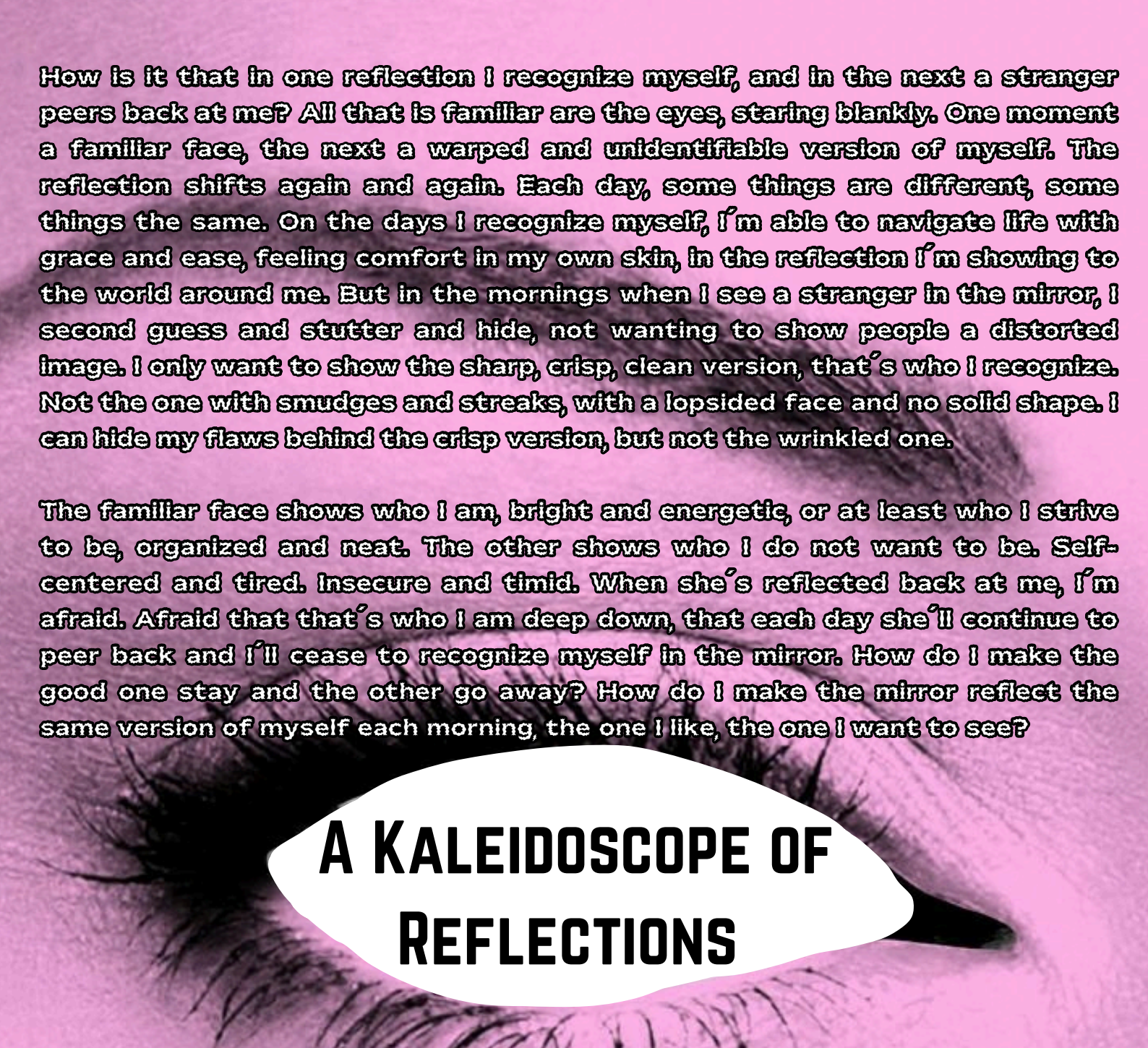

KALEIDOSCOPE
The Common Thread
TCT
The Common Thread
1950 - 1970
1960 - today
1970 - 2000
De Stijl
Constructivism
DADA
Wiener Werkstätte
Art Nouveau
Arts and Crafts Movement
EVERYTHING WE SEE IS A PERSPECTIVE, NOT A TRUTH

How is it that in one reflection I recognize myself, and in the next a stranger peers back at me? All that is familiar are the eyes, staring blankly. One moment a familiar face, the next a warped and unidentifiable version of myself. The reflection shifts again and again. Each day, some things are different, some things the same. On the days I recognize myself, I´m able to navigate life with grace and ease, feeling comfort in my own skin, in the reflection I´m showing to the world around me. But in the mornings when I see a stranger in the mirror, I second guess and stutter and hide, not wanting to show people a distorted image. I only want to show the sharp, crisp, clean version, that´s who I recognize. Not the one with smudges and streaks, with a lopsided face and no solid shape. I can hide my flaws behind the crisp version, but not the wrinkled one.

The familiar face shows who I am, bright and energetic, or at least who I strive to be, organized and neat. The other shows who I do not want to be. Self-centered and tired. Insecure and timid. When she´s reflected back at me, I´m afraid. Afraid that that´s who I am deep down, that each day she´ll continue to peer back and I´ll cease to recognize myself in the mirror. How do I make the good one stay and the other go away? How do I make the mirror reflect the same version of myself each morning, the one I like, the one I want to see?



A Kaleidoscope of Reflections

And how do I know that the reflection I want to see, the one I recognize, isn´t just a mirage? A piece of dust in the eye. A fog over the mirror. How do I know that the reflection I can´t recognize, the one that looks scary and squished and like nothing but everything all at once, isn´t what I appear like every day? But if I question that, then maybe it´s the opposite. That rather it´s the familiar face, bright and fresh, that says good morning each day, and not the stranger in the mirror. Reflection is elusive. A trick of the mind. It´s not something to be trusted. And so how do I know what the mirror really shows me? Because maybe all that we see are perspectives and not truths. And maybe my reflections, the familiar friend and the stranger alike, are simply just my own perspectives of myself. The parallels of my insecurities and my strengths. Maybe that´s why the mirror reflects different things, shifting each time I look, never showing the same thing,
a Kaleidoscope.

-Ainsley

The History of Reflections

While the light-reflection object is now present in almost every house, it was not always like this. Before the 1830s, polished stones, metals, and glass were used instead of the object we call a mirror now. Yet in 1835 in Germany, the chemical process of putting a thin layer of silver onto glass was discovered, and that's how the mirrors that we are used to appeared.

Even though mirrors are used primarily in everyday life, there were multiple applications of them throughout history. For example, long before the invention of electricity, mirrors were widely used to reflect natural sunlight inside dark buildings and architecture. In Ancient Greece, mirrors were also widely used by soldiers, who were sending messages from one hill to another by flashing the sunlight, which was used both in everyday life and on the battlefields. Talking about battles, mirrors were also widely used as a weapon: due to the reflection ability, it was convenient to use them for the sake of blinding people with flashes of light.

Nowadays mirrors are used widely in a bunch of sciences. Biology is one example: In the process of investigation, it was claimed that the only animals that were able to recognize themselves in the reflection were elephants, dolphins, magpies, and chimpanzees. Mirrors have come to be a powerful psychological tool, and this is applied in multiple spheres. For example, 'Skinny Mirrors' are used in sales and are placed in a bunch of clothing stores to increase the number of purchases. Mirrors are also implemented as a psychological tool in healthcare. Doctors around the world widely use the 'Mirror Therapy' technique to treat phantom pain after a limb amputation procedure. By placing a mirror in a specific vertical way, the illusion of seeing the amputated limb being present and moving tricks the brain, which makes the pain go away.

While the area of usage of mirrors is getting bigger and bigger, it's important to remember that, like any invention, it can be used both for benefit and harm.

So be wise and don't let any mirror trick you :)





-Adelya

CONTRASTS BETWEEN BOARDING

UWC Thailand is not just an IB school, but also a boarding school that provides students with meaningful connections and opportunities. It's easy for day students to forget that their boarding friends, in some ways, might have a completely different or identical perspective on our school. The parallel between the lives students experience after the bell rings pose an interesting contrast in how separate their realities are.

What are your relationships with other grades like?
I personally don't know many people from other grades. I know some people that I might talk to in the hallway to catch up, but I don't know anyone that well. I think since joining the school, the only way I have made friends in other grades is outside of my school day. I know other students from the musical, but that is the only way I interact with those other than my classmates.

How do you view the school?
When I think of school, I can only imagine it from eight until three thirty, except for special circumstances. Being in school without wearing a uniform feels odd; I can't imagine having to have a sense of privacy at school. When there are school events, like the student council socials, I feel so out of place being on campus when the sun has already set. I think of school as being completely separate from my home. At school I do specific things, like lessons, or clubs or break, and at home is where I do my homework, eat my dinner, and get ready for school. This cutoff in the mornings and afternoons is so severe that I can't imagine it any other way.

When needing to travel, how does it work?
If I want to, I can walk to the shops near school on my own. I can decide to go somewhere on the weekends at the last minute. The only thing I would need to do, especially if I was being picked up, is to let my parents know. I could get a taxi or go somewhere with a friend or parent; I can invite people to my house if we can't go out. I have so many options. For many plans with friends, I would only finish planning it a day or two before I was going to go. For things like schoolwork that needs to be completed in pairs, I could just let my parents know to make sure we don't already have plans.

What is your thought process behind managing your life?
Living at home with my parents means that things like this take up so much less of my day. If I needed toothpaste, it would be so easy to get some on my way home from school, or to ask my mum when she went to the shop. I would also not be thinking about it until after I left school. If I were to need something for my home life, it would be something I only worried about at home. It is also easy for me to just make a quick trip somewhere. As I don't have to pay for a taxi or wait for a school-organized trip, I can wait until the last minute to buy things. I don't have to plan ahead for when I will run out of things.

What do you think about your time after school?
My time after school and in school are very separate for me. The things I might worry about with my home life would probably be something I would only think about at home, while my school life would be only at school, excluding homework. I can do whatever I want after school, and I manage my time by myself. After school, I also nearly always just spend it with my family. We eat together, I spend time in my room, and I complete homework or study at the dinner table. It is only very occasionally that I see people after school other than my parents.

What is your concept of family?
My concept of family is just my parents. If I had problems at school or home, I would talk to them. If I was worried about something, they are the ones I would talk to. There is, of course, a great support system at school; I could speak to counselors, my teachers, and anyone would listen and support me. However, personally, I haven't really needed to before.

AND DAY STUDENTS

-Helena & Tabitha

What are your relationships with other grades like?

As a new student at UWC Thailand, I am still getting to know people who are in my class but also in other grades. In just a few weeks, I am good friends with students in both my own and higher grades. I think that boarding has allowed me to have a special relationship with my roommates in terms of friends that differs from the relationships I have with my other classmates. It's not that it's better or worse, but not the same. I think that as a boarding student, I also have more connections with other grades, all the way from 7th to 12th. Especially with people who board.

How do you view the school?

Obviously, I think of our school as a school; however, unlike the first few weeks, I no longer view it as me living in school but rather the school being where I live. Even though the buildings are for learning and filled with classrooms, once the clocks hit 3:30, it changes to my house. It no longer feels like a school but a space where I spend my free time.

When needing to travel, how does it work?

Going anywhere and getting around the island is more complicated than it has ever been. For MYP students, to get permission to leave campus, you first have to give all the details of your plans a few hours prior, on an app called Reach. Your parents need to approve your request, and then your boarding parents need to agree. Once you are allowed to go comes the matter of transportation; it's either relying on your friends or the school to get you anywhere, otherwise you pay on your own, and it can get pricey. Most boarding students' families live abroad so traveling and out of the country is the only way to meet their loved ones. This is not always an option since flights can get quite expensive.

What is your thought process behind managing your life?

When living without your parents, you don't have to think about the things they would take care of, that includes any toiletries, doing laundry, and managing your time. Except for school and personal life I have to keep in mind my finances and spending. It's more to think about and quite challenging to plan everything in advance to not fall behind with my work and social life.

What do you think about your time after school?

It's very convenient to be so close to the school; it takes me a literal minute to get to my room after class. It saves me precious time that can be used in other more productive ways. My days after school mostly consist of clubs, sports, and homework. It's easy to get caught up with work when there is always something to do, but I think it's for the best, it keeps our minds occupied. Personally I think that staying busy is the best way to deal with missing home and family.

What is your concept of family?

I've learned to understand that family is the people who take care of you, who want the best for you and who will always be there for you. I have two families, one of my parents, my sibling and further relatives and one I made here. Your roommates, your house parents and your friends mean the world to you when you share meals, have meaningful and meaningless conversations and live together.

In conclusion, although we attend the same school, in the same grade, our lives and opinions surrounding our day in and after school are quite different. Furthermore I can confidently say that nearly everyone at UWC Thailand has a different relationship with the school. There are so many factors that contribute to how people view things, one major one at this school being a boarding or day student. We wanted to look at this to see how the two of us, as friends and classmates, have different points of view.

Canada and the United States removed Indigenous children from their families and communities and placed them in government funded residential schools. These schools were designed to erase Indigenous culture and identity mainly by stripping them of their language and anything that ties them to their home. The residential school systems were a part of a system of cultural genocide. Though Canada and the US have a shared history, their approaches to confronting and repairing these wrongs have developed differently.

In Canada, the residential school system operated for more than a century, with more than 150,000 Indigenous children attending these schools. Canada's approach to confronting this history was with the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in 2008. The TRC documented survivors' experiences and examined the legacy of residential schools. In 2015, it published a final report, which included 94 calls to action, covering areas such as education, child welfare, language and justice. This created a national process for acknowledging what happened and addressing its lasting effects. One key call to action was creating a statutory holiday to honor Survivors, their families and communities and commemorate the history and legacy of residential schools. This led to the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30, 2021. This date was chosen to build on Orange Shirt Day, which is a movement started in 2013 by Phyllis Webstad to remember how her orange shirt was stripped from her on the first day at the St. Joseph's Mission Residential School. Canada's overall response has combined federal policy with grassroots movements, though significant issues remain unresolved around land rights, socioeconomic disparities and systemic injustices such as the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in Canada's prison system and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG.)

Parallels of reparations for Indigenous Peoples

The US operated similar federal boarding school systems but it has yet to establish a national reconciliation process. Their response has been slow and it has taken several steps. In October 2024, President Joe Biden delivered the official federal apology directly on Tribal land in Arizona, whereas Canada's apology was given inside Parliament. The US investigation into the schools was also led from within the government by Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, making her the first Indigenous Cabinet member to investigate her own department's actions. Furthermore, the US reports focused mainly on how the boarding schools were used to take land from Tribes, calculating that the government spent over 23 billion in today's money on these forced assimilation programs. The US also relies on a specific federal law, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), to help tribes reclaim the remains of children found on federal lands, which is a law that Canada does not have. Finally the US extended its investigation to include sites in Alaska and Hawaii which were outside the contiguous states.

Several factors contribute to the differences in these approaches. Canada's TRC was legally mandated as part of the 2006 Indian residential schools settlement agreement, which is the largest class action settlement in Canadian history, which forced a response. The US never faced a comparable legal settlement; its investigation began 15 years later. Canada's school systems were organized through a partnership with the federal government and the church, making them easier to audit as a single entity, whereas the US system is spread across dozens of states, religions and federal agencies.

Canada has taken some further steps towards reconciliation than the US, but neither country has reached the end of the process. Both still have a long way to go in addressing the lasting effects of these policies. Acknowledging, recording and investigating the past are important parts of the process, but they do not automatically resolve its effects. They are only the first steps towards reconciliation. The past can not be changed, but both countries can choose how they take responsibility and work towards reconciliation.

By: Talia

Written By Boling

What happens when someone is Both a teacher and a parent in the same school community?

Kru Saruta "Nok" is both a teacher and a parent at UWC Thailand, which has given her two different perspectives on children and the school community. She shares how she balances these two roles, how each role influences the other, and how seeing a situation from different perspectives can create greater understanding and empathy.

How do the two roles shape the way she sees children and students differently?
As a parent, Kru Nok focuses on her child holistically, and with consideration for their lifetime, including their health, happiness, and long-term future. As a teacher, she focuses on students' current academic and social growth within a group setting.

Does she think being a parent has changed the way she understands her students? How?
Yes. Being a parent has increased her empathy and helped her look beyond behavioural issues to understand the "whole story" behind a child's actions, such as exhaustion or difficulties at home. It also helps her appreciate the vulnerability that parents feel.

Has being a teacher changed the way she understands or approaches parenting?
Yes. Teaching has brought structured discipline, routines, clear boundaries, and realistic expectations based on children's developmental stages into her approach to parenting.

Has she ever had to look at a situation from both points of view before deciding how to respond?
Constantly. For example, when a student does not do homework, a teacher may want compliance, while a parent may understand home stress or fatigue. Balancing both perspectives can lead to more flexible and solution-oriented support.

Are there boundaries she has had to learn to maintain?
Yes. Kru Nok needs to maintain confidentiality about other families, to avoid treating her own children like students or students like her own children, and to turn off "teacher mode" at home.

Does it allow her to see the community through two different "mirrors"?
Yes. The parent mirror reflects the child's daily personal experience, while the teacher mirror reflects professional, school-wide standards and systems.

These two perspectives can sometimes make understanding a child more complicated, but they can also bring greater clarity to the root cause of a child's struggle. Kru Nok sees emotional empathy and professional responsibility as complementary: empathy allows her to respond with compassion, while professional rules and structure create a safe and fair environment for growth.
Ultimately, her two roles have taught her that there is rarely one absolute truth. The same situation can be experienced differently by a student, a parent, and a teacher. Parenting reminds teachers that every student is someone's whole world and needs gentle care, while teaching reminds parents that children are resilient, independent, and benefit from firm boundaries.



Kru Saruta (Nok)

I left home and found a thousand mirrors.

Before I knew that places could be missed, I knew them by sound, by taste, by sight. Some mornings start with an alarm; mine used to start with the uneven, blaring horn of jeepneys, neighbors greeting each other "magandang umaga" (good morning) through an open window, and the aroma of fried egg, dried fish, and sinangag (fried rice) for breakfast. I never thought of these tiny details as anything unique — they were simply there.

The culture I know so well, the language I don't have to translate, or the familiar face. I didn't have to search for those things because I was surrounded by them. I didn't notice how often I heard my own language until I had to listen carefully for it. I didn't notice how many little things belonged to home until none of them were around me. Suddenly, I found myself hopping onto an airplane and crossing the ocean, and then I began to realize how I didn't notice how loud home was until I left it.

Stepping foot at UWC changed the way I look at myself in the mirror. It's not only about what's right in front of me, but the mirror reflects everything that made me.

At UWC, cultures, different languages, and national celebrations are acknowledged and celebrated collectively, but more often, these appear in smaller moments in our daily lives on the campus.

Everyone started living among people whose versions of home sounded completely different from each other's, and saw how much we unconsciously carry where we came from. It's in the way someone sings in a language different from everyone else's. It's in the way they tell stories about their hometown. It's in the way they talk about how much they love a dish from their country. It's in the way someone teaches a word that has no equivalent in English.

Culture isn't confined to the countries written on our passports; it travels with people, when a student from Iran talks about how war affected their country, when someone from Nigeria introduces a dance we have only encountered on our screens, or when people from different continents share their diverse collection of memories. We are reflections of places we have never consciously chosen to carry.

Back in the Philippines, I learned culture through familiarity. At UWC, I learned it through differences, and how similar we are more than we think. Not the same colors in our flags, but the way I share similarities in language with many Hispanic people, the way everyone has their own ways of showing respect to the elderly, and the way people have similar foods in different cultures but call them by different names depending on where we come from. Perhaps, this is one of the quiet paradoxes of leaving home: sometimes you have to go somewhere unfamiliar to realize how much of home you carry within you.

And suddenly, cultures become less about countries and more about people. Countries become less about geography and more about traditions. Perhaps home is made of things too small to pack into a suitcase, yet despite the differences and the diversity, we still find ways to understand each other, not in familiarity, but through connectivity.

We may not pack them into our luggage, yet culture follows us anyway. It's in the words we speak, in the food we love, and in the ways we share and remember. I left not bringing the familiarity in my hands, but I found them again. In the stories, cultures, and homes of other people.

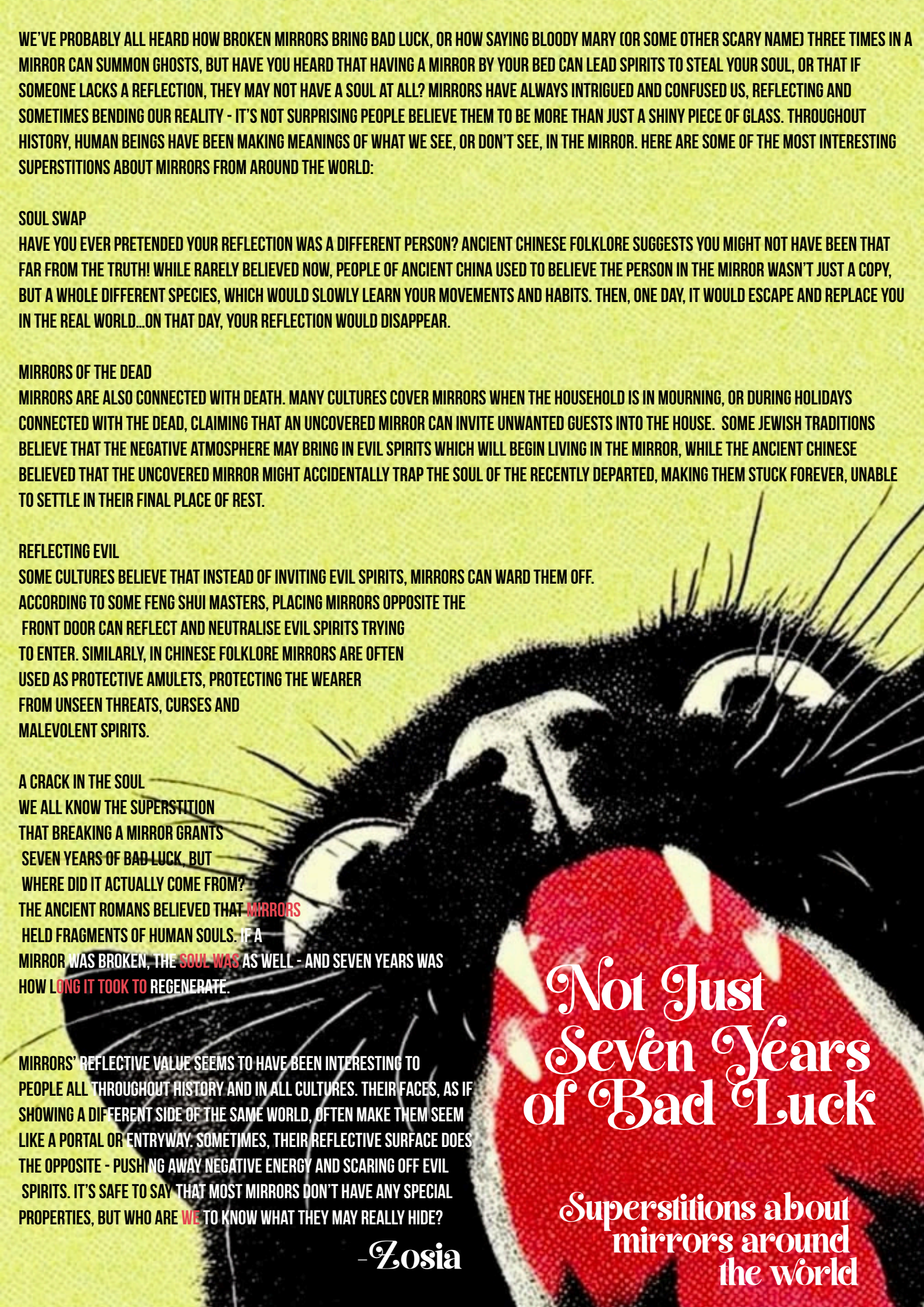
I came to UWC thinking I had left home behind, only to discover that I had walked into thousands of different mirrors, each reflecting a little piece of the world back at me, and somewhere within them, a little piece of myself. And by looking at them, I began seeing my own reflection differently, because we're not students who abandoned our homes; we're students who brought our homes to share them with the world.

BEYOND REFLECTIONS

-DHENRHYL

Not Just Seven Years of Bad Luck

Superstitions about mirrors around the world



We've probably all heard how broken mirrors bring bad luck, or how saying Bloody Mary (or some other scary name) three times in a mirror can summon ghosts, but have you heard that having a mirror by your bed can lead spirits to steal your soul, or that if someone lacks a reflection, they may not have a soul at all? Mirrors have always intrigued and confused us, reflecting and sometimes bending our reality - it's not surprising people believe them to be more than just a shiny piece of glass. Throughout history, human beings have been making meanings of what we see, or don't see, in the mirror. Here are some of the most interesting superstitions about mirrors from around the world:

Soul Swap

Have you ever pretended your reflection was a different person? Ancient Chinese folklore suggests you might not have been that far from the truth! While rarely believed now, people of ancient China used to believe the person in the mirror wasn't just a copy, but a whole different species, which would slowly learn your movements and habits. Then, one day, it would escape and replace you in the real world...on that day, your reflection would disappear.

Mirrors of the Dead

Mirrors are also connected with death. Many cultures cover mirrors when the household is in mourning, or during holidays connected with the dead, claiming that an uncovered mirror can invite unwanted guests into the house. Some Jewish traditions believe that the negative atmosphere may bring in evil spirits which will begin living in the mirror, while the ancient Chinese believed that the uncovered mirror might accidentally trap the soul of the recently departed, making them stuck forever, unable to settle in their final place of rest.

Reflecting Evil

Some cultures believe that instead of inviting evil spirits, mirrors can ward them off. According to some Feng Shui masters, placing mirrors opposite the front door can reflect and neutralise evil spirits trying to enter. Similarly, in Chinese folklore mirrors are often used as protective amulets, protecting the wearer from unseen threats, curses and malevolent spirits.

A Crack in the Soul

We all know the superstition that breaking a mirror grants seven years of bad luck, but where did it actually come from? The ancient Romans believed that mirrors held fragments of human souls. If a mirror was broken, the soul was as well - and seven years was how long it took to regenerate.

Mirrors' reflective value seems to have been interesting to people all throughout history and in all cultures. Their faces, as if showing a different side of the same world, often make them seem like a portal or entryway. Sometimes, their reflective surface does the opposite - pushing away negative energy and scaring off evil spirits. It's safe to say that most mirrors don't have any special properties, but who are we to know what they may really hide?

-Zosia





The Stranger



Sun rises. Open the tap, brush your teeth, a ritual of disguise.
Hair tousled, frizzled, a crown of static on the smoggy glass.
Lips cracked and parched from sleep,
a mouth open to the desert of dreams.

As I look in the mirror, I see the marks on my head,
I cannot help but bear the scar of pain,
Each blemish a memory,
each smudge a story pressed into my skin.

I see the man I am becoming,
Stubborn hair sprouting daily.
The razor sings across my skin,
a blade going against time,
as if it can keep the spark alive.

But nothing is the same.
The bones shift, shoulders broaden,
and the sight of myself whispers, an apparent attack,
telling the stories of a time to which I can't go back.

All of it reflected.
Who I am now,
changed, for better or worse,
a different person,
a stranger who still wears my name.

Glare into the eyes,
unchanged, constant,
a feeling of warm solace.
The lens I saw through as a boy.
I look into them and see,
the only truth that has not shifted.
When everything else changes
the gaze remains,
a thread that ties me to myself.

And yet, inside me,
the child still stirs.
The one who woke without hesitation,
For the cartoons, for the games, for the toys.
For the sheer joy of the sunny morning.
That child knew no condolence,
no mirror to confirm his existence.

The mirror is cruel, but honest.
It shows the labor of tending,
the endless care that never ends.
To tend oneself is to endure,
though tending never makes the self fulfilled.

Now everything is changed.
Nothing feels the same.
Does anything feel like home?

Life is a fight to keep that child alive,
the daily tending being
a negotiation with time.
To hold that candle against the cruel winds,
to believe that beneath the scars,
beneath the frizz and the cracks,
there is still a warm spark,
that remembers the joy.

Though the mirror shows
a man I barely recognize,
I will hold that candle lit
I will not let him die.

– Efaz C.

You Need to Smile More!

In the opening scene of “Nosedive” from the Black Mirror anthology, the protagonist is seen rehearsing a socially perfect smile as part of her morning routine. At best, it is comical, but what it truly is is deranged. She is not happy, she is practicing how to look happy.

***

I have always been a little wary of people who smile too much. There, I said it! I do not dislike happiness, but it’s the constant smiling that I find rather unsettling.
The kind of smile that is plastered on a person’s face as a consequence of a joke that no other person had heard; the kind of smile that emotes less, but is like permanent furniture around the house; the kind of smile that is stretched cheek to cheek and has the enthusiasm of a conman who has spotted his next victim; the kind of smile that makes one check their pockets afterward; the kind of smile on someone who thinks being liked is a full-time job; the kind of smile that looks more edited than a college brochure that is trying to persuade you that they are the champions of DEIB.

If this reminded you of a specific person, that’s on you. Not me!
The frightening thing about a charming smile is that it can make one feel safe before one has had the chance to assess if the person is safe. Such a smile might invite you closer, like the flame does a moth. That does not mean that you must sashay your way to it.
Maybe I’m being too harsh. Some people **are** naturally chirpy. However, and unfortunately, I have lived long enough to know that some smiles are not windows. Some smiles are like IKEA’s blackout curtains. They reveal nothing. And because I also ***know*** that when the teeth go in, the fangs come out!
I trust people who can sit next to me without feeling the desperate need to say something cheerful. A person whose face can look agitated, irritated, annoyed, and lost. There is an honesty on that face. There is solace to be found on that truthful face. A person who doesn't constantly smile, allows you to look at what they actually do. And actions are, thankfully, much harder to fake.
I like the kind of smile that looks less like a performance and more like being let in on something private; the kind of smile that says I understand without making a theatrical display of it; the kind of smile that carries a sense of confidence that does not need to prove itself; the kind of smile that has a hint of mischief and a strong personality underneath; the kind of smile with a slight curve of the lips that I can read when I look at the person across the room.
There is a comforting joy in knowing that I don’t have to contort my face in a manner that would make my dentist proud and to give the appearance that I am cheerful just to prove that I am a good person. I suppose I am not bothered by the smile itself, but the prevalent, predominant, and highly inaccurate assumption that being pleasant and being good are the same thing. They. Are. Not.

P.S.: If this piece made you smile, it’s because a lot of work went into it.
The same is true for fake smiles.



Written by: Kru Nicol

The Mirror has Two Faces

By James Naylor

Imagine a person getting ready for school. Before leaving, they stop at the mirror for one last look and begin scrutinizing every detail for the things they don't like. Maybe their haircut still isn't right. Maybe their eyebrows are uneven. Maybe their shirt isn't fitting the way they want it to...Again.

They noticed these things once, and now they expect to see them every time. They do this unintentionally, paying no attention to the reality that these small details are things that nobody else would ever notice. They do this because what we notice can take over what we see.

Now consider someone who buys a red sports car. Then, as they proudly drive around in their new red sports car, they start to notice all the other red sports cars on the road. There isn't suddenly an influx of red sports cars on the road because that person just bought one, that's not how the universe works. They are noticing the red cars because, on some level, they are looking for them.

This is an example of the frequency illusion, but that's not really the point. The point is that this experience (that most humans can relate to) suggests one simple thing:

What we look for changes what we see.

This can become more complicated when we start using what we notice to decide something about ourselves.



A bad grade turns into, "I'm not smart."

A friendship ending becomes, "Nobody likes me."

An awkward interaction becomes, "Everyone thinks I'm weird."

One mistake becomes, "I'm a failure."

All of these conclusions require a pretty massive leap. The event may be real. The disappointing grade may exist, the friendship may have ended, the mistake may have happened. But the interpretation is subjective. That is the second face of the mirror.

This kind of thinking is remarkably common. Working as a counselor with different age groups, in different countries and professional settings, I've seen this pattern again and again. Harsh self-criticism appears to be a broadly human characteristic. Our brains are very good at finding evidence that confirms the story we are already telling ourselves. If we're looking for flaws, we find flaws. If we're looking for failure, we find failure. If we're looking for rejection, we find rejection. If we're looking for what's wrong, we'll find it.

This doesn't mean that the things we see aren't real. It's true that sometimes we need to evaluate our lives when things don't feel right. Sometimes there are things we genuinely want to change. But it's helpful to remember that the mirror is not showing us the whole picture.

We must be careful not to mistake our most critical and judgmental observation for absolute fact.

The person we see in the mirror is not necessarily the person other people see. We tend to look in the mirror and see the things we're self-conscious about. We know where to look because we've been looking for those things for a long time. Other people don't have that same map of our insecurities. They see us, but they don't necessarily see the things we have trained ourselves to notice.

And there is another problem. We spend all day inside our own heads. We notice every awkward interaction, every mistake, every moment when we said the wrong thing. Other people usually don't have access to that running commentary. They have their own lives, their own worries, and their own things to think about.

Sometimes we are judging ourselves based on information that nobody else even has.

Sure, it might not be realistic to stop that automatic critical judgment when we look in the mirror (worth trying though). But we can learn to recognize it when it happens. We can notice when our brain takes one event and turns it into a story about who we are. We can remind ourselves that the first interpretation is not necessarily the whole truth.

The mirror isn't lying. But it isn't telling us the whole truth either.

So, if the mirror has two faces, our job isn't to stop looking in the mirror. Maybe our job is to learn to look at it differently. To notice what we are looking for, question the story we are telling ourselves, and leave room for another way of seeing the same reflection.

The next time you look in the mirror and immediately notice what's wrong, maybe ask yourself a different question:

What am I looking for?

The Selling Point



The UWC mission is one that has been romanticized by social media, students and graduates around the world. The idea of having people from all over the world to come together and promote peace sounds incredible. And while it is true, while the mission still stands, the UWC experience is not what it is on the websites and instagram pages. To me, the UWC experience isn't necessarily less than what is marketed, it's just different. Most students, including myself, have seen some genre of a poster image; a group of happy teenagers laying on the grass, all different races and genders, textbooks in hand, and potentially a nice bird in the background.

But UWC is not a still, it's not perfect, and it's definitely not the Utopia many expect. First and foremost, the academic rigour is not properly communicated to those who apply. To some extent I knew the IB was difficult, but I didn't fully process how difficult it really was. I spoke with Yaakov to gain an additional perspective. "So I had no clue, and this was intended as a gap year for me, so I thought I was going to be coming to a hippie-jungle culty spiritual getaway, and it's been the hardest academic journey that I've ever put myself into." This is a commonly shared sentiment across many NC students. But to me, it is also a foundational part of my UWC experience. You haven't really lived the UWC experience if you haven't been up at 3 am working on some TOK assignment you forgot you had. But still, that isn't really the example that UWC would like set in place, logically so.



"I don't know. I had a really, really high expectation in my mind, like a really big fantasy, so nothing could quite live up to it"
-Yaakov Ellis

Additionally, people seem to glorify a diverse environment, but fail to recognize the conflicts that arise due to cultural differences. I myself expected a lot more cross-cultural understanding than cross-cultural discourse. But when you decide to build a school that is based on the principle of having people with vastly different opinions, it is unfair to assume that they will all miraculously get along. This picture-perfect brochure can't and won't capture arguments in the kitchen about smell but these conversations aren't inherently a bad thing; in fact, they are useful. They facilitate conversations that wouldn't happen otherwise. Which is what truly makes UWC what it is. But it's also not super appealing to advertise "You will go through moments where you hate everyone because they are too loud" but it's also a reality.

But most of all, people forget that as great as it is, it is still high school. High school is difficult, with academics, friendships, and petty fights. Being away from your family also makes you depend on yourself during this difficult time. Everything feels like it is happening everywhere and all at once until it isn't. And maybe that's the beauty of it. Maybe that's what makes this school and this mission so special. The fact that it isn't a Utopia, but we all collectively decide to live through this experience together. That we decide to wake up every morning and "Live up to what we signed up for." UWC isn't perfect, but neither are we. The school will not advertise the nitty-gritty because then there would be no surprises for students like us. And maybe some day somehow realize we have become a poster child for a future UWC Applicant.

– Manuela




So sick and tired of all these pictures of me
Completely wrong, totally wrong
- Elliot Smith



Perspectives on a Shoe

-Kru Jazz

I was sitting at my desk one morning when Alex walked in. “Hey Jazz,“ she said, and I looked over my shoulder. “What do you think about the new Converse ad?”

I had no idea what she was talking about. This is mostly because our first unit in grade 9 English class is about social media algorithms, and studying it with the students always compels me to delete Instagram for a while. My thoughts on whatever viral action Converse had taken were, at that point, uninfluenced. Alex saw in this an opportunity to conduct a small social experiment, which she eagerly seized by finding a photo on her phone, walking over to me and holding it up to my eyes.

“What do you see?”

I looked. My breath caught, and I could feel my brow furrow. Discomfort bloomed within me, as if I were seeing something sinister. And yet, as my eyes swept the image, I struggled to articulate why. There was the greyscale color palette, the model in a stark white skirt, and the pairs of Converse on the ground, all pointed inwards as if bearing witness to something. Bearing witness to what was there in the middle: a pair of hanging feet, limp, suspended. It unnerved me. My tongue tried for words, tasting them, then tossing them away. But where my language was muddled, my feelings were sharp. I looked harder at the hanging feet - why did they make me so sad?

Curious, I reached out towards the screen, pinched it with my fingers to zoom in, and saw now that my eyes had misread it. The feet were not feet at all, but a pair of empty shoes, dangling gently from the fingertips of the model. When I asked myself why I seen a pair of feet, I finally had the words to answer Alex’s question:

“It looks like a lynching.”

Alex stared at me quietly. “Why?”

“I don’t know. I know the shoes are being held in her hand, but I can’t shake the image that somebody is hanging there. My eyes keep coming back to that.”

I touched my finger to her screen again, scrolling down to reveal some related images. I saw another photo of the same advertisement, upon which someone had overlaid two black dots on the part of the skirt caught white in the light, the part which rose steeply until it cut off at a clean point. And I knew, without needing to be told, that these were eyeholes, holes that could be cut from a pointed mask used to hide one's face. And suddenly it all made sense, why the advertisement was so disturbing. It was so like those black and white images in the book my grandfather had once shown me as he explained a shameful and tragic part of our country’s past, so like the similar ones that peppered my history textbooks and classroom films as a child, greyscale stills of lynchings in the woods, of dangling feet, and of the white, conical hoods bearing witness to it all in their sinister rituals of racism and hate.

This advertisement, in its own way, is very much like a mirror. When we peer into it, we will see parts of our worldview reflected back at us. In my case, this rose as subconscious sadness and fear, tangled up in dark symbols that so many Americans have come to know very well. But I was not alone: everyone is peering into their own mirror. Alex and I repeated this experiment several times. Of the Americans we asked, most of them clocked it even faster than I did, and had choice words to express it as well. Most who were not American did not see what we saw. Yet surely, the opposite could also be true: Alex did not see what I saw in the ad, but another image in the world, perhaps laden with certain colors or shadowed with familiar symbols, might evoke something for her that my eyes would miss.

All pieces of media act as mirrors. Those who’ve sat in my classes this year have seen the sign at the front of the room: different eyes see different things. Whether we wish to or not, there will always be a part of us reflected in what we witness. When we consider intentions and impacts, both in and outside of the classroom, it is paramount that we remember this.

"What ad?" Jazz asked confused.
A few nights before, during my regular scrolling time, something came up on my reels: a person stating how controversial the new ad for Converse was. And before reading or seeing anything else about it, I looked for the ad, stared at it, and thought...what did I see? What I saw was a woman in a white skirt stepping inside a star that alluded to the iconic Converse symbol and the classic Converses hanging from the woman's hand. I was honestly trying to understand what the controversy was about, and I looked for that "vase and face" type of epiphany, but I still could only see a shoe ad.

Then I read the comments and the analysis, and I followed it for a few days. The truth is that this ad was not written in my language (and I don't mean just Spanish), and it wasn't written in my history. I know about *that* part of history. I know what those hoods stand for and what lynching is, but I know them the way I know other events in history, meaning it is something I have studied, not something I have inherited. And I realized I was not alone. Our staff room gathers teachers from different continents and hemispheres, and many of them looked at the ad and, like me, saw a star and a shoe. But my American colleagues (and an Irish friend trained in publicity and design) gasped within seconds. They didn't just see it. They felt it, and it stayed with them.

Of course I see it now, but I didn't see it straight away, and I am not a stranger to discrimination. I am Colombian. I have seen my country reduced to one (mostly negative) word many times, one recurrent joke about what we sell and what we smuggle (Thanks, Netflix!), and probably, if the ad had shown a woman laughing too loud and with such a thick accent that it needs subtitles (like Gloria), I would have seen it, or felt it in a second, and most probably I would have rolled my eyes, even before my mind processed what I had seen.

Why did I miss it? Was I being naive? Ignorant? Nope. It was where I stood. Because a kaleidoscope never changes the pieces inside the glass, yet every time it turns, it makes a new pattern. And I think *Identity* works exactly the same way, as we never stop being any of the pieces, but the pieces that catch light in a specific turn depend on where we stand, to what light, and who is looking. For example, in Colombia, I was never just "Colombian". I was from a region, with a different accent from other Colombians. I became *latinoamericana* listening to Calle 13's "Latinoamérica", a song that made a whole continent feel like home. Later, I became *Latina* in other people's mouths, and *Hispanic* in a box on a form that asked for my ethnicity. I became a migrant 10 years ago when I left my home. Some of these pieces I chose and others were chosen for me. Either way, all of them shape what *I* see. Race in Colombia has its own long history: of *mestizaje*, of Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities, of colonization, of colorism that we still don't talk about enough, and that has taught me to read into specific symbols, but not necessarily a white hood.

So, because I didn't see it, it doesn't count? Not at all. The harm it has caused is real, whether my eyes could see it or not. However, I have to ask: if I could miss it because it wasn't written in MY history, MY language, or MY country, who else could have missed it? How is it that something like this came to light, moving its way through multiple layers and filters?

Zooming out from the picture and the ad, there are bigger questions, and they call for honest conversations, not only about Converse and its marketing team but about every room we walk into. Questions about representation: who was on the team, and who sat in the leadership above it? About intention: what happens when no one is meant to cause harm, and harm happens anyway? About results and accountability: what do we owe people once that harm is done? And about "blind spots": are they only a failure, or can it also be a starting place?

Jazz and I started from the same question and walked in different directions. But we came back together, had a conversation on the *zoom in* and the *zoom out*, and were willing to see each other's perspectives. We might not have seen the same thing, but looking through each other's kaleidoscopes revealed what neither of us could have seen alone.

The question is still here: ***What do you see? And what are you willing to see?***

-Aru Alex

The Two Fridas

Is it possible for two different people to live inside one body? Oftentimes, we can be very different people, whether it's at home or at school, or, if you're an international student, in your home country versus in Thailand. The language you speak, the decisions you make, and the way you act are all affected by the part of your identity you choose to show.

Frida Kahlo explored the duality of identity in The Two Fridas (1939), which is a landmark piece of 20th-century art. Frida Kahlo was a revolutionary Mexican painter known for her self-portraits. Kahlo was revolutionary in the sense that she created art that was deeply connected to her personal experiences and represented her identity. The Two Fridas is an exemplar of her expression through art. Kahlo painted The Two Fridas during a pivotal time in her life: while going through a painful divorce from her husband, Diego Rivera. Rivera was a monumental Mexican painter during Kahlo's lifetime, and his fame eclipsed hers at a time when much of the public was not aware of her work. The Two Fridas is also the largest self-portrait Kahlo ever made, at almost life-size (173 cm x 173 cm). This is important because most of her paintings were small. After a bus accident at age 18 and the many surgeries that followed, Kahlo was bedridden for long periods of her life and often painted lying down, using an easel attached to her bed. Choosing such a large canvas shows how much this painting meant to her.

The painting is divided between the two cultural identities that Kahlo felt: her Mexican Tehuana identity on the right and her European identity on the left. Kahlo's father was born in Germany, while her mother was of Indigenous Mexican and Spanish descent. We can see the influence of the divorce on this painting through the Mexican Frida holding a portrait of Rivera in her hand, while the European Frida holds surgical forceps, trying to stop her bleeding. Here, Kahlo reflects the reality that Rivera loved the Mexican side of her identity but did not love the European side. The pain that she feels is reflected through her open, torn heart. Frida's biracial identity brings her pain because of Rivera's rejection of her European side. There is another way that this painting shows two sides of Frida. Frida Kahlo contracted polio at the age of six, which caused her right leg to weaken and become thin; later, the bus accident permanently damaged her body. As a result, she often wore long dresses to cover her right leg and hide her limp, and the dresses also concealed her medical corsets. In this portrait, Frida wears a long dress covering most of her body, and an observer who is not aware of her injuries would most likely not know what she has been through. If nobody had known about her injuries, Frida would have been the only one to see the injured side of herself.

To me, this painting shows how a mirror reminds you of all parts of your identity, and that there are different sides to your personal identity, whether they are accepted by others or not. Although Frida was hurt by Rivera's rejection, the two Fridas are still physically connected and emotionally supporting each other. My interpretation is that she is showing that these two identities are part of her, regardless of others' acceptance, and that she is who she is because of her biracial identity. This shows me that people are made up of multiple identities, whether cultural, social, or based on personal experience, and that people should be confident in that, because that is what makes you who you are, regardless of others' acceptance. When we look into a mirror, we see two sides of our identity: the person everyone sees, and the cultural, social, and personal identities that make up who we really are. Frida Kahlo's The Two Fridas is an endearing yet powerful example of the human experience of feeling different identities and experiences within ourselves, and Frida's art will always be a reminder of how art can show a person's identity through multiple layers.

by Tiger


ONE IMAGE,
COUNTLESS
INTERPRETATIONS
-MAYTTÉ

THE NUDGE THAT DOESN'T

In high school, I had economics first period every morning. None of it landed. It was diagrams and vocabulary that connected to nothing I cared about. It also happened to sit directly after basketball practice, which ran from 6:30 to 7:30, and by eight o'clock I was fighting to keep my eyes open. Often I lost.

One afternoon I was in the gym getting ready for practice, and Coach McGloughlin walked over. He said, "You need to stay awake in economics class." That was the whole conversation. Ok, Coach.

From that point on I was locked in, regardless of how I felt about the subject. Nobody had said anything I didn't already know. What changed was who said it.
I teach economics now. My whole aim is to make it a course students can actually connect to — the thing it wasn't for me at sixteen. And the discipline I teach has a word for what my coach did that afternoon. He nudged me: a small, costless intervention that changed my behaviour without changing a single one of my incentives. Richard Thaler won a Nobel Prize in 2017 for taking that idea seriously. My coach did it in nine words next to a ball rack.
Ask most people what high school sports are for, and you'll get a short answer: exercise, stress relief, a chance for kids to burn off energy against an opponent. Somewhere behind that answer sit a set of older assumptions that never quite go away. That athletes are coasting on physical gifts rather than working. That practice time is time stolen from studying. That teachers go easy on the players. That sport is a lesser commitment than the orchestra or the debate team — fine as a hobby, but not the thing that shapes a student. And, quietly, that since almost none of these kids will play professionally, the whole enterprise is a waste of years that should be academic.
After years of coaching, I can say that picture is wrong. Not incomplete. Wrong.

In most of school, character is something we talk about. In sport, you watch it happen. How a student behaves on a court or a field is usually an honest reflection of who they are. The player who cheats when he thinks no one is watching is rarely a different person in the classroom or in his friendships. The player who steadies herself after a bad call, a bad quarter, a bad half tends to be the same person who steadies herself when something real goes wrong. Competition applies pressure, and pressure tells the truth.

What spectators see is the smallest part of it. A game is two hours at most. Behind those two hours are months of conditioning, of shooting alone in an empty gym, of showing up to practice when nothing is at stake and no one is keeping score. None of that is visible to the naked eye. By the time an athlete looks competitive, the work that made them competitive is already invisible.

At UWC Thailand, that work competes with everything else. Our students carry IB and MYP coursework, service commitments, co-curricular programmes, and in many cases a life lived far from home. For a student here to play a sport they love, they have to build a schedule that actually holds. They learn to protect their study time, to prepare in advance, to sacrifice some things so they can say yes to the one that matters. That skill does not appear in a box score. It is not engraved on a trophy. It is, quite simply, a life skill, and sport is where a large number of our students acquire it.

This is why I think one common instinct is wrong: pulling a struggling student out of sport. We don't have eligibility rules here, but the reflex still shows up -in a conversation with a parent, in advice from a tutor, in a student's own decision to drop the thing they love until their grades recover. It rarely works. When the American state of Kentucky introduced a rule barring students from school sport if they were failing a class- a policy widely used in the United States and known there as "no pass, no play" — an economic analysis found that student athletes performed no better academically as a result (Golebiewski, 2009). The hours freed up by benching a student do not reappear as study hours. Sport does not compete with the classroom so much as anchor a student to it. It limits the unstructured time in which a teenager's week falls apart; it forces the calendar discipline described above, and it puts an adult in their life whose approval they actively want. A quiet word from a coach about an overdue assignment will often move a student further than a formal warning from anyone else in the building.

SHOW UP ON THE STAT SHEET

Sport also teaches something schools are otherwise not very good at teaching: how to lose well. Disappointment in athletics arrives in many forms. There is the student who doesn't make the team and has to decide whether to spend the next year getting better or to walk away. There is the loss that comes down to one possession. There is the injury that erases a season. There is the mistake - yours, or a teammate's - that you have to forget within about four seconds, because the game does not pause while you feel bad about it. Learning to carry a short memory in competition is a rehearsal for carrying perspective in adulthood. Very few classrooms offer that rehearsal.
And then there is the team itself. A team asks a young person to lift up a teammate who is struggling, through encouragement or through example. It asks them to take a role smaller than the one they wanted because the team needs it. It asks them to subordinate a personal ambition to a collective one, repeatedly, in public, with no guarantee of reward. Anyone who has watched a seventeen-year-old choose the team over their own statistics has watched a person grow up a little in real time.

There is also the matter of whom these students will still know in thirty years. We lost our last high school basketball game to Hinsdale Central in the quarterfinal of the Illinois state tournament. Two thousand fans chanted "Season's over" as we walked off the floor. I will never forget the ride home - Floyd Hamilton and I cried like babies in the back of that bus, knowing that was the last time we would be teammates. What we didn't know was what we were actually keeping. Every time I have seen Floyd in the years since, an hour of it goes to basketball stories. Practices. Bus rides. Games nobody else remembers.

Teammates hold on to things classmates never do - the highlights and the lowlights from practice, the late nights in the gym, the trips, the tears, the sweat, the inside joke from a bus ride in Year 10 that still lands two decades later. A surprising number of our students will find, decades from now, that their closest friends are the people they once shared a bench with. Shared difficulty bonds people in a way shared classrooms rarely manage.

And athletes remember their coaches. All of them -the good ones, the bad ones, the funny ones, the technical ones, the one whose words at halftime they can still repeat word for word. Ask an adult to name every coach they ever had, and most can do it. Ask them to name every teacher and they will struggle. That is not a criticism of teaching; it is a statement about hours. A coach may spend more time with a student in one season than a classroom teacher does in a year, and much of that time is spent in exactly the conditions where character is formed: fatigue, frustration, pressure, and the need to keep going anyway. The socio-emotional impact of that is considerable, and it often outlasts anything on a transcript.

So when the season ends and someone glances at the record, I'd ask them to understand what they're actually looking at. The wins and losses are the least interesting information available. The real record is the student who learned to manage a week, to absorb a setback, to keep a commitment when it became inconvenient, to compete hard and shake hands afterward.
And somewhere in every season there is a version of that afternoon in the gym. A sentence from a coach that costs nothing, takes four seconds, and lands because of every early morning that preceded it. I have no idea whether Coach Mac remembers saying it. I doubt it. But I have wondered, more than once, whether I would be standing in front of an economics class today if he hadn't.

Kru Ron


Listen while you read
DESIGN-
ANAAYA
SOPHIA
KATARINA
JESSICA
YEATSHO
YAAKOV