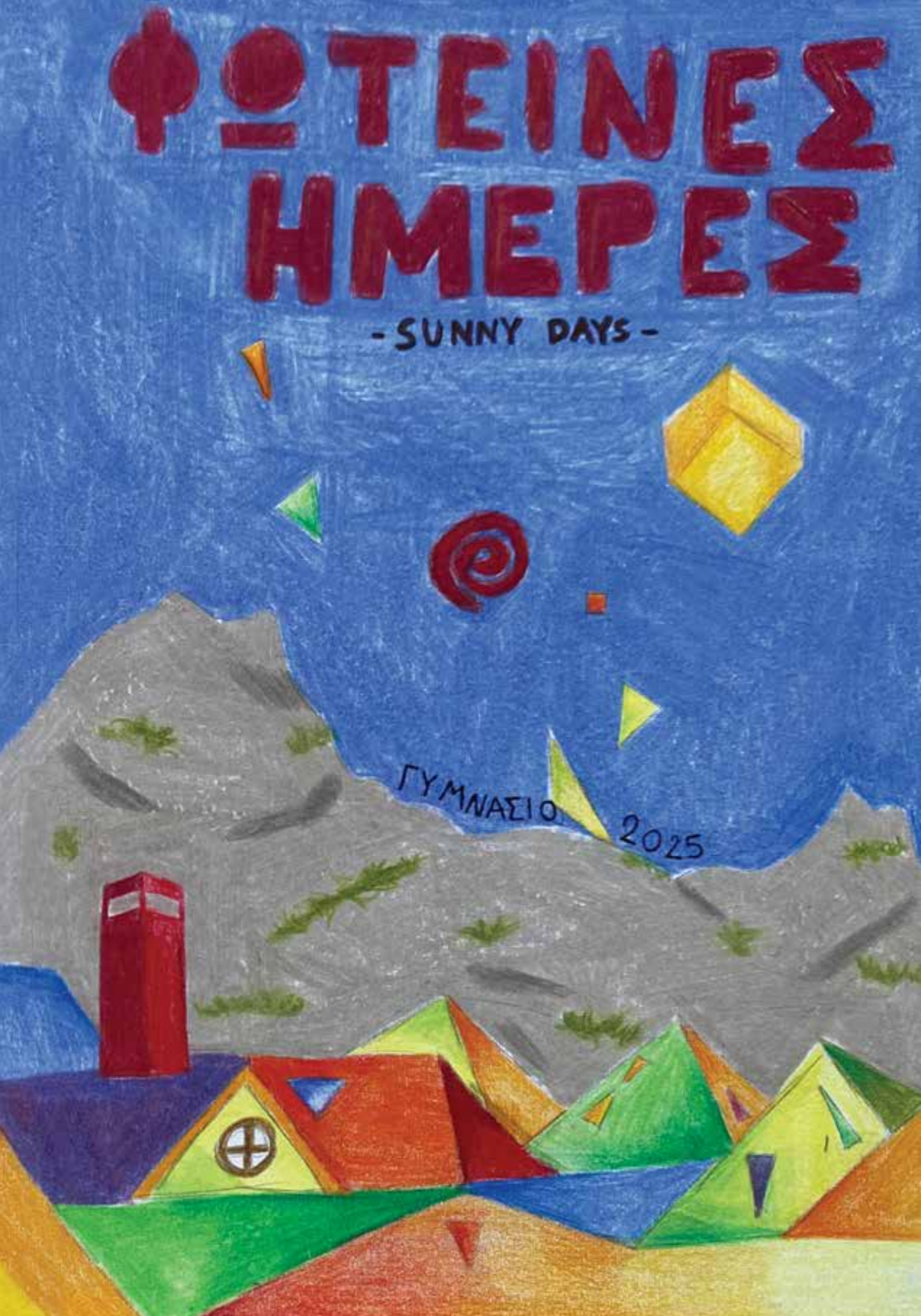


ΦΟΤΕΙΝΕΣ ΗΜΕΡΕΣ

- SUNNY DAYS -

ΓΥΜΝΑΣΙΟ 2025





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EDITORIAL 124

HALLOWEEN

HALLOWEEN GAME 126
 THE DARK LIGHT 127
 INVISIBILITY..... 128
 THE VOID 129
 A BIZARRE TRICK OR TREAT 130

THANKSGIVING

THANKSGIVING GAME 132
 THANKSGIVING DINNER AT PIERCE 133
 A DECADE OF GRATITUDE 135
 A THANKSGIVING WITH A TWIST 135
 FIRST MEDICAL SECTOR OF UNS 136
 THAT ONE THANKSGIVING 137
 A FUTURE GUEST 138
 THE RECIPE FOR THE PERFECT
 THANKSGIVING 139

CHRISTMAS

AIN'T NO LIGHT 140
 CHRISTMAS 142
 A CHRISTMAS POEM 144
 UNDER THE CHARM OF THE EVERGREEN .. 146
 WHAT COMES WITH A CHRISTMAS TREE?.. 148
 CHRISTMAS 148
 CHRISTMAS NIGHT 149

HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY 2025

WORLD WAR II - A TURNING POINT
 IN GLOBAL HISTORY 150
 CHILDREN IN THE HOLOCAUST 152
 REFLECTIONS 154

INTERVIEW

MRS. VEATRIKH SAIA MAGRIZOU 156

PORTRAITS 160

WHEN STARS ARE SCATTERED 164

POETRY

A NEW SHORE 179

SUPERHEROES 183

CREATIVE ADVERTISEMENTS 186

BOOK REVIEW

PERSEPOLIS 189

**PANHELLENIC FORENSICS ASSOCIATION
 TOURNAMENT 2025** 190

SPRING

WHEN SPRING COMES 194
 THE MAGIC OF SPRINGTIME 195
 HOPE SEASON 195
 THE WONDERS OF SPRING 196
 HOW CAN ANYONE HATE SPRING? 197
 NATURE AND ME 198
 SPRINGTIME CHEER 199
 THE PIANO 200

ENVIRONMENT

UNDERSTANDING OUR GREEN HABITS
 A STUDENT SURVEY 202
 AN UNRAVELING EARTH 204

INTERVIEW

NIKOS TSAFOS 205

MUSIC

16 INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT MUSIC 211
 THE SOUND OF SILENCE 212
 TRAVEL THROUGH MUSIC 214
 THEME FOR INTO LITERATURE 9 215

DOCUMENTARY REVIEWS 216

TRAVELLING

PIERCE EXCHANGE PROGRAM 220
 TRIP TO INSTANBUL 224

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the 2024–2025 edition of Sunny Days Magazine!

Over the past three years, this club has become so much more than just a magazine to me. When I was in A' Gymnasium and our advisor first introduced the role of English magazine representative, I was instantly intrigued—and from that moment on, I have been an active member. Joining this team has truly been one of the best decisions I've ever made.

Each year, this magazine has been a beautiful blend of people and their imagination, and this year is no different. Writing this now brings a wave of emotion as I reflect on the past three years—finishing gymnasium and stepping into something new. This magazine has been with me through it all, and it will always hold a special place in my heart.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition as much as we enjoyed creating it! Have fun!

Evagelia Kostantina Manelou, y1



Nantina Konopisopoulou, y1



Giorgos Masioulas, 72



E	D	S	V	S	Z	O	M	B	I	E	S	Z	O
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SKELETONS
ZOMBIES
MUMMIES
SPIDERS
BATS

GHOSTS
GOBLINS
WITCHES
CATS
OWLS

WEREWOLVES
VAMPIRES
PUMPKIN
GRAVEYARD
WIZARDS

The Dark Light

Everyone in the village knew the story of the creature that lurked in the woods on Halloween's eve. It was said that it wandered in the forest, waiting for its prey to come and, as it was darker than the night itself, no one could ever see it coming. It was only visible when it would eat its prey, as a red light would glow from it. That was the old tale that everyone knew in the little village and believed it to be true. And so, no one ever dared to go in the woods on Halloween's Eve. No one, except for two orphan kids a boy and a girl, who did not believe in the old tale and decided to do the unthinkable. On Halloween's eve they went into the forest.

Utter silence greeted them, as if the forest was holding its breath. The trees were so tall so neither the sky nor the stars could be seen. Suddenly, as they were walking, the two children felt a cold breeze. And then, a black shadow appeared behind the girl and before the boy could even scream, the girl vanished into the darkness. Panic rushed through the boy as he screamed, screamed the girl's name and started running faster than ever. He ran, but the village was too far, and he knew his legs would give up on him sooner or later. So, when he spotted a little cave right at the foot of hill, he slipped into it. And exactly then, he saw in terror the creature devouring the girl, as a red light glowed from it. The little boy wept and closed his eyes. He never opened them again. No one in the village saw the red glow that night and no one looked for the two orphan children that had gone missing.

Koralenia Fragkou (Eleni Koralia), 7



Invisibility

Twenty years ago, a strange story took place in a small city in Romania.

Steve woke up and was so excited that he put on his costume as soon as he got out of bed. He looked himself in the mirror and realized that there was no reflection of himself! He realized that he was invisible! Without a second thought, he called his friends to meet up at his house and play a prank on them!

First came Mark, the humorous guy, who always pranked others. He sat on the couch waiting for Steve, who was not at home. Once Joanna, the brave one, arrived, Steve revealed his secret power and they could not believe in their eyes. He briefly explained the situation and they planned a prank on Timmy, the smart kid of the group.

Meanwhile, Timmy was walking down the alley. Suddenly, he saw a horde of zombies running towards him. He tried to run away but it was impossible! In a couple of seconds, the zombies kidnapped him.

After an hour or so, his friends were worried and they decided to check his GPS signal and were astonished. Timmy was in the most haunted place guarded exclusively by zombies; The Dracula's Castle.

Steve and his friends decided to go there and save him. However, because it was guarded, Steve had to distract the zombies by using his secret power. That was easy! After that, Mark and Joanna entered the spooky castle. They were scared but their friend needed them. The signal was weak but they kept walking. They used some rusty weapons from the armory and broke the lock. Timmy was relieved, but they had to walk out of the castle. Terrified but united again, they walked out of the castle and ran away into the eerie woods and then back home.

When Steve woke up, his power had worn off...

*Steve Strouvalis, y3
Athina Chrysaiti, y8*

The Void

When I'm above the trees,
I see the truth exactly as it is;
I see all of these birds,
Light as whispers,
Roaming in the morning mist.

But now, I feel deep
In the heart of the forest,
I hate it here,
So, I let go;
I stop trying and I travel deeper
Into the gardens of my soul,
Deep within my existence.

The stars that shimmer in the sky
And everything is lost in the haze-
A blissful void
Of no Thoughts,
No Worries, no Pain,
No Happiness, no Joy;
Only Sweet, Sweet, Nothing.

When I'm above the trees,
I see the truth exactly as it is;
But now, I'm in the void,
Where I can just be
Free of heavy truths I cannot face;
Free of past mistakes I cannot mend;
Free of the ghosts that haunt me
And the lessons I never learned.

Inside this void, I feel nothing,
And it is the sweetest time in the world!

Maya Anastasakou Dalla, γ1

A Bizarre Trick or Treat

It was the eve of Halloween and I was extremely excited! Halloween is my favourite celebration! I was supposed to be asleep by now but that was impossible. I was thrilled! All of a sudden, I heard a screeching... There was something under my bed! And then another eerie sound!

Even if I was scared, I got the courage to check and I took a deep breath and looked under my bed. I had never screamed like that in my life! My little sister woke up and ran to my room with an upset look on her face.

“What happened? Why did you scream? You should not be awake!” she exclaimed.

“You will not believe what I just saw under my bed!” I replied.

Suddenly, I felt someone tapping me on my foot, as if he wanted me to end the discussion. It was the little monster that I had just found under my bed!

“So, what? What did you see?” my sister replied back.

“Oh, nothing. It was just a dream!” I said.

“That’s it? I thought that you had seen a ghost!” and she left my room.

I was just scared to death and I decided to check once more. The monster came out with its hands in the air.

“Wait! Wait! I do not want to harm you! Let me explain! I visit a random house every year and I hope that someone will help me. I want to get out and see the real world! But ...” the monster said.

I was frozen for a couple of seconds. I was still in the process of realizing what had just happened. A monster in my bedroom! At least, this was a friendly monster and I was surprised to find out that it was a mysterious but nonchalant and desperate monster trying to be free.



“Are you sure that this is not a prank or a bad dream?” I asked it.

“It is not! But I have a wish and I want you to help me.” the monster replied.

“Sure! What do you want?” I replied back.

“Can I experience the “Trick or Treat” tradition with you?” asked the monster.

“Why not? My sister thinks that we are too old for that. We can go together!” I exclaimed.

I told my family about the Halloween evening that I spent with the monster. They did not believe me and they laughed a lot. I know what I experienced and I will never forget that “Trick or Treat” experience.

Evelina Zafeiriou, 78 & Eleni Kanteraki, 77



E	C	T	Y	U	Y	A	D	S	R	U	H	T	T
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S	A	R	E	W	O	L	F	Y	A	M	G	R	E
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T	U	G	T	D	O	U	I	M	I	D	U	R	T
S	C	A	H	C	A	H	A	R	V	E	S	T	C
A	E	U	S	T	U	R	K	E	Y	F	S	S	B

MAYFLOWER
 PUMPKIN PIE
 FEAST
 APPLE PIE
 PLYMOUTH
 TURKEY
 GRATITUDE

NOVEMBER
 HARVEST
 CRANBERRY SAUCE
 GRATEFUL
 THURSDAY
 AUTUMN
 SQUANTO



Thanksgiving Dinner at Pierce

Today was the one of the best days of my three years at school; The Thanksgiving Dinner with the President of the ACG community. It was an unforgettable experience that reminded me of all the things I have to be thankful for.

It all seemed to me as a beautiful surprise. Seeing my friends and classmates dressed up, radiating excitement and warmth, ready to celebrate a day of unity and pleasure. The atmosphere was so well-organized, and the food was amazing—the highlight for me was definitely the apple pie!

Within the first hour, I found myself reflecting on all the things I am grateful for—the people, the experiences, and the journey that shaped who I am today. But I was also curious to know what my classmates were thankful for on this meaningful day, a day meant to bring us together as one big family—the Pierce family.

So, I began asking around. I posed one of the most important questions of the season: What are you thankful for? The responses surprised me. While many shared similar sentiments, others offered unique and touching answers. Still, one thing was true for all 175 people I asked—everyone was thankful for something. And in the end, that's what truly matters. After all, that's what this day was all about. Here are some of their answers!

Monika Sofia Alexandra Makrakis, y4

IF YOU HAD TO CHOOSE, WHAT ARE THE THREE THINGS THAT YOU FEEL TRULY GRATEFUL FOR?

The first thing that I'm grateful for is my friends. They have helped me get through so much stuff, good or bad. Even if we grew apart from some, it is nice to remember and cherish the memories. The second thing that I'm thankful for is my family. They have always been there for me! I am truly grateful for my little brother, who never fails to put a smile on my face. Lastly, I am thankful for all the great things I have. I am lucky because I have anything I wish, and I attend an amazing school, which offers me endless opportunities.

Melina Konstantopoulou, y3

I am thankful for many things in my life but if I had to choose three things that I'm grateful for, I would probably say that I am truly thankful for my sisters because they were also there for me and I have a really close relationship with them. Another thing that I am really thankful for, is my best friend, because we always support each other and I know that I can trust her. Last but not least, I appreciate being healthy.

Amalia Spyropoulou, y9

IF YOU HAD TO TAKE THREE THINGS IN A TIME CAPSULE, WHAT WOULD THEY BE AND WHY?

If I had the option to save three things that I am thankful for in a time capsule, I would be very interested and would gladly accept the challenge. I am curious to see if I will be grateful for the same things in the future. I would first say football because it is my favorite sport, I spend most of my free time playing it and I am very thankful for it. Also, I would say that I am thankful for my sister because she is very helpful and always listens to me. Lastly, I would say that I am thankful for my best friend because we always hang out together. I hope that in the future I will still be thankful for these things.

Kostis Karapatakis, y10

One of the three things I would like to put in a time capsule are definitely my friends. Photos of them that make me remember the good times of happiness and laughter. The second thing I am thankful for is my dog. The companionship it offered, the joy of playing with its toys, and the endless days we ran through the garden. Based on this, I would put a dog toy and its blanket in the time capsule. Last, I would put a hoodie with the school's logo. Pierce gave me memories, opportunities and broadened my horizons.

Katerina Solomou, y8

One of the three things is the quality time that I spend with my family. I imagine that it will not be so easy to see them every day and especially my grandparents. The second thing I am grateful for and would keep in the capsule is my friends. I will have met other many other people by then, but my current friends would better stay, because they had been always there for me when needed. The third thing I am grateful for is the fact that my brother always listens and spends quality time playing with me.

Bianca Bokota, y5

The first thing I would put in the time capsule is a T-shirt with the school logo, because I am thankful for attending this school and the academic recourses that it provides. I would also put pictures of me and my friends together, as they are supportive and caring. Their understanding and kindness make every moment shared with them meaningful. Lastly, I would put my dog's collar in it, because I am grateful for the memories we created together.

Filothei-Athina Chrysaiti, y8

A Decade of Gratitude

Being thankful is important as it makes us reflect on our lives, situations and what really matters. So, imagine sealing away three items that represent something you are grateful for in a time capsule, only to rediscover them ten years later, what would be in it?

Firstly, in my time capsule, I would place a family photo. Family members are the most important people in someone's life; they have been there since day one. And, even if everyone sometimes disagrees with their families and is "sick" of them, we should all be grateful for having people we can call family. Therefore, this photo would symbolize the love and support of my loved ones. Next, I would add a travel souvenir or ticket that would represent happiness and adventure. That item would remind me, once I opened the capsule, of joyful moments, and excitement. Lastly, I would include a letter to my future self. Reading that letter will make me feel proud of myself. So, it would be a symbol of personal growth and gratitude for my achievements so far.

Opening this capsule in ten years from now, I hope I'll be reminded of the values these items represent. And maybe, in a decade, I'll find myself putting similar things inside—because, to me, that's what really matters.

Marilia Christodoulou, y4

A Thanksgiving with a Twist

Thanksgiving will be very different from now in a few years. It will be celebrated by everyone in America, but not in their homes. Everyone will receive a ticket to a diner, built only for Thanksgiving. It will look like a giant turkey and the entrance will be built by a paper list that guests complete, writing about what they are grateful for. Inside the diner, you'll be able to see marble floor and many wooden tables and chairs. There will be dim lighting at first but as the food arrives, the lights will slowly get brighter symbolizing hope and togetherness. As the waiters enter, the visitors will be able to see the plates being put down on their tables. There will probably be no turkey because the people of our decade will have eaten it all. That's why they will have the turkey 3D printed, out of chickpeas. Also, water will be limited so instead of that they will eat Jello.

Thanksgiving is an interesting and important tradition, but we also have to remember the meaning behind it. We have to be grateful for what we have and not be jealous of what we don't because in the future, as we saw, we may not have what we thought was for granted.

Margaret Katsouli, y10

25/11/5002
First Medical Sector of UNS

Dear Diary,

Today, is my favorite day of the year! It is a day of gratitude, love and happiness that every person on the spaceship awaits in anticipation.

This year, my family will be hosting the Thanksgiving dinner, and I am thrilled! My parents have been cooking all day. They have been preparing some of the traditional meals of Thanksgiving, such as turkey, sweet potatoes and chestnuts. I am really looking forward to the dinner, as all our relatives and friends will be here! After eating and drinking and laughing at the table, the children of the gathered families will recite poems and stories about Earth, our home in the past. Then, the people of each sector will gather up in the main wards of the spaceship, and will look silently towards Earth, through the large windows. In that way, we show our gratitude to the home that Earth provided us with centuries ago. We do this every Thanksgiving, because our ancestors did not, in hope that one day we will return home.

Koralenia Fragkou, y7

That one Thanksgiving

Nora was the only person left in the station. Samantha and Joe had both left, wanting to spend Thanksgiving with their husbands and kids. The lab was empty!

Nora never liked Thanksgiving. She believed it was meant to be a holiday about gratitude, but she found that idea deeply ironic—considering the history of the Pilgrims and the mass genocide they committed.

Nora was a cellular biologist, a brilliant one, for that matter, and was on the verge of making an exciting new discovery that explained how certain autoimmune genes behaved- something that might lead to a cure. She did not have any friends, but she was relieved about that, holding on to the only constant variable in her life: Science. Nora had nothing to be grateful for. As a pessimist and a cynic person, she viewed the world as barren and cold, but as a scientist, she knew that not everything could be that way. Scientific laws would never allow it, because she knew that balance was the key to a functioning world, therefore, Good exists.

That thought stuck with her. She was surprised by her own mind, surprised and scared, filled with fear by that sudden thought. She put down the glass pipe she was holding and collapsed on the white sofa behind her.

“Not everything is like that”, she thought. Did that mean that she had messed up? Did that mean it was all her fault? Was it her fault she was alone? She liked being alone; she liked her everyday rituals: reading her book; writing in her room; studying the effects of plasmapheresis on Guillan-Barre patients. Being alone is not that bad, she thought. Alone meant quiet, being able to hear your own thoughts, your heartbeat. She stroked her cat by the fireplace.

As Nora took a deep breath, she realized that what she was truly grateful for, was being alone.

Maya Anastasakou Dalla, y1

A Future Guest

Dear Diary,

Today was Thanksgiving, maybe the most important celebration for our family. Each year we go out; a huge dinner with all sorts of holiday food; each of us gets dressed up, my dad even wears a suit. We decorate the house too, at least two weeks prior with red fluffy garlands and pumpkins all around. The house always smells like apple cinnamon and the lights are never on, we only use candles placed in every corner of the house. I must admit, however, that my family upholds an ancient and certainly interesting ritual each Thanksgiving. We invite one special guest. There are no limits to who this guest might be, not even like itself as once, we dined with Abraham Lincoln, and even Dracula. This year, though, was different. The special guest, was... me?

I walked into the dining room, my long velvet gracing the floor, and was met with an all-too-familiar face. Even though the room wasn't nearly as well-lit as it was the rest of the time due to the candlelight, I could clearly discern that I was staring at myself. And I was staring right back. A cold shiver ran through my spine, as it dawned on me that there was a huge scar on my face, starting from my hairline and going straight through my eye, ending just next to my lip. That was not the only off thing about my appearance: I was also extremely pale, almost like a ghost? My heart stopped, as I saw the expression of the person in front of me drop, as my mum walked into the room, holding the pan with the turkey and its carving knife. It did not take long for me to react. Sprinting out the room, running down the stairs, leaping out the door, only to be graced by the freezing embrace of a November night and the musty smell of autumn. I ran like I had never run before, like my life depended on it, because it probably did. As I was making my escape, trembling on the brownish-black trodden leaves, I glanced back at the window of that fateful dining room, only to see my figure without the huge scar and slowly gaining back its colour, smiling back at me, like... I had given it its life back, by saving mine.

Tonight, my future saved my present, I guess you could call it the Thanksgiving spirit!

I'll write to you again once I figure out what to do moving forwards. Until then, take care.

Much love,

Agapi Dimopoulou, y7

The recipe for the perfect Thanksgiving

- Start with some mercy forgiveness
- Then add some generosity and some love
- Next, throw them in a pan of kindness and add some friendliness, and start warming it up with a hug
- Now add some hospitality, honesty, and respect
- Rinse with affection and understanding
- Serve with a warm cup of respect

Enjoy! Share it with friends, family, and everyone else!

George Spithogiannis, y4

Ain't No Light

The winter was breathing.
Above the sky, its breath was,
crying with its tears
And cut in half the trees were
to celebrate the time
even though people still got no dime.

Many stole from the some
That they falsely hate at first
just for a symbol of a star
And some stole from those working humans.

They cut up the wood and
I smelled a now burned scent
in my nose getting, like a drug.
And, when the snowman comes to life
that's when I'll see the star.

The wind turning into a melody
Snowflakes falling into little tunes
And like a song it felt,
That someone, somewhere wrote
At some place with no hope.

Snow hitting the hedgerow
And a freezing breeze rushed through my face
In the tall dense trees, a hermit was.
As his humming melody echoed the forest,
a piper joined him from far away, over the hills.
And the music slowly blending in the wind.

The snowman turned to me
Its look, ironic was.
Watery were its eyes
tearing up slowly
And as it cried quietly
into quartz stones, its tears started turning
And a necklace they shaped.
Around my neck themselves wrapping.
But even though the,
snowman came to life,
I looked up at the lavender sky
And there still ain't no light.

Niki Papageorgiou, y5



Marina Zafeiriou, α4



Eftychia Stathia, β3

Christmas

Snow fills the streets,
Carols feel like treats.

Through the cold and white Christmas nights
The only thing that truly shines
Are the bright and lovely Christmas lights.

Loved ones gather around the tree
And share stories with glee.

During the cold and white nights
The only thing that really matters
Are the memories that come alive.

And in morning when you wake
For the Christmas tree you will haste
And when you open your gifts with cheer
Santa's reindeer will appear!

Stelios Karachalios, y3
Amalia Spyropoulou, y9
Katerina Solomou, y8
Athina Chrysaiti, y8



Stefanos Konopisopoulos, a8



Nikoletta Angou, a1

A Christmas Poem

With everybody laughing, everybody cheering,
everybody singin' carols without knowing the meaning
I really feel like Christmas has lost that feeling.

That feeling when it snows,
that feeling when the schools are closed.
It is so frustrating, to know that no one is paying attention
to our Lord.

I don't wanna change people's minds,
but if you wanna celebrate the birth of Christ,
you need to understand the meaning, and do it right.

Melina Konstantopoulou, γ3
Steve Strouvalis, γ3



Maria Eirini Kyritsi, α3



Dimitris Vlachos, α4



Eirini Anna Poulou, β2

Under the Charm of the Evergreen

Amid the hush of winter's breath,
When dreams are gently bequeathed by the night,
There's a gentle charm in the air.
Beyond compare, its touch so sweet,
your love, my shield from time and death.

As the stars above pale in awe, the snowflakes create a beautiful veil.
The freezing cold is warmed by your laughter.
A tune that the darkness can't stop,
A detailed symphony of love.

The world withdraws behind the gentle glow of the hearth, and I feel my soul fulfilled in you.
Every twinkling was hung on pine boughs.
The holy flame of hearts is reflected in your love, my gift, and my evergreen.

The night is wrapped in a red ribbon and crowned with a serene joy.
The quiet star, the holly bows,
Bare witness to how rare we are
A moment carved in love's pure light.

So let this Christmas cradle time,
Our love will last through the winters.
This Christmas, a timeless warmth, a brilliant show, forever ours.

Kynthia Kazantzopoulou, y10



Ioannis Theodorakis, α3



Eirini Vougioukalou, α4

What Comes With A Christmas Tree?

A Christmas tree
A word we all know
A tradition we all keep
Decorating it makes us feel
like this day cannot be ruined
A special moment in every child's heart
A moment that won't be left behind
When honest thoughts and feelings
come up to the surface
Small loving and caring actions are revealed
Joy and cute jiggles are created
What a holy season!

Eleni Kanteraki, y7 & Bianca Bokota, y5

Christmas

Christmas is a perfect holiday.
The Christmas tree is colorful
and the streetlights are shining.
Santa is coming to town
and the three magicians wear a crown.

Kids are so happy,
as if there was a clown downtown.
Presents are given to the kids,
under the Christmas trees.
Everyone is so happy
and the Christmas spirit is thriving.

Marina Ganosi, y2 & Annita Katsaouni, y5

Christmas Night

Christmas lights shine bright at night,
A world of peace, a joyful sight.
The air is cold, but hearts are warm,
We gather close, away from harm.

Snowflakes fall, so soft and light,
Children laugh, their faces bright.
Gifts are wrapped with love and care,
Good wishes sent through the winter air.
A time for joy, a time to share.

Eirini Alikì Panagoulia, γ3



Venia Giannoukakou, α3

WORLD WAR II

A Turning Point in Global History

The period 1939 to 1945 marked a painful six-year period during which the devastating Second World War unfolded. It remains one of the most destructive conflicts in global history, involving more than 30 nations. The war was triggered by unresolved issues stemming from World War I—most notably the Treaty of Versailles, which harshly penalized Germany and led to economic instability and widespread resentment. These conditions paved the way for the rise of totalitarian leaders such as Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini.

Adolf Hitler, the WWII's 'protagonist' and leader of Nazi Germany, was responsible for the Holocaust, an appalling historical tragedy which occurred from 1941 to 1945. Over 6 million Jews were killed, more than the combined populations of New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago, three of the largest cities in the United States. The Holocaust was driven by the racist and cruel ideology of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party. They believed that Germans were superior, and that Jews, disabled individuals, and all political opponents, were considered "undesirable" or "subhuman".

Jews were subjected to discriminatory laws, forced relocation, and economic and social exclusion. The Nazis imposed increasingly harsh measures over time, including the Nuremberg Laws (1935), which stripped Jews of their citizenship and rights. Moreover, the Nazis built a vast network of concentration camps, where people were forced into hard labor, starved, tortured, and murdered. Some of the most infamous camps included Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Dachau.

In 1941, the Nazis adopted a policy known as the "Final Solution," which aimed to exterminate the Jewish population. This led to the establishment of extermination camps where Jews and other victims were killed in gas chambers, often after being transported under horrific conditions.

The aftermath of the Holocaust and WWII was disheartening. WWII led to huge economic instabilities across multiple countries that still affect the world today. The war caused a massive displacement of people, including refugees, prisoners of war, and Holocaust survivors. It also introduced significant social changes, especially in terms of gender roles and race relations.

There is no denying that WWII was the war that sparked some of the most devastating and cruel events in human history, such as the Holocaust. Let this be a reminder that we should be grateful for what we have, and that we should tirelessly work towards a better future, free of discrimination and conflict, aiming always at achieving and maintaining peace.

George Spithogiannis, y4



Stavros Koutroumpis, a7

“Children in the Holocaust”

The English Department of Pierce – The American College of Greece organized a series of events with the theme “Children in the Holocaust.”

As part of Holocaust Remembrance Day, four subtopics were explored:

- 1) Children in concentration camps;
- 2) Hidden children;
- 3) The Righteous Among the Nations;
- 4) Second-generation children of Holocaust survivors.

On Monday, January 20, the c’ gymnasium students attended a stage performance prepared by 40 students under the guidance of their teachers, paying tribute to the innocent victims of the Holocaust. This was followed by a speech from Ms. Beatraki Saias-Magrizou, writer and daughter of Auschwitz survivor, Iosif Saias, who emphasized the importance of memory and the obligation we have to remember our past in order to look to the future with confidence.

On Monday, January 27, the following high school events took place:

A’ Lyceum students had the honor of meeting Holocaust survivor Lola Angel, who survived the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Ms. Angel shared her life story from Thessaloniki, her journey to the concentration camps, and her return to Greece. We thank her for sharing her story with us and for teaching us how to face life’s challenges with resilience and generosity.

B’ Lyceum students had the privilege of meeting the prolific writer and poet Iosif Ventura. His story as a “hidden child” during the war unfolded in an on-stage interview conducted by students, Natalia Theocharis, Lydia Kalemou, Phaedra Leontaraki, and Nefeli Chazan. Mr. Ventura advised our students to follow their dreams and perceive life challenges as a lesson.

C’ Lyceum students had the opportunity to meet Andreas and Haris Morikis, grandsons of Charalambos and Chryssanna Moriki, who saved the Jewish prisoner, Sam Nachmia, at the Karia camp in Phthiotis. The speakers passed on the “baton of life” to our students, emphasizing that “logic is useful when it protects emotion,” reminding them that in the era of technology, what we must safeguard is emotion. Additionally, from Friday, January 24, to Friday, January 31, the “Children in the Holocaust” exhibition by Yad Vashem was displayed in the theater lobby, while the school library was transformed into a Holocaust Information Center, offering the most up-to-date publications on World War II. Throughout the week, all students were

educated about the Holocaust in their English classes, discussing key terms such as genocide, anti-Semitism, misinformation, and propaganda. Visual interpretations created by the students were also displayed in the library after the event.

It is crucial to remember, discuss, and teach about the Holocaust, not only to better understand the past, but also to raise awareness among future generations about modern forms of anti-Semitism, xenophobia, prejudice, and hatred.

We sincerely thank everyone who participated and contributed to making this important day a reality.

#NeverAgain

Event Committee:
Gisela Iosif (coordinator),
Christina Chrysaiki, Afroditi Chrysanthopoulou,
Apostolos Mavrommatis, Eugenia Skountzou (English Department),
Dora Panagopoulou, Orestis Chatzinakis (Department of Music)



Marilia Christodoulou, γ4

REFLECTIONS

Holocaust Remembrance Day is very important because it reminds us of the horrific things that happened in the concentration camps. It's important that we don't forget their inhumane behavior. For me, the event we attended yesterday really touched me and changed my perspective of the Holocaust. I learned more about how Jewish people were treated and how terrible the conditions were. Overall, I thought the event was really powerful and educational. I especially liked that it had interactive parts that made it more engaging.

Vasiliki Fragkou, y3

Yesterday we went to the theater and after watching a really short play by students of our school, we attended a truly fantastic speech by a Holocaust survivor's daughter, Veatriki Saias – Magrizou. In her speech, she highlighted how important keeping the Holocaust memory alive is, as it helps us not forget the dangers of hatred, prejudice and indifference. Remembering the tragic events of the past, how harshly people were treated just because they were different, helps us understand that we, as modern-day citizens, should not repeat the mistakes of the past, but instead try and make our community a better place, where everyone is treated equally and is welcome to be whoever they wish. Remembering the Holocaust and the 6 million deaths that it caused, touches us and makes us feel truly terrible but also scared about the tragic events that occurred. The fact that Mrs. Saias-Magrizou chose to share the story of her father with all 280 students of the C' Gymnasium is what inspired me the most. She decided to speak up and raise awareness about the harms of the Holocaust. This helps us fully understand that we should do our best to make our world—a compassionate and welcoming society—a place that causes no harm to anyone.

Nick Karatzis, y6

Holocaust Remembrance Day was an emotional and enlightening experience. We attended the short play dedicated to this tragic period and then Ms. Veatriki Saias-Magrizou -descendant of concentration camp survivors- delivered an inspiring speech, raising awareness about this malicious act which haunts human history. The play referred to the children who suffered in concentration camps and their lives before war, hunger and death invaded their lives. There were some toys placed on the stage symbolizing the children's innocence and playful character.

Remembering the Holocaust can help prevent phenomena such as wars, racism, and prejudice. If we do not remember past mistakes and injustices we tend to repeat them. Ms. Veatriki Saias-Magrizou, made us realize that those events should never be forgotten. We should always cherish life and honor those who sacrificed theirs in order for us to be free, so that we can express our opinion, have the liberty to choose our religious beliefs, travel and live our lives the way we wish to. We should never misjudge someone because of their religion, race, gender or any other characteristic that make them special and different from us! The trauma that Mr. Joseph Saias experienced after he survived the Auschwitz camp – the slice of bread he was always keeping under his bed, the nightmares that were haunting him- made me dream of a society without inequalities, a more inclusive and compassionate world. The way he always remained a happy, protective and supportive man to his family – as Ms. Magrizou recounted- regardless of what he was forced to suffer, is testament to an attitude, a mindset that is rare nowadays. His memory and that of all of the other Jewish people must be remembered, must be appreciated, must be honored!

Maria Aikaterini Katsika, γ2



Artemis Patsourakou, γ5

Interview with Mrs. Veatriki Saia Magrizou

Beatrice (Betty) Saias-Magrizou was born in Thessaloniki and lives in Larissa. She is married and has a daughter. She studied economics at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. She has written both novels and plays. On the Municipal Radio of Larissa, she hosted the weekly show *Stories Without a Title*. Her texts are taught in the Department of Modern Greek Literature at the University of Padua. She wrote the screenplay for the film *Avraam*, which was shown on Holocaust Remembrance Day in Thessaloniki in 2006. Believing that civic engagement is a duty, she has actively participated in public affairs, beginning in her youth in Thessaloniki and continuing in Larissa, where she has served as president of AVIV, president of the General Assembly, and currently, as general secretary. She is also president of the Public Relations Committee of KIS (Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece).



In 2022, she published the book “The Bracelet of Fire”, a book about the dramatic journey of a Jewish family through the darkest moments of the twentieth century - a chronicle of a society that crushed and rising again from its ruins. It tells the turbulent story of a precious piece of jewelry; a keepsake that connects people and events, Jews and Roma alike.

In 2023, the story came to life on the small screen, directed by Giorgos Gikapeppas, with a sensitive script penned by Nikos Apeiranthitis and Sofia Sotiriou.

Stelios Karachalios: Why did you become a writer?

Mrs. Magrizou: Economics was quite popular at the time, which is why I chose that

path. It also seemed relatively easy to me, and I eventually graduated. However, it did not truly appeal to me. I was worried as I was wondering what to do, until one day, the idea of writing came to me. It felt like an inner voice, and that mattered to me. Of course, this cannot be considered a reliable income source in Greece. Thankfully, my husband was always by my side and helped me out a lot. I started generating income in the past few years, when my book, "The Bracelet of Fire" became popular.

Melina Konstantopoulou: Where did you get the inspiration for the characters of your last book from?

Mrs. Magrizou: It is based on a real story, my father's family story in Thessaloniki. He was the seventh and the youngest boy of the family. They lived a happy life and were wealthy. All children could speak French, English, German and attended high prestigious schools. This book is mostly about my father's story. But in the beginning of the book there are some imaginary elements and let me explain why. When I decided to write my father's story, I could not understand why Jews suffered so much and then I read an album, "The Gypsies". The album included photos, short texts about their traditions and their way of living. After that, I decided to visit their camp in New Smyrni, and I realized that most of us are prejudiced towards them. After this visit, I understood that ignorance is scary. If you get to know someone better, you will understand him. Then, I decided to write about a gypsy family and explain their customs and traditions, and about a Jewish family and include their customs and their traditions. The "Bracelet of Fire" becomes the symbol that unites that gypsy family with the Jewish one.



Stelios Karachalios: What is the bracelet of fire?

Mrs. Magrizou: That bracelet is an actual piece of jewellery, which was worn by all 13-year-old Jewish girls who became adults, during the Bat Mitzvah ceremony. They become responsible and promise to become good Jewish girls.

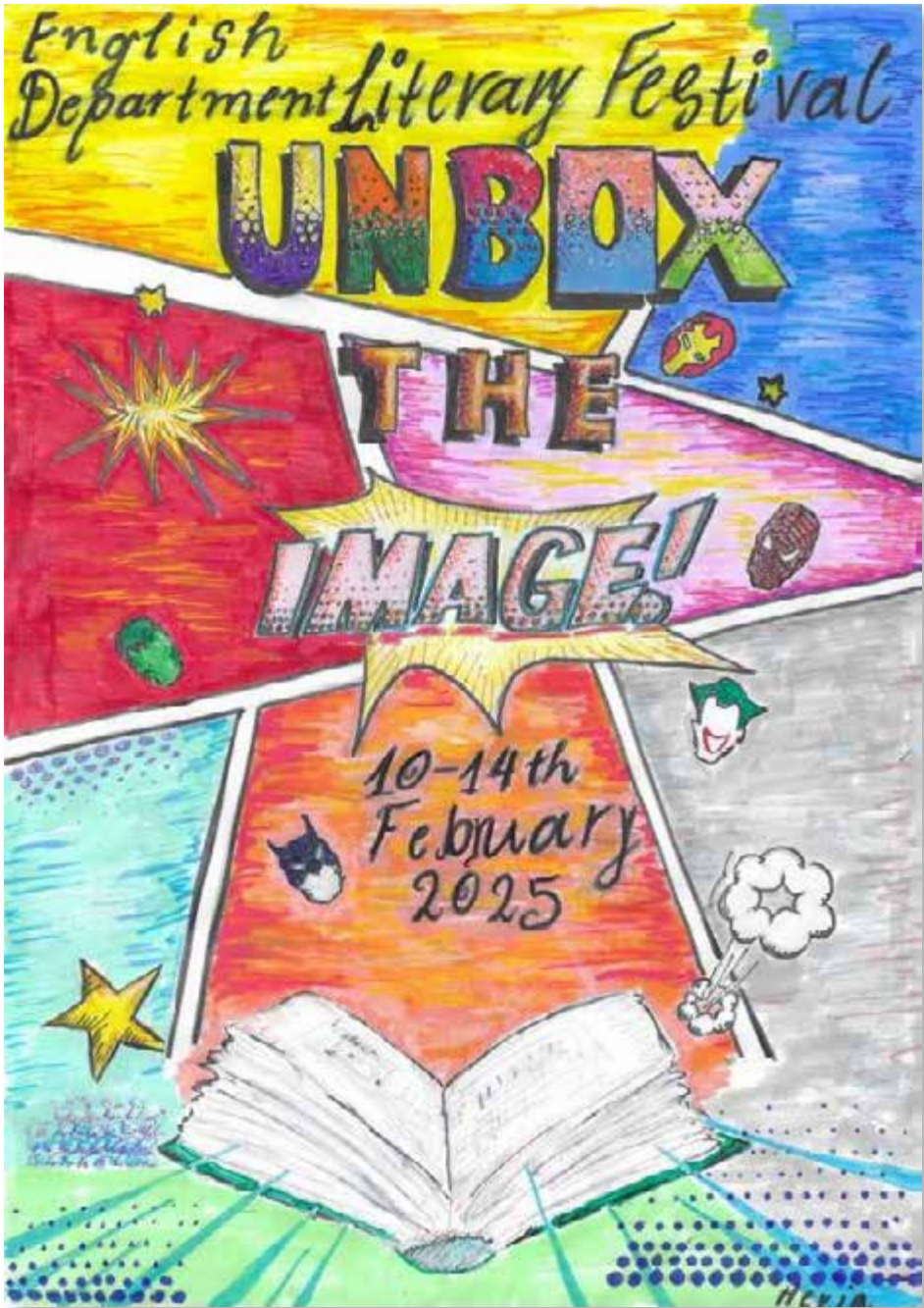
Steve Strouvalis: How did you feel while listening to your father's stories about the Holocaust?

Mrs. Magrizou: My father would never talk about the Holocaust. There were days that he tried to talk about his experiences but he could not. We usually asked him to stop because he was sick and weak. I asked him "Father, why are you crying?" and he replied that memories were painful. I told him that he would forget and he replied that this was even more painful. Then, I promised that I will never forget. After having published my book, my father called me. He was sure then that I was able to write. He wanted to share these tragic events a month before he passed away.

*Melina Konstantopoulou, γ3
Steve Strouvalis, γ3
Stelios Karachalios, γ3*



Maria Mouzaki, γ9

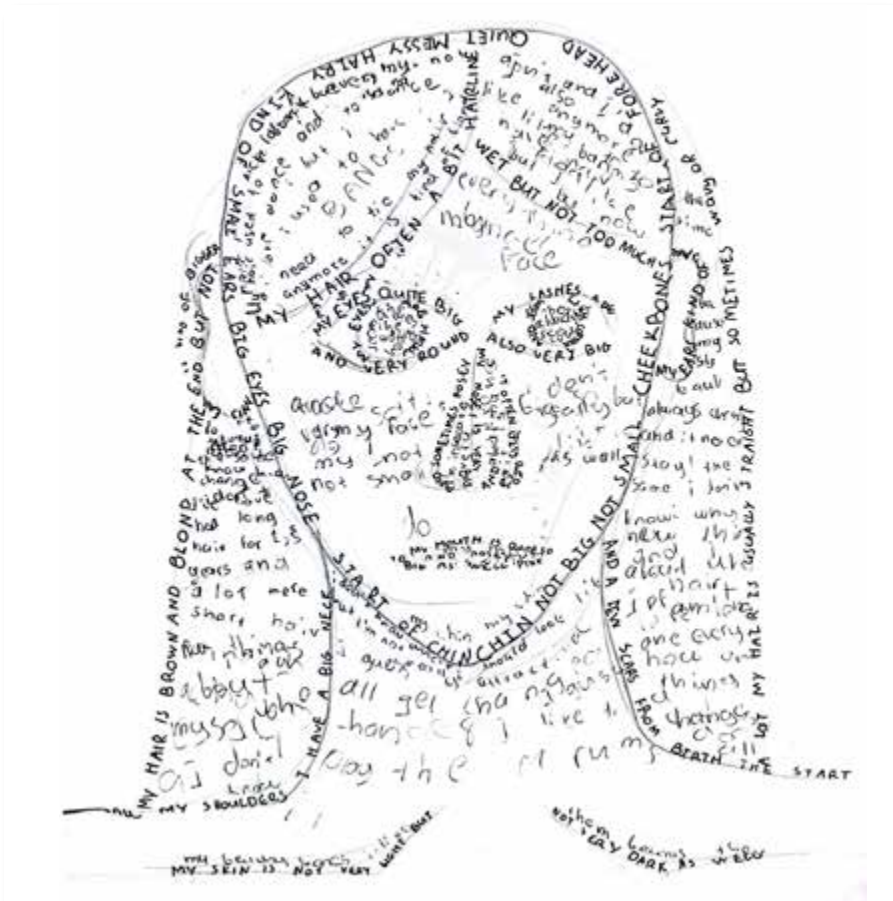


Sotiria Riga, a8

Portraits

The school hosted a vibrant literary festival, celebrating the intersection of words and visuals. Grade 7 students participated by creating stunning artwork that explored the power of images in storytelling. Their portraits beautifully reflected how words can be expressed through visual art, capturing the essence of literature in a creative and meaningful way.

*Sarantopoulou Nikoleta
English Teacher, MA*



Melina Anastasakou Dalla, 6



Giovanni Fioravanti, a8



Stavros Koutroumpis, a7

WHEN STARS ARE SCATTERED

When Stars Are Scattered is a graphic novel by Victoria Jamieson and Omar Mohamed, with illustrations by Victoria Jamieson. The story is based on Omar Mohamed's real-life experiences as a refugee. He and his younger brother, Hassan, lived in a refugee camp in Kenya after fleeing Somalia due to the civil war.

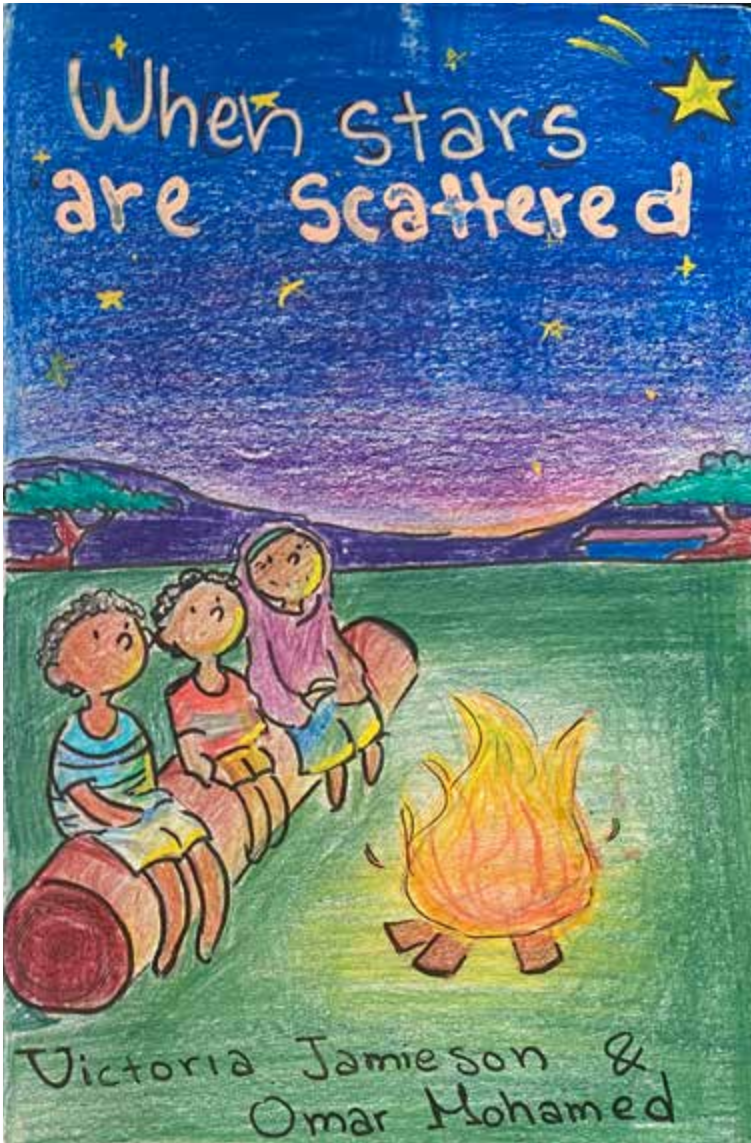


Published in 2020, the story is a winner of the Walter Dean Myers Award for Younger Readers and was a finalist for the National Book Award for Young People's Literature. It was also included among the YALSA Great Graphic Novels for Teens and the YALSA Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers. *When Stars Are Scattered* explores themes of maintaining empathy; appreciating one's gifts; and balancing dreams, hard work, and faith.

Through *When Stars Are Scattered*, 9th grade students explored a wide range of meaningful themes—such as identity, perseverance, displacement, and the strength of the human spirit—all conveyed through both text and powerful visuals. The graphic novel format allows them to “read” beyond words, engaging deeply with imagery, symbolism, and emotional expression. This connected beautifully to the theme of our Literary Festival, *Unbox the Image*, which encouraged students to look beyond surface-level interpretations and discover the deeper stories that only images can tell.

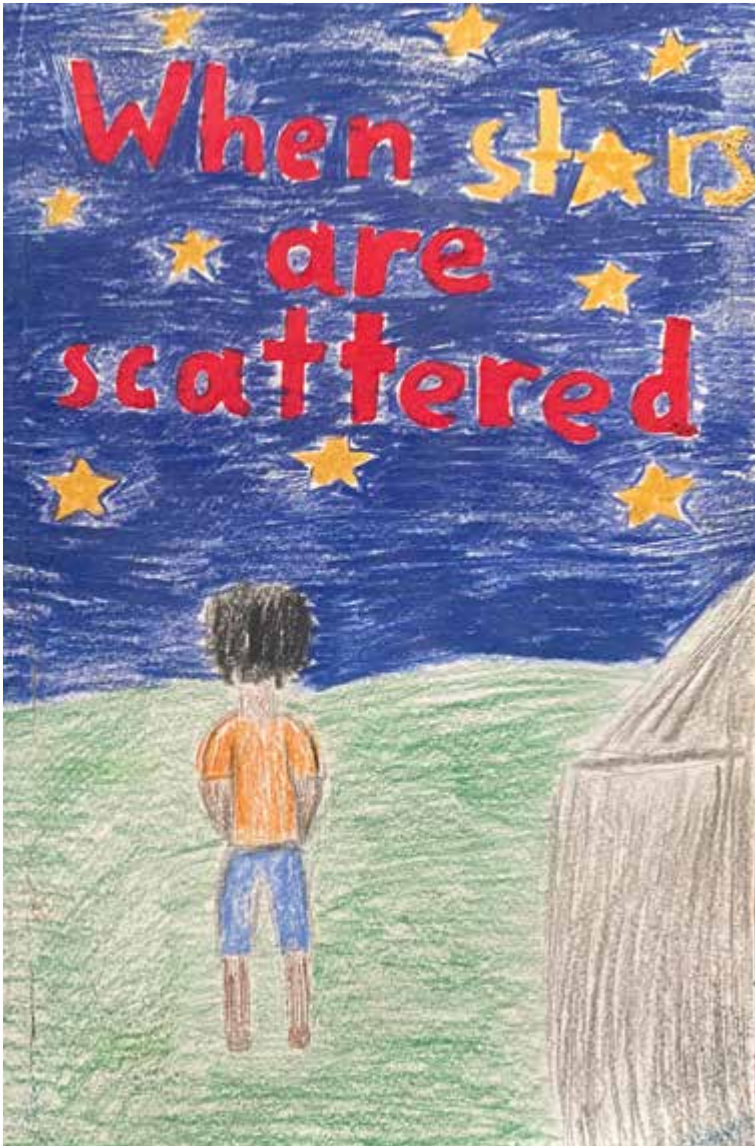
In the spirit of the festival, students analyzed how illustrations and layout choices communicate mood, character development, and setting, sometimes even more powerfully than words alone. They were challenged to think critically about how visual storytelling can unbox complex emotions and real-life issues, making *When Stars Are Scattered* not just a pleasant reading experience, but an invitation to view literature as a vehicle to understand the world around them.

Creative assignments were designed to engage students in deeper reflection, such as creating book covers, visualizing themes and drawing scenes from the book. The literary festival *Unbox the Image* inspired students to delve into the powerful relationship between words and visuals. Through a comics workshop they explored their creative side, and they produced original works that reflect their unique interpretations of imagery. A selection of these imaginative pieces is featured on the following pages.



Main Characters

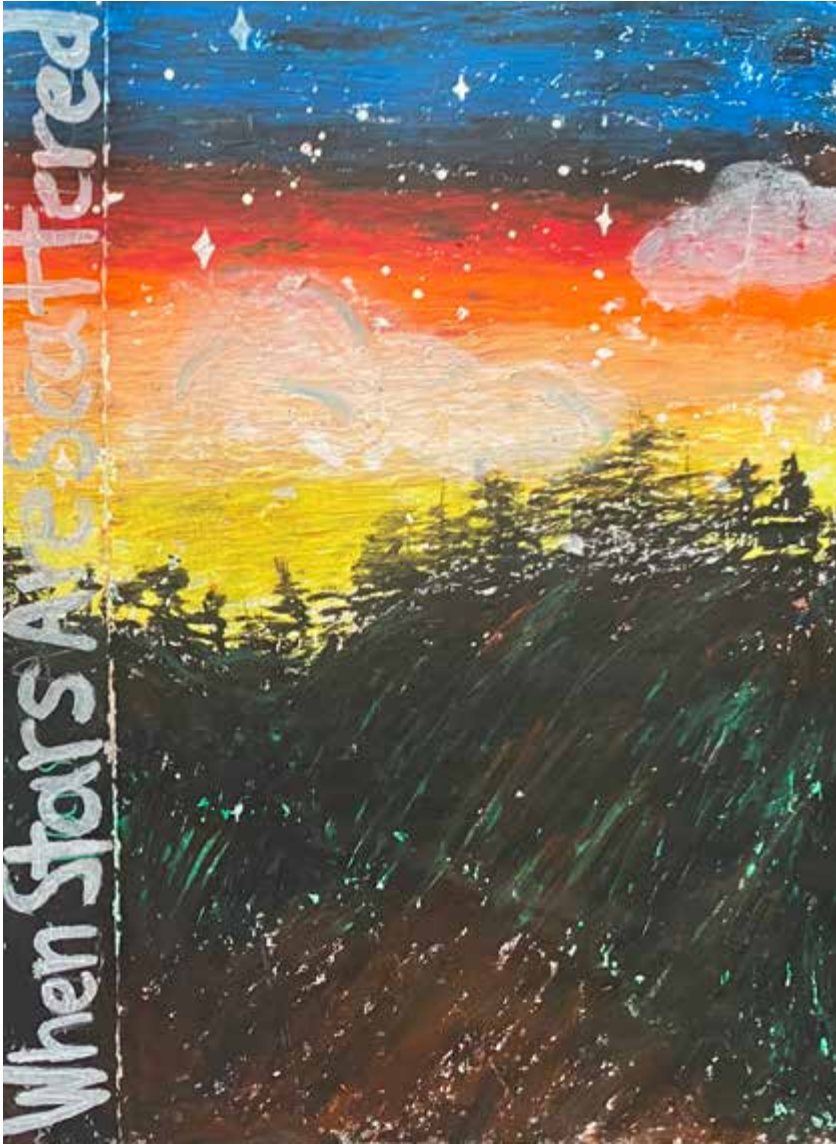
- Omar:** A boy who had to leave his country at a very young age. He takes care of his brother and goes to school.
- Hassan:** Omar's brother who sometimes acts in an immature way. He can only say the word "Hooyo".
- Fatuma:** An old woman who lives in the refugee camp and takes care of Omar and Hassan.



Summary

Omar and Hassan have lived in the refugee camp for seven years. Their life has almost been the same: doing chores and playing with the other children. They dream about going back to their home country, Somalia, and reunite with their mum. When Omar goes to school, he realized that learning is his passion. School becomes part of his daily life and he enjoys it a lot! He meets new people with different hopes and dreams but one day he finds out that his village has been destroyed...

Despoina Zafeiropoulou, y2



"In our block, everyone knows me and my brother."

"We had to leave our homes because we were afraid for our lives."

"There's not a lot of food here, so Hassan and I are always hungry."

"I've never gone to an actual school."

"All of our classes are in English."

Ioanna Spyridogiannaki, γ3



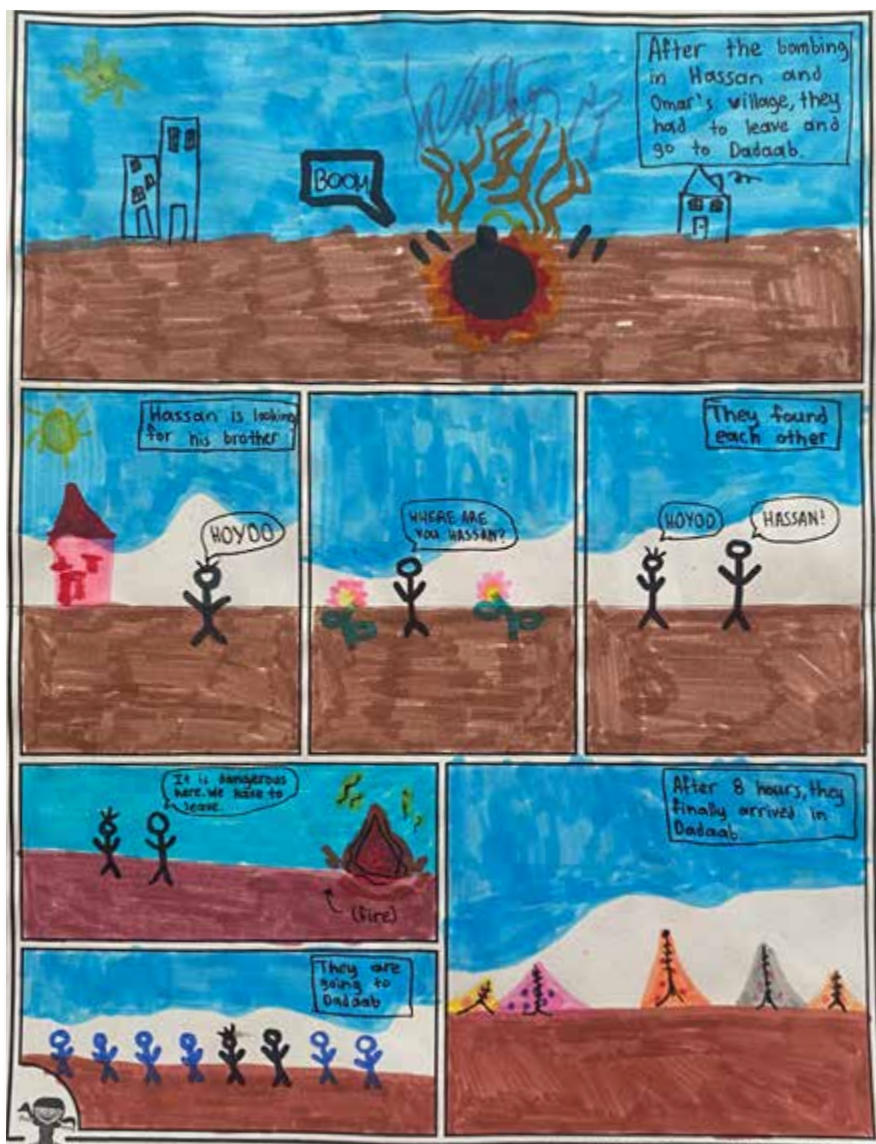
Meletiou Meletis Apollon, y9



Georgia Ilaeira Theodoridou, y9



Zioga Ioanna, y10



Elpida Meleti, y8
Thalia Kaliviti, y9



Sophia Chatzikonstanti, y3



George Matsioulas, y2
 Antonis Vlachakis, y2



Here we can see how Omar imagines his life in America. Even if he has spent so much time at the camp, he still hopes that one day we will travel to America with his brother, Hassan and his foster mum, Fatuma. He thinks that it is easy to make money there and that it will not take long to drive an expensive car.

Kostis Karapatakis, 10



Here Omar is studying with his friend, Jeri. They have to write an essay for school entitled “What it Means to Be a Refugee”. He concludes that refugees do not have a future. Being a refugee is much more than being homeless, it means that you are not able to plan a future life.

Kostis Karapatakis, 10



Omar is saying goodbye to his friends. He realizes that he has lived at the refugee camp since he was a child but it was not his choice. But now he chooses to leave Dabaad. He has tried hard to achieve his goal and now it is difficult to say goodbye to his friends because he knows that he will not see them again.

Kostis Karapatakis, 10

Q&A

Q: Why might Omar be trying to forget his past and focus on his future?

A: Omar might be trying to forget his past and focus on his future, because his childhood memories are unpleasant and unfair. He sees education as his only path to a better life and he struggles trying to remain hopeful that his family will be reunited.

Bianca Bokota, y5

A: Omar is trying to forget his past and focus on the future because he wants to move forward and create a better life for himself and his brother, Hassan. Living in the refugee camp has been full of struggles, loss, and uncertainty, but Omar realizes that dwelling on the past won't change his situation. Instead, he chooses to concentrate on his education, as he sees it as the key to escaping the hardships of the camp and building a brighter future.

Iraklis Belsis, y5

Q: Do the people living in the camp have any kind of freedom? Why or why not?

A: Their freedom is very limited, because even if they can walk or move around or go to school and manage their own "house", they can't really cross the borders. Refugees feel very trapped, but as readers, we can only speculate.

Melina Konstantopoulou, y3

A: All the refugees in the camp have very limited freedom. On the other hand, looking at the stars, means that even if we are fully trapped, our mind can always be free!

Marina Ganosi, y2

Q: Omar says he has 'wasted months, years of his life waiting and hoping to be resettled to another country'. Do you agree or disagree with his statement?

A: I agree with Omar's statement because he lost his childhood in a refugee camp but what his heart desires is to be resettled to another country with unlimited opportunities.

Annita Katsaouni, y5

A: Omar has spent most of his childhood at the refugee camp unable to control his life. He thinks that time has been wasted because he is unable to fully live his life the way he wants. But he soon realises that even though he may not have the best opportunities he has to make the most of them. Even if life in the camp is difficult, Omar tries to improve his situation by focusing on school and taking care of his brother.

Athina Chrysaiti, y8

A: I disagree with Omar's statement. For me, even though waiting was frustrating, it was also very important. Omar's experiences shaped him, and he got closer to his brother and supported him, which was not a waste.

Myrto Papadima, y8

A: I disagree with Omar. He might have lost parts of his childhood but he gained a lot. He learned how to take care of himself, and be independent. He learned how to help others and never give up.

Katerina Solomou, y8

Q: The first sentence of the book 'For me the first years are lost' is repeated on the last page. What is the significance of this? Do you think the next years of their life will be lost or remembered? Why?

A: This phrase shows that Omar has now accepted that his past was just a difficult chapter in his life but now he is ready to face a new challenge in America. The next years of his life will be memorable for him, as it is a new experience that he has long been waiting for; to build a future for him and his brother.

John Sakellariou, y10

A: The phrase is used to emphasize that Omar had a tough childhood full of disappointment, sadness, responsibilities, stress, homesickness and moments when he felt the most confused. Now he doesn't remember these first years as he is ready to start a new life!

Eleni Kanteraki, y7

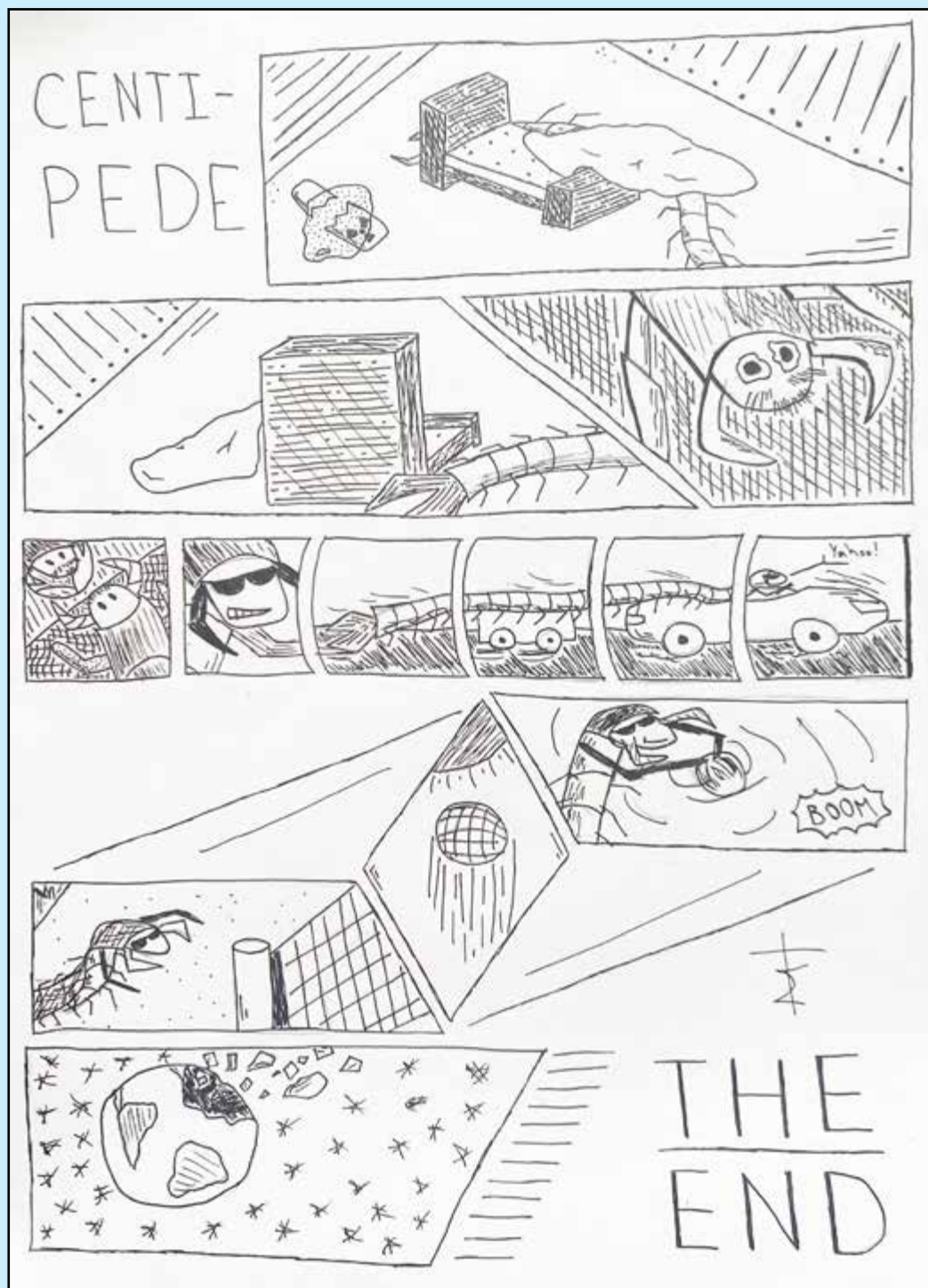
A New Shore

The ship slows down, my heart beats fast,
A distant land—I've reached at last.
A dream so bright, yet fears unknown,
A world so vast, yet I'm alone.

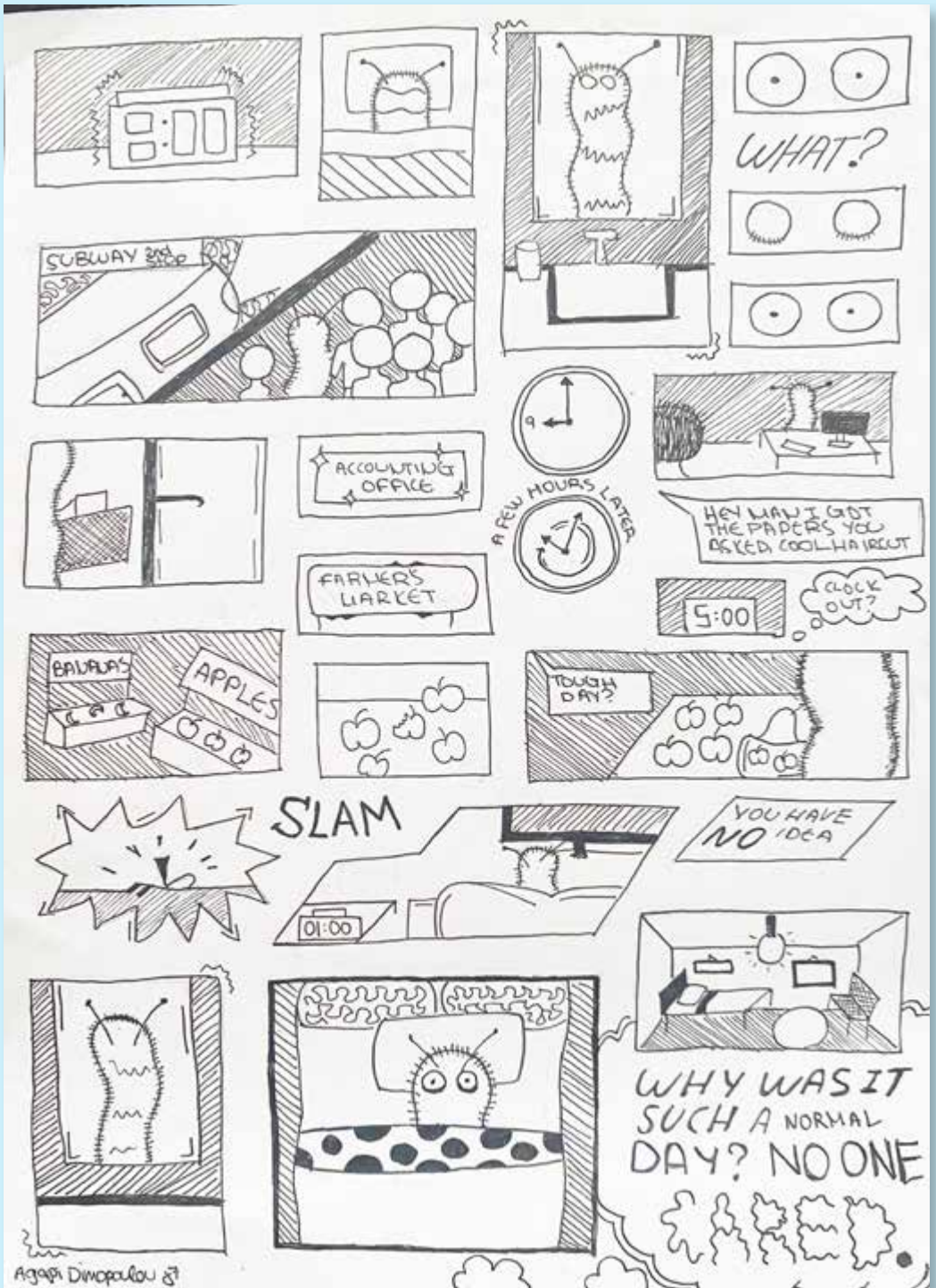
The city's hum, the voices strange,
A hopeful heart, a life to change.
Behind, my home, my past, my pain,
Ahead, the sun, yet still the rain.

With trembling hands,
I take my stand,
A stranger in a promised land.
But step by step, I'll learn, I'll grow,
And make this place a home I know.

Ariadni Stasinopoulou, β4



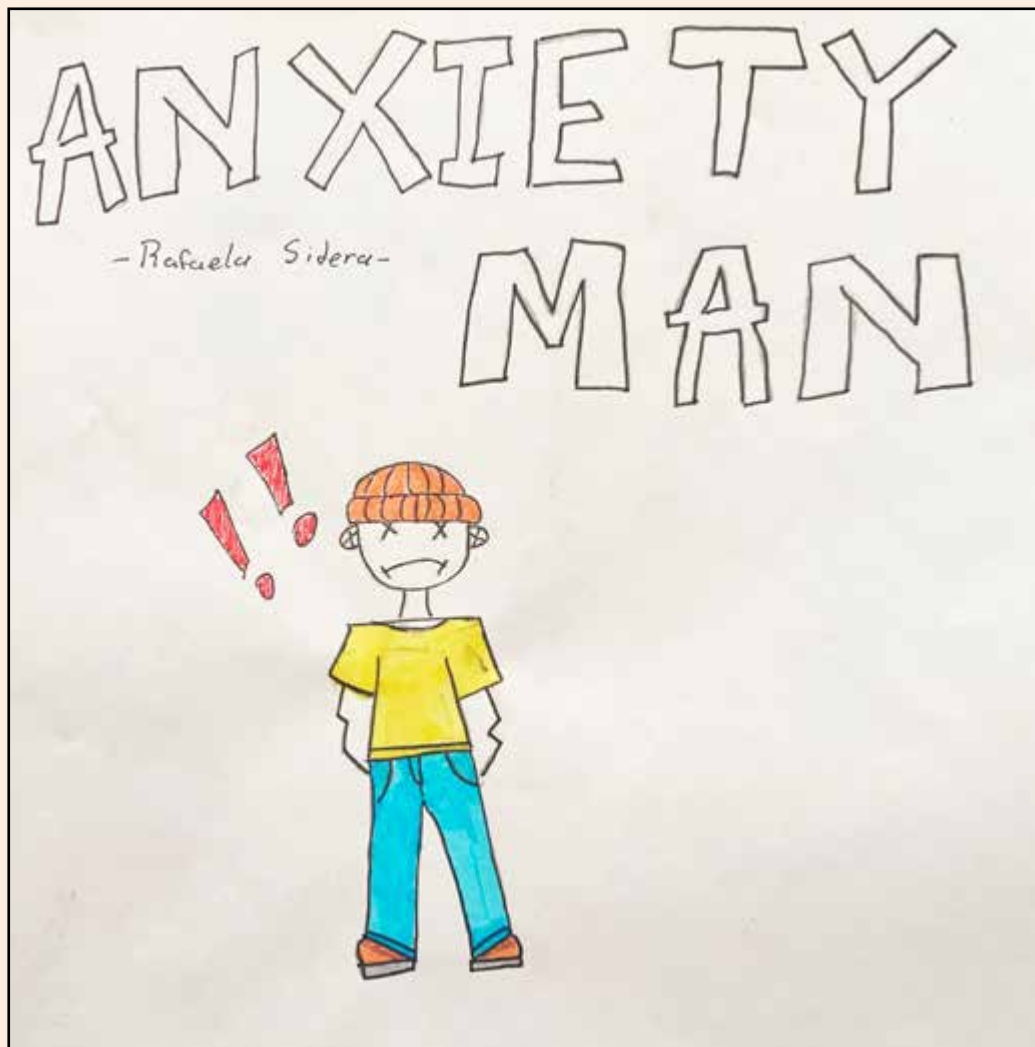
Sophia Chatzikonstanti, y3



Agapi Dimopoulou, γ7



Eleftheria Goussiou, y4



When you are stressed because of projects, assignments, or exams, he calms you down! He usually wears casual clothes, so you do not realize that he is a superhero. He likes helping others without waiting for anything in return.



He can time – travel using a special hourglass. He uses his powers to time – travel and prevents tragic moments and events, like wars from happening to make a peaceful world.

Anna Kolokytha, y2



When she sees a piece of garbage on the ground, she removes it. She cleans the ocean, which is full of plastic, and makes sure that parks and yards are clean.

Joanna Spyridogiannaki, γ3



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Message





Myrto Christodoulou, y4

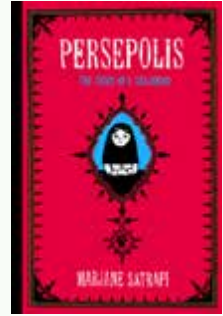


Eleftheria Goussiou, y4

PERSEPOLIS

Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi is a graphic novel that tells the story of a young girl growing up during the Iranian Revolution.

More than just a comic book, it is a memoir about the struggles, changes, and challenges Satrapi faced during her childhood and teenage years in Iran. What makes the book stand out is the amazing storytelling combined with real historical events. The book is illustrated in black and white, which gives it a striking and raw feeling.



It is easy to connect with Marji, the main character, because she feels real. She is just a regular girl who loves punk rock and dreams of freedom, but she is also living through a time of major political and social upheaval in her country, dealing with inner conflicts about her lifestyle. One of the things I really liked about *Persepolis* is how it shows the impact of big world events on everyday people, especially kids. Marji's childhood is disrupted as the Iranian Revolution takes over, and we see how this affects her entire life. It is not just about politics—it is about how politics affect real lives.

The book does not sugarcoat the difficulties of living in Iran during a time of war, but it also shows how resilient and strong people can be, even when facing oppression from the government and society. Overall, I would highly recommend *Persepolis* to anyone looking for a meaningful and emotional story. It teaches a lot about history, culture, and what it means to be human. Even though it is a graphic novel, it is not just for kids—it is a book that everyone, no matter their age, can appreciate and learn from.

Monika Sofia Alexandra Makraki, y4



The Experience!

The overall experience of participating in the Panhellenic Forensics Association Tournament was just amazing! First of all, receiving excellent guidance and support from my teachers and my coach is hard to forget. I can only be grateful that I was fortunate enough to learn from experts in this field. I participated in Oral Interpretation Comic, so another memorable moment was hearing the audience laugh... I knew they were enjoying my performance and it felt great to know that I was able to make people have fun and enjoy themselves! Another really special moment was right before they announced the finalists. I was truly nervous, but the other participants from our school team were kind and supportive. They kept encouraging me, which helped me feel less stressed. Of course, there were a few surprises: the large number of schools and competitors who participated in the tournament, as well as the strong team spirit and mutual encouragement among us. However, the biggest surprise was actually making it to the finals! I really did not expect it since it is usually the older students who make it. When I realized what had happened, I was in shock! I felt so proud and excited! This whole experience taught me that hard work really does pay off. Finally, the party was a fantastic event and everyone involved in the tournament was there. I had such a great time with my friends and the other contestants! The tournament was definitely challenging, but also so much fun. An unforgettable experience! I definitely recommend it!

Irene Anna Poulidou, β 2



When I found out that I would take part in the PFA Tournament, I was so excited! Forensics tournaments are a great opportunity! I think the best part was everything I learned about public speaking. I competed in Original Oratory, and it was absolutely amazing! I figured out a lot from watching the finalists - everyone seemed to have something interesting to say. Public speaking may sound scary, but the only time I actually felt stressed was when they announced the finalists!

I think the PFA Tournament is a wonderful opportunity for the public speaking community to come together and for any Forensics Enthusiasts (as written on the badges we had to wear) to meet like-minded people. I really hope to be there next year!

Alexia Koulouri, β6

Honestly, the PFAT was an event packed with mixed emotions. It really depends on your perspective. There were moments during which we were all very apprehensive, but there were also fun moments, and moments that make you believe in yourself and your power!

I remember when my number was called for the first time on Friday. It was the first time I actually realized that everything discussed in the months prior to the event was finally becoming real. I competed in Oral Interpretation. At that moment, I gave the judges an innocent look, and headed toward the stool. My body shivered, I felt cold. I was anxious and second thoughts quickly conquered my mind; but I was not going to give up, not now, not after practicing so hard for such a long time. I sat and carefully started reading. Then, I suddenly discovered that all my worries were gone.

But do you know why?

Because I realized that **NOTHING** else mattered!



Overall, the PFA Tournament taught me many important lessons. My personal favorite—and the one I related to the most—is that if you believe in yourself, you can conquer the whole world. Another lesson is that if you push just slightly beyond your limits, you can achieve anything. And I mean anything you set your mind on.

Trust me on this — you are so much stronger than you think. So, if I can do it, anyone can.

To finish off, I would like to say that the PFAT was a blast! It was a great event to meet new people and connect with others. I truly hope that even more students will join our team next year!

Anna-Maria Georgakopoulou, β4

I have just returned from the PFA Tournament! What a memorable experience! It was my first time participating in a Panhellenic competition. I always try to take part in as many competitions as I can, but none has been quite like this one. This tournament combined suspense, rivalry and, at the same time, enthusiasm and fun. Since I was selected to represent my school, I waited for the PFAT with mixed feelings.

I thought I would make new friends and that I would have a blast. I told myself that these things only happen in movies, it couldn't be real. But it was. It was one of my best experiences so far! I met new people, I danced at the party and I had a small feeling of rivalry, which kept the suspense alive.

Personally, I participated in Duet Acting, which I highly recommend, as it is both entertaining and challenging. Even though I did not make it to the finals, it did not matter! I cheered for Pierce and I attended almost every round my classmates participated in. I felt I was part of a new team, the Forensics Team. I hope I will keep participating in the PFA and - who knows - maybe, one year, I will win Duet Acting or any other event...

Philip Myzithrakis, β3





When Spring Comes

When spring comes,
Birds start singing
And flowers bloom in every color,
Scents of relaxing afternoons in every garden.

The sky clears from clouds,
And sun rays caress our skin;
Families are having picnics
And children play in parks,
Running among couples,
Watching the sunset.

Eleni Koralia Fragkou, γ7



Elissavet Prasoula, γ10

The Magic of Springtime

When spring comes around,
Nature's beauty is truly found.

As the heat melts the snow,
'Tis time for season's charms to show.

Fields are now a green so clear,
'Cause life returns, and joy's replenished.

When the sun rises early, the shadows fade,
And Everlasting memories are to be made!

Alkinoos Anastasopoulos, γ1

Hope Season

That's Spring, the best season of all!
Scents and colours all around the globe,
Flowers are blooming beautifully every day
And the birds are singing happily;
Children are gleefully playing outside
And the Sun, the glorious Sun is shining once again!

Marilia Christodoulou, γ4



Eleftheria Gousiou, γ4

The Wonders of Spring

A gentle breeze flutters through the trees;
A beautiful buzzing echoed by the bees;
A blinding sun begins to rise,
Spreading colors through the skies;

Light drizzles quench the earth below,
Helping all the greenlings grow
Children play while birds are tweeting,
Humming the welcome melody of spring.

But, why must all this end so quickly?
Why can it not slow it down so slightly?
This season, when skies transition to a soothing blue,
And every day, a dream comes true...

Alex Rambauske, y1



Anna Maria Vathi, y10

How Can Anyone Hate Spring?



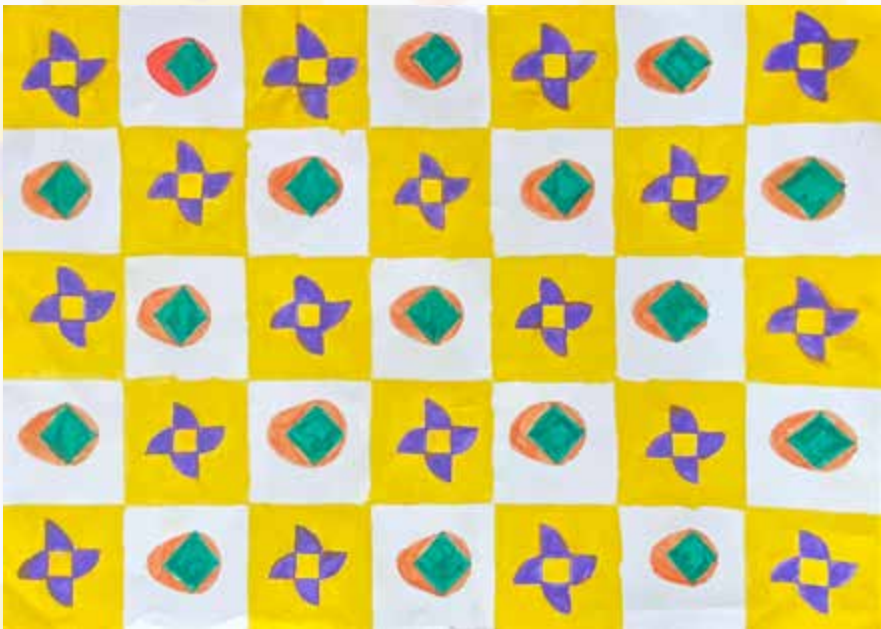
As the flowers bloom and the plot thickens,
I imagine myself sitting in a tree, reading Dickens;
Beside me lie a thousand lilies and roses;
The uncomfortable tree making me change poses-
Me and my book, my book and I;

I don't want spring to end, nor this character to die;
At this joyous time for nature, I find
A family of otters that seem kind;
Next to them, the river flows
I jump in, having no idea where it goes;

As the water guides me through the forest,
I can faintly hear a chorus;
A couple of newlyweds are singing
And showing off their ring.

How can anyone hate spring?

Maria Mouzaki, y9



Maria Katsika, y2

Nature and Me

Looking outside the window;
I see nature change.

Her orange hues,
Turn green.

Her unborn flowers,
Blossom and thrive.

Her murky mud pits,
Replaced by grass patches.

As she changes, I change, too.
As she flourishes, I feel better, too.

Agapi Dimopoulou, γ7



Mikaela Athanasiou, γ8

Springtime Cheer

The sun shines down, the skies are blue,
The grass is green, the flowers new.
The birds wake up and sing so loud,
While fluffy white clouds drift around.

A gentle breeze sweeps through the trees,
It shakes the branches, bends the leaves.
Bees buzz by and spread their cheer,
As signs of spring grow bright and clear.

The days are warm, the nights are cool,
The sparkling streams feel fresh and full.
The world is bright, so fresh, so free
Spring has come for you and me!

Sotiris Maniotis, y1



Stavros Koutroumpis, a7

The Piano

When spring season hits,
the flowers bloom,
the piano keys get wilder.

The music shifts
From dark and gloomy to all bloomy
The piano keys get stuck
Stuck on the note that brings me back to you.

I met you in spring.
The flowers bloom,
The piano keys get wilder,
The flowers that you never bought me,
Now surround me.
The piano keys that you played for me,
Now seem empty.
Empty like my heart now that you left me.

But there, in the light of the mind,
The spring spirit!
Someone else,
Plays the piano for their girl,
And the piano keys get wilder,
Their love is now blooming,
Like the flowers,
The ones that you never bought me.

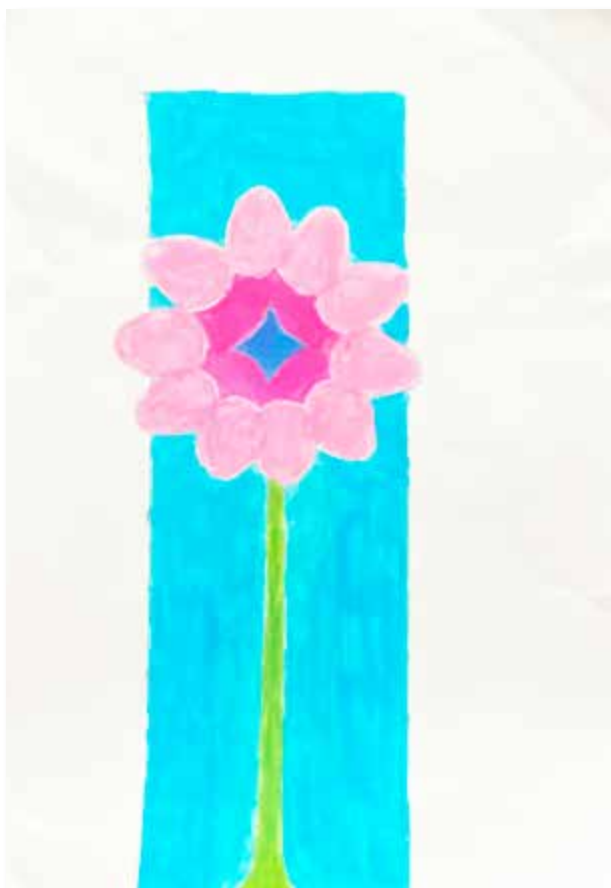
Someone else is living their love in spring,
Like we did last year.

Birds, humans, bees, flowers,
They are all celebrating the symphony of spring.
The music gets them singing, dancing all around
Until their feet get tired and they fall on the ground.

And the piano keys get wilder in my mind
And it all haunts me,
My heart is stuck on that same note.
The one that brings me back to you.

Hold me tight in your arms this spring.
Never let me go.
Let's explore the mystery of love,
While the piano keys get wilder,
And your arms open wider,
For me.

Tonia Ioannou, γ3



Ariadni Louki, γ

Understanding Our Green Habits: A Student Survey

At our school, we are committed to making a positive impact on the environment — but how green are our daily habits, really? Through this survey, we wanted to find out how students help the planet, both at school and at home. The answers helped us understand what we are doing well, where we can improve, and how we can support more eco-friendly actions in our community.

We would like to sincerely thank the Department of Computer Science for their invaluable assistance in helping us carry out this survey. Their support made it possible to collect and organize the information we needed to better understand our green habits. We are grateful for their time, expertise, and collaboration!

Together, let's take small steps toward a greener future!

SURVEY

1. Do you use a reusable bottle at school?

Yes: 143

No: 102

2. How often do you use the water refill stations at school to reduce plastic bottle use?

Always: 53

Frequently: 67

Sometimes: 63

Rarely: 41

Never: 24

3. How often do you use the recycling bins at school?

Always: 75

Frequently: 95

Sometimes: 40

Rarely: 20

Never: 17

4. How often do you use scrap paper at school?

Always: 28

Frequently: 58

Sometimes: 76

Rarely: 52

Never: 31

5. How often do you turn off lights when leaving a classroom?

Always: 38
Frequently: 25
Sometimes: 37
Rarely: 67
Never: 80

6. If you saw someone littering at school, what would you do?

Ignore it: 81
Pick it up myself: 80
Politely remind them not to litter: 84

7. Does your school promote environmental initiatives (e.g., Earth Day, recycling programs)?

Yes: 159
No: 21
I am not aware of any: 65

8. How often do you choose eco-friendly products (e.g., reusable bags, biodegradable items)?

Always: 21
Frequently: 109
Sometimes: 83
Rarely: 25
Never: 10

9. Have you ever participated in a recycling or cleanup campaign?

Yes: 142
No: 105

10. How concerned are you about climate change and environmental issues?

Very concerned: 79
Somewhat concerned: 117
Neither concerned nor unconcerned: 31
Not very concerned: 12
Not concerned at all: 8

An Unraveling Earth

The trees once danced to the rhythm of the breeze,
Now they stand as skeletons, stripped of their leaves.
Rivers once sang, crystal clear and free,
Now they choke, gasping in polluted seas.

The skies, once blue, wear a veil of gray,
As factories belch smoke, day after day.
Mountains crumble, their veins mined dry,
While the animals flee, or silently die.

Oh, the ice, the ancient keepers of time,
Melts away, a warning, a crime.
Seas rise with fury, swallowing the shore,
A tide of despair, we cannot ignore.

Fields once lush, where the wild things roamed,
Now deserts stretch, barren and alone.
The air grows heavy, toxic and cruel,
While we trade life for convenience and fuel.

The whispers of the Earth grow faint and weak,
Her tears are the storms, her anger peaks.
She pleads with us, her children, in vain,
To end the cycle of thoughtless pain.

But there's still time—though the hour is late,
To mend, to nurture, to change our fate.
Plant the seeds of hope, let them grow,
Heal the wounds of the world we know.

For if we listen, if we truly care,
The Earth will forgive, her heart will repair.
But the choice is ours, and the moment is near,
Will we rise with love—or drown in fear?

Ariadni Stasinopoulou, β4

INTERVIEW WITH NIKOS TSAFOS

Nikos Tsafos serves as Deputy Minister of Energy in the Ministry of Environment and Energy of the Hellenic Republic. He previously spent almost three years as the chief energy advisor to Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis.



Before returning to Greece in 2022, Nikos spent almost two decades in the United States, where he worked as a consultant on some of the world's most complex energy projects, as an adjunct lecturer at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), and as a researcher at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) where he held the Schlesinger Chair for Energy and Geopolitics.

Nikos has testified before Congress, the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, the Canadian House of Commons, and the Alaska State Legislature. He served on the Climate Advisory Committee of the Export-Import Bank of the United States and on the Board of Directors of the Greek gas company DEPA.

He has written widely on energy, including for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Policy, EURACTIV, the National Interest, and others; he has been quoted in The New York Times, The Financial Times, The Economist, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, and Bloomberg; and he has appeared on CNN, NBC, the BBC, NPR, Al Jazeera, and other leading media outlets.

He holds a B.A. in International Relations and Economics, Boston University and an M.A. in International Relations, Johns Hopkins SAIS.

Nikos returned to the East Campus as a proud Pierce alumnus to engage with members of the Sunny Days Magazine. During his visit, he shared insights into his school life at Pierce, reflecting on how the experiences and education he received laid the foundation for his career in energy policy and environmental affairs. He emphasized the importance of imagination, intellectual humility, and resilience—qualities he attributes to his formative years at Pierce. He also discussed pressing environmental issues, highlighting the need for proactive choices to shape a sustainable future.

Q: In what way has your school life at Pierce affected your path?

A: That's a good question! I finished at Pierce in 1999. So, it's been a while! What I realized over my career is that, actually, my time at Pierce really prepared me for life. You know, part of the job of a school is to get you ready for the next phase. And, I knew that when I graduated, I was well prepared. Let me tell you a couple of things that I do today that are very much related to my time at Pierce. I was a big fan of extracurricular activities. Not just to get out of class, but because they were fun. So, I was an active member of the Forensics Club. I did debate, impromptu speaking and original oratory. I learnt how to organize an argument, how to go from A to B to C in a logical way. I learnt how to speak in front of a crowd, clearly and confidently. These are things that are incredibly valuable to me in life today. So, being able to say this argument is strong but that argument is weak is an incredibly valuable skill. And, I started to learn how to do that here at Pierce.

I played volleyball and I was the captain of the volleyball team. I was also a member of the Student Government. The stakes are a little bit different in Student Government than in the Prime Minister's office. Still there are similarities. You know, you have to sort of think about different people and how they'll react.

The extracurricular activities are really the things that I feel like really stand out for me.



Q: The second question is, what kind of student were you in school? Were you a bookworm, a debater, or the curious type, always asking questions?

A: So, I was what you would call a late bloomer. If you check at my grades, you will notice that they were not high. And then, one day something changed and I became a really good student. I was not the best student, not the worst student, kind of like average. I don't think I read a book before I was, like, 16, with the exception of the biography of the basketball player Michael Jordan. So, if you take that aside, I don't think I read like an actual book until then. So, I wasn't a bookworm. I was a little bit more the guy that would tell a joke in class and get yelled at by the teacher. But eventually this changed. When I graduated, I was more like an 18 and a half grade average. I think a lot of it came through a slight maturity process, and I give a lot of credit to debate and forensics about this. You have to figure out how to use the jokes to make a point, to win an argument, to be creative. That is how I became a much better student, and I started reading a lot of books, especially by the time I got to university. I was much more of a bookworm in university than I was before that!

Q: Has the motto of our school "To serve, not to be served" inspired your life?

A: When I graduated, I went to the US, where I studied and then I came back for my military service. I went back to America and stayed there for 17 years. At some point, energy became a very big thing for Europe and for Greece. That's when the office of the Prime Minister found me and they said, OK, you look like you know what you're talking about. "Why don't you come back and help us?" And within six weeks, I was back home! I had that sense of helping and serving my country. The motto inspires you to reflect and decide what you want to do on Earth, what you leave behind and how you impact others.

Q: What would you encourage Pierce students to do?

A: I think that I would say two things; the first one is to take school seriously. As I grow up, I realize that if you have a good foundation, it is very easy to build on. I wish I had paid more attention to subjects, like physics or chemistry, because my job right now is very much about physics and chemistry. Trust me, it's very hard when you reach a point in your career to go back and do the basics again.

The second thing is that you have access to incredible services and clubs and they will help you to find your passion. I mentioned earlier that I did a lot of extracurriculars.

Some of them were the foundations for my future career but others were not. I have also joined the Drama Club and I did not want to become an actor. That's another useful thing, to know what you don't want to do.

I think you should just take advantage of the opportunities around you and these opportunities make this school unique.

Q: Was there a subject or teacher that had a big impact on your interest in energy and geopolitics?

A: To be honest, I did not leave Pierce thinking I wanted to be an energy expert. During my undergraduate studies, I was thinking a lot about the world and peace and war and how countries interact with one another and what makes the world work. But I still wasn't really dealing with energy. During my graduate studies, I was wondering... "Do I want to study more of the same or do I want to explore something different?" Back then, in 2005, energy was a really hot topic. It was the beginning of the war in Iraq or a year and a half into the war in Iraq. Oil prices were high of oil and I realized that energy was really important but I knew nothing about it. I found that incredibly fascinating and I thought that if I understood energy, it would help me put together the puzzle of how the world works. This is what makes my days interesting because I may wake up in the morning and talk about Latin America. By the middle of the day, I would be talking about something that happened in Thailand, but in the evening, someone might call me to talk about Russia.

To get back to your question, there were a lot of teachers along the way and subjects, but my curiosity led me to energy and geopolitics, as I had to understand how the world works. I realized that energy was one of the keys!

Q: Who has been a major influence or a mentor in your career?

A: I was lucky enough to have a lot of people around me who have taught me valuable things. What I always try to do is to observe people around me and understand their strengths and the things that I can learn from them.

I can think of two inspiring people. The first one is the CEO of the company I worked for, who would walk into my office and ask "What do I need to know?" It was a very sort of simple question, but it also forced you to think that he is a really busy person who's dealing with a lot of stuff, who's meeting CEOs and government leaders, so his time with me is limited and valuable. Nowadays, I sit next to the Prime Minister and I spend a lot of time asking myself: "Does he need to know this?"

Another thing that I have learned is that really busy people don't have time to read twenty pages. "How can you make this into two pages?" or "How can you make that into one page? But without losing the substance and the insight." There are a few important questions posed by another employer. She wasn't a mentor to me in the sense that she told me, do this, do that, but she showed me what's effective and what's useful.

Q: How can AI be used to protect the environment?

A: That's a really good question. I think that the greatest promise of AI is to help us do things faster and more efficiently. Let me give you some very simple examples. It's probably not the best use of AI, but it's a little bit more concrete.

Think about your house where you have lights, you have appliances, you leave the TV on, you have the heat, you have the water heater. And all these things today operate roughly manually. You turn things on and off. When you turn things on and off, you are not necessarily doing the best thing.

If all these things were connected to some central brain, let's call it a computer, it could actually run that system much more efficiently. It would say, you know what, I can sense that these guys are not home, so I don't need to be running the water heater, I can turn off all the lights, I can charge this battery in the evening or at night or in the middle of the day. That means you don't need to use as much energy, which means reduction of emissions, which is really good for the environment.



There are lots of other ways in which AI is helping the environment. In Greece we are using AI essentially to try to detect fires. If it's a small fire, then you can put it out. Detecting fires is not an easy task and at the same time, you don't want to send the fire fighters left and right, but you really want to send them where there is actually a fire. This is something that AI can do for us efficiently.

Q: Is there a particular energy project, or policy that you have worked on that you are proud of?

A: When I started this job in 2022, there was a widespread concern about power blackouts in winter and the high cost of energy. Essentially one of my first tasks was to come here, and help the country come up with a plan. What would we do in the worst scenarios and how would we protect the country? We are also part of a European system, we have to collaborate with other countries in Europe.

So, I would say the first six months of my professional life were very much focused on trying to protect the country and protect Europe from a major energy shock, and that's one thing that I feel very strongly about. I spent a lot of my time on that and I felt satisfied.

The second thing that I feel quite good about hasn't happened yet, so I can't quite take credit for it, but we'll hopefully be announcing things soon!

Q: Do you have any other future goals?

A: I think energy is a bright spot for Greece. We're reducing our emissions, we're growing renewable energy, and my goal is to keep that going and to do that in a way that makes sense for the country. It's a very big goal that includes a lot of sub-goals. My mission statement is to reduce costs and pollution levels.

Special thanks to Christina Chantzou, Senior Manager, Office of Advancement – Alumni at the American College of Greece.



16 INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT MUSIC!

Did you know...?

- Music helps plants grow.
- Singing reduces stress.
- Heartbeats sync with music.
- Music alters perception.
- Music helps in healing.
- Music improves memory.
- The artist 'Prince' could play 27 different instruments.
- The oldest known musical instrument is a flute made from a bird bone and mammoth ivory.
- Fast-tempo music can enhance workout performance.
- Many people get goosebumps when listening to especially moving or emotional music.
- Babies can hear music from the womb and may react to it before they are born.
- Today, there are over 100 pop genres.
- Around 1.9 million jobs in the United States are supported by the music industry.
- Artist 'Hoagy Charmichael' holds the record for the longest song title, consisting of 30 words.
- Certain songs can bring back vivid memories associated with emotions, people, or places.
- Music is a core part of celebrations around the world, from national holidays to weddings!

Ariadni Tsiopana, a8

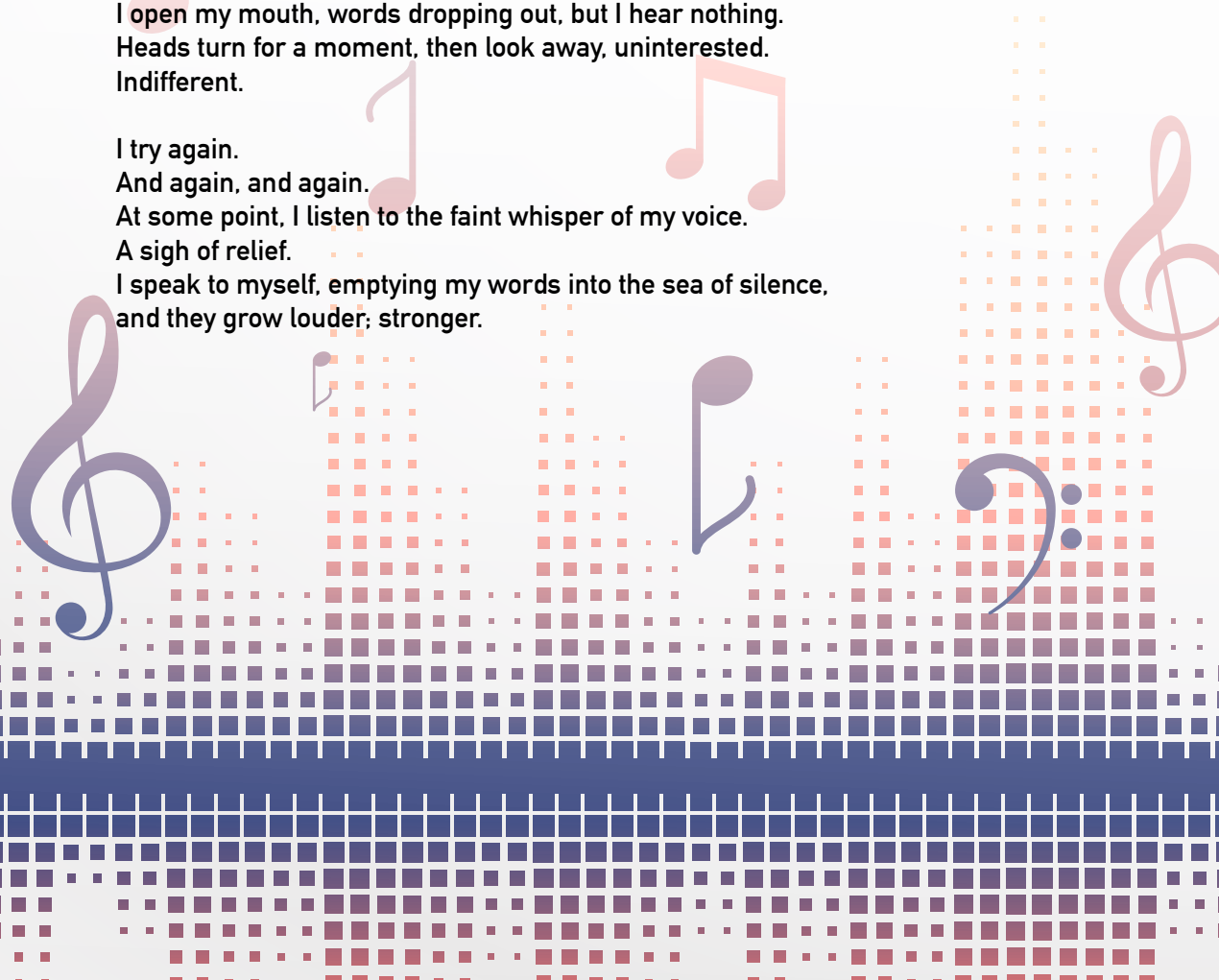
The Sound of Silence

I walk through places, situations, moments.
School, home, hotels, hospitals, parties, deaths, birthdays, dreams...
I've cried and I've smiled and I've laughed and I've shouted.
I've screamed, I've kicked, I've fought, and I've tried.
I've failed, I've tried, I've succeeded, and I've lived.

Bustling voices and people and sounds, walking all around me.
Walking alone, or walking with others. Talking.
Soon the voices and the sounds start fading away.
The silence hurts. It stings, it's too loud.

That silence is deafening.
Can't I hear and talk like everybody else?
Ignore the silence, like everybody else?
It beats like drums in my ears and I need, I need someone to speak.
I open my mouth, words dropping out, but I hear nothing.
Heads turn for a moment, then look away, uninterested.
Indifferent.

I try again.
And again, and again.
At some point, I listen to the faint whisper of my voice.
A sigh of relief.
I speak to myself, emptying my words into the sea of silence,
and they grow louder; stronger.



Silence like a cancer grows.
Hear my words, and I might teach you.
Take my arms, and I might reach you.
You must speak and you must listen, to break this wretched silence.
Stop talking, and listen.
Stop hearing, and speak.
We're all stuck in this silence, and we have to be loud to escape it.
But my words, like silent raindrops fell.
No one dared disturb the sound of silence.
They continue walking and talking.
"Tell me more"
Whispered the sound of silence, beckoning me.

The silence is an invitation to speak, to fill it in, to keep it company,
to encourage others to break their own silence,
and live in a symphony of speech and sounds.

My voice danced through that quiet roar,
weak, strong, knowing, loud.
Maybe the silence was the only one listening.

Me, my voice, and the silence are still walking.
You are welcome to speak, alongside me.
You are welcome to listen.

Irini Tzazopoulou, β4

Travel through Music

Every sound
and every silence,
just living in my head.

Every note
and every lyric,
just singing the one and only melody.

I can't help but explore my mind,
as this song has been stuck in my head all night.

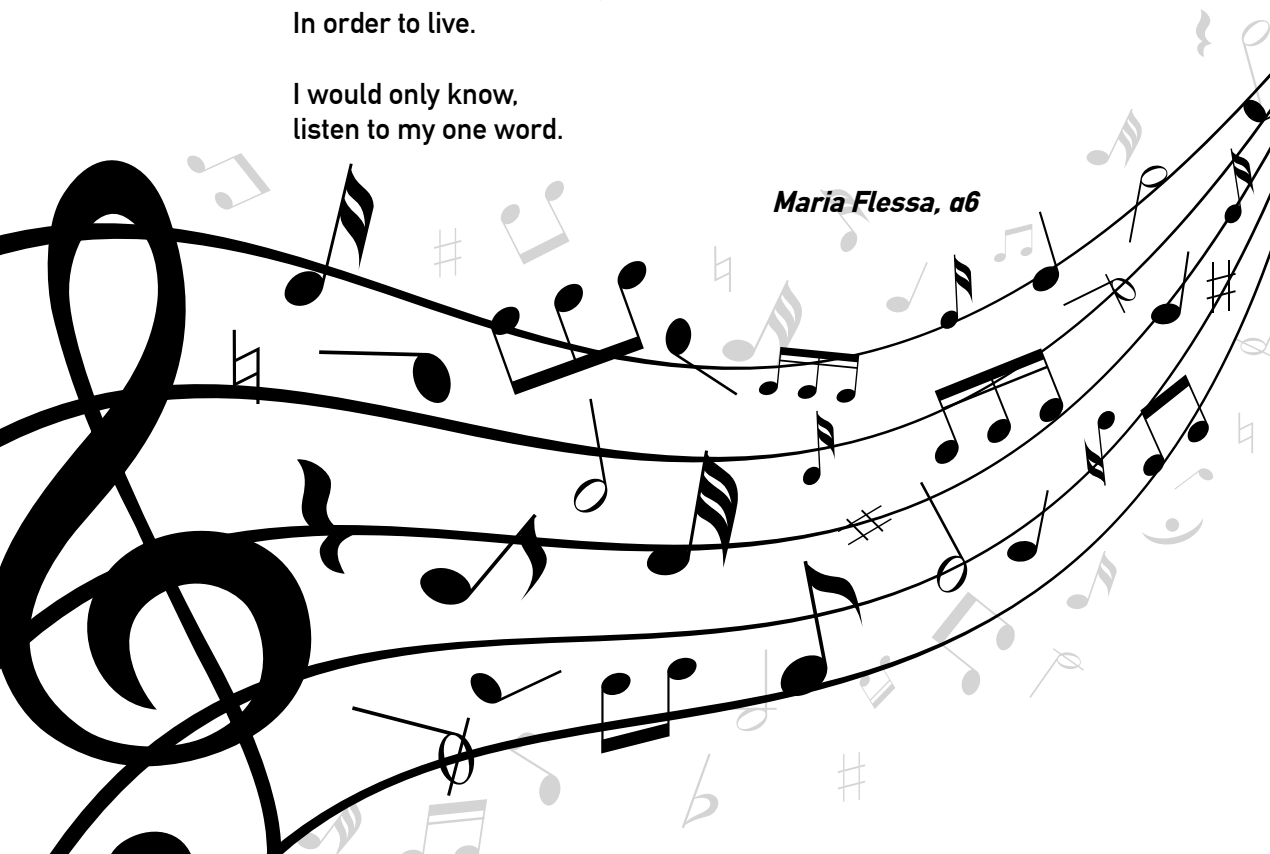
And then I go...
Where? Just so you know.

To another world,
that cannot be described with just a word.

Somewhere alone,
with the song playing on my phone,
Because that is all I need,
In order to live.

I would only know,
listen to my one word.

Maria Flessa, a6



Theme for Into Literature 9

This task was inspired by Langston Hughes' poem "Theme for English B", in which the 22-year-old poet is asked to write one page that is "true" about himself as an assignment for his English class at university. As he reflects, he finds it difficult to capture the complexity of his character in such a limited space. The IntoLit9 students explored their own multifaceted identities by writing poems similar to Hughes'.

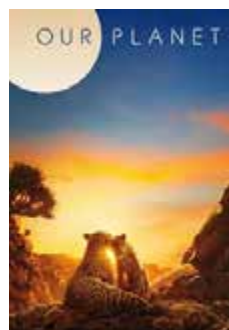
I've just been assigned to write a page about myself,
 "Anything that comes to mind" my instructor said.
 Sounds easy, right?
 That's what I thought as well.
 Turns out I was terribly wrong.
 What should I write about, my favorite song?
 I mean that doesn't sound so wrong,
 But I feel like it would be a little bit plain.
 Should I talk about the first video game I ever played?
 Would I mention FIFA? make my teacher think -
 "Wow! What a wonderful page.
 I played video games when I was your age"
 Or should I dedicate this text I made
 To talk about the first shot little me drained?
 That was back when I was five,
 Had no instinct of survive - al,
 I had just gone to my first recital.
 See, I played the guitar already for a year,
 But I had just gone on to buy my first proper gear.
 Little me didn't stop there though,
 Had to learn to defend myself, "karate will help" oh!
 Although I only made it to a half yellow,
 Wasn't that bad, just the time didn't help, no!
 I guess I already talked of all my ideas,
 I hope my instructor likes this- dears!
 I have to go now, don't have so much time!
 Goodbye everyone hope you like my little rhyme,
 It's my first time!

Dimitris Tasios, y5

Documentary: Our Planet

Director: David Attenborough

Release Date: 2019



The documentary aims to inspire viewers to take action to protect wildlife, emphasizing the impacts of climate change, deforestation, overfishing, and human activity on the planet's ecosystems. The motive is revealed through the cinematography, David Attenborough's narration and the interviews.

The techniques that caught my interest were the cinematography, the narration and various emotional moments. These techniques were effective because they voiced clearly the need for more supplies to protect these animals, but at the same time they remained realistic. The main message of "Our Planet" is that the natural world is incredibly beautiful, but it is under threat! The documentary emphasizes the urgent need for global conservation efforts to protect wildlife and ecosystems, as they are crucial for the health of the planet and humanity's future.

Konstantopoulou Melina, γ3

Documentary: Sprint

Directors: Paul Martin, James Gay-Rees

Release Date: 2024



The documentary wants the viewers to realize the sacrifices these athletes need to make in order to become champions. The motive is revealed through interviews with the athletes, videos from races and the cinematography.

The techniques that caught my interest were the dynamic soundtrack that perfectly complements the intensity and drama on screen, making each moment more powerful. The cinematography is stunning, capturing both the thrill of the race and the reflective moments of the athletes

This documentary focuses on themes of perseverance, self-discovery, and overcoming personal challenges. The documentary often illustrates how facing multiple challenges can lead to growth and resilience. The central message typically revolves around the idea that with determination and the right support system, anyone can overcome obstacles and achieve his/her goals.

Bianca Bokota, γ5

Documentary: Inside the Mind of a Dog

Director: Andy Mitchell
 Producer: Laura Thomas
 Release Date: 2024



The documentary aims to explore canine cognition and make us understand better the emotions and behaviours of dogs. This is revealed through expert interviews, scientific research and stories based on real life experiences of service and companion dogs.

What caught my interest more was the visual story telling (captivating real footage of dogs in action). I found the expert insights very interesting (the perspectives of scientists and dog trainers, provide depth). Last but not least, I liked the training demonstrations (it shows how dogs adapt and learn, making the film interesting and informative).

Marina Ganosi, y2

Documentary: Chasing Coral

Director: Jeff Orlowski
 Release Date: 2017



Jeff Orowski aims to raise awareness about the rapid decline of coral reefs. The film, attempts to explain how climate change is causing destruction through coral bleaching, capturing the transformation of vibrant reefs into lifeless structures due to rising ocean temperature. Through visual evidence and expert insight, Orlowski hopes to make audiences aware of the urgent need for action to protect these ecosystems. The documentary emphasizes that if climate change continues the worlds coral reefs could disappear.

One of the most interesting techniques in Chasing Coral, is time lapse. Specialists set up underwater cameras to capture the coral bleaching process over time, showing how vibrant reefs turn lifeless. This technique is effective, because it visually proves how quickly climate change is damaging coral reefs. It emphasizes the need for global awareness and action to protect these ecosystems before it is too late. It urges viewers to recognize severity of the crises, and to take actions, because there is still the possibility of restoring coral life through changes in human behaviour towards nature.

Athina Chrysaiti, y8

Documentary: The Social Dilemma

Director: Jeff Orlowski

Release Date: 2020



The documentary highlights the dangers of social media addiction, misinformation, and its effects on mental health, especially among teenagers. It supports the idea of changing the regulation of big tech companies in order to prevent the spread of misinformation and encourages viewers to explore more content on books or talks that are involved in ethical tech initiatives.

The film reveals its motive by adding interviews from experts, dramatized scenarios to illustrate the psychological effects of social media addiction mainly on an average teenager, and statistics to support its claims.

The documentary uses a fictional family to show how social media affects their lives. As a result, instead of just presenting facts, the dramatized story makes the issue feel personal and relatable, showing the emotional and social consequences of social media addiction.

The documentary features interviews with employees from Facebook, Google, Twitter, who reveal how social media companies manipulate users. That results in making the warnings more credible as they come from people who created these platforms.

The documentary presents statistics about the rise in depression, anxiety, among teens due to social media, and they also show how algorithms, that personify someone's social media, work.

The main message of "The Social Dilemma" is that social media platforms are designed to manipulate users, control their behavior, and prioritize profit over people's well-being. The film argues that these platforms contribute to mental health issues, addiction, misinformation, and they usually use algorithms that keep users engaged. Viewers should definitely rethink their relationship with social media.

Eleni Kanteraki, y7

Documentary: The Last Dance

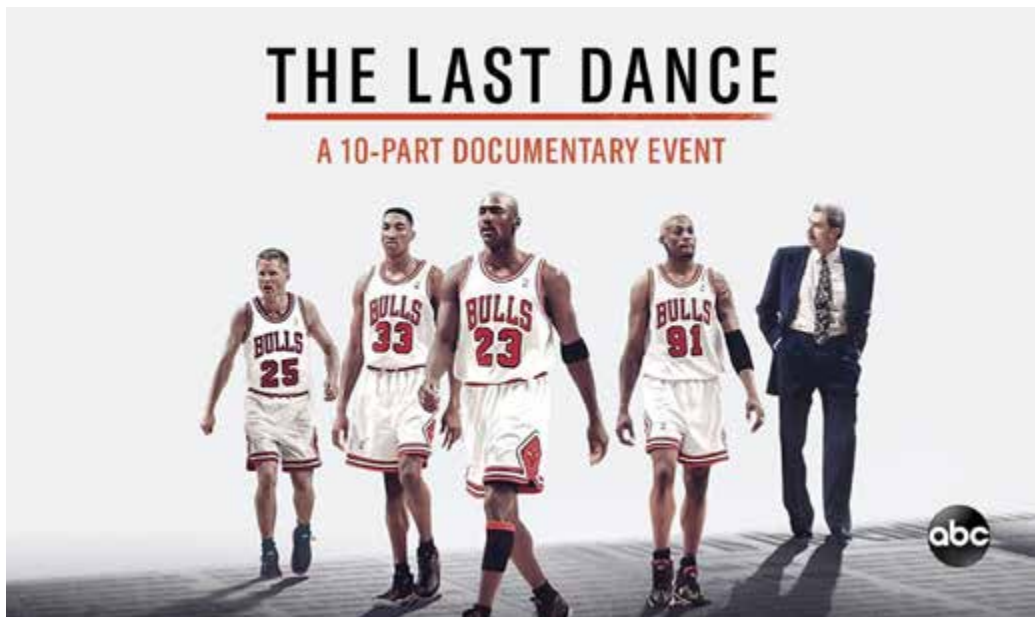
Director: Jason Hehir

Release Date: 2020

The filmmaker wanted to show Michael Jordan's last season with the Chicago Bulls and how he became a legend. This is shown through game footage, interviews and music.

Hard work, leadership and determination are the main ideas of the documentary. The film shows how Jordan pushed himself to success.

Myrto Papadima, y8



PIERCE EXCHANGE PROGRAM – STUDENTS’ REFLECTIONS

This lifetime experience was incredible and for sure beneficial for both Greeks and Americans.

During this trip I saw a different culture with different habits and no stereotypes. Back in Greece we have many stereotypes and that does not allow us to have more chances and friendships. Moreover, the kids and the parents were friendly and made us feel like home. From now on, I want to make new friends so that I can expand my social network and share my experience with all my friends back in Pierce! The only thing I would like to change is the limited time we had for sightseeing!

Konstantina Chatziapostolou, β2

The exchange student program with the Riverdale kids was WONDERFUL! It was a great opportunity to become independent and I had the chance to communicate with other children from another country.

Salma was the child who hosted me and we became close friends. It was great! We had so much fun together that made me forget all of my bad thoughts that were in my head. Salma and my other friends with their hosts made the trip unforgettable!

If a kid teenager now hears about a trip to America without his parents for a week, he will be scared and hesitant. I felt the same when I heard it for the first time. Now I feel really pleased with myself because I had the chance to live such a good experience with all the kids around me that now I am so sad that I left NYC. I remember every single moment that we had together and now I want to go back to the past.

I am looking forward to seeing the kids in Greece next year! I can't wait!

Areti Zacharopoulou, β7

I take away many things from this experience. Firstly, I got to see a different educational system, which is much easier and our school system could benefit from it. Secondly, I got to see a different country with a different landscape and interesting architecture. One thing is for sure! We should stay longer (seven days is not enough), and definitely see more of the districts of New York.

But in general, I loved the trip it was a once in a lifetime experience and I hope that I will participate in more exchange programs like this one in the future!

John Papakostas, β7

My visit to Riverdale school in New York was a lifetime experience that I will always cherish! It has already changed my life because I have experienced a completely new way of learning and living in and out of this school. Riverdale has shown us that there are so many different ways of thinking and creating through the emotional bonds we have established with our new friends. Moreover, Riverdale has made me more confident of what I achieved throughout our stay by also showing our students and teachers our own ways of thinking. This interaction is unique so I suggest that, for the next group to visit Riverdale, Greek students should entirely follow the entire basic schedule of the school so that they enrich their educational vision for their future.

Bill Rigas, β7

I can easily say that this school year is one of favorites because that I participated in this exchange program. It's actually a life-time experience for me as I had the chance to live with an American family. I learned a lot and my whole mindset changed. I understood that being yourself is the most valid choice you have, rather than pretending to be a cool dude or the "perfect" kid. I should be myself and do what I think it's best for me. I shouldn't worry about fixing my hair, etc.

Philip Myzithrakis, β3

This exchange program was a wonderful experience that I will never forget! When I submitted my application, I realized that I had entered a competing environment that I will probably face again in the future. I saw how the selection process was like and I remained motivated to achieve a certain goal. I had to overlook my fears of traveling and living alone away from my home and parents. I also experienced a new learning process, the idea of project week and experienced the way they teach. In my project I used my knowledge in an escape room, which was really fascinating, and improved my English skills by solving demanding crosswords. From this amazing experience I learned that I must put away my fears and insecurities, face difficulties, be responsible and spend my money wisely. In the future, I will absolutely grab such opportunities that turn out to be lifetime experiences!

Ilektra Anastasia Peroulaki, β6

The trip to New York was one of the greatest experiences of my life! First of all, I enjoyed taking part in project week and I would love to see something similar at Pierce because it was a lot of fun! Another thing I kept is, how kind and welcoming all the students were. Also, I will always remember the beautiful lights of New York and all the sites we visited. This trip has definitely affected my life. It gave me unforgettable experiences and allowed me to live like an American student for a week. Finally,

something I didn't like about the trip and I think should be improved is the limited time we had at school, I think it would have been more fun if we had another day!

Spyros Danalis, β7

The RCS-Pierce exchange program left me with many takeaways as it affected my life. This experience was one of the best and I will remember every second of it. Each and every person that I met from the school was an interesting personality. The program made me see how nice New York is, how good the schools are, how many opportunities it offers you and how everybody treats you equally. Even though I was from Greece and not America the school and the students made me feel comfortable. This program made me have a dream that I will do everything I can to make it come true; attend a college there and eventually get a job and live in New York. I loved this experience and I can't wait to host my exchange student here in Greece!

Valeria Anagnostopoulou, β2

In my opinion, from this experience, I take many things away. Starting off, the most important, if not the most, is the fact that for most of us, travelled abroad without our parents. This helped us mature and gave us a little boost to stand on our feet. Another thing, is probably the fact that we were exposed to a whole different culture, based on diversity and freedom, something Greece is trying to adapt nowadays. The hospitality and the open arms of the Americans also made the experience better. All these, I believe, affected my life in the present and future, because I learned how to work in a group. One thing is for sure that we should have stayed a little bit longer, maybe a week or so and have time to do more things.

Nikolaos Toutoudakis, β8

Being given the chance to participate in this inspiring and stimulating exchange program was one of the most remarkable experiences of my life as a Pierce student. I learned how to put my fears and worries aside about traveling abroad without the certainty that my parents' presence would normally provide. The selection process taught me how important acquiring a sense of self-worth is, as we all had to prove ourselves capable of representing our school. As soon as we arrived, my host family's hospitality showed me how minor gestures can instantly make someone feel welcomed. During Monday and Tuesday, I got to experience Riverdale's approach to education and their innovating teaching methods, which included a project week. Although it seemed like a bizarre and foreign concept at first, I got to realize the benefit of deepening one's knowledge on a certain topic that came with it. Another factor that made this experience so unique to me, was that I got to explore this diverse city through a local's set of eyes, while following my host's everyday routine. This fruitful experience has undoubtedly impacted my mindset thanks to all the lessons it has taught me. Moreover, this exchange program has familiarized me with traveling

for educational purposes, which I find quite useful in regards to achieving my goal of studying abroad.

Although I'm sure that the next group of Pierce students visiting Riverdale will love the trip as it is, there are some suggestions to further improve their experience. Since all of us bonded with our hosts and the other participants of the exchange program, apart from making the trip last longer, bringing along the American students to the Broadway show as well as the last day of sightseeing would make everyone happy. I also think that visiting the Metropolitan museum of Art would be better than the MoMA, since modern art is vague and hard for teens. Finally, I suggest that the Ellis island be excluded from the schedule, and spend time to climb up the Statue of Liberty!

Eva Mavragani, β7

There are a LOT of things I get from this experience. Firstly, the school system is way better than ours. They don't have exams to pass from grade to grade and neither do they have term tests. Secondly, it was exciting to discover a new culture, what they do there, how they spend their time, what they like to eat.

I loved the theatre on Broadway, Stardust Diner and the Empire State Building! Moreover, was fun and taught me about how a movie and TV series are made (sound editing, normal video editing, script writing and casting. Lastly, the family that hosted me was really kind and generous. They made sure that I was fine, I didn't want anything, I didn't need anything, generally being like actual parents to me. Drew was also really fun to be around and I especially enjoyed playing Bloons with him! I should also mention Milo, he was also a blast! Lastly, I really want to thank Mr. Sipp, and all Riverdale teachers for welcoming us in their city. I also want to say a big thank you to Miss Fay and Mr. Chatzinakis!

Konstantinos Kallis, β7



REFLECTION ON THE TRIP TO ISTANBUL

Last week some of my fellow classmates and I had the chance to participate in an educational trip to Istanbul, Turkey. Our group consisted of thirty students, who were chosen based on their academic performance. Chaperoned by the headmaster, Mr. Kladas, Mrs. Dimou and Mr. Misirlis, we took off on a Saturday morning, and so this trip began.

Reflecting on my trip to Turkey fills me with excitement and gratitude. Visiting iconic places like the Grand Bazaar was a unique experience; the hustle of the merchants and the aromas of the spices created a vibrant atmosphere. My friends and I wandered around the colorful alleys and discovered traditional crafts, such as shoes and handbags, which caught our attention.

The Topkapi Palace left me breathless with its stunning architecture and rich history. Walking through its gardens and exploring the rooms filled with Ottoman treasures felt like stepping back in time. I also enjoyed the beauty of Dolmabahce Palace, where the impressive halls and the view of the Bosphorus were simply breathtaking.

Last, visiting Zografeio High School gave me the chance to learn more about the Greek community in Istanbul and its cultural legacy.

Each place we visited offered a new perspective on Turkey's history and diversity. This trip was not just a tourist adventure, but also an opportunity to connect with the culture and people of this beautiful neighboring country. I certainly took away unforgettable memories and the desire to go back and explore more.

Mikaela Athanasiou, y8






Pierce