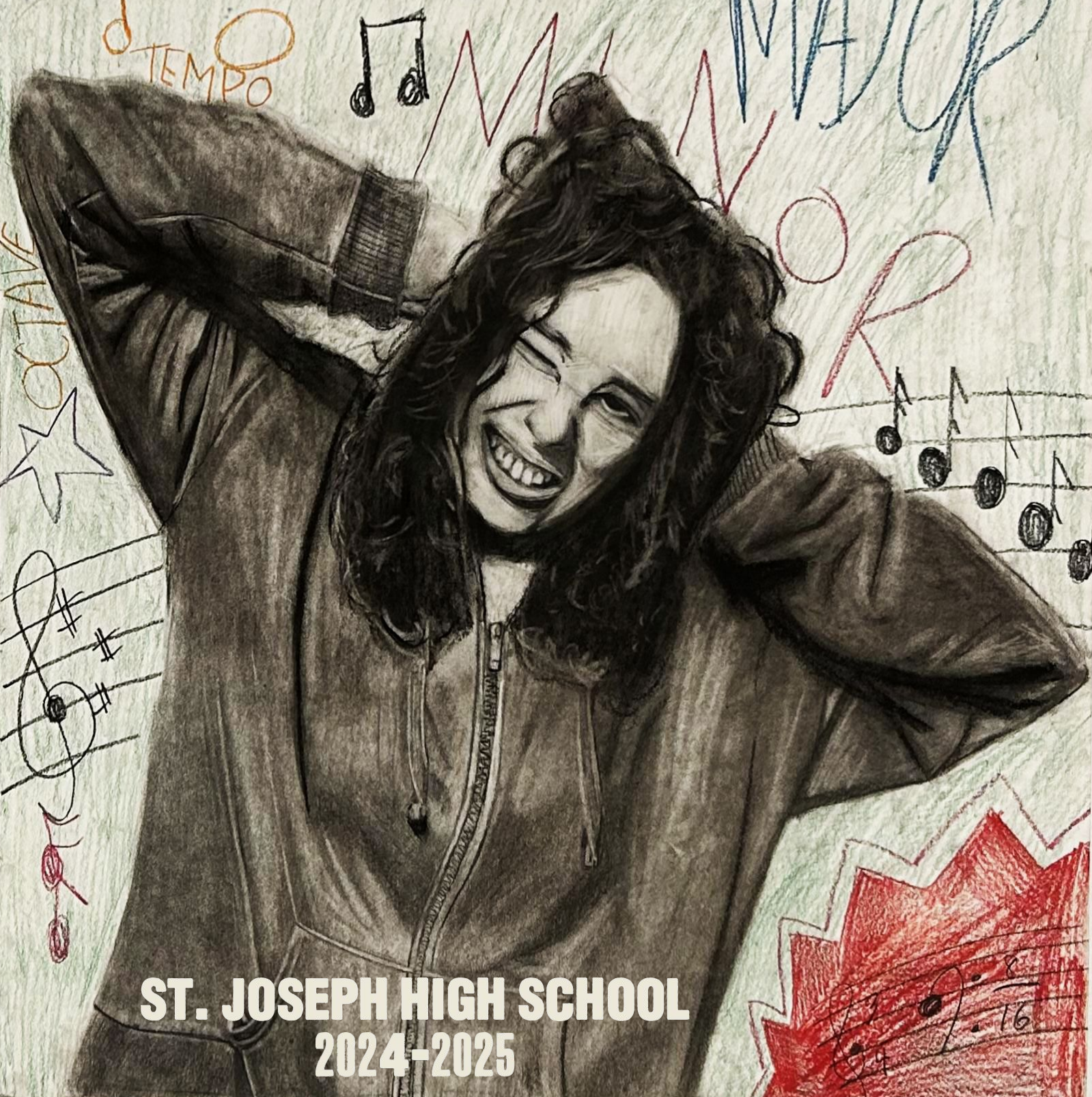


AMARANTH



ST. JOSEPH HIGH SCHOOL
2024-2025

Table of Contents

Cover: “Chaos” by Olivia Szczerba ’25	
Table of Contents	1-2
Dedication to Mrs. Russell’s Dad	3
Letter from Editor & Club President	4
Letter from Moderator-in-Chief	5
Contest Winners	6-7
Faculty Spotlight	8-9
Stifled Thoughts	10
“Ripples of Silence” - Sadie Plotkin ’25	11
“The Kindest Woman in the World” - Chicago Edouard ’28	12
“20 Steps To Say Goodbye” - Sebastian Martinez ’25	13-14
“Stuffed” - Aubree McAuliffe ’26	14
“Wordless Unsleep” - William Merwin ’25	15-16
“Sad Jester” - Ellen Romano ’25	15
“Speak” - Aubree McAuliffe ’26	16
“Who Else Cries When They Break Glass?” - Sophia Evers ’26	17
“Hidden Talent” - Asma Agha ’25	17
“Uninvited Words” - Maddy Paterna ’26	18
“Love” - Liz Arantes ’28	18
“Far Across The Stage” - Ava Pellegrino ’25	19
Nature’s Call	20
“Useless Nuisance” - Olivia Pason ’25	21
“Butterfly Sonnet” - Maddy DeRosa ’25	21
“Silent Peace on the Mountainside” - Kelli Ennis ’25	21
“Serengeti of Tanzania” - Edey Cumello ’28	22
“A Student’s Winter Dream” - Grace Glaser ’26	22
“Release” - Abigail Venech ’26	23
“Nature’s Mirror” - Asma Agha ’25	23
“A Bird Cannot be Coerced, but a Fish Can” - Sophia Evers ’26	24
“The Sunset Listens to What the Snow Cannot Say” - Kaitlyn Velsmid ’25	24
“Dog” - Aria Curi ’28	25
“World from the Microscopic Eye” - Grace Glaser ’26	25
“A Gift” - William Merwin ’25	26

Table of Contents

Unrequited Love	27
“Astronomy” - Anonymous ’27	28
“Denied” - Liz Arantes ’28	28
“Silent Distance” - Emma Fernandes’26	29
“Embers of Silence” -Anonymous	29
“Admirer” - Oliwia Szczerba ’25	29
“Unsent Message” - Anonymous	29
“The Song of 22” - Waliullah Khawaja ’25	30-35
“Silent Goodbye” - Asma Agha ’25	35
“Silent Truths” - Anonymous	36
“Art Block” - Liz Arantes ’28	37
Where Words Wander	38
“Come Sit With Me by the Willow Tree” - Sophia Evers ’26	39-40
“Whispers of Childhood” - Adriana Jauk ’27	40
“Untitled” - William Merwin ’25	41
“Stories in My Head” - Lucia DeArrese Martin ’25	41
“Escaping Reality” - Asma Agha ’25	41
“Introduction To The Bliss of Figure Skating” - Adalene Fallot ’26	42
“Introduction to the Complexities of Running” - Ava Procyk ’26	42
“Throw Your Phone Away” - Maximus Cartolano ’26	43
“First Strum of Confidence” - Olivia Szczerba ’25	43
“Roots of My Being” - Joseph Kustra ’25	44
“Friendship is the Tide” - Santiago Hidalgo ’27	45
“Second Frame” - Anonymous	

Dedication to Mr. Norman DeTullio

The Amaranth flower symbolizes “immortality, lasting love, and endurance.” Derived from the Greek word "amarantos,” it means "unfading" or "eternal". These flowers retain their color even when dried, further reinforcing their symbolic connotations: immortality, prosperity, resilience, commitment, and undying love.

Much like floriology and mythology, history coalesces with culture. This year’s annual publication is dedicated to the life, passion, and mentorship of Mr. DeTullio, a beloved St. Joseph English teacher and *Amaranth* Moderator-in-Chief. His memory and those he inspired continue to flower in our hearts and imaginations.



“Mock Orange” by Lori Conetta

Letter from Editor / Club President

In my first year at Amaranth, I tried writing an ambitious story based on the prompt of “Thrive.” I was struggling for inspiration, until I listened to a concept track called “Rebirth” by Chris Senn, I came up with the idea for the story, “A Sacrifice; A Gift.” The idea itself was very ambitious, having different writing styles in both halves, as to show the difference in narration. This, however, was not able to fit into the full version of the magazine, and so, against my desires, I chose to cut off the second half of the story. For years, I would continue to write stories for Amaranth, but as time went on, the second half of the story went unspoken.

I feel this is something that any writer can on some level relate to. Putting our soul into a work of art that will not see the light of day, for a number of reasons. I suppose that is one of the main reasons why we seek to collect our works into a magazine, in an effort to allow our words to be heard. That, I feel, is why the idea of “words unspoken” was chosen. Regardless of circumstance, we have had words unspoken before, and as such, we felt that we could express so much with those two simple words.

To Mrs. Martinez for publicity, the Administration for funding and supporting the publication, the English faculty, Ms. Pellegrini, Mrs. Conetta, and for everyone that has inspired us, and for everyone here that has been inspired,

Thank You.

- William Merwin

And with that, let's start this show.

Letter from Moderator-in-Chief

This year's edition of *Amaranth* invites its readers to explore the theme, "Words Unspoken." The student writers and artists courageously convey their true emotions via words or images.

During the 2024-25 school year, the St. Joseph High School *Amaranth* staff welcomed students to attend our Creative Collective events after school to enliven the seemingly ordinary as extraordinary. Given the platform to brainstorm ideas and eat together, fashioned a relaxed environment culminating in student works: poems, journals, crafts, mixed media, or sketches. Ultimately, all found unity in creating something new.

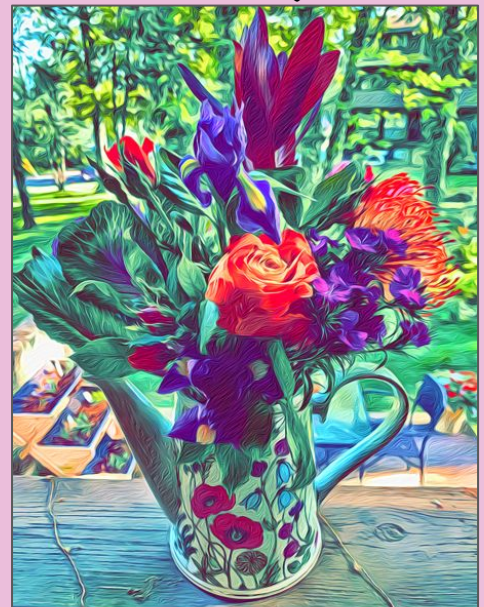
The *Amaranth* staff furthered its mission: Open the hearts and minds of the reader by infusing the design and selections with palpable care. This edition stands out as traditionally Gothic; yet, the works express these tenets in verdant forms.

The substantive submissions inspired the staff to curate this exceptional work by dividing the content into distinct sections. Therein, each piece in this publication shines. "Words Unspoken" illuminates not only the need to be seen but also challenges its audience to enter each portal-- reimagining one's concept of gravitas or gossamer.

Amaranth would not exist without the contributions from our SJ community. I would like to personally thank the *Amaranth* student editors & leaders +staff, administration, faculty, staff, and family who support our Cadets' creativity.

Lori Conetta, MAEd./CI
Amaranth Moderator-in-Chief
Student Academic Center Director
English Faculty
Drama Co-Director

"Amaranth Blooms" by Lori Conetta



Contest Winners

Literature: “Her, From Afar”

By Sadie Plotkin ‘25

There she is—
across the distance,
where the light catches her curls,
a wild halo around her head.
Her eyes, deep brown oceans, hold storms and secrets,
and I want to tell her—
You are beautiful,
a sunrise breaking through the gray.

She doesn’t know how loud she is,
a burst of life in a quiet world,
how her laughter shakes the walls,
how even her smallest kindness
is enough to pull someone
out of darkness.

I long to tell her—
You are strong.
Every stride, every scar,
etched from battles fought alone.
You’re a hurricane and a home,
and I am breathless in your orbit.

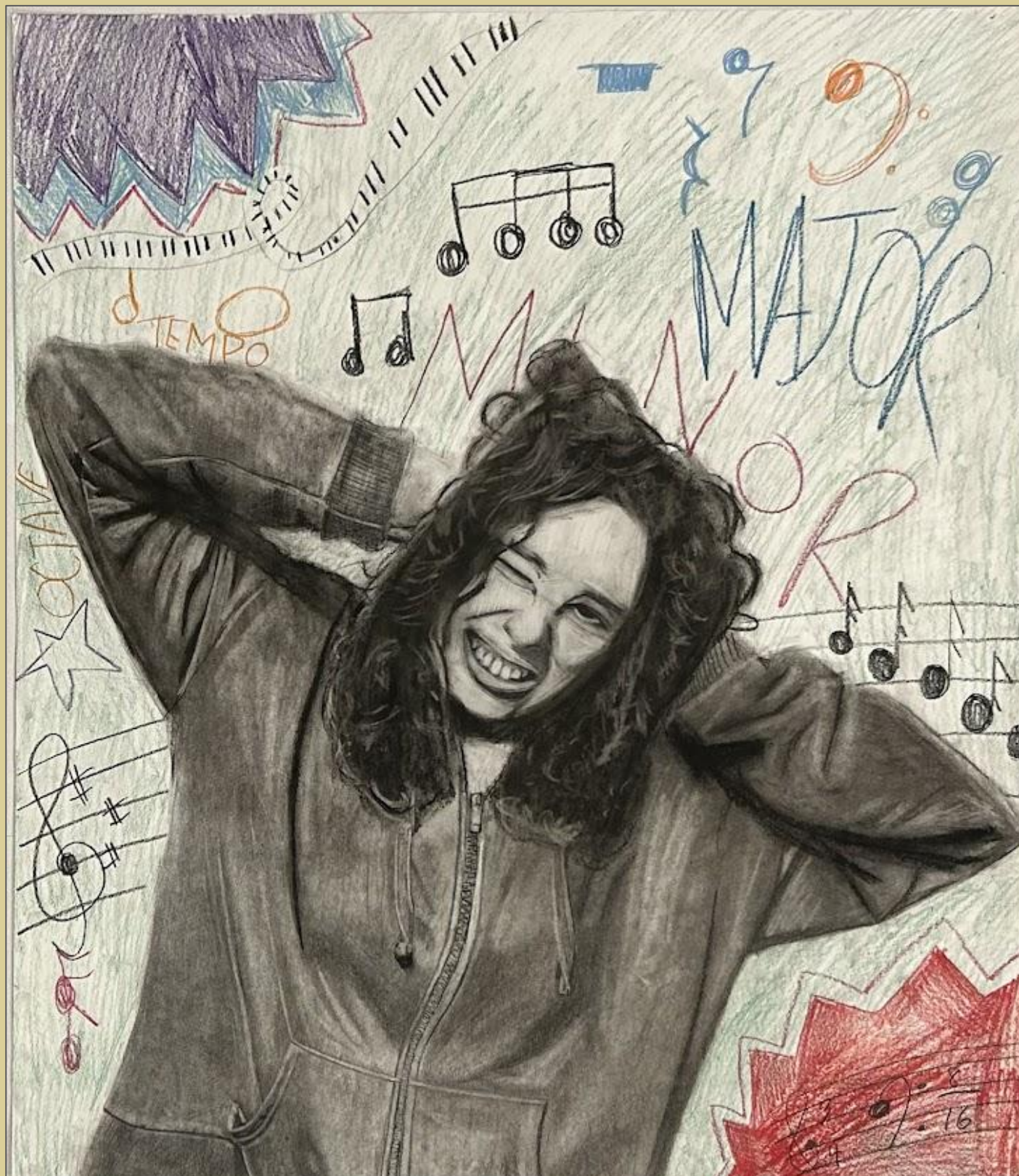
I see the marks on her skin,
proof of every battle,
Every fall she’s taken and risen from.
Yet she wears them
like armor no one can take from her—
A quiet, defiant crown.

I want to love her,
to step closer, to close the distance.
To finally say all the things
I’ve locked behind my own fear.

When I reach for her face—
the one I’ve feared to praise aloud—
my fingers meet glass.
She looks back at me,
eyes soft, aching for kindness.
And I realize—
the only person I was afraid
to love
was me.

Contest Winners

Art: "Chaos"
By Olivia Szczerba '25



Faculty Spotlight: Mrs. Carroll-Lewis

‘Leo,’ a painting



Faculty Spotlight: Mrs. Conetta

Mixed Media Original Photography



SECTION 1

STIFLED THOUGHTS

“Ripples of Silence” (Free-verse Poem)

Sadie Plotkin ‘25

I sit at the edge of the lake,
pole in hand, line slack,
waiting for fish that may never come.
The water is still,
a perfect mirror,
and then—
his reflection.

His eyes, once warm and steady,
now clouded with something lost.
A smile that once held the weight of love,
arms that gave the best bear hugs—
safe, unbreakable.
But beneath that love
was the man dementia stole piece by piece,
leaving a shell I didn’t want to see.

The man who taught me to fish
grew distant.
The man with the hearty laugh
started speaking to the TV,
his words slipping away
like fish through trembling fingers.
And none of us understood,
not until it was too late.

I jerk the pole,
sending ripples across the surface,
erasing him.

Because I’m angry.
Angry at what he left behind,
at the silence he carried for years.

The lies we didn’t know to question,
the distant stars,
the family breaking
before we even understood why.
He knew.
He knew something was wrong,
and he said nothing.
He suffered alone,
and we suffered in the dark.
The father I loved
slipped away in shadows.

I reel in my line,
gripping the pole so tightly
my knuckles turn white.
Anger is easier than sadness.
Easier than the ache
of missing him.

But beneath it all—
the words I never said.
The words I wish I’d spoken
when his heart still beat.
I love you, Papa.
I’m scared of losing you.
I wish I could’ve held you tighter,
just once more.

The water settles again,
his reflection returning.
This time, I don’t move the pole.
I just watch.

Because though the words remain
unspoken,
I hope somehow he knows
they were always there.

“The Kindest Woman in the World” (Personal Essay)

Chicago Edouard ‘28

People say the first thing one forgets about someone is his or her voice, but I still remember my great-grandmother's. My great-grandmother is my hero. She shaped my life, she was the greatest cook, and she was the balance in my family.

Although I never met my grandmother during her youth, I still know many of her amazing qualities. Sadly, she passed away in 2021. This was my first time experiencing death, so it shook me.

My grandma shaped many parts of my life. Her last words to me were to scrub my elbows and also to read my Bible. Those words motivate me to follow God. She also taught me to work hard. When my mom had to drive to New York to work, she would wake up early to bring us to our grandmother's apartment as she lived in New York. Although she was getting older, she would also wake up early to prepare food for us which would be done when we arrived. I remember taking walks to buy food and going to the park all the time in order to keep my sister and me entertained. She is one of my greatest role models.

Cooking was also one of my grandmother's best talents. To this day, nobody in my family has been able to make food as delicious as she could. She would always make the best mac and cheese and pancakes.

The last reason my grandma is my hero is that she was the balance in my family. Ever since her passing, our family has been distant. We would meet at her apartment every big holiday, and it was amazing. I still look at photos of my family and me before it became like this. Now, every holiday, I can not stop reminiscing about the old times I used to have.

My great-grandmother was a huge part of my life and will always be my hero. Her kindness, hard work, and love helped shape me into who I am today. Even though she is no longer here, the lessons she taught me will stay with me forever. I will always remember the special times we had together. My grandmother was the kindest woman in the world, and I am thankful for everything she did for me.

“20 Steps To Say Goodbye” (Personal Essay)

Sebastian Martinez ‘25

1. Recognize that you’re going to have to say goodbye. Nothing lasts forever, and you should realize this as soon as possible. Go through this process sooner or later, instead of waiting until the last minute. In addition, attempt to pinpoint one specific day that you will say goodbye. This can be an official goodbye, or a day that you decide.
2. Come to terms with what you’re leaving behind. The quicker you know who/what you’re saying goodbye to, the quicker you can leave it behind. And you’ll want to do it quick.
3. Have fun while it lasts. Take in your surroundings, whether you’re at a special event, or it’s just a regular day. You already recognized in Step #1 that you’ll have to say goodbye, so appreciate the time you have before that day comes. Most importantly, always remember to be happy. (A guide on how to be happy is not included.)
4. Know that saying goodbye is not going to be easy, but you’ll get through it. Saying goodbye isn’t an easy feat, but for someone as accomplished as you are, it’ll be possible. Easy, even.
5. Don’t tell anybody how you’re feeling. Chances are, they are going through a struggle much more harsh than yours, and they don’t need to hear your whining. You’re a smart, capable person. You can get through it yourself.
6. As the day gets closer, you’ll find it easier to appreciate the moments you have left. If you have a tendency to procrastinate, then you’ll likely feel all your emotions in these last few weeks, days, or even hours. No matter how long it is, take time to process that you will have to leave. You will have to say goodbye.
7. Build a support system. If possible, stay away from the thing you’re leaving for some time. See how it would feel after you’ve said goodbye. The stronger you make your support system, and the more you distance yourself beforehand, the easier it will be to say goodbye. This is a good thing: this is a guide on how to say goodbye with the least amount of pain, after all.
8. Remember the good times. Relish in the memories. Think of it as one last moment of weakness, before you go. Remember everything, and maybe cry a little, or smile, you’ll feel happy/sad, and that’s okay, it’s okay, just feel...
9. Let go. Don’t think about it, just do it. It should be a flash, a snap, a blink, just do it as fast as possible, and you won’t have to think about it anymore, and it’ll be over.
10. Don’t think about it again. Then you can move on with your life, and meet new people and do new things and go to new places, and eventually you’ll say goodbye to those people and things and places, but you can’t ever think about it afterward, or you’ll remember your memories again, and this guide doesn’t include how to process your feelings. That’s not part of saying goodbye.
11. Avoid putting a “band-aid” on the situation. Usually, people try to make things work in difficult situations because they’re afraid of saying goodbye. Rise above that fear, and just let go. It’s harder in the moment, but it’ll be easier for you in the long run. You don’t need it. You can move on.

12. If you find yourself thinking about what you said goodbye to, distract yourself. You don't need to burden yourself with those feelings.

13. To distract yourself, involve yourself in new things. Join a new club, or meet a new friend, or bury yourself in schoolwork or your job. Play a new game. Write a story. Just do something to stop yourself from thinking.

14. If you find yourself wanting to talk to someone about your feelings, stop immediately. You already learned in Step #5 that your problems aren't as important as everyone else's. Try listening to their problems instead, to distract yourself. Or see Step #13 for distractions.

15. Just forget about the goodbye and move on.

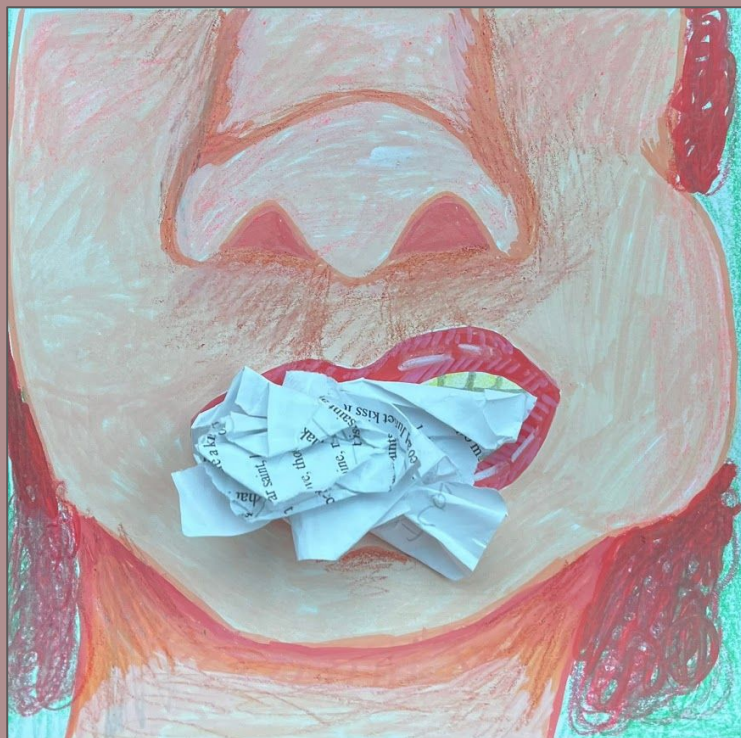
16. Just... forget. It's not that hard.

17. It is that hard. Why can't you get past this? Why can't I just leave?

18. I don't want to do this anymore. I don't want to say goodbye.

19. Please, stop with the numbers. Stop with the steps. If I say goodbye, then it will be real. It won't be the same anymore. Everything will be different. Wouldn't it be easier to just move on, and not think about it again? Leave it all behind, and pretend that nothing's changed.

20. Why are you reading this guide, anyway? I suppose we all have to say goodbye to something or someone eventually. Maybe for you it's your favorite restaurant, or an old house, or a very special person in your life. Or maybe you're like me, and you have to say goodbye to the only life you've ever known. You see, I thought it would be easier. I believed that if I wrote a short guide on how to leave it all behind, I could follow the steps, and everything would be alright. That way, I wouldn't have to tell others the words I couldn't say out loud. But, just like all my plans, it fell apart. I can't just leave it behind and forget about it, it's too hard. So what's the answer? I guess there is no answer. Unlike Step #3, just live in the moment, and don't worry about making memories until they're already made. Unlike Step #5, just telling someone else how you feel is often the first step to feeling better. Unlike Step #10, you do need to think about it, and feel those feelings coming back when you do. But, hopefully, each time you'll feel a bit better, and then eventually what you once knew is a distant memory, and instead of feeling sad that you had to leave, you feel happy that you were once lucky enough to be here.



“Stuffed” (Mixed Medium)
Aubree McAuliffe '26

“Wordless Unsleep From the City of Iron Blade” (Short Story)

William Merwin ‘25

A Worker walked home from work that day, in the city of Iron Blade.

He trudged through the pouring rain, other passerbys shrouded in darkness. The city lights shining down, the night sky illuminated with a purple hue. Despite the lack of cars in the area, they could still be heard roaring throughout the landscape. The scattered lamps showed dimly, a faint humming sound emanating from them. The puddles of water on the ground were dotted upon the walkway, creating loud splashes whenever a passerby stomped their foot upon them.

The Worker was awash with these sounds, when he heard shouting.

Looking up from the ground, he saw, in the middle of a clearing, a cage of cross-wire metal, with people gathered around. There, was a fight.

A Purple fighter, metallic in appearance, and with a grey mask was at one side of the arena. On the other, was a Blue fighter, smirking with confidence and donning a red pilot jacket with the emblem of a rabbit on its back.

People were crowded around the cage, with billboard advertisements staring down upon the match.

The Worker came up to the cage to watch the skirmish.

The Blue fighter charged at the Purple one, leaping into the air, kicking them in the face, and then retreating to the corner of the arena. Purple then began to hover. The opponent in sight, Purple charged, with Blue leaping out of the way, using the opportunity to go for another hit. This time, however, the opponent was aware, grabbing the leg in midair, and chucking Blue into the wall, the noise of the collision echoing throughout the night. And yet, Blue was far from done, clinging to the cross-wire and using it to support himself as he rose back up to the opponent, smirking unyieldingly. Purple hovered around the arena, looking for an opening. Yet, they could find none. And at once, Blue struck. Leaping forward, Blue clung to Purple and began to beat them down. Punch after punch, blow after blow, to Purple’s head Blue went. Even when Purple’s claws tore through his clothing and into his flesh, he refused to relent. He would triumph. And with one final punch, he delivered the final blow. Purple fell from the sky and to the ground. Everything was silent. Even the rain.

And then the crowd erupted into applause, the winning getting up fighter strolling around the arena, dusting off some blood from his clothes.



The smirk on the Blue fighter’s face morphed into a grin, as he let out a cry to his audience;

“Come on, make some noise!”

At this, the crowd grew louder.

At this, the Worker trudged home. It wasn't before long until he reached his small apartment, an old picture of his mom and a few books littering his dresser. He turned on the shower and heard the cold water rushing down on him. He turned on his microwave and heard the humming as it reheated a pizza for him. He didn't hear the sounds of him chewing and swallowing the pizza. He didn't hear the sounds of himself changing into pajamas. He didn't hear himself climb into bed and cover himself with his bed sheets. He didn't hear himself fall asleep

...

“Sad Jester” (Color Pencil & Marker Portrait)
Ellen Romano ‘25

...

Something happened to the Worker in his dream.

He was in an empty room, overgrown with roots. He was filled with confusion. How could he be in a room with no exit? Then, a feeling overtook him. Truthfully, it was always growing inside him, but only now was it blossoming. A small wave of apprehension overtook him. What would change if he did? And yet, he knew he would know the answer soon, as he could not stop what had begun. So, he resigned.

He began to *Create*.

He started slowly, and then he kept *Creating*. He kept *Creating* until he could not notice that the roof had vanished, giving way to a grand starry sky.

He could not tell what he was *Creating* for. It might've been for subservience, it might've been for freedom, gain, loss, nothing at all, but he couldn't care less. The *Creation* was the goal, it was the reward, it was *him*, and he was simply glad to partake in it.

Fish swam in midair, spiders crawled around the ground, the crashes of the waves echoed through the world, and yet all muted by the overpowerment of the *Creation*.

As it continued, he felt a sense of oneness with his surroundings, as if he was giving to the world through his *Creating*. He felt righteous in his actions. He was one, he was together. Finally, he had done it.

As the leafage around him grew, his *Create*, once overpowering, began to wain ever so slightly

Then, the man turned around, and stopped.

There was a sign.

And on that sign, for the Worker to see, was a message.

Ok. You can open your eyes now.



**“Speak” (Mixed Medium)
By Aubree McAuliffe ‘26**

“Who Else Cries When They Break Glass?”

(Free-verse Poem)

Sophia Evers ‘26

So many people will say they are sorry

Will apologize saying it slipped for their hand

Or fell off the counter or worse that it was out of
their control

But for the glass it was the situation it was left in
that truly broke it

It slipped when you promised you were going to
hold it

You left it unattended when you knew it was in a
fragile state

You took a risk in placing it on top of the other
dishes knowing very well it wasn't secure

and then you say you never thought this would
occur you would never expect the glass to fall

sounds ironic when the glass was almost destined
to fall

And then there'll be sighs how dare this glass on
shaky ground break all on its own

untempted and unpushed

how dare I have to clean it up while also being
afraid not to touch it due to the possibility of
being cut on it's shards

and not even a thought in their mind of
reassembling it's pieces and making it into
something better than before

only thoughts of discarding it

although no fall no crack no chip no shatter no
outburst considered out of control or a burden to
handle is on accident it is the glasses fault for not
being perfect

and I sincerely apologize to anyone who felt
deeply from this poem it is only about a glass



“Hidden Talent” (Charcoal)

Asma Agha ‘25

“Uninvited Words” (Free-verse Poem)
Maddy Paterna ‘26

They talk like they’ve known each other for
years

sharing old jokes, no doubts, no fears

I smile like i’m fine, like I belong

but inside it feels all wrong

Had a thought, almost said it

but the moment passed

and no one was really listening anyway

I laughed when they laughed, kept it light

swallowed my words, kept quiet all night

walked home slow, phone in my hand

thinking maybe they’ll never understand



“Love” (Digital Drawing)
Liz Arantes ‘28

“Far Across The Stage” (Free-verse Poem)

Ava Pellegrino ‘25

Far across the stage, I see you in the light

Chest heaving and proud, eyes shining alight

And a feeling comes over me, deep within my soul

The pride of a friend, a sister, true and whole

I wonder if you notice me, standing in the shadows

Hiding behind the curtains as the applause slows

As the curtains click shut, I rush in pointed heels

To hold you so closely as we hold in our squeals

The blessing of theater gives me the ability

To let me hear you perform in such tranquility

Even if I can never fully watch you on the stage

I will always be watching you, from far across the stage.

SECTION 2

NATURE'S CALL

“Useless Nuisance” (Ode)

Olivia Pason ‘25

Oh shrimp, you are the filth of the sea-
You rummage at the bottom of the turbulent and
treacherous waters
Shrimp, you eat the muck us malicious humans
forsake
You pale and peculiar coward
The lowest of the food chain
You feed on feces and dead fish-
You cannot stand against the brutal waves of the sea
A spineless, miserable being
You cannot choose your destiny-
Fearsome Mother Nature determines it for you
Oh shrimp, they tease and torment you with their
nasty words
But you are necessary to our ecosystem
You rid the ocean of waste and Her evil rotten
fragments of creation
A robust being who maintains the environment and
has authority over man
You give us protein and necessary vitamins
You are so delicious yet the Cockroach of the sea
Shrimp, you contain many bountiful traits-
Yet the scoundrel man only sees the bitter piece of
you
Oh, Crustacean

**“Butterfly Sonnet”
(Shakespearean Sonnet)**

Maddy DeRosa ‘25

The butterflies dance in the sky so free
With the flowers in the wind, they soar with
might

All the colors blend, what a sight to see
The vision of beauty, a stunning flight

Metamorphosis, a magical change
From caterpillar to butterfly bright
An example of growth, to rearrange
Coming out from dark, a glorious sight

Their wings are like glass, so delicate and fine
Fluttering so softly like a whisper
The circle of life makes them so divine
Transforming, a beauty beyond compare

Wherever they roam, what a view to behold
Butterflies, and dreams and stories untold



**“Silent Peace on the Mountainside”
(Watercolor Landscape)**

Kelli Ennis ‘25

“Serengeti of Tanzania” (Photograph)
Edey Cumello ‘26



“A Student’s Winter Dream”
(Photograph)
Grace Glaser ‘26

“Release” (Free-Verse Poem)

Abigail Venech ‘26

On the dam
Still water
Not a ripple in sight.

In the forest
Quiet
Branches sway gently

Look at the sky
The clouds are white
And peaceful

Look under the surface
The depth grows.
Hold a leaf in your hand and
It crunches. Dry as a bone.
Look again.
There are more clouds than you
thought.

Time goes by.
Pressure grows.
Nothing changes.
Pressure grows.
No drought for the dam.
Pressure grows.
No drop for the forest.
Pressure grows.
No sun for the sky.
Pressure grows.

The clouds are dark and gray.
The forest a matchbox.
The dam is trembling in exertion.

“Let go of the pressure.
It’s no good to keep it all bottled up.”
Don’t they know?
It’s too late.

One thing.
Just
One thing.

The sky is black, obscure.
Thunder rears in the belly of the
nimbus
Lightning catches on an emaciated
branch
A raindrop escapes the clouds and falls
falls falls into the dam.

Release

The dam bursts
The forest ablaze
The sky at war

The aftermath
Drowned
Scorched
Clear
And nothing can go back to how it was

But
It’s a new day
The debris is cleared
Ashes swept away
And there’s a sprout.



“Nature’s Mirror” (Charcoal)
Asma Agha ‘25

“A Bird Cannot be Coerced, but a Fish Can” (Free-Verse Poem)

Sophia Evers ‘26

A bird can be taught while a fish is hard from being bought
A bird will sing and pray
while a fish will gasp if forced to stay

A bird has fear derived of dangers of the sky and will allow their wings to be clipped
before they gained the right to fly while a fish will surely sink and die if it's fins were to
succumb to these terrible lies

The bird would say by nature it belongs to the land even though they inhabited the
heavens before civilizations could stand while with the fish there is no question there
dominion is of the sea why is only one apparent that if placed on land they'd be suffocated
and can not breed

For even a bird isn't made for a cage but with the promise of peace it makes sense that
they would stay but the fish who has never learned nothing but the ways of the waves
beyond the tether of earth the freedom of uncertainty awaits with no longing to obey

So with this information please let me say how many of us allowed our fates to be placed
in a cage



**“The Sunset Listens to What the Snow Cannot Say”
(Photograph)**

Kaitlyn Velsmid ‘25



“Dog” (Pencil Sketch)
Aria Curi ‘28



“World from the Microscopic Eye”
(Photograph)
Grace Glaser ‘26

“A Gift” (Short Story)

William Merwin ‘25

She opened her eyes. She was laying on a slab. The scene around her was clearly that of the temple she was at when she was caught up in the unexpected battle, and, judging by the bodies scattered across, had already ended.

As she got up, she ended up stepping on a body. She briefly looked at them, and then turned back to the waves of slain soldiers. It was truly astonishing, in a morbid sort of way, to see a single sight crowded with so much death.

She then became deeply confused, as she had remembered trying to run to the exit before something hit her, and then passing out. As such, it would make no sense for her to be resting on the altar unless someone moved her there.

She turned back to the altar, examining it, wondering who moved her there, and got a better look at the figure she had stepped on before.

It was her father.

Several thoughts swirled around her head, wondering if he was the man who moved her to the slab, if he had been at the battle, and, most of all, if he was truly gone. She uttered his name, then began to desperately shake him, tears leaking from her eyes, the thought of her being responsible for her father’s demise.

She began to run towards the exit of the temple. She was trying to escape this place that brought her father down. Her being in the wrong place at the wrong time had resulted in her father dying for no reason, just because she put herself in danger. As these thought clouded her head, she continued to sprint, not realizing that, for every time her feet would touch the floor, grass and flowers would grow out of it.

As she exited the temple, she was met with the sight of a horrifically scorched earth, seemingly a result of the battle that had occurred. Unlike the temple, there were very few visible bodies, most likely burned to a crisp, as it was clearly evident that a huge fire had occurred. Not that it mattered to the girl, as she collapsed to the ground, doing nothing but crying, wallowing in self hatred.

After she had shed almost all her tears, she opened her eyes to be greeted with lush, green scenery surrounding her general vicinity, which replaced her self-loathing with confusion, as there had been nothing but rough terrain when she first fell to the ground. She walked around the vicinity, inspecting it, wondering what had happened.

As she looked around, she suddenly realized that the plants were spreading to the areas that her foot came into contact with, as she felt an energy growing within herself. Quite startled, she put her hands into the ground, and the ground began to regrow back.

Although she was still confused as to how she gained this new ability, she realized what she was going to use it for. She decided that, as a way of giving back life after being responsible for the loss of her father’s, she would use her newfound powers to purge the land of its bloodstains.

She put her hands to the ground, and concentrated the most she had ever had, simply on releasing her energy to the land, and she felt a great sensation within her body as the air began to fill with a green aura, and the damage caused by the battle was slowly undone.

As she saw the simple green color, occasionally decorated with a red rose or some other colored flower, she smiled to herself; the first time she smiled since she woke up.

At least now, the tragedy of all the death and destruction would allow for new life to thrive.

Section 3

Unrequited Love

“Astronomy” (Free-verse Poem)

Anonymous ‘27

“Do you ever think about me?”

What a comical question.

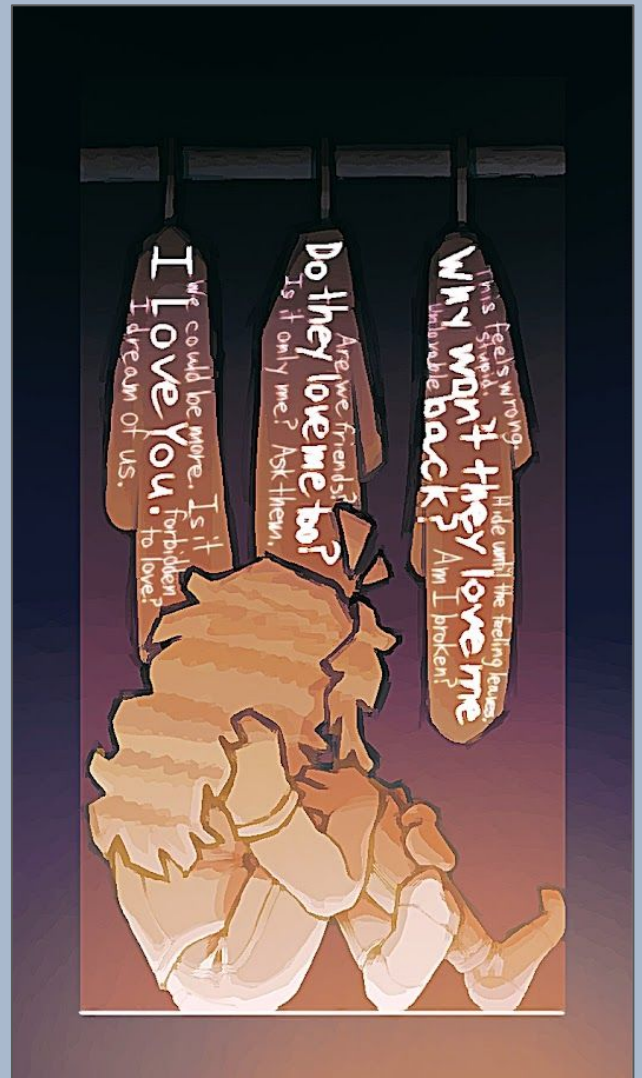
If an astrologist were to watch the sun fade away and disappear,
would he ever stop thinking about the sun?

He would stare at the sky every day and every night,
through the darkness and terrible weather,
letting not one second slip away without devoting
each and every thought to the sun,
missing the sun,
loving the sun,
wondering if and when it would ever come back.

He would trace its absence in the cold air,
in the way the flowers fold in on themselves,
in the quiet that lingers where warmth used to be.
He would find the sun in every golden memory,
in every flicker of light that just isn’t quite the same.

Still, the clouds roll by, careless,
and the stars take their places like nothing is missing.
And still, he waits.

To answer the question, in case it wasn’t clear,
I am an astrologist,
the way I don’t let a day,
a minute,
a thought,
pass without wishing I still had my sun.



“Denied” (Digital Drawing)

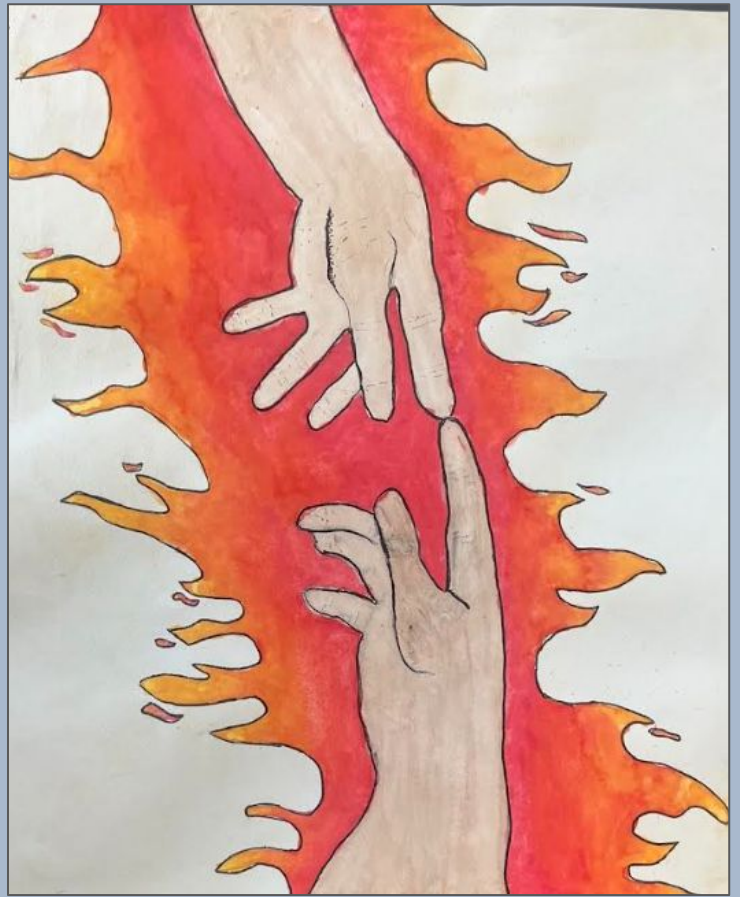
Liz Arantes ‘28

“Silent Distance” (Free-verse Poem)

Emma Fernandes ‘26

You're here but lost in your own space.
I see you every day, but it's like you're
always rushing.
Our conversations are brief, and moments
slip away.
I miss the person who used to laugh with
me.
Now I just wonder,
Why?

Your body's in the room, but your mind is
far away.
I wish you'd see me and hear the things I
say.
Being here in person doesn't mean you're
truly there.
I need you to be present to show me that
you care.



“Embers of Silence” (Watercolor)
Anonymous



“Admirer” (Mixed Medium Portrait)
Olivia Szczerba ‘25

“Unsent Message” (Free-Verses Poem) **Anonymous**

I miss you.
I miss going skiing with you,
I miss getting flowers from you,
I miss when you would call me out of nowhere,
I miss when you sent me lyrics that reminded you of me,
I miss waking up to good morning texts from you,
I miss how in love I was with you,
I miss how safe I once felt with you,
I miss everything about you.
I know you said you could never hate anything I did,
But I know you would hate it if I sent this to you,
Which is why it is still sitting in my notes app.

“The Song of 22” (Short Story)

Waliullah Khawaja ‘25

Where I was in these walls was none of my own business, you hear? It's a lovely day today because today I become twenty two today, hooray! So says me, in these new ways, that I become 22, where Mr. Voice Man will give me a cake while I ruminate beyond the stars in such an impossible bliss that everyone was happy with even her, that alongel in the bright star, though she's gone now to the great harmonious place far above in this skyline's mountainous dew. I wonder if she's proud of me for turn thrusting into a great 22.

Here's a cake. Small cake. For you. I... know it's been tough up here in "After here?" No, no, just... take the cake. "Thank you" Mr. Voice Man for the gracious cake because now I'm 22! Last year I was 22, this year I was 22 and in the future I'll be 22 forever and ever and ever! To the madness of daring, I sing a song and will eat my cake, because I'm 22! Harmonious, backwards 22! Am I truly living the good life, or what? I hold a plate full of a great and better velvety yellow sponge.

Now to consume with a hand with metal prongs at each end to custardy consume. Mine 'ead 'urts. Dig in with thy meat to eat, those lovely little lady fingers. And so my mouth out full of tort. Chew, and swallow. Chew, and swallow. That's how it goes. My mouth. Equals what? Vita. So long, so far down the system it goes. Thrilling isn't it? But I must continue. Can't ruminate too long before the rhapsody of Solomon takes helm again and makes me think more than I should. Ah, velvet. My favourite. Last year it was... bad? Something bad.

Ah right, mold. Lovely mold. Moldly man. Mr. Voice Man let me consume it thus. But it tasted nothing like it. Molded 22. No! No! Inside my mind I am here to have swallowed the cake. I love it. There were two twice layers, and there were 11 more o'er the shadow beyond that of the moon. Yes, they're in hell awaiting my returnance downstairs not knowing of my reverie ruminating

under the moon. It's hard to live like this, especially when Mr. Voice Man gave me cake to lull me. But is this hell already? Yes, it already is.

Prisoned here. Prisoned there. Where am I? Here. In the nevermore. Why? I don't know why. I should close my eyes. But the heaven above will disappear from my eyes. The heaven in the sky. A man. Or oo? Who knows! I'm just here. Trapped as nei a man. It's hell looking at the stars beyond and knowing that it's there but just out of reach. A manhood unreached, with it being the only gateway to get there. Is this what he felt when he fell? Looking with envy at the stars above? Wait, there was silence, for 22 minutes.

And in that silence, there was a glimmer of hope, wrought from a smack. Sweet. Sweet. Like a dream. Like her. Like you. Don't think. Focus on the taste. The smack. Sweet. Sweet. Like a dream. Like her. NO. Stop. Focus. Focus on the sweetness. That sweet. Sweet. Sugar. Cake. Sugar. Sweet. Like her. Like you, my love. We were both young and stupid. And you were sweet. Sweet to me, sweet to everyone. You smiled at me, and you smiled at everybody else. No, stop. I guess that's why I fell in love in the first place. Your smile.

And from your smile I learned you. Your ego. Your id. Your superego. And I fell in love with all of it. What did society say? You were a goal. But I still fell in love in spite of that. Your smile brightened my day everyday as we went to the same place together. I saw you everyday and you smiled, and I smiled back. And we talked. How we talked. How I loved. How we deciphered each other under a beautiful star and a great man. At the end of the day, I whispered I love you so much.

And I loved you and if I did show it, I would drown myself and you in such an impossible bliss. You aren't a goal, but you would be nice. You are my love, and I love you so much. They see you as a goal, they and those around. Men do. Do women know? But I? I love you because I do, a titanium. To be a man is to have a woman, and I am not a man. It was a raison d'être, wasn't it? She's not an it. I want to become a man when I'm 22.

Kill it. Kill it and I move. To what? Afterhood. Adultlife. She moved on to both. I felt so powerless when I did try to kill it but ultimately failed. Those walls would have felt good. But I couldn't that day. Forced it, I couldn't that day. I needed to be strong, but I felt so weak. Is that what being strong feels like? Feels like that forced killing of it, that those walls crumble down and she moves on? I don't know. Inside the walls of 22, she died, inside the broken harmony of 22, she died. Adulthood? Afterlife?

I feel my brain pulsating within my mind and it cries, how it cries. In a mad genius cacophony, I became a stupid old fool. 22? 22! 22 22, 22: 22; "22" < 22\22 = 22's 22 > 22/22. Marry me away! I wanted marriage but my own muscular hands stabbed her own hands. And that's my fault. I didn't do it. But I might as well. Injected the arsen into her and let her die as she was up in those tubes. And I thought I couldn't look at her but I did and I felt nothing. I tried to.

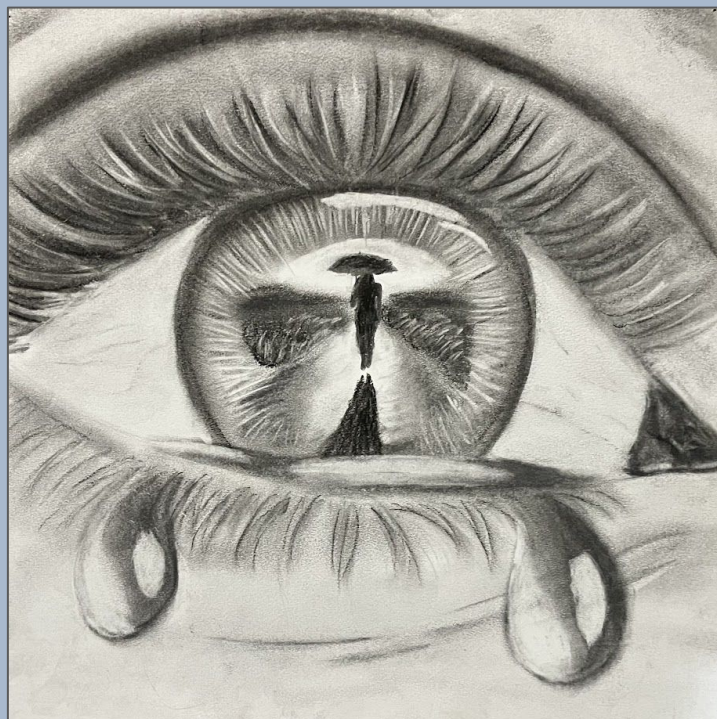
But I couldn't I'm trapped in these walls the eyes they judge my love and they judge how I couldn't do it, protect her naught for what I couldn't do I was strong enough to not cry but still I feel so weak (If I cried, I would drown myself and everybody around me.) weaker than most I am I hate myself but of course I didn't do it but I might as well have didn't I thirst for grief but nothing came and so I'm weaker and weak (If I cried, I would drown myself and everybody around me.)

.nwo ym tpecxe ,gnitcetorp throw gnihtemos si efil lla ,eergasid srehto nehweve ,tuB .ecneugesnoc eno otni etanimluc taht segnahc ylidob fo eramthgin a ,ybab a evah ot gnileef elbirroh a s'tI .yracs s'tI .htrib evig ot esruc a si ti yas srehto ynam, revewoH .elcarim a s'ti yas lliw ynam ,sneppah ti nehwtub ,sneppah ti woh rettam t'nseod tI .ydob detinu a ni rehtegot namow dna nam eno yb desuac si htrib yrevE .ti rof pu ekam ot shtrib 5 era ereht,shtaed 2 yreve roF .yawaraf ro ybesolc ,seid nosrep rehtona ,nrob si dlihc a emit yrevE

it's a number, but to me, it's my savior, my lovely 22. Oh, I beg of thee, hold no prejudice, 22!

But I'm a 21st century schizo man. I may not see nor hear, but I am out of marbles. That counts, right? That counts? THAT COUNTS? I won't live to see the 22nd century, will I? If I am to be 22, that means I have to go beyond 22 to reach another 22. It's an endless loop. To reach 22 means to not be 22. To be 22 means not to reach 22. Why must I choose 22? Can't I be both, star 22? Why can't I be 22? Why can't I cry over 22? Why can't I lie?

The plate's all empty now, and the window is open to a breeze. I'm lost at a white sea, because of the moon and stars staring down at me. I want to know why I'm like this. Why I'm unlovable. Is this the end or the beginning? Who is to say? I certainly can't. I'm lucidly dreaming of an alongel. Is she lonely up there? Who's to say? I certainly can't. I'm just here waiting for another opportunity to see the goal again. I'm just here wandrin' if I'm a man after all. I'm just here crying. I'm just here



“Silent Goodbye” (Pencil Sketch)
Asma Agha '25

“Silent Truths” (Free-verse Poem)

Anonymous

I want to tell you, to say what's true
But I am afraid I'll lose you more.
If I confess the love I feel,
Would it be too much to conceal?

The words I carry weigh me down,
Like heavy stones that make no sound.
What if the truth pulls us apart?
What if it affects your gentle heart?
What if I speak and break the bond,
That once felt deep, that once felt strong?

So here I stand wishing you could see,
The way I've grown from who I used to be.
Even if, in time, we hurt each other,
The love we shared was like no other.

Perhaps, in time, we'd be the same-
But different too, in a better way.
I miss the sound of your loud, bright laugh,
How your smile would cut through every path.
Now I only see that smile from afar,
Though I wish I could still be where you are.

You pull away when I get too close,
Like my love is something you can't expose.
I see the fear behind your distant eyes,
The walls you build,
Silent, yet they rise.

For the two years, we shared our days-
Laughter and love in countless ways.
I miss the way you'd light up to see me,
And the quiet things that made you, *you*, to me.

I don't expect to turn back time,
Or rewrite the stars that once aligned.
But, I hope you know, with all my soul,
You helped me learn, you made me whole.
And if this chapter has to close,
Let it end with truth-not shadows.

Though I want to be your biggest cheerer
Rooting for you, growing nearer.
I wish you'd see the way I feel,
And know these words are deep and real.

I wish you'd take the time to see,
The person I've become-
the one I'm meant to be.
Not as someone from your past to forget,
But as the person I am, without regret.

I'm still here, still strong, still true,
I just want you to see me-
Who I am,
And who I grew.



Section 4

Where Words Wander

“Come Sit With Me by the Willow Tree” (Free-verse Poem)

Sophia Evers ‘26

Come on down to the willow tree Love the ones that came before me feel the air of which we breathe trust the earth and all its seas

The sun will rise beyond the hill the songbirds' tale will swoon and swill, the captain's ship has just hit sail and the moon lies in the sea

I sit and spread out in the lawn my mom's calm voice keeps trailing on she asks me what I will become I don't know that only where I'm from

I want to rest but my brain's a whirl I toss and turn but there's no use still I hear my mom crying out against her viril have we been abandoned or all gone ill

It's settling into dusk dawns gone how long will this storm carry on the gloom starts to feel like doom I hope it all feels like a homestead soon

Saw a man sitting down in town reading songs about how the ends come now thought it can't be if gods around but that night no prayers were sound

Heard of a man with a rock on a hill hadn't had a clue what it meant until I saw my pa working with no thrill no progression to be made till he lye still

Mothers send their sons to war how much more can they all bore meeting tragic fates of gore no one asks if their lives worth more

So much violence amongst thee we are all two words away from a killing spree what ever happened to democracy will our minds ever truly be free

F*** the arms of the willow tree f*** them all who came before me I'm not trying to be a part of this machine watch and see what happens to me

This grueling system of tyranny when will these giants let us breathe the poor man's begging on his knees how long until we're consumed by greed

Ours souls were once not measured in currency morals not a synonym for a discrepancy a heart that is hollowed can still grow heavy tell me who separates the name from the body

A stick with no branch would encapture society how dare anyone for thinking different to me if we choose left no right will be seen even angels have tried but the weak shalt not concede

Who will pick the rose with the wilted leaves why is it that the damned are the only ones
allowed to be free who will let these labels stop defining me is that an object or a woman I see

Art will cultivate society entrust its power will bring about peace well what art is left if not in
an ossuary It only lyes now in the hands of the lazy

One would say that a life is precious never to realize they didn't live one at all I wonder how
much time has been wasted and if a moment of consideration could save us all

A heart is to love like honey to a bee it's supposed to beat for those closest to me but all people
seem to do is scream and flee it seems most of us have forgotten a hearts supposed to bleed

You would think the rainbow would be seen as grey by the same eyes that take in these lies and
say despite the world containing not one huge a grey area isn't made by people like me and
you

Is it cruel of me to plead do I contain not one good deed what will come if I don't succeed is
the only real solution more amphetamines

are we all in Pandora's light of Lime what's left of a race is nothing more than parasites the
righteous have all knelt and been forced to subside will hope survive the test of time



“Whispers of Childhood” (Photograph)

Adriana Jauk '27

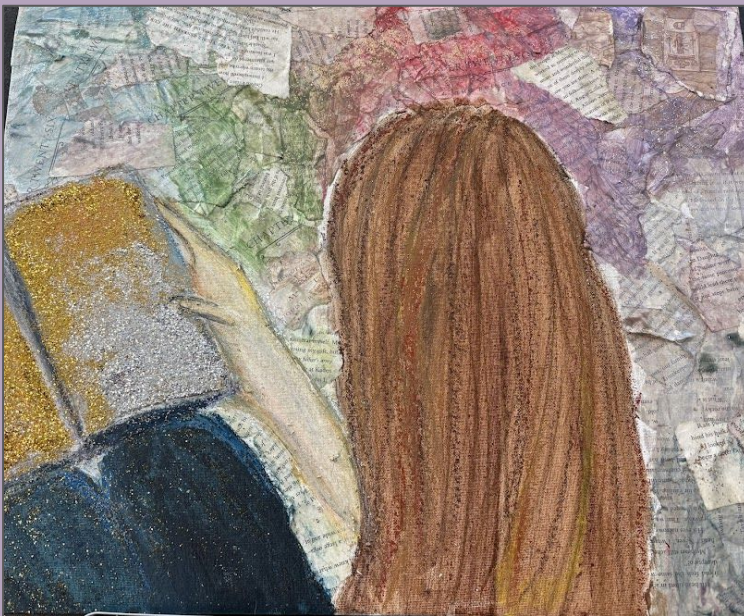
“Untitled”
By William Merwin ‘25

Somewhere, there is a room. A room but filled with words. And where are those words coming from, you might ask? Why, a boy, of course! He's in his room, mashing words together. Trying to make words sound nice together is something that he delights in. From catchphrases, to quotes, to stories, this kid enjoys playing with words. There, however, is something that he does quite wish, and that wish he wishes is to put his words out of his room, and into the world for all to hear. But, there is an enemy afoot; apathy. The boy's lack of exposure in the art of exposure has left him feeling unmotivated in the face of a big, scary world. But birds must leave the nest eventually, and soon, he will get out of his little pocket of nowhere and show the world one day.

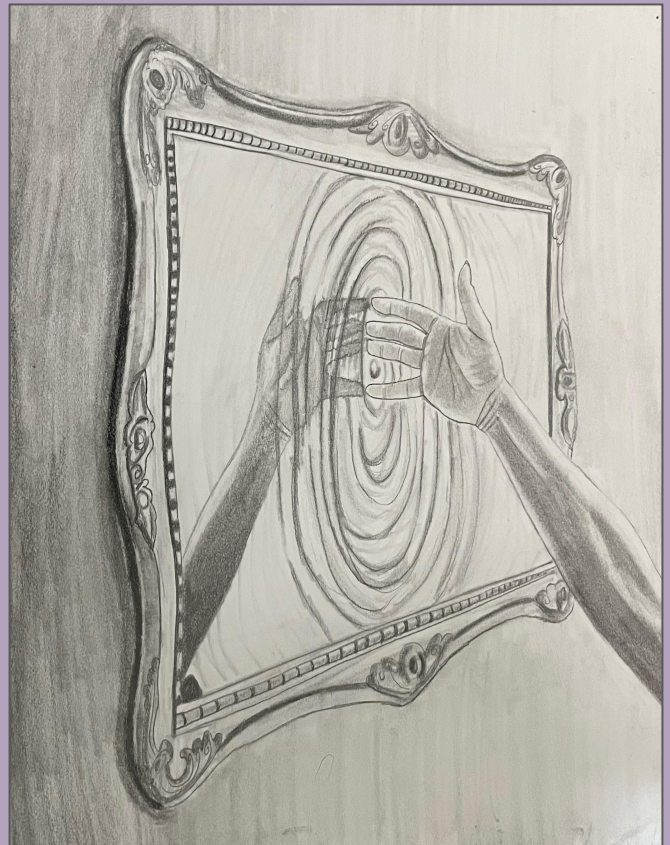
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One day, probably, he will manage to squeeze his words outside of his room. Maybe people will like them. Maybe a lot of people will like them.

But, as is the horrid truth of artists, we must wait for his ideas to blossom.



“Stories in My Head”
(Marker and Pencil Portrait)
Lucia DeArrese Martin ‘25



“Escaping Reality”
(Charcoal)
Asma Agha ‘25

“Introduction To The Bliss of Figure Skating” (Free-Verse Poem)

Adalene Fallot ‘26

My blades dig into the ice
like a cat's claws kneading a blanket,
softly nestling in as they paw the fabric,
before a long nap.

My coach intently watches me
performing each skill he tells me to complete -
like watching the leaves on the trees,
foreshadowing whether it is going to rain or not.

I feel the timing on each of my jumps,
as I soar through the brisk air,
Squeezing my arms to my chest like a soldier
hugging his family whom he's missed so dearly.

I check out with a glide,
Peering over for approval from my coach -
Loud silence fills the air,
As anxious breaths grow loud.

Fall after fall,
My confidence dwindles,
My body aches as my leg burns from the rough ice,
But I hear, go again, as my happiness fades.

I watch the clock anticipating the end,
As I am forced to do spin after spin -
The world goes quiet around me,
Like there is nowhere else I'd rather be.

And at the end of my lesson,
I always remember to thank my coach -
Although there is hardship,
That is just the bliss of figure skating.

“Introduction to the Complexities of Running” (Free-Verse Poem)

Ava Procyk ‘26

I ask them to tie their shoes
And press their feet into the ground
Like a bike's tires

Or listen to the footsteps crash

I say drop a bunny on a trail and
watch her launch out of the blocks

Or walk inside the paths mind
And feel for motivation

I want them to dash
Across the surface of the concrete ground
Sprinting with the gusts of wind in the air

But all they want to do
Is tie the exhaustion to a chair with short laces
And beseech an incentive out of it

They begin gasping for their breath
To find out what it really means

“Throw Your Phone Away” (Free-verse Poem)

Maximus Cartolano ‘26

Throw your phone away
Or rather your screens
Or rather the inability to enjoy life
Or rather the inability to live
Go live
Go run
Be free
Get outside
There’s a whole world
Nobody’s seen it all
Go explore your place that nobody’s ever
seen before
Make your mark in the world and discover
a new grove of trees
That nobody’s ever seen before
Go as far reaching as you can
Use your creativity to get to these places
Go where many have been and do what
nobody’s ever done there

Be radical in a place of monotony
Live your life
Carpe diem
You only have so much time
But if you slow down (and stop looking
down)
You’ll realize life moves pretty slow
And you’ve got a lot of time
So be free
Go on an adventure
Escape the monotony of your life
Do something new just because it’s
different
And squeeze the juice out of life

“First Strum of Confidence”

(Mixed medium portrait)

Olivia Szczerba ‘25



“Roots of My Being” (Free-verse Poem)

Joseph Kustra ‘25

I am from crowded rooms where laughter fills the air,
Where energy flows through every conversation,
From the hum of voices,
Always reaching out, always connecting.
I am from the late-night talks with friends,
The ones that make the world feel small,
Where the hours disappear like whispers in the dark.
I am from moments we have together,
Where every word matters,
And every laugh pulses through my heart.

I am from the hands that reach out to help,
The smile that says, “You belong here,”
From the belief that no one should be left out.
I am from the work that never feels like a chore,
Because it’s done with love, with purpose,
To turn visions into a reality
And to see dreams take place.
I am from the long hours and late nights,
From a dedication that goes beyond exhaustion,
Just to see everything fall into place.

I am from the joy of seeing others succeed,
From lifting them up when they feel sad,
Because I know what it feels like
To have someone believe in me.
I am from the confidence that comes from hard
work,
From the satisfaction of knowing I did my best,
And the victory that comes when others do the
same.

I am from the feeling of belonging,
From the quiet happiness of watching a team unite,
Stronger with each step, each goal,
Because together we can do anything.
I am from the energy that fills a room,
From the moments that remind me that we are all
connected,
By laughter, by struggles, and by the payoffs
The pieces that make it whole.

I am from the belief that no one should walk alone,
That we are stronger together,
And hard work is the key to everything.
I am from the dreams that are built on trust,
On connection, on lifting others up,
Because that’s who I am,
And I know who I am is enough.

“Friendship is the Tide” (Free-verse Poem)

Santiago Hidalgo ‘26

Friends are like the waves that rise and roll,
Always there to keep me whole.
When I drift too far from shore,
They push me back, forever more.

They crash and they break, then drift from sight,
Like people who pass, like stars in the night.
Yet one thing is certain, through calm or through
strife,
A true wave will guide me back into my life.

The shore my steady ground,
Where laughs and peace are found.
But when the ocean pulls too strong,
And I get lost, swept up, dragged along,

A friend’s the wave that lifts me high,
A perfect set beneath the sky.
They share my flaws, ride my highs,
Through glassy seas and stormy skies.

No matter how the currents sway,
They’ll paddle near, they’ll lead the way.
Through breaks and barrels, dusk till dawn,
Like the tide, they pull me on.

So I trust in the waters, their lessons so pure,
Forever knowing the right wave will always
lead me to shore.



Second Frame (Photography)

Anonymous ‘00

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Waliullah Khawaja '25

“The creative adult is the child who survived.”

-Ursula Le Guin

Words UNspoken



St. Joseph High School

2024-2025