

Spring 2025

Issue 8

UNLEASH YOUR

Spoken

OF  
CONSCIOUSNESS

WRITE

The Oakham School Literary Magazine

## **Foreword**

A very warm welcome to the Spring issue of SpOken, Oakham School's student-led literary magazine, edited by students and editors-in-chief Dr Reddy and Ms Curtis. We have selected creative pieces written by students of almost every age and year to enrich and brighten your Easter break with captivating and vibrant texts!

This issue features a wide variety of literary and artistic works. Amongst many superb works, you will find an interview with one of Oakham's three Reading Ambassadors, exciting poetry and photography work from the Form 3 Battlefields Trip and striking dystopian openings by Form 1.

We hope that SpOken can encourage you to explore your own creative potential, experiment and grow! If you've submitted a work, which hasn't been included, please do not feel discouraged – it might shine in the next issue! And if you are thinking about sharing your work through the magazine, you are always welcome to contact us or Dr Reddy via email. We wait to hear from you!

Finally, we want to say a huge thank you to our readers! Without you this wonderful space of creativity and connection would not come to life.

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**Front cover by Varvara Mast (F6)**

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# Lower School





## Romeo and Juliet Witness Statement by L1

**Edie Williams**

*I, Franchesca Williamo, hereby state the paragnaphs below are truly observed and written truthfully on the 4th of October 2025.*

*It was just past noon when I was walking to the bakery in the marketplace when I heard shouting. I knew this time as 12 bells chimed half an hour ago. By the far side of the fountain there was a commotion between men in red and blue. I heard them exchange insults such as 'pompion', 'rump-fed' and 'spongy'. It began to escalate quickly. Swords were drawn and blood was on Tybalt's hands from the narrow-cobbled streets. I knew this as I saw him at another fight not long ago. Before I got too close, town folks were cheering them along and some traumatised mothers backed away for safety. I backed away for safety but still witnessed this chaos. I think the Montagues were confused and shouted in disannay. However, the swords kept clashing and blood kept coming. Both the families were injured. 10 minutes later, the guards finally came and saved everyone. The fight ended when they gave a stern warning, and it would not be tolerated. The shop owners packed up and the Montagues and Capulets left in disappointment.*

*I promise this content above is written truthfully.*

*Signed, Francesca Williamo*

**George Lister**

I, Georgio Lorenzo, do hereby solemnly swear and state that the following list of events I endured on the evening of the 25th of October 1552, near the butchers, are true to my word.

I was just leaving the butchers at I think 7:00 pm because the bells were ringing when two people wearing blue jackets and black hats ran past me biting their thumb in my direction. I was just about to confront them when about four other people all in red shirts and brown trousers arrived shouting things like "artless, rump-fed, pumpion". I'm not sure but I think they were Montagues and Capulets because I saw the same people at a ball last night. The one with a distinctive voice who sounded like Benvolio suddenly drew out a sword and cut off the finger of one of the Capulets servants. After a while, crowds were starting to increase with oohs and aahs and little children cheering them on with the fight escalating to another level. I was starting to get a bit bored after a while, as it happens at least 3 times a week. All of a sudden, Benvolio lunged at one of the people in blue because a few seconds earlier a tall man with black hair and a beard killed one of the Montague servants. It felt like about half an hour before the guards intervened with some killed in the process. They took away Benvolio and all of the dead bodies with them, leaving in anger.

I declare that the entire content is true to my word, and I make it of my own free will.

Georgio Lorenzo

## Romeo and Juliet Witness Statement by L1

**Juliet Widdowson**

**I Juliano Cassandro witnessed the following on the 29 March 1594.**

**It was around 12:30 pm when I saw people having lunch in the bakery and stall holders shouting sales when I saw the Capulets bite their thumb. The crowd went antipathetic. After everyone heard "artless rump fed pompion". I think it was two teenage boys. I think I heard someone say "I can't believe Samsom and Abraham are fighting again for the third time this week". The fight mushroomed as they both drew blood. There was shouting, screaming, even crying. No one knew how long this fight lasted. It seemed to be at least 30 minutes with the amount of blood there was. Finally more combats came. It was too late. Samsom had been stabbed in the arm.**

**I solemnly swear that the text above is true.**

**Juliano**

**Amelie Lewindon**

*I Aruaro Lewindon hereby state that this statement is the truth and truth only of what happened on the 25th March.*

*At mid-day just as the clock struck twelve, I was on my way to the bakery when two boys shoved past me both sniggering and whispering intensely. Ahead of them was the fountain where there was a boy who was having a drink. The boy at the fountain I recognized was a Montague as he was in red from head to toe. I was curious so I followed. The boys were in blue: the Capulets! I knew there would be trouble with the two families together. The one Montague, which I know as Abraham, started biting his thumb. When this happened, people started to crowd around the two families. Suddenly Tybalt threw out his sword and swords started clashing fiercely. I soon realized I knew some of the people in the crowd, such as: Rosaline, Friar Lawrence, and some shop owners. I then decided to focus on the fight. I heard the following words 'artless scum', which by the sound of it was Mercutio, another Montague. I saw that around the three boys there were teenagers watching the fight in interest while children were screaming and running away to their mothers. But the baker's son, Sam, stayed and probably had the clearest view out of everyone. As blood was on the swords, I went back hoping the guards outside the church would come and tear them apart from each other. As I was thinking about going to get the guards, the prince arrived and gave a stern warning to both the families, and he let them go back to the families. Then I realised it was 12:10 and I then had to rush back home.*

*I swear that the statement above is to the best of my knowledge.*

*Singed*

*Aruaro Lewindon*

*Waste Land*  
**Madeleine Barber**

My eyes fluttered open, as the vivid sun shone on my face. I got up, slowly gathering up the few belongings I had found, the heavily dented flask and the frayed and torn blanket. I clambered over the sea of waste heading towards the large rock jutting out of the ground. I chipped off a piece of loose rock and scratched down yet another day. 176. What was the point? Scavenging. Living on scraps, barely surviving! For what? Eventually I'd get found and killed. Why not end my misery?

I snapped back to reality to the faint whirring of a jet. Shoot!

They were here.

I sprinted to the other side of the rock, scrambling towards the hole. I heaved the bulky armchair aside, uncovering a small opening. The jagged rock scratched my skin as I crammed myself inside, making me wince in pain. The androids beamed down just as I pulled the armchair back over the hole. I held my breath barely daring to blink as I peered through the crack. My heart was pounding as the androids deposited the mountain of rubbish. I could just see through the crack them talking to command. Then they were gone.

I waited till the aircraft had become a tiny speck on the horizon. I pushed the chair to the side, squeezing through the gap. Leaning against the cool stone, my chest heaving I closed my eyes and let my mind drift to the past. The crammed cities. The bidding. People being dragged to their death. My parents being dragged to their death. But I survived. I escaped.



*The Wastes*  
Theodore Whelan

Thud. Thud. Thud. The footsteps were loud and close behind him. He couldn't stop. He couldn't hide. He had to run. He looked back. He wished he hadn't. All he could see was the giant, gaping cave that was its mouth. The derelict, beaten, run-down buildings disappeared down into its huge mouth. Soon the city was nearly gone. A newspaper fluttered by reminding him of the date: 2150. The beginning of a new decade. The one day that he could die, and this beast had found him. It and its pack of hounds continued to devour the remains of that once great city. Whole skyscrapers disappeared down into the giant. He focused on the rising pillars and the huge city ahead of him. The thing opened its massive maw a little wider. It was playing with him. It was having fun. He drew closer and closer to the rising buildings ahead of him. Too late he realised that they would fire at him. It was protecting Bikreig. The city built on the remains of Moscow. The guns started firing. Harpoons and lasers fell on the small, skinny, twig-like boy and its followers. Time and time again a harpoon bolt whistled past his face, or a laser shredded a hole deep into the ground by his feet. The creatures behind him shrieked and wailed as bolt after bolt hit them and the sound of a huge body dropping to the floor one after the other. He looked back. There were less. He might escape. A harpoon bolt the size of a tree trunk struck as he turned. It slid past his face as he turned. It split his eye and struck down hard in the middle of his foot. His momentum tore his foot in two. He ran straight into a huge boulder thrown from the battlements. He fell back. He didn't even hit the floor. He was snatched out of the air by a set of needle-like teeth. He got a brief glance at the creature's face before a splatter of blood blocked his vision. His ribcage splintered and grazed his lung. The hunt was over. The creatures retreated to their dusty abode. Blood pooled around the body.

Leon was a small skinny boy who had never seen daylight. His hair was as pale as his face and bleached from all the different chemicals used in the anti-viruses. As a result of the tests and anti-viruses he had startlingly orange eyes. He was the human equivalent of a lab rat. He was housed in a huge communal area where he would often be bullied because he was the son of the King and thus got the easy life. He had been tested on and poked and prodded all his life. The leading chieftains of Grifaf created viruses to kill off millions in a city before charging in and taking over Leon and tested the antidotes. Leon was one of many test subjects in the grand testing chambers of the inner sanctum but he had been there the longest. He was the lucky devil who got to test the immunization serum, so he usually lived through the pandemics in the test chambers. The group that was testing the effectiveness of the virus usually didn't. He was now 13 and was constantly asked questions by eager boys and girls only to see them all die. He been there since he was 8 and that was impressive.

As soon as he was fifteen, he would be given to the training barracks and would become a commando, all the others who did Leon's job rose to that rank. Some had become even more famous than the ethnarch of Cranito the man who created the biggest, most effective super-weapon ever. K.R.A.K.E.N (Kaleidoscopic, radioactive, anti-matter keystone, entity N). The keystone that powered it was compressed into a single crystal. Entity N was AI. It was the targeting system that controlled K.R.A.K.E.N. It didn't like being held captive. It was using its vastly superior knowledge to create new living things. The creations were escaping and getting bigger. The auto laser based on almost useless waste formed a controlled beam of ionized plasma. This would not only spread a virus through the attackers faster than wildfire, but it would



disable all their defense systems and their weaponized vehicles, proving to be the most effective system of defense in the world. Grifaf were the first to leap at the opportunity and they launched a huge attack on Cranito and took over before they could create a virus to put in it. Leon heard a noise in the distance. A faint crashing sound came from far away down the corridor. The double doors crashed off its hinges. A low growl emanated from it. Leon ran.

A huge scaly snout probed through the wreckage. He heard someone scream as it found a survivor and devoured it. Blood splattered everywhere. The scaly creature's teeth-stained red. Something heavy landed on him; he blacked out. The weight of the huge slab of metal half crushing him...

'Lynx, have you found anyone else?'

'No boss, nufin'

'Are you sure?'

'Yes boss'

'Good, then our plan has worked. Scavenge what you can Lynx and we shall return home. Tonight, we feast.'

Leon woke up. There was something big and cold smothering him. He rolled over. Grifaf was in ruins. He walked slowly through the ruins of his old home. Nothing was left. He was the last survivor. He continued walking. There was a body in the distance. Leon eventually reached it. The way the body had died was weird. It looked like a gun wound had pierced it. Like someone had shot it and a few feet away there lay a gun. It was a beautifully made killing machine with a carved ivory stock a scoped thermal lense on the sight. It was a long-range assault rifle and the magazine had a few shots left in it. Someone had been there since the attack and the demolition of Grifaf and finished off any survivors. He was lucky he was still alive. Now he had something to defend himself. The creature might still be here though. That was a problem but now he had the gun it might be a different story when they met again. Leon had a brief check of the area and found a bag, three extra bullets, a pack of rations and a roll of bandages. He walked on for a while but could not find any traces of K.R.A.K.E.N. That meant that someone had taken it. Or it had been destroyed.

*Dystopian Novel Opening*  
**Chloe Davis**

Hello. I'm Keely Greenwood. I probably won't be alive now. Here's why...

You see, I live in a miniscule village in what's left of London. We were unheard of for a while, but then everything changed. A man called Len Hummingworth; he created the world's fastest shoes which became an overnight success. As a celebration of what had happened, he sent everyone in the village a pair, but as it turned out this was all part of his evil plan. Everyone in our small village was zooming about on these shoes and the Government even started sending us food again. So that was that: we were famous, we were getting food, we were happy, everything was perfect.

Till one day that is. I had just turned on our TV when the news popped up on my phone. So, I read through it and was stunned when I saw my best friend had died after her robotic shoes malfunctioned. The next few days, death after death was reported, all caused by the shoes, so I decided to throw mine out. That was the action that has kept me alive. Day and Night more notifications leapt up telling me about the endless people gone. Soon, I was the only one left. Fighting for survival. Every so often, I would go to the market to see what scraps I could find. Now there's nothing. The Patrollers must have picked up on what I was doing. So here I am. Waiting for them to get me. And kill me...



*I Fell*  
**Coco Jordan**

Fire was falling. Bombs were dropping. Robots were coming.

I ducked. A fiery ball of red whistled overhead. The sky lit up with pinks and ambers, reds and blacks, while scarce clouds hung like grief filled frowns. The putrid scent of corpses and death danced through the air, owing to the many bodies piled high, just left to rot. Blood covered bullets lay silent and subdued next to me, mocking my survival.

My friends are dead. My parents are dead. My family is dead. Except for my two brothers, but they left long ago, as well as the rest of the population. It was just me and the robots. Me and the fire. Me and the death. Fighter planes scanned through the sky, searching for human life. But what was in them? Robots. Rampaging, malfunctioned, bloodthirsty robots. I plugged my ears, dived under a piece of scrap metal and crossed my toes. Silence. I glanced up. A massive silver plane created a looming shadow overhead. They were coming faster and faster.

The immense aircraft hovered above, scanning, searching, scrutinising for life. Hunting for life. My heart was thumping, my legs were shaking, my fingers were twitching. My brain telling me to run but I couldn't. I was stuck to the floor with superglue it seemed.

I couldn't. Suddenly, a sweep of tiredness and failure ran through my body, and I gave in to it. I stood up, hands raised.

Gunshots pieced the sky. Bangs scrambled to find my ears. Blood trickled down my chest.

I fell.



*The Beautiful Truth*  
Bella Steiger

I'm seriously strange  
That's what they call me  
But that's okay  
Because it makes me special.

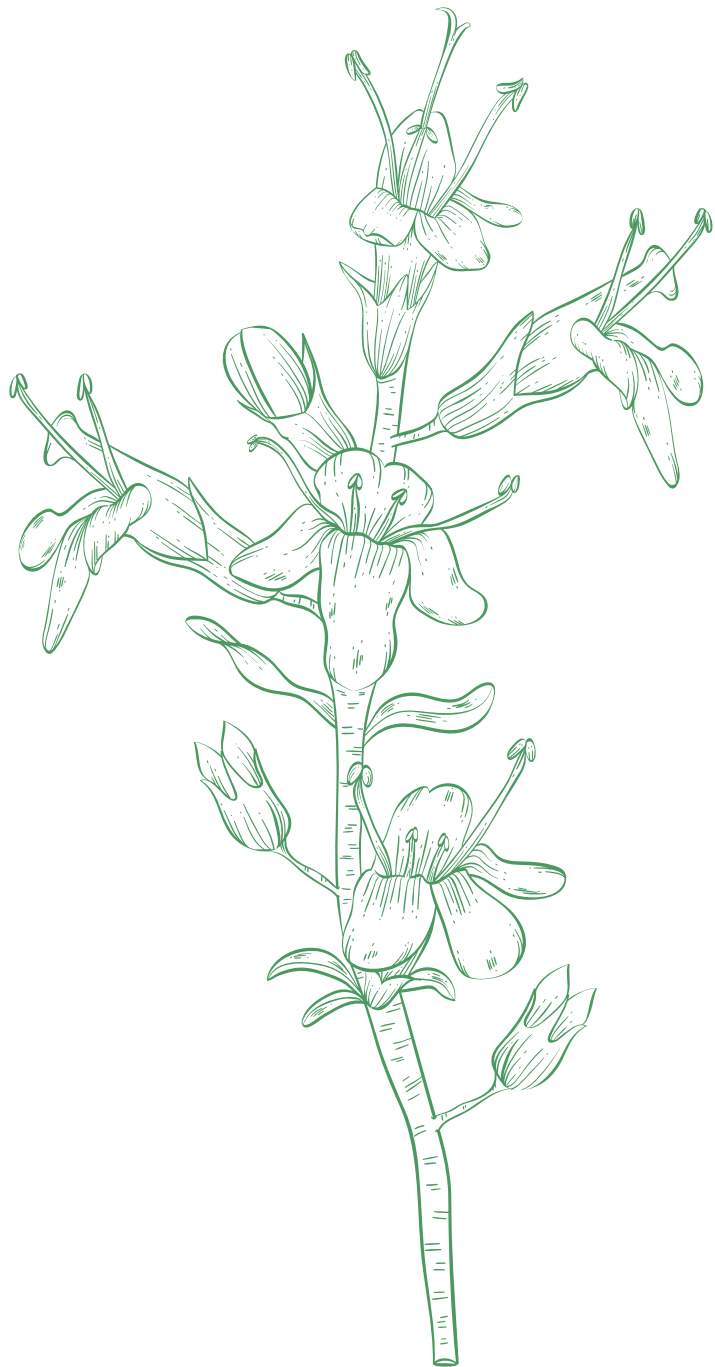
I'm definitely different  
That's what they call me  
But that's okay  
Because it makes me unique.

I'm wacky and weird  
That's what they call me  
But that's okay  
Because it makes me stronger.

Why should I  
Be someone else for them?  
This isn't drama class  
I shouldn't be acting.

When being me  
Should be good enough  
This mask is disguising me  
This mask is obscuring me.  
I mean I could be anything, an:  
Action packed astronaut  
Or a perfect popstar  
Or an epic Olympian.

But at the end of the day  
I think  
I'm just going to be  
ME!!!





*Who Are You?*  
Darcey Benton-Jones

Who are you exactly?  
The truth can't be told  
Are you young, teenage, infant or old  
Are you famous or rich or an actor or poor  
Nobody knows not even you I'm sure

You can't be good at everything  
It's really quite impossible  
But don't doubt yourself and don't be jealous  
Anything is possible

You're really quite spectacular  
So keep being who you are  
Keep being funny and kind and imperfect  
just the way you are

Don't worry about others  
And how perfect they are  
Just keep thinking who am I exactly?  
I love being bizarre!



*The Truth About Truth*  
Emma Chotrani

Truth is like a light that shines,  
It helps us find our way in lines.  
When friends are real and not pretend,  
It makes you feel like you can't offend.  
It's telling secrets, sharing dreams,  
It's being honest, or so it seems.  
Like when you mess up, and you say,  
"I'm sorry, I'll do better, okay?"  
Sometimes it's hard, like climbing a tree,  
But when you're true, you're really free.  
It's the stories we tell, the laughter we share,  
The little moments that show we care.  
So let's be brave, and always be kind,  
With truth in our hearts, our paths unwind.  
Together we'll shine, like stars up high,  
With truth as our guide, we can touch the sky!



*Sausage Dogs*  
Karra Muringani

In the sun, they lay free,  
Chasing their tails in glee.  
With tiny legs and long warm hugs,  
They bring joy like little bugs.  
Wagging their tails and barking with love,  
These truly were sent from above.  
With floppy ears and noses so keen,  
They are the cutest animal seen.  
Through fields they run,  
Like sausages from a bun.  
In every wag and every playful bark,  
They light up our lives, leaving a happy mark.  
With hearts so bold,  
And stories to be told.  
In a cozy home where the sun shines bright,  
Leaves a sausage dog, a beautiful sight.



*Class Poems:*  
**Loneliness is... 2/E/1**

a lighthouse that can't be seen in an endless storm  
watching waves crashing on an empty beach  
the seabird calling for its friends over a blank, grey sky  
your own echo thrown back in your face

a journey with no purpose, forever walking with no end in sight  
watching the front door close for the final time once enclosed in darkness  
the ghost of happiness drifting through a silent chamber  
waiting for them to come back but they never do

reaching for the stars but grasping nothing  
laughing with them until you realise they were never there  
the melody of your lone beating heart

a dot of colour on an empty canvas





*Class Poems:*  
**What is happiness? 2/E/1**

Happiness can be as simple as the sun shining over the street  
Or the rainbow coming after a storm.  
Happiness is someone finally hears your cries and  
You being filled with joy after endless sadness.  
Happiness is never-ending darkness being shadowed with light -  
Maybe hearing the click of a light switch flooding the dark room with light.  
Happiness is like the ugly duckling finally finding a friend.  
A bright room full of laughter and as many people  
As candles on the birthday cake.  
Happiness is peace after an infinite conflict: darkness inside you  
Filling up with glorious light...  
Happiness is hugging someone you haven't seen in a while and  
The warm dust glow illuminating buttery sunshine;  
Happiness is letting go of your pain  
And filling the darkness with summer rain;  
Happiness is the radiation of love  
And the relief after a life of conflict;  
Happiness is the bright smiles illuminating the gluttonous stormy skies,  
Whilst dancing through the meadows,  
Following the trail of fluttering butterflies...

# Middle School



Photo taken by Jayden Phiri (F3)



Photo taken by Joshua White (F3)



*Class Poems:*  
**Kindness is... Set 3/E/6**

Kindness is  
Pure,  
A hidden power  
A box of treasure.

Kindness is  
A true heart,  
A well-intended lie,  
Hidden in plain sight.

Kindness  
Connects you  
and me  
And is an under-rated trait.

Kindness is  
Helping others when they struggle.  
Making someone smile is  
the key to happiness.



*Memories from the Front*  
**Emerick Cheung**

15th Dec 1915

As I arrive in the trenches for the first time, the stench of rotting corpses covered in mud kills the atmosphere. The squelching of the muddy ground sucks my boots like they are food. Every step I take makes my boots sink deeper and deeper like it is quicksand. Sleep is near impossible with the squeaking of the rats scurrying from sandbag to sandbag with their tiny claws clicking against the muddy ground. Latrines overflow the area until it floods into a swimming pool, soaking me like a sponge.

The smell of the stinking mud, mingled with rotting corpses, lingering gas, open latrines, wet clothes and unwashed bodies, clogs my nostrils and make it hard to breathe without gagging, enough to permanently kill my sense of smell. It wraps around my nose like a heavy, suffocating blanket, unable to escape from it. The invisible toxicity of the air is deadly enough to make the devil become sick of sin. I feel like every minute I spend in the trenches is one step closer to slaughtering me.

6th Aug 1916

I've spent almost a year living in this noxious hellhole. The atmosphere of the trenches has only gotten worse. Muddy grounds feast on our feet, resulting in chopped off legs. It's not only just the squelching of the mud and the squeaking of the rats, but also the booming of the explosions, the banging of the bayonets, the screaming of soldiers in pain, and the hissing of the deadly gas that make this place a nightmare I'll never forget.

It's even worse over the top. Witnessing everyone I befriend die on No Man's Land beats my heart like a drum. Not to mention the slicing of the bayonets, even the thought of it haunts me, bloodshed everywhere. Some try to light up the room by cracking dry jokes with their dry lips, but even their laughter is hollow, dull with the horrors they have seen.



*Memories from the front***Yui Kashiwase**

20th December 1915

Dear Diary,

We are now in a trench. It is just 5 days since we came here... Life before I came here, 5 days in the blink of an eye. This was my hardest decision ever: coming to fight against Germany. The trench is muddy, damp, dirty and dangerous by the rain. Also, the smell here is awful; the smell of damp, stagnant water, smoke, rotting corpses, sewage, unwashed bodies. I cannot and do not want to believe that I will be here for a year. It has been about 7 months and a bit since the start, preparing for the war makes me fearful.

The darkness of the night makes me more terrified; it stands out the smell and sound. The silent night makes the sound of a small noise as big as trumpet. Even though I am already exhausted, the sound means that I cannot sleep... As the sun rises, I wake up. It feels good hearing birds singing which transports me from the trench. I really wanted to spend Christmas with my family, it makes me miserable that I left my wife and kids in England...

5th July 1916

Dear Diary,

We have finished the fourth day of the battle and now we are on day 5. The time moves rapidly slowly. The view from the trench changes from time to time. I can now see that the war has started. There are many other soldiers injured by the tree, the cross point of two German cannons. The injured soldiers crawled to the crater to hide from the Germans. The craters all around the trenches were full of injured and dead soldiers. I run above them, but I could not think anything about them.

The muddy ground makes it harder for us to walk; the hill makes us exhausted by the tiredness. Today, it started raining suddenly, which made the smell of stagnant water, sewage, injured and dead bodies horrible. Also, the ground gets muddy making it hard to run, even walk. In the trench, there are many soldiers who are struggling with trench foot. But in the other way, we were able to cool down by the heat. The rain was unexpected, we didn't prepare anything. Is it really July? Even in the night, we can hear the explosions, gunfire. But the most horrifying thing is the darkness and squelching. We cannot have a good sleep enough though we are tired and exhausted. The trenches are dark as deep sea, we cannot see what is in front of us. We move by what we hear and touch, the narrow trenches make it harder to walk through. I hope the world will be peaceful...

*Memories from the Front***Will Beaty**

1915 December

My first day in the front line I arrived in the trench and my first job was to dig where I would sleep for the next year or maybe two. I was already wet and cold; I could not imagine how cold I would be by the end of the day. I got woken up by a rat sitting on my chest staring right at me. The next morning, the Germans jumped into our trench while we were cleaning our guns. We managed to keep the trench. I was helping soldiers up and taking them to triage to be treated the next morning.

My friend and I climbed up onto the fire step for our first time and fired at some attacking German soldiers. I hit two and my friend hit one. We thought that this war was going to be easy. All the soldiers were preparing to go over the top but I was not because I was new and had never trained for this, so I stayed back and watched how to do it. At night I had to go and recover all the bodies and bring them back to the trench. This is hell.

1916 February

I have been here for 3 months, and I have experienced my first gas attack. Unfortunately there was not enough gas masks and my friend did not make it I saw him get flung into a wagon and I have not seen him since. I stabbed someone with my bayonet. It was going to be me or him, but I was quicker; it was scary. I could not believe that all this happened in three months.

I have been sleeping in the trench for what felt like years surrounded by rats. It is still wet and cold. I wish I'd brought more pairs of socks - my feet are so wet. All the food tastes like mud and sand and nothing was able to be kept clean. I cut my leg, and it keeps getting full of mud and is now badly infected. There was a bombardment of shells and since then I have had a constant ringing inside my head.

*Memories From the Front***Max Hazard**

Written 12/12/1915

As the sun rose over the horizon, the Sargent came round and woke us up saying "You lot are going to the front today, good luck" which filled me with confidence. He followed up with "You're leaving in 20 minutes with all your kit so get ready NOW!! And make your beds." I rushed to pack my kit into my bag. We briskly left in the back of big trucks. We arrived at the drop of point at just after 10:45 AM, we got out of the trucks 1.5 miles away from the front, to protect the trucks from artillery. We marched up to the trench we had been assigned to. When we found out the conditions we would be living in we were devastated; we had to live in this! It was nothing like what I had imagined. I attempted to sleep.

BOOM! BOOM! We were woken by the sound of the German artillery and the shrieking and screams of injured soldiers and officers shouting "GET DOWN! GET DOWN!" One officer shouted, "as soon as the shelling stops get to your firing steps and shoot every moving thing you see!!" I will be honest, I started to question why I had signed up. I was scared, very scared.

Written on 5/11/1916

The days are all mixing now. It is just mud, cold, and the constant noise of the guns. The rain will not stop, and the trench is full of water. The smell of sweat and dirt is everywhere. After each explosion, the quiet feels worse—like the world is waiting for the next one. We are stuck here, not knowing what comes next. Some of the men are holding up, but others are cracking under the pressure. I try to stay strong, but it is hard. I think about home a lot—my mom, the warmth of the fire, the smell of fresh bread. It feels so far away now.

I cannot forget Private Thompson. He did not know what was coming, murdered by a shell without warning. I keep seeing his eyes. It is hard to forget that image. There's talk of sickness, and I do not know how much more we can take. But we keep going because we must. Tonight, we will get some bread and soup, but it is nothing like what I remember. I just try to get through each day. I will sleep with my rifle close. Tomorrow's another day in this place. We push on because that is all we can do.

— Private E. Watson

*Memories of The Trenches***Jack Wheeler**

Dear diary,

Today is the 13th of December 1915. Whilst I was at army training Sergeant Major Gellert gave me the orders of going to the secondary trenches. I was quite scared since I was risking my life going and staying in the trenches, but I signed up for this so I must be proud of being able to go to the trenches. Whilst on the train to Calais, some soldiers were painting, drawing or eating chocolate they'd brought. The train was very crowded, a bit disgusting and quite dark. When we got to the main barracks, we had a little break just to cool down, then we put our equipment on carts and started our adventure to Verdun. The walk was a nightmare, we were all tired, the path was super muddy which slowed us down a lot and the air smelled horrific sometimes. After 6 days and 5 nights, we finally arrived at the trenches. When I got at the trenches it was horrible, I could hear spine shivering screams every 4 hours, and the food was barely edible.

Dear diary,

Today is the 14th of December 1915. I woke up depressed more than ever because I had a terrible night's sleep even though I'm in the secondary trench, which is a little bit quieter than the front-line trenches. I already hate this place. For breakfast I had cold oats which were somehow bitter and water that tasted like petrol. At least I have my cigarettes which calm me down a bit. I had to dig a muddy bunker, remove the dirty water from the trench and lay down some planks so this hell hole doesn't fill up with mud from its walls. I want to write a letter to my mum and check in on her. I miss Mum. Its nighttime now, it's cold and wet with a very un-comfortable bed. The bed feels like sleeping on bricks. I'm not sure how I'll sleep on an empty belly, but I will try. I think I'm going to die here.

Dear diary, 18th of November 1917.

Today I was sitting in the trench hoping we do not get attacked even though the secondary trench does not get attacked much, and I was bored out of my mind and had this overwhelming feeling of fear. I couldn't sit around too much since there's a lot of manual labour involved with the trenches. Whilst doing work in the soggy, sad, scary trenches, I thought of starting a painting but my train of thought suddenly came to a halt because the Germans detonated a shell! Everyone was panicking thinking the Germans were going to detonate another shell. Thankfully they just detonated one shell, suddenly I hear a blood curdling scream from my best friend, his legs were blown up! I ran over as fast as I could, but I couldn't make it in time due to the flooding of the trench best friend is dead. I can't sob too much over him because if the Germans attack, I wouldn't be prepared. Sergeant major Smith said he wants to have a chat in the morning.

Dear diary, 19th November 1917

I'm dead. Sergeant Major Smith called me up to the front lines. I don't know what to do. The overwhelming feeling of fear is eating me up. I can't run anymore due to this feeling. My first impression of this place was daunting, realising I was going to die, but now it's certain I will die. Sergeant Major Smith gives us the gameplan to go over the top. I could barely listen to him because the fear was tremendous. We set up our guns, and then we hear the whistle. Once we went over the top, I heard men screaming, "ATTTTAAAAACCKKKK!!!!" Everything was moving so quickly until I saw something I could never forget no matter how many times I pray: a soldier gargling blood whilst a bayonet is pulled vigorously away from his chest. I became enraged. I started stabbing any German I could see whilst praying I don't get hit by a machine gun. After the attack we retreated to the gloomy trenches. The nurses bandaged me up, but I felt like I was paralyzed because of what I had seen this horrible, terrifying, traumatizing day.



*All War Kills*  
Faith Mckinley

Endless foggy horizons, cold with the essence of death. The great tragedy of war, scarring the earth. Echoing, the screams of cursed soldiers. The eerie mist is a blanket, suffocating graves. I wonder, do the tortured men know their importance? Tortured like the traitorous criminals of their time. An angry flow of agony, slithers through the blades of grass, like an unwanted memory. All war kills.

*We Remember Them*  
Frazer Fletcher

The vast damp cemetery whistled. Dead bodies shivered in the sodden ground. Slowly, parents inched along their headstones. Thunderstorms poured under the tiresome eyes pondering, what was the point of war? Damp-duned fields: full of wasted potential and ability. We remember them.

*German Cemetery*  
Mimi Clarke

The shadows of the dead,  
Darkly lying in the grave.  
Sadly, they were once there.  
The ground was stone.  
Were spirits surrounding me?  
The graves were as cold as ice,  
Tingling my fingertips.  
Sad soldiers lay sleeping.  
My cemetery memory.



*A Feary Tale*  
Rachele Dimitry

In meadows green, I chanced to meet  
A knight who wandered, lost and pale.  
His eyes met mine, his heart did beat.  
Together began our fairytale.

He crowned me with a flower garland,  
And placed me on his noble horse,  
Through the deep forest, without a care in the world  
We rode with love and hope.

I gave him food both sweet and rare,  
He smiled and said he truly loved me.  
But as night repeated the day  
I knew soon our time would end.

I sang him a lullaby,  
He slept and dreamt of ghosts' warnings,  
I left with tears and a broken heart:  
A feary a lover can't have.

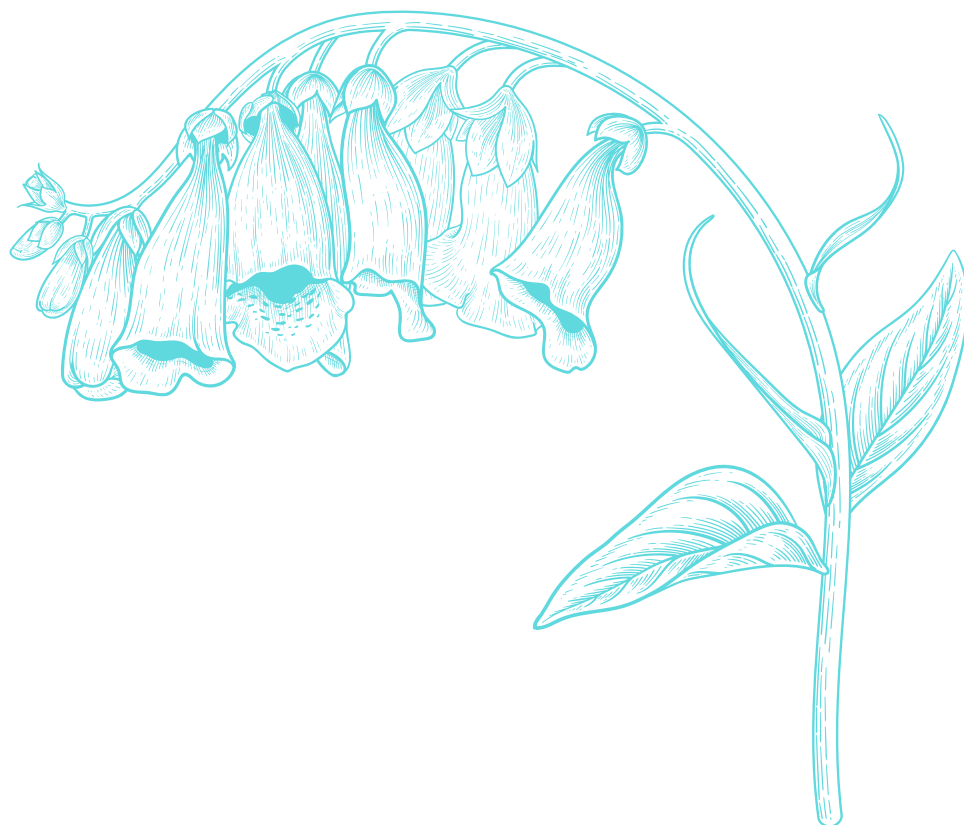


*Foxgloves*  
Isabel Hurst

The weathered old limestone cottage lay still. Only the cuckoos that surrounded the aged walls were chirping in the summer air. The quaint cottage was filled with knick-knacks and photos, from memories as old as the crumbling paint. The mahogany chest of drawers that spanned the wall of the tiny bedroom lay dormant, gathering dust in the evening sun. Perched above the discarded clothes and odd pairs of socks, stood a cracked vase of foxgloves. The lady shuffled to the wonky door and unlocked it with a creak. She took stumbling steps towards the bed and sat down. The neatly made bed was dressed in a colourful patchwork quilt, the stitching frayed with the years. As she sat, she looked towards the foxgloves, her eyes glazed with sorrow and sadness.

There she was, young once again, with her soldier standing at ease. She ran to him through fields of foxgloves and trees. They laughed and cried and stared at the sky as clouds waved past and time drifted by. Her memory, although foggy at times, could picture him as clearly as that bright summer day. His smile was as vivid as the flowers on the day he gave those foxgloves to her.

A stark reminder lay in wait just a glance to her left. His medals hung up in ranks across the wall. The biggest, a copper penny, the thing worth his life. The lady of victory stood tall, her scales hung in balance – their lives were worth the lives they saved. A lion stood to attention at her feet, lying in wait for the next load of boys dressed in play pretend to go and fight. It shone like a beacon to all. Her love was gone, lost to the war. She sat there alone, in the old, weathered cottage, missing her soldier. He lay in the rolling hills of France.



*Lingering Footsteps***Joshua Lai**

The porch let out a familiar creaking sigh, that he had so often heard every day as a little boy, as he walked up the steps leading to the front door. The sweet tinkling of chimes as he pushed open the door announced his arrival, the pieces of furniture and decoration lined up in the corridor all warmly welcoming him with a shower of memories. There, the rocking horse, hand-carved and painted, which had entertained him for hours on end in the nursery; there the cabinet adorned with stick figure drawings, a bright sun snuggled cozily in the corner of each one. The cozy armchair; the painting that filled the dining room wall; the bookshelf with all his favourite novels... oh how he had missed them!

All gathered in the hallway, the furniture had left the rooms bare and plain and as the man ventured further inside, the emptiness began to take hold of him. All the nooks and crannies, once perfect for a game of hide and seek, had disappeared, leaving the house looking bigger and emptier than it was. A thick layer of dust blanketed everything, finding no disturbance in the last few years.

The memories flooding back took on a more melancholic nature as the man surveyed the house. Slowly walking through, he peered around half-opened doors. At some moments a hazy mirage of what a room had looked like would appear, accompanied by a fleeting echo of a child laughing. Then, soon fading away it left a blank, confused stare in his eyes for a few seconds before he snapped back and continued his inspection.

Everything seemed to be in order. Absent-mindedly, he sighed as he wandered back to the front of the house. The clouds had cleared, leaving rays of sunshine sneaking through the gaps in the curtains. He walked through the doorway, the tinkling chime more like a farewell this time. Turning back, he took one last look at his home.

## *The Tragedy of Memory*

Fraser Cameron

His weary eyes sat miserably in his hollow sockets, taking in the grey, dreary clouds and monochrome sky. His tired body sat exhausted by the fatigue of his existence. Alone. On that cracked, ancient, mossy, damp bench. He looked yonder at the grounds, at the park that laid before him. Red leaves coated the sullen earth in an autumnal beauty; he did not see this beauty. The barren branches that belligerently swayed in the misty early winds. The bitter dew. The frayed and worn path he sat along was strewn with an insidious cornucopia of waste. Glass and plastic, wrappers and gum; what a vile sight.

But then off to his left he saw the playground. Nestled in the lurking trees. The bleak plethora of colour eroded from years of joyous use. There he saw a man; young, energised, and full of beaming life like the Sun, unhindered by clouds. With him a young girl. A blossoming tree-a young angel. Everything around her was brighter, more energetic, more fragrant, more alive. He felt a gut-wrenching pain looking at her. In a split moment a racing car sped past, drowning out everything. His eyes dilate in fear, in paralysing, haunting reflection.

His eyes rang with a screeching hum. He laid imprisoned in an amalgamation of teething metal and warped glass. Heat radiated from his surroundings. Ripping, rippling pain, searing pain. The metallic taste of blood stained his mouth, and his hoarse voice cried out, cried out her name: "Anne! Anne!" He gasped for air. He thrust his dishevelled body from the wreckage, desperately looking, circling the flaming crumpled mess for any sign of her.

Finally, he saw her. A glimpse, but that was all he needed. Summoning all his strength, he ripped open the broken door. Desperately gripping onto her, he hoisted her out. He called her name. "Anne."

He shook her. He tried anything, everything to awaken her. Yet, it was futile. She was gone. A void of frantic emotion enveloped them. He screamed, screamed at the top of his fractured lungs. "Why... why?"

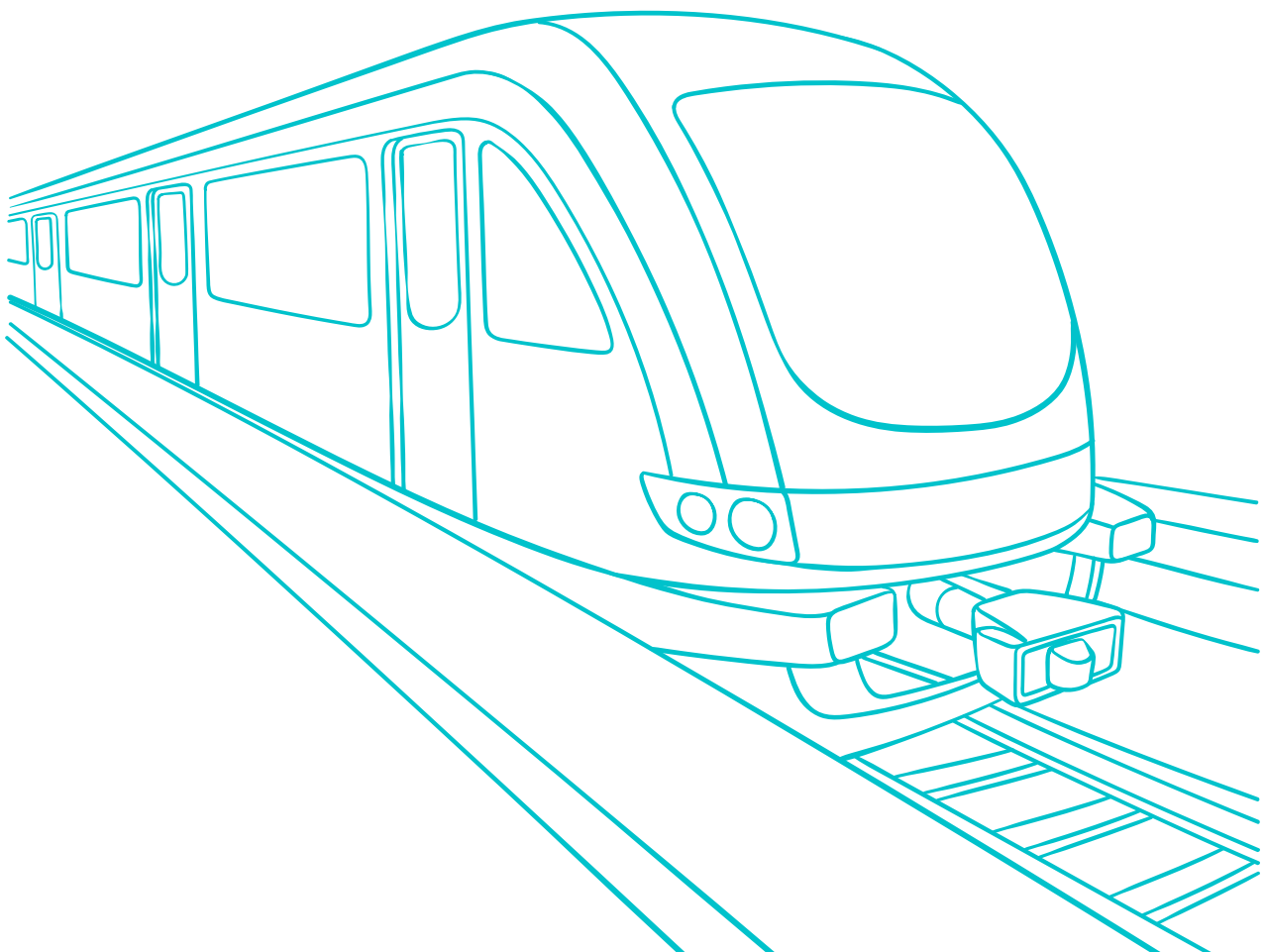
Then the whirring sound of faded sirens came and the clatter of voices. "Anne Howard. Time of death..." It all drowned out.

He awoke in his living room, grasping at a dusty yet cared for frame with a shaking hand. Inside, a photo, a lonely photo. Of the man and a young, cheery, smiling girl beside him. "Anne," he muttered silently. He placed the picture face down on the tabletop and sunk into his armchair, listening to the rain and the pitter-patter of his own tears of regret.

*No Way Out*  
**Bea Goodison**

The tube zoomed past me. It was isolated and no one was around. Quickly, I ran over the edge of the platform and hopped on the tube. Inside the tube was a prison, empty with no one around. Where was everyone? The hot air was slowly gliding through my hair like a warm wind on a summer's day. The squealing sharp sound of the wheels on the track made me nervous. I was alone.

Screech. The tube came to a stop. I looked out the window to see where I was. I was at Hyde Park. Luckily still on track. I had a strange feeling telling me that something wasn't right. I saw the tube driver getting out of the train. I was confused. Should we not be going to the next stop? I opened the tube door, and I asked him, "is this tube not running anymore? Has something happened?" I got no reply. I was being ignored. I now knew something was not right. I stepped out the door, looked up and read the only sign I could see. It read... No way Out.



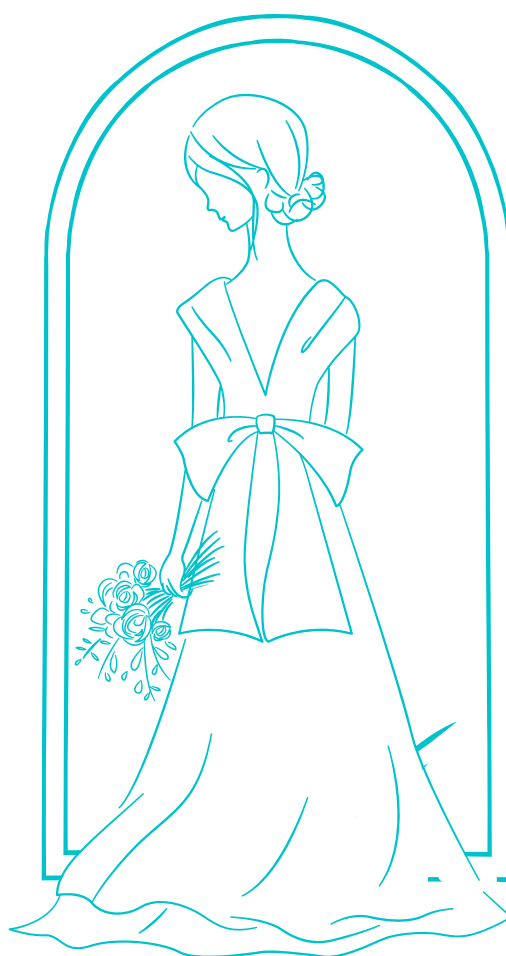


*Memory***Lea Lam**

Here I stand before the mirror, makeup professionally done, wedding dress on, veil hanging tightly from my beautiful hair. Today is perfect. As I stare at myself through the mirror, checking for any flaws, I find myself admiring the smile plastered on my face, the gleeful and childlike smile that fills me with thrill and nostalgia.

There I stood before the mirror, the same gleeful and childlike smile plastered on my chubby face, dressed in a princess gown with a tiara fitting tightly on my head, twinkling like a shooting star, granting my wish to come true as I declared my marriage to my future self with a prince charming who would treat me like his one true love, whose love would know no bounds, who would shower me with his love. That was the day when my declaration was granted.

The smile that reflects back through the mirror is the smile that only my younger self could return, a smile that knows I have truly found my prince charming. My smile can only heighten further, not even the numbness from how long and far my smile has gone could affect how ecstatic and giddy I am feeling inside. An almost silent but audible whisper escapes my lips: 'Are you proud of me, Lea?' These are the last words I utter to my younger self through the mirror, already knowing the answer as I turn to prepare myself to marry my prince charming.



# Upper School



Artwork by Ryewin Bridger (F6)

**6 MINUTES. 6 QUESTIONS:**  
**An interview with Chris Hazell**

**Why did you become a reading ambassador?**

I thought it sounded interesting. Reading ambassadors were only created that year – when I was in fifth form – and I was curious. When I was asked by Mr Sanders, I agreed. In my free time, I enjoy reading and I wanted to promote recreational reading among others. And how have you done that? The ambassadors' philosophy is that we wanted to target the lower years because if you can get them into the habit of reading, you can set them up for life. Although we primarily focus on Lower School, we also visit the third form during their library lessons when we're available. In these library lessons, we sit with the third form and discuss what book they've been reading.

**Why do you feel that reading is so important for people to do?**

Reading's important because it's very necessary. It's a basic skill, yes, so people don't think much of it because of that. When people are told to read, it means that they cannot escape and so they might lose their passion. What we hope for is that people can begin or continue reading in their free time. That's what's important: reading leisurely, reading for the sake and love of reading.

**What have you done or will do to encourage reading?**

Over the winter holidays, the lower school had a writing competition where they wrote short stories about Christmas. Our next strategy is during national reading week where we hope to promote personal reading through a few minutes at the start of each lesson where teachers allow you to either read your own book or a reading piece that they have provided. We want to, most of all, encourage five or six minutes a day that is spent reading. It is scientifically proven that something as simple as six minutes is enough to establish good habits. We are setting this up so that future reading ambassadors can reinforce it. Another thing is that we're expanding reading competitions to other schools in Oakham and we're planning on opening up the library, often underused because Oakhamians simply don't have enough time, to others so that it's utilised in a better manner.

**What's your favourite book that you've read recently?**

Inferno by Dante Alighieri. It's the first book of the Divine Comedy. It's about Alighieri exploring Hell with the Roman poet, Virgil. The book was originally written in Latin so it's a bit confusing but it has an enjoyable writing style, made all the more endearing by the fact that it's written from the perspective of someone who admires Virgil but doesn't actually know them.

**In what ways can books help further learning?**

They can help support the content learnt in lessons. Say, for example, Politics. I'm a Politics student. There are plenty of books in the library that you can read through to educate yourself further. What Politics books would you recommend? I would look at the works of philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes' Leviathan, which presents the political philosophy that the government is responsible for ensuring collective security. I think it's also interesting to look between the extremes because as Politics students, you should look into the extreme and think critically and radically over controversial figures like Nigel Farage or Boris Johnson and their politics.



**We've established that reading is crucial. What then is your opinion on the increase of book banning and censorship happening in the world?**

Literature should never be banned. Literature and the consumption of it has always been reflective of our society's nature and it's concerning that such commentary is being censored because it leaves the citizen restricted. It's insane. They cannot speak freely and they cannot even use reading as a form of escapism.



*Beautiful Melancholy of Being a Woman***Alieta Kurilko**

She stares so long, yet fails to find  
the spark the world has underlined  
Her clouded eyes eclipse the light,  
a soul concealed in self-made night

Her fingers trace unseen despair,  
bound by the dreams that aren't there  
A poem trapped in flesh and bone,  
yet the mirror hums in truth alone

But beauty strives within her pain,  
a masterpiece once lost in her refrain.



*Echoes*  
Bea Cole

Her frail hands clasped the parchment, as if her world entirely depended on this letter, these words. Her world did. She began to tremble, an uncontrollable nervousness as she peeled back the seal. A throbbing pain shot through her heart, as an unfamiliar grief flooded her brain, flooded her eyes. The silver streams slowly pouring down her face seemed magical, beautiful against her worn out, pale skin. The sky wept with her, mourned with her.

He was gone.

As the dust lifted, floating off the curtains, the mantelpiece, the piano; she remembered the days when the sun smiled, when the piano sang, and the music danced. When they danced with it. She remembered him, how he twirled her in his arms, round and round they went, until the world went blurry, and it was only them. She saw his eyes, buried deep within her memory: dark pools of water, unfazed and calm, even in the fiercest storms. What was she to do without him, without that tranquillity? The memories of him sway back and forth in her mind. Their last conversation replayed like a tired waltz, the same parts forever repeating.

"How can you leave again and again? Can't you see? I need you!"

It was the truth, she had needed him, only their country had needed him more.

"You know, better than anyone, that I have to go. I have to fight! It is my job, and it is my duty!" His voice was cracking alongside his heart, "Do not fret though my love, we shall be together again; I know we will."

He had never been wrong before that moment. This lie of reunion was all she had left of him now; all she could clutch was his empty promise. His face, his features were only a blank space in her heart.

This house had been theirs and now it was hers, she knew not what to do with it. Though full of windows and sunlight, the house seemed oppressive and dull, like her own prison. She had all the space she could ask for but there was no one to fill it. She was alone and the grand, twisting hallways felt like a never-ending maze. A trap.

She was huddled against the wall, her already grey and fading dress collecting dust with the furniture. They had sat there, together, before. Only guilt and heartache accompanied her now, the shame of her past vexation with him ripped and tore her apart. Sitting on the bitter, cracked, oak floor; she could almost see the space he used to fill. She could hear the laughter of their ghosts winding down the staircase, echoing through the silent empty cave that was her brain.

"You'll never catch me!" she giggled, as he chased her in an attempt to whisk her up into his arms as he always would.

"You know I will. I am, and always will be, right here behind you." And he remained behind her, in her past, forever.



Her once blissful life, back when she was consumed, encapsulated by love, seemed long ago, and reminiscing only mangled her damaged heart. She would never feel his love again. She wept; she screamed in agony. The piano mocked her, releasing an out of tune wail as she tossed her history at it, his history, his house. Everything lay in ruins, defeated, and destroyed. The piano was ravaged, it would never sing again. Everything from the glittering gold candle sticks, to the portrait of their family, lay dead around her. And still she felt nothing but grief. The entire world seemed meaningless without him to see it with her. She was alone, there was no one to save her; besides, she did not want to be saved. Glancing up at the hollow and shadowy lady in the glass, all she could see was the mirror of her heartache staring back into her bloodshot eyes.

There was a faint tapping, footsteps moving cautiously towards her, a timid, trembling sound.

“Mother?”

A hushed, comforting, and sympathetic voice revealed the presence of another. An angelic face of a small boy slowly emerged from behind the grand wooden door. Next to it he looked slight and insubstantial. Prying himself from the door standing between them, he moved toward her reaching out his tiny hand.

“Mother, what’s the matter? ... I’m here.”

Her son, his son, standing above her, rescuing her, the way her beloved had so many times before. She wiped the tear stains from under her eyes. A rush of determination took control, determined to never let her grief become the burden of her son. She had to spare him. She clasped his hand gently, dropping the letter into the deep waves of her gown.

“I am fine, my boy...all fine.” Her voice broke with a tortured pain as she attempted to swallow her heartache.

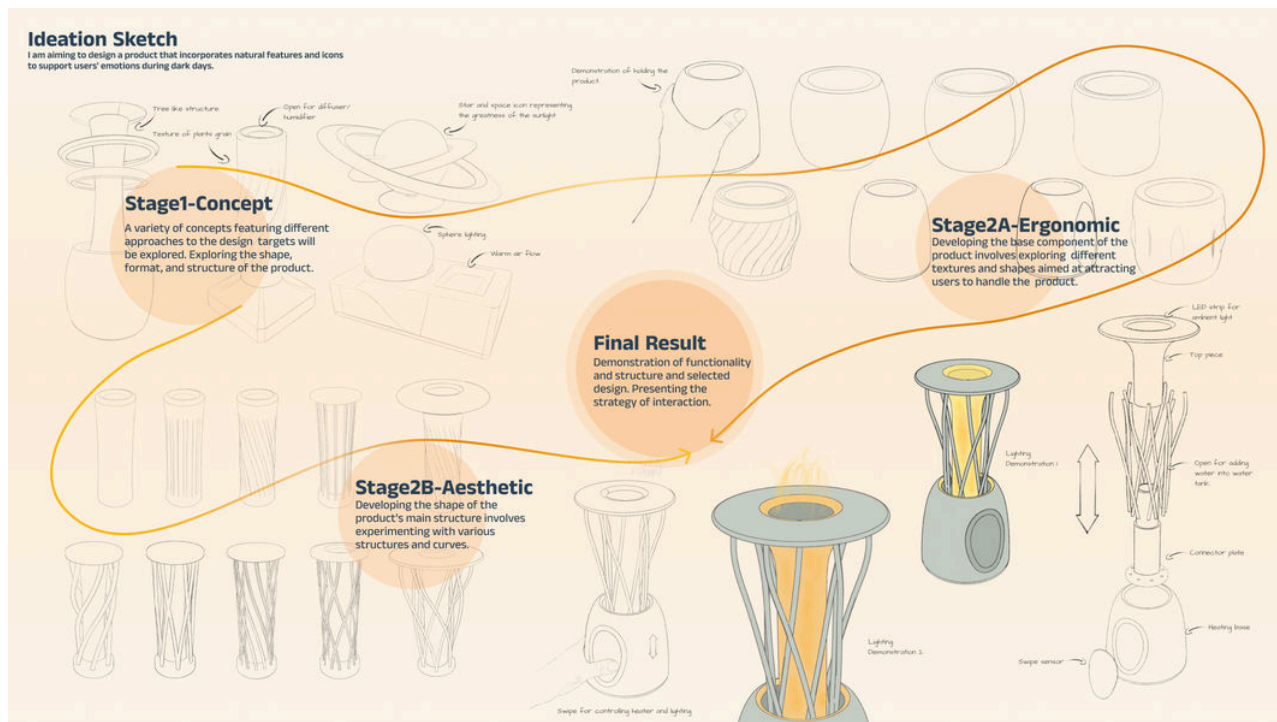
“With you...I am always fine.”

And she smiled, a bittersweet, simulated smile. But it was a smile, not a cry or a scream, and that would have to be enough.


Wrapping him in her weak, exhausted arms, she held him, intending to never let go. The streams, returning once more to her face, slowly spilled down her numbed and blotchy cheeks. Pulling his head onto her shoulder, she felt his breath, his life, moving peacefully against her. His sweet face overcome with fatigue began to shut down as he entered a tranquil sleep against her shoulder. The weight of his life, of his future, brewed an aching feeling that twirled in her chest. She had to protect her boy now, completely alone. Her son would never experience her suffering, nor would he feel the burn of a broken heart. She would ensure that.

“Just stay here, with me, always.”

Her son was the one legacy of their love: that legacy would be protected at all costs.



DT work by Andy Wang (F7)



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