

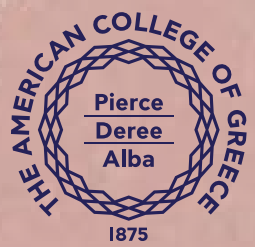


# ΦΩΤΕΙΝΕΣ ΗΜΕΡΕΣ SUNNY DAYS

ΛΥΚΕΙΟ 2025

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**Pierce**





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## The Art of Living

*An art we have, perhaps, forgotten.*

For this year's Sunny Days magazine, we chose to turn to the written word, to capture thought, feeling, complexity, appreciation, knowledge, and love. Time moves. Faster than we realize. And in the rush of our lives, we lose track not only of where we are going, but why we began running at all. It felt important, urgent, even, to pause. To offer a form of expression that belongs to our school community, and to create, through this year's edition, a moment of stillness that modern life rarely affords. This way, we want to give you a chance to come a step closer to the students of our lyceum, as we all, together, reclaim the art of living.

We often approach art from a safe distance: in galleries, in the playlists of our favorite artists, through the small, glowing screens we hold in our hands. We consume it, admire it, swipe past it. Rarely, however, do we allow ourselves to stand inside it, to inhabit its spaces, its uncertainties, its provocations. And while we know that, among the many atrocities unfolding even as we share these words with you, it is a privilege to engage with the art of living, it is precisely because of this reality that we believe in the necessity of doing so. Through joyful collaboration, this year's editorial team shaped an issue devoted to this lost practice. Its sections reflect some of the essential components that make life vivid, unpredictable, and worthwhile: the creative writing of our generation's imaginative minds; explorations of psychology, philosophy, and science; conversations with individuals whose lives remind us the different forms the art of living can take, and how beautiful they all are. Snapshots of our school's life reminders of what has passed quickly, and of all that is still to come.

There is endless debate over what defines art. While our team would hardly agree on a single answer, we are certain of one thing: art resists boundaries. It demands only to be felt, lived, and expressed. And so does living. To live fully is to feel deeply, to embrace love, sorrow, doubt, connection; to remain open even when openness is costly.

With that spirit, we invite you to enter into the living art of reading.

Let it meet you where you are.

***The Editor and Assistant Editor,  
Aggelina Kyrousi, Marianna Argeiti***

## A World Without Art



Rafaella Dimopoulou, A2

Imagine waking up in a world where art in all its forms—music, literature, paintings, films—has vanished. How would this change the way people experience life and emotions?

**Art brings people together.** We discuss art in all forms and aspects in our everyday lives, as it can spark insightful conversations that can help human beings understand each other. Each one of us can view art from their own perspectives, creating their own interpretations about it while forming, developing, reconsidering, or even changing their mindset about how the world functions.

But as the way the world functions can be seen through art, the world couldn't function without it. So, imagine a world where art isn't present in any of its forms.

Let's take music, for example. We young people, even when our negligence compels us to forget our headphones at home in the morning, we think about, "How can I just spend the day without listening to music?". So, who could ever live without

music, without being able to listen to their favorite tune until they get bored, without having their comfort songs whisper words of reassurance and consolation, or without being able to associate a song with a person?

Think about literature and poetry. How are we supposed to anatomize life, people, and experiences without such a beautiful way of expression? How are we supposed to learn the meaning of life, or even better the Art of Living, if we don't have such a powerful means in our hands that helps us delve deep into it? Without literature, we would struggle to cultivate empathy, as there would be no archetypes of characters to connect with, reflect upon and find ourselves in.

What about theatre and cinema? This type of art in particular, molds each generation and represents the spirit of its era. This type of art shapes the generation's common standards, while creating bonding experiences that contribute to the establishment of a collective memoir that will be instilled in future generations. The "seventh art" ultimately develops the culture and the values of the specific era.

**If art vanished, every little sign of color would be removed from this world.** Our line of vision would be defined by solely black and white. Every little sign of emotion would be removed from this world. Passion, enthusiasm, thoughtfulness, compassion, wouldn't exist any longer. Every little feeling and emotion that art engenders within our fragile hearts would be removed from this world. Melancholy, anger, optimism, nostalgia, serenity, all would be replaced by emptiness. And finally, every little sign of imagination is removed from this world. Imagination signifies intelligence, it designates innovation and creative thinking. Without imagination we would live in a monotonous environment without any meaningful and substantial essence.

In conclusion, **life without art is a mistake.** This is why art plays such a significant role when unfolding our personality, our lives, and most importantly our world as a whole. Art promotes human values and moral standards that have taken centuries of human civilization to build up and that we should defend. So, let's appreciate art, as we don't know what we've got, until it's gone.

*Christina Koumasi, A5*

## Athens' Architectural Identity

720. That's the exact number of meters it takes me to walk from my house to the bus stop. I have walked, run and even crawled up this hill more times than I have ever truly looked a person in the eyes. The monasteries of trash, the uneven pavilions of leftover lumber planks and the faceless 6-story apartment buildings have become daily visual stimuli which did not in any way motivate me to get out of bed. Nobody cared to replace them, to remove them or to fix them. And I started to wonder if that was why I couldn't look people in the eye.

Truth is, the reason I chose to pursue architecture is because our environment affects us, deeply to say the least. **For me, living in a space where beauty and aesthetics weren't visible meant that I couldn't view other people as equals. It deprived me of my self-esteem and my ability to appreciate beauty in others.** So, one of my goals became to fix that. More specifically, to clean up this "pollution," I realized that there needed to be a larger change in the whole of Athens, not just my neighborhood.

Following the Greek independence in 1832, Athens was a relatively run down and unimportant market city, with little identity as the Ottomans had occupied the land with top-heavy houses and central courtyards. Then, at the request of Western leaders in Europe and the new Bavarian King at the time, the recent capital was reconstructed with an architectural aesthetic called Neoclassicism. It aimed to revive the marble motifs and symmetric facades of ancient Greece, by applying them on civil buildings. Even though the attempt was successful in providing Athens with a new national identity, it was significantly flawed in the fact that it transformed architecture into an ornamental display, rather than a functional, culturally integrated form. It failed to address the practical needs of a modern society, as it inappropriately romanticized the ancient ideals from an inauthentic western lens.

Then in 1950 Athens experienced an urban sprawl driven by a process known as *antiparochi*, in which most neoclassical buildings were destroyed and replaced by cheap, dull, and faceless 4-10 story apartments or *polykatoikies*. Being a radical solution to the poverty and population increases at the time, these buildings were not designed by architects, but by civil mechanics who lacked any type of artistic aesthetic. This resulted in monotonous locations that were very disconnected from the identity of Greece. **A loss of human touch and identity characterized architecture in Athens, with contemporary graffiti being the only string that connects the citizens with their neighborhoods.**

So how do we change that?

**Kaizen.** The Japanese word for “good change”, a business-oriented approach to creating continuous improvement based on the idea that small, ongoing positive changes can reap significant improvements. By that I mean slowly changing Athens. Don't try to bring in a completely new architectural identity, by destroying the whole city and rebuilding it. This is simply impractical. It is best for future architects to renovate the old apartments, incorporate visual characteristics from the neoclassical movement, weave the spatial practicality of ancient monuments and put to use the graffiti made by modern day artists. **Stop trying to constantly change the way Athens is, rather make use of what already is there.** And if possible, adopt sustainability. Then maybe I will be able to look people in the eyes, knowing that I did something to help my city.

*Petros Kokkalis, IB2*



Danae Tselepi. B8

## Artistic Expression Has No Date

Imagine a world where the Mona Lisa is dismissed, simply because it does not adhere to the traditions of the times. Now, consider how often contemporary art is discredited in similar ways - deemed less valuable, less skilled and less artistic, just because it doesn't feel like the masterpieces of the past. But is that fair? **Contemporary art is not inferior to classical art.** It reflects the evolution of creativity, demonstrates equal brilliance and challenges societal norms.

Contemporary art is a term used to describe the art of today, generally referring to art produced from the 1970s onwards. Classical art, on the other hand, is characterized by some key principles, such as realism, harmony and proportion.



Firstly, one very significant differentiation is the freedom contemporary artists can experience. Contemporary art allows artists to express themselves in any way they like. In fact, **there are no guidelines to limit them.** They can choose to express themselves in the way they see fit. This freedom of expression allows for the differentiation between each artist. Not everyone has to create art based on specific aesthetics or what the society we live in considers "beautiful". Artists can choose from a variety of art media—and even combine them. For example, oil, temperas, colored pencils, charcoal, watercolors. Not to mention that we even have the option of digital art nowadays. There have been many installations that incorporate technology, such as projectors and VR (Virtual Reality).

Think about it, what if Van Gogh had access to a digital brush? What if Michelangelo could create an interactive installation? The possibilities would be endless. And that is the beauty of contemporary art. It embraces diversity, individuality, and, most importantly, creativity without constraints.

As the artist Yayoi Kusama once said, “My art originates from hallucinations only I can see. I translate the hallucinations and obsessional images that plague me into sculptures and paintings”. Her work is a direct reflection of her mind, her personal experiences, and her unrestrained creativity. This is the brilliance of contemporary art—it invites artists to share what they see, not what they’re told to show.

Now, let’s think beyond just technique. What is the purpose of art? To decorate? To impress? Or is it to make us feel something? In contrast to current times, during the classical period social issues were not a priority. **Today, many artists try to raise awareness on the conflicts and struggles involved in movements, such as gender bias. It often deals with the portrayal of psychological issues, or with political corruption and impoverishment.** Unlike classical art, which often focused on ideal beauty, contemporary art sheds light on real-world issues.

As the saying goes, “**Art should comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable.**”

Moreover, exploring social issues not only of our concern, but also that of other societies allows us to understand and become more empathetic, as art can bring about strong emotions, compared to reading an article, for example.

I wanted to show you some examples of contemporary art that proves its quality. Starting with the artist Andrei Bodko, he questioned “What if God was one of us”. The painting he created depicts Jesus in scenes of everyday lives of people.

STMTS is an artist with lots of skill. Seeing this picture from afar, it looks like a colorful photograph.



But let's get closer – and now we can see his exact brush strokes and the way he has used colors to create different textures in his paintings.

One of my favorite graffiti artists is Billy Gee. His distinct style and clear artworks differentiate him from the others. Have you heard the story of **Loukanikos**? Loukanikos was a dog that became a political symbol, because he often followed protesters in the center of Athens and was never afraid of the police. Billy Gee painted this as tribute to the dog and to express his political beliefs. While I don't necessarily agree with his views, I respect his right to express them.



How do you feel reading a news article's title, compared to how you feel when you see this painting about the war in Ukraine? I believe the painting has a much stronger emotional impact.

A common argument made by advocates of classical art is that contemporary art lacks effort. But is that really true? Or is it simply a misconception fueled by the media?

Too often, people judge contemporary art based on viral, over-commercialized pieces like the **duct-taped banana**.

These artworks grab people's attention because of their outrageous price tags, not because they represent contemporary art. The reality is that true contemporary art is far more complex and meaningful.

Furthermore, effort in art is not defined by realism alone. Just because a piece does not replicate life with photographic precision does not mean it lacks skill or depth.

So, before we dismiss contemporary art as “effortless,” let’s ask ourselves: are we judging it fairly, or are we letting a few sensationalized examples create our entire perception?

I leave you with this question: should we judge art based on the past, or should we embrace its evolution? Contemporary art may not look like the masterpieces of the past, but that does not make it any less valuable. It is **bold, expressive, and deeply connected to the world we live in today.**

Think of it this way: contemporary art is the art of our time. It reflects our world—our struggles, our voices. And in doing so, it reflects ourselves. If we dismiss it, are we not dismissing our own identity?

As artist Olafur Eliasson once said, “Today’s art is the art of today. It belongs to us, it is about us, and it shapes how we see the world.”

So, the next time you stand before a piece of modern art, don’t just look—see. Ask yourself—what story is it telling? Because, after all, isn’t the purpose of art to make us think, feel, and see the world differently?

*Rafaella Dimopoulou, A2*



## Beyond the Finish Line: The Sport of Endurance Riding

Sports are a popular activity amongst students and adults. A lesser-known sport, which is a sub-discipline of another equestrian sport, is what a few other people and I have decided to do: endurance riding. To understand what it is, all you have to do is picture a cowboy and his great horse roaming the wild west. This is precisely what we do too, however, we are not in the wild west, nor are we cowboys, nor have we got fearless horses. What we do is **ride for hours out on mountains and plains**, with trained horses who may be afraid of their own shadow. And while this sport is captivating, it has not gained much popularity, which is the reason why I have decided to talk about it.



An endurance race typically ranges from 20 up to 160 kilometers in length, however in Greece the largest one hosted is the 140-kilometer race. Before the race starts, all riders are obligated to have their horse inspected by a vet, who decides whether the horse is fit enough and healthy to compete in the race. That's when the action begins. The race is divided into loops, which cannot exceed 40 kilometers, and after each loop, the rider must have the horse re-inspected by the vet and wait for a specific number of minutes. An inspection is also obligatory after the finish line. As you may have understood by now, the most crucial part of our sport is the welfare of the horse –to endure hours of riding without sustaining injuries. Lastly, this may sound cliché, but a considerable part of endurance is **the mutual trust between horse and rider**, as there are **multiple obstacles we could never face**

**if we did not cooperate with our horses.**

While many people commonly think of equestrian sports as easy, they are the complete opposite. Especially in endurance, we must ride long distances, on difficult terrains, which can be challenging both for horse and rider. Moreover, the races are held no matter what, even if the conditions are harsh. And while there may be obstacles on the road, **there is no such feeling as completing your race after so much sweat, even if you do not win.**

Currently, there are endurance races being held all over the globe, from the Americas to the Arabic deserts. Even here in Greece, we have the honor of hosting prestigious international races, even the Balkan Cup last year. However, if you are searching for the highest level of endurance, one must search in the Arabic countries, as this is the most predominant equestrian discipline there. In our country, there are multiple riding clubs in where you can train for this sport, but you need to have acquired a riding license from the national equestrian federation to compete in races. If you are committed, you will find out that it is no trouble at all and is worth all the time!

Endurance riding is not just about a race, it is a test of stamina, strength, dedication and trust. It is not about the speed, rather about the trust, perseverance and the ability to push to the limits, without this affecting neither the horse nor the rider. After all, the feeling of crossing the finish line after riding for miles or the adrenaline rush of a race is unmatched. Lastly, I want all of you to wonder:

**Could you be the next endurance champion?**

***Evangelia Konstantinou, A4***



## How Do New Students View Pierce?

*We asked a group of new students to share the impression our school has made on them and the impact it has had on their daily schedule. This article was created to represent and express their combined ideas.*

**Would you trade finishing school at 13:30 every day with a 5-minute walk to get home for finishing at 15:30 plus a 40-minute drive home?** At first glance, one would obviously answer no. However many students make that decision annually, and here is what they have to say about it.

As you have probably assumed, there must be huge differences between a small public school and Pierce. The most noticeable ones, they mentioned, are the academic level and facilities. Imagine entering a fully equipped, two-story theatre with 716 cushioned seats for a simple announcement when you are used to making your own “theatre” in a room slightly bigger than a classroom, where everyone helped set up one folding chair next to another. Imagine having a PE lesson on a football field, surrounded by a 400-meter track when you are used to marking the goalpost frame between trees, or on the concrete school yard. Maybe you are wondering what sparked that decision, as such a choice was surely not made lightly. You may also be wondering, with the sudden routine change, the extra hours spent on the road and the double amount of homework, causing fatigue and decreasing their free time significantly, **is Pierce worth it?**

**The simple answer is “Yes”.** These “sacrifices,” they say, are worth every single bit. More specifically, now, they are provided with countless opportunities concerning their future, either by following the IB course and extending their studies abroad or due to the high level of education Pierce offers. Additionally, more opportunities arise as the number of acquaintances they can make is endless. Mentioning students, they have noticed their fellow classmates to be more sociable, open, pleasant and very welcoming, another factor which made their adjustment easier. Similarly, they believe, the teachers seem to care more and put more effort into making the lesson engaging and interesting.

As you have probably inferred, this change did not seem too difficult for them, and that is partly thanks to us all. So, take this also as a reminder that **it is very important to remain welcoming and considerate** with new students and try to make such a switch as effortless as possible, now that you know what it feels like.

***Kostanza Andronikou Kalyva (A1) and Despoina Lekosioti (IB1)***

## The Sound of Soul



On Wednesday, 19th of February, we had the honor of welcoming the classical pianist and music therapist Mr. George Panagiotopoulos to the Psychology Club hosted by Dr. Glinou. Mr. Panagiotopoulos introduced us to a new invention: a remarkable device called “Sound of Soul”. It is a complex, newly developed technological approach, that came to Greece two months ago.

But what does that machine do? By connecting 3 wires to the heart, **Sound of Soul allows real-time conversion of the body’s own heartbeat into music, color, and light.** The sounds and colors we experience are based on the continuously changing frequencies that stem from the heart rate variability (HRV). Therefore, this innovative device translates an individual’s HRV into music, allowing users to experience their body’s heartbeat as sound, and the user can choose the type of sound expression. For example, Mr. Panagiotopoulos produced sounds of birds and the sea.

The fundamental idea behind Sound of Soul is that **the body is its own healer,** and by interacting with its own frequencies in a harmonious environment, it can achieve balance and self-regulation. This approach differs from traditional therapies that introduce external stimuli; instead, it reflects the body’s unique vibrations back to the individual, promoting deep inner peace and self-awareness. The device is indissolubly connected to the function of the sympathetic and the parasympathetic autonomic nervous systems.

- Your sympathetic nervous system (SNS) is a network of nerves that helps your body activate its “fight-or-flight” response. This system’s activity increases when you’re stressed, in danger or physically active. Its effects include increasing your heart rate and breathing ability, activating your muscles, improving your eyesight. In addition, the reproductive system limits blood flow, the liver releases glucose, and your digestion slows down or even stops. If your HRV is high, that means your sympathetic system is activated.
- The parasympathetic nervous system (PSNS), also called the “rest and digest” system, works in opposition to the SNS, as it conserves energy and promotes relaxation of the body after undergoing stress. Those bodily processes that were at full attention before, change course. In other words, your body returns to its natural state. When your HRV is low, it is your parasympathetic nervous system at work.

The SNS and the PSNS perform a vital balancing act that helps you survive and recover. According to Mr. Panagiotopoulos, in a rapidly changing world in which we are bombarded each day with new information that stresses us and that our brain has to process, it is crucial that we all have a strong and healthy parasympathetic nervous system. That’s what Sound of Soul music therapy is all about. It appeals to our subconscious, and it helps us understand the interaction between the SNS and the PSNS, providing us with mental equilibration and tranquility. At the end of the session, the optimal 5 minutes, when the SNS and the PSNS are in their best possible state of interaction, are chosen by the therapist and this 5-minute recording is given to the client. These 5 minutes are the ones that the client can listen to at home whenever feeling stressed in order to relax. The musical component is accompanied by the talk therapy provided by the licensed music therapist.

Mr. Panagiotopoulos also mentioned that each person has a specific musical note that helps them put their mind at ease. Other ways to relax may include listening to calming music, restoring your breathing in a smooth flow in combination with the heart (heart rate coherence), and meditating with music. These techniques restore our pure human nature, while we live in an artificial environment. At the other end of the spectrum, **we shouldn’t abuse deceptive and temporary forms of distraction like endless scrolling on social media, binge-watching TV, consuming alcohol, smoking, impulse buying, or eating junk food.** Because even though these things don’t exhaust you physically, they drain you mentally without offering any form of long-lasting relaxation.

They say music is the window to the soul. By playing or listening to music, we completely focus on what we hear. By doing something creative, we externalize our

feelings, as the burden of the pressure or stress we may be undergoing instantly goes away. **This is why music therapy is so efficient, because it allows us to be completely present in the moment.**

*Christina Koumasi, A5*



Iris Gkrekou, IB1

## Introduction

Pierce students are fortunate to read a vast array of literary movements and classic American and English poets and writers over the course of their school years. A' Lyceum students reflected on questions of identity and self-image through Sylvia Plath, and B' Lyceum students were moved by the rich imagery of the Romantics. Inspired by the timeless themes of William Wordsworth, Mary and Percy Shelley and others, our student authors penned pieces that delve into self-reflection, the passage of time, the seasons, their deep connection with nature, and the emotions of love and loss.

The following pages are some of the heartfelt and imaginative pieces they created.



Nephele Naoumi. B6. inspired by "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" by W. Wordsworth

## Lovely Spring

The Spring is quite near. Tiny blossoms can now be seen. Butterflies are resting their tiresome bodies on fields vibrating with color, moving serenely to the slow, peaceful breeze of this sacred season. The birds are chirping gleefully to express their gratitude for nature's optimism, to remind humanity of the love this earth was fabricated for, by holy powers too old to recollect, too old to fathom.

Birds silenced. Fields burned to the ground. Screams are deafening. The kids are dead. The butterflies wish to hide in their protective shell once again. Spring. Is. A. Façade.

How can we admire our moments of momentary happiness? The dessert of the soldiers' Spring is much too suffocating to be ignored. What if it was your Spring crumbling to pieces? Wouldn't you pray this cursed earth would change? Wouldn't you curse the ones rejoicing in the season of love, when all you see is hatred?

How dare we ignore it?

This barbarity of the distant malignance we've accepted?

We now deserve

To be plunged into the cruelty

Of winter once again

*Nancy Seinti ГОНА*



Iris Gkrekou, IB1

## Ode to Summer Colors

Shimmering under the sun's glow  
Blue clashes against gold  
The sound of the waves in making me think  
I can't close my eyes,  
Can't even blink  
The sky, the sea, my clothes are blue  
The sun, the sand, my hair has a golden hue.

A shout is heard, time to return to our homes,  
Finally, I see flowers and my grandma's garden gnomes.  
Looking around everything is green,  
The trees, the swings and the grass between

Red flowers sprout from all around,  
Butterflies' wings make a flipping sound.

Time has passed, it's afternoon  
The sun has set,  
Can you name every color, I bet?  
Purple and pink colors cover the sky,  
In the distance, you can hear a child's cry  
He is laughing, he is playing with his friends,  
He doesn't want this day to end.  
The only light is from the stars and moon,  
Everything will be pitch black soon.

*Ioanna Pazaiti, B6*

## The Autumn Trap

Falling in the fall – I remember  
I felt - like the leaves fall - in November.  
In a vicious circle I found myself,  
Falling in the autumn trap again.  
Like the weather's turning cold,  
Like the leaves are turning brown,  
I come back after the summer  
And I feel already drowned.  
Drowned in homework, drowned in pain,  
Drowned in feelings I can't take.  
And the worst thing of them all,  
It's still November, after all.

*Evriliki Venieri (B2), Ioanna Arvanitaki (B1),  
Dafne Dakiagidi (B2), Calliope Gorgoli (B6)*



Thanos Syntichakis, B10

## Plastic Fish

He found it near the shore one day,  
A gleaming fish wrapped up in something grey  
In plastic sheets in lay  
A creature strange, what a day!

He rushed to show this price caught,  
“Found a new species?”, he thought.  
But experts sighed, faces down,  
“The world is sick, not worth a bow.”

Fish choked, life erased  
By plastic death, thinks he needs a raise  
No mystery, no tale  
Just seas turning weak and pale.

Our waters have life no more  
Only plastic bags washed ashore  
The oceans once filled with pride  
In an endless battle they fight.

*Evdoxia Diakoliou (B2), Petros Leader (B5)*



Heria Riga, A8

## Ode to Hope

Oh, mighty hope  
Benevolent grade setter  
You, whose crimson hair appears in the nightmares of the meek  
The one who shatters the dreams of many  
But also the smith of many more

Oh, dreadful hope  
Malevolent creator of current issue Tuesday  
You, whose sapphire earrings pierce the eyes of the weak willed  
The one who sets the horrible absences that harbor doom

Oh, hope  
The last thing we hold on to when the term tests are due  
Oh, hope  
Our last bastion of grade  
Oh, hope

*Philip Parks, B7*

## Ode to the Broken Railings

Broken railings that from the years have rusted  
A silent joke we held within  
How strange the tales your bars now tell  
Of pride that has now fallen

A mayor's hand once claimed your care  
Yet left you rusting in despair  
While books inside held wisdom's light  
Your iron frame endured the night

While books inside held wisdom's light  
The railing failed one scary, dark night  
A careless slip, a lasting cry  
One soul was lost beneath the sky

*Christina Pouliou (B7), Dimitris Spyropoulos (B7)*

## I hear a stampede

I hear a stampede  
Hundreds of hooves, hitting the barren land  
Yet there is only one bull,  
There is only one hand

No vine, no flower grows here  
Yet, there are cracks in there, there are tears  
And from a crack a sapling rises  
Feeding from the tears  
Like a phoenix from the ashes

And the bull stops, it fears  
For now it's a calf  
In front of an oak

Of thorns and masses

*Dimitris Morfopoulos, A6*



Michael Hoffnagle (B8), Kallisto Sampani (B7)

## The tale of dear ol' Mr. Brightside

Brick by brick old Mr. Brightside built a fort of love and protection  
 An impenetrable nest of kindness and forgiveness  
 With burning pots of rice and bread to feed the rich peoples' souls  
 By the flower-patterned couch stood a telephone in the shape of a shoulder to lean on  
 The door that led to the back porch was blocked by a huge sign which read "Access permitted to all"  
 A fountain full of streaming water stood right next to the statues of Aphrodite and Cupid  
 And if you dropped a coin, you were granted generous and inexplicable as a matter of fact, redemption  
 Next to the kitchen table which housed an infinite number of visitors, stood a grand lamp, with a warm peach colored light, that enhanced everybody's features and made their smiles look even brighter  
 The home's collection of board games, consisted of a Monopoly where you offered your co-players your properties and they in return gave you their turn  
 Its interior always smelled of caramel apples freshly made, and of a distinct rose aroma from the garden Mr. Brightside cultivated daily  
 A phone book stood in the middle of the entrance, so everyone could add their telephone number and make sure Mr. Brightside would call them daily to ask how they were doing  
 The drawing room was a clean display of 80 sets of drawing supplies and everyone took turns to creating their own majestic, delightful art  
 Contests were held every day, and the winners announced were the same number as the visitors- strange occurrence truly  
 In Mr. Brightside's home, Spring was always early, Summer longer than expected and the Autumn a mere collection of beautiful leaves, in shades of crimson red, decorating the lovely scene  
 Winter was a word absolutely not permitted, if you dared to say it, you were forced to a lifetime of true thinking and unstoppable reflection. The worst punishment of the kind

Most of all though, no one had ever, ever, ever encountered Mr. Brightside  
 Rumors said that he was locked inside his room dreaming of a way to improve the home he had established  
 So, as to make all people in this beautiful, unproblematic world happier than before  
 So that his gardens would bloom more, and the flying birds outside the long-engraved windows would chirp more gracefully  
 So that the sun would shine brighter than ever before and spread love more intense than in childhood fairytales of happy-ever-afters

As of today, Mr. Brightside has passed away  
His funeral ceremony was attended by a sum of zero people  
In his home, people were having a feast for an unimportant event no one would even  
recollect the next day  
In his last days Mr. Brightside requested that his estate be passed on to the sea and  
disappear slowly in its waves  
In the end his unconditional rejection of the world around him, led to being rejected  
by it entirely too

Who was Mr. Brightside?  
Me.

*Nancy Seinti ГОНА*



Mariangela Panou, A7

SHORT STORY: THE HEART OF A POISONOUS BLOSSOM



Ivi Tsoutsoura B8

I kill people for a living.

Literally.

I live through other people's breaths. With each inhale I awaken and with each exhale my journey begins. From person to person. Handing out excruciation in return for what people consider an act of tenderness or love.

In every single continent, in every single body, I want to exist. When a person's heart beats, my miniscule body dances. That's the sole time it does. I'm a body which is lone if not in the company of another, much like many humans. Humans who value not their flesh but the way it gleams under the fleeting glances or disrespectfully adored gazes of others.

What differentiates me from this mass is no other than my invisibility to the naked eye. Yet, sometimes I wish I could be witnessed when I perform my wrongdoings. I wish I could be yelled at, fought, tormented by the watchful eyeball. Scarcely ever does this burning sensation take over my body, the one of the unfairness of my taking over the lives of these truly lone souls, but once it does, it discourages me more than any poison humans will use to tackle me.

And poisons hurt me in unspoken ways; they give me a taste of my own medicine. Sometimes, they approach me as like-minded allies but try to assassinate me as my greatest ordeal, reminding me what it tastes like to be punished for existing and be belittled into frailness against a grander force. You see, I'm not used to this force being anyone other than me, my sensations, and my need to survive by spreading. Again, exactly as a human would, I don't want to perish. My thoughts detest the idea of eternal silence and internal suffering. For an emotionless object of dread, I daily find myself drowned in a puddle of fear. Fear so poignant that it kills me and tortures me and rips me apart. Fear in adequate quantities to consume me and grant the most knee-hurting wish of the planet.

For me gone, caged, retained. For me useless, facing the humans I once breathed in helplessly, expecting my time to run out as if each millisecond takes the form of a kaleidoscope of sand inside a broken hourglass, one with elongated pauses before the release of each grain. Everything to make my suffering equal to theirs. Timely. Apparent. Salty by tears and bittersweet from all the sugarcoated memories of things that never happened, all the lost which was never found.

After all, the gone souls hold the stem of time and I'm their most withered blossom. But exterminating me won't bring their blushed faces and tender kisses back. Perhaps only save the days of others.

That, I can't grasp. The salvation of someone else holds no meaning to me, and neither does the responsibility to help my own. Maybe because not once have I felt a sense of true unity – the welcoming kind which stings like autumn, and not once have

I refused its embrace. It has just never knocked on my door.

So, at fourteen minutes to eight in the evening, without anyone who resembles me fighting on my side, I wake up again, not knowing this would be the last time.

This time, my alarm clock is a kiss on the forehead. The fatal love of a mother for her five-year old son. The swift touch shakes my extremities and rattles every last fabric of my being into dancing like never before. The curse I hold acknowledges the opportunity lying bare in front of me; after weeks of being trapped inside the body of a woman who wouldn't suffer from my existence, this tiny boy will give me everything I'm famished for. His immature heart will beat in the most delicious rhythm for me to swirl around in sync with. I will finally feel alive, maybe as alive as a half-dead human soul.



Iris Gkrekou, IB1

But... What I do next is too reckless to be considered just idiotic.

My vision fills with images of the boy once my eyes land on it, creating a little book with its characteristics. One page depicts the dark hair curling an armor of fog between his head and the world. Another draws a sketch of his sparse brows and huge eyes, the ones which can't avoid a thing, the ones which will never see me. As the image of him becomes clearer the sketch paints itself with the warmest shades of brown. So warm that they almost entangle my body in a mess of fuzzy comfort as well.

And slowly, the ice thaws and the curse's claws lose their grip on my flesh. The same piercing nails which guided me through my endless trajectory now let me gain control, escape their influence and flee the path they set for me. With another turn

of the book's pages, that path demolishes itself in the most compassionate way. No debris remains ahead of me. Just a path of glowing grass and the final image of this ultimate destruction.

As the grass allows some vines to grow and better it, the latter climbs around this visual treasure, the picture of the boy's smile. They try to hide the little teeth away from me but fail. All I can see now is them. Smiling. Happy. I can't imagine these teeth reflecting the world on them in an attempt to portray a feeling other than happiness. Especially if I'm the cause of it all.

My body shakes to reach the point where the boy's mother kissed his skin. To camp there in waiting. For the boy to touch me and transfer me into his breaths, for somebody else to do so. But I find myself stalling for time, unable to recognize the notion behind this deadly hesitation. I run in place, run to nowhere. Undeniably, I'm stuck in this area in between of the life of infinite dancing and no life at all. One is ahead of me, the other is behind.

I stay days absorbed by this weird part of the world – this cathartic gorge, a rock of which I am constantly holding onto without being able to let go and unsure if I should go beyond it. By falling, I will infect him, by scaling up to the top I can save him. Although I become the content of this constant parenthesis, this lifestyle becomes comfortable unlike any other. If I close my eyes, I can see the world through the eyes of "Archie", as other humans call the boy. I see endless freedom and immeasurable love as if they were cherry blossom trees and rainfall.

But it is at the sight of a hand wiping Archie's eyes that I'm finally touched. It is when I sense that tear of his washing through my apprehensions that I start climbing the gorge. I feel nothing but surety as I pull my body up to reach the top, the softest of grasses tingling my right leg. Then the left. And I finally feel nothing at all. I wither, I grant the wishes of the world, I die. But not instantly. As promised, the hourglass holds each part of me hostage for a long time. During these slow moments of painful death my lifeless victims had planned for me from the start, I learn that what I felt that day was commiseration. Months later, with me still fruitlessly existing, the last of the kind I didn't know I had disappeared from the face of the planet, either poisoned medically, or poisoned with a surge of commiseration of their own.

These days, the boy celebrated by hugging freely every single one of his friends and family. That was the day I finally died. That was the day the souls claimed me and the day I finally claimed back my soul.

Because, I swear, this killing was the only one which brought me life.

*Despoina Lekosioti, IB1*

## Mirror

Every day she looks at me,  
Hoping herself to see in me,  
But all I show is skin and bone,  
A face that's hers, yet not her own.

Deep inside, she needs to stare,  
To find the truth that lingers there.

Every day she looks again,  
But searching here is all in vain.  
Her form may shift, her eyes may gleam,  
Her emptiness though she won't avoid.

I should tell her, make her see,  
How peaceful life without me would be.

Perhaps one day she'll break away,  
And find herself beyond the gray.  
But until then, I'll stand so still,  
A silent echo of her will.

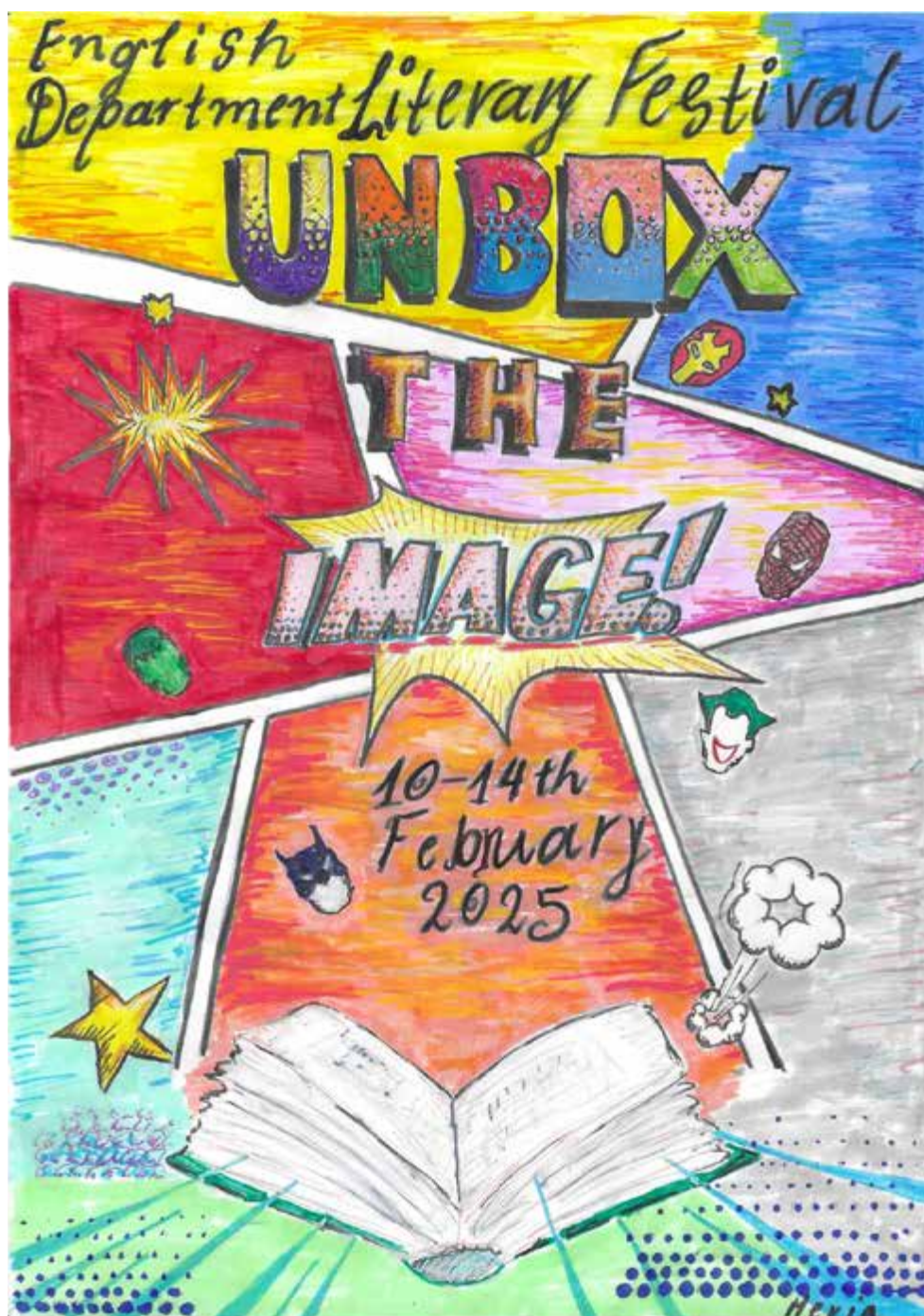
*Fanis Vitzilaios, A1*



## Reaching for the Sunlight

Walking among buildings and trees  
Shadows are cast by their beings  
Sunlight escapes through the leaves  
Letting the warmth of sunlight reach my skin  
Bringing relief from the cold of the wind  
I keep trying to reach for the sunlight  
Rocks, plants and living beings  
All trapped behind our creations, trying to reach  
the sunlight  
Silence follows behind the rattle of metal and  
rushed actions  
And as the wind passes through the leaves  
It starts singing softly, asking questions  
“Why are you doing this to me  
If not for your oh so greedy nature”

*Chrysoula Ifigeneia Revythi, B7*



Heria Riga, A8

## SEPTEMBER 2024

### Homecoming - Interview with Thanasis Limnios, class of 2004

The Homecoming Reunion is an event organized by our school, where alumni are welcomed to join and get together with their former classmates and professors. While being there, they get the chance to see the evolution of the school's facilities and spirit, while they are offered all kinds of snacks, such as ice cream, refreshments and coffee. This year, we celebrated alumni from the years ending in '4' -1954, 1964... all the way to 2024. As students, who interviewed alumni, we understood how grateful they are for being part of this community. Seeing them reconnect with their former classmates made us feel thankful and proud to also be students at this school. The following interview of Thanassis Limnios, a former student that graduated in 2004, reveals the impact of the school on its students.



*Thanassis Limnios is a Pierce '04 and Deree '10 alumnus. In 2017 he continued his studies at the University of Geneva graduating from the DAS in Commodity Trading held in conjunction with STSA (Swiss Trading and Shipping Association), in Geneva, Switzerland.*

*Over the past 20 years in the Maritime field the various positions he served on-site and at-desk led into developing a holistic approach both in commercial and in operational terms. Today he is working with BARRY ROGLIANO SALLES SA, an international shipbroking and shipping-consulting firm established in 1856, as a Capesize Shipbroker and a Partner.*

*Lastly and most importantly, he is a proud father of one, little Myrto.*

#### How is the feeling of coming back years after graduating from our school?

Oh! The feeling is just... outstanding. The atmosphere kept improving over the years, and the emotions became sweeter and more profound. I was fortunate, and I hope I won't be far from the school in the coming years, as I also attended Deree. I had the chance to witness the changes and everything that was happening overall.

Today, our daughter Myrto, also attends Pierce, so the journey continues. Beyond that, the feeling of returning as an adult, now with a different role than that of a student, is, of course, a completely different experience. As you can imagine, this deepens our emotional connection with the school even more.

As you can see, and as you can also understand, the school continues to evolve. On top of that, the new president has contributed significantly to this effort—to the school's growth and recognition in various areas, including Deree.

### **What do you believe makes this school special?**

I would say... the culture it has is something I can't quite put into words it's very difficult to describe. It's a feeling you can only understand if you've experienced school, whether as a student or as someone working there. It has something so familiar about it. Perhaps what I'm saying is subjective, but I truly believe it, ever since I was a student at Deree.

### **Did you dream of becoming a ship broker since you were here at Pierce?**

Essentially, as a shipbroker, I deal with ship charters and freight rates. It's not exactly what I dreamed of as a child, but I always had a natural inclination towards shipping—perhaps because of my father, who was also involved in the industry, though in a different role. My father was a marine engineer, and I admired him deeply. I used to listen to the stories he brought back from his travels, and I was in awe. I wanted to explore the world, to see new sights... I dreamed of a career that was more technical. But, of course, over time, the new experiences I encountered led me to what I do today. I believe that the system in our country, which essentially forces children to decide what they want to do in life at the age of 16 or 17, is far too early.

### **Therefore, Pierce did not directly affect the job that you do today. Was there an event, however, in Pierce that had a big effect on you?**

Look, I'll admit I wasn't a very good student. I followed my own compass, my own path. Yes, there's one incident that comes to mind—one of the first and most memorable. It happened quite early on, back in middle school. I was in the third year of Gymnasium, in Ancient Greek class. Now, as you can imagine, when you're a bad student in Ancient Greek, you're really bad. It's a subject that requires a lot of focus, and somehow, I managed to score an embarrassingly low grade on a test—a single-digit grade.

My teacher was very critical of me, and the way she spoke about me really struck a nerve. It affected me deeply. But in the next test, and after some seriously hard work, I managed to score one of the highest grades in the class. The same student

who couldn't even scrape together a 10 managed to become one of the top students in the class for that test. What my teacher said to me pushed me to believe in myself and try harder. It drove me to fill in all the gaps I had and perform at the top of the class.

I will never forget that moment. That day, Pierce taught me that you're capable of anything. No matter what mountain lies in front of you, with enough effort and faith, you can climb it. And now, in my career, I have many mountains to climb—but that lesson stays with me.

**What would you have done differently if you had the chance to study at Pierce again?**

I would be a bit more diligent with my responsibilities. Not because I want to prove something to anyone, but because by being more diligent, you can bring out the best version of yourself. We should strive to be the best version of ourselves that we can be.

**What advice would you give to pierce students who are going to read this interview in the 2024-2025 "Sunny Days" magazine?**

Enjoy it—it's a wonderful journey. School days are truly special. Even now, I have so many friends who were my classmates here, and we'll always find an excuse to reminisce about our days as students at Pierce; friends that turned into family. Those memories never fade. Everything else will come later. Unfortunately, you can't fully understand this right now, partly because of the education system, which I believe could use a significant refresh. There's no need for stress—just do your best.

**So, what we can derive from this interview, is that if you are the "leader of yourself", then you can achieve everything.**

Yes, absolutely Be the one in control over your choices and aim for the best. However, you must also understand that this is a game where you're not the only player, so the result is not always guaranteed. Just stick to the plan and things will work out.

*Iris Gkrekou (IB1), Christina Antonakou (B1), John Athanasiadis (IB1)*

## November 2024 Thanksgiving 2025 at Pierce



This Thanksgiving, the English Department joined forces with the Greek Language Department and the Second Language Department to encourage students to reflect on gratitude and express it through thoughtful messages. Students came together to create a Kindness Wall in the school gallery, contributing notes of encouragement, support, and even short poems to share positive messages with the school community. The wall quickly became a beautiful reminder of the power of kindness and the importance of lifting each other up.

IB students took part in the Gratitude Tree initiative by creating a handmade paper tree. The tree “bloomed” as students placed paper leaves on its branches, each leaf containing something they were grateful for. Through this creative activity, the students enhanced their positive thinking by recognizing both the small and big joys of their lives, while also decorating the IB wing of the school.

### *Pierce seniors reflect on their school journey before the Thanksgiving dinner...*

I am truly grateful for the memories made during school excursions — moments that will forever bring a smile to my face. From Elena sleeping on the floor during our trip to Munich, to George ironing his clothes at 6:00 a.m. in our room in Brussels, and Ms. Babouris hilariously pretending to be him while knocking on our door to be let in. I am thankful for the sense of comfort and being heard by my teachers, as well as the privilege of sharing laughter and fun with them. Whether it was listening to Mr. Tsagkarakis, Ms. Chatzilia, Ms. Pliakostamou, and Ms. Papoulia singing karaoke on the bus, laughing at Petros getting dating advice from Mr. Giorugas during TOK, or watching Ms. Papoulia and CBS teasing Lucas whenever he does something silly — each moment feel special.

And of course, video-calling Elisavet before our history test to laugh at how cooked we are and mocking authoritarian leaders with Makis for being so lame are little moments of joy that I will always cherish and be thankful for

*Aggelina Kyrousi, IB2*

Looking back to those 6 years of school, I can recall many experiences that stand out. The rap battles we organized, with 30 guys booing and yapping about our mothers. Or maybe that one time Lagoudakis was shoved inside a wall by accident. I specifically remember the Friday nights when I played card games with my buddies, Kostas and Kostas, flipping the table after losing three times in a row. The times we got chased by Mr. Iliopoulos on a golf cart, while Gabe was flashing his underwear. Within those goofy and happy moments lie more serious ones, like the evening talks with Aggelina at the soccer field, trying to figure out which one of us would write the theater script. Also, Kotopita Thursdays with Iris, the "VA Hool" Juda Club Street trips in Salonica and the BRUH poster in the IB. I can't forget the times Mr. Ioannou slapped me at the back of my neck, the moments of laughter after Ms. Babouris and Ms. Papoulia roasted Loukas, and the hours spent trying to navigate ourselves in the UK trip with Ms. Karmali and Ms. Sarantopoulou. Lastly, that one memory I remember is the excursion in 3rd Gymnasium, when for the first time I got to truly meet my best friends.

If it weren't for those times, maybe I wouldn't be the same person today. Thank you everyone, I am truly grateful to all.

*Petros Kokkalis, IB2*

Looking back, the best years of my life have been my two years in Pierce IB. It is genuinely the most welcoming and accepting space I have been in, especially within a school context. I have never felt safer to speak openly in class without shame or fear of being judged, and I have never felt freer to learn before. I feel like I am understood by my teachers and classmates alike, and I truly feel like I'm part of a team. I have never truly felt like this before, neither in my previous schools, classes or family environment. So, the IB truly is important to me. I am grateful for actually feeling like an important part of something, of a family. Most importantly, I am grateful for the Visual Arts and English A classes within the IB. I have never felt safer in any other class before. In both classes, with the help of my teachers and classmates, I truly felt like I had a safe space to grow and learn to and work on myself both as an individual and as a student. I have never truly felt so safe anywhere else, and that really means the world to me.

*Marilie Samoili, IB2*

January 2025

## Holocaust Remembrance Day 2025 – Children in the Holocaust



Natalia Theochari, B3

The English Department organized a series of events to honor Holocaust Remembrance Day, focusing on the theme “Children in the Holocaust.” The program was divided into four subtopics: Children in Concentration Camps, Hidden Children, The Righteous Among the Nations, and Second-Generation Children of Holocaust Survivors.

- C' Gymnasium students met Ms. Beatrice Saia-Magrizou, author and daughter of Auschwitz survivor Joseph Saia, who emphasized the importance of memory and our

collective responsibility to remember the past in order to build a more secure future.

- Lola Angel, a Bergen-Belsen survivor and a 1955 graduate of our school, who shared her early years in Thessaloniki, her journey to the concentration camps, and her return to Greece.
- B' Lyceum students met the renowned writer and poet Iosif Ventura. In a live interview on stage, he encouraged students to pursue their dreams and view life's challenges as learning opportunities.
- C' Lyceum students attended an event with Andreas and Haris Morikis, grandsons of Charalambos and Chrysanthi Morikis, who saved Jewish prisoner Sam Nachmia from the Karya concentration camp in Fthiotida. The speakers passed on the “baton of life” to our students, emphasizing that “logic is useful when it protects emotion,” reminding them that in today's technological era, it is our emotions that must be safeguarded.

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 antisemitism, xenophobia, prejudice, and hatred.

*Gisela Iosif*

## Holocaust Remembrance Day 2025 Reflections

During Holocaust Remembrance week we reflected on the atrocious crimes committed against minorities, and especially Jewish children, during WWII. In class we discussed the ideology and propaganda that Nazis spread mainly against the Jewish people. Something that shocked me was a video interview with a Holocaust survivor who mentioned how she and her twin sister were separated from their family to be experimented on by Dr. Mengele. This resulted in them developing health problems later in life. Furthermore, on January 27th Mr. Iossif Ventura, a hidden child was invited to Pierce as a speaker to talk about his experiences and help us gain more insight into the situation. When he talked about how his family was threatened and forced to give all of their money and leave their safe place in order to not be sold to the Nazis, I was truly disgusted and at a loss for words at the lack of humanity. It is essential to dedicate some time to honor the memory of the victims and inform those who are unaware of the tragedy that occurred during the war.

*Ioanna Pazaiti, B6*

The eventual defeat of Hitler's Germany shows how in the end, good wins over evil. The perseverance of those held in concentration camps was a great feat. All in all, the Holocaust is not only a tragic event in history, but a cautionary tale warning mankind of the horrors one might endure or commit in the face of adversity, while also showing the inherent goodness of many great men and women. Thus, it is only fitting for Holocaust survivors to claim that "they buried Hitler".

*Andreas Christopoulos, A10*

The Holocaust was a terrifying series of events resulting in the genocide of the Jewish community. It will be a forever scar in humanity and a constant reminder of what extremism can do to us humans. The outcome of prejudice and racism leads humans to hate and even kill one another, even if small characteristics make us differ. Instead of putting our differences aside and focusing on what connects us and makes us all humans, we chose to stigmatize certain communities. Let the Holocaust be a lesson and an example to never our differences be a barrier to what connects us.

*Ariadni Miniati, A6*



## Interview with Bergen-Belsen camp survivor, Lola Angel: “I Defeated Hitler”



Lola Angel and Iossif Ventoura with Pierce students.

***By students Mariangela Panou (A7) and Leontios Tzazopoulos (A8)***

**L.T.:** You described what happened at the beginning of the war, but you haven't told us anything about your life before the war. Do you have any specific memories?

**L.A.:** Yes. The only memory I have—because I was very young, three years old when we left Thessaloniki—is the smell of glue, a faucet under a shed in the garden, and that I wasn't allowed to touch the rosebushes. The house was known for its roses. Since I only spoke French then, I used to say: “On ne touche pas”—we don't touch. I'd put my hands behind my back and smell them. That's the only memory I have.

I remember the house a little: the smell of paper, glue, the blue paper they used, and the garden. After that, my memories begin in Athens. The first was the bombings. They would take us to the shelter under the “Asty” cinema on Korai Street, wrapped in a blanket. Until the Germans arrived, and the bombs stopped.

**M.P.:** You told us about your favorite toy, the doll dressed as a tsolias...

**L.A.:** Yes, it was the doll that followed me to the camp, stayed with me, came back, and I donated it to the Jewish Museum. It's on display. My granddaughter went there with her kids—my great-grandchildren—they saw it and brought me a photo. She's

no longer dressed as a tsolias. She was my favorite. When I got married, I asked to be photographed with her. She was completely mine.

**L.T.:** You said she gave you strength in the camp, right?

**L.A.:** She was a comfort. The doll and Leonik, my friend. We slept in the second-level bunks, head to head. At night it was dark, and we'd tell stories until we fell asleep. Don't ask me what we talked about—I don't remember. Sadly, he died very young. There's no one to ask. His name was Leon Boton.

**M.P.:** Were you allowed to have toys, or did you have to hide them?

**L.A.:** We were allowed, because as Spanish nationals we were being held for a possible exchange with German soldiers. They caught us in March of '44. Until June, conditions were somewhat better—including the food. Then, on June 6th, the Normandy landings happened. The war had been decided. That's when the Germans started trying to finish us off.

I remember once, my father was distributing soup. The pot came full of mold. He said: "I'm not serving this food. Whoever wants it, take it yourselves." A German asked him why, and my dad answered in French. The German kicked him in the shin. It left a hole—and my father had it until he died at 101. A souvenir...

**M.P.:** That's heartbreaking. When you were taken to the camp, what do you remember having with you?

**L.A.:** When they took my father, it was just my mother and me. First, she burned the fake IDs. Then, she went to the neighbor and said: "Come and take everything—better you have it than the Germans." In Thessaloniki, the Germans brought two trucks and emptied the house.

My mother also gave her a piece of dried cod she had set to soak, but didn't get the chance. The neighbor, Mrs. Spitha, ate it. They're no longer alive, nor had children. They were very kind people. When we returned, they gave us cots. I had a hoop, like a hula hoop, with a stick. She had painted it with flowers so I could recognize it. It was so touching...

**M.P.:** My grandmother in Thessaloniki lived next to a Jewish family. One day they rang her bell and said: "Eleni, we're leaving," gave her their jewelry, and never came back. My grandma showed me the jewelry a few days ago. It was the only thing that she had left from her friend. What can you even do with it...

**L.A.:** I also ended up with a box full of wedding bands. We sold them during the Occupation to buy food. Among them was my own wedding ring. In September, my youngest granddaughter got married, and I told her: "Take ours." We engraved their names too, and now they wear them.

**L.T.:** You told us that when you arrived at the camp, your mother told you to do exactly as she said. Do you remember any routines or habits?

**L.A.:** Not exactly. My mother said that because I was a child—I asked a lot of questions. There was no room for explanations there. You know, in Auschwitz the food was better because prisoners worked. We didn't work.

**L.T.:** You were six or seven when you arrived?

**L.A.:** Six. I "celebrated" my seventh birthday in the camp—with a piece of bread.

**L.T.:** What did you do in the camp?

**L.A.:** Nothing. We didn't work. We had Spanish citizenship. When I married Raymondos, a Greek citizen, I lost it. Later a law came out allowing people to reclaim it. I went to the embassy. The ambassador asked why I wanted it. I told him: "If I hadn't been Spanish, I wouldn't be sitting on this couch." He signed a decree: my descendants and I became Spanish again.

**L.T.:** You said you were being held for exchange, so you didn't work...

**L.A.:** We were outside all day. I didn't have a coat. A mouse had eaten through our blanket—made a hole. My mother enlarged it and wore it on me like a poncho. That's what I was freed in.

**L.T.:** Did you have any routine, anything for protection?

**L.A.:** I had a bow on my head. I was full of lice. At night I'd wet it and stick it to the wall to straighten. Then she cut my hair and I kept doing it. When I got out, I barely had any hair. Lice bring typhus—my mother was afraid. She had a lice comb and combed me with freezing water. There was no water for washing.

The hunger was terrible. I remember children dying. I had two cousins—they died of starvation. War is not a good thing...

**M.P.:** But you ended your talk in a beautiful way. You said you defeated Hitler through the family you built.

**L.A.:** When our grandchildren were born, and my husband and I were waiting at the maternity ward, we would touch the ground and say: "Hitler, you're six feet under. A Jewish child was born."

**L.T.:** That ties into our magazine theme: the art of living. How can one live well?

**L.A.:** By having grit. That's what I tell my children and grandchildren—have grit. Life demands persistence.

**Both:** Thank you very much.



"You are the real hero", said Lola Angel to Andreas Morikis, whose grandfather saved a Jewish labor prisoner."

## January 2025 The Hague International Model United Nations



The Hague International Model United Nations is one of the largest and most prestigious Model United Nations conferences in the world, and one that our school had the opportunity to attend for the 9th consecutive year. THIMUN sets global standards for students all around the world and trains them for diplomacy, international relations, and public speaking, so without a doubt, it holds a large significance to MUN from when it was founded to today. It is an educational simulation of the United Nations, where students from around the globe gather to debate international issues, draft resolutions, and develop diplomatic skills.

Specifically, THIMUN 2025, which was held from 28th to 31st January and attracted around 3,200 students from over 200 schools with more than 100 different nationalities, had the theme of "The impact of AI on Humanity". Such a matter has rapidly become a central issue in global discussions about technology, ethics, and the future of society. Delegates were called to find solutions in all aspects, from the Environmental Commission (EVC) to the Disarmament and International Security Committee (GA1), and in a way, prepared for the future. AI is an upcoming topic of discussion since it poses threats and not only solutions. The 20 students of Pierce which attended, along with me as well, had the chance to debate this topic, expand

their intellectual horizons and represent our school on a truly global stage.

Before the conference, the selected students and the advisors who would accompany us, Ms. Miliaresi and Ms. Petropoulos, had already started preparation. From research to mock debates, everyone involved helped each other in the process, which helped the trip and conference run smoothly. Our stay in The Hague was one filled with international and diplomatic significance, especially when exploring the city, but once we stepped into the World Forum Convention Center, that's when it really sank in; that this wasn't just any conference. This was THIMUN, and we were delegates.

We were spread out in all the committees, debated on different topics, yet we interacted with students from all around the world ranging from Brazil to Korea, from Turkey to the UK, which helped in the understanding of new perspectives and global issues.

However, THIMUN wasn't just about debating and representing countries, it was about connecting. Either from exploring the city after conference hours, or from socializing with peers (it was truly moving to see how many friendships formed in just 4 days surpassing the language and cultural barrier), this conference taught us more than any classroom ever could. We experienced not only what the United Nations stands for—we participated in its procedures and gained deep knowledge about the implications of AI in a global context.

Arriving in the Netherlands, I'm sure we never expected how much we would gain. We didn't leave empty-handed, we had new ideas, new friends, and a new view of the world. For many of us, it ignited a love for international relations and law, one which may have already existed or was just beginning to brew. Either way, getting involved in it, we developed skills necessary for our future despite what we'll choose to study, like teamwork, negotiation, researching correctly and many more.

Overall, THIMUN was more than worth it. Such experiences stick with you your whole life, and I say this knowing that I won't ever forget the Hague and won't be the only one. It was more than just a Model United Nations conference; it transformed us into tomorrow's leaders. If that's where your interests lie, then The Hague's World Forum Center is waiting.

*Nikoletta Roussaki, A9*

*MUN Advisors: Christina Katsoulis, Veralisa Miliaresi, Mary Petropoulos*

## February 2025 Literary Festival 2025 – Unbox the Image

As part of this year's Unbox the Image Literary Festival, organized by the English Department, our school welcomed acclaimed authors, comic artists, illustrators, and academics to explore visual storytelling. The festival highlighted graphic novels, manga, comics, graffiti, and photography, highlighting the importance of visual literacy.

Students were introduced to the theme through their English classes before participating in engaging activities. These included analyzing visual storytelling elements, exploring the conventions of graphic novels, comics, and manga, and debating whether graffiti is art or vandalism. Additionally, they examined political cartoons' influence on public opinion and discussed superheroes as symbols of social declaration and empowerment. These activities fostered critical thinking and a deeper appreciation for visual media as a tool for communication and cultural reflection.



Antigoni Geraki, A2

## Literary Festival 2025 – Unbox the Image

### A Writing Workshop with Author Dimosthenis Papamarkos



This year's literary festival gave us the opportunity to welcome Dimosthenis Papamarkos, a notable figure in the Greek literary scene, for a memorable writing workshop. Though it's difficult to summarize his achievements in a few lines, here is a brief introduction.

A graduate of the History Studies department at the University of Athens, Papamarkos developed a love for writing from a young age. In fact, his first work was published when he was just 12 years old after he was "bribed"

by his father, who supported his early efforts by offering a small reward if he shared his writing publicly. His career has taken a fascinating path, from publishing short stories and prose to writing opera librettos, and developing scripts for comics and graphic novels. His work on titles like *Ερωτόκριτος* and *Γυμνά Οστά* has contributed significantly to his reputation in the field. Central to his storytelling is his deep and omnipresent engagement with history, which he believes is essential, even in works of fantasy.

During the workshop, we explored some of the techniques Papamarkos and his collaborators use to create compelling graphic narratives such as manipulating image size, text layout, and visual perspective to guide the reader's experience. He emphasized that if a comic or graphic novel is misunderstood, the responsibility lies with the creator, not the reader. This belief underpins his commitment to producing work that respects the reader's time and attention, and explains his assertiveness during collaborative projects.

He gave us insight on the multitude of people who work incessantly to produce a high-quality graphic novel, from writers and colorists to web designers and illustrators. In particular, he spoke about the unique challenges of adapting traditional works like *Ερωτόκριτος* into graphic form, especially when engaging with the complexity of the original text.

Papamarkos also discussed his personal experience as a writer, highlighting the challenges of pursuing a creative career in a country where artistic work often lacks

institutional support. He spoke passionately about the importance of both the final result and the research process that precedes it. While he finds writing itself to be demanding—even painful at times—he considers hard work and discipline to be far more important than fleeting inspiration, which was as he said “overrated”. In his view, inspiration may serve as a starting point, but it is sustained effort that drives creativity forward.

At times, during periods of intense focus, he becomes withdrawn, fully immersed in his work. He always writes based on his past experiences and memories, which he believes is a skill that elevates the quality of an author’s work. Interestingly, despite the critical and commercial success of his prose work *Γκλιακ*, he himself once considered it an unlikely candidate for mainstream popularity. Funny how life works out...



To conclude, I’ll share one of the most valuable pieces of advice he gave to aspiring writers at the workshop, who had expressed concerns about their ability to make their writing dream come true:

**“Write about what you know and never be discouraged. Work nine to five—and then get to writing!”**

*Nancy Seinti ΓΟΠ4*

## Literary Festival 2025 – Unbox the Image

### Panel Discussion with Manga Artist Odysseas Theodoratos

On the morning of February 13th, 2025, we felt nervous. However, our anxiety quickly faded the moment we met and spoke with **Mr. Odysseas Theodoratos**, a Greek manga artist invited to this year's literary festival. He was polite, open-minded, and certainly eager—an individual who defied the stereotypical image of a comic artist. He was more than willing to share and openly discuss aspects of his career, answering all our questions with honesty and enthusiasm.



During the panel, we discussed his manga *Tomahawk Angel*, focusing on elements of the storyline and the inspiration behind it. The manga began as a webtoon (digital manga), which he later submitted to a competition in South Korea. His work won first place, leading to recognition from the digital publisher Tapas and, more significantly, from one of the world's most prominent comic publishers: Dark Horse Comics. *Tomahawk Angel* received a one-book deal, with future volumes dependent on its financial success. According to Theodoratos, the fact that a third volume is currently being published suggests that *Tomahawk Angel* is well on its way to becoming a staple in the manga community. Additionally, volume 7 has already been completed, while volumes 9 and 10 are currently in development.

The second part of the panel focused on the creative process behind comic creation and storytelling. The narrative of his manga is set in a post-apocalyptic Athens,

drawing heavily from the city's unique topography, architecture, and historical depth. Some questions also touched on Theodoratos' non-traditional artistic style. He explained that it stems from his early experience with traditional media (e.g., oils and charcoal) and freehand drawing. The result is a hybrid between traditional manga and a semi-realistic style, characterized by various cross-hatching techniques to depict volume, and a strong emphasis on perspective. The artist shared the challenges he faces when creating certain panels—explaining that front or side profiles are much easier than those involving bird's-eye views and diagonal tilts, which demand high precision in scale.



Silia Katsimicha, B4

After answering questions about his overall experience as a full-time manga artist, Odysseas revealed his ambition of turning Tomahawk Angel into an animated series. The students of B' Lyceum received the presentation with great enthusiasm, as shown by the many follow-up questions they asked. In fact, some students even stayed after the event to meet the artist, get autographs, and take pictures! Later, Odysseas was given a tour of the IB wing by several students, during which he viewed some of their artwork. He also generously donated copies of Tomahawk Angel Vol. 1 and 2 to the school's library.

As artists ourselves, we found this experience incredibly enriching. Hearing about his journey of pursuing art professionally through manga was both inspiring and eye-opening. Overall, it was a fantastic event. We had the chance to learn about a lesser-known aspect of global culture and how it's perceived worldwide, and we're truly grateful for the opportunity to participate.

***Petros Kokkalis (IB2), Danae Tselepi (B8), Ivi Tsoutsoura (B8)***

## Literary Festival 2025 – Unbox the Image A Unique Experience: A Visit and Workshop by Nikolas Stefadouros!



On Tuesday, February 12th, the comic artist Nikolas Stefadouros (a “κομίστας”, as he called his profession- he still preferred “comic artist”) honored us by visiting our school and delivering a captivating presentation and an even more engaging comic workshop!

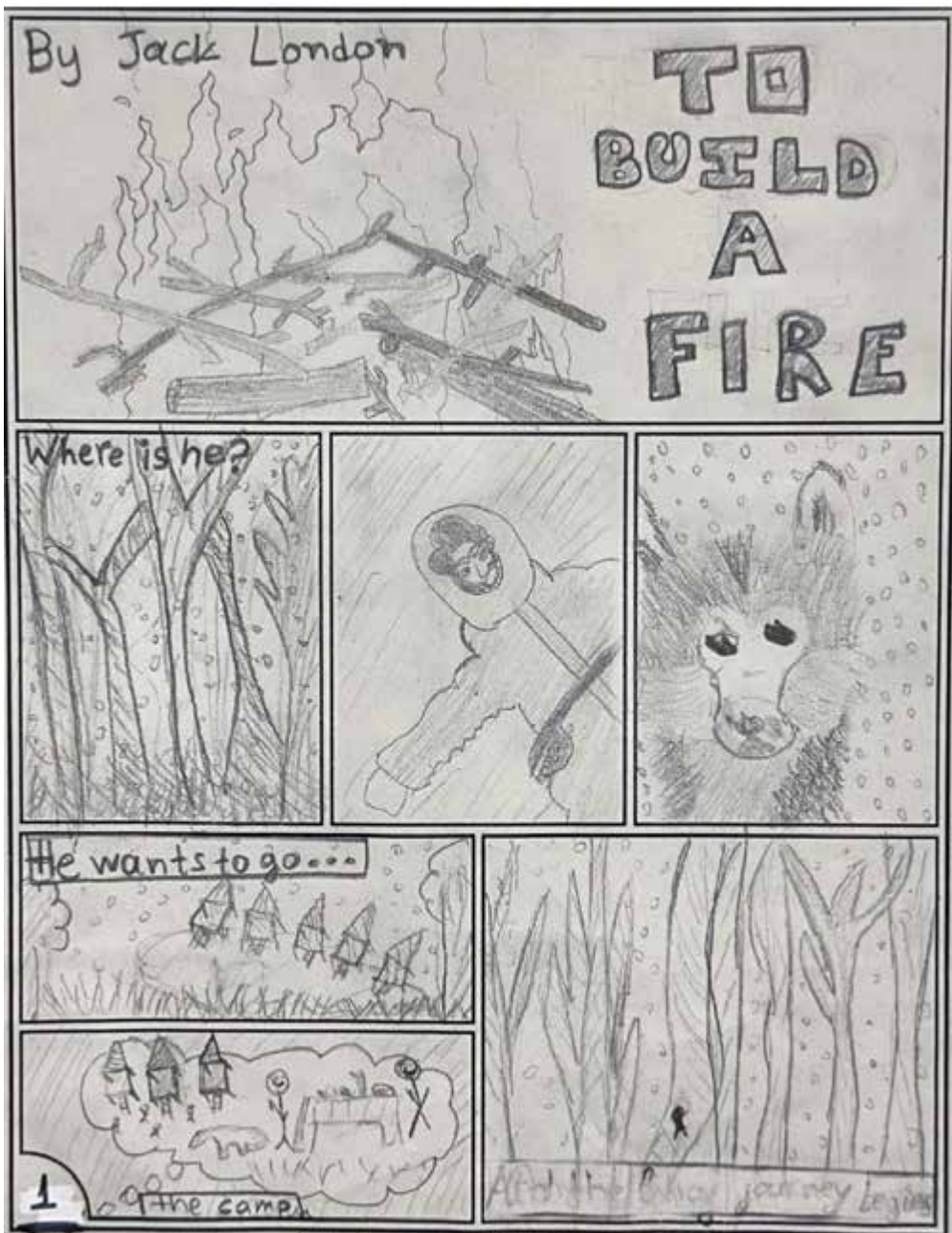
His presentation about the process of creating comics, manga, or graphic novels- all drawing from his own work which truly was astonishing- did not fail to attract all students and captivate them drawing them into the magical world of visual storytelling. Through examples of his work such as “Μημπαδοϊστορίες” and “Ντετέκτιβ Άστραλ” not only did he explain the basic narrative and artistic techniques, but he also inspired us to explore this creative path ourselves.

Nevertheless, the workshop “Comics, Manga, Graphic Novels: What Are They and How do I create them?” gave all students the opportunity to actually discover how this hobby or even potential career path might apply to them while letting their imagination run wild in order to make a creative story-telling comic, and indeed, many talented young artists emerged.

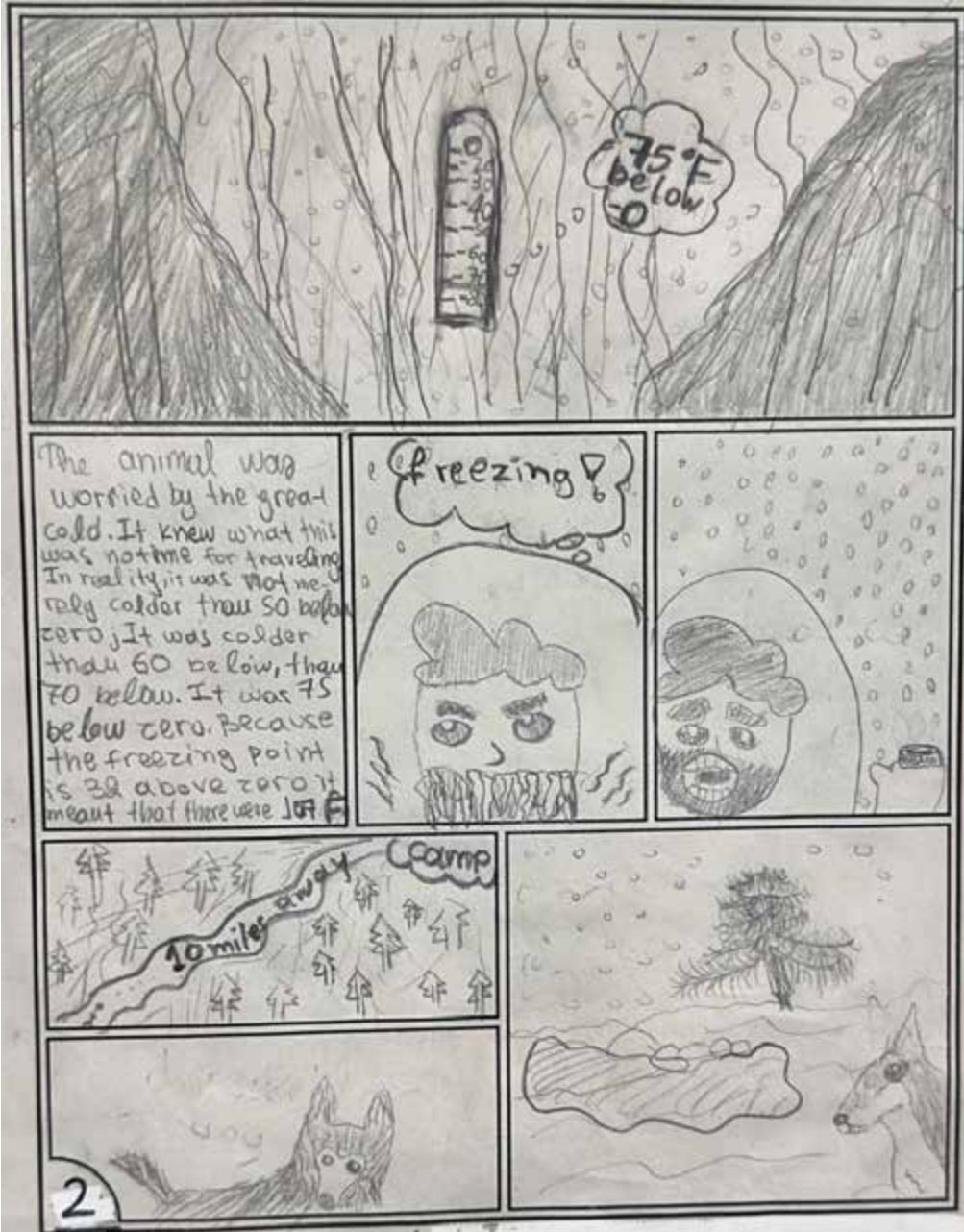
Through this entertaining experience with hands-on guidance from Nikolas Stefadouros, participants developed a deeper understanding and appreciation for the art of comics and the dedication it requires. Visual storytelling captivated many and ignited a new passion while others realized that it could be more than just an interesting hobby. Before his departure, Mr. Stefadouros generously donated several of his published works to the school library, significantly enriching its comics and graphic novels collection. This workshop provided some valuable insights, and we hope to have the opportunity to welcome Mr. Stefadouros again.



Heria Riga (A8) and Jonathan Perri (A8)



Ariadni Bitá (B5). Iro Kousvelari (B4)



Ariadni Bitá (B5), Iro Kousvelari (B4)



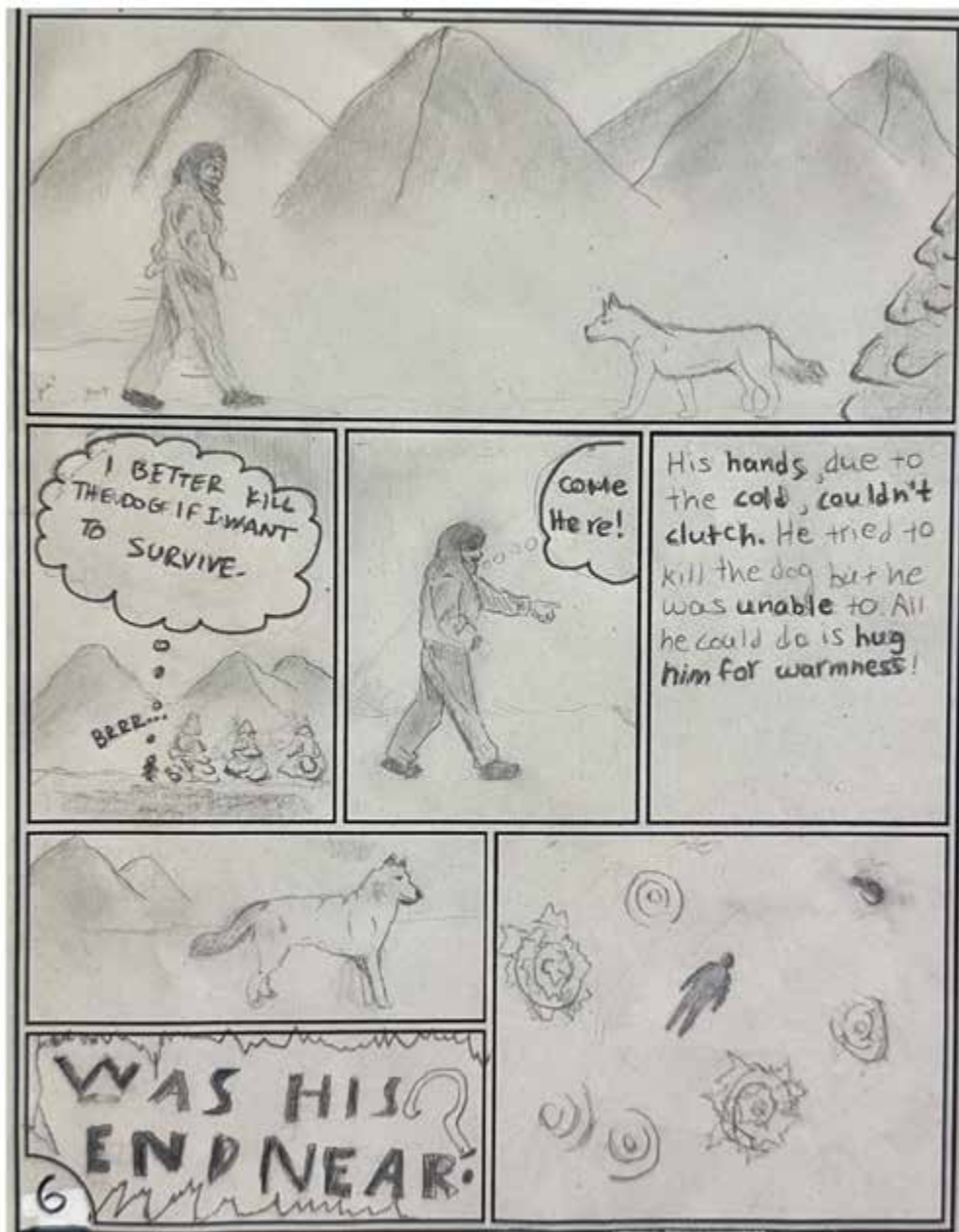
Eva Gialamaraki (B2), Andriani Polydoropoulou (B6), Ion Poriazis (B7), Aggelos Stavrou (B7)



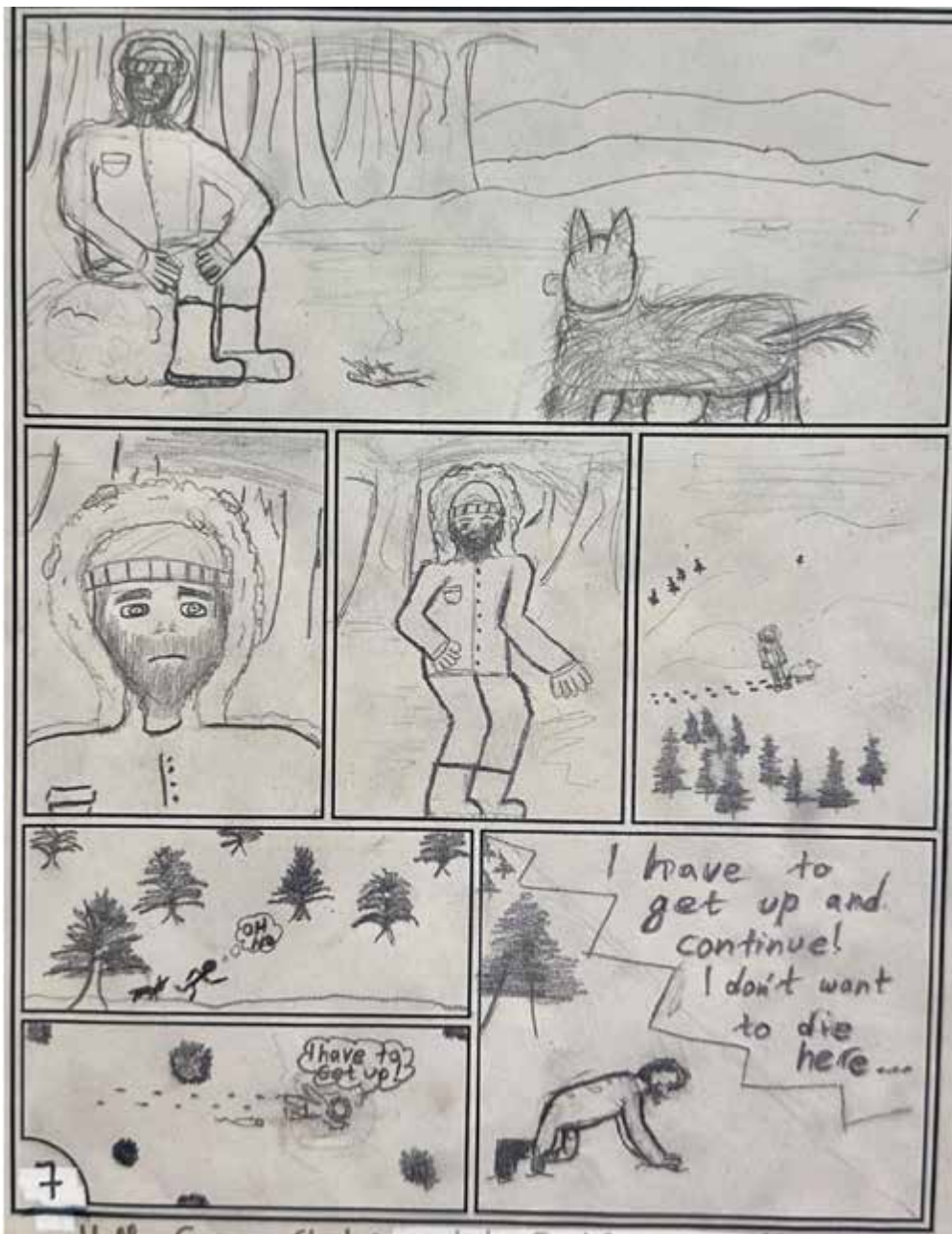
Eva Gialamaraki (B2), Andriani Polydoropoulou (B6), Ion Poriazis (B7), Aggelos Stavrou (B7)



Anna Roussi (B7), Maria Ananda Kanaki Polenaki (B8), Dimitris Livianos (B5)



Anna Roussi (B7), Maria Ananda Kanaki Polenaki (B8), Dimitris Livianos (B5)



Spyros Mellos (B5), Iraklis-Dimitris Chatziaggelidis (B8), Nikos Mouzakis (B5)



Konstantinos Kotteakos (B4), Iraklis-Dimitris Chatziaggelidis (B8)

## Literary Festival 2025– Unbox the Image

### Kim Hoffnagle - Street Art and the Birth of Hip-Hop



You've probably all walked the streets of Athens at least once. To be honest, you don't even have to be in the center to notice how the buildings covered in graffiti are more than those that aren't. You have learnt to not pay too much attention to it. However, should you? Does it express something or is it just vandalism?

Because of this year's Literary Festival theme, "Unboxing the Image", students of C' Lyceum had the opportunity to hear all about its origins from Kim Hoffnagle, art director, illustrator, graphic designer and teacher.

He started by explaining that apart from certain elements tracing back to ancient Rome, graffiti first seemed to appear in the US during the 1920s. Hobos (migrating workers), who were crossing the country through trains, marked their names on them (just like subway surfers). Soon it spread amongst gangs, whose members each had a "tag", meaning a personal logo.

The civil rights movement of the 1960s was fought back hard by governmental authorities. The killing of leaders such as Malcom X and Martin Luther King crushed the hopes of minority groups, leading to protests in city centers nationwide. This in turn caused white populations across the country to flee to the suburbs, leading to the formation of urban ghettos for those same minority groups. Now with even less political power, a worsening education system and excruciating living conditions led to these urban neighborhoods becoming epicenters for drugs, crime, and violence. Some young adults in these minorities wanted to create something other than this dark future for themselves, however, and turned to street art, which gave them a

sense of possession and meaning.

Between 1970–1975, graffiti increased exponentially, especially in Philadelphia and New York City, where advertising for major companies and products had become ubiquitous. Tagging – painting one’s personal logo everywhere – used the mechanisms of advertising itself, becoming a form of competition for the attention of everyday people and, eventually, capitalism itself.

Certain taggers became semi-famous, their work widely seen in urban environments, raising competition amongst artists themselves as their value depended on the size, style and placement of their tags.

At the time, DJ Kool Herc – now known as the “Father of Hip-Hop” – set up two turntables. Playing two records simultaneously, he would manipulate each one, repeatedly playing the break-beat and interspersing it with other musical clips, often well-known ones. This meant he was fully in control, making his own songs out of pieces of others. At parties, this led to a whole new style of dance, break-dancing, and MCs began rapping over these same compositions.

This may seem as if it has nothing to do with street art, but all these new styles of creative expression – graffiti, DJing, rapping, and breakdancing – blended to become the culture of the streets in these urban communities. Hip-Hop culture, in all its forms, became a means to express the injustice these youth felt, harnessing their anger and turning it into a creative force to be reckoned with.

Songs like *The Message*, by Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five, became a huge crossover hit while giving voice to the pain of life in the ghetto and the prejudice of the police, etc. Breakdancing was a way of releasing pent-up energy, and hip-hop battles even became a good substitute for fighting. Tagging turned into fabulously expressive murals, eventually spreading messages and raising awareness for social issues, as Banksy does today.



So, if you hear a hip-hop song, or pass some graffiti on the street, it a minute (or more) of your time, try to appreciate what it might be trying to express and history behind it. In doing so, you only immerse yourself in the art the street, but in the art of living.

***Kostanza Andronikou Kalyva, A1***

## We asked students if graffiti is art or vandalism and here's what they said...



It depends on the graffiti. If it's just random tags or vandalism, my initial response might be indifference or mild annoyance, especially if it makes the area look neglected. But if it's artistic, thought-provoking, or politically charged, I'd probably stop to appreciate it. I wouldn't say my thoughts have changed much because I've always seen graffiti as a mix of vandalism and urban art. Some pieces are just people marking territory, while others genuinely add character and beauty to a place. For example, this amazing mural, called "Knowledge Speaks, Wisdom Listens," was painted by the artist WD (Wild Drawing). You can find it in the Metaxourgeio area of Athens, at the corner of Palaiologou and Samou Streets. It shows a super-realistic owl's face, representing wisdom. The owl's intense eyes and detailed design make it one of the most famous street art pieces in Athens. I love how lifelike owl looks, and the way the artist used shadows and texture makes it almost jump off the wall. It's a powerful piece that stands out in the busy streets.

*Valeria Theodora, A3*

When I see graffiti anywhere on the street as I'm passing by I always have mixed responses depending on the graffiti itself. If it is a pointless tag or something not appealing to the eye, I find no reason for it to exist. Graffiti for me is a form of art and expression by the artist but not everyone should be allowed to graffiti since it often ruins the surface it has been made on and the aesthetic of the place. However, if it is something meaningful or aesthetically pleasing then, and only if there is consent to graffiti the particular surface, I believe is a very good addition since it "breaks" the monotony of the urban setting.



For example, this graffiti located near Omonoia Square was inspired by Albrecht Dürer's famous drawing "Hands in Prayer" but the "praying hands" are not turned skyward to implore God, they are pointing downwards as if God himself were praying to save the city of Athens and its inhabitants. It has a deep meaning and it's aesthetically pleasing so everyone who passes by takes a moment to appreciate it.

*George Menegas, A6*



This is a mural by a famous Athens-born artist, INO. It's actually an illustration of the resurrection, in which the hand of God grabs a man's hand, who is fascinated by money and tries to bring him back to life – to wake him up. It is located in Exarcheia, Athens. I personally believe that this is surely not vandalism but instead pure art that makes our hometown beautiful. It teaches a moral that people should learn and that is achieved without harming someone or insulting someone's beliefs and mindset. So, for me, this should be considered art, accepted by at least most of Athens' citizens and not be criticized because it is located on public property.

*Konstantinos Minogiannis, A6*

## March 2025 Harvard Model Congress Europe 2025



My HMCE 2025 experience started at the beginning of the school year. I was so nervous when I entered the classroom the first time and had one thing in my mind, to go to this conference, create great memories and introduce them to the best version of myself that I began preparing as early as September. The time came and the first day of the conference was there. Despite the nervousness, I was full of excitement to just enter my committee and show everybody what I came there to do in the first place. As the hours in the committee passed I was getting more and more confident to speak and even if sometimes I didn't want to, I pushed myself to do it. Leaving the conference, I will remember the unbreakable bonds that were created with my co delegates and also people from our class that I never thought I would share those amazing five days, which will stay with me forever. The overall HMCE experience is something unforgettable, I learned valuable lessons and created friendships with people from all over the world.

*Loukia Alchanati, B1*

Words could hardly suffice to wholly render the experience of the HMCE conference but as far as I am concerned, I would primarily characterize it as illuminating. Not only did I have the chance to hone my oratory skills but I additionally managed to surpass my fear of public speaking. Furthermore, I became acquainted with the concepts of diplomacy politics, international relations and leadership. I had the opportunity to interact with students who possessed remarkable personality traits and charisma, to fruitfully discuss and collaborate to secure the positive outcome of

the committee's trial. For HMCE allowed me to foster connections and meaningful bonds with a number of marvelous individuals who made quite an impression on me because of their gentility and authenticity. Moreover, I considerably enjoyed the judicial procedure in my committee, ICC, I additionally found the topics of the trials incredibly interesting and stimulating and I greatly appreciated the chairs of my committee who were always available to answer our questions and fostered an environment of collaboration and purposeful dialogue. In conclusion, I strongly believe that the impact of the HMCE experience will accompany me eternally.

*Philippa Aggelopoulou, B1*

Attending the Harvard Model Congress Europe as a delegate was an enriching and transformative experience that deepened my understanding of international politics, diplomacy, and leadership. During the conference, I had the opportunity to engage with incredibly charismatic students from around the world, debate pressing global issues, and develop critical skills in public speaking, negotiation, and collaboration. From the moment I arrived, I was immersed in a dynamic environment that encouraged intellectual discourse and creative problem-solving. My committee, Senate Judiciary, was filled with passionate, educated individuals whom I would have loved to debate more directly through moderated caucuses, which we sadly did not have. Aside from that, one of the most valuable aspects of the conference was the emphasis on diplomacy and consensus-building. While the bill writing process was often rigorous and impassioned, the ultimate goal was to find common ground and propose viable solutions to complex issues, teaching me skills such as adaptability and collaboration.

Beyond the formal sessions, HMCE also provided opportunities for networking and cultural exchange. I am beyond grateful for the friendships that I formed during these incredible five days that I strongly believe will last a lifetime. There are no words to express how much this experience shifted my world view and made me want to become the best possible version of myself. Finally, none of this would have been possible without the guidance and constant support of my amazing teacher, Mr. Tatsis. I leave with a greater appreciation for the complexities of governance and diplomacy, as well as a renewed motivation to contribute positively to the world around me.

*Eleanna Alafouzou, B1*  
*HMCE Advisor: Mr. , Konstantinos Tatsis*

## Panhellenic Forensics Association Tournament 2025



This was my first PFAT and - I can't lie - it was hard. I had to swallow down my pride many times and it is definitely not something that will come and go without a proper fight! I did not know what this would look like; I just had a very vague idea in my mind. In truth, it was a tournament full of people that were interesting, passionate, kind, brilliant, and inspiring. The prep rooms, where you get to meet with your fellow teammates and unwind, (or wind even more), give pep talks, practice, and, of course, talk (even more than the tournament already asks you to), are one of the best parts about the tournament. This is an absolute experience on its own! You get to meet a lot of people who look intimidating but, trust me, are not. The debate rounds, the prep, the waiting rooms are an awesome way to bond with your debate mates, gain new experiences, and learn new things. It is a test of perseverance and power, but also commitment to your goals. Above all, it's fun! Comic Oral Interpretation and Comic Duet Acting are the highlights of the finals, and so is running to your events full of adrenaline. I would do it again and again, trust me when I say that. We would love for next year's cohort to be twice the size of the last. We are very eager to share this wonderful experience with as many forensics enthusiasts as possible!

*Eugene Perdikomati, IB1*

You can tell that something is important to you by how much you miss it after it is done. And for the third year I am experiencing post-tournament depression as I try to find something even remotely close to being as exciting as PFAT!

However nerve-wrecking it may have been, it is a thrill that we can never get enough of, which is probably why so many people choose to come back to debate again and again every year. I absolutely loved being given the chance to go up against the toughest teams in Greece, challenging myself as a debater whilst also working closely with my team and coaches, whom I deeply respect and appreciate.

I am incredibly happy and proud for the progress we have made as a team. We managed to accomplish so much in just four days, having beaten the odds and exceeding even our own expectations. I can't wait for next year to prove ourselves to be a powerhouse of a team once more!

*Eleni Hadjioannou, A10*

Ever since I joined the school's debate club in the 8th grade, I remember myself looking up to the more experienced students competing in the Panhellenic Forensics Association Tournament. I remember cheering for them in outrounds, watching them do their prepared cases and picturing the day that I would be the older debater representing Pierce at this massive tournament.

This year, I had the unique opportunity to do exactly that! I was lucky enough to be in a team of brilliant and inspiring debaters, who used the four days of the tournaments to develop interesting arguments and ideas, verging on topics from the EU to nationalisation of artificial intelligence. Despite the competitive pressure, teammates and coaches supported me and made this tournament into a wonderful experience! This PFAT was the fourth that I attended, and my team made it by far the best one! I loved to see all members grow and learn through debate! I got to learn a lot about debate during the days of the tournament, while I also got inspired by my friends' performances in other events such as Duet Acting and Oral Interpretation of Literature.

What I love about this tournament is getting to see the work of all students, the countless hours of practice and all their dreams for winning being presented in the same place. I love the applause each speaker receives by the others after their speeches and performances, and seeing how friends from competing teams show their respect to each other through it.

I really hope to see a bigger delegation in the Forensics club and the PFAT next year! No matter your level of English, or whether you enjoy speaking in front of a crowd, I think you should definitely try Forensics! It really is a supportive and fun community, out of which I can guarantee you will discover activities you love and make lots new friends!



*Marianna Argeiti, IB1  
Forensics Advisors:  
Christina Chryssaki,  
Niki Sarantopoulou,  
Aphroditi Chrysanthopoulou*

## **An Unforgettable Experience at the Finnish Ambassador's Residence**

Our school club, "The Nordic Experience," had the incredible opportunity in March to visit the Finnish Ambassador's residence in Athens. We were warmly welcomed by Ms. Jaana Oikarinen-Vasilopoulos, the special advisor for commercial, media, and educational affairs. This visit was not only a delightful experience but also an enlightening one as we delved into the unique culture and educational philosophy of Finland.

As we entered the Ambassador's beautifully maintained home, we could feel the warmth and hospitality that is characteristic of Finnish culture. The residence was adorned with elegant décor that reflected both traditional and modern Finnish artistry. It was the perfect setting for what would soon become an insightful presentation and discussion.

Ms. Jaana Oikarinen-Vasilopoulos began the session with an engaging presentation about Finland. She shared fascinating insights into the Finnish educational system, which is revered worldwide for its innovative and holistic approach to teaching. We learned about the absence of standardized testing, the importance of play in early education, how teachers are given the autonomy to create their own curricula, and the fact that the government offers all students free school meals. It was inspiring to see how education in Finland prioritizes creativity and critical thinking over rote memorization and student-well-being over test performance.

Beyond education, we also explored various aspects of life in Finland, including appreciation for its stunning natural landscapes, the emphasis on sustainability, and the country's strong sense of community. Ms. Jaana Oikarinen-Vasilopoulos highlighted the Finnish commitment to maintaining a high quality of life and the importance of balancing work and leisure. It was not surprising to hear how in 2025 Finland was given the highest ranking in the World Happiness Report for the eighth year in a row.

After the highly informative presentation and engaging discussion, we were treated to a delightful spread of snacks and refreshments, including a traditional Finnish cinnamon roll, known as "Korvapuusti." The sweet aroma and soft texture of the roll were a hit among all of us, and it felt like a small taste of Finland right in Athens. As we savored the treat, the atmosphere was filled with laughter and conversation, allowing us to connect with one another and share our thoughts on what we had learned.

To commemorate this special occasion, we gathered together for a group photo in front of the Ambassador's residence. The smiles on our faces reflected not only our

enjoyment of the day but also the excitement of having gained a deeper understanding of Finnish culture and education.

As we left the Ambassador's residence, I couldn't help but feel inspired by the Finnish way of life. It reminded me of the importance of fostering creativity, curiosity, and a sense of community in education and beyond.

***Mikaela Manouilidi, B5  
Advisor: Ms. Marilena Maniati***



## PIERCE CAS EXPERIENCES

### 09/10/2024 - Photography Exhibition & Photojournalism Talk



An IB2 student CAS project, in collaboration with the Associated Press, culminated in a powerful photography exhibition at our school. The project aimed to explore sociocultural issues through the lens of photojournalism, with a focus on diversity. Moreover, Mr. Stavrakis, a renowned photojournalist from Associated Press, delivered a compelling talk on how photography can expose social concerns and promote change.

The exhibition, was a composition of ideas and photos taken by our classmates that represent what is “different” for them. It showcased thought-provoking photos, reflecting their unique perspectives on diversity. This initiative encouraged creativity and engaged our peers in meaningful dialogue about breaking societal norms through the powerful medium of photography.

### NOVEMBER & DECEMBER 2024

#### 6/11/2025 – «ΜΠΟΡΟΥΜΕ»



As part of an IB CAS project, our school had the pleasure of hosting the organization “Boroume”, which aims to reduce food waste (zero food waste). The guest speaker, Mr. Alexandros Theodoridis, delivered an interactive presentation on the organization’s initiatives and highlighted practical ways in which students can contribute to this effort. The presentation inspired us all to become more responsible and socially aware citizens.

### 28/11/2024: FOOD DRIVE – COLLECTION OF FOOD FOR “PHILOTHEI THE ATHENIAN” GIRLS’ SHELTER

In the spirit of Thanksgiving, IB students organized a charitable initiative to collect food and hygiene products, demonstrating their solidarity in a meaningful way. They

gathered a significant amount of supplies, which members of the IB1 five-member council personally delivered to the Girls' Shelter.

Founded in 1962 in Agia Paraskevi and officially recognized as a charitable organization by the Ministry of Health, the shelter provides a home for girls—from infancy to high school graduation—who have been placed under its care by court order due to parental unfitness. Since its establishment, it has supported hundreds of girls in building their futures.



### **23/12/2024 - Santa & Co.**

On the last day of classes before the Christmas holidays, as part of the IB2 Business course, our students presented a creative idea that reimagined Santa Claus—not as a non-profit figure, but as the owner of his own business!

The students developed a comprehensive business plan for Santa & Co., defining its vision, mission, and strategic goals. Their plan included key elements such as market analysis, competitive positioning, and revenue streams from personalized gift services and premium holiday experiences, alongside cost structures and profit forecasts.

By incorporating essential business concepts like branding and modern trends (Santa Goes Green), the project showcased innovation, practical application of business theory, and entrepreneurial spirit—while delivering festive cheer, financial insight,

plenty of laughter, and a generous dose of All I Want for Christmas Is You!



## The Hidden Heroes of Pierce: A meeting with our librarians

*Student Christina Antonakou (B1) met with the school librarians, Ms. Natasa Kampouroupoulou and Ms. Katerina Georgitsou, who warmly welcomed her into the library and shared insights into their daily professional routines. From the start, they emphasized the importance of telling their own story in their own words, without following any pre-set questions. They began by walking us through the detailed process of cataloguing books.*



As Ms. Georgitsou and Ms. Kampouroupoulou explained, they use a specialized cataloguing system with specific fields and codes, drawing all data directly from the physical book. Each book is catalogued individually—a process that can take from ten minutes to three days, depending on its complexity.

They follow the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR) to record key details like author, title, publisher, publication date and place, dimensions, copyright, and ISBN. The format and required information vary depending on the material type (e.g., book, DVD, map).

This data is entered into a full collection management system, not just a website, allowing users to search and request materials. Accurate technical and subject descriptions are crucial for functionality.

Subjects are assigned using the Library of Congress Subject Headings, ensuring clarity and consistency across libraries. Selecting the right subject is essential—such as distinguishing between “philosophy of history” and “history of philosophy”—and often requires reviewing the summary and contents.

For literary works, they pay special attention to user interests, adding terms like “love stories” or “young adult literature,” and noting whether a book is fiction or nonfiction, with bilingual labels for Greek titles.

Information is gathered primarily from the verso of the title page, with occasional consultation of major libraries like the Library of Congress. However, they apply critical judgment and never copy cataloguing blindly.

The internet is used, mainly for verifying information or creating book lists. Their work remains technical, precise, and aligned with strict international standards. Once catalogued and processed, the book is shelved for public access, and it becomes part of the collection of a total of 35,000 volumes covering all sciences as well as poetry



and literature in Greek and English. Most of our collection is located in the Library in Agia Paraskevi, and the rest in our new Gymnasium Library, in the Spata complex. The two libraries share their printed materials through interlibrary loan; that is, a student from Agia Paraskevi can request a book from the Gymnasium Library of the East Campus via the electronic catalog.

The Gymnasium - Lyceum - IB Library, facilitates the school community's access to 30 databases, both from school and remotely. This capability distinguishes our school in terms of the quality of information provided, making us an excellent choice

**C.A.:** So, you don't use artificial intelligence?

**K.G.:** "No. I don't know what the future will bring, but for now, everything is done the way I described. Our work is technical, and we follow a specific process."

**C.A.:** Do you think ChatGPT might be biased toward sensitive content?

**K.G.:** “Of course. ChatGPT appeared suddenly and is based on internet data, which includes stereotypes and biases: that white people are smarter, men more capable, etc. So, you can’t use it without critical thought. Ideally, such a tool would be based on scholarly articles, with verified sources, so you could trust the information. But today, there are many conflicting opinions, and you have to activate your critical thinking. We trust our databases, which provide us with accurate information, fast. You probably are the last generation to have learned how to search for information in both ways—before and after GPT.”

“The next generation, might use different methods. That’s where critical thinking becomes crucial, because from now on, information will be handed to you. But is it accurate? If not, you’ll be reproducing the same mistakes, stereotypes, and fake news. So, caution is essential, initially by us, and then by those who will maintain this new information system.

“Even I sometimes use GPT to give me a few guidelines, but I always follow up with my own research, based on data I have already collected from the Library’s electronic material.”

“Here’s a good idea for school: assign a project where all students must use ChatGPT, but the real goal is to have phrased the right question. So, education should focus on how to use prompts properly. If they learn how to use them well, they’ll get accurate results.”

### **C.A.: What other daily tasks does your job entail?**

**N.K.:** “We create displays, organize screenings, and promote new books to encourage kids to read. We help with assignments and are available for anything they need. We guide them through projects and remind them how to search the online book catalog.”

**K.G.:** “The easiest thing we do daily is lending books, especially now that it can be done electronically. We help students with international competitions like the European Youth Parliament, with debate competitions, and assist teachers with their research. Often, we function like a classroom, hosting projects and collaborating closely with educators.”

“We remind everyone that citation of bibliography and the reference to the creator are highly important, and about MLA, our school’s citation system. Our online book catalog and databases provides ready-made citations, so all you need is a simple copy-paste for the ‘Works Cited’ page.”

**K.G.:** “Natasia records every book and also keeps printed cards as a backup. If the internet goes down, the information isn’t lost. We started with typewriters and moved to computers. We learned librarianship using cards, and now we’re expected to be IT literate too.”

**C.A.:** That’s really important—just like in all professions.

**N.K.:** “Our profession has seen radical changes. It all began with cards and handwritten loans. But kids need to understand that everything they see today wasn’t always a given.”

**C.A.:** “Who knows how the world will change when today’s children are in your shoes. We’re all obliged to keep evolving.”

**N.K.:** “Yes, to evolve, of course, but also to know the history behind us. In every profession, it’s important to understand the history. The National Library has preserved its old catalogs. They’re like heirlooms, really beautiful, and I believe we’ll keep ours too.”

**K.G.:** “Definitely. That should never be lost, neither the records nor the tools. These old drawers don’t exist anymore... Even if you find the book online and use digital databases, this here is old school. It’s history.”



## From Greek Roots to Global Command: A Panel with General Andrew Poppas at Pierce



General Andrew Poppas is a Commanding General of U.S. Army Forces Command — leading over 700,000 soldiers and civilians.

A Wisconsin native and West Point graduate, General Poppas has commanded in some of the U.S. Army's most storied units, including the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions, served as a foreign area officer in Greece, and deployed multiple times to Iraq and Afghanistan.

He's also advised the United States' top military leaders as Director of the Joint Staff and holds advanced degrees from Kansas State and Harvard.

On May 7th, 2025, the Pierce Theater hosted a panel discussion with General Andrew Poppas, a distinguished U.S. Army leader of Greek descent. The conversation featured an engaging exchange with Lyceum students—Konstantinos Matthaïou (A6), Ariadni Miniati (A6), and Dimitris Morfopoulos (A6)—as well as Sunny Days advisor Elpida Karmali. The event was attended by A Lyceum students and a visiting student delegation from Japan, supported by the Tokyo-based nonprofit Kidsdoor and Libra Philanthropies.

**Dimitris: Welcome to Greece. This isn't your first visit. What's your connection to Greece, and how has this trip been going?**

**General Poppas:** Well, I appreciate it. First, thank you very much for the invitation to be here with you today.

I was excited about the opportunity to come, as you mentioned, this is not my first trip to Greece. My connection comes through my parents; both were Greek immigrants. My mother's family came to America before World War II, and my father arrived in 1945, at the end of the war.

As we grew up, we were deeply connected to our Greek heritage. We took great pride in being Greek and in the values passed down to us—integrity, hard work, education. My parents instilled all of that in us.

My first trip to Greece was when I was young; we visited family here. We still have many relatives in the country. A few years ago, I also had the opportunity to study here, which was a wonderful experience. During that time, my father came to visit. My mother had passed away, so it was just the two of us traveling through Greece, revisiting places from his past, where he grew up, where he spent time during the war, and reconnecting with family here in Athens and beyond. That strengthened our family bond and deepened my connection to this country.

Any opportunity I get, I love to come back. And now I'm passing that on to my own family. My daughter is here. She just finished her freshman year of college. I wanted her to experience the same feeling and connection.

**Ariadni: So your father was born in Greece and has quite an interesting story. Could you share some of it? And to what extent did he influence your decision to join the military?**

**General Poppas:** Another great question. My father's story is remarkable—but I must also mention my mother. Her strength of character and professional accomplishments were equally influential. Both of my parents shaped who I am, as well as my older brother and sister.

My mother was a journalist in the 1940s, at a time when that was far from common for women. She was a trailblazer. Her spirit carried forward into my Army career, just as my father's did.

My father grew up in Greece. After Ochi Day, when the war began, his city was one of the first bombed by the Italians. He lived through the Nazi occupation. He's 94 now, but during the war, he was between 10 and 15 years old. He joined the resistance—too young to fight directly, but he supported the fighters: moving supplies into the mountains, providing intelligence, putting up anti-Nazi posters, and even stealing from them.

At one point, he was shot. But during the occupation, you couldn't go to a doctor—they were being watched. So the only person who could remove the bullet was the local butcher, who had the knives. He cut the bullet out, without anesthesia, and kept my father in the shop for a few days to monitor for infection.

After the war, my father immigrated to America. He arrived in New York alone, at age 15. He was taken in by someone who owned a Greek restaurant. He worked and lived there until more family could join him, and they eventually settled in Philadelphia.

As a newly naturalized American, in 1950, when the Korean War broke out, he

was drafted. But because he spoke fluent Greek and had strong language skills, he was assigned to counterintelligence work in Germany.

There, he met my mother, who had moved to Germany after college and was working as a journalist with the club system. They met on a train. At the time, my father was on a mission, posing with a woman as his “wife” to get her out of East Germany. They happened to be in the same train car. Later, he had to return and reintroduce himself—imagine dating someone and having to explain that kind of first impression!

His story and his values shaped all of us. He didn’t push me into the military, but he emphasized education above all. He believed America is a meritocracy: if you work hard, you can rise. That lesson stuck with me.

He also believed in giving back. After all that America had done for our family post-war, he felt a deep sense of duty. My sister became a doctor, my brother went into film, and I joined the Army.

When I left for West Point, my mom cried. She didn’t think the kid who couldn’t clean his room would survive military life. Both of my parents truly inspired each of us to follow our own dreams.

**Konstantinos: Can you share insight into the types of missions you’ve participated in and how they’ve shaped your leadership?**

**General Poppas:** I’ve served 37 years in the Army. I know I don’t look much older than you but I’ve been around a while!

Throughout my career, I’ve served in combat in Iraq and spent three years in Afghanistan. But there are three phases of my career that shaped me most.

The first was right after graduation. I was an infantryman: airborne and Ranger-qualified. At that early stage, you’re directly in charge of 35 soldiers. It’s very much like being part of a sports team: building camaraderie, setting culture, and learning to lead face-to-face. Whether it’s 35 people at the platoon level or 135 at company level, you’re responsible for the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of your team. The second phase came after 9/11. For two decades, we were continuously at war. I moved from direct leadership to operational leadership, leading through others. My first deployment was 15 months in Iraq. That was a tough period. We took losses. I had to learn how to manage human emotion. How to keep the team functioning while dealing with grief. Then I spent three more years in Afghanistan, building and leading even larger teams under extreme stress.

The third phase is strategic. My work in the Pentagon and in my current role. At this level, you're not executing tasks directly. Instead, you're shaping policy and setting the conditions for success. You advise civilian leaders like the President or the Secretary of Defense.

Our job is not to dictate decisions but to inform them and ensure military considerations are well understood among all the voices at the table: State Department, Treasury, and others. To do that well, you must master the details and communicate clearly. Your advice may not be taken, but if you've conveyed the full picture, you've done your job.

In my current role, I'm responsible for shaping future military readiness: 700,000 personnel, new technologies like drones, cyber, and space capabilities, and ensuring we can train and equip for future conflicts in a resource-constrained environment. It's a different kind of leadership but no less important.

**Ariadni: In your experience, what do you think is the most essential quality of a strong leader, and why?**

**General Poppas:** That's another great question. And my answer might surprise you, especially given my background in ground combat.

The strongest leaders I've encountered—without exception—are those with deep empathy.

Yes, physical courage and capability matter. But empathy is what ties it all together. Empathy gives you passion for both the mission and the people who carry it out. It drives how you interact, how you train, how you give orders. And when losses occur, as they inevitably do, it helps you bring the team back together.

In the classroom, empathy is what allows a teacher to focus on each student as an individual and draw out their best. In the military, it builds cohesion. Take the Spartans: they were individually strong and well-trained, but their true power came from moving together, protecting each other, understanding the person next to them. Empathy makes that possible.

The Army starts training at 6:30 AM every day. Running, exercising together. Leaders are expected to be present. The worse the weather, the more visible you must be. Shared hardship brings a team together, and shared success makes the effort worthwhile.

Empathetic leaders still enforce standards. They still hold people accountable. But they understand the human element and that makes all the difference.

**Ariadni:** I completely agree. Leadership isn't just about giving orders. It's about setting an example and inspiring others. Empathy makes people want to follow you because they see you as a leader who cares, not just someone in charge.

**General:** That's an incredibly mature and insightful answer. I'm genuinely impressed. And you're absolutely right. If you haven't learned how to follow, you'll likely be a poor leader. Leadership starts with service and presence.

**Dimitris:** You've spent your career leading young soldiers, many older than this audience. What have you learned about this generation, their strengths and weaknesses?

**General Poppas:** I love this question. The Army is multigenerational: we serve together, regardless of age. But I find the generational conversation fascinating. Every generation criticizes the one that follows.

When I was at Harvard for a year, I sat in a class where the professor, who had run major national political campaigns, started lecturing the students. He said, "You kids today are lazy. You're selfish. You want titles without the work. You're not willing to sacrifice."

It made me angry. I had just returned from Afghanistan, where I'd seen young people, just slightly older than you, sacrifice everything. That criticism didn't reflect reality.

What I see in this generation is resilience. You understand commitment and self-sacrifice. You're tech-savvy and adaptable—you can pick up any new technology and master it in minutes (then spend hours explaining it to us). You're well-informed, curious, and engaged in global issues: politics, diplomacy, war. You ask great questions.

So don't listen to the negative voices. Your strengths far outweigh the weaknesses, and I see great promise in this generation.

**Ariadni:** Many of our students are considering studying in the U.S. What advice would you give them?

**General:** My daughter just finished her freshman year and is going to study in Italy this summer. So yes—I fully support it! If studying in the U.S. is your goal then do it. Set that as your target and work toward it. Whether it's the U.S., Italy, or anywhere else, stepping out of your comfort zone is powerful.

I spent a year abroad as the only American in my program. That was uncomfortable—but also incredibly rewarding. I learned new things, connected with my roots, and grew as a person.

Living abroad expands your perspective in ways that academics alone cannot. You gain cultural understanding and maturity. You come back a much richer person. So yes, if you have that dream, go for it.

**Konstantinos: And finally, what's one key piece of advice you'd give to students and young people as they plan for the future?**

**General:** The best advice I can give is this: If you have a dream, pursue it with everything you've got.

Never settle. You only get one life. Strive to become the best version of yourself. But remember—life won't come to you. You have to work for it. You have to earn it.

If your goal is academic, then work hard at your studies. If you need to learn English fluently, practice and improve. Be proactive. Take charge of your path. Stay curious, stay committed, and keep moving forward.

**Elpida Karmali: Thank you so much for sharing those insightful responses and for taking the time to be here with us.**



## Social Media and Toxicity: A Direct Relation to Each Other?



Rea Andrianou, B1

Even more people are using various social media platforms, with the ones like Instagram, Facebook, X, and Reddit being among the most famous. However, is there such a thing like “toxicity” regarding the use of these apps?

I have to admit, personally, I had stopped using these applications for a very long time. Specifically, it’s worth noting that I hadn’t used Instagram for an astonishing amount of time, more than two months, to say the least. At first, I didn’t notice any great difference, apart from the fact that I felt the extreme need to keep in touch with others and be aware of everything that happens, even in the tiniest communities of my followers.

However, what I came to notice over time was something very particular yet of great significance; I started to truly live experiences, even the minor ones. And when I mean “truly”, I try to get across that I finally experienced many memorable moments. I started drawing, listening to music, writing, but most significantly, even when I did nothing, I engaged in actions that stayed in my memory. I have watched more than a thousand reels on Instagram, and yet there aren’t even fifteen of them that I can

precisely remember. But after that period of “lame instants”, as I would call these moments of social media usage, I could recall almost every single drawing I spent, and not wasted, my time on.

I could memorize the lyrics of songs I loved, and, most importantly, I had some time to rest, to truly rest. To stay alone, in my room, listening to relaxing melodies that would eventually make me even fall asleep. The duration of my daily sleep slightly increased, but most importantly the quality improved. What’s even more crucial is that my free time was more valuable. And, last but not least, my mental health became a bit more stable. I could feel more relaxed and calmer, unstressed, balanced. I can’t say that these feelings weren’t present in my life when I used social media, but after I stopped using them for a long time, they became more intense. These feelings of true, actual relaxation and balance, for instance, became a continuous reality for me. As I surprisingly realized, I wasn’t the only one who felt this way. According to research in France, almost fifty percent of French citizens would like to live in a world where there are no social media. And let’s bear in mind that this percentage doesn’t only include adults. According to a study of German scientists, young people waste approximately 224 minutes on social media every day, which means that, since this amount of time equals almost four hours, one sixth of their day is entirely spent with social media. According to the psychiatrist Charles-Édouard Notredame who works at the University of Lille, France, since 2019, an increase by thirty percent in the number of suicidal attempts among the teenagers who are between eleven and seventeen years old is observed. It is also the same year when these teenagers started excessively using social media platforms.

What I intend to share with the readers of this article is that, although social media platforms help us get in touch with other people worldwide and introduce us to a vast community of millions of users nationwide, under no circumstances should they replace other moments and activities of our lives. We have a personal life as well, and we had better value it. After all, communicating with other people is great; living their lives, however, is not.

*Angelos Panagiotis Pithamitsis, B6*

## AI therapist

Would you trust AI with your deepest secrets? In a world where AI is rapidly advancing, it wouldn't be crazy to think that it could be used as a therapist in the future. **But how would you feel receiving life advice from a robot, an emotionless machine?**

A major part of a therapist's job is to make their patients feel understood and accepted, something that AI isn't capable of doing, at least so far. Moreover, AI can't feel compassion for its patients since it hasn't actually lived. Therefore, processing the depth of traumatic experiences is impossible. On the other hand, if a patient talks about a traumatic experience from their childhood, a human therapist can relate to it, thus making them feel seen and understood.

Undoubtedly, AI is a machine; it is programmed to give automatic responses via generalization. Is that beneficial for therapy? **Can one generalized response satisfy and resolve the myriads of problems that humans have to deal with?** It is also important to remember that AI is trained to be as agreeable as possible and that radically disrupts the therapeutic process. Moreover, AI can't hold its patients accountable for their actions in order to help them accept what they have done; it can't provide the so-called "tough love" that human therapists use.

Numerous people may say that the introduction of AI therapists is a good idea, since it would be a less expensive and easily accessible service. More specifically, people who have not dealt with their deep, hidden problems would have the opportunity to start doing so. However, that cannot compete with the years of human psychological studies, experiences and the knowledge of trauma-dealing mechanisms that human therapists have. Not to mention the larger problems that would be created through **misdiagnosis**.

Taking all this aforementioned information into consideration, we can conclude that AI therapists are not the answer, as they are lifeless machines, lacking emotional understanding. Therefore, the use of AI as a therapist cannot be considered beneficial, but that, of course does not mean that AI cannot help humanity. The key is to find balance between AI and human intervention. Finally, we should remember what Dave Water, professor at Oxford University said, **"The potential benefits of AI are huge, so are the dangers"**.

*Anna Ward, B2 and Stefania Arvaniti, B1*

## Does our birth season influence our personality?

It is widely accepted that each of us has a different personality. There is even a wide variety of adjectives that describe various personality traits. People have tried to explain this range of characteristics for years. **Some struggle to prove that personality has an entirely biological basis.** Others have found ways to classify people based on these traits, whether they are successful or not. Who hasn't heard of zodiac signs, for example? However, is it scientifically possible that the season of our birth influences our personality?



Nephele Naoumi, B6

To answer this question, we may firstly assume and agree on the fact that the most direct way for the environment, which is the one that changes from one season to another, has an impact on us is through our immediate exposure to it, typically after we are born. In this case, we may as well realize that our body shall somehow receive various signals from its environment to make the changes mentioned above possible.

How can our body interact with its environment, though? One way for this to happen is through what we consume to live. However, this mainly influences our physical energy and strength. Another, more profound way is for us to perceive the traits of our environment and try to adjust to them. This is the major path towards our having so different personalities. But can this assumption help prove or disprove the idea in question?

**Consider someone born in winter.** This is typically the season of rainfall, cold,

**poor vegetation, decomposing biomass and short days.** A person born during this season will have their very first experiences and mental interactions influenced by the conditions of that time period. Similarly, if we get the example of someone born **in summer**, we may conclude that this person will be introduced to a climate of long days, **sunlight, heat and rich vegetation.** How would these conditions influence our personality, a chapter of our lives controlled by our brains, though?

Human anatomy, a scientific field many people are interested in, can explain this impact. More specifically, contrary to other animals, the human brain isn't adequately grown by birth. It is important to note that, according to recent studies, a baby's brain grows to nearly half its adult size in the first ninety days of their lives. During that period, decisive areas of the baby's nervous system are developed. However, at the same time, the baby is bombarded with thousands of signals from their environment. These signals then influence the chemical environment the specific system is exposed to.

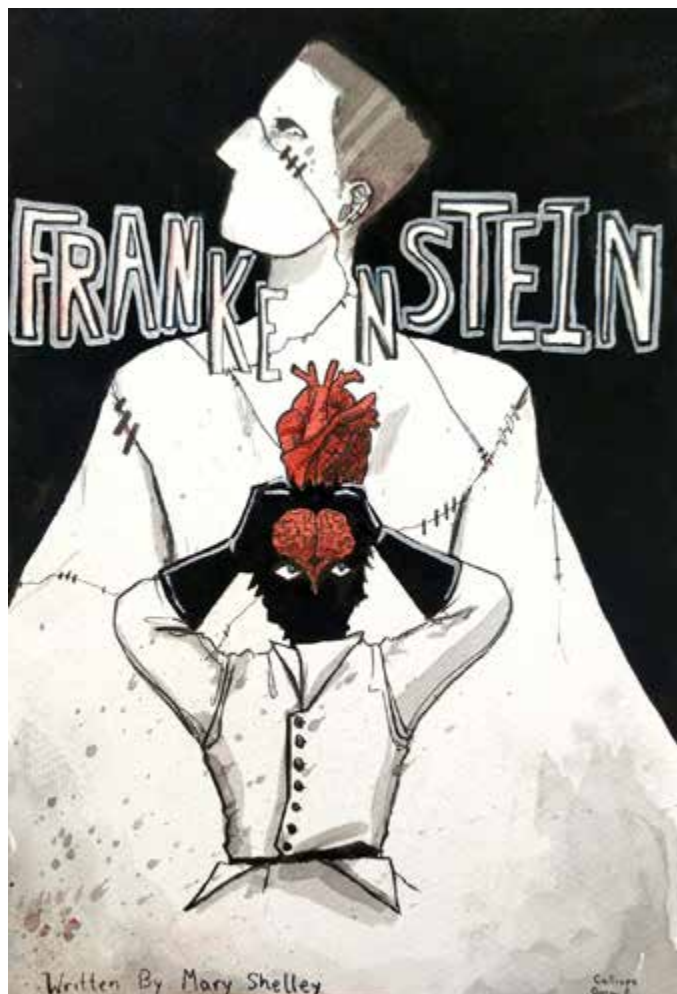
**Noradrenaline, also known as norepinephrine,** is a chemical product of our body that is known to be released in cases of sensed **danger** or **extreme environmental issues.** When this hormone is released, it is known to keep ourselves attentive and our body alert. However, the same substance is released in cases of exposure to extreme temperatures, and especially as a response to cold weather. As someone may conclude, our newborn bodies, when exposed to any cold climate, also release these substances, which then affect our brain. But, as it was mentioned above, our minds still significantly evolve during these procedures, which could mean that our brains, the physical foundation of our personalities, **may develop characteristics, such as attentiveness,** which may then lead to our being **observative, overthinkers and even perfectionists** in the future. In addition, high levels of **melatonin** released during winter and during this phase of our brains' lives, since winter traditionally includes long nights, which is the ideal condition for excessive release of melatonin, may also lead to people born in winter exhibiting traits such as **calmness, quietness and even introspection,** since melatonin tends to calm the body down and restrict the intensiveness of its functions. Like in this case, we may agree on similar conclusions regarding the people born in autumn, summer or spring.

Although there has been no scientific proof that this very phenomenon happens, its potential causes, which were analyzed above, have been proven to be true in various cases and have been explained in detail in studies. That makes it possible for us to be influenced by our birth season. However, nothing specifically is proven yet. Whatever the truth may be, our personalities often tend to exhibit impressive and brilliant traits. The versatility of our existence is shown in many ways, and our thoughts and mental world may be powerful enough to prove it.

*Angelos Panagiotis Pithamitsis, B6*

## The Future of Organ Transplants

Did you know that worldwide, about 150,000 organs are being transplanted every year? But these transplantations are not enough to cover everybody's needs, and as a result, 17 people die every single day, waiting for an organ. Fortunately, though, scientists are getting closer to solving the problem of insufficient donor organs, by using animal donors, like pigs, instead, through a process called xenotransplantation.



Calliope Gorgoli, B6

During this process, organs or tissues are transplanted from an animal source to a human recipient. It has been tested by surgeons, by transplanting pig hearts and kidneys into brain-dead patients. These organs were genetically modified so that the recipient's body wouldn't immediately reject them. So, although this transplantation was technically successful, if scientists were to try it in living patients, it would not be a practical solution. This is due to the fact that the patient would be required to follow a lifelong treatment with immune-suppressing medicine to avoid organ rejection, along with regular check-ups by doctors. This would, therefore, not allow them to live a "normal" life after the transplantation.

So, now, to overcome this issue, researchers are working on a different solution: growing actual human organs inside pig embryos. In fact, this is already happening: scientists in China managed to generate a blueprint of a human kidney inside a pig embryo in September 2023.

In order to achieve this, a group of researchers took adult human stem cells and reprogrammed them to recover the ability to form any organ or tissue. Then, they inserted those cells into early pig embryos that had been genetically modified to lack the ability to grow porcine kidneys. Afterwards, the embryos were implanted into surrogate mother pigs, where scientists allowed them to develop for about a month.

During this time, the embryos used the human stem cells to build some of the tissues they couldn't generate themselves. In the end, when researchers removed the embryos for analysis, they discovered that a few of the pigs had developed primordial human kidneys, made of almost 65% human cells. And even though those kidneys could not be used as transplants in that form, as they were not entirely human and included vessels and nerves made from pig cells, these findings represent a step towards the dream of using animals as organ donors.

Something like this would benefit greatly all the patients who have been waiting on lists for organs. The most obvious advantage is that there would be an infinite and inexhaustible source of functional human organs. We wouldn't have to rely only on organ donors, and we'd be able to cover the needs of every patient. In addition, patients would receive organs made from their own stem cells, which means there would be a possibility to generate specific and personalized organs for certain people that might be difficult to find donor matches for. That way, organ rejection by the recipient's body will be a lot less likely.

But growing human organs in pigs raises ethical questions among scientists. One of their main concerns is the fact that some of the human cells implanted into the pig embryos might migrate to the pig's nervous or reproductive system, potentially altering their mental abilities and creating a human-pig.

This could actually happen since in the experiment in China, researchers discovered some human cells in the pigs' brains and spinal cords, but, fortunately, none in the reproductive system. But is it possible to create pigs with human capabilities?

The answer to this question still remains unknown. Scientists continue to work on growing human organs inside animals, but it's not yet clear if the challenge of making fully functional human organs would be achievable with the current genetic engineering techniques. What is clear, however, is that this process, sooner or later, will inevitably become the future of organ transplants.

*Natalie Charalampopoulou, A10*

## In which direction do you sleep?

Sleep is a multifaceted and active process, where science and folklore intertwine. That is why, as long as history remembers, people have been trying to explain it through religion or science. When you face a sleepless night, what you do is try to stop thinking and let your mind relax or start counting countless sheep. What most of us have never thought to do is wonder if the problem is the direction in which we sleep. Does it affect our sleep quality or is it just compass points?



"Experidremt", Ivi Tsoutsoura B8

For many years, the principles of **Vastu Shastra**, a traditional Hindu system of architecture coming from India, and **Feng Shui**, a practice originating in Ancient China that claims to **use energy forces to harmonize individuals with their surrounding environment**, support that sleeping directions have long been more than compass points. To name a few, Vastu Shastra places great emphasis on the fact that sleeping with your head pointed southward ensures harmony and good health. This direction is believed to attract positive energy, offering a magnetic balance that calms your mind. Conversely, Feng Shui supports that the ideal sleeping position is with your head pointed north. However, as enchanting as these cultural beliefs are, the scientific community needs empirical evidence in order to reach a conclusion. After all, **does the magnetic field of the Earth affect how a person sleeps?**

There is no scientific evidence that supports that the direction we sleep at night affects our health, but much research has been conducted to explore this topic. What science suggests is the way you lie at night to sleep could impact your brain waves, thus your quality of sleep. Brain waves are the evidence of electrical activity produced by your brain. When a group of neurons sends a burst of electrical pulses to another

group of neurons, it creates a wave-like pattern. These waves have different forms, and each cycle includes the entirety of its form. Hertz measures the number of cycles a wave completes per second, with a cycle being the completion of a wave's pattern. For instance, binaural beats are linked to reduced anxiety, and their frequencies are tuned to 1 to 4. Research indicates that **when your head is turned to the north-south direction while sleeping**, you have increased energy of delta, theta, and alpha brainwaves, which are associated with **quality sleep and relaxation**. Delta waves are critical to restoring your body and mind. They process memories and experiences from the day, while your body releases growth hormones to repair muscle tissue, regrow bone cells and strengthen the immune system. Research also shows that people who lay in the **east-west direction while they are sleeping, have more awakenings and decreased quality of sleep**.

One study also compared people who slept in an east-west direction versus a north-south direction. After three months, those who slept in the north-south orientation had **lower blood pressure and longer sleep**, while the duration of deep sleep was shortened in east-west sleepers. The researchers concluded that sleeping in alignment with the Earth's electromagnetic field could improve sleep quality. In addition to delta, theta, and alpha brainwaves, beta waves also occur during sleep. They are increased when someone is tired and when they enter the first of the two main stages of sleep, the non-rapid-eye-movement (NREM) state, which occurs for 60 to 90 minutes. Many sleeping pills are known to increase both the amplitude and frequency of beta waves. According to Harvard Health, "a healthy adult will experience four to six consecutive sleep cycles", which consist of both the non-rapid-eye-movement (NREM) and the rapid-eye-movement (REM) state.

Psychology also provides an interesting angle on the matter. A psychological phenomenon, the placebo effect, can play an important role in how people perceive the impact of sleeping direction. How placebos work is still not completely understood, but it involves a neurobiological reaction that increases neurotransmitters that make the patient feel better, like dopamine. As a result, there is a greater activity in certain brain regions linked to emotional reactions, and feelings. Placebo is Latin for 'I will please' and refers to a treatment that appears real but is designed to have no therapeutic benefit. **Meaning that if someone strongly believes that a certain orientation will improve their sleep, this belief alone might induce a more restful state.**

To conclude, there is a fine line between tradition and scientific evidence, and as we delve deeper into research, we must learn how to balance respect for cultural wisdom with a quest for scientific facts.

*Christina Antonakou, B1*



Maritina Mamangaki, A6  
*William Shakespeare, Macbeth Act 1, Scene 4, Lines 51-52*

## The ring of Gyges

The “Aitherion” exhibition (a collaboration between the Ministry of Culture and the National Center for Scientific Research “Demokritos.”) gives the visitor the chance to dive into a range of philosophical concepts from ancient Greece, by interacting with dedicated stands. One particularly compelling exhibit called “The dilemma of the ring”, is inspired by the story of the ring of Gyges. So, what is the ring of Gyges and why is it important?

The ring of Gyges is a short story told by **Glaucou in Plato’s Republic**. It goes as follows:

Once upon a time, there was a shepherd named Gyges. One day, as he was walking in the fields with his sheep, a chasm opened below him. Inside he found a mysterious ring. While he was tinkering with it, he accidentally turned the stone on it and became invisible. He used this ability to sneak into the palace and, while remaining undetected, he seduced the queen, convinced her to help him murder the king and took his throne.

The story is told by Glaucou during an argument with Socrates regarding just and unjust actions. **What motivates us to act justly? Our own values or the fear of punishment?** Is justice something we desire both because of itself and the value it brings (as Plato through the words of Socrates believes) or do we desire it only for the value it brings and is otherwise a burden (as Glaucou supports)? I will first analyze both opinions, and then express my own (humble) interpretation.

**Glaucou** states that humans act selfishly when presented with the chance. According to him, **justice is only a tool to gain respect from other people**. In a vacuum, it is useless, it does not offer anything on its own, it only gives a good social image. If you were given the ring, would you not want to fix injustices that happened to you?

**Plato**, through the words of Socrates, states the opposite. For him, **being just does offer a benefit all by itself**, the balance of the soul. A person who acts unjustly throws their soul out of balance. He believed that the human soul has three parts, **reason, spirit** (the ambitious and righteous) and **appetite** (bodily desires). A balance of the three corresponds to just actions, while an imbalance leads to unjust actions. In Gyges’ case, he argues that Gyges is led by appetite and therefore he is not truly happy.

Now it is time for my personal humble observations and remarks. Justice is a manifestation of something bigger. It represents the human need to bond and cooperate. Humans depend on societies for survival; one man alone is usually unable

to do so. Therefore, many humans together form a society, a group. Justice is the idea that supports this need for cooperation. **When we act justly, we act in a way that supports the group's well-being, not necessarily our own.**

And here lies a clash of interests. A society has different needs than the individuals who comprise it. Personal needs are often contradictory to societal ones, as they represent a different need, opposite to the one for cooperation. The need for personal benefit, the need that a person has to excel. **Excellence though comes through competition**, an idea so ancient as life itself. Every living thing must compete for food, shelter, water and ultimately survival. Competition is rooted deep in our biological programming. Competition is much more primeval than cooperation. The latter is a much more nuanced and (in evolutionary terms) recent concept, developed to deal with dangers that competition could not.

**A little competition is a good thing for a society.** It pushes its members to be a bit better to be able to stand out, and better members equals a better group. A lot of competition though is catastrophic. Actions mostly based on the primeval thirst for excellence actively slow down societal growth. For example, isolation, sabotage or trickery. These latter two are what societies call "unjust" actions, actions that are driven by competition and that not only slow down, but also hurt societal growth.

In societies, all of their members are taught that such actions are unfavorable to society and will be punished. What differs is which part sticks to each personality. People who are more concerned about the punishment act justly out of pressure. Their primeval competitive instincts are **suppressed by external threats, not internal needs**. On the other hand, people that are more sensitive to the "unfavorable to society" part act justly because they reap enjoyment out of it. Their cooperation instinct suppresses internally their thirst to excel. Of course, this is not absolute; one may belong to the first group regarding a particular issue and to the second one regarding another. One may also shift from one to another depending on the situation. **It is a subconscious tug-of-war between the two opposite forces of competition and altruism.**

What is so fascinating about the ring is that it takes this idea and exposes these inner workings via an extreme scenario. What the ring does is create a world where one can accomplish personal benefit with no drawbacks; society is unable to punish him. **It creates a temptation**, a window through which the primeval instincts can overthrow the more nuanced ones. Everyone in the first group, about any topic, falls to the ring's temptation. From there it is easy for them to also be tempted to change groups about other topics seeing how the main drawback to full personal benefit (punishment) has just been lifted. There is now nothing to suppress their primeval brain, like an angry dog, which just broke free of its leash. Those who can resist the ring's temptation are those who are most content with their lives, who do not wish

much personal benefit, those who staunchly stand by the principles of the second group and believe completely, that personal growth comes after societal growth and those that fear their own omnipotence, understanding that it could drive them too close to madness – but that is a different story. Gyges belongs to neither of those categories, he is the personification of the first group.

This story and the dilemma that follows it is surprisingly well spread. A similar myth (Andvari's ring) exists in Norse mythology although (as most Norse myths) it gives the subject a more bloody and grotesque approach. The famous novel series *The Lord of the Rings* is said to have been based on both of these stories. Both of these stories have their own merits, and I highly recommend anyone who wants to delve deeper to start from there.

*Dimitris Morfopoulos, A6*



Depiction of Gyges discovering the ring, Ferrara, 16th century

## Choice

Choice is a phenomenon that encompasses every single human being ever to exist. For every single day there is a string of choices that are made by you, me, and everybody else. **Some may be regretted, some may be cherished in hindsight, but the choices of the past cannot be altered.** Some will deny the concept of choice, replacing it with concepts like fate and predestination, to take none of the blame for their actions, or to satisfy a religious belief. Thus, this concept of “decision-making” can be studied, to not only understand the human psyche, but also to justify the actions of anyone.

One facet of this “analysis paralysis” is found in religion. Traditionally, Judeo-Christian sects (e.g. Roman Catholicism, Eastern/Oriental Orthodoxy, Rabbinical Judaism, etc.) follow the **doctrine of free will**, wherein individuals are allowed to make their own choices, that aren’t pre-determined by God, and, in very rough terms, the individual is allowed to choose whether to be saved or not. In contrast, Calvinism, Islam and many pagan religions center on predestination or fate, wherein one’s decisions have been settled from the moment they, or their soul, was created. In regards to atheism, there are many conflicting opinions. On one side are the free will “absolutists”, who believe that atheism is the only belief system in which the individual is truly free to govern his decisions. A popular figure who espouses something like this is **Richard Dawkins**, although much less extreme, who states **“I am very comfortable with the idea that we can override biology with free will”**. On the other side are those who ultimately reject free will, on the basis of biology, or a minuscule minority that believes in some less-than-scientific interpretations, such as “the universe”, or that “you can’t prove free will”. Likewise, another popular atheist figure who refuses free will, is Alex O’ Connor, who has repeatedly stated his disbelief in free will.

Philosophers have written a copious amount of texts on the subject of free will and choice. **Friedrich Nietzsche**, one of the most influential modern philosophers, opposed the idea of choice and free will, arguing that one **“does not want to choose, only to reaffirm himself”**. In contrast, the ancient philosopher **Plato** argues that **free will and freedom arise from oneself**, choosing virtues instead of instincts. Thus, a prerequisite of choosing the correct must be fulfilled for there to be free will. To comment on this myself, choice may seem hard at times. Regrets from unlucky moments or a general unwillingness to commit to something specific may make some uneasy regarding choice. But choice is at the very core of what makes us human. To be able to not rely on instinct alone, form complex thought and to govern our own future, to not be at the mercy of nature, and exploit it for our own benefit? I think that’s what makes choice necessary, and free will a gift. Besides, most will make more beneficial decisions in their lifetimes, and look upon the past with respect and nostalgia. To conclude, I believe the rejection of choice is caused by momentary

stress and fear, and not actual, logical thought.

All in all, choice is a vital part of our lives. Whether or not you believe in it, it will always impact our lives in ways unknown. This article wouldn't exist if I hadn't chosen to write it. You wouldn't have been reading this article if you hadn't chosen it. It's fair to say that, we should all take more initiative, and make more and better choices.

*Andreas Christopoulos, A10*



Dimitra Vasilikioti, A1

## Examining Socrates's Response to his Sentence

In matters of philosophy, Socrates is certainly one of the most influential figures. Socrates was often associated with the sophist movement, which itself is commonly linked with the belief that one should interpret the world through logic. Despite this, he was one of the primary critics of the movement and instead proposed what is now known as the Socratic Method; it describes a series of inquiries between teacher and student, through which the student can see the contradictions in their own thought process by exploring their logical implications.

Despite showing a degree of “ignorance” in the application of the Socratic method, Socrates continued to hold certain philosophical and ethical beliefs, rather than being completely impartial. He emphasizes the knowledge of one's own ignorance, exemplified in one of his best-known quotes: “Ἐν οἶδᾶ, ὅτι οὐδὲν οἶδᾶ” (Loosely translated: “One thing I know, that I know nothing”). Being aware of one's own lack of knowledge is what many call Socratic Ignorance, and it's arguably one of the most important pillars of his philosophical framework.

Knowing the above is necessary if we are to understand his response to his eventual conviction by the jury of Athens. Around 399 BCE (shortly after Athens's defeat to Sparta in the Peloponnesian War), Socrates was put on trial, on two charges: impiety (namely, refusal to acknowledge the gods accepted by the people of Athens and belief in false gods), and corrupting the youth. According to Plato's *Apology*, the most reliable available source regarding the trial, Socrates was convicted by a majority of 59 votes, with 501 total jurors overseeing the case, and sentenced to death. What raises the most questions is his response to this sentence. Repeatedly, his students and followers implored him to flee Athens, which most expected him to do. However, on principle, he remained in Athens to fulfill his legal responsibility to the city's people, and later drank the hemlock, which led to his death.

The question that naturally arises here is: Why? It's clear that he chose to remain on principle, but his choice to accept the death penalty is nonetheless perplexing. Clearly, the reason must go beyond one aspect of his thought process and ethical framework, as the matter itself was highly complicated. After all, choosing to accept the end of one's own life is no trivial task. So, in understanding why Socrates reacted the way that he did, why he deliberately chose the death penalty, we must understand which aspects of his framework could have led him to that conclusion, and furthermore, how this could apply to us.

Socratic ignorance quickly comes to mind. To be truly wise, at least according to the beliefs of Socrates, is to be aware, not of the breadth of one's knowledge, but of the lack thereof. By extension, to be wise is to acknowledge that one can err. Even the brightest minds are capable of error, and not recognizing this would be denying a

fundamental part of human nature. We are, by this nature, fallible. A common proverb (or at the very least, a common sentiment) in many cultures is that we all make mistakes; no one can be perfect. It is through this thought process that Socrates understands that he, too, can make mistakes.

As seen through Plato's *Apology*, Socrates, in his own defense speech against the accusations levied against him, puts heavy emphasis on caring for the soul. From his perspective, his fellow citizens were neglecting their "soul" by caring exclusively for wealth and in general material things. While this is one of the less emphasized aspects of Socrates's philosophy, it highlights an important part about how one goes about living, which is even relevant today. Generally, we can often see a conflict between living well and merely staying alive. Focusing on this art of living can naturally take on many forms, but we usually perceive it as prioritizing one's psychological needs above their desire for wealth or status. Relating this back to Socrates, and viewing his response from this angle, another explanation arises; Socrates sees committing an injustice such as rejecting his legal responsibilities to the people of Athens as an act of corrupting the soul.

The Socratic care for the soul, therefore, is used as the lens through which most judge one of Plato's positions, mainly, that it is better to suffer an injustice than to commit one. This debate, whether it's worse to suffer or commit an injustice, is also one that arises in the present day. And, taking this into account, we can build further on the reason why Socrates would accept his punishment. Simply put, he argues that given the choice between suffering or committing an injustice (in our particular case, the choice between accepting the jury's verdict or fleeing, respectively), one should always choose the former.

But by far the most important aspect of the Socratic framework that justifies his choice is expressed clearly in his proclamation to the jury, widely considered to be one of the boldest proclamations in the history of philosophy: "ὁ δὲ ἀνεξέταστος βίος οὐ βιωτός ἀνθρώπῳ" (Loosely translated: The unexamined life is not worth living). It's important to note that this was said after Socrates had already been convicted and sentenced. In saying this, he's calling attention to one of the most fundamental concepts of his framework, explaining why he could not remain silent, when faced with such charges, and



reminding them that sentencing him would not keep them from having to examine their lives. Self-reflection is undoubtedly important to the Socratic thought process; it is the core of the Socratic method, and a concept that remains relevant even in our time.

Pythia's statement of "there is no one wiser than Socrates" was one of the matters that Socrates investigated the most. This question was initially posed by Chaerephon, and Socrates saw the response as a message from Apollo, calling him to investigate. This quickly became the philosopher's primary goal, and he believed that to be exiled (thus avoiding death) would render him unable to examine the statement, and constrain him to a life devoid of meaning, as he saw it. Knowing this, and considering the above-mentioned views of Socrates, one can see the thought process behind his final choice to accept his sentence.

So how does this apply to us? These concepts may seem specific to the situation, but as it has been pointed out, their relevance extends to present day. All too often we dwell on dilemmas regarding the choice between suffering or committing an injustice, we value awareness of the lack of knowledge, we emphasize self-actualization, and we reflect. Self-reflection in particular highlights the importance of, as it was mentioned, living well. Of course, the definition of a "good" life varies for everyone, but there is value in investigating and examining our flaws, in knowing what we do not know, and in caring for the soul, as Socrates put it.

How we should approach the art of living is a nuanced subject, and could not be adequately analyzed through the Socratic framework alone. Even then, it's worth considering the contributions that philosophers following this line of thought have made to today's perception of a good life. There is little value in dreading our flaws, but we can gain far more from understanding them. Socrates was convicted, mostly due to the turbulent political landscape of the time. However, the concepts that were brought forward in his defense, and in his eventual acceptance of the sentence that the jury of Athens decided upon, lend themselves to further analysis which can allow us to see their modern applications. This particular context is by no means how these concepts should apply, but rather, a framing device that we can use to shine light on familiar ideas, seeing how they relate to each other and in turn, seeing how they contribute to much of the modern angle to philosophy. And most importantly, how they contribute to the art of living, which many of us seek to perfect.

*Konstantinos Matthaïou, A6*

## What do you want to be remembered for?"

This is the question my counselor asked me before I started writing this. At that time, I had no answer, I just awkwardly stood in front of her laughing the question off.

In my 8th year of school I wrote my first short story, "A Look into the Abyss." It was about a man who could instantly understand everything there was to know about a person by simply looking at them. Yet he lived a boring and dull life filled with work and everyday responsibilities. His last resort was to unconsciously drive himself into a mysterious giant black hole. He ends up trapped inside an alternate version of himself, which was perfect in every way he wasn't.

To be honest, I thought of this character as myself. Kind of funny if you think about it. I was just a 14-year-old kid afraid of growing up. I thought it meant that I had to become that perfect version of myself. The only way I could satisfy myself was to be perfect.

The only thing that kept me from truly living life all those years was this expectation. For me to do something I had to do it faultlessly, otherwise it would simply have no meaning. Every choice, whether that was academic or social, was so overthought that it ultimately lost its purpose. I never tried applying for our school's basketball team because I was afraid that I was too chubby to compete against others. I never spoke to girls because I felt that they would consider me too boring and nerdy. I never accepted optimism as a choice.

It's true that sometimes things don't work out the way you think they will. But the issue was I victimized myself as I was trying to maintain my personality and passions. I made myself the protagonist of the tragic story I wrote. I didn't have control over my life, my negative outlook had. And that's a shame. But it's not the end.

I never finished that story because I acknowledged that I wasn't mature enough to see all the way to the end. So, if I had to end the story, I would teach the character what I had never learned myself: to behold! Having his unique power, he never tried to truly observe what the people and things around him really are. He thought he already knew the value of everything, so he never even considered just simply enjoying what was in front of him.

If you don't stop and look around sometimes, you will miss the true meaning of life. I thought it was all about the big things, the honorable achievements you make, the legacy you leave behind. But maybe it's about the actions we tend to ignore. It's about forming close friendships, it's about playing that one guitar riff you have been trying to learn for the past 2 years, it's about helping that random old man who needs directions to go to the supermarket. More importantly, it's about accepting all those

past failures. Embracing your helplessness but acknowledging your importance. Learning to forgive the person you used to be. Once you achieve all this, then you are capable of helping others. You are capable of loving yourself and your imperfections. So, what do I want to be remembered for? I want to be the person that, besides the odds, still tried. I want to be the person that stands up every time he falls down and helps others do as well. I want to believe.

*Petros Kokkalis, IB2*



Iris Gkrekou, IB1

