

SHADES OF RED

2026



Shades of Red
The Literary and Visual Journal of Prince Alfred College
17th Edition, 2026

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Acknowledgement of Country

The stories and artwork we celebrate in the pages of this journal were created on the lands of the Kaurna people, the first storytellers of the Adelaide Plains. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Kaurna lands on which we are privileged to create. The Shades of Red committee pay our respects to Elders past and present, recognising the power of young people to carry stories forward through their own creativity.



Designed and printed by:

2-14 Paul Street St Marys SA 5042
T 08 8124 0000 F 08 8277 2354
obhprint.com.au

You. In Focus.



Joshua Zhang | Year 11

Editor’s Note

As my final year of schooling comes to an end, I find myself reflecting on the impact *Shades of Red* has had throughout my six years at the College, eternalising my personal growth through pen, camera, and canvas. As the Editor-in-Chief of the journal’s seventeenth edition, it is an honour and a privilege to showcase the breadth of creativity we have here at Prince Alfred College, and to invite you to see what makes this school so special: the diverse perspectives of its students.

The symbol for this year’s journal, a pair of binoculars, was chosen to remind students of their unique perspective and creative outlook, especially in a time where individual thought is threatened by artificial intelligence. Furthermore, our slogan *You. In Focus* reflects how the journal provides a platform for all submissions, with works spanning from our youngest members of the ELC to our graduating Year 12 students.



A testament to the quality of the journal, I’d like to personally thank and commend the following committee members for their hard work this year:

- » Jack Stunell
- » Christopher Davi
- » Harry Grandioso
- » Tom Nolan

Although a smaller group compared to previous editions, their time and effort are integral to the creation of this year’s *Shades of Red* journal. Moreover, on behalf of the committee, I extend my thanks to Ms. Kelly and Mr. Iadanza, the *lifeblood* of this very book. Ms Costello’s help has also been invaluable. In particular, I’d like to acknowledge and congratulate Ms. Kelly on an outstanding first year overseeing the journal; I am indebted to her guidance and dedication.

When turning each page, I encourage you to embrace all perspectives displayed within. It is through our differences that we learn, inspire, and define ourselves. We the committee are incredibly proud of what we have created, and we thank you for your continued support.

Taine Meyer

Year 12 Student and Editor-in-Chief



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The Colour Red
Oliver Richardson | Year 2

Red is my colour
Just like my new Prince’s
Uniform.

Red shines in the dark.
Like a great fire burning with sparks.

The autumn colours of
The great big trees with
Falling leaves, fill me with
Glee.

The bright red sunset
Glow.
Like a sheet of rubies on
Show.

Red hot chillies spice me up
Like a curry in a cup

Red is the colour of my blood
Strong and powerful like
A flood, it keeps me going
So I can run.



Polish Knights
Felix Witkowski | Year 4

The moon shines in the night
As you gallop on your horse with the other knights
The knights and you are scared for the fight
because Polish knights are in a fight for rights

The fight begins
The rest of the knights run for their lives
You said attack
The knights that are left swing at heights

The things you have seen
The poor knights
You wish you didn't see
The gory things in the fight

You swing the final blow
You win until an arrow takes height
Flying to your chest your final words are
'Polscy rycerze nigdy nie wycofują się z bitwy'

'Polscy rycerze nigdy nie wycofują się z bitwy'
translated to English is
'Polish knights never retreat from battle.'



Hugo Kirkpatrick | Year 7

Harry Will | Year 9



Ducks
Jamison Landers | Year 4

A duck has a violin and likes to pluck,
But the violin has no strings, well that's bad luck,
He finds a way to successfully play,
But unfortunately, he finds out that he needs to pay.

A duck that plays basketball and likes to slam-dunk,
A duck who likes music and plays some funk,
He scores a goal and we all start to cheer,
He misplays a song and we all start to jeer.

A duck who plays soccer and scores a goal,
A duck who likes golf and makes a hole,
He has powerful feet and very strong kicks,
He has to go to the clubhouse to get balls and sticks.

A duck who has a husband and a son,
She has a big car that weighs a ton,
You may see her around in town,
You can also see her in the circus as a clown.



Tom Nolan | Year 11

Nothing Can Change:
The Story of The Three Owls
Max Drew | Year 7

As evil fills their twisted minds,
Their wings flap in horror. Despair.
Hallucinations of Satan fill their harsh vision.
Their pristine white feathers now cursed. Dark. Like an
everlasting black hole.
No destiny. No happy ending,
Just a cause for utter catastrophe like a bull in a China
shop.

As their feet wiggle, their heart shatters like glass
With no good left within them.
They are scarred for life.
Trapped in a vault where no one comes in and no one
comes out.
They hope and wait for a hero even though they know
he will never come.

One blocks their ears and screams, "no more evil."
One covers their eyes and bellows, "no more evil."
And one covers their mouth and mumbles, "no more
evil."

But something says within,
There. Is. No. Escape.
Peril awaits
And nothing can change.



Nathan Zhang | Year 5

Two Love Birds
Sam Schroeter | Year 8

There once were two lovebirds; they had the whole of
the world to discover with each other. They were part of
a flock over southern Africa. They were very colourful,
with the male bird being the biggest and the fastest in
the flock. His name was Rio. The female was the most
beautiful bird that Rio had ever seen. Her name was
Zulu. By sheer luck, a powerful gust of wind pushed them
towards each other. As they collided, the world stood
still, and it was love at first sight. They were the perfect
partners, with the whole flock admiring their relationship,
as they flew together in perfect sync. It seemed like
nothing could separate them until one night a storm hit.

"Where are you, my love!" Rio screeched.

Thunder crashed down like a sonic boom, and lightning
split the flock apart like a knife. As morning came, there
were no birds in sight, and Rio was scared and alone,
lying on the coarse, dry and sandy ground. With no
way of reaching the flock, Rio panicked and started
flying in all directions. Eventually, Rio calmed down and
broke down in tears, realising that he might never see the
love of his life again. He found some water, drank, then
rested a little. When he woke up, he set himself a mission
to search the ends of the earth until he either died or
found Zulu. After a nearly endless flight, Rio almost gave
up until he saw a glimpse of orange on the horizon.
He used every last fibre of energy to reach the orange
sparkle. He flew with only one thought in his mind.
He was going to reach Zulu. When he finally reached
the sparkle, he heard the sound of a thousand screeches.
He was then immediately tackled by Zulu.

"I was so worried about you, Rio", she said.

He was finally safe at home.



Edmund Macmillan | Year 1



Monica Magann | Staff

To Be or Not to Be

Jack Wilson | Year 10

To be or not to be,
That is my question.
It's what drives me insane.
Leaving me lost without direction,
And my thoughts
Stuck in progression,
That always tends to stop.
But unlike my thoughts,
The world keeps spinning,
Telling me who to be
Before I even get the chance to breathe.

I try to fit into this puzzle
That you call life,
But my pieces won't fit.
No matter how much I slam
And cram,
Until I can no longer say,
This is *who I am*,
But instead, I ask,
Who am I?
So I shrink,
I rethink,

Overthink every blink,
Like, was that too much
Or not enough?

The truth is,
I don't know anymore.
I don't know how to stand on my own,
I don't know how to think on my own,
I don't know how to be my own.
And somewhere
In all that deafening silence,
I realised,
I didn't choose to let go,
I was taught to let go.

So, what if the problem,
Was never my pieces,
Instead, the puzzle.
What if fitting in
Was never the goal,
Just a lie to keep me small.
What if I was never truly lost,
Only placed on a map,



Xavier Reppucci | ELC

That had no destination,
Only, an ongoing journey.

I know I'm not perfect,
But I'm tired of being less,
To be more.
I'm tired of living in the shadow
of my own spotlight.
I'm tired of wondering,
To be or not to be,
Because now
I don't need to choose,
Because I know,
I want to be me.

The Letter

James Dixon | Year 12

Dear Masculinity,

I remember the days when I didn't have to worry about you. When my only worry was dodging and weaving, trying not to get tagged by one of my best mates. Feeling the hot sun reflecting off the monkey bars blinding me every time I stared at them. The sound of laughing children filled the playground air around me. But those happy, carefree days feel like an eternity away now. It wouldn't even have crossed my mind that someday you would be the thing that hunts me.

You are a silent killer, gaining strength every day.

I don't really know exactly when you arrived. I'm trying to remember the first time someone angrily told me to stop crying. Looking deep inside, I can't remember the first time I got called soft. Soft for showing that I was a bit timid.

Maybe I can't find the precise moment it happened, but that's the most terrifying part about you. The quiet predator, striding swiftly through social media, around sports, forcefully moving things around in my head until everything feels like it's yours. Constantly forcing me to hide my real self.

—

I am finally starting to solve the puzzle of how to live with you. Every day now you become less hurtful than the last. Not because you mean something different but because I am realising that it's acceptable to show emotion. You're still in the comment section but no one's paying as much attention. You're still on the TV, but your protective walls are getting torn down.



Angus Christie | Year 8

I'm now seeing there are so many different parts of you and my role is to pick and choose what aspects will make me a good person. At school we have started to learn about you: how you're meant to be strength, courage and honour. But occasionally that is so far from the truth. You're meant to be something men are proud of, but sometimes you're something that they want to run from. What I have learned is we need to accept you. Stop ignoring you. We need to know it is braver to show ourselves than to hide within.

Once I thought you were what made me strong. What made me a man. Now I know that hiding from the truth and acting tough was making me weak, not strong. Honesty is what makes me strong, even if it's harder to do. I know you're still a part of my life these days, but the difference is I control you, not the other way around. Being a man isn't about being a sheep, following the crowd, or sticking with the pack for comfort. It's about shaping my own future. Shaping one that I am proud to call my own.

Dear Masculinity: I will keep some things you taught me. But what I've learnt for certain is it takes more courage to show my emotions than hide away from them.

Maybe that's all there really is to being a man.

Harry Grandioso | Year 11





Phil Noble | Staff

Untitled

Charles Li | Year 12

The no-man's bride stood,
Borrowing the icy wind of winter to freeze her heart,
Praying that the burning sun of summer would not defrost.
As the blight he gifted had already taken root,
Enduring the calamity, yet bearing no fruit.



William Scott | Year 4



Ellis Twigge | Year 9

Monica Magann | Staff



Behind the Mesh

Harry Grandioso | Year 11

A man prevented from leaving,
Hurling at the mesh.
Entrapped.
This has always pleased her.
They only live a day or two,
Starved to death.



Máirta Matthews | Staff

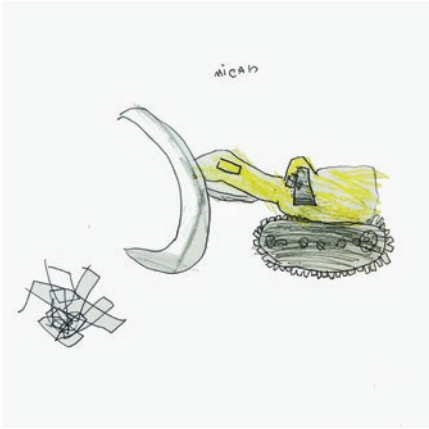


Jaiyen Landers | Year 7

Party Popper Poem

Basil Baklavas | Year 7

Parties are filled with lots of joy and fun.
Gives you the best memories from lots of celebration.
Party poppers erupt – streamers stream.
Colours of the rainbow move through the air like
a flock of birds.
The streamers land and the party goes on.



Micah Wong | ELC



Kaelan Virag | Year 11

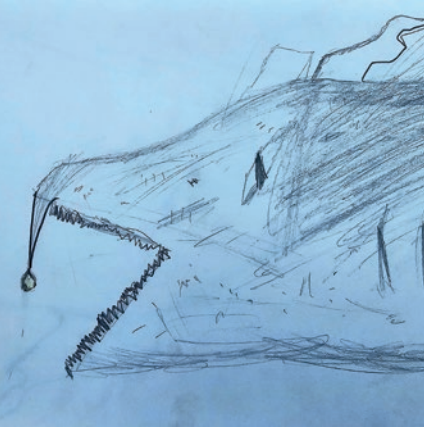
Joshua Zhang | Year 11



Reconnection

Finley Turner | Year 12

I ventured across the woods, past the fields.
It was clear that the trees had healed.
What was previously abandoned had been set free,
able to reconnect.
The forest had overcome destruction,
and it was all for me to see.



Logan Mills | Year 4

Homeland Headlines

Mo Ismaeel | Year 10

News Headline: “Bahrain under attack”,
The bombs fall down,
Scattered debris,
Bodies found
Three civilians killed,
Tens more injured.
“There will likely be more before it ends.”
That man will make no amends.
“Unavoidable” he says
I’m convinced that crazy man finds it enjoyable.

Unavoidable...

As if the war is bad weather,
Like the missiles are rain,
Like destruction is another forecast,
Tomorrow partly cloudy,
A 90 percent chance of explosions being broadcast.
Expected to last the next days,
Weeks,
Months,
Until everyone confronts,
The people making the calls.

The location changes,
But the outcome doesn’t.

Different skylines,
The same smoke rising.
The same smell of war.

The same fear,
Raiding new street names,
Familiarising itself with new places to oppress.

Why not pull out of the Gulf?
Why not follow international law?
Why is nothing being done?

What was meant to be an “Arab NATO”,
Turns into a terrible fate “oh no”.
Yet still,
We sit and stare,
Not a care for those people,
Living the disgusting warfare.
From a distance,
From a screen,
From places we think the conflict won’t reach.

Bryan Zheng | Year 4



See,
The problem is,
To the vast majority,
The conflict causes no commodity,
It’s a spam notification,
Something to ignore,
Just another buzzing phone.
More content to scroll past,
In a desensitised world.
Disconnected.

But when my home is a headline,
The screen becomes heavy.

The places I visit,
Not long ago,
Spontaneously under fire.

I walked down streets,
That didn’t sound like sirens.
Didn’t shake with distant thunder,
Didn’t have the smell of smoke in the air.

Observing a sky that didn’t flash,
Living moments that are now memories.
Ephemeral moments of life,
That will now never be the same.

A world living under the belief,
That fear and tragedy has borders.
That it can’t cross oceans.
But it does,
Faster than we’re willing to admit.

And one day,
if we keep treating pain,
Tragedy,
War
Like background noise,
The headline might learn our names too.

And if it does,
The notification won’t feel small,
The words won’t feel distant.
The reports on the screen won’t feel meaningless.

Because for someone right now,
It never was.

For you it’s a headline,
For someone else it’s a home.



Sebastian Veronese | Year 12





Untitled

Lachlan Bekavac | Year 6

I paced back and forth. I had chess after school until 5:00pm. I looked around for my mum's white BMW. Nothing. I stared straight at my watch. 5:30pm.

I ran back to my classroom, hoping my teacher would still be there. I quietly walked up the stairs as I was worried I shouldn't be in the building after hours.

Scrape.

I froze. My hand wrapped around the cold railing, not daring to let go.

Everything was silent except the faint howling of the wind outside. Whooooosshhhh. The lights upstairs were off and I could vaguely see the silhouette of the steps.

Scraape!

This time it was louder. Something, I wasn't sure what, was getting closer.

Slowly I turned around and started descending, carefully down the stairs towards the noise.

"W-what was that?" I stammered.

My hand froze. My heart skipped a beat. My leg shook as I forced it to go forward, down the stairs.

I was sure the sound was coming from the library. I had that feeling in my stomach that something wasn't right, I was almost frozen in fear, but also my curiosity was spiking as I moved towards the sound.

Every step I was hoping that the noise was something else. Like a busted pipe or an overheated computer fan moaning. As I crept off the last step I was as scared as ever. I could barely take the anticipation.

Thump!

I jumped backwards. My head smacked against the wall.

"Owww!" I groaned.

I took a step forward. Head throbbing. Heart pumping. My hand unwillingly moved toward the door handle. I tried to pull it back, but something was drawing me in. Maybe it was the suspense. A chill ran through my spine as my hand made contact with the cold, hard metal of the doorknob.

I looked to the left and noticed a light go on in one of the buildings in the distance. I thought it might have been the front office, but I was too scared to really comprehend what was happening.

What choice do I have? I thought to myself. I have to open it sooner or later.

I twisted the doorknob.

Please be the right decision. I thought. It was hard to think with an aching pain in my head.

Squeak.

I looked to my left and quickly turned on the light. Some of the lights in the library didn't work, but I could pretty much see everything.

A figure emerged from the shadows. A small black nose. Followed by whiskers. A tiny furry body and a brown wagging tail.

Gasp.

I exhaled as I realised it was the school's emotional support dog, Scout. I couldn't believe it. I looked over and saw a pile of books on the floor.

Ohhh. I thought. That explains the scraping and thumping sounds.

I saw that the door had scratch marks and part of the brown oak wood was peeling. I picked up Scout and gave him a scratch under the chin.

"Ohh, that's a good boy," I said as I ruffled his soft golden fur. "Did you get locked in here accidentally? Let's get you back where you belong," I said relieved. I carried Scout down a windy path to the front office.

I knocked on the glass and Miss Pepper the school principal came out with my mum. "We were wondering where you went," said Miss Pepper.

Tears streamed down my face as I rushed over to my mum. I let out a sigh of relief.

"It's okay honey, I would never forget you. I was just running a bit late."

I hugged my mum as tight as I could, my heart was still racing from the massive roller coaster of emotions that I had just experienced.

"Let's go home please mum, I'm starving."

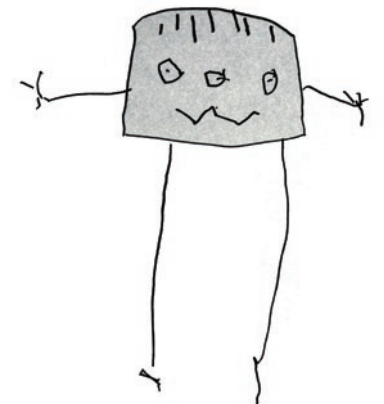


Thomas Henderson | Year 7

Abaddon

Charlie Harris | Year 12

Vague notions of Eden,
munched away by a blight,
purposive but of a random nature.
Lurid desire nosing,
yet but never rising.





Passed Down

Jawad Ismaeel | Year 7

The click of the camera,
signifies the start of the cycle.
The start of the handing down.
Passed from him to her,
To her to him.
The generations it went through,
The generations it past,
Though it still stayed,
generations apart.

Book Sniffing

Georgia Costello | Staff

New books smell so good;
I will put them away soon,
just a few more sniffs.



Harrison Andrews | Year 9

Parker Richards | ELC



The River

Bryan Zheng | Year 4

The river is wide and long,
The water currents vast and strong
The water splashes with a BONG!

As it races and runs down the stream,
The waters smooth and clean,
Its rapids and ripples powerful and mean.

And when the rapids get rough
The rocks like guards are tough
It is like the rocks have had enough.

It supports wildlife all along,
Its source hundreds of kilometres long,
It flows on and on.

Luca Roscio | Year 3



Iguaçu Falls

Elon You | Year 4

The flaming waterfall flows and forges.
The channel flashes and flails.
The giant rockfall punches through gorges.
And the rapid thumps and wails.

Later when the giant channel
Starts a big deafening sound
Smashing down a disused canal
It will not stop till the mouth is found

But when the river starts to slow
And turns from tough to churny
It will merge with the sea and crawl
Right to the end of its journey

But we must go straight back to the torrents
Where the waters are as frothy as cream
And the seaweed makes a terrific abhorrence
Then it flows to a silver stream

Then the river slows to a stop
As still as a stunned statue's shoulder
There are not any whitecaps or chops
It rolls in the sea like a boulder.



Elon You | Year 4



Lucas Pizzino | Year 9

Matilda Dawe | ELC



A Sense of Life, Even in Death

Aidan Witenden | Year 12

The door behind closes itself.
Entering the way snow enters a field.
No prescribed lines, no typical hush,
just the cold bleating its blank refusal.
Ahead a second set of tracks,
in their precision, identical to mine.
Maybe someone who wants the same.
Darkness. You poor thing.



Illiterate Hippopotamus

Ashton Gerecke | Year 8

Hippopotamus
Hippopotamus want learn!
He should read a book?!

The Death and Life of a Tree
Taine Meyer | Year 12

If a girl could become a tree,
would she confide in Mother Nature's bosky
embrace? Hold fungi beneath her rosy roots?
Blackmail the cantharides which feast
upon her leaves, daring the destruction of her
sweet virginity?

Tied upon her wooden cross,
Nature's sacrifice, bloody sap and moss.

Oscar Dolan | Year 8



Angus McLachlan | Year 12



Nate Wang | Year 7

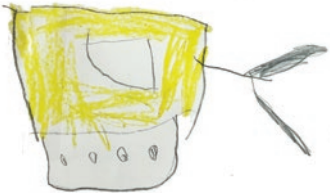


Joshua Zhang | Year 11

Darcy Economos | ELC



Gabriel Teixeira | ELC



The Trophies of Masculinity

Max Flower | Year 12

Before he even knew his name
the cabinet loomed before him
towering, tyrannical.
trophies gleaming
enticing the young boy
the glass polished to a blinding sheen
the sharp scent of polish clinging to the air

It stands in front of him like a rulebook
one that no one wrote
yet everyone knows it by heart.

Each shelf measured, labelled, exposed to light
no blemishes, no cracks, no doubt
only victories, triumph, pride

There is a lock
only accessible by a certain key
every boy is given one
a different one
a replica of themselves
but it doesn't quite fit in the beginning.

“Deal with it.”

“Make it work.”



Will Pledge | Year 11

So the young boy learns to mould their key
chipping away pieces of themselves

That boy is you.

You step inside
click. The door seals shut behind you
pressing your best parts forward,
flush against the glass –
but behind you,
the dust breathes in the shadows
a stale, suffocating odour of neglect
the pieces you want to keep hidden
the key you filed off to fit in

As you grow,
the cabinet grows with you
demanding Achievements.

The Never Cry Trophy
crafted from the finest crystal.
A delicate semblance of fragility, capturing...
the nothingness
because no one knows how easily it breaks

Awarded only through mastering the ritual of pain
when that knot forms in the back of your throat
the pain feels like suffocating yourself
when the chest tightens
begging to be released

but you don't.

You clench your jaw
the pain intensifies
pressing your tongue to the roof
of your mouth
tilting your head back
so nothing can spill out.
you swallow the knot.
again.
and again.

The trophy saturated with pain
by the clear tears,
feeding the beauty
The trophy gleams.

You win the Toughen Up Medal
whether you want it or not
with savage serrated edges that slice your palms
learning pain is a mindset
bruises and blood drawn are just a test -
so you drape it over the Never Cry Trophy

But toughness shouldn't be about breaking bones
just to prove you never cry
it should be about being able to drop the mask
and finally ask, why?

The Silence Trophy,
shaped like sealed lips with a zipper
engraved on the side: “Solitude. Composure. Control.”

The restless thoughts like a river restricted by a dam
the crushing pressure against the walls
constantly surging as the water level swells
carving thoughts in your notes app
each line re-read buries more pain
only to erase every line again
filing your key
just to gain a trophy
so the dam wall begins to strain
because it was always easier than being seen.
Easier to be silent,
Easier to drown, compliant

The Confidence Trophy
obnoxiously large,
bright,
golden and
Hollow.

It commands:
“Be confident.”
“Be tough.”
but behind that shiny exterior coat
is an inner void
where the outside reflects everything admirable
except what's inside it.
The anxiety
the absence of courage
The trophy is a facade
because confidence here isn't truth —
it's performance polished until no cracks show.

You rearrange this shelf every day
ensuring no one notices
that behind this trophy,
Hidden,
is The Bottle Trophy
made of thick glass
sealed tight.
Heavy.

All emotions go in there
everything you were told to keep inside:
every fear,
every doubt.
Every thing.

The bottle slowly fills at first
then suddenly,
every day the lid grows tighter and tighter
strangling the air inside
the air turns bitter, overripe with the unsaid
strangling you
making you struggle to breathe at the thought of the
bottle
because you are too afraid of what happens
if you spill just some of it
wondering, will it all come gushing out?
or leave you choking on doubt?

The One Of The Boys Cup
dented all over
from all the nights out
filled with all the banter
which was more like a war
the “punch” thrown in the punchline
hitting your own gut long after the joke
leaving constant regret
and a shame you can't forget

The Win At All Costs Trophy
an anchor, heavier than the rest
it's not shiny
not gold nor silver,
but something darker
It stands as a constant reminder of what you sacrificed
just to become that reflection in the cabinet glass
it's sat on a slight angle
it's unstable
in a cabinet for victories and achievements
it's there as if it doesn't belong.
Because masculinity can rarely distinguish
between winning
and everything slowly thinning

To uphold your image, the cabinet constantly needs
polishing
wiping your own fingerprints off the glass
you are changing yourself
into someone you can't even recognise.
The “perfect”
“polished” version of... you.

So one day you finally go to the shelf that doesn't fit
where you try to place something new
something that isn't like the rest
a moment of compassion
a moment of struggle
a moment of fear
a truth you have carried quietly

they don't fit
they don't shine
they stand crooked
they keep falling,
The cabinet refuses them.

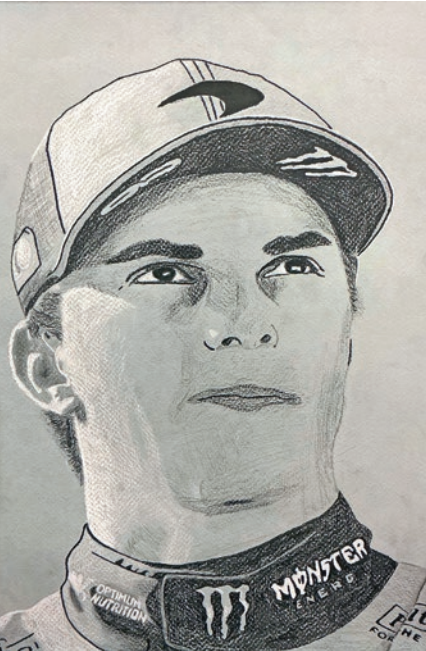
You persist
the cabinet fights back
violently shaking
the trophies rattle
the wood creaking
fractures spidering through the glass
until finally...

Shelves fall.
One
By
One
crashing into each other
releasing all the pain
but instead of panic and mayhem
you release a long, awaited,
Sigh.
after years of tension
a relief.

Standing there in the destruction
your heart calm but frantic
have I ruined everything,
all I've worked for?
or have I saved myself?
and in all the destruction
there is a bright glimmer
shining through all the debris
Not gold.
Not metal.
Not the shine of expectation.
Instead a piece of the cabinet
a shard of the glass
reflecting an image of you
not a future version
but an honest version

Finally seeing the truth
that the cabinet was never a home
It was a display.
Stepping over what's left of the trophies,
you breathe
Deeply.
Fully.

And for the first time,
nothing needed polishing.



Nicholas Rapuano | Year 10



William Garnett | Year 11



Archie Shum | Year 2

The Lonely Beetle

Henry Pedler | Year 12

In the twilight, was a cabin,
A beetle laid with up-stretched limbs,
Through the icy darkness, he imagined touch,
His aedeagus stirred, not with love,
But with loneliness that grew teeth,
And bit through all he had left.

Eyad Shahin | Year 7



iWorld

Harry Hall | Year 10

I wake from my bed and I reach for something,
It's become a recurring motion,
A habit almost natural,
Like it's muscle memory
A reach for some screen controlling my world,
A world that is dominated,
By these addictive devices
So iLook,
And iWatch,
I'm constantly powered on.
Because in my mind,
There is no off switch.

These devices,
Influencing our decisions,
How is it that I am losing connection with the world,
When we are more connected than ever?
These controlling possessions,
Where we can't go anywhere without,
Restricting us from the outside world,
Are trapping us in this wrong way of living.

I look to my parents,
They tell me it's wrong,
They tell me to switch off,
Deep down I know they are right,
But I am always switched on.
They don't know what it is like,
They didn't experience a world like this
They were living in a world that was LinkedIn,
Where you didn't have to snap and chat in order to
hang out,
A world free from these distractions,
That are holding us back from connections .

They tell me to go out with friends,
Maybe play near the station,
Or go in my room,
And bury my face in a book,
And once I'm done,
I'll tell them I've Reddit
Because anything is better,
Than being locked on a screen
Even If you're just watching a clock Tik and Tok.

And so, I do,
I do my best anyway,
I will play rounds of golf,
Hang out with my friends,
Lay down in the grass,
And hear the birds Twitter around me
Because deep down I know,
Life would be better with no screens.

So, we live in this world,
This inescapable place.
This world full of "I"s
iPads
iPhones
And iPods
All around us.
And so iWatch,
And iPlay
And iThink
Because that is the way society works in this world today.

So, into the future,
I want a place where we don't need a GPT to start a
chat with friends .
I want young people to ask others "what's-an-app?"
And for them to experience a place free from these
stressful screens.
For that to happen a question must be asked.
A question that you must ask yourself.
How do you want to live your life?
Behind the blue light,
Or beyond the glow?



Jack Case | Year 6

Second Place

Lachlan Logan | Year 10

No one notices second place,
It's always,
Who came first?
Who won the race?
Second place never gets remembered,
It's like being the... fine print
Like, 'that guy was there too'.
But no one remembers you.
Because you lost the race
Off the pace
And everyone saw it,
What a disgrace.
Because you trained, studied, and rehearsed,
But didn't have what it takes,
Someone else came first,
But did they work harder?
Were they smarter?
Maybe you weren't enough,
Cause no one trains to be a step down on the podium,



Josh Dartnall | Year 11

A mark short,
A goal behind,
A second slower,
Just out of frame.
You came second and it got in your head.
Like a lingering thought,
Or an unfinished puzzle,
Where the missing piece is just one place away,
When you're at the top,
It's no longer a dream.
The puzzle is complete,
But that thought still lingers
Because you are second place.
Living, breathing, competing in the shadow
Of someone else's moment,
Where they get the glory and you get a bad memory,
Where they get a medal and you get a pat on the back,
Where they get the best grade and you get a well done,
Where they get remembered and you get forgotten.

Second place carries that certain sting of losing.
Because you were so close you could almost grab it,
Close enough to see your name in flashing lights,
Close enough to feel what it's like to be first,
But close enough to realise what you missed out on.

Second place is almost,
And almost sticks with you more than losing ever would
Because losing is easy to forget,
But almost,
Almost shows that you tried.
Almost shows that you put the hours in when no one
else did,
Almost shows that you care,
Almost shows that you want to be at the top.
But almost shows that you aren't the best.

And almost is second,
And second follows you home.
Because second place is the first loser.
But second matters,
And no one else might know that,
But you do,
Because you were the one that stood in second,
And felt what it was like,
To be almost.



Edmund Macmillan | Year 1

Small Cruelties

Ari Cantor | Year 11

Punishing a cat.
One of the small cruelties.
For a moment, she is very still
Troubled by the fact
Trying to hold on to her presence;
She died in the night.



Jaiyen Landers | Year 7

The Weight of Love
Filip Fantasia | Year 12

She woke before the world,
While the stars still whispered their goodbyes,
Her hands rough from years of carrying burdens that
Were never hers to bear.
She never asked for rest,
Never let me see the exhaustion in her bones,
Never spoke of the dreams she'd buried,
One by one,
In the quiet spaces of her heart.

I never knew the weight of her love,
Not until I began to see, to feel, to understand
How much she had given without ever asking for a thing
In return.
Her love was not loud,
Not grandiose.
It was in the soft hum of her voice,
In the way she held me when the world was too much,
In the way she carried all the broken pieces
of herself And still gave me the world.

I didn't know how much she'd sacrificed,
How she gave her voice to make sure I had a place to
Speak,
How she gave her joy so that I could have mine.
She let go of her own hopes,
Just to plant mine.



Jackson Siew | ELC

Her hands, once soft with dreams,
Became calloused from working for a future she would
Never see.
Yet still, she smiled.
She smiled through the pain,
Through the loneliness of loving someone more than
Herself,
Through the ache of giving everything
without ever Asking for a thing.

She carried me,
But more than that.
She carried the weight of every hope she'd ever had,
The weight of every loss she couldn't speak of,
The weight of the life she once knew,
That was lost in the chaos of survival.

She didn't complain.
She didn't let me feel the weight.
Instead, she wrapped it in love,
In a quiet, unspoken promise that no matter how heavy
The world got,
I would always have her.

There were nights when I heard her cry,
But she never let me see.
Never let me feel the depth of her sorrow,
The toll of everything she had given,
The emptiness of all she had lost.
She kept it hidden in the dark,
A secret kept between her and the
stars she once Reached for.

And when I asked her,
"Why, Mum? Why do you do this?"
She smiled.
But I could see it in her eyes.
The weight of everything she had carried,
The years of pain that never stopped,
But still, she loved.
Her love was silent,
But it spoke louder than anything I could ever say.
She gave everything because her love for me was never
About what she kept, but about what she was
Willing to lose.

She came to this country with nothing but the clothes on
Her back.
A heart full of memories, too painful to share,
And the fierce, unshakable will to give me a life she
Couldn't imagine for herself.

I didn't know it then,
But now I see it.



Azalia Goudas | ELC

The quiet sacrifice of a woman who never asked for
Thanks,
Who never needed praise.
She just gave,
Again and again,
Until there was nothing left but love, and still,
It was enough.

Now, when I look at her,
I see the strength that held her together,
The love that never let her fall.
I see the life she gave me,
And I can't help but wonder,
How can one person carry so much in their heart,
And still smile,
Still love,
And still give?
She gave more than I could ever repay.
She gave everything.
And in that giving,
She made me who I am.

But that's the truth of it, isn't it?
Love isn't measured by what you get,
But by what you give,
By what you're willing to carry,
Even when no one else can see it.
And in her quiet, endless love,
She continues to carry me.



Jack Wilson | Year 10



Archie Shum | Year 2

Fourth Try's the Charm

Hugo Shaw | Year 12

First time's the golden time, they say
Crack open the egg, the world is your oyster –
First impressions make lasting impressions

Second time's the "hopefully this time will be different"
It's the hoping through closed eyes and muttered breaths
That carry through the dead of night

Third time's the one where you'll get it,
You have to, after all this time
What doesn't kill you makes you stronger – right?

Perhaps four times is four times too many.
Maybe the world isn't that oyster you thought it was.
Maybe those silent prayers weren't the catch-all
measures to ensure success.

Maybe you don't get it.
Maybe those ambitions, those hopes, that person you
once aspired to be – maybe all of that wasn't real.
Maybe the blood, sweat and tears that stain the
workbook, that stain the crumbled-up rejection letter,
that stain the "good luck" cards which you once thought
sincere – maybe they all amounted to nothing.
Maybe the image staring back at you in the mirror
wasn't enough, maybe the long nights you spent
working weren't enough, maybe those dreams in your
head just weren't enough.

Or maybe they stayed as just that. Dreams.
If only you just answered that question differently, if only
you just knew what to say,
If only you just showed those qualities they were looking
for, if only you just didn't make that mistake,
If only you just – if only you were enough.

Harry Grandioso | Year 11



Anthony Rapuano | Year 10

Perception

Charlie Fassina | Year 12

Gare du Nord, Paris
9:08pm
Ava stood motionless at the edge of the platform, toes perched over the line, waiting. It had been the longest thirteen hours of her life, stuck on that treacherous train from Berlin. Claustrophobic. Unhygienic. Unsettling. All of this to finally see Maria again, the younger sister she'd left back in Paris six months ago. She wanted answers, clarification of what she saw the night she left. She couldn't stop thinking about it. She'd been missing her sister, like a mother misses her child on their first day of school but knew she needed the truth.

9:13pm
The bustling station was deafening, but Ava heard every single sound. From the high-pitched screech of incoming trains stopping, to the small rectangle letters flickering synchronously on the departure boards. She stood by the kiosk, the same one she'd said her goodbyes from all those months ago. An aroma of fresh buttery croissants mingled with the intoxicating stench of diesel. Looking down, her fingers tightly gripped her bag. She exhaled loudly. The conversation she was about to have with Maria had played on repeat in her mind so many times.

9:44pm
An overhead announcement declared: final train for tonight will initiate boarding shortly. Distracted by a torrent of people flooding the station to catch the B-47 to London, Ava's eyes were drawn to a young family struggling toward her. Studying the two young girls, she was reminded of how she and Maria used to pretend to be twins in their pretty pink dresses. She was frozen in the moment, watching as their mother tried separating the two girls clambering around. Ava was drawn to their giggling as they helped one another, remembering the feeling of Maria's hot breath on her cheek. The aggressive echo of the train horn bouncing off the station walls brought her back to reality. There was Maria standing right in front of her, wearing the red coat. Her hair looked exactly like it had on the day she left.

Six Months Earlier
It had been a warm spring day. The feeling of leaving had been intoxicating. Something bubbled up inside Ava, forcing her to grin like a Cheshire cat. She was eager but anxious, frightened but enthusiastic. Maria's Volkswagen Beetle – brilliantly affordable yet completely unreliable – overflowed with Ava's luggage, barely fitting Paddington, her battered childhood toy. Whatever she had forgotten, Ava was ready. She couldn't stand seeing the world through the iron bars of her comfort zone, she wanted to make a change. The thought of leaving Maria was awful, and leaving Nicholas was even worse. He'd been her constant all through college, a part of her family.

She passed the passengers on board, trying to find her seat and a place for her luggage. The doors closed and whilst clenching the handrail, she reluctantly raised her hand and waved a forlorn goodbye. The horn sirens were deafening, the exhaust plumed, and the train shifted into gear.

Grasping her novel, she turned back and blew a final kiss. The train rolled away from the platform. The urge to look back – just once more – overcame her. In disbelief at what her eyes were witnessing, Maria was locked in a passionate embrace kissing Nicholas, their hands intertwined. Becoming aware of her heart rate beating faster and harder, Ava's stomach dropped. A violent thrust sent her back into her seat as the train picked up speed, bumping and shaking aggressively. She could hardly see them now in the distance. Her head spun, her insides churned, recounting every moment the three of them had been together. Playing gin rummy on cold winter nights, Christmas at mum's house, and even those nights out drinking at the pub. Questions flooded her mind. When she would get home early from work, had Nicholas really been there waiting for her, or was he spending time with Maria? Had the two of them been together at Nate's party when they were huddled up on the sofa? She drowned in fear and confusion, desperately trying to surface every moment they shared.

9:47pm
Now finally back at the station where it had happened, Ava fiercely wrapped her arms around Maria, squeezing her tightly. She didn't want to let go, longing to breathe in the smell of Maria's strawberry scented shampoo. She had missed it so much, but now it was mingled with the scent of menthol cigarettes. Nicholas's cigarettes. The smell strangled her, forcing her back to that moment she'd been trying to forget. The conflicting emotions reignited turmoil in her mind. Some part of her wanted to ask about Nicholas then and there, but another part didn't want to lose this safe familiar feeling. In Berlin she had felt incomplete, lonely. Maria returned her embrace with equal force. Both looked into the other's eyes, a deafening silence between them. Ava knew she was going to hold on to this moment, this feeling, just a little longer. She would let them think she didn't know.

She'd hug Nicholas back at the car and feel hollow. She wouldn't say anything, nothing at all.

At least, not for now.



Ollie Fox | Staff



Campbell Cowe | Year 10

The Tide That Makes Me

Ammar Shahin | Year 11

Two dialects sever my tongue,
leaving uncertainty of where I belong.
For I know part of me thrives down under,
but all of me belongs in the salt water of
the Levant's tide.
Crushing me beneath the iron weight
of what I must be.

The Green Man
Eddie Callaghan | Year 12

Have you ever felt like you were made for something more? Knowing you're better than that dry, grey office job that you so tediously persist with. Trust me, you're not the only one. This is a story about revolt, a story about a man who extended himself beyond what others expected of him. A story of my own; a story about chasing the green man.

Pianissimo.

February 13th, 12:30pm. I was eating lunch at the same wooden table I always did, but this time it was different. I felt a beat, a crescendo of noise drowning my ears; something was coming. Snap: my neck turned to the sight of a conspicuous figure. A green man. He wore bright lime shoes, neon green shorts and a high-visibility vest. His hair was perfectly trimmed, legs gracefully shaven, down to the last miniscule follicle. He was running away, elegantly bouncing from one foot to the other, not even breaking a sweat. His technique was flawless, to the point where no one else seemed to notice his unusual appearance. But I did. My gaze evoked some kind of fascination, deep within me. Looking at him I somehow felt as if I had prevented myself from living my own life to the fullest. I needed to speak with him.

Crescendo.

June 12th, 9:00pm. Months had gone by; no sign of the green man. As autumn went on the verdant hues in my life slowly faded, leaves dulled, flowers died. Perhaps the passing season was a sign to stop chasing the green man. But I hadn't forgotten, he shadowed my every movement like an unresolved note lingering out long after the orchestra had gone quiet. Trying to cut him out of my thoughts, I attended a house party, thinking it would be some kind of escape.

Hundreds of bodies jumped to the monotonous beat of the music, the pungent smell of booze drifting amongst the polluted fumes of cigarette smoke. I was alone. Perhaps more alone than I had ever felt before. I felt a wave of anxiety reining over me all at once, trying to force me back out the front door. But, I wouldn't let it happen. Drawing upon every inch of strength I had left, I turned my head around.

Looking amongst the endless sea of people, I once again saw a green neon figure, tirelessly roaming amongst conversation. Like a king, he controlled the crowd, almost like he was dictating the pace of each beat, pulse and thump of the music. I longed to be like him, deciding that from this point forward, every action, moment and decision I would take would be inspired by this one simple question: what would the green man do?

Fortissimo.

October 5th, 2:00pm. I was coming off the back of the worst four months of my life. Though I tried to act with spontaneity and purpose, like the green man would, there was still a void in my life. It was like a sink hole, slowly but surely deteriorating my mental compass. I needed a direction.

3:30pm. I walked. Trying to crawl myself out of what seemed to be in an inescapable rut, whilst still clinging on to the last inch of sanity I had left. In an instant, I remembered the gospel that I promised myself I would uphold. That question. What would the green man do?

Crack. A path seemed to pave a way in the concrete beneath me, it was almost uncanny. I'd never walked these streets before, but seemed to know where I was going like the back of my hand. Before I knew it, there it was, a sign that read "Green Light Studios: Drumming for Beginners."

I peered through the window, and sure enough there he was. The Green Man. Effortlessly gliding across the drum kit, each hit executed to perfection. This was my chance. I creaked the door open, slipping inside, letting it slowly click behind me before turning to face the room.

But the sound had stopped.

Pianissimo.

Empty.
The room was completely empty.

No green man.

I looked at the drum kit, standing helpless once again. He had escaped me one last time. But as I gazed upon the kit I noticed something; under the beaming stage lights I saw my reflection in the snare drum. I noticed something, something I perhaps never took the time to pay attention to. My green tie.

In this moment, the last nine months flashed before my eyes like the climax of a symphony collapsing into silence. But the life I saw wasn't mine. I was somehow viewing it from the green man's perspective, as if I was living it. Slowly, it dawned on me. What if this wasn't the green man's view? What if this was some kind of fragment of my own memory?

The cogs started turning, with each passing moment I found out more about myself than I had ever known. The little intricacies of the past year came out of the darkness like a polaroid in a gust of wind. Before I knew it, my feet crept toward the kit, dragged by some kind of supernatural force. Sitting on the stool, my hands rested on the snare drum, gripping it loosely. Then, in the bare silence I clocked my hand back and played a note. One note. It rang out euphoniously amongst the vacant room, bouncing off the walls in every direction, filling the silence.

I stood up, straightened my tie, unwrinkled my trousers and wandered out of the shop. But this time, I wasn't following anything, not chasing anyone, I just walked. At my own pace. My own tempo.

Because I am and always have been the green man.

rit. (fade out)



Jordan Sun | Year 10





Human Made

Oscar Mulhern | Year 12

It all started before he had the words for it. No one ever taught him directly, but everyone seemed to know what he was meant to be. He just wanted to grow up in a world where he could be himself and exist without the pressure.

At five, the little boy hid behind his mother's leg as if it were a shield from the future. He never wanted to grow up. The world was loud, and he found comfort in what he already knew. He and his mum were inseparable. She was the first role model he had, which somehow felt like a mistake. One he didn't know how to fix. The strength he drew from her was on borrowed time. Someday he needed to find his own. While his dad made an effort to be around, the demands of farming life made it hard. For now, his mother taught him more about the simplicities in life. How to bake. How to gossip. Most of all, how to put yourself before others, just as she had been doing for twenty years or more. These lessons didn't make him rougher or tougher, but she wanted him to experience life as a human first. She wasn't necessarily thinking of teaching him how to be a man.

By the time he turned ten, she worried the world would be cruel if he remained so soft. So, she enrolled him in boxing to roughen him up. She knew he was naturally gentle and sensitive, so some things had to be taught. His dad was an icon at the football club, celebrated and admired. But the little boy liked sitting on the sideline wearing his mum's prescription glasses, blurring out the world around him. He watched his older brothers' lives unfold and felt he had no part in the script they were playing. He started to fall out of love with himself. His first betrayal was his own skin, the layer that protected himself from the world. It turned an agitated red and became impossible to ignore. The second betrayal came in the family car before boarding school, his life packed into a suitcase and his head buried into his hands. He felt as though his parents had just given him up, alone and afraid.

Soon he was fifteen. The days became long and showers became longer. Tears combined with the water, as he could not bear letting anyone see him weak and crying. When he heard his own voice he would flinch, burying it under a deeper tone he knew was never his. Mirrors reminded him of how far he was from who he wanted to be. Surrounded by one hundred and fifty boys in a boarding house, the pressures became immense. His solution? To shame himself mentally and build it back up in the gym. But no matter how much he lifted, he would put himself down more. His greatest mentor now became the

persistent voice in his head. The same voice that manipulated his self-belief. But eventually he rejected that voice and built his courage on false security.

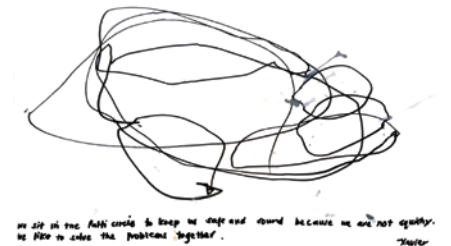
Forward three years. He was eighteen and his life became busy. He spent less time trying to fix himself and more trying to fit in, thinking respect only came if people liked him. A checklist of people, all to be ticked off and pleased. There was one sunny winter game, he won the ball thirty metres from goal. The distance of responsibility felt further. Scores were level. He backed himself and kicked it. Maybe that could mark when he started to fit in. Was it enough for their respect? By Monday, people started to know his name. He understood: be liked or be invisible. His whole direction changed. He no longer fought for what he believed. He fought to meet the expectations of others. Playing life like Simon Says. Matching every move. So, he laughed at the sexist jokes like everyone else. Even made some up himself. He taunted homosexuality. Not understanding the power in his words. He became surrounded by those who gave so little effort. It wasn't cool to try, but he did. Tried too hard, got called a nerd, a try-hard, a teacher's pet. He lost the game. But he also came to the truth: that nobody is perfect.

Soon he turned twenty-five and held a little boy in his arms. They locked eyes. His mum always said children gravitated toward him, but he didn't understand what that meant until now. He had spent years trying to roughen his manner. To match the expectations. Now he had a choice. To be the man he knew he was or stay the man everyone else thought he should be. For the first time since he was a boy, he didn't want to be strong. All he wanted was to be kinder, gentler, and more patient. He wondered how an innocent boy could grow up and fall out of love with everything about himself. He wanted to shield him with a silver umbrella. To protect him from growing up, from experiencing the life he had. But it wasn't about him now. All he could do was instill the qualities his mum had taught him years before: empathy, patience, and putting others before yourself.

These five boys all have something in common. They're all me. Although they are different from one other, they grew up under the same pressures and expectations.

I suppose as I've experienced my own life, I've never truly learnt what it is to be a man. But what I have learnt is how to be a human.

There isn't a set formula or magic ingredients. But maybe, that's the beauty of it. After all, we have no choice in the end but to be ourselves.



Xavier Reppucci | ELC

Will Pledge | Year 11



AI Life

Aaron Liu | Year 10

Your brain is drained,
Can't contain the pain,
Don't wait or stay this way,
Say goodbye to constraints with AI.

A machine has no fears,
No blood, sweat or tears,
Even if you cheat it, it'll treat you sweetly,
Just trying to please and appease you.

AI'll blithely write, design, devise,
It'll strive to contrive any idea,
Comply with no bias, no notion of wrong nor right,
You'd be blind not to try AI!

But really, it's seething with evil,
It's seeping, leaking, creeping,
Spilling into every bit of living.
It's a snake squeezing and constricting.

No need for trying to devise inspired ideas,
Deprive your mind, rely on AI,
In the blink of an eye, it can write more than you can in
a lifetime.
But time is still flying, attention's dying, try summarising,

So now school's a breeze,
Cheating's never been so easy,
Feed a single fleeting idea into Gemini or GPT and it'll
release a speech,
Naïvely eaten up and believed by the oblivious teach.

Meanwhile creativity's bleeding and receding,
Art's got no mouth but it's screaming,
A beast who's been beaten and lost all feeling,
Secretly pleading to be completely freed,

Millennia of making and painting,
Made into a brainless heap of creative debris,
Machines re-releasing esteemed pieces without
meaning,
While greedily concealing their stealing.

Bots are ploppin' out slop.
Minds rotting without stop,
Nodding to its stink in sync,
On the brink of forgetting how to think.

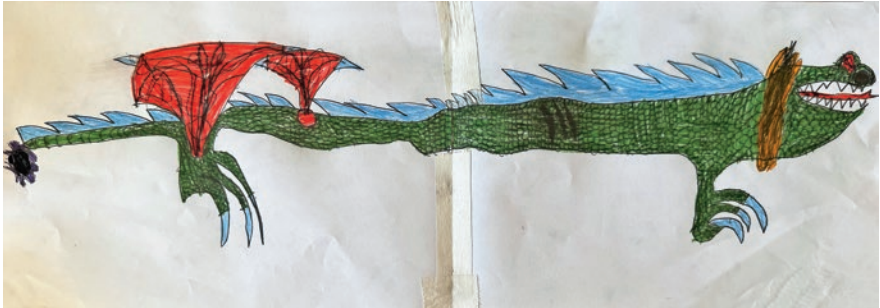
It mimics making, fakes creating,
Blatantly teasing and cheating,
Its drain on the brain is devastating.
AI feigns its greatness, but it ain't really amazing.

Those 'smart' devices might act like a benign and kind
ally,
But it's all a lie, it's taking time trying to pry into your life,
Which is why it's buying, compiling and saving your
data,
Your name, face and location are no longer safe,

And when the price has been paid,
Without pain it'll leave your aid,
And then you won't be smiling,
'cause you'll be complying.

Will you fight to keep your mind bright?
Will you stay blinded or open your eyes?
It's time to think twice and decide,
Your life or AI?

William Scott | Year 4



Cackling Cough

Hamish Hewitt | Year 7

The harsh attack of the clenching smoke.
The complex cackle of the raspy cough.
Puffing. Grabs at the screeching heart.
Thickly dangerous, crush it up.

Sam Charters | Year 7



Jacob Branso | Year 9



Harry Potter: Final Words

Rory McDonald | Year 8

He stood quietly waiting.
Rain, hitting his head.
The weatherman drifted off as he gave his report;
The television hadn't yet turned on in the Dursley house.

Lucca Malivindi | Year 9



Harry Grandioso | Year 11



Frankie Shirley | ELC



Other Side

Connor Caruso | Year 9

The other side, a mystery
The trench, the front, the injury
Through trifle and trout neither budged
Still through the mud, the other side trudged
With scorching heat, and pouring rain
The gunfire started and came and came
The horrors, the terror, the blood, the bane
The gas, the guns, the death, the pain
Through day by day and night by night
Why do we always have to fight?

Oscar Olsen | ELC



The Librarian's Desk

Toby Patterson | Year 7

As I walked through the door of my favourite library, accompanied by a soft, cool breeze, the lights flickered and the librarian of this little library waved hello. I walked over to the librarian and placed the books I had borrowed on her beautiful antique desk.

"How were the books?" she asked.

As I looked at the worn covers in between us, I smiled. Returning books to this library always felt a bit like waking from a dream.

Infected

Tom Balnaves | Year 12

Morning Boston fog closes in.
The spore in the tree enjoying its infection. At least it shows the cogs are turning and gears are moving, infecting not a crime but destruction of history. Much like a plague, only less notable. The blueberry swaps Its resting place now, infected.



Freddie Admiraal | ELC

Ode to Snow Globe

Edward Manuel | Year 7

Crystallised flakes flowing through the translucent liquid.
Soft, wintery snow gliding gracefully through this infinite dome.
Bubbles swishing as you shake it like waves crashing on a shore.
Drifting glitter mesmerising anyone who can see.
I can almost feel red and green lights and bells ringing through the town on a Christmas Eve night.
Icy chills covering this curved globe.



Gabriel Teixeira | ELC

Let Us Free

Hugo Mallett | Year 7

Black and white. Face to face.
Country destroyed. Culture encased.
Mob let me know when it's safe to go out.
Mob keep me protected, help me not pout.
Black Lives Matter.
Sharing our pride, our culture with Youse.
Now help us try to connect, repair
What still can't be un-Broken.



James Selby | Year 11



Romesh Ediriweera | Year 9

Yours No More
Joshua Penhall | Year 12

An old painting stored away,
the memory of the past lost today.
What was yours, is yours no more,
like echoes fading from the floor.
A new life will fill your door.

**The Sun Never Sets
on Gallipoli**
Loki Bown | Year 10

Stray bullets penetrate the blood red ocean surface
fearless young men tremble before the shoreline
Sons courageously staggered up the rugged slopes
Met with a storm of steel rain piercing sand and skin.

The sun rises, spilling a warm light over the
war-torn peninsula
As the crack of rifle fire reverberates throughout the
scorching ridges
The ocean's horizon littered with looming dreadnoughts
shadowing the jagged cliffs, unleashing
a deluge of howling mortar

Sons, brothers, fathers line the cold trench walls
Hearts pounding against the blood-soaked soil
Counting down with trepidation to the shrill of the
slaughter whistle
Embracing memories of loved ones, for the final time

The cries of the wounded abide as the fighting falls silent
Grasping blood-stained photos as they take their
final breaths
Yet relentless machine-gun fire continues pulsing through
the gullies
Mowing down the brave as they scramble
across the scrubby terrain

The ANZAC spirit gradually neglected into today's
society
Real men's ultimate sacrifice too often forgotten
Their legacies lay peacefully in friendly foreign soil
The sun never sets on Gallipoli.



Jack Potter | ELC

Ziggy Tasci | Year 8



Wildfire
Julian Dawson | Year 12

The wrath spreads like wildfire across the Mason-Dixon
Line,
as squirrels hear the cursing of the chestnut blight,
enchanted in its speed.
It narrows in on the final tree in the valley,
making its harrowing mark.
Forever scarring the landscape
and the cursed redwood of Massachusetts.

Manifesto of a Spore
Thami Nyathi | Year 12

Minuscule and insignificant, they sat on groves of bark.
Gusts of wind ripped them from their home,
pasts abandoned, they travelled to new lands.
Like ghosts, haunting new woods,
killing those who've sinned, on this parcel of soil.
Why me, why have I been stolen?
Jealousy, brewing within.



Márta Matthews | Staff

Love Poem
Humphrey Duckworth | Year 3

Roses are red,
Violets are blue,
I love you to the moon
You give me love when I'm in fright,
You shine light in the darkest of night,
I love you Mum with all my might
I'll love you day and night
I love you mum, night-night.



James Barr West | ELC



Alex Boase | Year 9

Yale
Filip Fantasia | Year 12

Within a minuscule spore,
lies an undiscovered fire awaiting to be explored.
A celestial imagination seems to be like heaven.
But such progress,
hurts one more than it heals.

The Machine Makes the Man
Alec Guglielmucci | Year 12

Look. Look at him all alone. He lays there, defeated yet fighting for survival. Cato. A hopeless, elderly man wired to the invasive machines spiralling unwillingly down his airways. His wheezy breaths become louder, the phlegm rattling down his throat like a snake stalking its prey. Clogging him. There is a lingering smell of overboiled broccoli, served with gelatinous beef and a dollop of cafeteria gravy. The insanity and hysteria of the other patients echoes along the sterile, graveyard-bound corridors.

But for Cato, as powerless and brittle as he looks, his corrupted soul is finally liberated from society's formidable pressures. He knows he will die free, not just the man society wanted him to be.

He glances at the newspaper article beside him. An elite, all-boys private school advertisement gazes up at him. Students stand grinning, hands behind their backs, obedient and charming. Their polished poses are appetisers for the audience hungry to devour more of this deceitful treat. His impassive face becomes snarled. He remembers. He remembers it all.

—

Now see Cato. He's fifteen. Staring up at a poster outside his imposing school gates. A heartless jock is centred, football in hand, teeth blissfully blinding. Muscles flex effortlessly. But Cato knows the effort and brutal force that have gone into that boy's nonchalant stance. His careless athleticism. The boy's blazer shines royal red like clotted blood, leaking from a weeping wound that never seems to fully recover. And Cato knows all about that boy on the poster. Bradley Jones. 'Jonesy'. In the locker rooms last week after sport, he was gloating about a chick he hooked up with at the house party, making her seem disposable. Like a piece of gum you spit out once you've sucked away all its living juice. Jonesy always took pleasure in humiliating Bruce, a porky, innocent boy who was too embarrassed to take off his sports top. His odorous outfit would stink like he'd been marinating all day in a microwave. Teachers dug into Bruce all day, saying he wasn't complying with

school attire. If only they knew what really happened behind closed doors. If only the ignorant, excited families that were newly welcomed through those ornate school gates knew the true price of their fees.

Cato would always remember that one class when Jonesy finally directed his attention towards him. "You worthless little scumbag, always sucking up to the teachers!" Jonesy barked, making Cato's face blush as he felt the heat flaring up his throat. Cato's acne radiated all over his face like a balloon, red and inflated. Jonesy targeted, ridiculed, humiliated Cato. The pack surrounded Jonesy; the 'lads' they called each other, all admiring their ring-leader's merciless comments. At the time, he felt outraged. Everyone was told that expression is what made them connect with one another. But Bradley Jones told Cato otherwise. Under Jonesy's watchful eye, the boys transformed into synthetic robots. They bonded. They breathed together, in sync. Motionless but always moving.

But this version of themselves they presented to society was not real. It was shielded by the masculine blanket they hid themselves in. It was cozy, comforting. Cocooning them. But really, that blanket became attached to them, wrapping around their necks. Strangling them.

They ignorantly marched, hands to hearts, conforming to Jonesy's orders. The orders of masculinity. Inside, Cato felt hollow. He thought of his mother, his grandmother, his sister, and how masculinity was slowly decaying these relationships as his expression became mute.

Cato remembered his mother wrapping him in that baby blue blanket as a young child. Was the blanket innocence, tranquility and warmth or just the monotonous cycle of a boy being injected with their initial dose of hyper-masculinity? That blue, bleeding conservatism. That melancholy and pessimism. Cato saw it as the birth of a journey to hell. Torture not only for the young boy himself, but for society facing the ruinous repercussions of immoral behaviours so many boys exert. His mother deserved a better son.

It started in Literature one day in class. Cato read a line: "it is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society." He couldn't stop thinking about it. He could finally feel that the world was much bigger than this place. That the society he had surrounded himself with was chronically ill. That this conservative version of life at school would not endure forever. He felt inspired for change.

Later, long after school had finished, Cato started to drop the grotesque mask he'd needed to wear. It was gradual at first. His first shared house. His first queer friends. His first rejection of a Friday night out at the pub with his old school mates. For once, life became refreshing. He was no longer a slave working under the school's toxic regime. Instead, he was free. He was a free man.

—

Look again. We are in the hospital room, with the air denser as Cato wheezes louder for survival. Crust oozing out of his half-opened eyes. A gold pendant, his eighteenth birthday present from his mother, hangs down his neck and glistens against his mauve, sunken skin. He kept it tucked away for a while, with dust gathering on its case. But he no longer feels embarrassed to wear it like he used to. The elitist school advertisement is still spread across his bed, with the school's motto centred boldly:

"Machina pueros in iuvenes virtuosos transformans"

A machine transforming boys into virtuous young men.

The machine did its job. It became a production line turning so many of those young, innocent boys into heartless sheep. Into so many Jonesys. But for Cato, the machine did something different. By repelling its automated system, he turned himself into a man with genuine character. Unafraid to show his emotions and love for the world itself. He did himself justice. He defeated his inner Jonesy. That voice in his head harassing him to give in, to submit, to become a part of that growing force. It had faded.

Forever.



Nate Wang | Year 7



Monster Society
Rebecca O'Leary | Staff

The clouds are a strange shade of brown
and the treetops are rustling.
The wind has picked up out of nowhere.

To ignore this would be foolish
but how can you explain a sense of foreboding without any steadfast facts.

The colour, a shape, some movement.
All real but with no form they elude the gaze of the crowd.
Only you can see what is coming.

Their eyes look past the moment
and their own movement collides with the incoming breeze.
Their voices drown the pulse of change and they remain unaware.

The traffic lights buzz and you notice the birds have gone quiet
but there is no ultimate event.
No cliffhanger.

The crowd continues its mundane routine.
You are left looking sideways at complete normalcy,
knowing the monster has not disappeared, merely been absorbed by its surroundings.
Biding his time.



Harvey Koch | Year 11



The Truth Speaker
Spark Wang | Year 10

Evening, just another couple of civilian deaths tonight.
Nothing special today, just the usual today.
Wait, just stop right there.
Do you mean there's no peace anywhere?
Shakes head
Um, shall we continue.
No, we shouldn't!
Is this what you want?
This is what I want.
Is this what we want?
This is what we want.
pause
No, it isn't.

The problem isn't remotely recognised,
Maybe we all are just desensitised.
The ones on top scream and shout,
Whilst us on the bottom dream for an out.
Just a light swing of their fingers,
And a word out of their mouths.
Their tiny choices ripple out into shattered lives,
Turning distant decisions into someone's daily fight.

How selfish of them.
How incredibly selfish of them.

But what about me?
Am I really any better?
Sitting here all safe and cosy.
Bread on the counter,
And meat in the fridge.
I wake up every day at 8 to the smell of cosy coffee,
Whilst others wake up to the smell of gunpowder.
Instead of helping,
My surplus of wealth sits in the bank.

But even if I did help.
Donate a few dollars here and there.
Share posts to people who wouldn't even care.
Would it even make a difference?
It wouldn't make a difference, right?
By myself at least.

You know what we need to do?
We need to all help together.
Now a few dollars here and there,
Turned into thousands of dollars to people in need.
The posts we share will then turn into awareness to
the ignorant.

I think everyone can agree that,
When the power of none is compared to the power
of some.
Not enough is better than nothing.
If we have finally come to an agreement on something,
What excuse do we have left?



Harrison Duckworth | Year 6



Hamish Thompson | Year 8

2 Uniforms

Benji Johnson | Year 10

The bell rings, done.
But wait, I’m not.

They say, “Go home, rest, study
You’ve got the time.”
But time is taken for granted
told by someone
who’s never had to clock in at five.

Clock out to clock in.
I swap my backpack for a uniform,
Swap papers for more papers,
essays for a minimum wage.
Sent to the bottom of the food chain.
Nothing but scraps.

And suddenly my future depends on
making the manager happy
more than textbooks and “good” grades.
Teachers stack assignments,
teachers stack expectations
quietly, and steadily,
weighing down your shoulders bit by bit.

“Just manage your time better”
They say.
But you’re forgetting the parts of life that actually matter?
Family, friends, interests.
And no one grades how hard you try,
Only the final product.
Treated like numbers on a factory line.
Graded like products made in a factory.

And yeah,
Maybe I didn’t finish that pointless assignment,
Maybe I forgot a due date,
Maybe I didn’t forget responsibility
Maybe I just learned it in a different classroom.
And maybe some of us are balancing more than
just school.

The bell rings,
But that doesn’t mean I’m free.
I still have to clock in at 4:30
Clock out to clock back in.



The Amazon

Darcy Allington | Year 4

Once, I went to the Amazon River,
It was really cold, so I started to quiver,
The river is really strong,
I think it might pull me along!

I went to the source,
The river flows on its own course,
Then I went to the dam,
Once the dam went bam!

Swoosh! The river is going as fast as a hawk,
We had lunch and I ate some pork,
The river danced along its stream,
Further ahead, there are hot pools letting out steam.

Then we went to the mouth,
It was in the south,
The river began to split and bend,
Now we are at the end.

All of a sudden, my dad starts talking to me,
He said “this is a good sight to see the sea”
We looked at the sea and we saw some whales,
And then my dad turned pale!

Poppies

Billy Freemantle | Year 6

The sky is black
While soldiers lie on their backs
The planes soar high above
Soldiers think about their true love.

Medics are busy
While soldiers drink whiskey
Bunkers hide below
Enemies tiptoe.

Tanks move slowly
The air is smoky
Bombs dropped down
Soldiers miss their hometown.

Disease spreads
In the sky they all saw jets
Every person wanting to survive
But few still alive.

They wish it was over.
Be silent, you will hear the motor
The war was bloody
To remember we all, wear a poppy.

Joseph Huang | Year 6





Harvey O'Brien | Year 7

Somewhere Between Florida and Forever

Filip Fantasia | Year 12

I don't know how to explain
How a girl from across the world
Feels closer
Than anyone I've ever known.

There are people who feel like chapters in your Life,
And then there are people like you,
Who feels more like the ink the entire book was
Written in.

Your blonde hair isn't just hair to me.
It's like sunlight forgot how to stay in the sky,
And instead learned how to rest gently on you.
Like gold softened itself on purpose just to
Become something human.

And your green eyes,
They don't feel like colour.
They feel like depth pretending to be colour.
Like if the ocean ever decided to become quiet
And look back at you, and instead of moving, it
Would look like that.
When I look into them, it doesn't feel like seeing
You, it feels like being seen into.
Like something inside me gets read without
Pages.

I think that's where everything shifted.

Not in a moment.
More like the way tides change a shore,
So slowly you don't notice it happening,
Until you realise the land you used to stand on is
No longer shaped the same way.

You became that kind of change in me.

There are thoughts of you that arrive before I
Even realise I've started thinking.
Like my mind stopped asking permission a long
Time ago and just quietly chose your direction instead.

And time,
Time behaves differently when it knows you exist.

With you, it dissolves.
Minutes stop pretending to be structured. Hours
Forget their names.
It's like the universe loosens its grip whenever
You're near it.

And when you're gone, everything technically
Returns to normal,
But it feels like the world is wearing something
That doesn't fit it anymore.

I love the way you speak to me like the world is
Softer than it actually is.
Like you take reality and gently smooth its edges
Without even noticing you're doing it.
Even your silence has a kind of presence to it,
Like it's still you, just in a quieter form.

And I don't think I ever properly explained this, but
You don't feel like someone I met.
You feel like someone my life recognised.
Like a memory I never actually had,
But somehow always knew I was going to miss.

Florida is far. I know that.
But it's strange how distance starts to feel
Different when it's connected to someone.

I don't care about the distance.
Oceans are nothing
When my heart already lives with you.

Because for me, it doesn't feel like "far away."
It feels like something I would simply cross.

Not dramatically. Not as a statement.
But as something inevitable,
Like water finding the sea.

I will come to you.
Not as a promise I repeat,
But as something already decided underneath
Everything I do.
Like gravity.

Because there are people you walk toward in life,
And there are people you eventually realise you
Were always moving toward without knowing it.

And you are that.

The way your laugh lingers in memory,
Like warmth that refuses to cool down.
The way a simple conversation with you can feel
Heavier in meaning than entire days without you.

And I think that's when I understood it most
Clearly. You weren't becoming important in my life.

You were becoming central to how I experience It.
Not loudly. Not suddenly.
Just undeniably.

And it doesn't feel like a decision I made. It feels
Like something I finally stopped resisting to admit.

Like the truth had been standing there for a long time,
And I just finally turned around and had the
Courage to say it properly.

I am falling for you.
There's nothing else to it.

And when I come to Florida,
I can already see it,
Hugging you for the first time,
Like distance was never real.

And I promise you,
If you let me love you,
I will hold you like the most fragile star,
Guard your heart like the rarest secret,
Love you with every breath I have,
And make your happiness my life's purpose.



Alby Cooper | ELC

Waterfall
William Zheng | Year 4

When you go to a river;
The waters and fish will perform a glorious dance
The strong, fierce waterfall,
Will break up the bubbling, blue, black banking.

When people start leaving after taking pictures;
Like a snake, it will slip softly through the land
Leaping and laughing with pride,
Whilst the sunlight scatters gold into the side.

As the sun sets, the moon comes up;
The snakes will coil up in the extremely rocky,
rough, sandy and silty riverbed
When all the fish and all the other animals in
the river go to sleep,
The rivers and waterfalls flow to a stop,
as they start to slide and seep.



William Zheng | Year 4

Riley Ung | Year 4



Waterfall
Riley Ung | Year 4

When you go to a river,
The glorious sea is dancing,
The strong fierce waterfall,
Will break the weak blue, black, banking.

When the people start leaving,
The fish will eat their dinner,
The rocks will start breaking,
From the great waterfall winner.

So don't go near a waterfall,
It could break some of your bones,
Or it could kill you,
So that's why you need some drones.

When you're below a waterfall,
It feels like a million bees stinging you,
But you can still admire it,
With a big and mighty "Woo Hoo!"

The colour of the water is
Clear, cool, and creative or pride, purple, and pink,
The wind feels like it is pushing,
So give the wind a wink.

Against the Current
Leo Witkowski | Year 8

Sweat dripped off Henry's head. Struggling, he heard the commentator announce, "The coxed quad final, USA is in first with Germany and Australia close behind." Henry was in seat 2, with Jake his close friend behind him in bow seat. Henry was looking at the person in front of him, his zootie was gold and green. Henry's vision started to blur, he was exhausted. The voice of the crew's cox, Tim brought his attention back. His voice started building, things were getting serious. As they neared the 300-line Henry started to feel off balance, was the water uneven? Suddenly he felt Jake's head slam into the back of his head. The boat came to a halt, something happened.

Suddenly Henry realised, Jake had caught a boat stopper crab. Both crews had slipped ahead now, things were not looking good. Tim stayed calm and instructed everyone to get back into the lane. The crew started rowing again; they were faster now,

more confident. They had beat USA at this point, but Germany was still a boat length ahead. We had to do something unexpected, thought Henry. 250 metres is not enough to catch up. Suddenly Tim screamed something insane, something against the coach's plan, something UNPREDICTABLE. Tim called a push 50 metres earlier than planned, this could end badly. The crew could be out of energy by the time 50 metres was left. He screamed incredibly loud. "DROP THE FREAKING HAMMER, LET'S RIP IT LADS". This was it; this was the push; they had to row at record-breaking speeds to win. Henry's arms were burning, his throat was on fire, he could hear Sam's uneven, tired breathing. Suddenly the silence was interrupted with a BEEP! The noise played when the finish line was crossed. Nobody knew who won, nobody except Tim who gently announced, "We did it, boys!" Everybody started screaming, Sam even jumped into the river. They had won.

Campbell Cowe | Year 10



I Lost Something Once

Kieran Gray | Year 10

When you left,
It was perfect.
I am neither psychotic nor delirious with delusion,
Believe me,
But it was great when I lost you, my friend.
Granted, I mourned and relived our times together,
But our company was the real problem.
The death of me,
Your flourishing,
One and the same.
I watched you grow to my detriment,
So,
it was wonderful when I lost my friend.

We met years ago,
At a paradigm shift,
In our lives,
But I never knew you emanated life,
I guess all that dies lived,
A life.

Naïve,
I welcomed you,
With open arms,
To the open space in my heart,
Only to find that you weren't who you said you were,
At all.

What was your name again?
Was it hideaway
Or we don't like people today.
It was set low expectations
Or what if we fail.
No, I know,
It was what do they think of you,



Roy Axford | Year 9

Think of you.
As if the real me wasn't the acceptable me,
I digress,
I must agree.
And I guess the philosophy reigns true,
Because what did I see of you,
But what I was meant to see.
I always had to conform,
To society,
Its norms,
I ask,
who led the reform,
But you.
Imposter.

Why couldn't I depend on you,
Hold you tight
As you could always count on me.
Why did I make all the effort,
While you sat aside.
Why did I care for you,
You were just there for the ride.
A journey together,
But only I changed direction,
For the worse.

Every meeting with you solidified my limitations,
But to me, things could have been worse.
Somehow it was always me picking up the phone.
You had no control.
Nevertheless, I turned to you,
Which means that all I had to do to be rid of,
You,
Was let go.
Or in my case,
Reach beyond,
Beyond you . . .
My very own confines.

Even though your end brought me new life,
You were pivotal for me,
And for that,
I thank you,
Old friend.
I thought of the negatives
How I would be seen,
Over the figure
Vacant in the mirror.
Forgotten by the world,
And yet you found me.

Or I found warmth beneath your blanket of lies,
Woven by the boundaries of mine.
Regardless, I was proud to call you my friend.



Oliver Hanuszewicz | Year 8

Eternal Rhythm

Finley Turner | Year 12

Sun's golden rays spread out upon the horizon as if to embrace the land,
Its radiant beams signalling the beginning of another new day.
As hours progress, sun persists, extending its bright hand,
Yet sunlight is temporary and begins to decay.

And then when sun fades, moon takes its place,
Reflecting sun's light and filling the empty void of space.
Although it appears permanently visible, there can only be one;
Moon's place in the sky is temporary, and it fades at the rebirth of sun.

And once again
The revolution repeats,
Mirroring the cadence of those it observes.
The pattern is cyclical, immortal,
As old as time.



Charlie Vella | Year 8



Max Diestel Feddersen | Year 8

The Broken Camera

Declan Leow | Year 7

He stalks over and snatches the Polaroid from her hands.
He looks at it and throws it to the ground.
It clinks.
Bounces once.
Diving to the ground, she grabs for it but he's quicker.
Snatching it up, he jeers at her.
He drops the camera into the mud and continuously
steps on it.
Crunch.
Smash.
Repeatedly.
He kicks it away as she cries. In his hands is the film.
Rips it
into two.
Kicks it again and again until the camera is just
a piece of metal.
Useless and Unwanted.
Alone.

Sam Davies | Year 8



Silent Sorrow (Divorce)

Max Cohen | Year 10

A boy walks into the kitchen
Scared of what he may hear
Even more scared of what he may not.

The constant yells and crying claw at his ears
As he clutches them tightly, waiting for the sounds to stop
His sister holds him close, telling him it will be all right
But deep inside they both know there's always
another fight
He runs into the lounge room, with great tears in his eyes
As he goes to tell them to stop, when he opens
his mouth, suddenly his courage dies.

He learned chaos before he learned calm,
He spoke into rooms that never answered back.
Left standing in the space between them,
Where silence was louder than words.

They told him that it's normal and that time will heal
the pain
But now, with what's said and done,
it just can't be the same.

He wishes it would stop and all just be okay
But he knows it's
not
that
simple.

Soon the noise hushes, but the silence is louder
than before
The quiet whispers and subtle sorrows hide behind
closed doors.
It all feels so empty and cold, in this new chapter of
his life
A brand-new house with many more rooms, but there's
no one to play in them now,
no sound of a brother or sister.

The blur of hurried packing flashes through his eyes
He worries about what he may have left
behind – his shoes? his clothes? his life?

The Friday drive is eternal, as though he's travelling to
another world
Each family they pass is a reminder of what he once had

Their laughter spills out open windows like it too is
travelling somewhere else
Somewhere he can see, but can no longer reach

Now that he is older, he thought it would be fine
But the cracks in the foundation still echo in his mind.

Stuck right in the middle, the opposite of where he
should be
A diplomat of silence, carrying secrets they won't say
to him.

He is just a messenger, but each message leaves
great guilt
For what is he to do or say when the
words destroy what they once built?

Then again, he is just a messenger.

Each view becomes distorted, he's not sure what to think,
Two worlds are pulling at him while
he's standing on the brink.

The constant checking of whose day is whose
His Monday
Her Friday
His Wednesday too

To make everyone happy is such a simple task in mind
But when he lives like this, that's not what he will find

To tick all the boxes is to pick a final side
For how can he choose between two
parents in whom he confides?

Two Christmases,
Two birthdays,
Two Easters,
Too much.

He wishes he could split right in the middle
So he could be in both worlds

He learned how to apologise for things he didn't do,
And how to love with a foot out the door,
Because he learns that forever doesn't exist
And that there are some things that just can't last.

Billy White | Year 9





Nicholas Rapuano | Year 10

Untitled
William Gibson | Year 10

700k a year,
60k a month,
2k a day,
83 an hour,
2 every minute.

That's how many men take their own lives,
That's how many,
sons,
dads,
husbands,
grandfathers,
great grandfathers,
uncles,
are lost unnecessarily due to suicide.

Why?
Why are men told not to cry,
Not to speak out,
To stay quiet,
To deny it,

Why are men told to just hide it,
To "be a man"
And to subside it

Because if we learn that were supposed to silence it,
We carry the weight alone,
Until eventually we're crushed by it.

It starts small,
A passing thought
A quiet ache
Something you tell yourself will fade

But it lingers,
It grows in the silence
It echoes in empty rooms
It follows you like your shadow

And the louder it gets
The quieter we become

Two a minute,
Let that sink in,

Before I finish this speech
Another man dies,

And somehow, we call this normal,
Like silence is stitched into our skin
Like pain is something you swallow not something you say

"Man up"
"Be strong"
"Don't cry"
Standards make us feel,
that feeling something.
Makes you less of a man

They make us feel that silence is strength,
That pain is something you carry,
Not something you share.

So, we bottle it
Every thought,
Every doubt,
Every feeling

We bottle it
Until it builds
And builds
And builds

Until eventually we break.

And no one even realises it,
Because we laugh,
We joke,
We say "we're fine"

When really,
Denying it is just easier
Than talking to someone

2 every minute

Another dad
Another son
Another man
Who thought staying silent
Was the only option he had left

So why?

Why are men told to hide it
To bottle away the pain

Instead of letting it free

Because these numbers are not just statistics
They are people

And if nothing changes
Those numbers wont either.



Sue Gray | Staff



The Game Called Life
Mason Papps | Year 10

You were not only a child.
You were like the first quarter of footy.
All the chaos and excitement rushed over
your body like a wave.
Noise and energy circled the field.
You were unknowing of the structure of the game,
The delicacy of every aspect.
It was like a puzzle – every piece fitting
together perfectly.
You know that now.

Every missed mark felt like a missed opportunity.
As the ball came towards your hands, there was
a sliver of chance that you could make an impact.
Your time to shine.
But every time you let that ball slip through your
fingers, the game played on without you.
You know that now.

A player came towards you.
Thoughts flooded your mind,
That pressure to stick the tackle.
The brute force of the hit drove into your body
and shoved you into the ground,
Like a boulder crushing your bones into the grass.
Almost as heavy as your expectations now,
The expectations to land that tackle,
To take that mark.
You know that now.

Dragged from the field,
You sat on the cold iron bench.
Back then, it meant failure.
You thought you weren’t good enough,
That you did something wrong.
But it was only the rotation.
Everyone was in the same boat as you.
You know that now.

In that first quarter,
Time did not matter.
The final siren only meant that you could get your
dollar lollies from the canteen and play in the scrub.
The sugar high doesn’t hit the same now.

Life is now like the third quarter.
Time is tight,
The game is getting serious.
Every goal scored edges closer to an ending.
Missed opportunities, high expectations,
overwhelming pressure.
You now understand they are unnecessary.

The game still has its puzzle pieces,
The pieces haven’t changed.
Only the way you see them.
Strip it back,
It’s still just a game.



Angus McLachlan | Year 12

Dear Masculinity
Ethan Rogers | Year 12

You’re a code engraved into men from when they
were boys and their favourite colours were blue and
red because purple and pink were for girls. You’re a
societal expectation men inherit from their gender alone,
pressuring them to abide by your laws as seemingly
every other guy does. Enforcing outdated gender roles
and stereotypes, excluding and belittling anything else,
like showing emotion and weakness. Core principles
that you are built upon are supposed to revolve around
strength, courage, mastery and honour, but how can
anyone constantly uphold these expectations, let alone
a teenage boy?

You teach that these “unmasculine traits” - being caring,
softly spoken, showing sadness, depending on others –
should be ridiculed and avoided as they are viewed
as weakness. You provide blueprints around avoiding
these behaviours, teaching boys they must act tough
and detach from their femininity and emotion. But these
traits and qualities, while they may be perceived as
more feminine, are their own strengths and require great
courage to practice.

Extremes of your teachings – over-aggression and
dominance, anti-femininity, stoicism and self-reliance,
“toxic masculinity”, are a burden to men. It’s not just
other teenage boys that pressure these young men to
rehearse and project your practices; it’s the whole of
society. Misogyny shackles men; they can’t be caught
acting out of line. They narrow their values, distorting
their personality and character to act in line with
a ‘societal norm’. This template gets passed down,
shaming the tenderness and innocence out of vulnerable
young men. You offer solutions to their problems,
asking them to construct themselves from broken and
destructive messages.

Once, you were my escape, a way to blend in, to be
like everybody else. You were a baseline for how I lived
my life, telling me what I needed to like and how I had
to act.

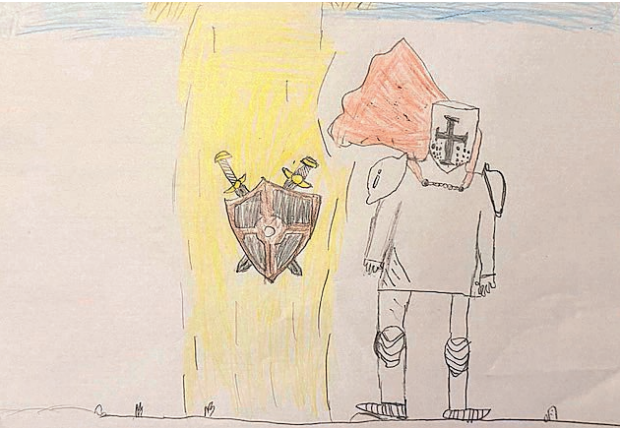
You showed me what parts of myself had to focus on
and improve, and what I had to remove and change.
You were the perfect guide for any insecure fourteen-
year-old that would think the world was staring at him,
watching his every move.

I guess now it’s about having a conscience when
it comes to you. Forcing yourself to do things that
you don’t like or believe in will only worsen society
and strip the individuality that makes everyone
special. Men should be allowed to choose what
kind of man they want to be, rather than blindly
following the flawed rules of hypermasculinity.



James Selby | Year 11

Christian Bibbo | Year 10



Felix Witkowski | Year 4

The Umbrellas Between Us
Hugo Sanders | Year 12

Streetlights bleed across the wet pavement. Cars hiss on the soaked road, people walk quickly with heads down and hands buried into the pockets of their jackets, umbrellas tilted against the wind. Then I see her. Everyone else moves with intent, but I become the only stillness in the street. She looks different; good but different. Only subtle things that most wouldn't notice. Her hair is longer. Face sharper. Clearly, she is doing better without me. Even though she looks new, everything is still familiar enough to hurt. Those Medusa eyes turn my body to stone as my mind falls into a sombre trance. It's been months since seeing her, but suddenly every memory returns at once; as though I am in a cinema watching moments of our story play out on screen.

Jawad Ismaeel | Year 7



Struan Cowe | Year 8

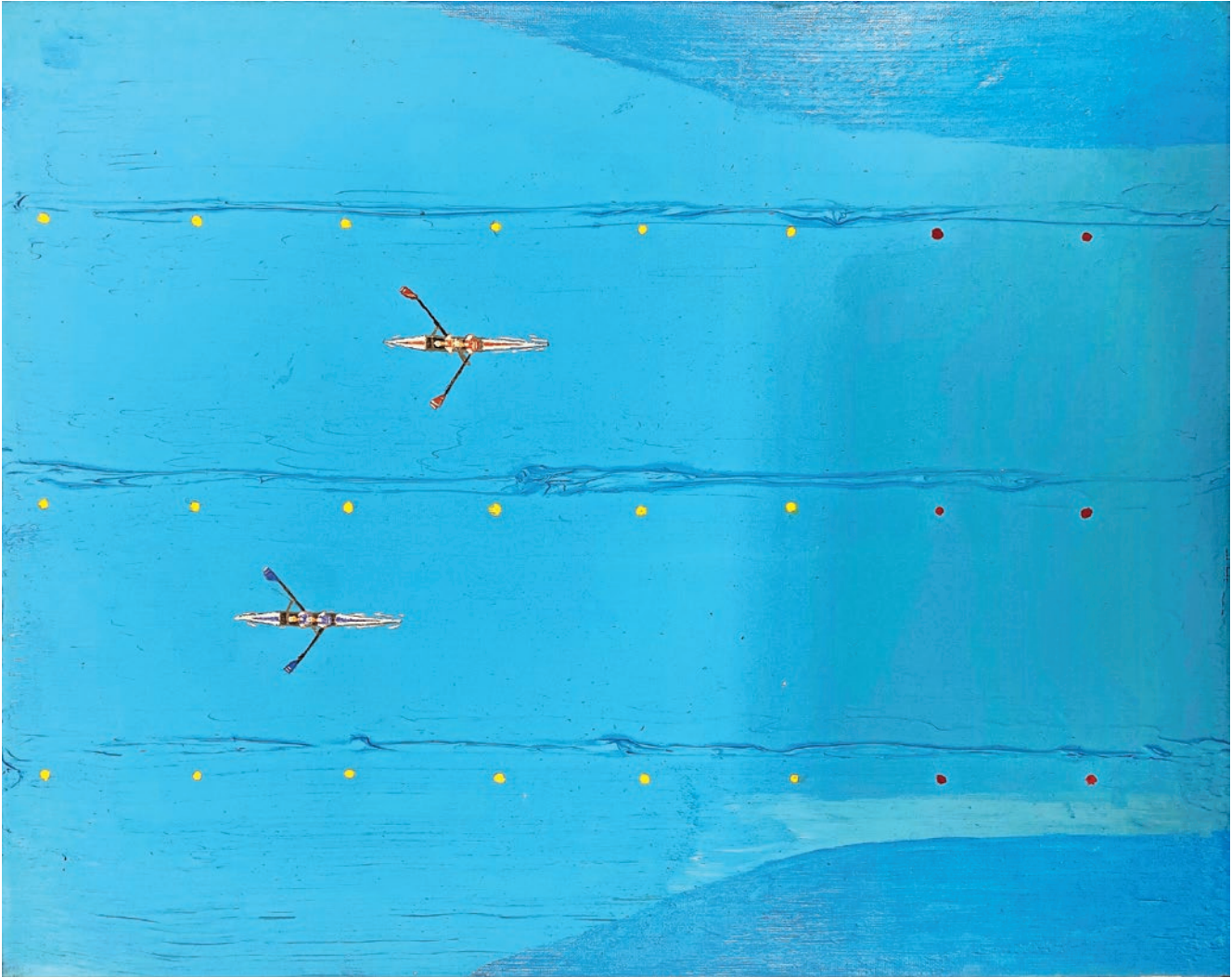
I see the girl whose laugh echoes through me; the way our fingers would dance when they met. The way she used to look at me, like I was someone worth staying for. The projection focuses on us, trading glances for the first time from across the room, before finally talking alone for hours on the balcony. Speaking like we already know each other, about anything and everything. Everything around us goes silent, like the world has quietly stepped back to give us space.

As the cinema screen in my mind flickers with memories, one slows down, becoming detailed enough to hurt. My pupils try to focus on anything but the screen, I clench my jaw as it begins. Last January: the after-party

of the formal. A rented marquee is pitched on an open property beyond the suburbs, just paddocks. Inside, the lights are too bright and the floor uneven. The relentless bass sits under my skin like an itchy vibration, moving up through my body, buzzing behind meaningless thoughts. The sound thunders inside my head, crashing in small and inevitable waves.

The beeping of the traffic light blurs the image of her standing in front of me. The light turns green. Surrounded by strangers eager to get to their destination, splashing their shoes in puddles while glaring headlights cover me like they are searching for the emotions I have kept hidden from the world. While the crowd pushes us forward from opposite directions, I wonder what she might say or do. Perhaps she'll smile awkwardly or look at me as she once did.

My head lifts as I move towards her. Every step closer makes my chest tighten. Now we are only an arm's reach away, but she moves past me without hesitation and I realise I have been carrying memories of someone who has already let me fade into the background. But her perfume cuts through the cold air, and instinct turns my head before my pride can stop it, like a man still trying to warm his hands over dead grey ashes. She is already disappearing further down the street. No backwards glance; those jaded green eyes won't meet mine again. The flickering screen loses her, frame by frame, and with her go the images I can no longer hold. But I try to capture her silhouette in my mind as she hurries through the rain, swallowed by umbrellas.



Harry Grandioso | Year 11



Tom Stuchbery | Year 10



Archie Shum | Year 2



Will Pledge | Year 11

I Am My Own Filip Fantasia | Year 12

They came into my life like promises.
Loud. Bright.
So certain they would never leave.
And maybe for a while,
I believed them.

But time has a way of showing you what's real.
Of peeling back the smiles,
The words,
The moments that felt like forever —
Only to reveal,
How temporary people can be.

Still, I don't hate them.
I'm not angry.
I just finally understand.

I don't need them.
I never did.

I don't need half-hearted love
Wrapped in pretty words.
I don't need friendships
That vanish when I speak my truth.
I don't need to shrink
Just to fit into someone else's comfort.

Because somewhere along the way,
I stopped reaching for hands
That never reached back.
I stopped bending
Just to be enough
For people who couldn't see me
Even when I was right there.

And in the quiet they left behind,
I found something stronger
Than all their empty noise.

I found me.

Not the version they wanted.
Not the softer, smaller version I used to offer.
But the real one.
The one who stands tall,
Even when no one's clapping.
The one who laughs alone and doesn't need to explain
Why.
The one who no longer waits to be chosen.

I am not lonely.
I am free.

I don't need invitations to feel like I belong.
I don't need likes, texts,
Or whispered affirmations
To remind me that I matter.

I wake up with myself.
I carry myself.
I choose myself —
Every day.
And that love?
It doesn't fade
When the room clears out.

I'm not bitter.
I'm not broken.
I'm just done searching
For something
I've already found
Right here —
Within me.

Let them go.
Let them forget.
Let them misunderstand. I don't need to be understood
To be whole. I don't need anyone to complete me.

I was never missing anything,
But the truth —
That I've always been enough.
That I've always been home.
That I've always been mine.

And one day,
When my name echoes in rooms they'll never step Into,
When the world turns to watch
What I've built from silence —
They'll remember me.
Not with love,
But with the sting of regret,
Wishing they had stayed,
Wishing they had seen
What I became
Without them.

They'll watch from a distance —
And I'll be so far past them,
That I won't even care.



Will Pledge | Year 11

The Drowning
Henry Stirling | Year 8

Open-mouthed, Jabari blooms awake, eyes cracking wide from sleep and pus streaming down his soft, pale face. Snot gushes out his nose, the green goo fuses with his saliva and drowns his Superman t-shirt. Simultaneously, his stitched, baby blue blanket unwraps around his delicate, hairless, bony legs as it swims below to the cold, dusty floor.

In the cramped stroller, a heavy weight pounds Jabari in place. His thick, scruffed hair tangles with the hexagonal, latex netting, giving the suffocating lice an opportunity to flood out. Suddenly, as he finally gets an airy finger on the intricate stitching, his anchored head bobs skyward and is eyed down by a hungry, predatory beast with a long, diaphanous head and triangular behind.

It was a shark.

Displaying a Gorgon-like stance, Jabari's intense trembling dripped sweat onto the seat, soaked up like an aged sponge. While his dazzled, immature mind, which floated from thought to thought aimlessly, was flooded with endless possibilities, his fate was only described by one: his mother.

His mother, with silk-like hair accessorised by bright, vibrant garments displayed a bold stance with a thick, rose-like ruby – high in wealth – welded around her agile, swan-like neck. He could never forget her pendant. Desolate tears flood his eyes; cycling mental whirlpools around him implode. Unexpectedly, sprinkles of reddish light flash to the corner of his eye.

His mother's pendant.

Overpowered by emotions, Jabari's delicate, feather-like fingertips brace his chest; he was free from the shackles of his confining stroller. Amazingly, the reflection was still strong. His light tiptoes were strained at every waddle. His legs finally gave out, falling to grasp a hold of his precious matriarch while being shielded from the never-ending vacuum of sea life. Her bold figure – containing natural authority – towers over Jabari, shielding him from his worst fears. His mother – cradling him – keeps him protected and dry, wiping the delicate tears off his soft face.

A Letter to My Younger Self
Athán Harlaftis | Year 12

Easter's coming up. You'll be up at the river this weekend. The pitted yellow cliffs tower over the murky water. The roar of speed boats and jet skis as you zip up your itchy life jacket. With the sun beating down on your skin, you refuse to put on sunscreen. Nonno has you busy with work, giving you jobs that leave your hands aching. Doing all the dangerous things that you aren't allowed to do. The things that scare your parents. The things that scare you. But you never say no to any of them. I know you don't want to seem weak. You don't want to disappoint Dad. Uncle Lee. Nonno.

You feel like you've got your whole manhood to prove when they tell you to jump into the unknown, murky water to tie up the rope. Through the sludge that makes your toes curl. When you're in pain, you keep going. If it's too hard, you keep going. If you're scared, you keep going. You still think being a man means pushing through, ignoring fear, and never saying no. What you don't realise yet is that sometimes being strong can mean revealing you're afraid by saying no.

In school, in sport, in families, toughness in boys is praised. Hesitation is seen as weakness. But this way of thinking is treacherous. Because when you believe you need to always keep going, you stop listening to yourself. You start to ignore things that are uncomfortable, things that are not for you, things that are unsafe. And over time, this seems to create strength, but it only builds pressure.

Real strength doesn't mean pretending to be fearless. It is all about knowing your limits and having the confidence to speak up when something doesn't feel right. This doesn't make you weak. It's what real strength looks like.

Now that I'm approaching the end of school, I've realised that it takes courage to stop pretending; to not dive into the murky water, to admit to fear instead of hiding it. And that's how I have learnt to become a better friend, a better son, and a better man.

I know you will, too.

Books
Sam Charters | Year 7

Imagine a world
Real or fake, dragons or frogs;
All trapped in a book.

Nick Iadanza | Staff



Austin Zhang | Year 3



Quintus Zhang | Year 3



For My Brother Filip Fantasia | Year 12

I watch you drown
In a sea of thoughts too heavy
For anyone to carry.
Your silence screams louder than words ever could,
And my heart shatters
With every moment you pull further away.
I want to reach inside
And take the pain from you.
To fight the monsters that live in your mind,
To tear down the walls
That keep you locked in the dark.
But all I can do is stand here
And watch you fade,
A person I once knew
Slipping through my fingers
Like sand in a storm.
I see the weight you carry,
Crushing your chest with every breath,
And I know you want to scream at the world —
But no one can hear the screams inside you.
No one can feel the way it hurts
To see you fighting a battle
You can't win on your own.
You hide behind smiles
That don't reach your eyes.
Pretend you're okay
When everything inside is falling apart.
And I'm left here,
Watching, helpless.
Wondering how to pull you out
When you're sinking deeper
With every passing day.
But I will not let you go.

I will hold you
Even when you push me away.
I will fight for you
When you don't have the strength to fight for
Yourself.

I will stay,
Even when you think you're too broken
To be loved.

You are more than this darkness,
More than the pain you feel,
More than the lies you tell yourself
When you think no one is watching.
You are my brother,
My family,
My heart.
And I will remind you of that,
Even if I have to remind you every day.

You're not alone in this fight.
I won't give up on you.
Not now, not ever.
Even when you can't find your way back,
I will be here,
Waiting for the moment
Until you can see yourself again,
Until the storm inside you passes,
Until the light comes back in your eyes,
And you remember who you truly are,
And realise
You are worth fighting for —
And that I've been fighting for you
From the moment I saw you slipping away.

Wear it Well Taine Meyer | Year 12

I bought a new sweater,
a multi-coloured heap of pure sheep's wool.
Bright, loud, and unapologetic,
a true statement piece.

I said I'd 'never take it off,'
who cared if I got looks.
It was safe and warm,
me personified.

It didn't itch like my grey one.
I hated the way its polyester felt,
the prickly stitching intruding on the fibres of my being,
never comfortable in my own skin.

I wore my new one a few times,
told to 'change it; take it off; what were you thinking?'
The colour of the wool draining more after every wash.
Why did it have to be so bright? So loud?
So unapologetic?

So, I took it off, hung it in my closet,
buried it amongst 'acceptable' garments,
put it behind my grey sweater,
the one I wore yesterday, and the one I'll
wear tomorrow.

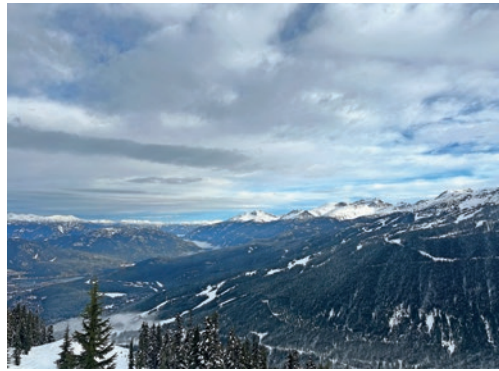
The one I'll wear every day,
until the fashion trend is over,
and I can wear my colourful sweater again.
Proudly.



Nicholas Rapuano | Year 10



Hugo Kirkpatrick | Year 7



Ode to Snow Globe

Edward Katdare | Year 7

The snowflakes shimmer
and swirl in crystallised water.
The delicate feel of snow glistens
and the smooth, swishing water
bubbles and fizzes
inside of the infinite round
majestic snow globe.

Ode To Snow Globe

Daniel Auciello | Year 7

The field of snow so soft and shiny
The curved sphere feels like sheer and gold
The seasons of wet are just so wintry
Bubbles and water, it's just so cold



James Selby | Year 11

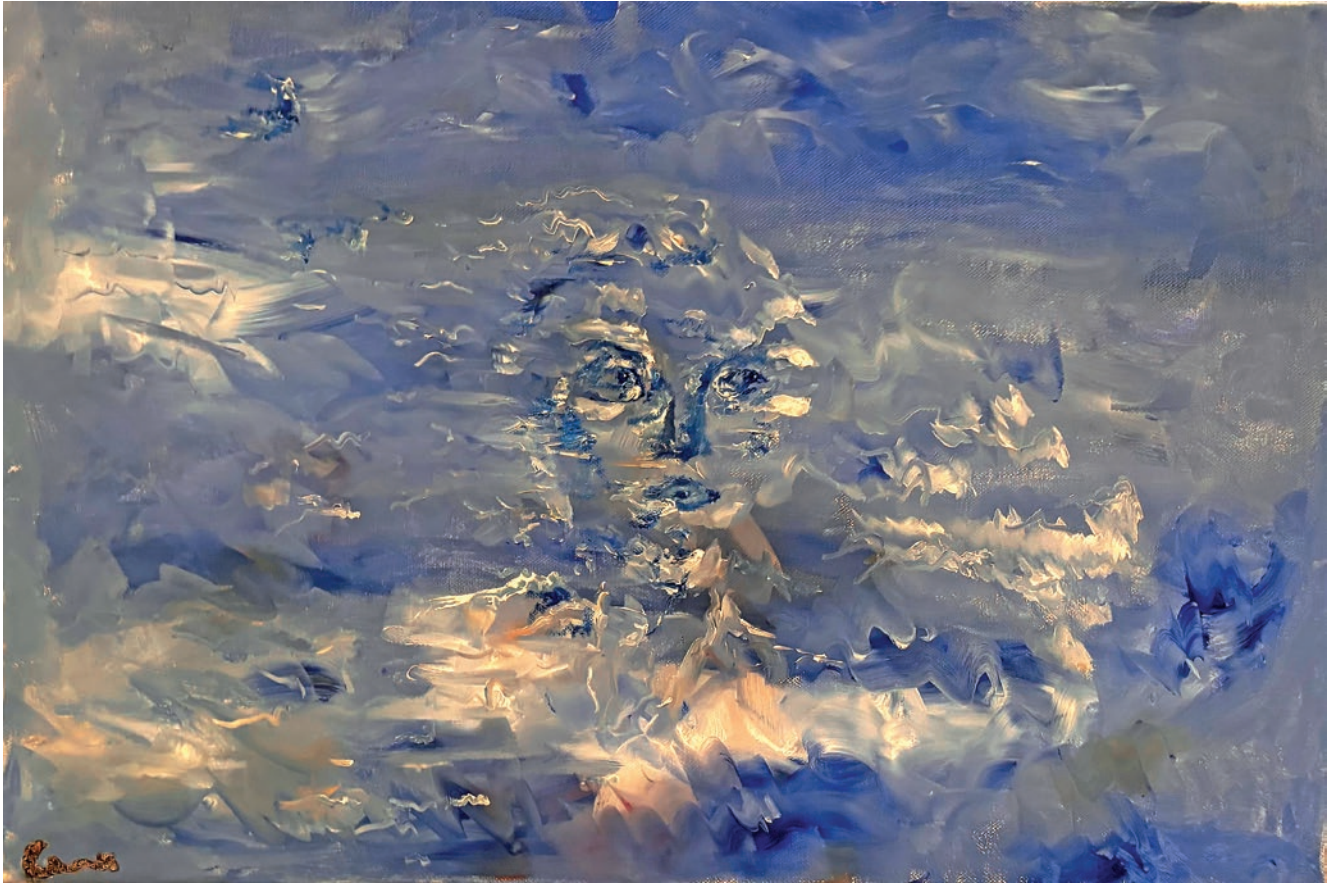
The Chilly Snow Globe

Ed Paglia | Year 7

The snowflakes swirl and swish in the globe
Bubbles form on top as they pop and sizzle
The globe makes me feel chilly and gives me a
Christmas vibe
As I shake the globe it slushes around like slime.



Quintus Zhang | Year 3



Oscar Dolan | Year 8

Infinite Ecstasy
Jackson Tomkins-Green | Year 12

The tectonic flanks built upon years of regret,
Fraudulent lives bleed white into red,
Consuming one’s story.
Life is infinite, yet living is ecstasy.

Time Lost
Kai Dalby | Year 12

To visit a place, you once knew
To smell a lifetime of wasted minutes
To capture a moment now gone
To learn the lessons one more time
To be desperate to live it all again.

Prelude to Water Melody
Leo Feng | Year 12

When will the bright moon appear?
With a cup of wine, I ask the blue sky.
I wonder what season it is tonight
In the celestial halls on high.
I long to ride the wind and return,
Yet fear the jade towers, lofty and cold;
At such heights one cannot escape the chill.
So, I rise and dance with my shadow —
As if no longer among men.
It turns around the vermilion chambers,
Stoops to silk-draped doors,
And shines upon the sleepless.
The moon bears no grudge —
Why then is it full when we are apart?
Men know joy and sorrow, parting and reunion;
The moon knows dimness and brightness, waxing
and waning.
Nothing has been perfect since ancient times.
May we be blessed with long lives,
Though a thousand miles apart,
Still sharing this fair moon together.

Sebastian Horvath | Year 8



Thomas Henderson | Year 7

The Rescue
Harry Heuzenroeder | Year 8

It was a misty, foggy morning when Tim was taking in the breathtaking views by the frozen-over lake, enjoying his breakfast and a coffee from the café by the lake. Then all of a sudden, he heard thunder and the sky fell dark and gloomy. So, he headed home.

While he waited for the weather to clear there was a knock on the door. It was his neighbour, Steve.

“G’day Tim,” Steve said. “Have you seen my dog?”

“No, I haven’t sorry,” Tim replied.

After Steve left, the weather finally cleared, so Tim decided to head back to the lake. A photo of a missing dog on a pole offered a \$100 reward and a phone number to ring with any information. Tim was very confused by this, so he kept walking down to the lake.

As he arrived there, he heard whining sounds. It sounded like a cry for help. As Tim turned around, he spotted a dog struggling under the ice. Tim sprinted over and tried to smash the ice, but it was too thick. He ran and found others to help him, however the ice didn’t even scratch.

So, Tim sprinted home to get his shovel. Everyone was still trying to smash the ice when he returned; Tim cracked the ice with his shovel and pulled the dog out but it wouldn’t wake up so Tim tried CPR. Still the dog didn’t wake up. Tim grabbed a flyer and called the number. His neighbour Steve picked up the phone and ran down.

Steve was surprised to find it was his dog. Suddenly the dog woke up and Steve couldn’t believe it.

He couldn’t thank Tim enough and so Tim got his reward. Also, Steve organised a statue by the lake to show Tim his appreciation. Tim now has his own dog, and they live together happily ever after.

Fuel Prices
Harry Hodges | Year 10

Good old Trumpy,
All bark no bite,
Making Iran grumpy,
Causing a bigger fight

My hands shake as I pull the trigger,
My wallet getting lighter by the second
While the government just sits back and sniggers
But with the mileage on my car, the servo beckons

I tap without looking,
Can't bear to check the cost
Hardly have anything left, for my own cooking
Can't afford to get lost.

You dread the day,
For that light to show,
you know, you're going to have to pay,
give up your hard-earned dough

Other countries, not making a peep,
But most are suffering,
Fuel is not cheap,
And the economy is buffering

Like us down under,
Albo's not been joining in,
But now, the fuel prices so high it leaves us to wonder
As you tap the card, it takes away your grin

With a couple litres worth 3 pound 4
Many people crumbling
Filling up, is becoming a chore
It's all becoming very humbling

The government loves it,
Public transport, used more than ever
But no one can afford to quit
It seems like it will be like this forever

With towns slowly running out,
Putting the economy on hold,
People are beginning to doubt
It seems to be worth more than gold

As the engine hums a quiet tune,
I think to myself,
I will be walking by June,
Have to put it on the shelf

Many people, long for the road
But now, that's just a fever dream,
The highways have been slowed
For too many people blowing steam

Hopefully soon, the prices drop
The roads come back to life,
Cars would stop being such a prop,
We would be in less strife.



Josh Dartnall | Year 11



Joshua Zhang | Year 11

The Car
Jimmy Apostolakos | Year 7

The raspy noise of the engine horrified me
Its putrid, nasty smell interrupted my taste buds
The fire as black as a charcoal pit
And all that was left was raw disappointment

Imaginary Partner
Aston Smith | Year 7

Rhythmic sensations merge together
Swirling and twirling as an imaginary partner
Crystallised flow and glistening glow
Glide as one through the globe

Sweet Smells
Magnus Greenbank | Year 7

The majestic smell of vanilla fills my lungs with pleasure.
The light guides me to my future adventure.
The fire gives a sense of a cozy cabin.
The wax drips down the glossy tall structure.



Leon Sun | Year 3



Xander Kammer | Year 8

The Weight of Being Alive
Filip Fantasia | Year 12

I wake up,
And remember.
Again.
Every day.
Every second.
It hits me like a fist to the chest.
You're not okay.
I'm not okay.
And no one can fix it.

Do you know what it's like
To love someone so much
That watching them fade
Feels like you're being ripped apart
Cell by cell?
To see their body betray them,
Slowly,
Cruelly,
And you can't do anything,
Except sit there.

Alex Qiu | Year 8



And now me.
My own body,
Whispering things I don't understand.
Pain in places there shouldn't be pain.
Fatigue in bones that are supposed to be young.
Doctors don't know yet.
They poke,
They scan,
They test,
But I already know.
I know something's wrong.
And I can't even look at it directly,
Because I'm already watching him
Fall apart.

How do you grieve
Someone who's still breathing?
How do you face your own possible ending,
While holding the hand
Of someone who taught you how to live?

I want to scream until my throat tears open.
I want to rip the world in half.
I want to crawl out of my skin,
And run away from all of it.

But I can't.
Because I have to be strong.
I have to smile.
I have to hold it all together
So no one else falls apart.
Because if I break,
Then everything breaks.

But inside?
I'm gone.
I'm empty.
Hollowed out by fear and rage and love so big,
It makes me sick.

He's hurting,
And still asking me how I am.
And I'm hurting,
And telling him I'm fine,
Because what else can I say?

What else is there,
But lies,
And silence,
And sitting in the dark,
Wondering,
How much worse
This can get?

I want it to stop.
Not life,
But the pain.
The waiting.
The not-knowing.
The pretending.

I don't care what happens to me.
Just leave him alone.
Just give him peace.
Give him breath.
Give him time.

I'd burn everything I have
Just to see him
Laugh again
Without pain behind his eyes.

But I can't trade places.
I can't stop it.
I can't save him.
I can't save myself.
I can't.

I just can't.

Xander Russell | Year 11



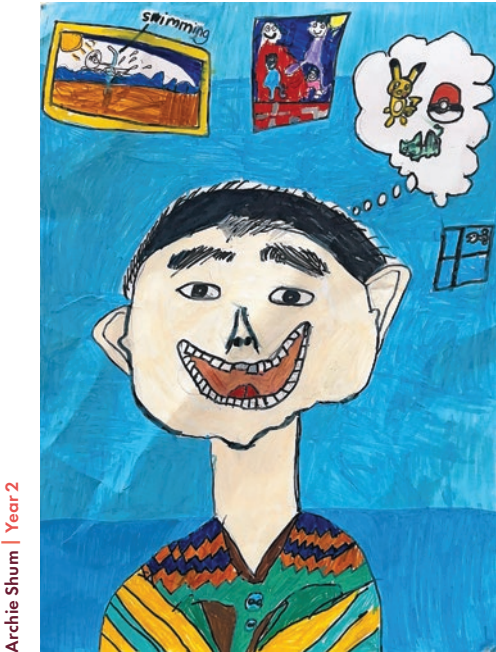
Separation
Harry Taintey | Year 12

When life is complete,
Mourning begins.
Separation.

Your family feels abandoned,
Your ghost wanders,
The land consumes you.

Separation.

Jack Williamson | Year 8



Archie Shum | Year 2



Will Pledge | Year 11



Harrison Duckworth | Year 6

Receipts
Laura Kelly | Staff

Purchases written out in fading ink
On paper that poisons you
Just a little when you hold it.
Grief is proof of love: keep the receipts.



Excerpt from: Years of Delusion

Toby Sutherland | Year 12

2003 – Banff National Park

Alan loved the Canadian wilderness; it was pure. He especially loved the escape from his life at home. He and his father had made these trips an annual tradition.

After a particularly exhausting hike, they had reached their camp site in time to watch the sunset. A soothing golden light poured through the untamed canopy of the pine trees, projecting a mesmerising dappling of light on the forest floor. He basked in the serenity for what felt like years. Slowly returning to reality, he figured he should probably check on his father. Walking through the forest gave Alan what his parents failed to; he couldn't quite put his finger on it. Their constant conflict had built up a wall through which emotions and affection could not pass. He was much too young to understand, but he knew one thing. It wasn't fair.



Oscar Dolan | Year 8

The One

Max Drew | Year 7

The clouds, soft and airy like delicious cotton candy and the sweetness of the air showering my taste buds with vivid flavour. The sun radiating a luminescent glow while reaching far into the ongoing horizon. Steep, towering cliffs looking out at the crystal-clear, pristine water with their destiny uncertain. Strong but gentle zephyrs collecting dust and sand, sweeping across the glamorous sea. It was a gorgeous sunset, but I couldn't share it with the one I've always loved. The one that always had a coffee in his hand. The one that refused to play ANY games, except if it was Zingo. The one that never disappointed with his scrumptious schnitzels. The one that was regularly getting comfy on his faded brown armchair. The one that had a massive crack in his tongue constantly giving me the heebie-jeebies. The one that migrated to Australia at a young age at six with his two sisters and two brothers. The one perpetually wearing his battered grey singlet that looked like it was worn during World War One. The one that I call my Nonno and the one I will never forget.



Phil Noble | Staff



Printers

Georgia Costello | Staff

Like soft serve machines, a printer's natural state is out of order.

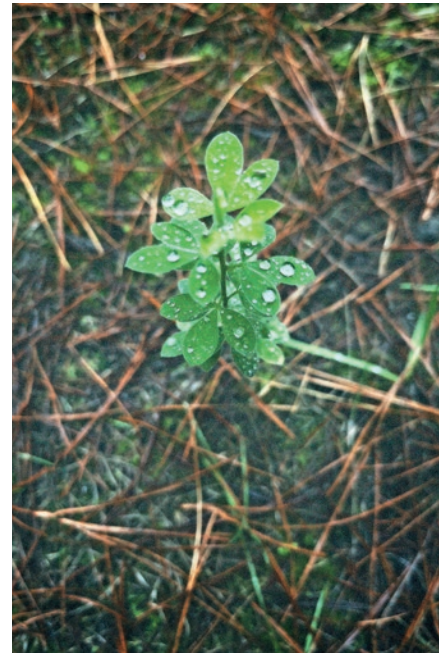
Shushing

Georgia Costello | Staff

When we are learning
how to be librarians
we major in shhhhhhhhhhh.



Ashleigh Hollitt | Staff



Relationships
Kaizhen Zhong | Year 7

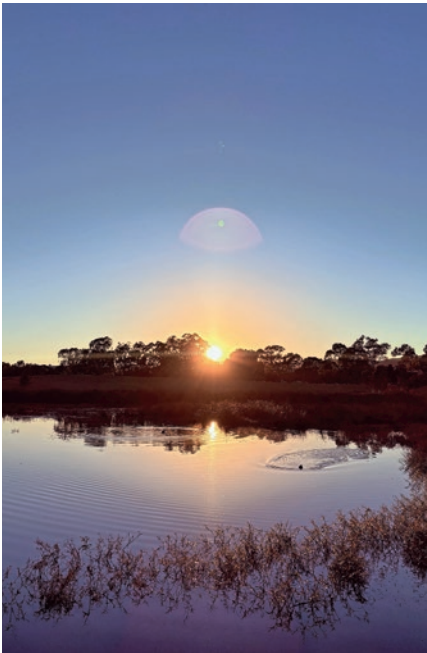
Relationships are lies,
But they could also be the meaning of life.
Some are new,
Some are history.

Relationships could be scary and ugly,
But it is just reality.
When you have one,
Embrace it,
Value it,
Protect it as hard as you can,
Or else it could be a past that you
would never meet again.

Anthony Rapuano | Year 10



Robyn Blenkiron | Staff



Troy McKinnon | Staff

Moment in Time
Hugo Spears | Year 12

Rain falls on an isolated forest
inhabited by nature,
guardians and preservers of history.
A president leaving their mark,
to be forgotten.
But nature disregards;
from the conflicting beliefs of humanity.
War, violence, harm.
Millions of napkins for crying generations
inheriting trauma.
Trees bearing witness .

The Flask
Myles Moore | Year 7

The clear silver reflection like a mirror.
The old faint smell of whiskey tingles your nose.
You think of the reflections that have been on it in the past.
The old memories that the flask has seen



Zac Grice | Year 11

Counting Calendars
Isa Tariq | Year 7

The crinkled calendar counted its days
Until it could not count no more
Chunks of knowledge crippled away.
Countless cracks covered the display as it
Calls

Casino Bangino
Rocco Ricciuto | Year 7

Cards shape the casino.
Hearts, spades, diamonds, clubs.
The joker’s laugh echoes through the room.
Patterns cover the small rectangles.
Cards slide out as the dealer tugs on the lid.

The Smoke
Rupert Norris | Year 7

I looked at it.
I could smell all the toxins walking around.
I could see all the puffs coughing
and cancer coming right for them.
They are playing the wrong game.



Nathan Zhang | Year 5



Hugo Spears | Year 12



Man Up

Spencer Zerbe | Year 10

From the moment we're born,
We hear the phrase, "man up".
We're taught this idea of a man from birth.
It's a mask.
Something you'd put on in order to brave any danger.
Like how a surgeon would put on a mask before surgery,
We're expected to put our emotions to the side,
Let our "man voices" take the centre stage of our lives,
Until we realise, not everyone can.
Years of turning emotions into hard smiles,
Cold eyes,
Short fuses,
And sharp words have turned us into monsters.
The monsters that society has wanted us to become.
Because yeah,
We might be strong,
And yeah,
We might be silent.
And true, we can survive this way –
Years of being strong and silent don't make you
powerful –
They leave you weak and voiceless.
You see, men feel like asking for help is a crack in their
idea of themselves,
That those three words, "I need help", are not a question,
But an incantation summoning fragility and leaving us
with no ability
To help others because we can't even help ourselves.
Who made this rulebook, which describes masculinity as
strength, power, aggression,
Dominance?
Do you want a father who thrives in fear?
Do you have a brother who thinks anger is strength?
Do you want to be someone who rules with an iron fist
over your family?
Because I know I don't.
If masculinity is something that incites fear in others, in
my own family, then I don't want to be a man.
I want to be the kind of man who feels safe in his own
skin to say, "I need help" and not stutter the words.
I want to change the thought that the first thing we think
of as a man is someone who can hurt people.
Boys can hurt people.
But only true men know that true strength lies not in
domination, but compassion and patience.
A real man wouldn't seize his power like a dictator or
force his power over others.
So don't tell me to "man up".
Tell me to be a human.

Melody Marshall | Staff



Oscar Dolan | Year 8

Johnny Kaipa | ELC



Phil Noble | Staff

Average
Finn McNally | Year 10

Mean,
Median,
Mode.

Average is supposed to be neutral.

A middle point.
Pretty much top 50%.
Where most people land
without thinking too hard about it.

But I don't hear it like that.

Because by definition, most people are average.
that's the whole design.
a bell curve doesn't peak at exceptional,
it peaks at ordinary.

and still, no one grows up,
shows up day in day out
wanting to be the highest point of a graph no one
celebrates.
I think that's what gets me
it's not rare. it's not unlikely.
it's almost guaranteed,
statistically.

like my life is
already mapped out in percentages,
where I fall right in the middle
and nothing about me
tips the scale.

not bad.
not great.
just... statistically expected.

and I don't know how to make peace with that.

because average feels quiet
in a way that scares me.

like a life that doesn't echo.
like conversations that don't get repeated.
like being known but not remembered.

I'm not afraid of failing,
at least failure means
something went wrong.

average means nothing
went wrong at all.
But nothing went right either.

you showed up,
you did what you were supposed to do,
you stayed within the lines,
and that was it.

a life without sharp edges,
but also, without sparks.

and I know, logically,
that average holds most of the world.
that it contains entire lives
full of love and meaning
that don't need to be exceptional
to matter.

I know that.

but knowing it
doesn't quiet the voice
that keeps asking,

what if I end up exactly where I'm most likely to be?

what if I am
perfectly, predictable,
nothing special?

and what does it say about me
that that feels
like something to be afraid of?

The Eleventh Hour
Athan Harlaftis | Year 12

The commanding grandfather clock hangs from above.
Its golden arms tick over to the eleventh hour. I've got
twenty minutes to stop being such a coward. That's it.
Twenty minutes for me to say something that I have been
hiding deep within for months. Praying for some delay,
I gaze up at the ticking departure board as the nerves
rush like rapids through me.

Amanda stands slumped down beside me with her tan
suitcase. She looks so beautiful, it almost annoys me,
with her messy brown hair and soft, rosy cheeks. There
is always one loose strand of hair dangling in front of
her face, no matter how many times she tucks it back.
I know she hates it, but I love it. It's part of what makes
her Amanda. The girl that I love. The girl I'm letting walk
out of my life, because I'm too petrified to say anything.
Before I can help it, my mind is back in Josh's car six
months ago.

We were on our way to a party. Seven of us in the car,
four in the back row. The deafening music was drowned
out by laughter and Sarah screaming the wrong lyrics.
David was filming, and all I could do was pretend not to
realise how close Amanda was to me. I gazed out the
fogged-up window, watching the streetlights flash past,
acting like I was relaxed even though I wanted to crawl
into my shell. Everyone was pressed up against each
other in the back row. That smell of her vanilla and citrus
perfume was everywhere. She was close; closer than
ever before. Part of me wanted to get out of there, but
another part of me wanted to move even closer.

All of a sudden, Josh slammed the brakes. "Jesus, Josh,
slow down," screamed David. With no seatbelts on,
the whole backseat shifted. Drinks were thrown around,
Sarah and Casey screamed, and Amanda fell onto me.

For a moment, neither of us moved. Everything had gone
quiet between us. There was still laughter and screaming,
but I couldn't hear any of it. She just looked at me
hesitantly, but I just froze. *Move. Do anything.*

Then the car pulled up to the party. The door swung
open, cold air rushed in, and Amanda was pushed off
me as though nothing had ever happened.

—

"Amanda, wait!" I call out.

She stops three steps from her train. Three steps from
leaving. She turns, her eyes shining, and a look on her
face as though she is uncertain whether to come back
or keep walking. Before my mind can talk me out of it,
I start walking towards her. *Don't mess this up. Just say
it. You've practised it in the mirror a thousand times. Just
do it.* When I get to her, I forget my line. I stand there for
so long it starts to get awkward, and now she knows this
isn't just a simple goodbye. As I stand there, the smell
of vanilla and citrus hits me again. It takes me back to
Josh's car and the gap I never tried to close.

"Amanda."

Her eyes are full of tears, and her cheeks are flushed.
Her hair is in a mess, just the way I love it. That single
strand dangles in front of her face just as it always has. I
tuck it behind her ear.

And for once, I don't step back.

Hunter Allington | ELC



Phil Noble | Staff

Luca Roscio | Year 3



Paul Gaganis | Year 10



Phil Noble | Staff

Sebastian Horvath | Year 8

Excerpt from: Empty Words, Silent Thoughts

Hugo Sanders | Year 12

Sometimes I feel like there is only one place where the buildup of our emotions is allowed to come out. Not by falling apart, but by using it as fuel put into something else. A place where emotion is actually acceptable. Saturday morning, sunlight spilling onto the court; the echo of the ball bouncing. Shoes squeaking against the wooden flooring. Voices cutting through the air. Once I step onto the basketball court, suddenly everything I have been holding in is used. Giving me an edge over my opponents.

There was this one game a couple of days after your message. I can still remember it. I was carrying everything from that night. The questions. The frustration. The feeling of not being enough. The game started and early on I had every chance to lose control. A bad call. A push under the rim. A missed shot. But instead of losing it, I sharpened. Played with more intent. Where every step was more powerful, like I was angry at the floor. As if all this rage finally had somewhere to go. Instead of holding me back it would push me forward. And on the sideline, I was told to keep going. There was no questioning where it came from. Everyone saw it as “intensity” or “energy.” Because in sport it’s acceptable. You’re allowed to show frustration and play with emotion, even if it’s written all over your face. So, I embraced it because a part of me had to prove to myself that I was worthy. I was able to reveal my true self. I could get rid of this facade. This brave face I would put on. It felt like this was the only place my emotions were allowed to exist. And I continued using this, whether in games or practising at home. Taking my anger out on the ring. Trying to tear it down or shatter the backboard when I dunked the ball, leaving me with bruises and scars on my hands and arms. Acting as a constant reminder of this place where I could let out this darkness in me. What the hell would I do if I didn’t have the court to come back to?

Expectations

Calvin Anesbury | Year 10

Expectations,
They holler then they bother,
Follow till tomorrow,
The situation becoming ever more hollow.

He strives till he breaks,
He perfects till he’s wrecked,
He has trekked to be perfect.

But he doesn’t realise...
Realise he’s off his balance, off his face
Trying to embrace first place.

He wants to succeed, it’s who he is,
The anxiety is killing him
Stabbing him with all these doubts, saying
“you’re a failure, you’re an idiot!”

But these are just his thoughts,
Making him go back rather than forth,
The only challenge he faces is himself.

While he may be efficient, engaging and
highly organised,
He is the one who capsized,
From the push of his own shadow,

Kaelan Virag | Year 11



In the deep end he goes with a deafening “SPLOOSH”,
The turbulent ripples spread as his stress.

The stakes feel high, like the sniper in a battlefield.
But a sniper can also be as fluent as an artist,
If he is detailed and patient into accomplishing his target.

I was once too an extreme perfectionist,
I still am quite self-disciplined,
However, I’ve grown to notice that you can achieve
great things, by not trying to change your brain... but to
understand your brain.
Apply a self-therapy session to relieve the pain.

As natural selection adapts, we adapt.
Adapt to Survive,
Adapt to Thrive,
Adapt to keep our dreams Alive.
Adapt to control any Fixations.

Refine to a constructive Cognition,
To further fortify your Ambitions.
Hang-tough during the Hard Stuff,
And you will be Enough...
You will have fulfilled your Expectations.

Julian Dawson | Year 12



The Thief of Joy

Harry Grandioso | Year 11

“Comparison is the thief of joy” they say,
But I hand it my keys,
Invite it in for tea
Let it sit at the head of my table.
As it stares at me.

I scroll.
And I scroll.
And I scroll.
Their highlight reels,
My blooper cuts.
Their body ideals,
My ugly gut.
Their sunshine smiles,
My crooked grin.
Their “I woke up like this”
My “dark nights thinking why aren’t I like this.”

Comparison is the thief of joy.
but here I am,
with my window wide open.
so envy can skulk in
like a serpent in Eden
hissing “see what they’ve got”
Look at Abel’s offering
So pure, so perfect
While mine burns on the altar.

I am Cain.
Mark me.
I have slayed my peace with my own hands.
Envy, jealousy
Grip my neck like a noose of ivy
Whispering, slandering –
“you should have more,
Be something more”

Tall poppies get cut down they say.
You see but here’s the thing:
I’m the one swinging the scythe
Yet, not at others, but myself.
Because I measure my worth in units taller than me.
In laughs I didn’t get,
In grades I didn’t earn,
Oh the awards I yearn,

And the dreams I drowned.
Because it seemed someone already swam.

Tall poppy syndrome.
It isn’t them chopping us down.
But it’s me.
Trimming my own full potential,
Because if I’m not the best
Then just give it a rest
Because I don’t want to fail
I don’t want to be judged.
And to be judged, means I might not measure up.

Comparison is the thief of joy
Yet it’s also a trickster.
It shows me their grass is greener
But neglects their weeds.
It tells me they’re perfect
Yet ignores their cracks.
It shows me their highlights,
But exactly only that.
It tells me I’m less
But truth be told I’m not.
I’m just different.

So today,
I’m changing the locks,
Closing my blinds
Destroying that cup
And sitting at the head –
Of my own table!
Because comparison only steals
What I let it take.

Today, I water my own grass.
Today, I let my poppy grow tall,
Today, I look in the mirror and see,
The only person I must outdo
Is me –
Yesterday’s me.
Last year’s me.
Last breath’s me.

Comparison is the thief of joy...
But I’m done being robbed.

Our Dying World

Bailey Ferme | Year 10

Our world as we know it is slowly dying,
poor Mother Earth, you can hear her
plea and all she wants is to be set free.
Our animals who once were in abundance
are going extinct,
birds flying high are sizzling,
turtles swimming are slowly suffocating.
It’s about time we hear the pleas and
put our animals at ease,
fish once gliding effortlessly through water
are now sinking,
snakes are slithering on steamy sandy soils,
factories continue to roar as masses of
smoke fill the air,
as we watch our birds fight their way
through the never-ending glare,
more and more plastic is in the ocean,
turning our pristine world into just a notion.
Because our world is dying!
Poor Mother Earth, you can hear her plea,
all she wants is to be set free.
We turn our heads away thinking it
will decay,
but dead turtles are everywhere on display.
Oil is flowing into our water as our fish
face continuous slaughter,
monkeys are needing respect after
numerous years of neglect,
humans have been greedy and now our
recovery needs to be speedy.
As our ice starts to slowly melt, we’ll need
a boat to keep afloat.
As trees continue hitting the ground, soon
oxygen will go unfound.
Our future is a mystery, and we need
action to make sure the world’s not history.
As the sun beams, the wind blows and
water is incessant, renewable power
will be our blooming flower.
It’s about time we made some change to
our way of life before we end up in strife.
Global warming is rising, deforestation
is rampant and water levels are risky, but
nobody seems to realise there is no planet
B and recovery is key.
Because our world is dying!
Poor Mother Earth, you can hear her
plea, all she wants is to be set free.

Felix Song | Year 5



Paul Gaganis | Year 10

Edmund Macmillan | Year 1



James Selby | Year 1

If Tomorrow Never Comes

Filip Fantasia | Year 12

She has always seen me before I saw myself.
Before the world shaped me, before I knew
Who I was,
She knew. She saw something in me,
That I was too young, too lost, too reckless to Recognise.

She was always there, steady as the tide,
Watching me stumble, watching me rise,
Always believing, always knowing
That I would find my way.
And yet, I wonder...
If tomorrow never comes, will she know
How much I love her?

I think about this more than I should.
Not in the loud moments, but in the quiet ones.
In the spaces between heartbeats,
On the nights when the world is still,
And I am left with nothing but the weight of what I
haven't said.

Sometimes late at night, I lie awake and
Watch her sleeping,
And I wonder if she knows.
Knows that every part of me that is good
Comes from her.
Knows that when I laugh, when I love,
When I stand tall in the face of the world,
It is because she showed me how.

I wonder if she remembers the nights
She held me when I was down,
The mornings she picked up the pieces
Of the failures I faced,
The times she stood in front of me
When I was too weak to stand for myself.
And I wonder if she ever truly knew
How important she is to me.
Have I tried in every way to show her every day
How much I love her?

Not just with words, but with the way I lived?
Do I make her proud?
Do I love her enough in return?
Or do I let the days slip by,
Assuming there will always be another chance,
Another moment, another tomorrow?

Because the truth is, I could never imagine
A world without her.
She has been my constant, my gravity, my quiet strength.
And yet, time is cruel.
It does not wait. It does not pause.

So, if my time on earth were through,
And she had to face this world without me,
Would she know?
Would she know that I carry her in every step?
That I am not just me,
But the pieces of her love, stitched into
My being?

Would she know that her kindness echoes
In my voice?
That her love built the road beneath my feet,
That I have always, always relied upon so heavily?

If tomorrow never comes,
I need her to know.
I need her to know that I see her —
Not just as my mum, but as my beginning.
As the reason I became someone worth being.

I need her to know that love like hers,
Does not fade with time,
Does not end with silence,
Does not disappear when the world turns cold.

If tomorrow never comes,
Let today be the day she knows.
Let today be the day she feels it —
The weight of my love,
The depth of my gratitude,
The way she shaped me into someone who will
Never, ever forget what she has done for me.

If tomorrow never comes, I pray that she knows.
Knows that every moment, every breath,
Every piece of love I failed to say out loud still
Belongs to her.
And when the sun rises without me, let her carry
This truth:
She is my greatest gift, my quiet strength, and
My forever home.

Safe Space

Thomas Maynard | Year 10

I look through my window on a warm morning
In the bedroom I am always in
I shake and sweat rolls down my forehead as my heart
pumps out my chest
Why am I scared, why am I nervous
People are outside, in the sun having fun
I look, I watch, I imagine
I walk to the front door
But I stop
Every time, every morning
I reach out my hand
But it feels like trying to open a rusted iron door
I can't bring myself to open it
I try but the closer I get, the worse I get
Like something is pressing down on my chest
Like the air gets thick and heavy
I am safe inside, outside is dangerous
I feel nauseous and sick like my stomach is turning over
and over
I clutch my chest
My knees are weak, turning into jelly
I want to go back to my room
I need to go back to my room
My room is safe
My room is quiet
No one can get me there
No people in my room
Just me
Just silence

But I want to go outside
I want to make my parents proud
They tell me it's safe
They say it's fun
But I don't believe them
I know it is scary out there
I know I disappoint them
But nothing can hurt me in my room
At least that's what I tell myself
Every day I try
But I just can't
I want to go outside
But I won't
I want to lie in the grass
Feel the sun beaming on my face
Run to places I see from my bedroom window
Play in the playgrounds
But what if it's not safe there
What if I'm not safe there
My parents stand out the door
Calling my name in that same old miserable tone
But I stay where I always stay
Inside in my room
In my Safe Place.
But the walls feel closer
And I realise
Maybe It's not keeping me safe
But keeping me trapped



Monica Magann | Staff

Ollie Fox | Staff



Harry Grandioso | Year 11



Amelia Dodson | ELC



Beth Christie | Staff

The Ladder of Dreams
Sebastian Roussos | Year 6

I am climbing a ladder and
I don't know where it's going to
And I don't dare to look down
I hold to every rung
Like a hook to fish
I see my village down below.

Out of the atmosphere
Gravity is low
I dare not let go,
I hope this is a dream
But I hope it doesn't end.

I go past Venus and
say goodbye to Pluto
and there I lie in my bed
In the morning sun,
I look out the window
And there it was,
The ladder of dreams.



Campbell Cove | Year 10



Beth Christie | Staff

Splinters
Henry Yang | Year 12

There are two fields.
The one where your footsteps vanish into the dry grass.
Another, where you learn what kindling is.

But along the fence that separates the two fields I sit.
Room enough for one person I ponder the path not
taken.

She climbs up beside me and called it friendship,
but a fence isn't a porch.

Splinters work in slowly,
not from her
But from the pain of indecision.

One morning she stepped down,
Back towards the fields,
Yet I'm still here picking the slivers of wood from my
hands,
Except the maiden splinter,
and the slow rot of the almost past.



Beth Christie | Staff

Hospital Blues
Henry Murdoch | Year 12

The monitor beeps
As blood pumps, the man weeps.
He admits that time took place
As the natural blister of history,
Written in human literacy
As nature, holds so many mysteries.



Daniel Liu | Year 7

The Great Escape
Angus McLachlan | Year 12

The blessed morning arose
My surroundings, painted in the walls
A window, blowing a breeze through the halls
A window to not raise suspicion
To disprove all motives leading to my entrapment
To disappear to a paradise
To disappear to my grave.

Frank
Jack Stunell | Year 12

Franklin's ruddy face has been foresworn,
My minds cleared like the path of an exquisite metal detector
My obsession is left behind,
Just as the leaves leave the trees,
I've grown and flown,
Far away.



Archie Shum | Year 2

Mother
Max Bussenschutt | Year 11

She misses touch,
Unfamiliar nurses prevented happiness
Entrapped, cruel, weak
Starved to death
Gone.
Her mother,
Down the drain.

Eat My Words

Laura Kelly | Staff

Dear Chat.
Dear Claude.
Dear Grok and co.
Please, don't wait for an invitation to invade
my heart and pull out the words
that cost me my pride to find.

Continue your feast; I'll continue to write.

These words come through my precious breath, passed
down to me through my father's wit and my
mother's care
tinged soft with Scottish lilt.
These words come through the tips of my fingers,
worked hard to the bone
In tall brick buildings by exasperated teachers who
mapped my mind to language.
Once, these words meant something,
to me – and not always, but sometimes – to the people
who heard them.

Now? Ah, dearest Chat et al.

My words reside in your cavernous maw,
chewed up and spat out for profit.
Eat them up, savour their flavour.

Because these thoughts; this heartbeat; my memories?
For now, these secret streets carved deep inside
my heart are mine alone to navigate.



Hugo Kirkpatrick | Year 7

Jawad Ismaeel | Year 7



Melody Marshall | Staff

Ziggy Tasci | Year 8



Will Pledge | Year 11

Future Self Solutions

Laura Kelly | Staff

Tomorrow I am amazing: Future Self.

Folding fourteen piles of tiny T-shirts while
breezily marking a pile of papers twice as high
as it ever was today.

Because tomorrow
I am a problem-solving fixer,
Master of all trades, Jack of none,
A Future Self crafted from extraordinary concentration.
Forged in steel.
Fully in control.
I will be new,
I will be something else,
I will be kinder to myself than I've ever
known possible (but efficient; also, very
efficient).

Tomorrow, I will solve the problems of today.
Tomorrow they will be yesterday's problems
(because: time).
Future Self will face it all with a patient calm
assurance that – it's true –
I can't quite picture just yet.

It's all for the best that tomorrow I am changed,
because this pile of problems that await me today
really do require some extraordinary
Future Self Solutions.

Phil Noble | Staff





A Book is Magic

Lucas Pizzino | Year 9

Walls of words and books
Open up to transport you
To another life



Hugo Spears | Year 12



Oscar Dolan | Year 8

William Scott | Year 4



Toby Sutherland | Year 12

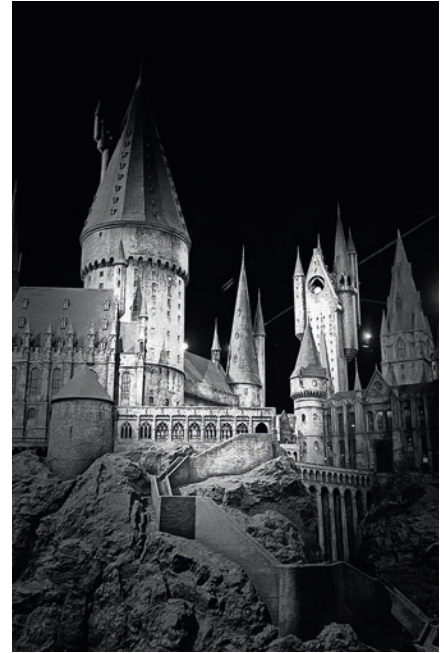


Butterflies

Nathan Wang | Year 11

She craved butterflies,
But eventually she died.
A little moth died.

Anthony Rapuano | Year 10





Books Atop More Books

Toby Patterson | Year 7

My eyes skimmed the rows and rows of books that lined the library, looking for a book that spoke to me. And then I found it: a small, worn book nestled in between some other old books. I walked over and took the book off the shelf; up close it looked a lot older than I thought it was at first. This book seemed different to all the others I'd read, more life-like somehow.

I walked up to the librarian's old, worn desk and placed the book atop it.

"Oooh, I haven't seen someone borrow this book in a long time," the librarian remarked.

"Why's that?" I replied.

"It's just not that popular," she said, "anyway, why'd you choose to borrow this book?"

"It called to me," I said, just before I fainted.



Archie Karamalis | Year 6

The Realisation That Nothing Lasts Forever

Oliver Crocker | Year 12

Much like the blight, something similar is cast upon humanity. In spores of thought and question, the affinity of purpose found with the sentiment of mortality. Once caught, it persists for an eternity.



Archie Shum | Year 2



Edward Thomas | Year 5

The Weight of What Comes Next

Knox Green | Year 10

The drive on the way home, and I am drained
I can see my mum's mouth moving but I just can't be bothered to entertain.
I've spent all day talking to people and being on guard,
Talking and talking, so much that any more is just hard.

My worth is defined in a single letter,
Any less than an A and I need to do better.
Study hard, they always say,
Get onto your work, don't dawdle, no play.

My hand starts to hurt,
As it writes and writes.
The numbers and letters make no sense,
What even is the Bill of Rights?

The clock ticks loud, like a beating drum,
Pushing out the grades,
The points,
The sum.

Even when I get an A,
It's never enough,
I'll never get that award,
What should be a win still feels rough.

There's an invisible bag,
And it just keeps getting heavier,
Books of work and time,
Yet I'm the sole carrier.

I stare at the page and it's just blank,
I don't know what to write,
There's just nothing left in the tank.

The future is coming, and it's chasing me down,
Become a doctor, a lawyer,
Chase that crown.

My holidays and free time start to disappear,
What used to feel like forever is now not,
The work feels like it takes up the whole year.
Hanging out with my friends is now just a thought.

Jasper Yang | Year 3



My future is dark, with the price of a house,
As the numbers just keep rising,
We're working two shifts with just one job,
Yet everyone is still somehow smiling.

Free time doesn't feel like an option.
We go to school like it's a full-time job,
Spend all our day writing along
Just to learn about Picasso and some olden day snob.

But yet these people mean more than my happiness,
My time is worth nothing more than this.
All I can do is reminisce,
The bliss,
Of doing anything other than this.

Look to the future,
People always say,
But what about the present,
Don't forget about today.

Phil Noble | Staff



Archie Marsh | Year 8



A Mother Reads the News, Again.

Laura Kelly | Staff

At night I dream of children's bones
stretched thin across
skin that holds
a holy heart,
a tiny life.
Flickered flame dying by degrees.

It will take a hundred years or more
To unsee just one brief image of this horror.

In the loud black cages of wicked men's hearts
beating thick with tar
and the viscous blood of other people's children,
this tiny life does not matter.

That black curl and those half-moon nails and
that sweet doughy breath
Are not sacred.
Whose God will forgive this?

There is nothing now we can absolve ourselves of
For we have seen and cannot unsee.

I heard that anger
Is a unit of energy for change
So, what do I do with all this rage when nothing
changes?

How was I to know
when I birthed a plump-cheeked pigeon pair
that forever I would feel every mother's
desperate wracking love,
Too strong to hold in one body.

That every child would be
hers and mine. Hers and mine.

How was I to know
that I could no longer comfort myself with that
age-old, white-faced lie:

That I am not a mother waiting for her dead.

Alexander Nguyen | Year 7



The Endless Financial Struggle

Henry Lovell | Year 10

Can't afford a house,
Can't afford fuel to drive my car,
Can't afford to buy enough food,
Clothing prices are through the roof,
This crisis has me in a foul mood.

Inflation and the cost of living are affecting everyone.
The price of a dozen eggs 10 years ago was only
\$5 and now you'll pay \$13 for a dozen eggs –
how is that even possible?
People are stressed with the rising costs
Annual expenses have almost doubled

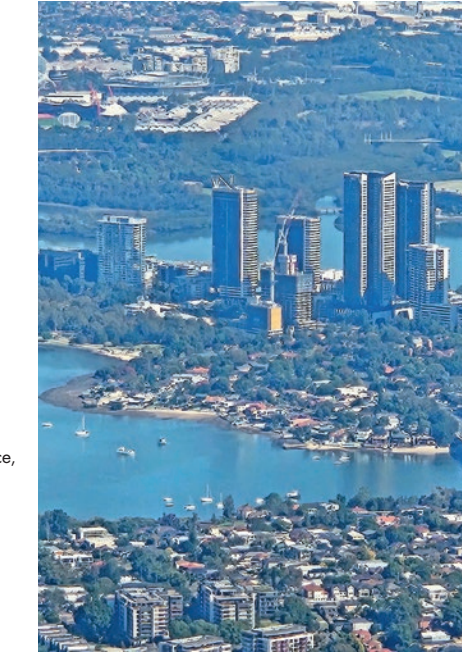
The bills never end... council rates, water rates,
electricity, health insurance, car insurance, pet insurance,
the mortgage, car registration, school fees... the list
goes on
Over 122,000 people are homeless in our
country, the country we all call home

For some people, putting food on the table is
a struggle – just the basics for survival

People can't thrive when they are just trying to survive
It's time the government stood up and did
something about it
We can't afford essentials like clothes or healthcare
What the hell do we do?

The pressure is building and what shall we do?
The youth are facing a tough future – how will they
get by?
The rent is high, it's hard to save, to get ahead
Generations before us well, they have been through
the war, the great depression and inflation

We are the lucky country and we are
grateful for so much, but we still have our
challenges that we need to face together.



Keshav Balachander | Year 8



Struan Cowe | Year 8

A Father in Five Acts

Toby Dodd | Year 12

‘Marc, I need that wrench,’ Dad says impatiently, eyes narrow with concentration as he tinkers with the blistered metal exhaust. My gaze darts back and forth, scanning the cluttered surface of the oil-stained workbench. I step forward and begin to scour the depths of an unlatched toolbox. Quicker now I rummage, and any hopes of my father not noticing my ineptitude vanish. Beside me, the harsh scrape of metal-on-metal echoes. ‘Don’t worry about it bud,’ he says, returning to the rear of the old red Mustang. Head down, I hide in the safety of the dimly lit corner, slumping into the camp chair Dad had set up for himself. My father’s pride and joy was once a beautiful car, candy-coated with pristine chrome accents polished to perfection. At least that’s what he tells me. I’d say more rusty tin can. Between work and Mum leaving, Dad seems to spend every waking moment in here. I want to get involved, but he doesn’t exactly make much space to let me. I just try not to get in his way.

—

A week later now, Dad still can’t figure out why the exhaust won’t work. Maybe if I can just find what’s wrong, he’ll finally ease up a little. My skin presses against the filthy surface of the cold concrete floor. Beneath the car, I look up cluelessly at the maze of crooked parts weaving around one another. A barely audible click of the garage door makes me flinch. Dad’s home. My grease-stained hands claw onto the dusty surface of the bumper as I rip myself from beneath the car. The door swings open. Behind it my father stands in darkness, occupying the width of the frame.

‘I was just looking,’ I stammer, ‘I didn’t touch anything. I promise.’

‘What have I told you about being in here by yourself?’

My cheeks burn. I don’t want to look at him. ‘I’m sorry.’ I feel my chest pounding, ‘I was just trying to help.’ *It’s all I ever want to do.* Slowly, Dad steps into the light. His face tightens. ‘Out.’ My jaw clenches. This car is all he cares about. Pushing past him, his face comes into full view. Pale eyes. Hollow cheeks. I haven’t noticed how tired he seems. He looks terrible.

—

White. I look around, nothing but white. I try to take a deep breath, but the back of my throat burns with the smell of antiseptic; it’s everywhere. I’ve always hated hospitals. By now, I have almost become accustomed to the constant beeping, but it doesn’t stop my head pounding with every beat. A nurse emerges through the door, her silver nametag glistening beneath the fluorescent light. Susan. I look towards Dad, one callused hand lying atop the empty white sheet like a lighthouse in the dark, the lone piece of humanity in this sanitary detention. I want to reach out; I don’t. Beneath the cracks of his fingernails, grease remains embedded. It’s about the only part of him I recognise. The nurse moves to his bedside, beginning to adjust the tangled tubes. Dad lies unchanged, his gaze unfocused, face sunken and pale. I try to think of something to break the heaviness of his silence. ‘Can I help with the exhaust, Dad?’ I look towards my father in desperation; his face remains closed. I feel a lump growing in my throat, pressure building behind my eyes. Silence reigns, and my father will not look at me.

—

‘Sorry for your loss,’ murmured on repeat. I nod slowly, a habit I’ve acquired, seeing as it’s all people can say to me anymore. If one more person tells me how sorry they are, I’m going to go insane. I can’t stand it. Feeling defenceless, I move through the endless rows of people, finding my way to the front of the room where Aunt Linda’s familiar rose scent meets me. I take my seat. Voices begin over the loudspeaker, a monotonous drone lingering over the room. My eyes stay fixed on the soft maroon carpet, following the loose geometric pattern to the base of the lectern. Behind it stands the celebrant Brenda, a frail woman caked in a sheet of poorly blended makeup. What does she know about my father? She looks down at me, rehearsed and insincere, a half-smile and a head tilt. I feel my stomach churn. Most people here barely knew him. I feel like I barely knew him. Still, the thought of his absence settles somewhere deep in my chest. I never really thought of my father as comforting. He was too blunt, too busy, too hard to reach. Even at the best of times, I’d only ever get in his way as he worked. But there was something reassuring about him, the weight of his footsteps, the stale smell of his tattered overalls. I know that’s what I will miss most.

—

It’s been months now since I’ve set foot in the garage. I reach out and flip the blackened light switch, the familiar buzz filling me with unease. The air is thick, and the smell of gasoline hits me instantly. Stacks of discoloured cardboard boxes line the back wall. Above them, silver spiderwebs glisten in the yellow light. It hasn’t changed one bit. Beneath the jet-black stains and miscellaneous scraps, the cracked concrete surface of the garage floor is barely visible. Amongst it all, his red Mustang sits motionless. It’s dustier than I remember; smaller too, I don’t know why I’ve left it for so long. Standing at the rear of the car, the rust-covered exhaust juts out tauntingly. Some part of me wants to never touch this thing again. My gaze skims the surface of the workbench, littered with familiar mess. Swallowed by an oil-stained rag, something catches my eye. I reach forward, picking up the crooked silver wrench, heavier than I expected. Exactly where he’d last placed it. I look back at the red Mustang, holding everything he never said.

I’ll take it from here.



Harvey Koch | Year 11



Harvey Koch | Year 11

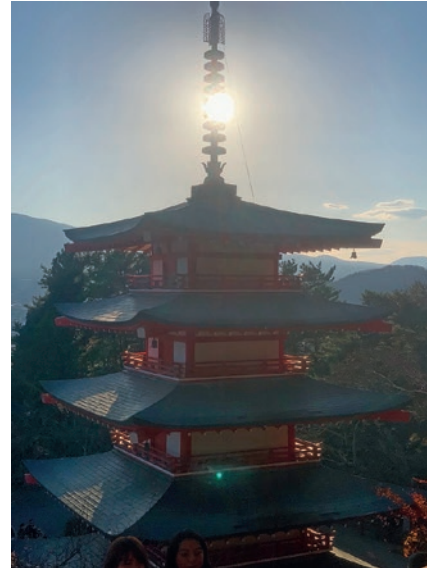


Calvin Anesbury | Year 10

Harry Grandioso | Year 11



Leo Witkowski | Year 8



Hamish Thompson | Year 8

Overdue

Georgia Costello | Staff

The sky outside was darkening and the library was almost deserted, but for the wizened librarian squeaking her trolley down an aisle. I bolted past her to the furthestmost shelves and sprinted down their length, the footfalls of my black-clad assassin falling ever closer behind.

As I approached the dead end of the aisle, a shelf filled with stories of dragons and pirate ships and time machines, I turned to accept my fate.

His gloved hands had just settled around my neck when I heard the creak of the book trolley and, peering over his shoulder, I saw the tiny, hunched woman with her hands poised upon its blue frame. She emerged from behind the trolley and set off down the aisle at a surprising speed, her sensible, laced shoes a blur as they skimmed across the floor. As she ran, she whipped off her olive-green cardigan and launched it at my assailant's face, as he turned towards her in shock. Disoriented and blinded, he flailed and let go of my neck to beat away the woollen ambush. Never slowing down, the librarian pulled a sharpened HB pencil from behind her ear and threw it like a dart, connecting squarely with the man's left eye. He screamed and clawed at it as she closed in. Now she lowered her head, and I could see the severe, firm bun arranged at the nape of her neck. She charged at him like a bull and then leapt upwards, her cannonball bun meeting his chin. He fell hard to the floor, landing on his stomach. She snatched the long, pearl necklace from around her throat, pulled his hands and feet together behind his back, and deftly entrapped them in a tight, pearly knot. It was over.

The librarian reclaimed her cardigan and draped it around her shoulders, demurely patted her bun, and shuffled back to the trolley, again assuming her hunched form as she started wheeling it away.

"T-t-thank you," I stuttered. "You saved my life."

She turned back and raised her finger to her lips –*Shhh*– and then winked at me.

"I've been waiting to have a word with that young man. He had an overdue book."



Jawad Ismaeel | Year 7

Citizen-Shipped
Taine Meyer | Year 12

Where’s my accent gone?
The echoes of my youth, mute.
Boarded by borders.

A lost souvenir,
Purchased by a plane ticket,
Sold to a passport.

There, a poached springbok.
Here, a newborn kangaroo.
And I, a hybrid:

A wild animal,
Tamed by time, forced to mutate.
Domesticated.

A plucked protea,
A planted golden wattle:
Reaping what I sow.

Forgetting my past,
To make room for the future.
Forgive me, Mzansi.

Dust
Jack Karapandzic | Year 5

A thousand people have walked upon me
People walk upon me still
The world around me is all I see
I’ve not felt life, and never will

I’ve heard the voices of many men
I’ve seen the green trees tower up high
I’ve felt the world, but even then
The people passing, pass me by



Jawad Ismaeel | Year 7



Sebastian Veronese | Year 12



Jawad Ismaeel | Year 7

Ukraine Kids Story
Tom Ryan | Year 5

Death after death,
Year after year,
The bombs kept dropping,
It was all one could hear,

These horrid noises ringing my ears,
Meanwhile the Russians sit with bliss and cheers,
On this day I sit and mourn,
For this is the day my father was born.

Robyn Blenkiron | Staff



Joseph Huang | Year 6

The Test
Henry Sutton | Year 8

The singular drop of sweat falls down Leo’s forehead and gently glides into the lap of his untucked shirt. His eyes bolt across the dull, poster-stricken walls in a desperate search of something to cleanse his mind of racing thoughts. Failure controls his mind like a puppet. Looking up, he sees Mr Smith’s skintight navy-blue pants stretch and fold over themselves as he strolls with his hard, blistered hand sandwiching the stack of paper tests.

Mr Smith’s navy-blue blazer falls off his chest as he leans down to place the test on the first student’s wooden desk. The student’s eyes roll over the front of the test when his smug grin turns to an expression of confusion. His whole face scrunches as the letter F gazes coldly back up at him. Another test, the same reaction. Two thin sheets of paper crinkle as Mr Smith places down another test and moves inevitably closer to him. Leo’s heart begins to beat out of his chest while thoughts race across his head. *I need to make my dad proud.* The small light beams over a tall figure shadowing his desk, as Mr Smith moves his hand to grab the last test. Every movement like a knife in the chest. World spinning, a large leathery hand lays the test calmly onto Leo’s desk.

Through blurred vision, Leo makes out a letter, his heart drops. His muscles tense and collapse. A smile radiates across his face.

“Well done, Leo! Your father would be very proud of how hard you worked for this grade,” Mr Smith says softly.

Melody Marshall | Staff



Eyes tearing, Leo’s mind starts to clear, his body slowly understanding what he said. His arms stop tensing and his heartbeat slows until he can no longer feel it pumping out of his chest. With the sunlight blanketing his puffed cheeks. He realises. *My dad never cared about my grade; he only cared about how hard I worked.*

Beneath the Soil
Oscar Mulhern | Year 12

The farm waited for no one, not even the dead. But by 4:30 each morning Thomas was already pulling on his faded Blundstones in the corner of the mudroom. Echoing from the kitchen, Mary reminded him to hurry up before his coffee turned lukewarm. Ignoring her, Thomas pushed through the back door, cupped his hands, and lit a cigarette. The deep drag bit at his lungs but gave him a familiar comfort. Making the short drive in his corroded Holden, Thomas's fog lights barely lit the gloomy road ahead. Arriving at the dairy, smells of silage and manure overwhelmed his system. Starting up the motorbike three or four times, he proceeded along on his usual route across the property. Winding by the neighbouring farms, the hollow valleys, and making his way past the contorted ghost gum tree on the eastern hill. It sat perched in the cleanest paddock, grass cut short, fences stitched tight. An oasis of the farm. His movements so routine, the gates could have set their hinges to him coming and going.

It was winter now, months later, and the fence wire held onto droplets like tears that they couldn't let go. As usual, Thomas didn't stop by the tree for long. The motorbike rolled by in a low rumble. Some mornings, before the cloud lifted, he could feel the tree watching him. Curious about what it wanted, but too scared to face its truth. By nine he returned home, awaiting Mary's presence. She had been gone for six months now. The home was slowly turning into a house.

For months Mary had been telling Thomas to get away from the farm, even for a day. But he never listened, something bigger held him back, an attachment to his past. With roots entangled into the land, like grief that wrapped around his bones, through his head, and into his heart.

Thomas knew Mary had wanted more time together, but he never knew how to manage his schedule. She always said she'd never married him for the machinery, the cows, or the farm. Those conversations became more frequent after they'd buried their son Jack, thirty-three years earlier. Only two months old, his heart had never stopped beating; it carried through the farm.

Instead of placing a headstone over his tiny grave, they planted a sapling to accelerate his growth. This was the reason Thomas could never leave. It wasn't the tree; it was the grief. Mary had begged for an afternoon together. A picnic underneath the ghost gum. Thomas never said no, but his answer was always the same: later. After he fixed the tractor. After the rain left.

But when Mary became sick, he knew more grief was approaching so he tried to outrun it. Busying himself with work, the farm became Thomas's escape; fixing fences and broken machines. The ghost gum was his anchor, he couldn't imagine planting a second tree. When she asked him about Jack's gum, his posture stiffened and the conversation was pushed aside. Late nights were blamed on jobs he had to do; dinners were left to go cold in the oven.

Winter days grew shorter and the nights became cooler. Before another season slipped through, Thomas knew he had to give Mary her perfect picnic. Planning to borrow Mary's mother's linen tablecloth, Thomas would wear the linen checkered shirt, still with the tag she bought him four Christmases ago. But time moved quicker than he did, and by early May, Mary was gone. In her final months she spent more afternoons in her study, writing him letters.

On the first wet day of winter, thirty days after the funeral, Thomas found himself slouched in Mary's chair, just as he was most evenings. Picking up her favourite novel, 'The Things We Never Say' by Elizabeth Strout, a perfectly creased letter spilled free. Her cursive writing faded between the fold.

Dear Thomas,
I knew you would eventually find this. Probably after fixing something that could've waited.

His finger froze following the words to the edge.

Darling, you're too worried the farm will fall apart without you.
Fences can wait. Pipes always burst. Cows get sick.
This place has been falling apart long before us.

Instantly taking less air in, his chest froze.

Why had he never been able to express it was never about fixing the farm? The endless labour was just a distraction. It was what laid under the tree he still couldn't confront.

There was only one thing I wanted, Thomas. The picnic under the tree. I know how much you hated going there, but we would've been with you.

The study quickly turned to a suffocating heat press; his stomach gave way and spilt down over his feet, hot and sticky. Part of him wanted to shred the paper pieces, she had no idea. But another part of him just wanted to finally give her the picnic.

Thomas drove into town and passed through The Last Bite, a family-owned bakery. As the young cashier behind the counter wrapped up the koliva she smiled.

'Special occasion sir?'

'Something like that.' Thomas replied, cracking a lopsided smile.

Back at the farm, he didn't make the normal turn towards the dilapidated homestead. Instead, he drove with his heart at the wheel, like he was being towed out of his own life. Stepping out of the ute, it's not relief he feels; the air is mild, and he is finally having to face it.

Under the ghost gum, Thomas laid a tartan rug. Smoothing each edge against the trimmed grass, he unfolded the table, the legs locking into the earth. Here he felt a strength he hadn't known of for a while. Laying down her mother's embroidered tablecloth, he placed the koliva in the centre. Through the branches above him, wind whispered unspoken words.

Then finally, under the shade of the gum, Thomas sat down.

At last, he had stopped. He had nowhere to be, but here.

This time, he would make the farm wait.



Nate Wang | Year 7



Christopher Davi | Year 12

Jasper Yang | Year 3



Hugo Kirkpatrick | Year 7



Alice Turnbull | Staff

Excerpt from Location: Murray River Ashleigh Hollitt | Staff

It is still cold, but with the sun now setting, blankets – multiple blankets, made from thick and heavy wool, are needed to ward away the chill and block the wind. The noise from earlier; the engines and yelling and clanging of metal as someone nearby builds something is gone, replaced by less intrusive footsteps as people move from A to B. The ‘thwap’ of thongs on pavement and the rustle of thick jackets.

In the billows of dusk, the beautiful singing of nature is amplified. Gorgeous deep bellied warbling. Light chirping pitched higher, more singsong, nestled between the creaks and whispering of trees. Earlier, the sounds of civilisation grated restlessly against the tranquillity of nature; trilling and chirps and birdsong; their calls – so many different calls – blending effortlessly into song. As people ready for bed there is nothing as intrusive as noise disrupting nature.

Now, there is light. Great floodlights that map the land between the shacks and sheer weathered cliff-faces, and all the tufts of grass in-between. Random rocks, sprinklers attached to coiling snake-like hoses, wire fences.

There are kangaroos on the lawn. Massive kangaroos with thick tails coated in red fur. They move with an easy, elegant glide that looks impossible when you notice the amount of muscle and strength packed around their bones. I spot a joey peeking its head out of its mother’s pouch. It leans forward, one arm out. It paws at the ground for balance as it grazes the grass.

Once the floodlights go out, I continue staring into the dark, looking for animal silhouettes long after the kangaroos are gone.





Artificial Intelligence
Angela Spitty | Staff

Creativity.
Not evolving,
Nor adapting,
Nor revitalising.

Feeding on the sins of past generations.
A royal line where cousin marries cousin marries cousin.
Yet... we behold it, bow down to it and bestow it upon
our future.
We allow the incestuous beast to craft our thoughts.
And feed the putrid regurgitation back into its belly.

Creativity is festering.
Be inspirational,
Provide a new bloodline,
Or inherit your fate.



Rehoused
Nick Iadanza | Staff

I hear you are now hiking Mt Kosciusko
taking in the bright morning air
that glides light on the frost like breath.

You are back at work now, too. A mechanical engineer
doing whatever it is that mechanical engineers do.
I don't know and you don't either.

A kitchen is being renovated by you, I'm told.
Paint rolled, floor stripped, cabinets sanded,
repurposed things to hold new memories.

These are the things you are doing now
Part of you at least,
according to the latest email update.

Tissues, valves, cells.
They have been rehoused.
They have new chambers.
New cavities.
New neural pathways.

Small remnants of you have split, cleaved, grown
Beyond you.
And now they traipse around the country
Beating, pumping, filtering echoes
of you.

What a marvel -
What a blessing -
What a tragedy -

Because I wonder if they've carried the imprint of
your laugh,
If they brought with them that craving for too much
ice-cream,
If that same heart now pumps new blood to a
new eye giving it that old sparkle. I wonder.

But most of all I wonder that if I passed them
in the street, these marvels,
if something in my own heart, my own liver, my
own kidneys
If something in my soul
would trip, reach out, call to you.
Recognise a you that is still there.

I think they would.
Because it is still you,
rehoused.





Paul Gaganis | Year 10

Agrotis Infusa
Noah Leathart | Year 11

Aestivation caves.
Inside were ten thousand moths,
Darkening the sky.

Mobile Phones
Georgia Costello | Staff

I sigh in relief;
what I thought was your phone is
a calculator.

Dear Little Me
Laurence Dalman | Year 10

Dear little me,
I hope you're doing well
And that you sing out your songs with all your heart.
No matter who is there
Share them out with the world,
Even if not everyone will be so kind.

Dear little me,
Hug your mother tight,
Don't wipe her kisses from your cheek
Because the world changes fast,
And soon she'll miss your birdsong
Every time that you get home from school.

Dear little me,
There will be places you'll feel watched
And hunted by mockery and scorn,
But don't let the monsters that silently feast
Seize hold of your spirit and light

Dear little me,
They don't need to be spitting in your face
Or shoving you into the dirt.
It still matters if you feel your lungs turn to ice
At the idea of a classroom with
Them.

Dear little me,
When their words hurt like knives
And you feel it's better to hide your face
That's when you need to raise your own voice
And fight back against their rigid ideals.

Dear little me,
Speak up,
Sing out for salvation,
Call them out for their mockingful tone.
It is not your burden to carry the pain that
They give to you tenfold

Because the grown-ups will tell you to just ignore it,
But believe me because I know the pain.
How your skin will prickle
And your throat tightens at the idea – of doing
What you love.

And their silence isn't yours to hold true
Let your soulful cries
Lift up to the skies,
Remember that they're just
Sheep in wolves' clothing.

Dear little me,
They're not monsters out
To try and clip your wings
They've just scared themselves of using their own
As they've only been taught to walk

They've been told that it's wrong
To defy gravity's pull
Because it's always been that way
So when they see another soaring above
It's just easier to bring them down than to rise with them

And so they put up a front
Because laughing with your mates is better than
laughing alone
And they say "it's not my fault
If I'm just following along"

Dear little me,
If you show them it's okay,
To go and take that leap of faith
You won't be flying solo for long
As more learn to battle their predestined fates.

So dear little me,
Don't let a courtyard be no-man's-land
Waiting for some poor unfortunate soul.
Keep sharing your melodies
With as many as you can
Their harmonies will come and make you whole.

And if you feel it's too hard to go on
And see the hardest of these times through,
Think of what – you will wish you had done.
Sincerely,
A more helpful
You.



Nick Iadanza | Staff



Nathan Zhang | Year 5

Tables Turned
Anthony Harradine | Staff

Listen here,
Dear Mike Steer,
Wordsmith, punster, linguist dear.

I would have thought a man so able,
Could have grasped the multiple forms of table!

From timber-topped to binary sheets,
Where numbers dance and language greets,
It seems, my friend, you failed to see,
A lost table was no times table plea!

Table found,
puns abound,
One fine bloke, trying to astound.

Please accept my verse,
A gentle jest,
A staffroom banter’s friendly quest.

While words so cleverly twist and steer,
Mathematics is always, crystal clear.

Nick Iadanza | Staff



The Island Out Nowhere
Fengshun Zhang | Year 8

Three days stranded on this island; the hunger is unbearable. The trees violently sway as the waves relentlessly crash onto shore, the wildlife here is extinct. “Oy Abdullah, have you caught anything? I’m fatigued and starving,” he says, lying comfortably on the sand. “YOU KNOW WHAT! I’m sick and tired of your inability to do ANYTHING, Gerald.” This outburst helps Abdullah clear his mind. But before he can even react, his flimsy rod is forcefully tugged away, bringing him close to the furious sea. Gerald, noticing his struggle, runs towards him, but his attempt is ended by a stone, slamming Abdullah into the ferocious waters.

Gerald anxiously prays for Abdullah, breathing a sigh of relief when his face, bright red, emerges. After swimming to land, Abdullah lifts his fist. Crack! Gerald touches his jaw, feeling the ache. Pupils dilating as Abdullah’s push leaves his rear planted in the sand. Slowly approaching, Abdullah’s towering figure is outlined by the UV rays, obscuring his facial expression. Gerald, hands full of sand, aims for the eyes. Scrambling to his feet, he climbs up the tree, finally reaching the leaves. His attention is caught by a coconut, the sun glaring on it. Food. He snatches it, looking down to meet Abdullah’s hunger-stricken eyes. THUMP!

Falling down the tree, he realises his companion has fallen. Crying, he grabs the coconut and tries to crack it open. Unable to, he starts thinking how it all started. His head creeps up at the sound of a loud honk. The remnants of his survival instinct compel him to reignite the extinguished campfire. The smoke rises, shrouding Gerald’s already blurry vision. He stares at his open palms before waving his arms to catch the boat’s attention. On the brink of exhaustion, Gerald lets out a final cry of help as the vessel diverts its course. Gerald subconsciously yells for his companion to join him, forever waiting for a response.

Dulcie Starke | ELC

Memories
Toby Patterson | Year 7

The past is ugly and it is ours
Embrace it
Reconnect with your roots
Memories create an identity
Life is full of moments
In which you can ponder
What the meaning of life is
If you discover your past
You will discover yourself



The Mighty Rapid
Charles Yin | Year 4

The silver stream slipped silently through the wavy sand,
It sang a pretty song as it saw the Sydney band.
It flows like a ribbon, which is strangely very weird,
I told the awful man that he had a beautiful beard.
There it is, the Three Gorges Dam
I saw a pretty man named Sam,
He told me that he had to work on the bank
Because his boat went down and sank.
“I’m sorry Sam that I can’t help
Because there’s a rapid, so we need to YELP!
Oh no! What should we do, Sam?”
“I think we better eat some jam.”
After me and Sam were full
We dived into a nearby pool,
To dodge the flying foaming flood
We thought we better jump in the mud.
The flood flew as fast as a jet
So me and Sam made a bet,
That I would get to the Pacific first
Otherwise I will roll in the dirt.



One More Gulp
Leo Wu | Year 7

I took the hard clunky flask as it crashed against my heavy belt with a resonate Clang-ng.
I unscrewed the heavy jointed lid and stared into its violent depths.
I lose myself in the toxic liquid
down
down
down.
I snap back to reality and throw my head from side to side trying to clear the sharp pain boring into my head.
I sigh and bring the neck to my trembling lips shivering with anticipation.
Its sharp taste irradiates my mouth, the poison racing through my veins.
The metallic taste of blood assaults my taste buds and I release a cry of pain.
I wait. Head pounding. And will it, beg it to stop.
But it doesn’t.
Tears stream down my cheeks and my consciousness floats High Above.
I vaguely register pain as I stare down at my dying body, crying and clawing at the end.
Then I feel a tether snap in my back and I rush back into my body.
An endless rasp erupts from my lips, lacerating my soul.

Atticus Iadanza | ELC

Water Polo
Lucas Pizzino | Year 9

Welcome to water polo, cos it’s the best sport
Even if you have high standards, this will not fall short
It’s a fast game, full of fury and fun
So please sit down until I am done

Water polo is a fast-paced game
Ball in the goal – simple – it’s the aim
But there’s more to it, it’s not that easy
It’s far from simple, far from breezy

Thirty seconds to shoot, so use it well
Will you score? Only time can tell
If you dunk or punch, it’s a turnover ball
Don’t touch the bottom or even the wall
A fast-paced game, with attack and defence
In these sixteen lines I’ve tried to condense
The best sport in the world, so give it a go
Because water polo might be your throw

Leo Witkowski | Year 8



Jordan Sun | Year 10

