

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Mr. Adam Chabot
English Department Chair
Ricker 206 - Classroom
Ricker 302 - Office
Office hours; X block or by appt.
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REQUIRED TEXTS

Creative Writing Reader

Stories for Boys by Gregory Martin
ISBN: 978-0983477587

The Art of Memoir by Mary Karr
ISBN: 978-0062223074

REQUIRED MATERIALS, AND RESOURCES

Please have the following materials available for the first day of class:

A charged laptop--you need to bring this with you every day!

3-Ring Binder

A Creative Writing-dedicated notebook

Appropriate writing utensils

ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATIONS

It is the policy and practice of Kents Hill School to create inclusive learning environments. If you anticipate challenges related to the format or requirements of this course, please meet with me. I would like us to discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course. Together we can plan how best to design the course and coordinate your accommodations.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Honesty is one of Kents Hill School's core values. In the classroom and in school-wide settings, all teachers and students are

CREATIVE WRITING

An Introduction to Writing Creative Nonfiction, Fiction, and Poetry

COURSE OVERVIEW

This class is an introductory writing, workshop, and survey course designed for students who want to learn to write life's true stories, explore character as a beating heart of good creative writing, and unearth an interest in the power of words and how those words create beauty, teach us about life, and connect us even closer to the world. It offers the opportunity for you to develop and practice the writing techniques and processes of creative nonfiction, fiction writing, and poetry.

I cannot promise that taking this course will turn you into a writer; that depends mostly on you. In the end, my hope is that you will come away with a small portfolio of exciting work that you are proud of and that you will have been introduced to skills, concepts, and ideas, that you can carry in your writer's toolbox forever. Another goal is to provide you the experience of a mentor/apprentice relationship. Beginners apprentice to the "master" so to speak. I'm by no means a master but what that means is I, as the writer/teacher, become less the judge than the guide, and you become the person who eagerly launches yourself on this journey. Ready to be guided? LET'S GO!

DESIRED LEARNING OUTCOMES

My objectives for this class are that it gives you the chance to:

- 1) Read and analyze a variety of different kinds of creativenonfiction, fiction, and poetry
- 2) Develop creative writing skills through short assignments
- 3) Learn critiquing and workshopping skills
- 4) Write and successfully revise a full-length creative nonfiction essay, a full-length short story, and a number of poems
- 5) Have your work closely read and critiqued
- 6) Learn and practice revision skills
- 7) Participate in a learning, growth-mindset writing community
- 8) Reflect on our growth as writers
- 9) Publish your work in both/either print or digital form

In keeping with Kents Hill School's 4D curriculum, Creative Writing emphasizes a balanced combination of knowledge, skills, character attributes, and reflective practices. As we immerse ourselves into the world and community of Creative Writing, we will:

- Become **knowledgeable** about a range of writing strategies and concepts that are crucial for understanding the process and production of quality creative writing.
- Exercise our creative muscles with obvious intent in the production of **skills** organically and originally crafted writing; hone our collaboration through a diligent workshop and revision process and through the regular sharing and

expected to exhibit the highest standards of academic integrity. Academic integrity is integral to our purpose as it is based on honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. It also trains students for the rigor of college studies and affirms the bond between character and intellectual life. Any student who violates our Academic Integrity Policy will face serious academic and disciplinary consequences. Please consult the Academic Handbook for common examples of academic dishonesty and its consequences.

LATE WORK POLICY

Unless otherwise excused, all assignments are due on the date specified on our OnCampus calendar and, in the case of conventional essay assignments, in the directions posted in the corresponding OnCampus folder. When you miss an assignment due to illness, athletics, family emergencies, travel-related mishaps, or any other reasons, it is your responsibility to schedule a time to make the assignment up. *Please note that unexcused late assignments will be docked a third of a letter grade per day. Any assignment not submitted within a week of the original due date will receive a failing grade.*

HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE

Clear communication is essential. Absences are a fact of life at Kents Hill, often because of sports-related travel. When you miss something in class, it is important to get caught up by checking OnCampus and emailing me with any questions. You should also feel free to email or see me in person when an assignment is confusing or you feel you need more time to do your best work. I can help you create a plan to succeed, but only if I understand the situation.

ATTENDANCE (in person)

It is expected for you to attend each class and be *on time* and be in [dress code](#). If you are more than 2 minutes late, it will be recorded in the Husky Portal every single time. If you are 10 minutes or more late, unexcused, it will be recorded as an absence. If you arrive at class out of dress code, you will be asked to go change. This will result in an unexcused tardy. Your participation grade will be negatively impacted for each unexcused tardy or unexcused absence.

If you know ahead of time that you are going to miss class for any reason, you must communicate with me in advance. This is

considering all types of writing; develop critical thinking skills as we analyze, evaluate, and synthesize different professional forms of creative writing; and practice communication in the verbal and written form through the aforementioned workshops and regular class discussion.

- Invoke the ten Kents Hill School core **values** as we consider the required **character** qualities needed to not only improve one's own knowledge and skill set as a writer, but also enhance ourselves as members of a productive, effectual, and growth-oriented writing community. This is a major component of the Class Participation and Preparation Grade discussed later in this document. Much of this character component will come through the formal and informal feedback both given and received; this will be a major focus of the workshop and revision process.
- Embrace **reflection** as our foundational pillar in which we develop practices of reflecting on habits of learning (punctuality, preparation, participation, politeness, and persistence) and the application of what we are learning. More specifically written and spoken reflection will happen frequently as we will reflect on our individual process and growth as a writer and reader. A formal reflection will be completed at the end of the semester as part of the final portfolio.

ASSESSMENT PHILOSOPHY AND GRADE BREAKDOWN

Each semester grade will be based on the following forms of assessment, all of which reflect our course's commitment to developing knowledge, skills, and character, and providing regular opportunities to reflect on meaningful learning and growth.

Long Narrative/Short Story, Workshop Process, Revision, and Portfolio: 30%

The major assignment of EACH semester will be your long narrative/workshop/revision/final portfolio. We will spend more-than-adequate time working, workshoping, and revising your drafts. You will be graded on the overall success of your piece, the diligence of your revision process, and the proper assembly and production of your Final Portfolio. This final portfolio will also include a formal reflection of the writing process, one's experience in the class, and a self-created plan for improvement. Essentially, this process will utilize all four hallmarks of the 4D curriculum: knowledge, skills, character, and reflection.

Addendum: When we reach the Workshop Process, this will be an intensive yet exciting process that will add a number of graded assignments to the grade book. Although workshop specifics will be covered at the appropriate time, this is arguably the most crucial part of the course.

Short *Essais* or Fiction/Poetry Writing Exercises: 20%

These *essais*, Writing Exercises, or short pieces of writing (2-3 pages each), are meant, in the French definition of the word coined by essayist Michel de Montaigne, as "trials, attempts, experiments." The assignments will have a subject or technique as their focus. *Essais* will be typed and in proper MLA formatting. It is expected that these *essais* will be shared with the whole class for various forms of critique. *Essais* will necessitate firm attempts at trying out a specific writerly skill, which involves learning said skill through reading assignments or in-class lessons. Students will also be permitted the chance to make revisions; each *essai* will receive written comments from me indicating areas of excellence and growth areas. Students will reflect on these *essais* regardless of their indicated aptitude or ability.

true for athletic competitions, performances, field trips, any other school obligations, doctors appointments, etc.

Should you miss class unexpectedly for any reason, you must communicate with me via email or in person on the day of before 6PM (EDT). Work that is due will be expected at the next class you attend, and work that is assigned on the day(s) you missed is still expected unless you talk to me and make other arrangements before a due date. Do not wait until the next class period to communicate and expect to receive full credit.

ATTENDANCE (virtually)

You must attend each Zoom class and join *on time*. If you are more than 2 minutes late, unexcused, it will be recorded as a tardy. If you arrive more than 10 minutes late, unexcused, it will be recorded as an absence.

If you know ahead of time that you are going to be late or will miss class for any reason, you must communicate with me in advance. Any tardiness or missed classes must be excused by your parent/guardian. Your parent/guardian must discuss with Ms. Addie Michaud (amichaud@kentshill.org) to excuse you. Your participation grade will be negatively impacted for each unexcused tardy or unexcused absence.

Should you have trouble logging in, or get booted out of a Zoom class, it is your responsibility to follow up with me to explain what happened and to catch up on the information you missed. You must communicate with me via email ASAP on the day of before 6PM (EDT). Work that is due is still expected on time and work that is assigned for the following class is still expected on time unless you talk to me and we make other arrangements before a due date.

If you are in another timezone that prohibits you from attending our scheduled Zoom classes, you must make a plan with me for how you will accomplish work. For each class you miss due to a time difference, you will be required to check in during one Virtual Office Hour.

ZOOM CLASS EXPECTATIONS

There are a few non-negotiables for those participating in class via Zoom.

Mr. Chabot will send invitations for all Zoom class meetings via Google calendar. When our class meets, you are responsible

Written Reactions or Reflections, Reading Notes Check, Writing Exercise checks, Conferences, and other related quizzes/assessments: 25%

Keep up with the assigned reading. Part of being a writer is learning to “read like a writer.” We will practice that in this class, spending at least some portion of each week discussing readings from our texts. *If you want to be a writer, I can't overestimate the importance of reading.* All in-class writing must be done in a solely dedicated Creative Writing notebook. The date of the in-class writing assignment and the prompt (what you're writing about) must be written at the top of the page. Each in-class writing assignment must be on its own page. Your notebooks may be collected at any point in time to ensure this is happening. Once, hopefully, twice, you will schedule a conference with me to go over your writing. A missed conference counts as a missed class. You must come prepared for the conference. Sometimes I will assign a reading, or some other assignment, for which you must prepare a written response that will often be graded on its attention to detail, specificity, inclusion of properly cited evidence, etc.. Responses will be well-written, thoughtful, and at least 150 words in length for full credit. Don't write hastily. Sometimes you might be graded purely on the effectiveness of your note taking in your Reading Notes Organizer. This relatively broad category necessitates knowledge and skills, but also character. A fair amount of this work is ungraded; instead, they allow students to practice good soft skills along with opportunities to demonstrate character.

Classroom Participation and Preparation: 25%

This is about engagement and vulnerability. In this class, it is imperative that you are willing to serve as both a giver and a receiver in class discussions. What this means is that you must actively participate in order to do well in this class regardless of writing ability. Part of the writing process is one's own ability to communicate effectively; if one is unable to do so then one cannot improve as a writer nor are they participating in the writing community. Participation and preparation are significant components of your overall grade.

Addendum: In a class like this one, and as previously alluded to in the **Character (I've bolded this for emphasis)** section of the Desired Learning Outcomes, writers frequently take risks and write about things that are fearsome, problematic, controversial, or challenging. We must all commit to respecting each other's efforts in this area and agree that writing from this classroom will *NOT* be shared with people outside of our class unless the writer is asked personally and specifically for permission. **If you are discovered to be doing this, this will result in severe academic consequences, which may include upto failing a marking period and/or a semester.**

COURSE ROADMAP

*Subject to change

TOPIC 1

CREATIVE NONFICTION WRITING | SEPTEMBER-JANUARY

We will learn the ins and outs of Creative Nonfiction writing by developing a writer's toolbox of skills, grappling with the challenges of memory and truth in creative nonfiction writing, understanding that proper narrative requires a “situation” and a “story”, analyzing various essays, learn about various forms, engage with published writers, and wholly immerse ourselves into the writing community. The main drive of Creative Nonfiction is to learn how to utilize our own experience, viewpoints, worldviews in the production of narrative akin to memoir writing. Assignments may include:

- Daily writing in our Creative Writing notebooks. These will almost always be a creative prompt in which you will use tools in your developing writer's toolbox to create an experience. An example might be “write about the time you were

for joining the meeting, on time. Be prepared and engaged for synchronous learning time.

Be respectful and considerate towards your peers during Zoom classes. Choose an appropriate backdrop. Mr. Chabot should not see or hear your cell phone or any other noticeable distractions during Zoom classes. This will also negatively affect your participation grade.

Your microphone will be muted when you join the Zoom meeting. If you would like to speak for the whole class to hear you, you must use the “raise hand” feature to alert Mr. Chabot that you would like to say something. Once I have acknowledged your raised hand, you must unmute yourself while speaking into your microphone. You will return to muted status after speaking to minimize background noise. There is also a chat feature on Zoom. You can send a question or comment directly to me if you would rather not speak for the whole class to hear.

When attending class virtually, your whole face needs to be visible and you should be dressed appropriately (following the 2020-2021 dress code).

SOME COMFORTING LAST WORDS...

If you don't know, ask. If you can't remember, ask. If you panic, talk to me the night before. Most importantly, relax.

Remember this: I don't wake up each morning scheming up ways to make you miserable.

I always give this advice: lose yourself in your writing. It's the best way to create something you are proud of and to which others respond. I believe that each of you can write interesting, well-crafted, perhaps astounding stories this trimester. Throw yourself into this course. Abandon your doubt. Focus and work hard. Don't take yourself too seriously but take your writing seriously.

Do this and you'll have more fun and you'll get a better grade. And you'll be a better writer.

most embarrassed.” Each of these prompts will be based on the self, which is the essence of Creative Nonfiction.

- Reading a variety of essays and memoirs to develop various components of the writer's toolbox. All readings will come from the assigned Creative Writing Reader, *The Art of Memoir* by Mary Karr, *Stories for Boys* by Gregory Martin. Any additional reading assignments will be provided free-of-charge in print and/or PDF form. Essayists may include the following: Dinty Moore, Vivian Gornick, Phillip Lopate, Joyce Carol Oates, Patricia Hampl, David Sedaris, Mary Karr, Amy Butcher, Stephen King, Andre Dubus, Annie Dillard, Brenda Miller, Suzanne Paola, Elizabeth Cooke, Adam Hochschild, Lucy Grealy, Francine Prose, Mimi Schwartz, among others. Analytical and/or reflective writing on any of these essays may be assigned.
- Reading the memoir *Stories for Boys* by Gregory Martin, analyzing the way in which he wrote his piece, and Skyping/Zooming with him to learn about his process, his story, and his career in writing and teaching.
- Writing 3-5 *essays*.
- **Writing one 6-15 page long narrative.**
- **Workshopping and revising all long narratives.**
- **Conferencing with Mr. Chabot about your development and process as a writer.**
- **Constructing a final Creative Nonfiction section of your portfolio.**
 - **(THIS WILL ALSO SERVE AS OUR PBL, PROJECT-BASED LEARNING, REQUIREMENT FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR. MORE DETAILS TO COME):**

TOPIC 2

FICTION WRITING | JANUARY-MARCH

We will take everything we have learned in the production of personal narrative (Creative Nonfiction) in utilizing ourselves as the situation and the story, but we will move forward with our creativity. We will explore short stories in its published professional form, delve into various components of that production, and reinforce the fact that good fiction writing uses character development as its beating heart.

- Learning and practicing the important writing elements of storytelling: character, setting, dialogue, point-of-view, plot, details, structure, organization, among others.
- Daily writing in our Creative Writing notebooks. These will almost always be a creative prompt in which you will use tools in your developing writer's toolbox to create an experience. Each of these prompts will be largely scaffolded from published work.
- Reading a variety of short stories and essays to develop various components of the writer's toolbox. All reading assignments will be assigned from our Creative Writing Reader. Any additional reading assignments will be provided free-of-charge in print and/or PDF form. Authors and essayists may include the following: Rebecca Rule, Susan Wheeler, Sandra Cisneros, Ernest Hemingway, Edith Wharton, Aimee Bender, Lorrie Moore, Steve Amick, Flannery O'Connor, Ursula Hegi, Katharine Weber, Richard Bausch, Manuela Soares, Peter Bacho, Matt Krampitz, Richard Ford, Joyce Carol Oates, Alice Munro, Edwidge Danticat, Patricia O'Donnell, Antonya Nelson, Josip Novakovich, among others. Analytical or reflective writing may be assigned in response to these short stories or essays.
- Hosting a visiting writer, Elizabeth Cooke, for a day of workshops, writing exercises, and experiential learning.
- Skyping with a writer. This could be Rob Wilder. If I can make this happen, we will read provided excerpts from his novel, *Nickel*.
- Writing 3-5 Writing Exercises.
- Writing one 4-12 page short story.

- Workshopping and revising each short story.
- Conferencing with Mr. Chabot about your development and process as a writer.
- Constructing a final Fiction section of your portfolio.

TOPIC 3

POETRY WRITING | MARCH-APRIL

We will take everything we have learned in the production of narrative (fiction and nonfiction) and widdle everything down to an “experience”. Poetry is all about using language to create an experience so we will dabble in various poetic forms, discuss what makes poetry effective, and develop our voice as poets. Assignments may include the following:

- Daily writing in our Creative Writing notebooks. Each of these prompts will be largely scaffolded from published work.
- Beginning each class day with a Poem-of-the-Day in which each student will be responsible for sharing a poem they discovered.
- Reading a variety of poems from a variety of voices that will help us understand the necessity of creating an experience through words. All reading assignments will be handed out in printed and/or PDF digital form. Poets may include the following: Anis Mojgani, W.S. Merwin, James Davis May, Carolyn Forché, Donald Hall, T.R. Hummer, Sharon Olds, William Shakespeare, Molly Peacock, Theodore Roethke, Martha Collins, Linda Pastan, W.H. Auden, Dana Gioia, Adrien Matejka, Mary Oliver, Bonafide Rojas, Sarah Morgan, Dan Sullivan, Alvin Lau, Idris Goodwin, Jason Bayani, Deja Taylor, Nick Weaver, Linda Hogan, Joaquin Zihuatañejo, Cristin O’Keefe Aptowicz, Nate Marshall, Kiandra Jimenez, Hieu Minh Nguyen, Galway Kinnell, among others.
- Reading and responding in discussion and writing to excerpts provided by Mr. Chabot from *A Poetry Handbook* by Mary Oliver.
- Write 2-3 polished and revised poems through an abbreviated workshop process.
- Constructing a final Poetry section of your portfolio.

TOPIC 4

JUXTAPOSE | MAY

We will collaborate with the “Juxtapose Club” to help produce an issue of *Juxtapose* which has traditionally been Kents Hill School’s student literary publication. Assignments may include:

- Producing work for the publication (creative nonfiction essays, short stories, and poems).
- Designing and developing a cover, layout, and formatting.
- Copy-editing writing for publication.
- Producing a digital and printed final version of “Juxtapose”.
- Marketing and promoting the publication.
- (Possibly) soliciting work from the larger community.
- Composing a personal, holistic portfolio of one’s own creative writing.

Words by Michael Capone '18

Flowing like winds through thatched groves
Trickling currents down trees, evergreen
They exploit others expertly,
Individually: standing in their interiors

Tracked, trumped by torque and thrust
Thumped into their cages
Compellingly trapped into fear,
Unable to escape through the throat

To begin listening gingerly:
A skill possessed, able to create simply
Keys unlocking prison doors
Where yours are stored

Two Great Men by Cam Knowles '21

When Mr Chabot announced our 12-page long narrative assignment, I thought nothing of it. I figured I would wait until the last night, like I do for most writing assignments, and pull something out of my ass at the last minute. I haven't had an issue with this method in the past and figured it would be the same again this time.

Fast forward a couple of days. Still, I had written nothing. That night I came home from a hockey game, exhausted from an embarrassing loss, and was met by my father preemptively shoving chicken nuggets into the oven for me. I sat on the couch and talked to him and his buddy about the game, what went wrong, and cracked some jokes, thinking nothing of my dinner in the oven. By the time my stomach was loud enough for the whole conversation to hear, my nuggets were burnt and the truck was started, ready for its trip to McDonald's.

My dad was drinking that night, more than he normally would on a weeknight, which meant I manned the driver seat. My dad is a big burly man with broad shoulders and a long beard. He's a classic "Mainah." He wears his Carhartt's proud and becomes quite the character when he consumes his fair share of alcohol. He doesn't become mean or angry, or annoying or loud, he just talks a lot. I got an ear full during our twelve-minute journey to the golden arches. He asked about my team, what I thought we needed to work on and what needs to get better. He talked about his past, something I can always expect when he drinks, and he started to reminisce. I answered him in between rants with the ordinary "uh-huh" or head nod just to prove I wasn't ignoring him entirely.

It wasn't until he held the oversized bag in his lap and our destination was set to home that I really listened to what he was saying. See my dad has a tendency to talk about his past

when he's in the state that he was that night. He talks about his time in Georgia as a middle schooler, playing football and driving his stepdads car as a pre-teen. He brings up my mom and their lives before kids. He talks about their trips with each other and their classic "stuck at Disney during 9/11" story. This night was not much different. His story was prompted by the classic turn around at the armoury, which is essential in order to get to McDonald's. I had just got done telling my dad a brief story about my sister and I's trip that same morning when he began telling me about his bike collection that he had before kids.

See he started his chain of stories with one that occurred in the same place that we were. The story included him and his buddy Josh riding bikes down Western Ave, which inevitably ended in both of them getting pulled over and my dad escaping a ticket by telling the officer "I'm trying to teach my friend here how to ride a bike properly." That story transitioned into another about his first street bike purchase and by the time I reached out the window to retrieve our bag of food, his story had meshed into another that I had heard so many times before. That story is the one of my Grandfathers tragic accident.

The story goes as follows, Senior year, two weeks before graduation, my Grandfather was riding his project bike, the one that he had made in class, down Memorial Drive in Winthrop. He was going overly fast and driving recklessly like he normally did and right before the train tracks, in front of Winthrop beach, his back tire caught sand, whipped around sideways, and he went head-on into an oak tree. He rolled up to graduation via ambulance, received his diploma in a full-body cast and endured even more pain as the football coach of UMaine revoked his full scholarship.

My dad ended that story with the beginning of another. He brought me back to 2005 when his grandfather passed away. He told me my Grandfather and he took a trip up north, just

the two of them, in order to get away and mourn together. He brought up this story to add emphasis to his last. He told me that he asked his dad if he regretted getting on that bike. He asked, "if you could do it all again would you do it the same?" My grandfather took time to think, pondered his response and told my father, "if I could do it all over again, I would do it the same because if I wasn't in that crash, if I didn't get my scholarship taken away, I wouldn't have stayed with your mother and I wouldn't have had you."

All these stories about his dad were nothing new to me. My dad is very emotional when it comes to the loss of his father. They were best friends, my dad looked up to my Grandfather and credits him for most of the knowledge he has to this day. Hearing these stories time and time again isn't unordinary for me, it's the way my dad copes. The stories weren't new to me but the questions were.

My father took a break from his storytelling on the way home that night and resumed with questions instead. He broke the silence by saying, "It doesn't feel like it's been 7 years since he's passed does it?" I answered, rather taken back, I agreed that the years have flown by. The next question he asked will be a memory that sticks with me for a very long time. He sat up in his seat, looked over at me and asked: "what do you remember most about Gramps?" I sat and debated my answer because I knew if I told him the truth he might break down, just like I thought I was going to at that moment.

See the real answer to his question is not much. I think about my grandfather every day. I think about the lessons he taught me, the games he went to and cheered me on from the sidelines. I remember rushing up the path between our houses to meet him with a metal pipe and some beans which we used to practice my baseball swing. See I remember moments, I remember bits and pieces of times spent together, but I've lost the memory of what he looked like, what he

sounded like, his famous words and sayings, they're all gone. My dad noticed my lack of response to his first question and followed it up with another. He asked, "do you think about Gramps at all." I responded this time. Choked up, I told him that I tried to. I told him that I tried to remember him, that I tried to think of him, but every day it's the same couple of memories that play in my head. I'm telling you this because at that moment, struggling to tell my dad about my feelings, I knew that this time, this writing assignment was going to be different. It had come to me at that moment that I had to write about my grandfather. I had to write about what he meant to me, what he taught me, but I also had to tell the story of the moment I realized I was starting to forget my hero.

That's not an easy thing to admit. At that moment driving home with my dad, I couldn't even tell him, of all people, what I was going through. I couldn't look my own father in the eyes and admit that I forgot what my grandfather was like. That is what hurt me the most. It wasn't the fact that I had spent the last 7 years gradually forgetting what my grandfather had looked like or sounded like, but the fact that I wasn't able to admit it to my father.

In a way, I've been trying to pin all of this on the universe. I've been trying to find ways to justify my inabilities and find a way to make this not my fault. I'm pissed off at the world, at the way it works and the way it continues to move on, day after day like nothing has happened. I was 11 when my grandfather passed away. I WAS ONLY 11. You can't blame me for losing the memory of him, for forgetting what it was like to live a life where he was my neighbour again.

The memories that I do remember, I hold close to my heart. While the descriptive memories may be fading from my knowledge, the bits and pieces that I do have don't portray him any differently. I remember the way he was always the voice of reason. He always found a

way to give both my sister and me the best lives possible, whether that be through compromise or spoiling us. He had no goal in life other than to be the best he possibly could for the family.

His will to spoil my sister and me was something I always took for granted. Every year, before school started, we would load up the RV and head to the mall. We were both set up with a budget. Our cash was stored in an envelope from the bank and we were given the task of getting everything we needed, but not to go over budget. That was never the case and he was always fine with it. Christmas was the same way. My sister and I were always impatient Christmas morning waiting for his truck to pull into our driveway promptly at 9 a.m, knowing 9 actually meant 10:30. There was always the same excuse “we got you guys more presents than we remembered.”

My grandfather was a jack of many trades and had many hobbies, some more expensive than others. He was known for his big driveway, sometimes housing more than 10 cars at a time. He enjoyed his toys, anything from 4-wheelers to snowmobiles, to a 400cc scooter. My grandfather lived with no regrets and did the things he loved. Before his cancer, you'd find him up north every year riding snowmobiling and ice fishing. In the summers you would see him at camp or riding his sleeper boat down to Boston.

You see my grandfather didn't get a college degree, but he worked with what he had. His job allowed him to express his talents and it paid generously in return. He was able to do the things he and his wife loved because of his work ethic and his drive to do right by his family. His commitment to putting family first will not be forgotten and his will to better others is lived on by his family.

In my eyes, he is remembered through my father. Those two were the bestest of friends. My dad has the utmost respect for him and challenges himself to be as good of a man as his own

father was. My dad goes about his life both at work and at home in a way that his own father did. He puts his family first, he works hard, he lives humbly and he looks out for those closest to him.

I'm thankful for my father in many ways. He gives support, he loves no matter the circumstance and he is the rock that holds down our family. Additionally, he reminds me every day of how great of a man my grandfather was. Whether that be by telling me stories or teaching me lessons that he learned himself. His ability to never forget and to strongly live his life with his father's memory in the back of his head has allowed me to remember and to be thankful for the time that I was able to share with the great man that I was lucky enough to call Gramps.

The strength that my grandfather passed down to my dad never goes unnoticed. On the day of my grandfather's funeral, my father stood before us all and told the life story of his best friend. The room was filled with people that I knew, people I had heard about, and faces I had never seen before. No matter their relation to my grandfather, my father stood before them and honoured a man that meant something to each and every one of them. As I sat in the front row, not knowing whether to cry or smile, I watched my father shed a tear for the first time in my life. I know no man stronger than him and for him to show emotion and let his guard down in such a vulnerable time, I knew my grandfather had taught him well.

As I stood in the doorway of the funeral home, receiving condolences from familiar and unfamiliar faces, I heard nothing but powerful words from the people passing by. I was told how great of a man my grandfather was, how meaningful he was to people, and I was reminded that his memory would never be forgotten. Many shook the hand of my father, thanking him for his strength and for the stories he shared with them. No time before had I ever been so thankful for being the son and grandson of such amazing men.

I will never refuse or complain to my dad about sharing one of his stories. Whether it's the first time I've heard it or the 100th, I will sit back and listen thoughtfully. While my memory may be fading in regards to the physical features that I once remembered about my grandfather, that's not all that there is to remember. His personality, his love, and our memories together will always be worth more than a physical description. While it may be hard to cope with and will surely take time, my focus in the future will be on remembering the man that he was. The man that gave life everything he had. The man that strove to provide for his family and be strong for everyone.

Above all else, those are the most important things in life. Yes, it would be great to remember his smile, or his laugh, or just the sound of his voice. But the characteristics and the mindsets that I have inherited from both my father and grandfather are worth more than a memory. The idea of giving life everything you have and providing for your loved ones is something I will take from both of them and pass down to my own children. You see it isn't the memories that make a man who is, but the things that he has learned on the way. For that I am grateful, and for that, I owe who I am and what I believe in, to both of them. I am proud to carry on their legacy, to know their lessons, their personalities and their love will be lived on by me.

You see my father may talk a lot when he drinks and he may rant about his past, but when he talks about my grandfather and shares his life story, I will be sure to listen, knowing he's there listening too, knowing that he taught his son to be the best father he could possibly be.

Sneak by Arianna Pearman '19

I move down the stairs
Careful, so as to not make a noise
One, two three
One foot in front of another
Down, down, down
I reach the bottom
Tile cold against my feet
Tiptoe, tiptoe, tiptoe
Silence must be held
Sneak into the room
My toe hit the leg of a table
Pain, pain, pain
Push through, this is important
Limp forwards...
Almost there...
I pull, letting it open
The light turns on, revealing heaven
And I grab my leftover Chinese from the fridge

Sense of Belonging by Tengxiao “Jerry” Li ’21

According to the Chinese zodiac and ancient Yi Jing philosophy, 2020, the year of the rat, was said to be an extremely ominous year.

“It’s going to be a rough year you know,” my mom said to me as we were walking in Beijing International airport at the beginning of 2020. It was the last day of my winter break as I was about to get back to Kents Hill.

“Come on, don’t tell me you really buy that,” I said to my mom, “it’s superstitious.” I walked faster so my mom wouldn’t start her Chinese ancient Yi philosophy and Eight trigrams in “the book of changes” all over again.

“There are reasons why these things have been there for three thousand years,” my mom said, “you have a lot to learn from traditional Chinese culture, Jerry. They don’t teach that in America.”

“Okay okay, 2020, rough year,” I said it so my mom could stop her lecture.

A few minutes later, we arrived at the departing gateway. “See you in March,” my mom hugged me, “remember what I told you, okay?”

“Okay, but I’m not coming home in March,” I said, “I’m hanging out with my friends in New York or something.”

“Whatever,” my mom shook her head, “you are too independent now.”

Ever since I turned 16, flying between China and the U.S. has become my routine. I’m spending less time at home and more time on the other side of the planet. I sometimes forget the fact that I just turned 18 last year because I left the bubble of my family at a young age. I thought

the year of 2020 was going to be another ordinary year with no surprises. In retrospect, I was so naive to think that.

As far as I can remember, everything started with a disruptive email from my teacher on March 13,

“Hi all, FYI that brunch will be from 10-12 and dinner from 5-6. There is a mandatory meeting at 6:00 in the Commons for all students staying on campus. Thank you!

Ms. Chute”

I reluctantly chose to stay on campus for the spring break because of COVID-19, and all my excitement and anticipation of the spring break had turned into boredom after a few days of video gaming. I was hoping Mrs. Chute was going to announce some activities like “Chinese hotpot in Wesleyan,” but my journey to home started when Mr. Cheney, the head of school, told us the campus would close on March 17th.

Jerry Jiang, a student who graduated from Kents Hill last year, and I rushed back to Sampson as soon as the meeting ended and started looking for flight tickets. After hours of searching, we finalized our flights. We were going to fly out on March 16th from Portland to Chicago, then Hong Kong, then eventually Beijing. Direct flights to Beijing were all canceled because of COVID-19.

Everything was still frightening to us when we were sitting in the Commons for dinner on the day before we left. Kris Wang, another student who graduated last year, still couldn't believe that his high school life was going to end this way.

Mrs. Samborski, the school nurse, walked to me when she saw me in the Commons and handed me a blue Ziploc. There were two disposable masks and a Purell hand sanitizer inside.

“Hey, Jerry,” she said to me, “In case I don’t see you again this year, protect yourself on your way back, stay safe, okay?”

I suddenly felt so bad and guilty about myself because we, the whole Chinese community actually, were laughing at the nurses for sending out an email earlier telling people not to wear masks. I wanted to apologize, but somehow I didn’t, I guess I was scared.

Jerry Jiang and I left school at 3:30 AM on March 16 and we were the only people wearing a mask at Portland international airport in Maine. Before we departed, I had a chocolate croissant from Starbucks at the airport. “You sure you are not eating,” I said to Jerry Jiang. “This might be the only meal you will eat in the next two days.”

Jerry Jiang shook his head, “No, I’m good.”

Our first flight was from Portland, Maine, to Chicago. If you’ve taken a flight out from Portland, Maine at 4 in the morning, you’d know that the airport is almost empty during that time. The customs officers are so patient as if they have all the time in the world. Just as we thought our entire trip was going to be as peaceful, we were frightened by what we saw at Chicago O’Hare International airport. There were hundreds of people in the airport, waiting to leave the city and flights were getting delayed and canceled every hour.

“They are not canceling our flight, right?” I said to Jerry Jiang. My voice was shaky as I was watching the departure screens, another flight to Europe was canceled.

“We are going to die if we stay here,” I knew he wasn’t joking by the look on his face, “I don’t want to stay here.”

“Don’t say that,” I said to Jerry Jiang, “you are making me scared.”

At that moment, all we wanted was to go home. Everything became unimportant when it comes to death. We were only seventeen years old and our school never taught us what to do when a pandemic hits.

We were lucky enough that our flight didn't get canceled and made it back to Hong Kong and Beijing safely. We flew for 40 hours in total without sleep, and Jerry Jiang didn't eat for 40 hours because he didn't want to take his mask off.

The turbulence caused by landing woke me up as the plane landed in Beijing on March 18. People with protective coveralls, masks, and safety goggles immediately showed up in our cabin from nowhere and started measuring our body temperature.

Back in March, people in the U.S. didn't seem to care about the virus as if COVID was only a thing in the far east. It was the period of time when COVID was still called the "Chinese virus." There were times that I asked myself if my country really caused the pandemic.

During my fourteen days of quarantine, I was disappointed when Donald Trump was blaming China for everything. On the other hand, students like me were being discriminated against on the Chinese internet because they thought we were bringing the virus back to China. For the first time, I wonder: where do I really belong?

Sometimes I can't stop thinking about how I've changed in the past three years. Kents Hill is such a comfortable place, so comfortable that it makes me want to call it home. I forgot when was my last time having a lobster roll from the Apple Shed, it was always the first thing I would eat after returning from summer break. I miss the time when I could just yell across Sampson's hallway to get Jerry Jiang to log into his account so we can play video games together. I remember when I faked sleep just to pass Mr. Munson's room check so I could play video games at night. Three years later, I'd call Kents Hill my second home.

A few weeks ago, I was chatting with Oscar Wen, a senior at Kents Hill School, on WeChat as we were both stressed about college applications and our future plans.

“Man... I can’t believe I’m saying this, but I actually want to get back to school.” I said to Oscar.

“Me too,” Oscar nodded, “remote learning sucks.” After a moment of silence, he said, “do you know if the Apple Shed is still serving lobster rolls?”

“I don’t know,” I said, “I couldn’t find good lobster rolls in Beijing.”

“Lol (laugh out loud), the steak in Beijing sucks as well,” Oscar added.

One time I went to a steakhouse in Beijing this summer and asked for A.1. sauce. The waitress had no idea what A.1. sauce was and asked me if A.1. sauce really exists.

All I said was, “for real?”

Moments like this remind me of Kents Hill. Teenagers love everything but going to school, it’s the people that make schooling meaningful. Even now, I always have that smile on my face when I remember these moments. It’s easy to tell that I’m a really nostalgic person. All I know is that I belong to where my people are. My family members are my people, my friends are my people, my teachers are my people... There is an old Chinese proverb, “落叶归根,” which translates to fallen leaves return to the roots. I’ve been drifting for so long and I can’t even figure out which root I’m falling into.

It’s been more than nine months since I got back to China and I’ve been watching how COVID was exacerbating in the U.S.

Last week I was watching TV with my dad and the news was reporting how the Capitol was raided.

“It’s so dangerous in the U.S. now,” my dad said, “don’t go back to school.”

“The Capitol isn’t in Maine,” I said, “and your son is graduating from high school soon, remember?” My dad hardly cares about my school life. He used to go to my elementary school for the family weekend in my first year of middle school.

“You can graduate remotely,” my dad said, “just like the kids from last year.”

“I’m not graduating remotely,” The idea of graduating remotely frightened me as I recalled the day Jerry Jiang and I left school. It was his last day at Kents Hill and he didn’t even say a proper goodbye to anyone, “Biden is becoming the president soon. They are going to fix it.”

“You think the Americans are going to fix it in three months?” my dad said, “and why are you speaking for them?”

Why am I speaking for them? It’s a question that I don’t know the answer to. Do I just want to return to the U.S. and graduate in person, or do I support the U.S. when the tension between the U.S. and China is escalating? Perhaps I’m simply sick of remote learning and attending classes in the middle of the night.

In my father’s eyes, I’m not patriotic at all. You see my family is very communist: my parents are communists and so are my grandparents. I’m not saying that communism is inferior to capitalism but, you know, they get annoyed when being told that the U.S. isn’t doomed yet. No matter where you are, all media does the same: they paint a picture and try to make you believe it. I would laugh when I see the news in the U.S. reporting nonsense about China, but I wouldn’t explain things to my friends like I did with my dad because I didn’t care. The reason why I argued with my dad was that I care. I wanted him to know about the country that I have lived in for the past three years. I wanted him to know about my second home.

I often joked around with my dad and told him that he could live a peaceful retirement in Maine in the future, knowing that his restricted by the government to leave China. I told him that he could buy a nice house in Portland and I will take him to my favorite Chinese restaurant or the LongHorn Steakhouse. But every time we talked about his “flawless retirement plan,” I always questioned myself afterward: where do I really belong?

Houses by Delaney Feeney '21

“De, there’s something for you in the mail from the Naval Academy. We’ve been calling you for 5 minutes!”

My sister Kaylee moved to the side as I sprinted down the stairs to my other sibling E, who was holding the mail. I practically snatched the letter, and stared for a few seconds at the seal on the front. I read my name, and reread the address from the Department of Defense. This was important mail. The envelope was thin, which had the potential to be a good or bad thing. I hadn’t heard from the Naval Academy in a month, so naturally I was itching to open it. As I opened the letter, I looked at E. “I feel sick to my stomach” was all I managed to say between heavy breaths. I didn’t even read the whole letter, only the “congratulations” and “automatic appointment” towards the top. This was it. This was what I had worked for months, no... years, to hear. Knees weak with excitement, I crouched to the floor with my head in my hands. My life had dramatically changed because of that envelope. I was going to my dream college.

This letter came a few days after I was given a writing assignment by Mr. Chabot. The assignment was to write a long narrative essay, maybe through branching off of my previous short essays, or expanding a prompt in my writing journal. I was apprehensive about continuing one of my essays, so I opted to look through my writing journal for inspiration. I stumbled across a prompt we did early on in the year, which was to finish the sentence “I remember..”. I had written about a place in my childhood that I once identified as home. It swept me down a rabbit hole of nostalgia, and the scenery and stories came out onto the keyboard like word vomit.

I started out remembering one of the first houses I lived in. It was the earliest place I remember calling home. I can’t remember the move or relocation to the house, but I remember

existing in it. While living there my memory was just starting to develop, so some parts are more vivid than others.

I wrote about scenery, describing the house the best that I could with the image in my mind. Eventually, my inner child and author agreed that it was white and roughly 1800 square feet with two floors with a manicured lawn and a fence that wrapped around the property. There were three bedrooms, two upstairs and one on the main floor (which was my parent's room). The main floor was open concept, so the living room was also a playroom and an entrance to the kitchen. The area had white carpet, and was surrounded by big windows that showcased the backyard. The upstairs had a loft that you had to walk by to get to the bedrooms, but the area wasn't baby proof when my parents bought it. With a smile I recalled that Dad had to put a sheet of plexiglass in front of a big hole in the loft where the rungs of the railing were too wide. They didn't want us kids cliff jumping off it into the living room. Knowing the four of us, we would have probably done some stupid stuff if my parents weren't careful.

A memory that jumped out at me while reviewing the paragraph was running around in my closed off backyard barefoot, chasing my older sibling E around. The grass and clover mix felt cold and wet under my feet so I tried to make every step as light as possible, trying to avoid the 'yucky' feeling on my toes. I remember looking at my next door neighbor's Eagles flag, one of interests our families had in common. The backyard was a small rectangle, and had a gate that opened to a secret path behind our community complex. We were never allowed to touch the gate, and I'm surprised now that I never tried to open it given my rebellious tendencies as a kid.

There were a lot of small components of the backyard that had specific memories. The old tree in the corner reminded me of the time one of its limbs crashed through our glass sliding door during a windstorm. Mom had to call a repairman who came into our house over the next

few days to fix it. The low back porch connected to the house was the roof for baby bunnies underneath, and my mom's herb garden was their food. I pictured the jet planes that flew over my house, and maybe even hear the sound of their engines as they flew to the Navy base where my dad worked a couple miles away. The noise would always wake baby Owen from his naps. By the end of my short passage, I had reflected on how small my world was when I lived there, and how content I was with my limits, not knowing what layed beyond the fence. I wanted to explore the other homes that I had in my life, so I continued down my rabbit hole of nostalgia.

I explored my memory of the second house of my childhood. It was a rental, and the house could only be described as eccentric despite seeming pretty normal from the outside. There was a tire swing in the front tied to a big tree, and a homemade swing set and slide in the backyard. The driveway made its own cul de sac for us to ride our bikes around. The feeling I had living in that house, and also felt through recall, was one that I didn't like. It was a feeling of fraud, living in a home that was someone else's. The house constantly reminded my family that someone else had lived there, and that eventually they would come back. The living room had shag carpet that smelled like a cat and a popcorn ceiling that Dad hated. The laundry room had a cat door that was always stuck open (my family didn't own any cats). There was an empty drinks bar in the basement, but my parents didn't drink. The backyard had a trampoline tucked in the corner that was left behind by the owner that we never used. There were even times when neighbors came to visit asking for the previous family. It was always a pretty awkward situation when they found out that they had moved away. Today, my family actually still calls that house 'The Hall's House' because it belonged to the Hall family, not us.

While exploring my memory of this house, I discovered a feeling of disdain. I realised that nothing in that house really felt like mine, even the space given to me. My older sibling Em

and I were given a bedroom that was designed by one of the kids that lived in the house before. One wall of our room had hand painted blue bubbles on a green background, and the other wall had vertical purple and green squiggly lines. The ceiling fan in our room had funky purple lights that matched the paintings. Today, I would never refer to that bedroom as my room. There were too many signs of the other kid to call it my own, and I feel like it wouldn't be truthful.

I don't think I have any amazing memories from that house. I reached a few milestones with my siblings, but I didn't feel like I could make my home there. The few good memories I could bring up were because of the people I lived with. I remember how exciting it was to run around the side of the house with my siblings and to peep into the rock wall in search of lizards and toads between the cracks. We would try to capture as many as we could and show them to our parents. I loved pushing my siblings on the tire swing out front, and climbing the small trees on the property. One of my favorite memories that came up during my exploration was of my dad and a rogue lizard that got into the basement. The basement was half in the ground, so bugs and creepy crawlers always found a way to get into the basement through cracks in the wall or window sealants. During play time one day my siblings and I found a tiny lizard in the basement, and called our parents to take care of it. Mom didn't want to touch the thing, but Dad was more than willing to bring the lizard outside. He went to grab it by the tail, but forgot that lizards can detach their tails in self defence. So our dad was left holding a wiggling detached lizard tail while the rest of the lizard was running around! Mom was horrified but the rest of us couldn't stop laughing. I don't remember how, but eventually we got the lizard back outside.

Looking back, I was curious why I had considered this house one of my 'homes'. I was surprised at my emotions of contempt towards the house, because it was a good home for me at

the time. I decided to continue through the chronology of my homes, and approached the most recent home that I moved from.

It was easier for me to remember this home because we had only moved from there a few years ago. This house didn't have as big of a property as the last house, but it was located in a much nicer area. The exterior of the house was a clean white and had green shutters. There was a concrete walkway, and a fenced in backyard that was big enough for us to put an above ground pool in later on. The back of the house had a deck made of dark stained wood with built-in benches and a hot tub in one of the corners. On the inside, the house was very bright and clean. I remember being dazzled on my first day inside because of how much natural light flooded in.

My favorite memories that came up from this house were the pool parties my family used to host for my soccer teams, with all of our friends hanging out on our back porch after a long summer training session. Half of the team would be swimming in the pool and the other half would be hanging out in the hot tub that had come with the house. I always felt that the house was designed to host a lot of people, that it was meant to be shared.

After all of this exploration and memory dump, I didn't know exactly what I was writing about. I was spurred to write about these places, but I didn't know why. I recognised nostalgia in my writing, but after rereading and some extra thought, I felt something else in my heart. No matter how many memories I had written about or how many anecdotes I added, I felt a little sad. Maybe bitter is more applicable. I'm not sure. But none of the places I described made me feel terribly sad, and I never regretted living in any of them. They were stops on my childhood, and I'm grateful that they were available for my family when the timing was right. Where were these feelings coming from? Why did I choose to write about my childhood homes?

I decided that I needed to zoom out. Was there something that I feel like I missed? I kept nearing an idea, but something inside didn't want me to consider it. I guess I was in some sort of denial, because I didn't even want to write about it. It wasn't until I forced myself to put it on paper did I better understand why I had written about what I did.

Growing up, I envied all of the other kids who got to grow up on the same street, with the same best friends, and went to school with them everyday. I never got that because my family moved around every few years, away from my favorite neighbors and the kids I used to have sleepovers with. I always craved the idea of having a solid home. I wanted a place where I could show people without hesitation that that is where I grew up, a space that was mine and where I layed down roots. I wanted a sense of belonging, something solid that doesn't change, and something that I can revisit when I needed comfort.

I think my writing was trying to hint at something bigger than just where I lived as a kid. While putting down my thoughts, I think my underlying sadness walking down memory lane was caused by my life changing quickly and very soon. Something in me wanted a sense of comfort in a home or memories or roots to fall back on while everything else in my life was shifting.

Zoomed out, the stressor that most likely caused this was the fact that I'm going off to college in a few months. It will be the first time I'm away from home by myself, and since I'm going to a military academy I won't be able to see my family for a few months. Because I was so elated to get into my top college, it didn't even occur to me to stop and think about what I was going to miss. I was expecting homesickness to hit me during my summer, when I got my things packed and ready to leave or on the car ride down south. After some more thought, I discovered

that I embody this concept of 'home' or 'belonging' in a house, or a childhood idea of security. But was I actually missing a house in my writing? What do I actually consider home?

It will never be a house. No matter where I moved, there was one common factor that made me feel at home. It was the people that filled the houses. My home will always be my family.