, though without hope, for no child could survive the dark. And lost was not just one, but two. A great tragedy, Mrs. Sprine had decided.

Mr. Sprine had shakily stood up to go mourn his grief inside when Mrs. Sprine hooked his sleeve and said, "Wait." He followed her gaze to the horizon where he could make out a swarm of fireflies. The fireflies parted and two figures appeared, the one's red skirt billowing as they sprinted homeward. Their interlocked hands never parted as they leapt up the steps and embraced their parents. Tears of grief and joy escaped from the corners of all four pairs of eyes as all worries were flung aside.

Their children had returned.



*Sophia Kramer ('24) ~ Inkblot Painting*



Alexa Ray ('25)

---

### An Unexpected Vacation

When she opened the door of the smoldering wreckage of the plane she was riding on just a few seconds before, she gazed around at her surroundings in despair. Thoughts flew through her mind: her family, her life, both in jeopardy. She was stranded in the middle of nowhere, Oregon. She frantically threw parts of the fiery crash out of her path. All she could think about was her family: her mother, brother, and father. Suddenly a groan cut through the silence like a blade. She hobbled over to find her father with his leg bent in the wrong direction. She cried out with relief. He was hurt, but at least he was alive. She scrambled over to him and dragged him away from the site of the crash. He groaned and let out an inaudible whisper. She leaned closer. "Find them." She dashed back to the wreck calling her brother's and mother's names as she went. She saw a body. Her breath caught in her throat. She ran over to find her brother whimpering in agony, a piece of shrapnel from the plane in his side. She carried him to where her father lay. For the first time, she felt a sharp stabbing pain in her arm. She looked down to see her blood dripping from a cut. A piece of metal from the explosion. She could worry about that later. She needed to find her mother before she went to a place she could never return from. Her father's eyes widened when he saw his son next to him. He ripped off a piece of his shirt and tried to stop the bleeding.

She limped over to the crash once more. She screamed her mom's name in desperation. She could not be dead. She saw an arm sticking out from under a piece of what was once the wing of their plane. The pain everywhere was forgotten at once. She tripped over a piece of the wreckage and collapsed in with a yelp of agony. Her ankle twisted. As she tried to get up, her ankle gave out and she face-planted in the mud. She gave up on trying to stand and crawled over to the wing of the plane. She tried to slide the wing off of the body and soon realized in her current state she could never move it. Instead, she grabbed the arm and dragged it out from under the plane.

Her breath caught in her throat. She grabbed her mother's arm and felt for a pulse.

Nothing.

She felt her heart to see if it was beating.

Silence.

No, no, no, no, she couldn't be dead. She was smiling and laughing with her just a few minutes ago. *This can't be happening. I must be hallucinating.* She checked her pulse again. Nothing. Silent tears rolled down her cheeks as she cradled her mom's head. She cried out to her dad. He crawled over and stopped in his tracks when he saw what had become of his wife. Abigail had never seen her father cry until that day.

She went back to her brother to find him lying in the mud. The bleeding from his side had subsided. It quickly dawned on Abigail that she was stuck in the middle of a forest in nowhere, with no phone, no idea what to do and no hope. The reality of her situation came crashing down on her with the weight of a semi truck. Hungry. Thirsty. Stranded. But she would not let anyone else she loved die here. She saw the memories of her mother flash by. It was like the saying, "My life flashed before my eyes," except it wasn't her own. Her mom taking her to her first day of elementary, middle and high school, baking with her mom, biking with her, shopping, camping, all of the future moments, gone.

She needed to be strong for her remaining family though. They would not die here. Not while she was still breathing. She hobbled over to the crash and looked for a survival kit. She walked into the metal carcass of the plane and searched through the remains. She pulled out a half shredded bag and brought it over to where she had set up a lean-to to keep her brother out of the sun. She opened it and cried out with joy. Matches, a knife, a blanket, a sewing kit, fish hooks, and a flashlight. Abigail dashed to her father. He was still grieving, they all were, but he needed to wake up from this haze if they were going to survive here. Abigail found him on the beach of the lake next to where they had crashed. She didn't say anything but she grabbed a sturdy piece of wood and started to bind his leg in a splint. She learned how to make splints and slings in one of the first aid classes she (meaning her parents had made her) had signed up for when she decided to start babysitting over the summer and after school. He gritted his teeth as she set the splint. "I found something in the plane." Her father's eyes widened. Together they walked back.

A few days had passed since the plane crashed. They were all weak and close to starving. Abigail had managed to sew her brother's side up with the sewing kit in the survival pack and they were constantly trying to catch a fish or anything with the fish hooks with no luck. They drank the water from the lake, they could hold out for a couple of days but then they would be done. Her father had managed to start a fire that they constantly kept going in hope of the smoke being spotted by a passing plane or anyone that might save them from this living hell. They were being eaten alive by mosquitoes day and night unless they were next to the fire. They lived off of the berries that Abigail and her brother had found in some bushes. Constant stabbing in their stomachs made everything ten times harder. If they ate too much of the berries they would double over and vomit them up. They didn't fill you, but they kept you alive. Barely.

On what must have been the seventh day after the crash (they had begun to blur together) a roaring of an engine came from above. Abigail yelled with relief. It would all be over! She screamed and threw more wood on the signal fire. Her brother jumped up and joined in. Her father teetered over as fast as he could in his splint and joined in as well. They were saved! But the plane wasn't slowing down. It turned around. They all screamed till they couldn't anymore. *This can't be happening! After all we've been through?* But as soon as it had come,

the roaring engine died off with their dreams as the plane became a shrinking speck in the sky, leaving them hopeless and alone.

A day or so after the plane had come and gone, they had their first triumph. After countless times of trying, they finally caught a little catfish! They whooped and ran to the fire to cook it. As they split it into three parts, the smell drifted through the air, and if they ever got out of here, Abigail promised to never take her grandmother's burnt cooking for granted ever again. After the past few days, she would have eaten a raw fish if she had to. They devoured the fish and savored each succulent morsel. Finally, after so many hardships, something good had come their way.

As Abigail went to sleep that night, she dreamed of the minutes leading up to the crash. They were flying to their vacation home for spring break, they were flying in their private plane with the pilot who was a close family friend. (They had never found his body.) As they were cruising high above the treetops, there was a loud bang from the right side of the plane. Both of the engines on the right side had given out and were now twin fireballs on the side of the plane. They descended from the clouds rapidly, her mother screamed as the ground became visible. Her father yelled to the pilot, everything was spiraling out of control very quickly. Their pilot wrestled with the controls, trying to put them into a controlled glide instead of plummeting to certain death. As he regained some control, it slowed their descent a little bit. The treetops came rushing towards Abigail as she looked out of the window, screaming for her life. *This was how it is all going to end? I haven't even gotten my full driver's license, I never told Tucker that I liked him, I never went to Paris like I always wanted to, I shouldn't have cheated on that math test, I...* As the ground rushed toward them, she thought of all the things she had done, wished she had done and hadn't. Then everything went dark.

As she thought of the roaring of the remaining engines as they struggled to keep up the plane, she opened her eyes and realized they were in her head. Her eyes darted to the sky and she yelled out. There, a helicopter with its beating blades, its searchlight cast upon the plane crash was coming to them. She ran to her brother and father and shook them awake. When they saw what was happening they jumped up and down with excitement, it was over, finally. As the helicopter descended, Abigail bathed in the sweet searchlight of salvation.

*Katherine Armitage ('25)*

---

### **Inside Fear**

The darkness takes over and covers you. You can't hear nor see, and the world falls quiet. The fear washes over you, and each step you take risks trouble. You might fall but your screams will get lost in the darkness. As you are falling, you smell a candle burning in the distance. But you can't observe the amber glow nor can you hear the slight crackle as it burns. You start to shake as you land on the ground frightened to move on. The darkness eats at your skin and pulls you closer and closer to the endless portal of darkness. You barely escape and move on slowly, scared to take the next step. You then see an outline of a child in the distance. You move closer to see them. Then you realize you know that child, but you can't think of who they are. As you move closer they start to fade away, then they disappear. You stand alone. By yourself, in the dark and silence. Silence equals fear and darkness. The portal sucks you in and never releases you. The cruel whims of the world force you to suffer through the fear, silence, darkness, and loneliness that it holds. Alone.

*Hannah Guffery ('26)*

---

### **Tranquillity**

In front of you, the fireplace crackles, radiating warmth. You feel the warmth, reacting by sliding closer. Gazing into the friendly flicker, you pull your blanket farther over your shoulders, soft against your skin. You stretch your feet out so that the heels bump against the rough brick of the fireplace, your palms pressing against the smooth wood floor behind you for balance. Your feet smile at the flame. Ava shifts beside you, woken by the change of position, but only enough to lazily nuzzle your arm. You stroke her gently, her soft fur brushing pleasantly against your hand, and she curls back into a ball. You conclude that you could bask here for hours, but choose not to ponder any further and turn your attention back to the blaze.

Behind you and slightly to the left, you detect the gentle sound of wood scraping wood. You assume that the sound comes from Grandma knitting in her rocking chair again, and the sound of her metal needles clinking strengthens your theory. Ava sighs besides you, her side lifting sharply and falling deeply. The snow patters against the windows, steady and soft, occasionally hugging the glass just long enough to display the six-pointed beauty of its hexagonal design before fading away. Earlier the fresh blanket sparkled as it carpeted the

ground, and one can assume that such is still the case, though no one bothers to lift an eye to check.

You feel the press of a warm mug in your hand and lift a smile to the face above you before lowering your head. Inhaling the steam, you can taste the richness in the chocolate. Marshmallows bob gently on the surface of the brown sea of deliciousness, and you cautiously wedge one between your teeth and suck it farther into your mouth. It melts onto your tongue, gooey and delicious, the sweet of the sticky substance tickling your senses. You swallow, letting it drift down your throat, and rest there for a moment. You shift yet again, searching for a spot of give in the hardwood, yet mindful of Ava's presence. Bowing your neck, you touch the surface of your cocoa with your tongue, and finding it too hot, sit back to continue breathing the steam.

A background of noise creates a fuzzy carpet between you and the outside world. Sheltered by the gentle laughter, you lean backwards until your head rests on the floor. You stare at the ceiling in the flickering light, letting the edge of your vision blur as you drift off. You slip into sleep while Ava continues breathing gently, her warm body pressed against your side.

*Annie Shen, ('26)*

---

### Peace: In Two Vignettes

You lay in a beautiful meadow, the soft grass gently tickling your legs. A little waterfall splashes behind you, the sparkling water leaping over tiny pebbles. A leaf falls from the giant oak above you as the wind tugs softly at its branches. The smell of honey envelops you, and as you turn around, you catch a glimpse of a golden-yellow beehive dangling from a low branch. You sit very still and listen; listen to the sound of leaves rustling, of the water gurgling, and slowly, you hear a song of hope, of happiness. It floats through your heart and you relax, letting all of your worries slip away. Next to you, a breathtaking orchid produces a wonderful sweet smell, and the petals dip down to allow little dewdrops to slide off of them. The sun just peeks out from the horizon, its rays of rich orange light penetrating through the trees around you. Baby animals awake, arising from their shelters to greet the new day. Fawns with their parents hop through the trees, occasionally bending down to pick some berries from a bush. You close your eyes and listen to the beautiful sounds surrounding you.

\* \* \*

The raindrops patter against the window, filling the room with muffled tapping sounds. Downstairs, soup is bubbling in the pot, and the smell seeps through the crack under the door. It dances around the vast bedroom, dipping here and there. You take a sip of your hot cocoa, the sweet milk warming you. Your fingers slide slowly over the blanket next to you, the velvet

swallowing their tips. You dreamily stare out the window, the warm city lights glowing in the distance. You take a deep breath and drift off to sleep.

Sabrina Bong, ('25)

---

### On The Banks Of The River

At home, the raging river of social trials and tribulations has become stagnant, iced over. But the imagery is deceiving, for the ice is paper thin- trying to skate back into the fight that we never knew we loved would be fatal. How is it that the thought of trying to break the ice is more invigorating now, when every day once was a struggle to brave the same waters that churn beneath the ice?

The surface of the river, now shiny with frost, is a mirror. We sit on the banks, blocked from those beneath the ice, but forced to stare at our reflection day and night. Who are we? Who are we without? Who are we within? We despair over many more queries that manage to surface as the hours pass by- who knew that so many questions existed? Staring into the crystal surface of the river, the rush of the water seems to be within our heads now, pounding against our temples.

The flow that the days once possessed is absent now- no longer do we glide through life. The day is a list to be completed, grains of sand to be counted, boulders to be pushed up endless hills. And when the sand is counted, the boulders gone, we are at a loss, left staring back into the river.

I feel entitled and spoiled putting these words on paper. Who am I to pass judgement, to lament about my troubles, my *boredom*? My troubles are nothing. Everyone lives in the shadow of death, we can all say that. But even now, when all of humanity is trying to run from its own shadow, I live on the fringe of the darkness, far from the thick of it. The same reports that recount the deaths and sacrifices of hundreds of thousands also reassure me that / am not in danger of dying. Any suffering that befalls me would be pain felt vicariously.

Guilt is at the heart of every word of complaint I breathe- how can I complain, when I have the luxury of doing so? I don't work hours untold, don't silently toil against death until the wee hours of the morning. By dint of my age, I shouldn't worry, shouldn't complain. Should just be thankful.

But we all face our own trials. Ours is our painful crouch at the bank of the river, staring down at ourselves silently, pondering and shouting, and questioning, waiting for the unknown date when the ice will finally melt. Until then, we must be vigilant in our crouch.

And we must keep in mind that not everyone is lucky enough to have the luxury of waiting on the banks. There are doctors, nurses, grocery store workers, deliverers, and many more who are living their lives on the bottom of the icy river, making sacrifices we can't begin to imagine. They are the ones who are calming the flow of the river, ensuring that the water doesn't surge up and break the ice, drenching even those safely on the banks. They are the ones who should be complaining.

Us bearing our discomfort, sticking it out for the long run, will make those sacrifices easier to make. Our loss makes us idealize what's under the ice, and the thought of returning to "normal" has us all salivating. But under the clean sheen that we see, people are suffering; the waters are rough. If we dive back in we will exacerbate the already herculean tasks the front lines face every day. Others will suffer for our actions.

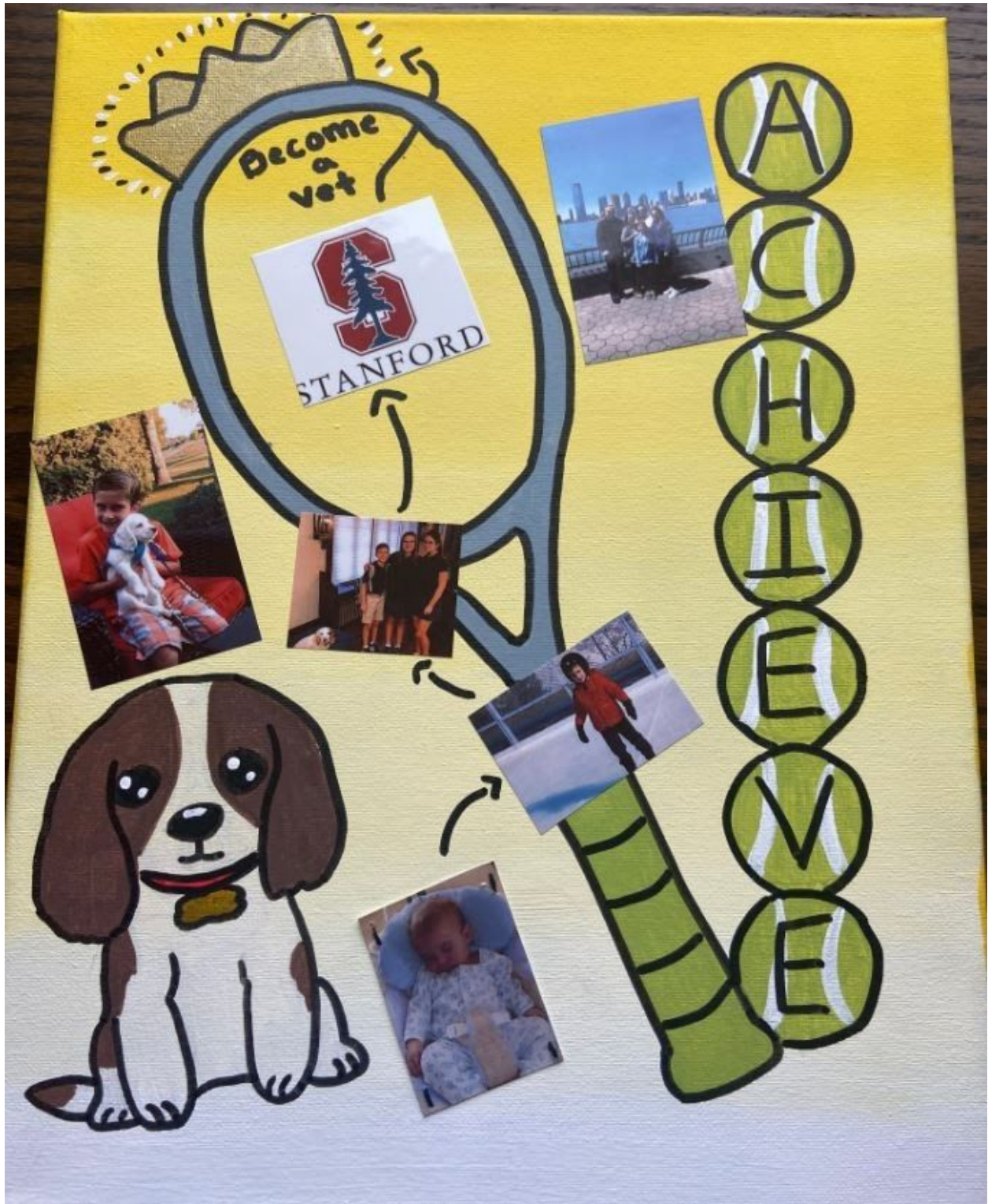
Everyone wants to "dip their toe in the water," everyone is "tired of this winter." Every winter comes to an end- so we can't we all just be still? If this situation is a torrent of uncontrolled water rushing through a damaged dam- in our right minds, why would we pull another log out of it?

We have the luxury of waiting and shouldn't forgo that privilege. If you make the choice to dive into the river, those who were dragged there will pay the price. Tread carefully on the banks you are lucky to be walking on.



Bo Huang ('26) ~ Tree of Life Narrative





Vincent Vegas ('26) ~ Tree of Life Narrative





Annie Shen ('26) ~ Tree of Life Narrative





Eleanor Kirsner ('26) ~ Tree of Life Narrative



Grant Spirko ('25) ~ Alphabet Photography



*Hussein Ali-Ali ('24) ~ Memory Painting*

### **Artist's Statement**

The place I chose for my memory landscape painting is the sand dunes in Dubai. I chose the sand dunes in Dubai because I grew up there, and it has an exceptional place in my heart. The different types of perspectives I used were stacked, and a bird's eye view. The sand dunes in the bottom part of my painting are the stacked perspective, and the sand dunes in the middle that look like pyramids are the bird's eye view part of my painting. For the background, I used an ombre effect with green, purple, and light blue. In the end, the memory landscape painting project was great because we were able to paint something from our memories that had deep meaning to us.





*Emerson Thompson ('24) ~ Memory Painting*

#### **Artist's Statement**

For my painting, I chose to do the forest that our family lives in. The pink is the forest floor and the green are the trees. The black things behind the trees are shadows. This is in bird's eye view. The stripes of browns and yellow are our farmland and the green at the end is the tree line. These are in rational linear perspective. The blue thing running through the piece is a creek. The bottom of the creek is in rational linear and the top of the creek is in bird's eye view



*Vivienne Bond ('25) ~ Anne of Green Gables*



**The Wellington School**  
**3650 Reed Road**  
**Columbus, Ohio 43220**  
**© The Wellington School 2020**