

# THE BELLARMINE REVIEW

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# THE BELLARMINE REVIEW

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The Literary Magazine of Fairfield College Preparatory School

# MISSION STATEMENT

We desire to publish poetry and prose that is clear, concise, and evokes the senses, taking the reader to the writers imagined placed through strong writing and a good sense of rhythm. It is believed in Jesuit education that an academic endeavor may be an encounter with the divine, and we strive to live by the motto *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*. That is to say that in the authenticity of our written thoughts we may unknowingly stumble on truth. Our intent is to give our students' words a place to land, serving as a venue to acknowledge their living truth.



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# Forward

**Guest judge, Dr. Jerald Walker, Professor of English at Emerson College and author, most recently of *How to Make a Slave: And Other Essays*, which was a finalist for the National Book Award, selected Nicholas Katsetos's story as the winner of Fairfield Prep's creative writing contest, The Writing Royale.**

## Winner:

““The Diner Vampire” is an excellent story in all aspects.” Walker declares. “The writer does a wonderful job of describing the diner and the characters, and creates an intriguing, complicated tale about cruelty and regret. I was hooked from the start and completely awed by the writer’s talent. This is the kind of work I see from my most advanced undergraduates, and all I can say is that if the writer sticks with it, there is no limit to what he can achieve.”

## Runners Up:

“I love “Wii Remember” by Tomas Lignore, for its humor, especially its great opening paragraph, and for the inspirational wisdom it dispenses about life’s continuous challenges. The writer learns a valuable lesson, and its truth resonated with me long after I finished reading: ‘it is ok to let the nine-year-old inside of you out to play once in a while, so long as you can let him rest again.’”

Of “Whirlwinds and Wildflowers,” by Mark Kolotylo, Walker writes: “What I most admire about this story is its wonderfully descriptive prose. The details the writer uses are so exact and rich that nearly every sentence provides a delight to the senses, such as this one: ‘The plants stood orderly swooning in an ever present orderly breeze that would only slightly ruffle the dewed leaves.’ So good!”

“In “Vesido Azul,” Stephen Wong has a strong narrative voice and is mind-blowingly creative, as the inclusion of a well-crafted, thought-provoking poem illustrates. Most impressive, however, is the writer’s ability to so accurately and realistically capture the complex anxieties of first-love.”

““These Paths of Life,” by Joe Altieri, is a prime example of outstanding storytelling, suspense-building, and character development. When a story can give a reader goosebumps—as this one gave me—that reader is in the hands of a seriously gifted writer.”



# The Diner Vampire

Nicholas Katsetos '21

The Fornarlamb Diner was reduced to rubble about six years ago. I jog by it daily, reminiscing on the random weekdays where I'd skip first period English with my friends. We were noisy, rude, baseball kids; kicking our feet up on countertops, dribbling our glass bottles of Coke, preaching vulgarities, and tripping the poor morning customers that looked at us funny. It wasn't a popular spot, most due to its niche location at the back corner of town and mediocre food. It was our memorable domain, and save for the elusive owner, we were the closest to the top of Fornarlamb's hierarchy.

There was one constant in our Fornarlamb stories, a facet which always seems to fade into the backdrop, but is oft brought up briefly from time to time—Angela Fornarlamb, the owner's wife and only visible faculty. Angela was a slender thirty-something year-old woman of reasonable height, with a thin face, baggy greyish eyes, and long black hair statically tied into a bun. She was incredibly pale as well, and had a wardrobe predominantly occupied by long-sleeved blacks and greys, giving her the common features of a suburban Carnstein. She rarely saw the light of day, spare for the windows of her retro diner. Rain-or-shine, Angela wore long-sleeved shirts and, very rarely, skirts that go past the knees. Despite knowing her age from word-of-mouth, age did not treat her face well; wrinkles, bags, and other impressions of elder physicalities manifested. But in four years of high school, not a wrinkle or grey hair appeared on her being.

It's rude to say, but her eccentricities were a hot topic. To ourselves, of course, but if the opportunity appeared, I would not put it past my borderline-delinquent lackeys to pry at the poor woman's private life. See, Mrs. Fornarlamb only spoke to her own friends, and her discussions always concerned the condition of her husband, Mr. Fornarlamb, the owner. It is important to also note her frequent and severe stuttering problem, an impediment that drove her deeper into social solitude.

We made fun of this disability to ourselves. Sometimes way more audibly than should be. Angela definitely knew how boisterous we were, and how we'd repel customers away from the diner, but she never intervened. From what I could tell then and what I now know, she was a very kind woman. Despite her peculiar nature, she would often hold donations to innumerable charities in addition to donating the funds from the restaurant to said charities. She also took excellent care of the building, giving it the furnishing, the repairs, everything it needed to keep running. In retrospect, the debt she put herself in was catastrophic, all to keep that diner running.

In November of my Junior year, a shatter pierced the diner atmosphere. For a moment you could see Angela Fornarlamb wince in pain. A coca-cola bottle exploded into shards of glass all over the carpeting, and spilled the brown fluid in all directions. The explosion suppressed



into the loud sizzling of the carbonated beverage, foam still settling on the cloth. Eric, the brickhead of the group, stood dumbfounded before his accident.

Immediately, we erupted in laughter, cackling and pointing at him. Some of us rolled onto the ground clutching our stomachs. The kid broke glass on the doormat! Eric, red-faced, stood scratching his head and forcing a bashful grin.

Angela stood to clean it up. We went silent, and Eric slowly retreated. As she knelt down to sweep the glass up, her arm slipped from her sleeve, revealing leopard prints of black and blue. Needless to say, we decreased in rambunctious volume for the rest of that morning.

But we didn't say anything. Nobody did. Everybody knew what went on behind the scenes, even the closest of Angela's friends held their tongue. They didn't want to intervene, because nobody wanted to acknowledge it. I hated it, and I know everyone else hated it, but I kept my silence like the rest of them.

The diner was Angela's home, her only respite. It burned down soon after I left for college. Now it is nothing more, a hunk of burnt wood embedded with scraps of glistening metal. Angela Fornarlamb, the Diner Vampire, lives in the back of our memories, like a neglected smudge of paint on a canvas. But she's still there, immortalized in time. Had we not disregarded her, maybe I would still be there every now and again, and maybe she would still be there.



# These Paths of Life

Joe Altieri '22

The valley ahead seems never ending. No. I am in the valley. A white sea grows far as my eyes can reach, and the ghost-like frosty fog lingering before me, and all around me, shortens my already weak sight. Behind me, a steep slope rises. I can't see past it. There are tracks on it, in the deep snow— my tracks, I suppose.

The snow rises to my knees. I'm cold. I clutch my hands together and bring them to my face, blowing into them, and blowing, until I'm out of breath and need to stop. I breathe and keep blowing, but my gloves are wet and cold, and whatever warmth is in me, I've spent. I look up, in search of the sun, but the pale sky leaves no trace of warmth. Then— Apollo! I look to him for comfort, but the waning disk's power seems to have faded.

I gaze about and all around I see only a white waste. The weariness I feel in my bones, and the biting frost, make me blind to its beauty. Storm clouds loom and fill the sky: an omen. A wind has risen from the north, blowing the storm on my path. It will soon reach me. I would turn and flee, but my forces are drained, and the prospect of climbing the hill is one I refuse. I am weak. I fear the climb would claim me. I pull my hat down to cover my ears, but it shrieks back up, leaving them bare. I cross my arms and bring my hands under the armpits of my coat. I put my head down. Like the sun, my strength is fading, but the wind keeps rising; it pushes me now. I try to hold my ground against it, and suddenly I realize that I haven't taken a step since I first looked behind, at the hill.

Flakes have begun to fall, more and more every second but, ahead, in the distance, I can see a shape. A faceless shape, miles away. A cloud— darker and denser than any near me— towers over it. It stands out like a spot of ink on a white cloth. The image is fading, whitening; the snow covers my field of vision. All this time wandering alone I've whimpered along, and now the sight of something other than myself, and the desolate waste, stirs within me a strength from some unknown depth. I step into the storm; the wind pushing against me, as if it were trying to stop me from reaching the shape. I will not let that happen. With all the strength in me, I tread; every step taking a mile's toll. I feel no pain; no frost on my skin nor aching in my bones. All I can think of is that shape.

I hear whispers, and amid the senseless rambles I discern one sound: my name. That can't be, it must be the wind. I tell myself I'm tired, weak, that these calls are just the storm's trick. I don't know how long I've walked but, looking up now, I see a hill: steeper even than the first, and taller. I cannot climb it. Stranded strengthless in the winter storm I fall on my knees, embracing my coming doom. I cry out. No words— just a long, painful shout. Then, not I, but

something else, raises my head. I see a figure on the hilltop. The shape— there it is. I can see now that it is a tree, an oak. A gigantic oak. *The Oak*. The snow now falls harder than ever and yet the tree is clear. The crown, which, for its greatness, I mistook as a cloud, is still green, and the tower-like trunk is free even of the hint of white.

Though it feels more like a mountain, I climb the hill. Reaching the top, I somehow find it in me to run toward the Tree. There is water about it. A pool of melting snow surrounds the Oak. The trunk is warm; not only that, it is hot. I drop to the ground and am filled with inexpressible joy—I don't know why—and I laugh. Finally, I get up, only to sit down again with my back leaning against the tree-trunk. Then, in a rush, I turn. I take my hat off, press it on the trunk and then on my face to feel the warmth. I'm crying.

I notice then that there are letters carved on the tree. They read:

*Long I've walked these ways unknown, Field and storm I roamed alone,  
Hill and valley I have passed,  
For fleeing death I took this path. Now I've reached the Tree of Life  
And warmth shall end all cold;  
On pastures green shall fall no snow, For what I fled I stand before.  
Alone I trod these paths of life. Alone. I am alone.*

I read it again and I drop my hat. I stand, and ahead at my feet I see a green pasture, and a river, and an ocean. The air is sweet as honey. I can see the grass, swaying in the wind, and I can hear the river running through the valley. Behind me is the storm; I see lightning and snow, falling ever harder and denser, but all I can hear is the river and the birds singing ahead. I see a harbor by the shore of the ocean, and a boat: a great galley. There are people on it.

A stone road runs from the hill to the harbor. I leave my hat on the ground by the tree and run. With every stride my body turns lighter, and in no time I pass the hill. To my right is a river, and hundreds of stags and does, drinking its waters. On my left a plain grows until, far off, rise great mountains. Near me, a mighty black stallion heads a harass of white horses. They notice me, and the stallion rears up, while the others neigh. I stop and kneel; I do not know why. It is suddenly warm. I throw off my coat and run again. At last, I reach the harbor and notice that the people on the boat are standing. "Come," they say, "Join us."



They have familiar faces. A man is standing on the bow. A stern tenderness in his august stare pierces me: I know his face. “Son,” he says, signaling me to come and join him. “Father?” I cry out, in awe. “How can this be? We lost you four yea—”

He interrupts me, “You will understand all, very soon. Come,” he calls, smiling.

I recognize some of the other faces on the boat: my mother, my grandfather and my daughter are all on board— they, too, are calling me. I smile, still confused but, nevertheless, I take a step towards them. Presently the air is filled with an aroma. “What is that smell?” I ask my father. He holds his arm out and gestures for me to join him. I turn and look for the source; I keep turning. I’m spinning in circles, until I realize that the galley has sailed. She’s far away in the distance now. Suddenly everything fades to black.

I open my eyes. All has changed: I’m lying in a strange bed. The clashing waves are no more — the grounds now are white tiles. The smell of the pastures, and of the sea, is replaced with that of chemicals: a clean smell. My clothing, too, is not the same. I’m fitted in an odd white gown. A woman is beside me. I know her. “John!” she cries, as I look at her, in silence and wonder. “My dear, oh good Lord! We thought we’d lost you,” she says. She’s out of herself with joy. But I still sense that smell, and I ask her what it is. “Smell?” she repeats, trying to understand, “Smell?—Oh. I’ve just poured myself a cup of coffee.”

I make to stand but some small tubes in my left arm tie me to an odd machine. “Coffee?” I ask. “Yes, coffee, John,” the woman says, laughing, “*COFFEE!*” I exult, remembering, “Mary? Oh Mary!” “Yes, John. I am here,” she says,

“I was alone, in that storm, but I reached the tree. I did.” I say, laughing. “Oh Mary. Alone! I’m not alone.”

She looks on me through tears. I know now she is my wife. Suddenly a weariness knocks me back on the bed. Mary’s lips are moving but I can’t hear her. My vision is fading. All I hear are waves, and oars beating the ocean surface like ten thousand hammers striking one, great anvil. I close my eyes. All turns black— No. Not black. I am rowing, in a galley. But she is not on water; we are rising, from the ocean, into the clouds.

# Vestido Azul

## Stephen Wong '21

I once knew a pretty girl who wore a blue dress. It seems so cliché, but even when I first laid eyes on this girl, I knew that I was in love. She was the match that allowed the fireworks in my heart to explode and she was the one that made my stomach feel as if butterflies were stirring about. She used to look at around, and across the way. Sometimes her eyes would fixate on mine for only second, and for that second I was truly in awe. Those moments were amazing. She was my queen and I felt so honored in her presence.

I still remember her first day. She caught my attention because of the bright blue dress she was wearing. *Who was she?* I silently thought to myself. I wanted to know her and I could tell she was looking for people based on the expression of her face as she entered the room. It was very similar to mine on my first day, awkward, because I could tell she didn't know many people and she wandered around the cafeteria to find that *first* table to sit at. I thought to myself about beckoning her to my table, but then I shut myself down and decided to watch her make her move. Nevertheless, she found herself a seat and little would I have known at that time, that many of those girls would become her greatest of friends.

Later that day, we actually interacted for the very first time. It was social studies, second period and in choosing our seats, she chose the one next to mine. I turned to my left and tried to introduce myself, but quickly turned back because I got nervous. I felt so panicky about her response. Would she say, "Hi, hello, hey, my name is so and so," or would she just look away?

I decided I would ask her, but another time. Soon enough, another time became weeks and even past then, weeks became months. Occasionally I would see her walking down the halls and I was always plotting how to make the best approach. I almost felt like a hitman planning out his mission and trying to successfully reach his target. She really took my breath away, so it was hard for me to show my voice for her. Her beauty shielded my mind and my mouth could not stop fighting with it over the right words to say. My brain was jumbled about how it could even be possible to place the thousands of adjectives I could use to describe her, into figurative structures to express the ways she always brightened up my day. Instead I decided to play the silent card and remain quiet. Even though I was an introvert, every now and again, I would try to adorn her with soft smiles as I walked by, treating them like precious benchmarks that would eventually lead to a milestone.

I never reached my milestone. I mean, I actually tried to play my game with the deck that God gave me. I must have had a full house one day because I suddenly absorbed the audacity and courage to sit down in front of her at lunch. It was just us at the table, none of her friends by her side, and the expression on her face looked so surprised. Still, she kept me silent as she waited for my opening. I quickly realized that I may not have had the words to talk to her, so I took out my notebook and began to write about what I saw. I looked up and down while there



was confusion on her face, I wanted to impress her so I took my time and let my thoughts flow:

*Psst! Psst! The first sparks run along the start of the wire. Or is it a rope?  
Whether it be rope or it be wire,  
It still runs to my wooden base.*

*For in which,  
The sparks continue to trail. Faster and faster.  
More and more upon each second. Now they're seconds from end, Where torch meets mineral,  
And expression meets beginning. Crack! Fwooom!  
Off I go.*

*Far throughout the clouds above,  
Along with doppelgängers at my sides.  
We begin to feel a slight drop,  
In which we burst.  
BOOM! Color.  
Or just droplets of our sparkling beauty.  
The most extravagant colors beyond any human's mind, But there all for you,  
And nobody else.  
However, You don't see them.  
Instead, Only I feel can them,  
They explode and burst within my chest,  
While my heart and mind begin to soften up.  
For I have been standing at my side.  
And you have simply walked right by...*

I looked up one final time and her reaction caught my attention. The girl in the blue dress was blushing as if roses were steaming from her pale cheeks. I knew I caught her off guard, but she looked at me with a mix of flatter and embarrassment. Then she said "Thank you," as pleasant smile grew across her face. She got up and left the table, taking my poem with her. However, it was actually the first and last time that I met her. Years have gone by and it's been quite a while now, so of course I feel the cutoff. I used to feel like a desert with lots of rain-fall, but then there was a drought. We both moved on, changing schools meant going down our own paths. Parting ways is hard, especially when you know you had that one chance and

now its all gone. We only one coin and you don't get a replay, because thats what life is and this is your single play.

Sometimes I do wonder, if angels were sent by God above, to bring her down from the Heaven that lies beyond our skies. I mean, she practically was an angel herself. I haven't seen my angel in the blue dress as often as I used to. My *vestido azul*, blue dress, has become much like an unfamiliar tune because she remains a memory that fades. But more, oh very much more would I give, to just simply snap my fingers, go back to see her, and do it all over again.



# Whirlwinds and Wildflowers

Mark Kolotylo '22

Asam stood eyes level to his palms. Arms filled with cherries, carrots and an assortment of berries, he stood attentive arms raised as he fed the food to a ravenous basket at the fringe of his aunt's garden. The weather was cool yet sweat dampened his trying face, from keeping a constant pace he labored along the sunrise all the way till the sun died. Intertwined with monotony he harvested, from the golden grasp of nature's grounded hands, to the vine slats made from her flailing braids. He collected fruit of every trade and soon the basket became a casket for the initial fruits beginning to rot away. So long this cycle stayed all simply on the fringe of this elongated garden shade. The garden more closely resembled a field as its expansiveness drew further than any artist's eye could wield. Painted in its beautiful mirage were well watered daffodils, roses, cabbages and cherry trees along with every other type of breed. The plants stood orderly swooning in an ever present airy breeze that would only slightly ruffle the dewed leaves. Asam of course paid this no mind, he had ridden this wheel a million times, the serenity of the scene now only sparked his mulling annoyance. He had worked night and day for what felt to be eternity. The fruit juices stung bitterly in his raw hands he'd received from peeling off the stubborn seeds, unwilling to share the destiny which they and himself would soon precede. Asam felt boredom creep with every trek he took, he was bound to only reach and harvest from the small patch of the garden and was never permitted to leave or reach past it. Every day the plants regrew their harvest creating a cycle that became a constant bothering. What bothered Asam the most was that the fruits he teared were never shared, they simply would rot in piles beneath the sweltering heat. And disappear when the moon rose overhead, irradiating the piles of slush till they were no more than mere dust. Asam scowled as a bunch of grapes scraped off of his hands, he was tired and frustrated, no longer caring about the rules his aunt had set for him. Who was his aunt to tell him what to do anyways? Asam bitterly thought, he barely knew his aunt Lucy, a middle aged woman who seldom spoke to him. A woman who had picked him up after the incident in his old home and left him to his own devices on most occasions. With rebellion pressing against his typically cobwebbed mind, Asam began to scheme of a way to find an ailment to the boredom which by now had seeped to the deepest reaches of his soul. After a few more moments of disarray, Asam felt a liberation from his pain as he decided on a plan of action. He would travel outside of the parameters of the small plot of garden he was allowed in, perhaps there he would find something to quench his weariness. Asam set off, rejuvenated by the prospect of turning a new leaf as he freely barged forward, brushing aside all that stood in his path. Soon he reached the climax of his journey. A rosy picket fence with a maroon shade, its height was minute, perhaps only a foot or two with a plethora of more plants on the other side. The plants here strangely however stood unwavering as if unaffected by the breeze which reverberated between the patches of plants and trees. On the other side of the fence stood an unmoving sentient array of plants more beautiful than the ones Asam had tended to. These plants appeared dry yet still healthy. Red spider lilies lie interwebbed within swaths of chrysanthemums

and marigolds. Further beyond stood towering flowers of a different kind, one Asam had never seen before. With his curiosity and interest peaked he quickly vaulted over the poky fence. At first all continued to appear still, still it was, yet slowly and methodically a slight lulling sound began to emanate from beyond, soft piano keys with a symphonic flare. Foreign sounds to Asam who knew little of such sounds. His old life had been drenched in silence and his new life was still just as quiet. It was no surprise that Asam immediately ran forward attempting to decipher and locate the strange foreign sound. Soon he found himself moving through dry desert like shrubs that seemed sprung to set a fire at the slightest inclination of heat. Asam began to sweat profusely as the soil now beneath him began to sting with a heat. The soil itself appeared darker at this point as well Asam had noticed. Whether it was the shade of the canopying trees overhead or the actual pigment of the soil he was not sure. The noise felt near deafening as Asam finally uncovered its source. Emerging from a series of trumpet flowers an angelic score was set. Heavy jazz notes seemed to vibrate within the air and float right beneath Asam's ears. The sound was overbearing yet addicting. Soon Asam saw himself being pulled into the aura of the trumpet flowers. Their melodic tunes teasing and tempting his mind to reach out and hold on to them.

A hissing rattle began to play as more instruments joined the symphonic play. Eventually the botanical siren's curse worked on Asam and with both arms stretched he grasped the angel's trumpets with such fervor that the stems split, shattering off of the glassy complexion of the plant. As soon as the plant fully severed a deafening silence encompassed Asam once more. His eyes widened as he felt his heartbeat bump dangerously fast, with knees growing slack, Asam collapsed and began to retch. An overwhelming fragrant rosy scent emanated from his breath. Panic settled in as his knees, feet and fingertips were once more reminded of the heat. Screeching in pain he sprang upwards and began to blindly sprint forward in an effort to escape the steaming iron binds he had jumped into. Though every path he took resounded in the same surrounding scenery, an infinite loop of misery and cloudiness at every nook and corner. Asam began to tear as he continuously tore through sheets of loose leaf hands shaking as he attempted to extract a way to leave. Heaving he continuously ran till the burning turned into a numbing pain in his hands. Asam ran till he was no longer able too, tearing a branch from a tree he staggered on one knee with the branch as his cane. With one resounding thud he began to fully fall. His entire core burned fingertips dripped in ash to cede his burial urn. Asam's eyes began to close until he could see no more besides a blurred upturned world. The thud of his sleeve slowly began to cease until suddenly, a lone stifled breeze eased by his feet. With renowned speed Asam rose and ran towards where his feet had lie, hopeful that he had found the cooler dewed leaves and trees which he had so listlessly resided. He began to feel his feet cool as the ground became cooler, his hair no longer stung and instead swung free in the re-



turning ever present breeze. In his elongated strides he had surely passed the fence and continued forward past the bramble searching for some fruits to enjoy. He smelt a stronger scent, reminiscent of the fruits he had relentlessly bent and broke his back for. Yet now for those same fruits he ran fast for. Eager to receive the praise of the sweet yet familiar taste. Arms stretched and raised to the level of his face he chased and leaped as he sensed a clearing from right beneath him. He leaped with such joy that his entire

being seemed to float in harmony, unlocked from the keys that had threatened to keep him from free. Leaping wholeheartedly he sprinted and gave the jump all that he could give. Just to jump past the bushes and find himself tumbling down a sheer cliff. Asam fell further than any person could live, rending his texts and his neck stiff. Such is the margin of which sound and silence skip.

# Wii Remember

Tomas V. Lignore '21

I remember the first time I truly felt nostalgic like it was yesterday. It might also help that the first time I truly felt nostalgic was yesterday. Upon sifting through my bedroom closet where I keep my childhood things, I found many old toys I used to have on shelves in my room. Among them was my old Nintendo Wii, and a copy of Nintendo's 2009 remake of *Punch-Out*. I stared at the cover of the game, and upon cracking open the plastic coffin that held the disc inside, I felt the nine year old inside me come back to life. Something about watching the 5'7, 104-pound Bronx Bruiser shadowbox in the opening cutscene again brought tears to my eyes. I began to remember all the times I shadowboxed next to him, and with one screen shattering punch that revealed the title screen, I felt my composure shatter and my nine year old self embrace me for letting him out one last time.

You should have seen me, sitting at the edge of my baseball-themed bed, tears in my eyes, with a WiiMote and nunchuck in my hands. I knew I shouldn't be getting so worked up over a decade-old video game, yet I couldn't stop myself from crying. Amid one of the most jarring transition points in my life, where my entire world has become about taking on new responsibilities and growing up, I finally was able to grab onto a physical piece of my childhood, to look back at the simpler times when all that mattered was beating Mr. Sandman for the World Circuit Championship.

I couldn't remember the controls, but it wasn't long before they came back to me, alongside several other memories of good days where knocking out Glass Joe was the funniest thing. That night, I went through the entire Minor Circuit without breaking a sweat. It was just as easy as I remembered. I even remembered all the one punch, instant knockdowns and knock-outs.

All the tips and tricks were still there, somewhere in the back of my head this whole time; information I'll probably never need ever again, or so I thought. I remembered how easy it was being a nine year old kid, no pressing responsibilities. Back then, I was living in the Minor Circuit. Back then, I had all the tips and tricks.

When I arrived at the Major Circuit, things became a little more difficult. The fighters became smarter, faster, stronger. The opportunities for counter punches grew slim, and I began to get knocked down. I remembered how unfair it was that The Great Tiger could teleport and disappear into thin air. I remembered all the fits I threw every time I lost to him as a kid. It began to dawn on me that even though those simpler times seem so great now, even back then there were struggles I dealt with, struggles I overcame through trial and error. After toppling Don Flamenco for the Major Circuit Championship, I was back at the World Circuit.

There I was once again facing the toughest competitors Little Mac would face. In one night, I was back to where months of trial and error got me to when I was nine. As a kid, these fights were almost impossible, but that night, I was going to do what nine year old me would have thought to be impossible. I was going to beat *Punch-Out* in one night. But I didn't. That night, I didn't get to Mr. Sandman again.

It got late, and I had to bury my nine year old self again, and as much as I didn't want to see him go, playing *Punch-Out* with him reminded me of all the struggles I had faced up until that point. He reminded me that if I could beat Mr. Sandman at nine years old, than with enough trial and error, I could beat the Mr. Sandmen that loom in my way today. I could take on all the new responsibilities in my path. He reminded me I can do the impossible. As I shut off the Wii and the room fell silent, I was met with tears once again. If that night taught me anything, it is

that it is ok to let the nine year old inside of you out to play once in a while, so long as you can let him rest again.



# The Wood

Joe Alitieri '22

Lo! Before a wood I stood alone,  
And gazed upon a mighty stone  
That on the barren ground lay prone,  
On the ashen Earth that fiery-shone.

I closed my eyes,

Thoughts bewildering came running,  
Of water streams on hard rocks crushing,  
Of fields of green, greener growing  
And flowers white on tall trees glowing.

Then, I looked

And I saw death and lifeless trees,  
Fallen on ground, left on their knees  
Lone to die deaths of unease,  
In fading lands now prived of breeze.

‘Thy Earth, O Lord, hath we made dry!  
And I do know mine death draws nigh,  
But tell me, Lord, from thy throne high  
For child of men thou draw a sigh.’

I closed my eyes, my body broke.

I was in death, but saw Life sheer,  
Saw grasses green and waters dear,  
I knew I was in utmost cheer,  
Past death in lands that know no fear.

# The Soldiers

Joe Alitieri '22

Oh, we left with the pride of youth,  
And the ignorance. We left for green  
And mount, for stream and sea,  
For cloud and air of Mothercountry.  
In the ordered columns of the company,  
We marched to chaos. We ate and drank,  
And laughed whilst in our borders,  
But dread and silence one day fell upon us.  
Through lifeless deserts we have sped  
And for the Mother we have shed.  
Yet not on grass or mount we bled,  
But in the dirt: there, lay our deathbed.  
We left with the cries and laughs of youth,  
And heard the cries of war: no laughs,  
But yells of dying men. What for?  
For we have seen our brethren dead,  
Lie beside us, eyes empty, their youth spent,  
Their bodies pierced and desecrated,  
Longing home's air—nding the last breath.  
Who, now, shall bear our memory,  
But the two woods of our crosses,  
Who, thousand next to thousand,



Stand alone?

For the metals in our medals rust;

In the fields our bones are borne to dust.

Who, now, shall bear our memory?

# There's an Oak in my City

Joe Alitieri '22

There's an oak here in my city,  
In the middle of the park.  
Not the tallest, not the greenest,  
But it's my city's pulsing heart.

The grounds around are covered  
With its leaves—the rest of ages past:  
Already tall and stout it stood,  
When our fathers fought in trenches.

Still the mighty oak stands even now,  
As the strangers on the benches  
Look about the city that they love—  
Looking 'round but not above.

Long may this oak stand, long may  
This oak grow green, long may it  
Hold fast on the earth. But if it fades  
Unnoticed, if it dies not tended for,

So will my city wane,  
without its Green and vivid core.



# The Compass

Joe Alitieri '22

What can an iron horse tell me,  
As I look with leaking eyes  
Out my window at the winter's  
Storm, roaring, running hoarse?  
Yes, he shifts with gallant gallop—  
Ever turning, mighty stallion.  
Yes, he sees what comes to pass,  
But cannot find his lost harass.  
What can the iron horse tell me?  
That the winds of the World, crushing,  
Have swirled, and he, their slave,  
Has carried their word; that he,  
Their slave, always has turned, even  
Now turns, ever will turn.

# Fish Bone

ShanXu (Neil) Li '21

Humans are hedgehogs. I came to this queer but sincere conclusion after spending a whole night watching my favorite TV show, Animal's World.

The story began four months ago. The day was January 24th, 2020, another day of coastal Connecticut's mild winter, and the second day after the lockdown of China's second-largest city, Wuhan.

A few hours ago, a girl from China was found having coughing and fever at the Yale MUN Conference and was immediately sent to the hospital for a COVID test. As my host father, XXX was informed of it and started to yell at me: "Hey, Neil, from now on, clean every surface you have touched, and if you want to cough or sneeze, cover it with your arm or stay away from us!"

Besides pure astonishment, I felt like becoming a suspect, a potential virus carrier, threatening other people's lives.

A few days later, I started to understand what was happening to me—the distance that was kept purposely between my host family and me at the dinner table; the bizarre looks on their faces when I drank with their glasses; the sanitizer in the car that had never been there before. Even though my life came back to normal when that girl was tested negative, a harsh question kept torturing me—why were they afraid of me? The question was like a fishbone stabbing in my throat.

Eventually, the fishbone dropped out painfully when I went back to China.

After being tested negative and quarantined for 14 days, I was set free and hunger for human contacts. So, I called my beloved uncle and aunt to visit me. Everything looked so normal until something went wrong. As I was enthusiastically sharing with them my experiences in the U.S., they were also "enthusiastically" leaning back and trying to move to the far side of the sofa, even though they knew I was "clean".

This time, it was even more hurtful since they are my real family. But surprisingly, I felt the fishbone in my throat disappeared. After a sleepless night of watching Animal's World, I started to have that queer but sincere thought—Humans are hedgehogs.

At least it is true at some point in human history. Hedgehogs erect their thorns when what they think is dangerous comes close. Humans don't have thorns, so they invented chainmail, musket, and missile to protect themselves. Like hedgehogs, humans react to their fears, which means they do harms to innocent targets even if they just seem dangerous. So, hedgehogs hurt the noses of curious dogs, and humans start wars.

I started to understand that in whatever names my relatives and host family reacted to me in that way, they did it out of fears—fear towards my unknown health status, fear towards the virus' unexpected appearance in their life, or fear towards the inaccuracy of nucleic acid amplification testing. Fear is the mechanism within animals' nature to protect individuals from danger, but it doesn't necessarily contribute to a better society. It can be translated into different forms by different scenarios—racism, sexism, xenophobia—and humans have long sered

suffered from the damages they brought.

But humans also possess something that hedgehogs lack—we tried and managed to transcend our fears. This is the very reason those supranational organizations were established since the world wars, and the reason that I, as well as many other high school students, continued to attend MUN conferences, tirelessly made motions and debated over a win-win resolution. With man-made frameworks of communication, we tried to build trust to overcome fears and make unexpected future expectable.

Today, I still encounter misunderstandings and unfair treatments and delegates keep arguing at MUN conferences, but I never give up trying to understand others or paying empathy because, I know, it is when we try to overcome the fears within us that humanity shines.

# Open Ocean

William Gualtiere '21

Gentle waves rock against wood, splattering and crashing with thunderous noise. I hadn't heard anything so powerful, and I just remember the fear I felt. It was a deep and primal fear. There was no hope, no savior, just myself and the waves. The days had already begun to blur together that night the storm came. The strong sounds of wind, and the increasing strength of the waves hitting against the side of my ruined sailboat filled my head with a cacophony of desperation. In that moment, I lost all hope. I gave up. The cold salt of the sea spraying in my face pushed me further and further into the deepest grief, I've ever felt. The rain began overhead, doing nothing but pushing me deeper into my mental instability. I continued to do my best to steer, but this was nothing but futile. As the waves continued to rock my boat in whatever direction they saw fit. I sat there at the wheel for a second, observing my environment.

The ship deck, the wood I had polished days before, was scratched and doused in layers of sea water and salt. The tattered canvas of the sails billowed in the wind like flags of some forgotten army, doomed to defeat. Even my own hands were calloused and cut from the struggle of manning the ship through unfamiliar terrain. The ship and I weren't so different. We were both worse for wear, and braving the same chaos. I fell back into the tattered leather seat and felt the cold splattering droplets hitting my face. My weary eyes closed and a wave of black, peace rushed over me. The last thing I remember hearing was the deep rush of warmth that comes with sleep.

I could've been out for hours, days, I don't know. I woke to warmth enveloping my tired body. Everything was pure pain as I woke up. I strangely laughed, almost giving into the insanity that would take me if I was in solitude for much longer. It was low and guttural going on for a few seconds, before I quickly snapped myself out I walked below deck and did daily tasks of monitoring damages and food supply. I had maybe two days left. I laughed again. It was strange, I knew there was nothing funny about the situation I was in, but if nothing else the laughter was a burst of emotion thrusting itself forward and expelling in a pained cackle. I ignored it and moved back to my tasks. I was lucky that day, no rain, calm waves, but the pain and loneliness, still made the day's tasks feel eternal. The laughing happened a few times before the day ended, growing more and more frequent in between each spout. It was almost a gut reaction by the time night set in. I ate some tasteless jerky, crudely salted the second day of my isolation. It felt as if I was eating leather, it didn't help my mood. I laughed again, longer this time. There was no way of helping myself, I just let it happen.

As night fell again, I didn't fall asleep easily or out of exhaustion like I had previously, rather my mind drifted. I felt all the pain, the isolation, the fear, the chaos of my situation build and expel

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once again in my laughter. The stars were bright and beautiful creating a tapestry above. I would've loved gazing at them, losing myself in them at a normal time, but this was no normal situation. It just made my sorrow and yearning for saving build. I missed the normalcy of land, of my job, my family. It was all arbitrary back then, but now it seemed like paradise, just out of my reach, surrounded by the challenge of a horizon of open ocean. I was absorbed by my grief, continuing deep into the night until finally the exhaustion took over. I knew that was it. I heard myself continue to laugh before it died down, falling into the background cacophony of sea around me, my life absorbed in the ocean, the wind howling overhead and, finally, peace.

# Home on the Mountain

Matthew Ionescu '21

It was cold, very cold. As we approached the top of the Heaven Gate chairlift at Lincoln Peak the thermometer read nine degrees below zero. Getting off the chair my pants froze. I asked myself, "Is this worth it?" At the top of the lift was a man who had been skiing for over 55 years, John Egan. Once he saw the entire group arrive he made a motion to follow him, and raced down the nearly 40 degree pitch of the "Paradise" trail. Although everyone on the Fairfield Prep Ski team was nearly 45 years younger than him, Egan was the first to arrive at the bottom. The trail had thin cover, exposed grass, mini cliffs, and ice, oh the ice, it was covered with ice bumps. Despite the terrain the 65 year old Egan flew down the hill at nearly 55 miles per hour. It was like watching art in motion. When I finally arrived at the bottom, the first thing I noticed was the massive grin on his face, followed closely by his snow covered grey beard.

John Egan is an extreme skier who lives in Moretown Vermont. He has made ski movies and has skied everywhere across the globe: from the Grand Tetons in Wyoming to Alaska, to even Antarctica. John Egan's career is a story about happiness, and home. When a person has the ability to travel the world to play a sport that they love, they find new places. Every major skier who grew up on the east coast for instance, moves to the west coast. John Egan is the exception.

Egan and his brother Dan grew up in a suburb of Boston, and by no means was his family a "skiing family." They would take bus trips up north occasionally, and that is where the two brothers found their life long passion. After high school John Egan moved up to Sugarbush, and has stayed there since. After living in the Vermont green mountains for nearly 40 years, Egan knows every aspect of them, every twist in the fall line, every tree line, and backcountry access. Now in his sixties Egan still lives with his wife in Moretown Vermont, and shows no signs of slowing down. He describes Vermont as his "training ground" where he can "paddle board" with his wife in the summer, and ski with his kids in the winter.

When I asked why he never moved out west, he replied the same way he replied to everyone before me "this is my home." Egan has traveled all around the globe, and yet he still comes back to a small town in northern Vermont. He calls Vermont home, so then what is the meaning of home?

The Latin root for home is actually the same root used for humans. Rather than looking at the term literally, as a building, it must be looked at metaphorically. Home is more than just a place, it is the center of trust, of family, and friends; it is where a person goes after a long and tiring day to be comforted in a caring setting. Home is more than just buying a house with the biggest price tag, or most square footage, it is about enjoying what already exists and the bonds created. Egan says his house is the Northern Vermont mountain range, the Mad River Valley. The Mountains' demand a great deal of respect; every year people die in the east coast backcountry from avalanches, slides, and cliffs. Egan describes a need for a familial type outdoors: respecting its power. caring for it when it cannot. and ultimately enjoying it togeth-

relationship with the outdoors: respecting its power, caring for it when it cannot, and ultimately enjoying it together. He often told stories about hiking up the backcountry terrain, just him and a few friends where they were probably the only people in the area for miles. John Egan's love for his home stems from his connection to his friends, family, and the mountains.

I will always remember skiing with John Egan at Sugarbush resort. From the way he carried himself, to the way he would create long free arcs in the snow, Egan is the embodiment of finding joy. John Egan is proof that happiness is created by finding a place to grow friendships and family not only with people, but with the environment surrounding them.

# The Process

## Matthew Ionescu '21

Several years ago, an indelible Fairfield Prep tradition began: the Film Club President made the first official “Hockey Hype” game day trailer. Since then, the annual production has been destined to reach 10,000 views. As a member of the club, I had made several school videos in the past for various teams, but I had always worked under the guidance of upper-classmen.

At the start of my junior year I became the Film Club President, and suddenly the pressure was on to film one of my school's most viewed, most prominent videos of the year. Doors to a hockey arena that had once incited thoughts of the building's incredible potential to inspire careers—whether as NHL players, Olympians, or, in my case, as a filmmaker—suddenly seemed to loom in front of me. Inside, cold air burned against my face, bleachers rose to the heavens on either side of me, and red and blue pierced my eyes as I unpacked my camera bag.

*Would my video live up to the ones prior?*

Twist and lock the Zoom lens... Set the ISO... Adjust the white balance... Preparing my camera for battle removed my focus from the fear and insecurity over what would be the Superbowl of my Film Club career.

I pressed record; the players took the ice. The roars from the student section echoed throughout the building, fueling the team and similarly fueling my focus. The players skated up and down the ice chasing the puck; I ran up and down the bleachers also on the hunt for the small rubber disc through the viewfinder. Every time the puck hit a stick, I hit record. The further Prep moved down the ice, the further my zoom reached. Prep took a shot, and as the red record light lit up in my camera, the red light lit up behind the goal. Prep scored, cheers erupted, and my camera's audio levels flashed seemingly in pain as sound blitzed my equipment and my own senses. Amidst the noise, the joy, the pain, and the uncertainty, I stood completely still, confidently in opposition to the chaos surrounding me.

*I knew what I was doing.*

**Filming is only half of the job; editing is the other.**

180 gigabytes of clips jammed my computer's home screen. The fan of my hard drive roared with the effort to keep up as I moved videos on a timeline, cursor dropping anywhere from an eighth of a second to 10 seconds worth of film into various locations within my Davinci Resolve editing program. At the center of it all, I was the conductor and the video my orchestra.

*I knew what I was doing.*

Place the music... Adjust the audio levels... Insert timing markers... Color grade the film... All of this done in an effort to press one button: export. I adjusted the final render settings, trimming down the original 180 gigabytes of 1080p film to nearly 10 gigabytes of 4K ProRes video.



*I knew what I was doing.*

When it was time to finally present, I was happy but admittedly nervous. More than 700 of my peers plus the whole faculty would all simultaneously watch after I made an introduction over the school's PA system. I had spent nearly a month of time on this project, and once again the feelings I faced when I originally walked into the arena crept back in. I liked my video, but when faced with the prospect that 10,000 other people could see it, I was suddenly uncertain.

But the video played to considerable praise. Then it was published online and reached a total of 11,859 views. It remains the highest viewed video I have ever made. Deep down I knew it was a good video, and I knew that people were going to enjoy it.

Uncertainty clouds judgement, and yet when I lean on what I know, that cloud disappears.

# Uncertainty

Jack Mullen '22

Am I going to be able to go to school?  
Am I going to be able to sit around a crowded lunch table?  
Or see all of my friends at school?

Am I going to get out of bed for my Zoom?  
Will I find the will to work out today?  
When will structure return to my life?

Will I be able play sports again in my lifetime?  
Or take a bus ride with my team late at night after a big win?  
Will I again come home exhausted after vigorous workouts?  
Is it possible to get a fair chance at recruitment?

Was my sophomore year my last game of football?  
Will I be able to attend football camps in misty mornings?  
Am I going to be able to run in the blistering August sun?

# Plenary

Tim Wong '23

I sit in my seat  
In a court of the elite  
Haunted by the voices of those who resist

Through the walls the cries persist

Suddenly the doors begin to shake  
As the windows begin break

As we're running through the hall

We hear the monuments fall  
A weapon is discharged  
A body falls with no regard

Right as we escape  
His plan begins to take shape

The king watches from his tower  
As he loses the threat to his power

A ruler with a false dynasty

Enjoying the force of the "free"

His power is not absolute  
But that does not stop his pursuit

As we're hiding from the horde

We all turn to the lord  
In the hopes that we may find

Some sort of peace of mind

A mere moment of hope  
In an effort to cope

Because our failure to prosecute  
Created judgment with no dispute  
Above they aimlessly destroy and wander  
We hide as I begin to ponder

What becomes of a land  
Who wants to be destroyed by it's own hand?



# A Secret Utopian World in America

Birong Zhang '22

On a quiet and peaceful summer morning in 2020, three high school students sailed along the Mississippi River in three small boats. At this time, a boy was caught in another river by a powerful wave, but his friends did not notice his disappearance. The boy drifted with the waves and couldn't remember how far he went. At this moment, he suddenly found a forest of flowers. There was no other tree in it. The boy was stunned by the sight in front of him and decided to continue following the river to explore where the river goes.

After about an hour, the boy found that the river had stopped in front of a small hill. There was a small cave in the hill. There seemed to be a faint gleam in the cave. The boy was curious about what was in it, so he went ashore, set the boat and walked into the cave. The entrance of the cave was very narrow and only one person could barely enter. After turning a corner, the boy suddenly found a huge village. The village was surrounded by mountains. The ground was very plain and the houses were neat and tidy. The boy saw people working in the farmland and they all wearing strange clothes and laughing with joy.

Suddenly, people saw the boy, they were surprised at the boy's arrival and quickly gathered around and said the native Indian language that the boy did not understand. All the natives looked friendly and they invited the boy to eat with them. During the lunch, they used many paintings to explain their origin to the boy. From the painting, the boy understood that they were originally a group in Louisiana area, but they were defeated in the war with another tribe and many people were killed. Their ancestors took advantage of the darkness and ran out of the encirclement and went down to the south along the river. They did not know how far they drifted and finally reached the place where they now live, and since then they have completely cut off

the contact with the outside world. The old tribal leaders asked the little boy how their enemy Indian tribes are now. They don't know the arrival of colonists, the westward movement and trail of tears have wiped out the ancient Indian tribes, they know nothing about the establishment of the United States and the World War. After that, the boy also drew the things down on a stone, according to the boy's painting, the villagers realized and sad for the loss of the Indians culture. Soon, the boy realized that this place could be a tourist attraction and took out his phone to record everything in this unknown world, but soon he discovered that his phone couldn't turn on at all. The boy lived in the village for a few days. Every villager invited him to eat at home and listened to him telling stories from the outside world. In the end, the boy said goodbye to them in order to prevent his mother from worrying about him. The village chief said to the boy, "Don't let people outside know that we live here."

The boy found his boat after leaving the cave and marked it all along the river. Eventually he was discovered by the rescue team on the Mississippi River. After the boy returned home, he

posted his experience on social media and attracted many people's attention. Many Famous explorers organized together and ask the boy to lead them to the secret village. The boy followed his mark all the way along the river, however, the boy never saw the village again.

Ideas comes from "The Peach Blossom Spring" by Tao YuanMing 421 CE

# Pearls of Ignorance

Mark Kolotylo '22

I wish beauty  
Blissed the beholder  
Gifts amiss and shift to boulders  
I wish sacrifice  
Didn't cost a life  
Soldiers battlecries with knives  
Lie destined to die for pearls  
When did it go awry?  
This dark world on it's brink  
Was it the war torn horns?  
Was it the stored ink that coat our newborns?

Thrown cone whirlwinds  
Have hurled man to the fringes  
Open doors floored with stone hinges  
From hued hanging apples of Avalon  
To the few dangling scaffolds we battle on  
When did our stains spawn?  
What started to divide us?  
Was it the golden stylist from a broken Midas?  
Was it the Rose's thorns?

Or Jehovah's storms?  
Perhaps it could be  
Beneath the stark apple tree?  
Were those lies resized and not purified?  
The gift of the present is wrapped in wrath

The reign's reins whip marks  
Have shifted to tattoos  
Stories of Draculs  
Have hidden larger stab wounds

Greed has succeeded

In teaching us, believing that we have too

Steal and rain on plains

Till the ground is limp with slain

From urban predecessors

Investing into private sectors

To past defectors who skewed with intent to sever

They have all dutifully

Dismembered our pride

I surmise that is why

We've decided to not to remember our past lives



# Revolution

Brayam Nunez '22

Look me in the eyes because I cannot say  
goodbye. This love is real. So cut  
my strings off like a marionette because  
You blow my mind like Marie Antoinette.  
And a revolution occurs in my heart and mind,  
when the revelation of the situation  
contrived up in my interpretation of this  
hallucination is suddenly more than a dream.  
There was no caveat for this deep affection and darling  
I hope that one day when I hold  
your hand there will be a ring.  
I want to grow old with you because I thought  
I was Icarus, instead I was falling in reverse.  
You are all I need because when I am with you  
it feels like I have grown wings.

# Sober

Brayam Nunez '22

Lilies wilted; roses burnt.

He asked for love and

she gave it, but

it was falsely true.

The windows shook, as his heart she took.

Memories created, words are formed.

The stars glistened in his eyes.

Oh how they shined.

She however was a sun, a star very close to him.

Saturn she was not.

Neptune she might be.

A hideous face disguised by a beautiful mask.

The sweet cake was crusted over, because he did not take his chance.

He was afraid it might be poisoned but instead

it caused him to be sullen. Now how

rotten it became. He surrounded himself in

flames of anguish to protect himself

for he was worried he could no longer stand it.

He tried to push her away to no avail.

She managed to make the flames die out and reveal the person under

the veil. She opened his heart and she knew exactly where to start.

He gave her purple, the last color of the rainbow. He said

their love will last. He did not know

how wrong he was until time started to pass.

She gave him false illusions that seemed too real.

Then she started to set aflame his heart like once before and he started to feel.

This time though, it was like Hades' soul

instead of winter snow. One forest remained

as the autumn leaves fell and it became November.

The trees sprouted into different branches.

He knew to stay away, now that he was older.

Yet, he was still drunk on her love,  
and I guess she became sober.

# Changing the Narrative

Matthew Flynn '21

Through power there is light, through light there is hope, and through hope there is opportunity. Opportunity is what enables us to shine bright. For twenty two year old Amanda Gorman, shining bright bestowed upon her the opportunity to change a nation. With the weight of a fight for unity and racial equality on her empowered shoulders, one poem at a time, Amanda Gorman has defied history and become a symbol of change in our country.

Growing up, Gorman was not viewed as the catalyst for change she has since become. She was described as a very introverted girl who suffered from both an auditory disorder and a speech impediment. To many of her peers, she was viewed as a bit odd. She couldn't speak like the other children, she couldn't listen quite the same way, and she grew up without the presence of a father. Her mother, a devoted teacher, worked countless hours everyday to support both Gorman and her sister. Gorman wasn't afforded the same opportunities other kids received—especially wealthy white kids. Gorman grew up at what she described as “the intersection of all Los Angeles communities” (Marin). She, a young black girl, was predisposed to a variety of different races as well as varying economic statuses. Yet, to this elementary aged girl, she felt like an “outsider”, that “didn't know what to identify with”.

As she progressed and grew more into herself, Gorman continued her mission to change the world. She longed for a world where she could eventually make something herself but it was always viewed as, a hill to climb. Since she was little Gorman dreamed of being President. She would stand tall and speak presidentially everywhere she went. She didn't just dream about being President, she has made it her mission to be the first female President little girls can look up to. Although she started on this path as a little girl, Gorman has no intention of stopping anytime soon. In our nation's history, there has never been a female President, and to childhood Amanda Gorman, there has never been a female holding a significantly high office. America made a huge step forward when Barack Obama was elected President. Obama, a black man himself, faced many challenges like Gorman. He was tested both racially and economically throughout his life but he was able to persevere. To Gorman, Barack Obama is a symbol of hope. To Gorman, he is inspirational.

Throughout the rich history of civilization, poetry has been known as one of the true beauties of the human language; it possesses the elegance of a rhyme scheme while conveying a message through intricate metaphors culminating in an extravagant art. Poetry is the connection between the mind, body and heart. We speak from our souls to love and empower one another. This strength and determination in poetry captivated Gorman and allowed her to become the first ever National Youth Poet Laureate. The award of Poet Laureate is as prestigious[ as they come. To Her, this was just the beginning. She is able to surround herself with names such as Conrad Aikan and Elizabeth Bishop. She had reached the pinnacle of her life...or so we thought.

Soon after achieving such a high honor, She enrolled at Harvard University and continued on her path to shattering glass ceilings placed above both African Americans and women.

She consistently wrote while in school and appeared nationally. While still a college student, Gorman wrote for Nike, spoke at the Library of Congress, and performed at the inauguration of the new Harvard President, Lawrence Bacow all the while preparing for exams. To achieve greatly one must work hard, and work hard she did. Writing poetry can take weeks but it all starts with a narrative. Gorman's narrative since she grew up was to change the world. She wrote about the inequality faced by both African Americans and women. She wrote to give others someone to follow. Women have been very prevalent in politics since their right to vote was added to the Constitution, but they have never held the highest ranking offices. We've seen Governors, Representatives, Senators, Speakers, and even Ambassadors, but we had never seen a woman, let alone an ethnically diverse woman, have anything near the Presidency. That is why Gorman vaulted at the opportunity to perform at the Presidential inauguration of Joseph R. Biden and Vice Presidential Inauguration of Kamala D. Harris. Biden and Harris have made it clear that their administration stands to make changes and reshape the outlook of our country. They've said we will be a unified nation that treats all citizens equally. To them, what better way to solidify this point than inviting a future world leader and current world changer, Amanda Gorman, to perform for the nation. The history of poetry at presidential inaugurations is very small. Only John F. Kennedy, Bill Clinton, Barack Obama, and now Joe Biden have asked poets to accompany them. Some of these poets include the great Robert Frost and Maya Angelou. As a young twenty-two year old poet, that is an impressive list to add your name to.

During a time of turmoil and strife, Amanda Gorman plead for our progression. Her poem entitled, "The Hill We Climb" allowed for not only a nation, but a world to rally behind the United States. Whether you are a Liberal or a Conservative, Democrat or Republican, Amanda Gorman's poem evoked a sense of unity and achievement within us. Gorman highlighted that she was the product of slaves and years of racial abuse, and now she stood and spoke at the most celebrated event in our democracy. She is only several generations removed from slaves and now she has the ability to dream of being President. She can fight for those who could not fight so many years ago, and she will continue to fight alongside those who are struggling to get what they deserve as spelled out in our Bill of Rights.

As a country, we are at a turning point "Where a skinny Black girl / descended from slaves and raised by a single mother / can dream of becoming president" (Gorman). We are unfinished and we aren't near the end yet, but Amanda Gorman has risen to the forefront and solidified herself as a beacon of hope, not only for African Americans and women, but for the country as a whole.



