

PINNACLES

2021

pin·na·cle

noun \ 'pi-ni-kəl \

- a high mountain top
- the best or most important part of something
- the point of greatest success or achievement
- a tower on the roof of a building that comes to a narrow point at the top

Synonyms: apex, apogee, crescendo, crest, crown, culmination, summit, zenith

Antonyms: bottom, nadir

Middle English pinnacle, from Anglo-French, from Late Latin pinnaculum small wing, gable, from Latin pinna wing, battlement

First Known Use: 14th century

An anthology of English creative
writing by Hilton College boys



HILTON COLLEGE

Deeply Traditional. Refreshingly Contemporary.

INTRODUCTION

I am writing this introduction to *Pinnacles 2021* on Black Friday, which feels somehow auspicious. Black and white are colours which are synonymous with our school, and which speak, when juxtaposed, through their contrast to complement multiple facets of our College. Our school this year, like many others, has had its black moods of frustration and fear after yet another year of the pandemic. In my introduction in 2020, I quoted Israeli fashion designer Alber Elvaz's musings on *the strange year that was*, and I think I was not alone in my hope (my assumption?) that 2021 would be an easier, more normal, less traumatic year for our community. I was sure the world would revolve again (apologies, T. S. Eliot) and in its spinning, we would recover our equilibrium.

We didn't.

Many of our boys and our staff have been bereaved. A few of the poems in this compilation were written about, or inspired by, grief at the passing of our late and loved Tony Richter.

A number of our poets did very well in an American competition the theme of which was *Poetry of the Pandemic*, giving young people globally the platform to write their confusion, hurt and anger into that satisfying place where at least our words can be ordered and our punctuation controlled, even while life confettis further.

This weekend I learned that Tony Richter would tell his team they had to "earn the right to white"; the prestige of donning a First Team jersey to run onto "the Field of Dreams". At Hilton College, almost anyone with the willingness to wrestle with words, to find joy in the rigor of creativity and the heart to do so, can be immortalized in black – printed on these pages for posterity.

The late Maya Angelou wrote a collection of children's verses called, *Life Doesn't Frighten Me* and it's a salutary reminder that *of course* life frightens all of us, quite a lot of the time, but we can stand up to it and frighten it right back. And when you are too tired to stand up like the little fire-breathing dragon illustrating Angelou's poem, you can relax with *Pinnacles*. You can remember that it wasn't easy when you climbed to the top of Pinnacles on our beautiful estate, that you probably needed help to do it but that the view was breath-taking from the top.

Creative writing is like that too. It salutes the courage within all of us to be undaunted as we look for the next handhold up the rock to the summit.

Thank you to our boys who were willing to share their writing: Angelou would say, "Life doesn't frighten [you] at all." Look out for the sections on our Grade 12 Prize Winners: Richard Karlson who won the L.A.B. Sharpe Prize for Creativity and Sebastian Guimaraens who won the Senior Verse Prize. (The Junior Verse Prize and the Derek Veenstra Creative Writing Prize for Grade 10 will be announced early in 2022.) Make a point of reading Tanner Bailey's superb Extended Research Essay, too – this is a new section that we will continue with in the future.

Thank you for reading this year's publication.

Pamela Neethling

Head of Department: English

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POETRY

Grade 12

Matthew Boast

5 P's of Life

No one's gonna lift you up,
All they can do is temporarily motivate.
You the only one that's going to fill your cup,
So start working, before it's too late.

No one's gonna change your mind for you,
Nothings ever that easy.
Life is something everyone has to go through.
Promise me you won't back out and disappear like Houdini.

No one's gonna just make you feel better,
Stop making excuses.
You be your own ruler and measure,
Because only you know, what the truth is.

No one's gonna be there in the tough times,
Remember you driving down your own street.
Sometimes you have to look up, and see the signs,
as you feel incomplete.

You will always be the captain of your own ship,
Your life is of great importance.
So work hard, stay focused
and remember that proper practice prevents poor performance.



Matthew Dalrymple

Beauty and the Beast

At night She is not safe
During daytime, She is not safe
According to Her clothes, She is not safe
At home She is not safe.

The beast is never at fault
It attacks on sight
And thrives in the ominous night
No instinct, only violence.
It feeds on its prey
And somehow always gets away

However
She is powerful
She is strong
And She will enact change



Finish Line

Placid, cold to the touch
Pale and stiff
Is this what death looks like?

A person was once here but no more.
Is death final?
Or do you live through the memories of others?



Green Light

Brown hair, smooth to the touch.
Hazel eyes, whose glare I get lost within
Small stature with a large personality.
Comforting hands to grasp when I feel despair
Strong voice with an independent opinion
Intelligent mind with an imaginative flair
My green light across the water.

Pen

Powerful, pointed and poised.
A classic accessory for rich and poor alike
All the wisdom of the world lies in the tip
It is just patiently waiting to be written down.



Perspective

Chained into captivity, maimed into submission.
Will the people ever be free?
You see chaos and looting,
I see survival tactics
You see social disobedience,
I hear the shout of unheard voices.
The virus of poverty has spread, many are hungry and thirsty
It reeks of desperation.

My job is my prison, My wage is my chains
My employer is the warden, My family are the inmates
But I am innocent.
I was born here and I will die here, for the mistakes of the past
I will do anything for my family
And anything to survive



Sub-Standard Humans

Classrooms like jail cells
I am trapped and constricted in this space
The warden comes and checks and signs our passbooks
I have a specific schedule
I can't make a mistake because that means
Another 50 years in the slammer.

On the weekends, Gilfillan's stands became my prison yard.
Hard labour, no pay. Slaving away at desks,
Like we are convicts.
The desk screams as you sand it but it is silent when you cover it up with a
coat.
"It's just the first coat" the warden says.

Other days, the road becomes our suffering.
The warden watches, grins.
They left us with white scars, forever reminding us of our sentence
The prisoners left with hands smelling like Turpentine

In public, the guards judge us,
They make snide comments.
Our number ones are our overalls,
The booklet was the shackles.

We are cut off from the world. Remote.
No outside communications
The warden looks at us with contempt
“If it was up to me, you would’ve gotten the axe”.
Instead, supposedly we got a chance
They call it amnesty but it was more like slavery.



Muhammad Siraj Khan Girdhurparsadh

“Blood”

Flowing through her
Giving life to me

Violently pumped throughout
Pulsating under her skin

Its thick and warm,
Like a red blanket

Too bad its spilled
Now there’s a mess

Seeping into the carpet
She exhales, Carpet expunges

Strikes her wrist
whimper
Silver to red

Shivering, Shaking
She cries

Her wrists start to sting,
Grieving for a friend

Scars left for future
She grieves more

Alone, darkness
Her ~~soul~~ only friend

I wish I could help her,
She was me.



Dreams

Tossing, turning
Dreaming

A thought,
So perfect...
A figure of our imagination,

But living it, it was all a dream.

Reality, a slight depiction of our imagination,
Which we flood with thought.

To grow,
Is to live

To live is to strive
Strive for what one truly desires on this rock.



Haunted

Buried under
It begins to float up
Leaking through the surface
Haunting my future

I don't recognize the present,
only the past haunting me

The day shiny silver pierced, blood splashed,
The day I froze and got used,
The day I trusted
The day I was broken

I buried them.
6 Feet under.

One mistake, the dead being risen to haunt me.
Emotions flowing in me like petrol igniting my fire

Old habits renewing themselves

I trusted too much,
secrets slowly flowing out of me,
Drowning

Acceptance is key
But
Not all keys work.
That,
is,
the,
truth,
it,
hurts.

The longer I wait to accept,
more of the past is brought back from the dead

How much longer till my urges take over,
How much longer till I shatter and it's over?



Honey

Natures natural sweetener,
Free from the impurities of beings.

Your glowing honey eyes,
Sweetens my mood when I glance at them.

Avoiding your beauty is hard,
Bees are constantly around you.

Your impeccable personality as precious as a queen bee,
Powerful.

Slowly, I'm making my personality transparent to you, trusting you the way flowers trust you with their pollen.

The hive your kingdom,
Expanding and always achieving your desires.



Past

Buried Away,
It drifts to the top
Seeping to the surface,
To haunt me.

I present transparent, the past gleaming through

From,
The day I froze and got used,
The day silver first pierced my skin,
The day I got lied to,
I days that broke me

I buried all of those days,
6 feet under

I buried all of those days,
6 feet under

One mistake, it all came rushing back into me,
Once fixed now, broken again
Old habits return, getting worse

I trusted too much,
Now secrets gradually flowing out
Burying me alive

Acceptance is the key,
but not all locks need to be opened

The longer I wait more of the past spews out of me,
How much longer till my urges are too much,
How much longer till I shatter like glass,
And it's over?



“Poison”

Every night I imagine her,
wishing she would notice me
I desire her,
I want her
I need her

Dreams turn into nightmares
Dreaming of her.
You are in my nightmares

Writing this for her
this thought
on my mind
poison

I know she has no interest in me
I know she has never considered me
I know that she will reject

Poison hurts



Sleep

Too much makes you tired,
Too little makes you sleepy,

What's the point,
To sleep?



“Stress”

Stress-it builds up
Like traffic
You try to backup
You can't, you panic

Stuck
overthinking
drinking; smoking

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attempting to escape
your state of panic

Shredding you to pieces,
blood runs violently
driving you to the edge
of your state of panic

Sharper blades, bumpier roads
the cuts run deeper
blood is pain, is panic
from your state of panic

Stress fuels anxiety
IN YOU!
the pumps never stop,
you end yourself in the end.



Suffocating

Short breaths
The heart slows down
Like water, approaching its freezing point

Smoke crawling into your lungs
Choking, coughing, and flooding your mind.
The pain slowly seeping out your skin

Your Skin burns as the acid seeps
Softening your insides to slime
Death the way out

The cycle of life



Them

I love,
I get hurt.
I loved them all,
They used to love me, I think?

The thoughts of them open old scars
Emotions flowing out of me, tears running down my face
Darkness overpowers me, corrupting my innocent soul
The past lingering,

Surrounding

My past slowly unraveling,
The urges creeping back,
The thought of them ruining me

My arms an empty canvas,
Being painted in gushing red blood after each of them.
Paint dries and fades away
The painting remains

My scars invisible to many.

I see them all,
Tormenting me day after day,
The fear of judgment kills
Covering them, the only way to live

My heart left burning in a critical condition
Beating after beating the pain deepens

Six of them

I desire to feel loved,
I'm scared to love again,
The pain scars me

The human desires overtake me



TIME

It hurts alright,

ever since the beginning,
always shooting me down.

The aim to succeed,
but how?

Constantly bleeding out,
With no help to be found

Looking at the bullets
Makes the body shutdown

Breathing, slowly bleeding with
Mental breakdowns



Your Happiness

Your happiness is an impenetrable shield,
A shield which protects you,
A shield that changes the mood of me

Arrows try to blast through your shield,
As strong as an oak you don't move.

To protect yourself?
To protect others?

Always kind and understanding the shield adapts to every situation.

Will the shield ever reveal?
My curiosity driving me to unravel it all.

From deep eyes which pierce my walls,
Your long hair tangles me around my walls.

Your energy repelling evil, yet so radiant, attracting nature while nurturing others.

Holding on to the past, never seeming to let go.

I want to let down my guard and open my iron gates, yet I'm afraid.

But who am I to judge, I have only shown you the moat of my castle:

Sebastian Guimaraens

Allegory

this allegory is a horror story of
all the gory details, a fall from glory
what's the mission? the human condition.
plagued by inhibition
we need to pay attention to the commissions
we listen to
before we make a decision and end up insisting
a coup
because this consistent resistance to listening
to citizens is significant
if you want to start a war, they're willing too

it's the trend, the truth getting bent
they trade the proof for a cent and
won't relent, even for a global event
but i sense it's the end
lives have been spent
an enduring dent has been delt
but their time has been lent
it came and it went
the message has sent
though the messenger's dead
another allegory
another attempt to prevent



Coda

it's at times like these when the moment has passed
at last, you can relax and return to the past
because the truth is you never knew how long it would last
the days, the wins, the loses just hills on the same path
that's why i have to finish doing what i started
cannot fall apart right after i have departed
and i could never force it, that kind of cause is caustic
i just don't want to turn 'now' into 'then' and spoil it
we're all so concerned with what is and what should
we also forget what was and what parts were so good
after counting years, months, weeks and now days
i can never look at myself the same way
there comes a point, past which, you can't predict
outside your jurisdiction, no choices, you can't pick
it's a clean slate, be good or be great

the moment may pass but it will never be too late
to decide, but remember to let the past educate
no point in learning from mistakes if you forsake
what you paid for, the time is on your hands
it never made any sense to never look back



Interest

we can't afford not to show interest
in the climate, as if it's none of our business
gold is up but o₂ is down
minds made up; we choke out the sound

so, we wait until it is too late
and die of old age before we can turn over a new page
either way lives are lost at a high rate
no wonder we get irate when we barely respire great

green house is turning our home into green mile
meanwhile the greedy smile because we are on speed dial
can't even see past our own smoke screen
even the sea will pass if we don't clean
up our act

it's a matter of fact
we won't be able to turn back
this business is serious
and it's time we pay interest



Ode to String

my splintered mind is strung
from the ceiling
under which my head is hung

intertwined, my twisted mind
is incoherent
and cannot create nor design

to yearn for new yarn and thread
to end this absence
that plagues my head

though try as i might fight off this blight
to my purpose
who can cure a hand that won't write?

i cannot draw ink from stone
i cannot link what i think
i think this thread cannot be sewn

dare i join a wordless tomb
of unsung lines decomposing
in a maze of catacombs?
it's about time i find more string



Rabbit Hole

"Who in the world am I? ah, that's the great puzzle."
what is life's hustle? a red or blue pill?
if this were a simulation, we would live still
so, i'd still hold on to the will to live
even if ill, i'd write until
syllables filled these pages
and then spilled

verses define my universe
i'm cursed with words for better or worse
sentenced to pen sentences
and i'd never want it reversed
my mind designs these lines
because they give me purpose

it's like looking through a window
you've got to see past the pane
change your frame of mind
a new canvas and paint
sometimes you hit rock bottom
to find your role but
it's never too late to go
down the rabbit hole



the joy of Creation

i'm sorry
that you are,
that i tried to make
you as i am

i see you
contorted shadows
glaring from the corners
of my chamber
always near

you cannot return
my unwanted gift
that burns
but leaves no ashes

i'm sorry
i couldn't stand it
the
loneliness

but at last
may i share the burden:
the joy of Creation.



Richard Karlson

Pressure

Pressure does not crush
the dull, black coal
to sparkling diamond.

Pressure does not fan
the dancing flame
to raging fire.

Pressure does not mould
the stumbling child
to future leader.

Pressure places its weight
onto our shoulders,
hoping to find a fault.

Some stagger,
others stumble,
but Pressure grants a choice:
crumble into safety
or step into the darkness
as the new light
in the forest of fallen dreams.



Son of Africa

Started in the icy, white room
with no identity.
Doctors delivered
the crying son
to privileged arms.

The child lives “protected”
from Africa on the doorstep.
Barbed fence holds the culture out.
Enjoys Fish and Chips
and chatter in the distant Queen’s tongue.

Yet, trapped
in the tormenting truth:
too African to be otherwise
and too otherwise to be African,
born under the African sun
but
never
a son of Africa.



The Living Room

The Persian rug,
a weathered sofa,
the soft breeze,
make the memory.

Chitter chatter amongst the family
fills the air.
Long-forgotten uncles,

aunts,
cousins,
friends,
are gathered once again.

Although the air is filled,
hearts are empty.
Words are swallowed
with the tears.
We have gathered here today
to mourn the missing voice
and the lost love.

We say goodbye to the dead
in the comfort of the living room.
But a farewell is never final.
Memories fill the void.
Memories open the door
to find the feelings again.
Sometimes a living room of memories
is the best legacy.



Bongi Khoza

Bien-amieé

To her I write
The words I wish I could tell you

My love
Beloved is your name
And your beauty is forever proclaimed
By all who are the beholders
But my love if love is blind
Then do my words give you insight
Into the emotion of love?

My love remember to love yourself for even my love is incomparable to the
love you are capable of showing yourself
My love your name is beloved

To her I write

Bliss

When she walked, she took her own steps which he followed, it was true love as they barely knew each other but were connected through a love that was never seen before because they were meant to meet, they were perfect, a true love



Don't Let Me Go

The Sunset running up and down
Waves on the beach
Sand in your hair my hand unreached
A smile through your eyes your gaze to me
Something as beautiful as her
only my eyes can see



Ivy

To her I write
As charming as she is
A Name to symbolize faithfulness to a significant other
But I use my words to touch her heart
Which makes it easy to love her
Ivy
Your name maybe poisonous to some
But beautiful and create an everlasting love in others



Metaphor

The simple pencil
But oh so important are you
For the words it writes may be erased
And may leave pages clear
But to the writer
The pencil may be used as a form of freedom
A form of escape
A form of practice

To the writer the pencil
Is the reader into their lives
A witness, no more of an observer
This leaves the simple pencil
As a companion that will listen without sharing
But create with the same caring as the writer
The simple pencil
A tool for life



October

I look at your eyes I see you
I follow your footsteps and I can see
Who you truly are
From the depth of your heart to the museum
Of your beauty
To her I write
For the days I have left my premonition
Tells me to write
For in a world where actions speaks louder than words
I choose to the written word
For something written withstands the test of time
And the spoken word fades into a room of memoirs
To her I write
For my pages will always be there with you
When my voice cannot



The Sands of Time

The sand fades with the wind
I think to myself the sands of time
What to leave in the memories of others and what shall
Fail to be recalled
What will dance amongst the sands and will be ignored?
Who shall I be remembered as?
Will I be the one to have his stories told?
I stand in my thoughts enthralled
As I think to myself Who shall I be called
The great? The bold? The one to have his stories told?
No, I see premonition even greater
I see monuments with my name extolled

Your Hazel Eyes

Your hazel eyes
My heart's desire
But are my words required to catch your attention
Or will my love for what I admire speak for my affection
My love
The emotion that flows through my pen as I write
Flows like my devotion for you when I first set sight
To you heart I write
To my heart you are mine
Your hazel eyes



Sagwadhi Malongete

Days Come, Days Lost

The ending,
bitter sweet,
the joy lost will never be tasted yet again and again the feeling arises,
the needs shifts from you to filling the void,
maybe not alone,
bitter sweet,
from one end to the next only to be back where it all started,
again and again until the love leaves the void too wide to close
I am sorry I lost you
I am sorry that I loved you
The taste of those words leaves scorched earth at the tip of my tongue,
for I loved the only way I know how,
the ways taught to me by the slippery memories that had began to fade,
My love corrosive
My love broken yet again



Devastation

I feel it every time I take a breath,
I feel it every time I look in the mirror,
The feeling of power lost and emotions felt,
The ungodly feeling of losing yourself and the
truly painful feeling of painting yourself black

and blue with trying to find yourself again
Growing without you
A devastating reality
A truth unheard, unknown to me
But we live it
We breathe it
We see it in the mirror every time
I live to love and in love I live
But devastation always lingers
Like the smell of cheap cigarettes



The Sharks Journey

The jacket, daily, ragged and an old to be considered vintage,
it was you,
it is you in a way most things cannot be, the path shown through spotlight,
more then a mere coach, a teacher, a guide to life itself,
the jacket worn with a pride unwavering,
an honour that could not be deterred by an man,
regardless of statue,
regardless of understanding,
you have fought the war to enlightenment for me
For all of this the only words I can mutter under the tears, the only words that make
sense at the moment
THANK YOU



Mukaii Mhaka

0,00001

7 years ago I was born
4 weeks ago I fell in love
9 days ago my mom fell sick
4 weeks until I'm 8

10 years ago I was born
2 weeks ago I met my best friend
7 days ago my mom got better
3 weeks until I'm 11

15 years ago I was born
3 weeks ago she left me for someone else
6 days ago my parents got a divorce
2 days and hopefully things will get better
15 hours until I'm 16

17 years ago I was born
5 weeks ago I knew things would get better

19 years ago I was born
2 weeks ago I thought about ending it
8 days ago I bought a desert eagle revolver
4 hours ago I loaded it with around
0,0001 minutes I was about to squeeze the trigger.

But remained a bullet wasn't the solution to my pain and decided to live again.

Your cyan
eyes and ocean blue hue on the slide of your silky hair
I can imagine nothing remotely incessant as I gaze upon you
The slightest crinkle in the corner of your eye
And the glimmer that shimmers upon your retina
You are full of joy, bouncing, laughing, and gleaming
But all I can ever do is sit and watch you
Blue

You seem to like what I've always wanted
But I never caught your attention
You weren't around people like me
They have money and good looks
Something that I don't
But every day
Every night
I think of you
Blue

I sometimes think to myself through this screen
If who you are is true
Behind this curtain of pixels
I don't know the real you
But even it is just a mirage
Your eyes still twinkle like the night sky
Blue



Blue

How could I be blue if I had you?
Your cyan eyes and ocean blue hue on the slide of your silky hair
I can imagine nothing remotely incessant as I gaze upon you
The slightest crinkle in the corner of your eye
And the glimmer that shimmers upon your retina
You are full of joy, bouncing, laughing, and gleaming
But all I can ever do is sit and watch you
Blue

You seem to like what I've always wanted
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Blue



Money

Something we all want
Something few of us get

A piece of paper, metal, or digits on a screen
That is the currency of life

All humans need it more than water
So they can purchase goods to quench their consumerist thirst

A thirst that will be quenched at any cost

Whether it is human life, genocide, or war
Money is all that we are good for

But out of the dark, a brighter future emerges
One where you use the money to liberate, not subjugate

Where nobody will have to steal or kill
Just to pay a bill

Money makes the world go around
But sometimes I question whether our desire for money is sound



One world

One world

One world where we all breathe, dance and sing
One world where everything is happening
One world with no borders
One world with no wars, crime, or extortion
One world where greed doesn't reside
One world with longevity destiny and hope
Could you imagine one world
Could you live with hope

One world

One world with one virus we all share
One world where money is our only care
One world with boxes, packages, and choice
One world where our trash floats in the ocean
One world where the third world lives without bread
One world where people died instead
Could you imagine this world
Could you live without hope

Our world

Our world connected from Brooklyn to Beijing
Our world with a virus from Durban to Dubai
Our world with hate from Cairo to Cape Town
Our world with oppression, depression, and suicide
In our world where the internet is more dangerous than a gun
Our world where hope has just begun
If you saw this world
Could you live with hope



Radio

A breath of air and a kiss of the sun
Summer has just begun

She feels her fingers stick after her popsicle melted on her hand
He feels the fine sand rolling into his baggy swimsuit

The suns neon rays bubble on backs lay on the beach
As silky peach skin turns to a flaky tan

The shade of umbrellas is accompanied by a novelty fan
As people wave pamphlets, books, or even clothes to emulate that of a breeze

The squeeze when opening a soda can and the bubbles that gush out
The feeling of satin lips against each other

All under the light of summer

As the sun retreats and the air gets heavy
Fireworks illuminate the humid atmosphere

Where all the aromas of the night can be smelled
The radio makes the sounds of summer felt

Into the night and to the next day
We party our worries away

In summer.



Unako Nowele

Don't let me go

The Sunset running up and down
Waves on the beach
Sand in your hair my hand unreached
A smile through your eyes your gaze to me
Something as beautiful as her
only my eyes can see



The heart mourns guilt like a widower,

The heart mourns guilt like a widower,
and all ones hopes and dreams lay six feet deep.
Out of reach.

But there's hope for the one who seeks favour and liberty.

A power which comes from above me.

A source of peace which touches me.

He cleanses my sins with Control, Alt, Delete.

He gives me strength and a new perspective of life,

A gift and a gateway to eternity. The King.

A toast to this champagne poetry...



You people, full of energy and curiosity.

You people, full of energy and curiosity.

A crowd who have the ability to become whatever they desire in life,
as well as the facilities

to get the correct education to reach your destinies.

Yet many of us don't truly take this opportunity,

many of us go through the motions

listening to this destructive melody

which has been played more times than the Bohemian Rhapsody.

Addiction starts off small and simple ABCing its way

to the point that one loses control of his mind, soul and identity.

A person beaten his opponent is unfortunate,

but a person beaten by himself

A tragedy.

Grade 11

Ross Taylor

Experience from Different Views

Is it possible to experience everything in life we choose to do?
or is someone else controlling us from a higher view.
It's the question that frustrates me, not the answer
because I would rather die free than have to live inside a petting zoo.
That is the journey I'm seeking, not the one I'm left to rue.

I am heading back to the future
so I travel back in time.
Guided by the map, I have everything I want
because my adventure and imagination is mine.

But mine is not good enough for me
because I am not yet in control of my mind.
I am privileged, I can see it all
but I'll never get to see because I am truly blind-
to the love, hate and prejudice against our brothers own kind.

We are all the same.
It is not about each other's human race
It is just a human race
to identify who's left running when there is a goal to chase.
We do not run this place
what is up the next generations sleeve?

It needs to be an ace
of hearts
to win this war between people who are two-faced.



Love is the only Intruder

When I first saw her

Her voice could fill naked streets as her
hair moved gently in the breeze.
With every step she takes she spreads joy to all around her
Oh, and her smile, makes my heart miss a beat. Thank

I dream of her.

"I never meant it," she said.
All I ever wanted was the truth that had been buried from my view.
I had been there, when he had not,
why him over me?

I love her.

My heart will never be fixed, fragmented from the rest of my body.
Why should it beat,
without her touch?
My heart has been stolen.

I loved her.

Once mended, I ache for her.
I feel like barren land, drained of life.
I'm sprinting, racing to her.
But no distance will be covered.

I used to love her.



Poppy Flowers

My grip tightens around my pencil as my hands begin to perspire
The sounds of war ring throughout my head.
My gaze slowly lifts to find the warm eyes of my teacher
Although my eyes do not focus
as nothing can console me now.

A flash of violence engulfs my vision
While my ears prick to the sound gun shells.
My hand twitches as the sound of laughter fills the classroom.
The volumes of war slowly begin to subside but the horror sets in.

My mind drifts once again at the thought of a seventeen-year-old boy kiss his
girlfriend goodbye. The high-pitched cries from worried sisters
brings tears to his mother's eye as his father firmly shakes his hand.

The wrinkles around my forehead appear. A shock runs its way up my spine
at the thought of being the target audience towards propaganda posters had
we been in war.

My breath quickens although the fears of war are subsided for now.

Truth Is

Let me show you behind the scenes
of the rumours in the life he leads.
Behind the glitz and the glamour that the public sees.

The truth is
he has really bad anxiety.
The highest of highs never last for as long as the lowest of lows.
Waterproof jacket to soak up all the tears
he wakes up early, it's called morning fears.

Like a freak in a circus, he gets made to dance
But does he have a chance?
of making something out of nothing.
He can't afford the shoes that society wants him to fulfil
It's ironic because the doctor just said to him to 'take a few pills.'
It's a shame it took falling to his lowest
for a person to fully appreciate his life purpose.
Imagine what this does to your mental state,
does being a billionaire decide your fate?

He lives in Africa.
but flies to America with angel wings
only to find out that it's not right, to be right-winged.
He can see red flags of a culture clash in ivory skin,
it's the elephant in the room.
But he's careful because the brush that they use to stroke your ego with
can turn into the broom
that they use to sweep your name under the table with.
No one knew what happened, it must have been a myth.
He listens to his brothers and sisters because their feelings are real
With scars so deep, it isn't easy to heal.
He does accounting, calculating profits but

it still amazes me that we are on the same team but you're celebrating my
losses.
Am I in love or do I love having someone to help from distracting me from
myself?

You can stop me if I'm lying because
I'm not perfect but I can promise you that I'm trying.



Vertigo

I feel, I feel you breaking under
my skin.
Delving too deep to tell each other apart
hand on my fragmented heart.

All this crypto in the world
you can get rich in a day.
So I don't understand why you're invested in the things that I say.

I've been going through a stage
I haven't connected with myself

The suns still shining, its blindingly bright

I used to talk to her
But she has no more inflection than a mundane red, orange, green traffic light

Is there happiness in this world, or is happiness having someone to hold when
it's cold
did I just have a panic attack?
But now I understand when you said 'summer is back'

You live and you learn
But there is still water underneath the bridges I burnt.

I feel, I feel you breaking under
my skin



Grade 10

Liam Blauwhof

When the Days are Cold and Dreary

Today is grey
Cold and dreary
The thick clouds' mellow shade
shines dimly on dewy blades

The day is cold and dreary
my mind, the clouds are dull and gloomy
The trees, and I are pissed and weary
Today is dark, damp and dreary

The sun is bright, I say aloud
It whitens grey timid clouds
white enough to radiate
bright enough to tell it's day

It's still a dull and dreary day
But, at least a light shines

On days like this
when the swards of the meadows
are wet and damp
from drippy weeps from aching leaves
When I am down and filled with doubt
Bleak about the present hour, and
Anxious for potential failure

On days like this
When I sit and watch natures' picturesque sorrowful weep
I learn from natures dull amiss
Where here I see this restful sleep
I learn that nothing is amiss

Today is dull
Cold and dreary
But nature is softening and resting deep
It is weepy, it is cold,
But the wetness on my cheeks
and the wetness on the leaves
Leaves us both fresh and healed
The damp moisture of the weeps fills our lungs
And gives us strength to sail the waves
of this beautiful life

On Cold dreary days
Like nature's whimsical waves
I myself take rest and hydrate
on these cold rainy days
I take a break and heal my mind
and reconnect with my soul's emerging tide

So when the Days are Cold and Dreary
When darkness re-emerges
I lay inside my heated bed
Alone and in Love
I open these pages, and read these same old words
surrounded by many candle lights
I sniff my favorite scents at night



Ross Boast

Haiku Diary

THE BEGINNING:

The journey begins
Nerves arise, as bags are packed
We wait patiently

THE FIRST WALK:

Departing, goodbye
Down to the Lapa we stroll
9k's lie ahead

BIKE RIDE:

We climb on our bikes
Set off for a testing ride
My friends on my side

COVID NEWS:

Losing taste and smell
I knew that I had Covid
Tests were positive

GUILT:

Being in my house
Feeling guilty for my friends
Nothing I could do

RETURN TO CAMP

Asymptomatic
I return to the journey
Finishing the job

SOLITUDE:

Just nature and I
Abundance of time to think
Beneficial day

GETTING BACK TO SCHOOL:

I am back with friends
The school work piles up each day
Two weeks till rest time



Benjamin Guimaraens

Benvie Gardens

The smell of the soil
Makes me feel content
The sounds of wildlife
Fill me with hope
And make me realise
How lucky I am
The birds hop
From branch to branch
Their brilliant song
Walks the path of the undergrowth
The texture of the bark
Of the towering trees
Is illuminated
By the heavenly light
That cascades
Through the impenetrable vegetation
The feeling of peace
Of rejuvenation
Courses through me
I am now ready
To finish the journey



Dreams

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams go
The soul will become a tomb
From which there is no escape

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams go
The plantations of imagination
Cannot flourish

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams go
There is no future for the past
And no past for the future

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams go
There is no thread for the needle of knowledge
To connect the fabric of life

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams go
There is no creativity
To cradle the wisdom of mankind



Finishing the Journey

From dust
We came
To dust
We return

To Gilboa
We walked
To the Wild Garden
We returned

Learn much
We did
Return the same
We did not

Life-changing
It was
Grateful
I am

Place the stones
We did
The end of the journey
It was



Home Planet

I long for home
The crisp air
And luscious fruit
I long for home

I long for home
My adoring family
My encouraging friends
I long for home

I long for home
The smell
Of the Galactic Gargle Blasters
I long for home

I long for home
Where ships hang in the sky
The way bricks don't
I long for home



OLE Haikus

Wind on first day
Hefty gust of wind
Snapping tent poles like branches
Invisible foe

Water study of Albert Falls Dam
Freezing black abyss
Intriguing organisms
Creatures of the dark

Canoeing on the river

Cold, misty morning
Long plastic water vessels
Please don't tip over

Summitting Mt. Gilboa

Steep rocky trail
Nearly vertical climb
On top of the world

24-hour Solitude

Completely alone
Almost touching the divine
Facing my conscience

Karkloof Canopy Tours

Zip-lining through trees
Exploring the canopies
Wow, that's quite high up

Watching the stars

Heavenly night sky
Twinkling ever so brightly
For all eyes to see

Closing ceremony

The rocks are piled high
On the edge of the garden
Such a joyous time

**On the Field**

I feel the skin
Of the player's hands
As he passes me
To the wing

I see the faces
Of the players
Covered in sweat
And bloodied

I hear the roar
Of the crowd
Cheering their teams
To victory

I think of the hope
Instilled in the people
The trust they place
In the players



The Ever-Growing Pain

Constant, never-ending
The pain ever-growing,
And my loss ever-lasting
The loss of my grandfather
The missing piece
Of the puzzle,
That is my existence
Every day, the inferno grows;
Burning my heart,
With memories of ecstasies
Placed in the bank,
That is my memory.



The Untouchable

Time pushes dreams
Beyond the horizon
Just out of reach
From an itching hand

The sagacious know
That perfection
Is only a misconception
Of what can be achieved

The perfect picture
Cannot be painted
A studied masterpiece
Is only an illusion

Nothing
Can be perfect
For changing tides
Shape the developing world

Alex Hayward

Every day I tell myself that loosening my grip

Every day I tell myself that loosening my grip
On the world isn't worth it,
That all will get better.
But it's so difficult to do when surrounded by negativity.

As if I'm floating in a sea of emotions,
Fending off the sharks.

The desolate depths,
The point of no return.

Each shark with a different name,
For each trying to drag me down.

My mouth parched from the vim and vigour of life.
Teasing me throughout the day and night,
The clouds full of happiness.
The only thing I see when I look up,
The thing that I hold on everyday for.

The rainfall from the wispy clouds has been Few in the past five years.

I've tried it all,
Medicine, therapy, eastern practices, hypnotism but no saving grace has
appeared,
Nothing to hold onto,
Save for the friends' support on which I hold onto with hope,
The small bit I have.



Oliver Mann

OLE Haikus

2 legs, 2 wheels

Peddles moving quick
Speed increasing rapidly
A dangerous ride

A Christmas day

It feels like a dream
A rare snow day in Karkloof
What a Saturday

Hacky sack

Legs are all over
The ball flying in the air
A fun game to play

Leaving the gates

A deep breathe outside
Senses tingling nervously
A big wild greeting

Mount Gilboa/extreme

The hardest steep hike
Mount Gilboa at its might
The breeze in my face

Rapid experience

A river madness
All kayaks flipping often
A big splash parade

Solitude

In the wild alone
My book and pen in my hand
Thinking about life

The Canopy

The trees greeting us
The leaves blowing in the wind
Ziplines attached strong

**Khanya Mhlongo****June 16**

Taught in a tongue they did not understand
While sitting in classrooms upon their own cultural land
They rose in numbers like desert grains of sand
Singing for the freedom they so desperately demand

Twenty thousand voices and forty thousand feet
Calling for the liberation so many would never greet
Marching, chanting, unity their weapons of choice
Singing the cries of many, all-in-one voice

A body of beautiful black youth
Shining like broken glass in the sun

By far some of the finest work god has ever done
Now wounded on the streets screaming out to their classmates run
That day metal bullets took lives that had only just begun

Bullets in the backs of children
My peers
Mothers carrying the wounded
Eyes pouring with tears

So many gave everything
So that we could bare the fruits
So many gave everything
May we never forget these roots



Mansa Musa's Mali

Gold so heavy it sinks in the sand
Welcome to Mali, a rich and thriving land
The people with skin dark and tanned
A great leader with his nation under command

An African with abundant wealth and modesty
Justice, integrity and honesty
It was the compassion of his soul
That gave him this historical role

The genesis of intellect and knowledge
Academia at the world's most ancient college
Moral frameworks routed in religion
Allowing for unition and a collective vision

A time for Africa not so long ago
A time for Africa, that we no longer know
We have abdicated our throne, fallen from grace
Like kings and queens that lose their place

Maybe one day, maybe once more
We can taste our grace, liberate our poor



Phantoms

I am tormented by a phantom
Held at high ransom
One that no mere man can afford
So, I look to the holy heavens and pray to the lord

Please deliver me my salvation!
But it feels as though salvation,
has become somewhat of a hallucination

This gargantuan ghost is like nothing before
Every day its abuses me more
But there is a ray of beautiful sunlight

It creeps around the iron bars of the cage
This glimmering light has stolen the stage
A light beyond the 4 four seasons
Provides me the strength to battle my demons
I feel like a grape vine that has just found rain

Finally, finally, now that I'm sane
I realize my phantom was a projection of myself
I was my ghost, the author of my gulf



Raging Beauty

Lightning dances over the violent seas
Accompanied by a choir of thunder
One could stare for hours in awe and wonder

Hell let out a scream that shook the mountains
Vociferous winds and surging rains
As though God himself had split the skies
Sent down this chaos just to open our eyes

Our perception of nature is tranquil and peaceful
But every now and again,
Mother nature reminds us of her raging beauty



Wabi Sabi

True beauty lies within the mundane
We overlook the real joys which alleviate our pain
The everyday appearances which keep us sane
Free yourself from the pursuit of perfection
Find what you need in your own reflection
The cracks, the scars, the boring and broken
The truest parts of our lives remain unspoken



Warriors

Like a cork in the ocean, I refuse to sink
The road to glory is most turbulent at it's brink
Tenacity and ferocity ablaze
Continue to fight forever and always!
What do we have in this world if not determination?
The fortitude to persist even in desperation
The fight itself is a part of who we are
We seek the honor that comes with a scar
Ancient empires had warriors at lead
Deep inside we admire those not afraid to bleed



Siya Mpfu

OLE Haikus

Starting the Journey
Will this be the end of me?
Into the unknown

Second day walking
I'm tired of the talking
I want to go home

An epiphany
What if God is watching me?
And is guiding me?

Walking through the dirt
I'm in need of a new shirt
All my muscles hurt

I'm drenched all over
Mistakes were made in the water
That wretched river

Starting to have fun
Enjoying the bright warm sun
The struggle is done

Longest day walking
Endurance is important
I spoke way too soon

The last day walking
At last, the end has arrived
Back to reality



Grade 9

Kigen Chepkonga

2020.

2020

In a year destined for perfect vision
We even saw suffering not seen in a century
In a year promising hope and happiness
All we hoped for was the need not to bury

2020

Racial awareness at its highest in my lifetime
Yet, in real life, much stays the same
Continuing to shy away from conversations outside of Twitter
People of colour still live with horror, shame, and pain

2020

The cliché is for this poem to be a dream
To wake up, with the sun high and a bright world to see
For all we've lost to awaken too
With a sigh of relief, to sigh and see no knee

2020.



Wim Ebersöhn

City Central

Massive trees of steel,
Sickly bellowing clouds of smoke,
A flowering tree

City of Smog

sometimes you never
know if the sun will rise on
the city of smog

Peace

sun on lake water
bird flies overhead, leaves glide
I feel peace finally

Seasons

spring brings green and life
Summer to autumn, golden,
Winter arrives, frost.

Shadows

shadows lie silent,
waiting menacingly in dark,
for a drop of light

Ships

leaves blow in the winds
carried away to afar
ships on a strong breeze

Success

golden bells ring out,
carpeted moss creeps forward,
he stands at the peak

Winter Blade

Icy wintertime
A shimmering blade lies
on a cosmic sheet of ice.

**Uthando Gumede****2020, Was Destined for Greatness**

2020, was destined for greatness,
But up until now, its filled us with sadness.
No opportunities, fun or a game,
Instead leaving us shaking our heads in shame.

We had high hopes for the year,
But turns out, success was not near.
Although we tried our very best,
Unfortunately, 2020 took care of the rest

As we look back upon a tough time,
It was a colossal mountain we had to climb.
Are we near the top yet?
Or has the virus not even broken a sweat...



William Kitching

Cup of Coffee

Out of nowhere, the virus engulfed me.
It was silent, deadly, cutting me down like a tree.
Intensive care, doctors, hospital,
This problem was incomprehensible.

I was lying there with the ventilator doing its job,
Then came the distinct BEEEEEP- my head began to throb.
The heartrate monitor flatlined,
Leaving me falling into a rapid decline.

Would I wake up,
Would I be brought a cup
Of coffee when all was okay?
No, I had passed away.

No coffee, no life.
No hope, no wife.
No breathing, no heartbeat.
No open road, a wall of concrete.



Imperceptible Madness

We came across a virus with pure serendipity,
Moving with purpose, yet so whimsically.
Eventually bound to engulf the world
With endless consequences unable to behold.

I was sitting on my bed
Listening to one of those talks by TED.
Hearing the news- I'm skeptical...
Knowing this virus kills- it's imperceptible...

With the silent killer occupying most of our Amygdala,
In the blink of an eye, the world was hosting a gala
With the most severe, infuriating problems attending.
Racial abuse, gender based violence, the climate changing.

2020, a year where our flag would fly proudly on its pole,
Ended with minister Angie and a zol.
While last year was like a dumpster fire,
We held fingers crossed 2021 would lift our spirits higher.

Jarred Kitto

Covid-19 Cinquains

Covid
Drawing blood
Isolating, draining, disheartening
Like bears during hibernation
Insanity

Covid
New world
Repetitive, Patience, Tough
As tired as the wings of a bird
Hopeless



Sebastien le Roux

Coronavirus, It Tore the World Apart

Coronavirus, it tore the world apart
And brought us together
Month after month we kept going
Waiting and hoping it would get better

We could not meet with others
Jobs lost, hospitals overrun
People dying, loved ones lost
All the days of the week merging into one

We will never know when this will be done
This past year of the pandemic has really not been fun



Jared Maltby

Pandemic Poem

A pandemic of peace
A time where we spend time with family
A time where fish filled the see
A time where birds flocked the sky
A time where are our conflicts and dispute were put to rest
A break

From the rush of our busy and overactive lives
We saw our world in a different light
One with hope and beauty
Optimism filled the air as we wished for sport and a normal life
I realized how much I take for granted
One day I'll look back
At photos, videos,
And remember some of the greatest days of my life



James Moore

The Day our Lives Changed

Our lives were halted
As if they were assaulted
This horrid virus
Has made this deadly crisis.

We are all filled with sorrow
And some just hope to live 'til tomorrow
Our lives have been reshaped
And now for better days we wait.



Reabetswe Motlhaloga

A Pandemic Year

A pandemic year
What is a pandemic year?
Is it a year filled with fear?
Is it a year filled with hate?
Is it a year filled with depression?

A Pandemic Year

Different opinions confront you everyday
Scientists and public figures swaying your thoughts
A year which truly unearths one's character

Will people help others in desperate need?

Will people be open to learning?

Will people be open to change?

A Pandemic Year

Will people be willing to learn from their mistakes?

Will people stand together in unity and peace?

Luc Schraivesande

Apprehensive

Alone
Alone in an atmosphere of despair
Where thoughts override actions and your nerves start to tear
Fear
Fear surrounds my troubled mind
Where I can't comprehend the terror that live inside
Stress
Stress flows in and out my brain
Where I feel the claustrophobic lockdown pain
Gloom
Gloomy themes of black and grey
How can I ever relieve this horrid pain?
Time
Time ticks slower than a sloth
When the outside world all begins to cough
Truth
The truth is nothing but a lie
I see this when the crowds begin to cry

And I think we all would hope someday
That these Covid times would go away.



love through the phone

I find myself indecisive
Indecisive to what the world has launched directly into my soul
I ponder if reality is a dream
A dream that had diverted into an evil course
I sit in a dwaal
A dwaal that seems to have no loophole or escape
I have no serotonin
No serotonin to convert my wild thoughts
I tend to fight
To fight troubled thoughts with vigorous emotion
I see a vision
A vision with a blurry ending
I need someone
I need someone who cares
I picture you
I picture the person I saw on my screen
I feel you
I feel your presence, yet we have never met
You saved me
You saved me in this virtual world

Connor Segar

The Queen Bee is Dead

I am a virus that plagues the planet with fear
I cause tranquility amongst the busy bees
The busy bees that once buzzed so delightfully through the working world
on a freshly greased axis on which they spun with an efficient and innovative
heartbeat
with sublime rhythm to which they danced and were taught to live by.
My arrival and relevance on the planet were a quick Pearce, like a sharp
dagger slicing away at the hive taking out each comb at a time blacking out
the hive
My grey and poisonous shadow caused the grease on the axis to dry and
crumble leaving it rust over time with a lingering effect, stopping our smooth
rotation.
My origins are yet really known, but when does my fate succumb
Do I end like an 80s song, with the yolk being so strong and leaving the
impact but who's ending is dragged and prolonged with the different pitches of
severity?
Do I end?
Do I end?
Or does my sudden and uninvited arrival to the party change what is normality
and become evident in changing the culture of life
Am I here to dry and hollow out the stem holding the hive to oak tree of their
world?
What Do I know?
All I know is
....
I am a virus that plagues the planet with fear



Chad Swanepoel

A Refresh of Our Systems

Covid 19
Such a simple word
Yet It left us all thinking
If this didn't happen
Would we still all be sinking?
In this boat that we are all in
All that we knew has been thrown to the bin
From masks, to lockdowns, to distancing
But there is very much still hope
When we rub our hands with soap

This virus starts to disappear
Sitting at home thinking when this would be over
Sitting through school thinking when this would be over
but the time will come
when we will all start to float
once more
Covid 19
Such a simple word



Jack Weavind

Lockdown 101

We live in a terrible dream,
Abiding to COVID 19,
Online school was a fail,
The fun is all stale,
Oh, curse you, you damn quarantine!



Mitchel Wilson

COVID-19 has Turned the World Upside Down

COVID-19 has turned the world upside down
Every aspect of our lives has been affected
It will impact the world as people frown
As every surface needs to be cleaned and inspected

Although the world is in lockdown
The millions who have lost their livelihoods or their loved ones
We must rise as we cannot drown
For as human race we need to do this for our daughters and sons

How to safely reopen our school
The government is making that decision
Millions of cases and deaths which seems cruel
Our online school became the new norm of revision

The statistics presented are just the tip of the iceberg but not forever
We need to find a solution for our nation to rise in this all together

Grade 8

Andre Boshoff

But You Didn't (Variation on an original by an anonymous poet)

Remember last year on Valentine's Day,
When I put sunlight in the dishwasher,
I thought you would take your ruined clothes and leave,
But you didn't.

Remember that time when we first met,
I asked you out on a date,
We ate like royalty and had a fantastic time,
But when the bill arrived I knew my fate,
I forgot my wallet, so you had to pay,
I thought you would hate me,
But you didn't.

Remember that day on Christmas Eve,
When I forgot your present,
You gave me mine, a golden pen,
It must have cost a fortune!
I thought you would take it back,
But you didn't.

Remember that time when we went for a walk,
But when we got back there was a trail of mud leading through our house
straight to me,
I thought you would kick me out,
But you didn't.

While I stood at the end of the aisle on our wedding day,
I recited my words in my mind,
I stood erect and proud as I waited for you to show,
But you didn't.



Dreams (Variation on an original by Langston Hughes)

Hold fast to dreams,
For if dreams go,
Life would be like a rabbit's dark burrow,
Deep in the ground, empty, lonely, and full of sorrow.

Hold fast to dreams,
For if dreams vanish,
Life would be like a branch twisting, snapping, breaking,
Falling from the tree of life.

Hold fast to dreams,
For if dreams perish,
The protective string of life will be pulled from the pants,
Leaving the wearer naked and afraid.

Hold fast to dreams,
For if dreams fade,
Life would be like a sloth's holiday,
Lying about with no purpose.

Hold fast to dreams,
For if dreams disappear,
The abundant stream of life, that once quenched our thirst,
Will simply cease to exist, leaving behind a barren, wasteland.



Fire (Riots in South Africa)

Some Gasoline, a flame, a spark
Is all it takes to light up the dark
But through the smoke
The shadows remain
Of those who've dressed up in shame.

They've struck fear into our hearts
They come in big BMW's and carts
They are to blame
For this horrendous flame.

The flame that burns
The flame that stings
The flame that turns
Love into hate
That makes us carry all this weight.

For them it's a game
A game of lives
But there's no need to cry
For the end is nigh.

They take what's ours
But there's no hope in cowering

We need to stick together
We are a team
Together we'll awake from this dream
We can do this
We are South Africans
Now let us prove it.



The Boogeyman

The crunch of bones under your feet;
The smell of blood, and human meat;
The dark tunnels leading down and under;
The Boogeyman sleeps, in gracious slumber.

The horrid scent of rust and mold;
Jolts the memories of the tales you've been told;
So long ago now, so old and fake;
The Boogeyman sleeps, but will awake!

With his decaying teeth, and immobilizing stare;
You can see your life flash before your eyes;
And nobody will ever hear your cries;
The Boogeyman sleeps, but won't for long!

You will drop to your knees;
When you realise your fate;
Because you know that it is too late;
The Boogeyman sleeps; for now!

When he gets out of bed;
You will wish that you are dead;
The ground will rumble and shake;
The Boogeyman is awake!

You will cry out in fear and pain;
When you realise how many people he has slain;
One everyday since he was ten;
The Boogeyman kills, and will again!

He takes a huge bite;
Presses down with all his might;
The echoing screams of women and men;
The Boogeyman kills, and kills again!

He will grab your neck with no mercy;
You will suck for air, like you are thirsty;
You will drop to the ground, dead;
The Boogeyman has fed!



Adam Wingfield

The man who was loved by all

The breeze running through his hair
although it's not fair
His feet rustling through the summer grass
but without another's glance
may he rest

The light shining so bright
yet he is out of sight
with his motionless walk
he smiles

I'm living the dream he used to say
I wonder why he had that price to pay
But on this very day
people weep and pray
may he rest

A man loved by all
yet still paid a toll
he is at home with the lord
free to do whatever he wants at his own accord
MAY HE REST



PROSE

Grade 12

Richard Karlson

A Shepherd's Dream

The gentle afternoon breeze meanders through the valley and rustles the grass of the lush mountains. Small, thin trees have grown sporadically among the grass with arms spread wide to feel the wind. The river that formed this valley still flows through it, sustaining life as it has done for aeons. It has ebbed, raged, and, with time, ground mountains to dust. The water is low and flows slowly during these summer months. The cracked ground beside the river has not felt rain for weeks, yet the land still provides for the grey, woolly beasts that call it home. Sheep in their hundreds make their way along the trail, following the water's bends and turns. The ground is eager to spring into the air and every step adds to the cloud of dust that follows the flock. They chat among themselves, occasionally bleating to disrupt the monotonous clopping of hooves on the solid ground. One or two are courageous enough to break away for a quick bite of the sweet, green grass but they know the consequences. A stern chant erupts from behind the flock and echoes against the mountainsides. It is the sheep's guide, the human, the shepherd.

Sweat moves down his face like molasses as the sun relentlessly shines on his dark skin. The air feels thick and the smell of dust and sheep dung overpowers everything else. Flies buzz around him like persistent salesmen. His brown eyes gaze upon the flock while he grins from cheek to cheek. All of the shepherd's wealth lies in front of him in a cloud of wool. In his right hand he holds a polished wooden cane, an essential tool for a shepherd, and in his left hand he holds the reins to his steed. The large, brown stallion on which he rides grows tired of their slow pace but a swift kick eases the urge to disobey. His horse is not the only helper as a simple whistle summons a black and white border collie to get the sheep in line. Even though it is a hot African day, the shepherd is not dressed as one would imagine. He is wearing a plain white shirt, a fine black waistcoat, long canvas pants, old brown boots, and a blue, brimless hat. If anyone not used to the African heat wore this they would overheat yet the shepherd wears it with little discomfort.

On the other side of the river is a small piece of flat land. The ground is more fertile than the surrounding area and growing nearby is the largest tree in the valley that provides a pleasant umbrella of shade. Beneath the tree is a small rondavel that has been sculpted from the river mud and has a thick, thatched roof. An unlit fireplace sits beside it, waiting for the long shadows of the mountains to consume the light. This is the shepherd's homeland and one day there will be sheep throughout the entire valley, eating the thriving grass and drinking from the river. The shepherd wishes to have a family with him to tend to his flock and enjoy the peaceful, orange sunsets. This is what he hopes for - a shepherd's dream.

Driverless Cars: A Future to Which to Look Forward

Driverless cars have been the centre of many debates around the future role of technology, machine learning, and artificial intelligence in human society. These vehicles will have little to no human input while operating and every decision will be made by computer software. This has raised the concerns of many individuals who believe that driverless cars will result in a grim future due to issues such as software errors and job losses. However, the potential benefits of driverless cars far out way the drawbacks. The introduction of autonomy into cars will lead to a safer, more efficient, and more economically beneficial system for humanity.

The most critical aspect of the discussion around driverless cars is safety. The fact is that implementing driverless cars onto roads will result in a safer driving experience for not only passengers of the driverless vehicle but other vehicles as well. An alarming figure is that 1.35 million human beings die in road accidents every year with 94% of these being due to human error. Driverless cars will solve this because, unlike humans, computers do not get tired, distracted, annoyed, or make careless mistakes. This simply means that the accidents caused by human error could be prevented entirely. The computers controlling driverless cars have the potential to map their surroundings constantly, track potential hazards, and communicate with other vehicles as to what they are doing, making them superior to the average human driver. A future in which millions of people do not lose their lives unnecessarily is an objectively better one and the increased reliability and safety of driverless cars can ensure that this future becomes a reality. In addition to the safety provided by a computer driving a vehicle, the efficiency of the vehicle is optimised.

Technology needs to be as efficient and sustainable as possible in this era and driverless cars are much more efficient in terms of the consumption of resources and general operation. With the threat of climate change quickly approaching, cars, and especially non-electric cars, need to use energy and fuel in the most efficient way possible as to not contribute to the climate disaster. Driverless cars have been proven to use up to 7% less fuel and energy compared to normal human-driven cars. This means fewer emissions, less energy used, and a more efficient operation of the vehicle. Driverless cars achieve this by optimising speeds and acceleration as opposed to human drivers who are a lot more sporadic, often braking and accelerating unnecessarily, which consumes more fuel. On top of this, traffic can be optimised with driverless cars when they communicate with one another. Groups of driverless cars at intersections can work together to minimise the amount of time lost, emissions due to idling, and make travel by car much faster in large cities. This makes the efficiency of the car transport system important environmentally and economically with driverless cars as the logical next step towards a better system. Time is money in the 21st century and a future with driverless cars will save people both.

Despite the loss of some jobs, the adoption of driverless cars will have great economic benefits for car owners and economies. Owners of driverless cars will no longer have to leave their cars idle while not in use because these vehicles can operate autonomously as taxis for others. Therefore, cars in our society will be less of a liability for owners as they will generate passive income for them while they work or relax. This is also effective in ensuring that cars are used to their full potential and

not left parked for several hours. The other benefit to this is the increase in the amount of transport for those unable to afford a car. With many driverless cars functioning as taxis, the necessity to own a car will be greatly reduced because it will be cheaper and easier to use the taxis. This is a major potential benefit for economies because the amount of public transport will be increased drastically, benefitting the poorer members of the economy who rely on this form of transport. The introduction of driverless cars will result in a future that is economically better off by creating new revenue streams and greatly increasing public transport options.

From safer roads to increased efficiency to an improved economy, the benefits and necessity of driverless cars are clear. While the technology for fully driverless cars is not here yet, engineers and developers are only a few steps away from this major leap in human transport and that leaves us with an exciting future. Acknowledging that driverless cars will have some drawbacks is important, but the reality is that the benefits that this technology will bring to our society's future are not something we can take for granted.



The Redwood Forest

In an area of the map that looks the least interesting, with apparently no buildings and little human influence, sits a Californian forest. It is a particularly special forest with some of the most extraordinary trees we know, the great Californian Redwoods. The forest is densely packed with these natural skyscrapers. They stand almost one hundred metres tall and six metres wide, towering over their leafy relatives. After a quick look around, you will find numerous small trails that weave around the wide trunks and under the shadows of the giants around you. The ground below you is cold and barren of any significant vegetation despite the rich and muddy soil. The sun attempts to penetrate the leafy canopy to spark new life but never truly seems to reach the ground. Within this lively forest, there is a calming absence of unnatural sound. The calls of the local birds and scurrying of nearby critters are all that will disturb the peace. Take a breath among these trees and you will find that the air is crisp. The unwanted odours of civilization are replaced by the earthy smell of the untouched land around you.

The Redwoods contain almost no low-lying branches for climbing and only have long, leafy branches towards the top. Redwoods are covered in a thick, reddish brown bark and placing your hand on the bark reveals that it is not perfect. It is rough and splintered from hundreds of years of existence and forgotten history, history that may be rough and splintered itself. The roots of these trees bulge and emerge randomly from the soil, crisscrossing one another multiple times along their length. These roots frequently fuse together to form strange natural structures to admire. The tree also seems to dance with life that is not its own. Plenty of birds and small mammals explore these goliaths to find convenient holes and branches to call home. Insects create long winding lines following one another and marching up the trunk like little armies in search of war.

Humanity, like the insects, marches along in search of war, except not a war between each other, but a war with nature. The polished cogs of expansion and development tick closer to the forest every day. The sparse area and value of the forest accelerate its destruction. The smoke and noise of a greedy monster encroaching its borders. Humans come to explore the beauty here but taint it instead. Poisonous plastics litter the area, shining unnaturally in the natural light. Carvings of love cut deep into the veins of the trunks. Wounds of stripped bark appear among the trees. You hear no screams from the trees, only the soft rustle of their leaves in a breeze. You hear no screams from the soil, only the squelch of the mud beneath you. You hear no screams from the animals, only their silence. If a forest could scream, the Earth would be plagued in noise. Humanity came to explore the beauty here but has destroyed it instead.



Bongi Khoza

Architectus

There once lived an architect who appreciated the world for what its worth and his eyes never failed at showing him the treasures of the world from the contours of the hills to the beauties of the pantheon. The inspiration he took was from what he saw and what he envisioned, he often spoke with the knowledgeable philosopher Aristotle about his views and teachings on ethics. Architectus was not low born as in fact he descends from a successful noble family from Athens called Theodorou, Theodorou is an aristocratic family renowned for its contribution in the field of politics and architecture master builders in their own rights. Rumors around Athens believe that the Theodorou family have been blessed by the god Hephaestus himself for their ability to bend masonry to their vision is a feat no other family let alone builders can compete with. The name Theodorou means gift of god which is understatement for their family even so Architectus is not like the rest of his family who take his blessing for granted, Architectus is planning on building a temple to the god Hephaestus of metalworking, stone masonry, fire and art through sculpture. It was a reaching the dusk and Architectus found himself walking back home from Mount Hymettus, when a he noticed someone playing the kithara while admiring the nature's beauty when he approached, he noticed this was no human being, it was the messenger of the gods himself the god of the sun Apollo. Apollo spoke to Architectus in a voice that seemed as beautiful as the birds singing in the mountain side, Apollo spoke of how the gods are impressed with his work and especially Hephaestus although Zeus is said to be envious of the temple that Architectus is constructing. At that very moment Apollo disappeared. Aristotle warned Architectus that Zeus might try to disrupt the construction of the grand temple but must not fall into fear and must consult the oracle of Delphi for his prophecy will guide to make the decisions he sees fit in continuing his plan. Architectus is a man who determined to see his dream to completion although there is no telling if he will see his project to completion or face an untimely demise.

Matt Liao

A Letter I Would Send to My Past Self

Dear Matt,

Can you believe that we're almost an adult now? When we were eight, I remember wanting to grow up faster, wanting more control over my own life. Now that I'm grown-ish, I want it to slow down instead.

It's not as bad as I make it out to seem, though. Making burgers with our friends at 1 a.m. the night before a test in the common room or driving ourselves to meet up with them at Monte during the holidays. Having the ability to decide what we want to do and when? I'd say that's pretty worth it.

But there are always some things that I wish we had known. Stuff that we had done differently.

Firstly, we don't go to high school with the rest of our friends. We're told that we're "gifted" and transfer to Radford House since it's supposedly a school for gifted children, but I wish that I had known that being labelled as "gifted" didn't mean anything. Don't get me wrong, there's nothing wrong with it, but I just wish we had never been told we were considered "gifted" because it ends up making us stick to the "easy things", the ones we're supposed to be "gifted" at. Don't do that. Instead, take on challenges, learn to fail and pick yourself back up.

We only end up applying to Hilton College, an all-boys boarding school, in Grade 7. During these five years we experience so much. We went on exchange to North Carolina, where I wish we had spent more time exploring as much as we could instead of wanting to focus on basketball. Again, don't get me wrong, I don't regret it because it would be the reason we made 1st team basketball at Hilton, but I just wish we had spent more time enjoying it instead of worrying.

Be serious about studying and find a good reason to study. I discovered my reason much too late, at the end of our Grade 11 year, having never had a real reason to want to study. Learn different methods of studying and make sure they stick. Listen to your teachers, pay attention in every class and attempt all the homework. We were so focused on wanting to prove to everyone that we were still "gifted" that we stopped attempting to solve harder problems and became obsessed with being perfect.

We learn so much more by attempting and failing, that I genuinely believe that we wouldn't be where we are now if we hadn't changed our way of thinking. Don't be afraid of making mistakes; we're human, they're meant to happen.

I still remember the day we were told we could never make gaming a career. It crushed our soul. Don't let others extinguish the dreams we have for ourselves. Who knows? We could have been the next pro or famous streamer – like Stewie2K – if we had kept going. It's 2021 after all ~ so many things are possible, I don't see why that couldn't have happened! This doesn't necessarily mean I regret stopping, though. It

gave us more time to focus on our studies as we prepared to write this essay for our dream college.

Learn to be adaptable. In 2020, a virus emerges which would cause a disease called Covid-19. This would send South Africa into a 6-month lockdown, in which everything is closed to the public, and we have to learn online. We can't see our friends and we can't exercise. Learn to be able to tackle any problem that comes your way and solve any issues.

Finally, don't let the time we have go to waste. These years have flown by so fast, it's basically all a blur (but a memorable one). And remember, even when things aren't going your way, you'll make it out in the end.

P.S. Don't worry about trying to find love now. It'll come to us eventually. We had a few special people in our lives that showed us a lot of great things and made us a better person.



Grade 11

Felix Jenkins

The Old Bookshop

I approach the bookshop with caution, knowing the dangers that lie Within. Its faded exterior gives the illusion that there is nothing to be found inside, however, as you enter, you embrace yourself in a completely new world.

I open the door to the chime of a bell. I stand for a second, trying to take in my surroundings. The orchestration of a single, broken ceiling fan and the *tik tok* of the grandfather clock was enough to put anyone to bed. A candle could have yielded brighter light than the one flickering lightbulb on the ceiling. The frigid air bites at your skin making you feel as if you are not alone. The *creek* in the floorboard wakes the bookkeeper who lends me nothing but a vacant stare.

The blanket of dust that enveloped every inch of the store made it hard to identify a colour other than grey. I wander over to the first bookshelf where one swipe of my hand uncovers a sea of novels. I explore from bookshelf to bookshelf, brushing off the cloak of dust, uncovering hundreds, nay, thousands of stories. With each movement a new book tempts my hand, making it impossible to decide, each more enticing than the last. I could have spent days foraging amongst mountains of book, entranced by landscapes of lyrical diction. I find myself in the fiction section. The vibrant covers of each book appeared to be fighting a war against the dull scaffolding on which it perched. I linger within each book, forgetting about the world outside of this literary heaven. I wrench a sheet off of what I believed to be a pile of books. Revealing a leather armchair fit for royalty. Its tall leather back protected from the film of dust by the aforementioned cover.

I take a seat, ready to immerse myself into the fictional excellence that has tarried, stagnant, on these shelves for decades. I open my book, only to be greeted by a spider who scurries away with speed! I fall into a trance, falling deeper and deeper with each word as the scent of old book envelopes me. I lose all sense of my surroundings and time is suddenly no longer of importance. Hours and hours pass by while I, oblivious, exist between worlds. I've been hopping from one realm to another since taking my seat in my wizened, leather throne where I can travel back in time, and suddenly, immerse myself in the hopes of the future within a new book.

I rise, surprised that my legs can still hold my weight. Step after step, I approach the perishing, ligneous door, disappointed that my journey has come to an end. I run my finger along the spine of each book reassuring them that one day, I will be back. Until then they will remain on these dust entrapped shelves, aging like a fine wine, forgotten yet remembered. I pass the bookkeeper, once again, on the way to the exit, I wonder how something so lifeless exists in this place of wonder. Placing my hand on the freezing metal handle, turning once more to say goodbye to the mountains of love, hope, war, life, death, and everything this world has known, will know, and wants to know, I open the door. The light of the sun is blinding as I step onto the cobblestone street. Walking away, I wonder, how can such a dark and

dreary place be filled with a thousand other worlds that present you with a new perspective on life with each turn of a page?



Oliver Lello

A One-Day Sunrise

How the wealthy should rather provide business to the impoverished to provide a steady flow of income and opportunity instead of gifting them a “once off” form of income.

As the African sunrise creeps over the horizon, it slowly stretches its long life-giving fingers over the savannah. As these fingers hesitantly climb over the splintered mud walls of Ubumpofu a sense of hope is instilled in the residents. A hope that today will be different. That today will be the start of something much like the sun, the start of something pulchritudinous, life changing and most importantly everlasting. Everyone is awake at this hour, slowly staggering to the taxi ranks onwards to their jobs. With dusty eyes and ghastly mannerisms, the people pile in. Unable to move, their three-hour journey begins.

With crippled backs and newly calloused hands they return to the rank and pay two thirds of their daily wage to the taxi man. After such an arduous day the men drift into a bar with nothing but a crumpled fifty rand note. The women are back home, tending to the children and wondering why their beloved man has once again forsaken them. The men only come out whence that sunrise peers through the bar window. Revealing to them that it is time to begin the process again, again, again.

As the Sun dances through the curtains a man squints at the bedside alarm clock. Its 8:00 and time to get out of the warm hug of the duvet. With a morning coffee in hand the car complains as the key turns into the ignition. With the air conditioning fighting off the weather the man gazes into his empty heart. A heart without enthusiasm and without purpose. A heart that is looking for the correct block to fill its hole. The man turns his head and spies at the town of Ubumpofu. He watches its nervous system, how its synapses fire and how its bones creek into a decrepit movement. Suddenly the correctly shaped block is discovered.

As the ghastly men once again stumble out of their huts a low rumble echoes and a cloud of dust rises from the ashes of shattered dreams. The dreams of being the scarlet bird and the one who escapes this broken lifestyle. Like a metallic stampede the Landrover comes forthwith bearing gifts of heartlessness. As the white shoes cautiously step out into the dust bath, he is met with a tribe of mere shadows of men. Men who are all hoping to receive some form of wealth to carry them out of this graveyard. Yet only a simple item, that costed he who bore the gift nothing, is received. An effortless loaf of bread and a carton of milk.

With that such shoes hastily skip back into his luxury vehicle and stampede back into the horizon. Flicking up a cloud of dust behind him. With this the block slides into place, and the heart is momentarily whole. And by the man briskly throwing money at the situation he believes that he has made a meaningful impact to those less privileged. A monetary solution.

The man returns to his everyday life and forgets the agonies of those who he “helped”, except with a renewed intrinsic feeling of self-worth that is provided from their suffering. Whereas the reality is that the man performed the dehumanizing act of throwing the men some meat but never teaching them to hunt.

Thoughtless giving is much like the one-day sunrise. It is beautiful in its initial moments, but without a sustainable flow all life fades away, leaving more darkness behind it.



Thomas Roy

My Africa

When my parents announced that we were going on a road trip that would include giving Connie, our domestic employee, a lift to her home, I had no inkling what a thought-provoking trip lay ahead. Connie lives in Nkambithi, a few kilometers outside the town of Ladysmith in KwaZulu- Natal. It was an embarrassment to my parents that, at the time, Connie had been working for our family for 16 years and we did not know where she lives.

We departed from our pot of gold with no idea of what lay ahead. We would have struggled to find our way without Connie in the car with us. Once we were off the tarred road, everything looked similar like common shaped puzzle pieces. Houses were scattered across the barren grasslands with few trees to act as markers. The dirt road twisted and turned like a rollercoaster through dongas and grasslands. Only when we arrived at the Dlamini's property did I realise my flawed preconceptions and assumptions. This was Connie's home and because of that, it was not the same as the other houses. It was well maintained with a bare but neatly swept yard. It was welcoming, a noticeable contrast to the sparse, rural surroundings.

Over the years I have gotten to know many of Connie's family. Their respect and care for her was tangible. She is the matriarch and was the main breadwinner (whilst she worked) in her household but because of her humble nature that was never obvious. It was only when I was in her space, her home, that I saw the whole of Connie. She was more substantial than I had perceived.

When the car entered the gate, the unfamiliar surrounding was filled with enthusiastic people. They shouted in an array of enthusiastic words that used countless clicks. 'Sawubona', 'unjani?' It sounded as if someone was snapping their fingers to a song. The constant sweep of the broom that kept the yard so neat halted

only for a second as the man looked up to see who these foreign people were. Connie's family showered us with treats, "Just for you bhuti, some amakhekhe?" Wandile, her son, called over the commotion in the living room. The room was filled with the sweet aroma of the chicken livers that were cooked for lunch and my nostrils danced as the scent drifted towards me. I had to adjust to my new surroundings but Connie's family took no time to prove that this was a happy place. We were not seen as outsiders but instead welcomed and included into their home.

We witnessed the roof tiles being laid on the house's roof. The tiles were tossed in the air by a man on the ground and caught each time by another man who had climbed onto the roof. This task seemed so practiced. They maneuvered each tile, onto the roof with such precision. The puzzle was complete. A young boy, Connie's grandson, Themba flashed me a shy smile before disappearing behind his sister. His teeth still showing the remains of the biscuits we had just enjoyed.

Connie's house is home to her elderly mother, Connie's three children and her grandchildren, her cousin, and Connie's slightly deformed nephew. Some of them work away from home but this is still the place where they come back to. It was surprisingly calm and comfortable considering the basic services of a rural village and how many people it accommodated. It matched Connie's demeanour but, in so doing, given the circumstances, it revealed her quiet strength and selflessness. It demonstrated her commitment to her family unit and the value placed in the people she called her own. She may not have been in a position to build a bathroom inside her house but she could make a dream catcher for her troubled nephew to help him sleep. Where she could make a difference, she did.

We drove away from Connie's house in silence, absorbing the time that we had there. For no apparent reason my siblings and I cuddled up on the back seat of the car. Why is that? Were we making up for times we had taken each other for granted? Connie was no magician but her kind, nurturing ways for her family and the effort she put in, is her magic.



Matt Sara

The Broken

The human mind is undeniably the most amazing thing to ever exist on this planet. It has allowed our, frankly physically unremarkable, species to conquer the world and made it a possibility for us to conquer worlds thousands of miles away. As a species we are obviously creative, but we are creative in a way that conforms to what society deems acceptable. People still fear having absolutely outrageous ideas because of our primal fear of being judged and scorned. Humans are herd animals; our minds crave acceptance and familiarity. But what if they did not, what if a mind became truly unique? What would happen if a mind broke?

There are people whose minds have differed from the Status quo of today's world, people who are truly different from the rest of us. These people are extremely rare and like so many other unknowns, society shuns them. These people are said to have "Psychotic Disorders" and that they need to be medicated and controlled because they are unable to function. I disagree with this, in fact I believe that these people with psychotic disorders or broken minds should be left alone entirely.

We are all born with brains that are, close as makes no difference, identical, these brains are then shaped and molded by life experiences the person goes through. Yes, we develop different personalities, views and opinions but we cannot really call ourselves unique, we all still think in the same patterns, we obey the code. In the same way that a ceramic vase shatters to create unique pieces or how a cracked piece of glass warps the image behind it, I believe that minds that have been subject to extreme trauma or stress and have actually snapped are the only truly unique minds on this planet.

In the same way that a muscle grows stronger due to micro-tears and scar tissue, the mind becomes more powerful by breaking. It allows for new perspectives to form without fear of judgement or embarrassment. We often tend to, although maybe subconsciously, look down upon these Broken Minds as we think their mental capacity is limited, when truly they are far more superior than us.

These "disorders" are not a weakness, some appear as defense mechanisms. Multiple personality disorder, for example, is caused by early childhood trauma and allows a person to completely dissociate themselves from a situation that is painful or violent, the mind literally creates a whole new personality to deal with circumstances. The ways in which the mind is able to cope with life is incredible. They are a product of rather unhappy circumstances but the impact on the mind and how it shatters allows for the mind to be rebuilt in incredible ways.

I believe that the Broken are the strongest...



Declan Sawyer

The Old Bookshop

Still the Old Bookshop sits on the corner. The sun rises to reveal the once celebrated walls, now cracked and dull. Through the tinted windows, gusts of dust swirling appear as ghosts which had once found a world of endless possibilities. Intrigued to investigate the ancient ruins of the old world I decide to walk the fifty or so meters along the sidewalk. As I approach the Old Bookshop a large wave of smells crash over me like a wave in the sea. The damp smell of mold blocks out all the fresh oxygen left in the remaining steps to the rotting door. I take a weary step as I open the jammed door, scaring off a few swallows who chirp fiercely back. An old bell chimes and the floorboards creek as I enter the great wilderness of words, awakening a time traveler with surprise.

The old man stares with a blinkless gaze, acknowledging my every move. I approach him as he gives an enthusiastic wave. I stop for a second taking in the world which indulges in the past, present and future. I stroll through the shelves of wisdom, the smell of mold still strong in the air. I reach the shelves which read "Non-Fiction". My childhood reborn as my mind is trapped inside the stories of Wilbur Smith on the savannah plains of Africa. Suddenly the dull shop is filled with color of different worlds and events. The scent of mold is now replaced with the fresh dirt of the savannah and the great green plains with thousands of trees now cover over the grey walls where swallows now nest. The old bookkeeper now becomes a safari guide with a rifle and leads me through the world and onto the next. My mind only starting to grapple on how much power the Old Bookshop on the corner has.

I suddenly am brought into a darker scenario, where a more concerned and serious version of myself arises. The sound of distant bombs going off alerts me as I sit up in my hospital bed in a white tent. The smell of cooked flesh fills my nose and makes me feel at unease. I am fetched by a Commander holding a large rifle and taken on a windy path. The sky black from smoke of fires which burn a village from below. The man who once led me through the safari is now leading me through the great war of the past. Distant screams and the smell of burning wood fill the air. The sound of trembling hooves on the churned-up ground appearing closer with each step I take. Great stallions suddenly appear in the horizon bolting straight for us, but yet the man still walks forward. The horses now only a few meters away, with men keeping balance and holding guns directed at us. A sudden burst of a pop sound is heard but I am already drawn into reality, sitting back on a creaky wooden chair with a book labelled "World War 2 Main Events" sat in my resting hands. I stand up and am welcomed back to the bookshop by the strong stench of the mold.

I approach the man at the desk of the shop. Without asking anything he responds as if reading my mind, "It is amazing, isn't it?". I walk out of the Old Bookshop astound. The dull building is suddenly lifeless again. I pace back over to the safety of my apartment, admiring the books which had just been presented to me. I think back to what my initial thought on the building was. Dusty, moldy, and rundown. The Old Bookshop, the place which translates ink into worlds of wonder and where possibilities are endless, still sits on the corner.



Ross Taylor

Forgive you to Forget

I shudder. A frigid breeze slowly navigates itself through my half open window. As my curtains dance and sway with the steady movement of the breeze, my toes contract into the warmth of my duvet. Turning my head, I expect to see the orange glow of the early morning sun, but even the singing birdlife are still silenced with sleep. The busy intersection below my house is quiet as only the monotonous tick of the green light changing red fills the vacant road.

Awoken to the silence and an impatient bladder, my eyes and mind started processing concurrently. While shifting inconveniently large pillows, my bedside alarm clock reads 3:52. I allow my thoughts to wander. Against all temptations, I opt against the thought of her as to let whatever is brewing come up to the surface on its own volition. I close my eyes tightly as the photo wall inside my head resurfaces the once filled joyous memories and pictures, that now live unresponsive in a broken heart. An intolerable escape. Thus, the pathways feel overgrown and unkept as they lead to an impossible maze of my solitude, seeking for the attention of new life.

Weeping for myself, I wonder if I'll ever be what is in my heart. While taking all the courage I had left, it was only spent fixing problems I had made inside my own head. The cool air of benign affability had become misleading, and I was now in a state of misery.

Who do I forgive if it was all her fault or mine?



The Black Ball

My mother's shrill voice fills the car as she starts her annual lecture on fulfilling our manners during the Christmas family lunch. I catch eyes with my brother as we share a smirk and pretend to listen to the droning voice. After church in the morning my collar slowly starts to stifle my neck as I try to undo my top button, to my father's despise and glaring look.

Family gatherings often bring mixed emotions along with it. The fun and games between cousins and the more boresome task of talking to the aunts and uncles about the topic of 'school'. Although I always seemed enthusiastic to see my grandfather. A smile broadened its way on my face as he gripped me into a tight clasp and his broad shoulders wrapped me up. My cheeks turned pink as my mother made her usual remark of our similar resemblance. My grandfather smiled back at me and made his way to the bar to fix himself a drink. After a long afternoon of sitting at the dining room table the hands of the clock soon ran into the early evening.

Every Taylor Christmas Lunch ends off with an intense match of strip pool. When the opposition team sinks a ball one member of the team removes an item of clothing.

As teams of two were beginning to form, I slowly glided towards my grandfather. He was sitting quietly on a bar stool sipping his ice-filled glass of white wine. We both thought that it would be fitting if the reigning champions reunited. We strolled our way through the first rounds, eliminating our fellow family members with ease. We eventually reached the final. A final fought between my brother, who was subjected to only wearing his socks and underpants, and my uncle who only remained with his shorts. A fitting battle to end the tournament as my grandfather and I had only removed one item of clothing each.

A slow start saw my grandfather and I fall two balls behind the leading pair. My grandfather expertly leans over a striped ball and whips it into one of the corner pockets to open up our account in the final. My brother slowly starts to remove his socks as his eyebrows narrow. After sinking another couple, we neared the end of the match. The small white ball was being smacked to all four corners of the table until finally the elusive 8 ball remained. As both teams narrowed their targets onto the final prey, the tension could be cut with a blunt kitchen knife. The ball appeared in a position for a possible sinking shot. A cool sweat timeously arrived on top of my brow as I leant over and rested my elbows onto the smooth surface of the table. My now bare chest beat with every thump of my heart. A quick intake of breath revealed a deathly silence in a room that was once buzzing with drunken laughter. With my fingers clasped around the cue my knuckles slowly lost the flow of blood. The drawback to release saw the white ball slither effortlessly along the green surface of the table. The two balls crashed against each other but the notorious number 8 seemed to end on the lip of the pocket. Disappointment flooded my system as I stood aloof. A simple tap in from the opposing team saw my grandfather and I lose a battle for the Taylor history books.

My grandfather looked me in the eyes as he embraced my sweaty body into his. No words were needed to be said as we shook hands to end another annual family gathering.



The Direction of Faux

A fox, a house cat and a salmon all have a sense of where they are in the world. The birds chirping outside my window can change direction from north to south impulsively. The fox never forgets his first den. Salmon find their way back to where they were spawned. A house cat always returns home by sliding its slim body through the narrow rungs on the gate. It's the freedom they've been led to.

I am lost. It is difficult to fathom this sense of loss when life is all about you, but not about you at all. These are two opposing thoughts and yet both of them are true. My sense of direction fluctuates with every specific situation, whether it be fishing at the shallow dam below my house or running around circular drive amidst the heat. Freedom maintains a liquid form allowing its owner to mould it into however they see fit. The tranquility of cool water running over my toes brings equal amounts of liberty

as the beating pulse that blinds my eyes as my legs fail beneath me. Why has this freedom not given me the direction to my life that I so desperately desire?

The game of life is often played as a game of poker, where fools sit and speculate about their future fortunes riding on the pitch and toss of luck. The house always wins, although not in a way that is too obvious to discourage fools forever. My grandfather was never a fool but rather the croupier, always set to be in control. A man that I idolised to be one day. It is difficult to examine one's life through their own eyes as they see this perspective from day to day without time for reflection. My grandfather always believed he should have been a poet due to his uncanny belief that we are related to Lord Byron. Nonetheless, his poetry was rather elegantly written as he clarified the sense to live with direction. I admired and longed for this trait of direction as the continual confusion of being a young adult shadowed my fragile, foolish frame. His story about these two games seem to complement each other like a King and Queen.

I had succumbed to the fate of showing my hand too soon, without the hidden trick of an ace up my sleeve. Patience averted me at the most critical time when all that was needed was a level head. The game of life needed to be played with this patience in order to reap its reward. My grandfather would not have submitted so soon. His story grounds me and allows me to understand his sense of direction. Although, one evening even the greatest lost this sense. Thick smoke hung in the air and hovered over the octagonal shaped table. Chunky cigars sat in mouths as the raspy sound of inhaling broke the silence. A delicate shuffle introduced the swift handing of cards to their new owners while a wild array of coloured chips littered the bare green table. Tension increased as the men tilted their heads and lifted their thumbs to see their new hand. With no space for any more players, my grandfather led the charge with his consistently growing pile before him. A risky hand produced his first successful bluff but to him it was known as confidently playing the game. The game's direction was surely sealed, the only question left being when my grandfather cashed in. He was a bold man in his youth, pairs of eyes suddenly appeared behind tinted glasses as he pushed countless chips into the middle of the table and so crashed from their high pedestals. However, the crash only foreshadowed his ending.

His direction was sealed just like the fox, house cat and the salmon. How did it all go wrong? My grandfather left me with the knowledge that direction only serves you good in the present, while leaving you to be a stranger in your own element in the future.



The Storm in His Head

There is a passage in the old testament that foretells of a time where there will be paradise on earth, with everything living in perfect harmony. Violence and peace will be at rest from their war.

A low, growling shatter of thunder was accompanied by the soft image of a lightened sky. Electricity pulsed through the air, seemingly creating forks of networks from the heavens to the ground. The sounds rolled silently over the high hills until reaching an ear in which to release. Nature went quiet for a moment as if an intake of breath halted any noise. The unconscious mind has no control over a storm.

Metal grounding against metal shook the floor beneath the boy. He fell down at the sudden movement and shuffled on his hands and feet, blindly fingering his way to an escape. His back struck against a solid wall; he slid along it until he hit the corner of the room. Sinking to the floor, he pulled his legs up tight against his body as the dark hairs on his legs soothed his trembling hands. Squinting into the darkness, he closed his eyes away from the black abyss, in hope that they would soon adjust to the surroundings. With another jolt, the room lurched up like an old lift in a mineshaft. Harsh sounds of chains and pulleys, like the working of an ancient steel factory, reverberated and bounced off the walls with a hollow, tinny whine. A beating heart raced against the pulse in his temple as an attempt to exhale his breath. The constant drip of sweat from the boy's hair pulsated around the enclosed area as the wait for the next droplet became antagonizing. His bare chest shined in the dark as small pathways caressed along his torso against the dirty backdrop of his body. The room continued its ascent as the boy grew immune to the ceaseless rattling of the chains that pulled him upwards. The room halted and the sudden change threw the boy from his huddled position. Scrambling to his feet he felt the room sway less and less until it finally came to a stop. the cold metal smell filled his nose as he screamed in frustration; his echo amplified through the air as his lungs projected the noise. He pounded on the walls with his fists and his knuckles grew whiter as his slim fingers thawed from the action. The imposters footsteps, Fear and Insecurity, grew louder as they hunted with relentless determination. They had pursued the boy for years and their persistence had kept him underground, forcing him to live in a purgatory of his own mind. Without warning, he reached up and curled his fingers around the high ledge, pulling himself up and trying to scramble on his knees. The impostors rushed forward in disbelief, wanting to grab at the young boy's feet, in the fear that he shall view this experience from a higher feat. The boy was close as he could now see the dull colours in a more vibrant taste. But one slip and fall, led the boy to learn that both medicine and poison are an acquired taste.

Is there an escape from one's mind?

When the boy is above ground, the storm is able to subside. The moon makes the night bright but only because it reflects the sunshine. It's the journey that the boys been listening to, escape is this destination. He turns the handle to step into a passage of no return in hope to find that his escape is aligned with his next location.

Perhaps the prophecy made in the Book of Isaiah had not quite come to pass, as the storm still lays rigid in awareness of the boy.



When the Light Sets In

A single wild, indigenous Hadedda flew up the side of the hill, almost brushing the tips of the long grass in its flight. It drooped its wide wings and hung its feet as it started to reach the crest and then dropped into its leafy cover.

Two young boys and their dog followed it up the valley as the evening sun nastily glared into their eyes. While squinting through the blindness, the boys continued to trudge, stepping from rock to rock. The dog led; his tongue flopping pink from the corner of his mouth, followed by the two boys who had sensed a nearing to the top. Both of them were sweating in dark patches through their tired khaki shirts. The perspiration had spread to their foreheads as an already muddy hand swiped at the messy hairline, for the African sun still possessed her heat although already standing half-mast down the orange sky.

The dog hit the scent of the bird and a newfound excitement filled its little body. For a second he stood, sucking it up through his two large nostril holes, and then started his charge again. He worked fast, back and forth, his head down leaving only his busy tail above the dry brown grass. The boys hurried behind him, as he was their navigator, and seamlessly blended into the dark thicket behind them, courtesy of their sun-kissed skin and shirts. The wind still wistfully whistled and so the trees danced with gusto. Only the soft sounds of innocent beetles filled the silence as they scurried below the boy's feet.

The older of the two, who had now taken charge, steadied his rifle below the crest of his shoulder. The bird moved sharply with the perceived knowledge of its predator in close vicinity. A moment of hesitation now reeked around the once jovial air as a barrel left the end of the rifle. The serene environment turned into one of havoc as gunpowder filled noses. The trees now stood stiff and blended into the evening light at the attention of the boy. Dust had grown to swallow the fresh air as a hand hastily slashed to clear it, but only to find another unsuccessful shot. A wild spray of cursed words escaped a bitter mouth while the dog whimpered at its owner's misfortune.

For the boy walking home with his eyes on the floor, the perky chirp and chatter of the songbirds lightened his mood. The critical words of his younger brother only seemed to fall deaf as they mindlessly travelled from one ear to the other. Although disappointed, the boy was happy. His nose lifted the rest of his body to the smell of his mother's dinner. The sun had given her final praise to the day as she slowly started to switch the lights off, but to the boy, it was start of when the light sets in.



Jack Waterhouse

“Looked’d up in perfect silence to the stars”

The discomfort of the evening’s stars illuminates you.

Whenever I have the rare opportunity to gaze and feast on a truly surreal African sky, I am gripped by its enchanting embrace. Lying down on a plush mattress, looking up and contemplating the giant grandeur of twinkling diamond stars, I am allowed to take a brief few moments to reflect and ponder on my life. I can leave the rigid rule of society and school and immerse myself in the freedom of nature and the vastness of the sky.

These contemplations allow me to illuminate who I am - 17 years old with just over a year of boarding school left. Looking back, I have given high school my absolute all. It has been a profound breeding ground that has allowed me to confront and challenge many aspects of life, including myself and who I shall become. Communication, respect, and appreciation have been key elements that are essential to building relationships and a community. Sport has been a powerful outlet for me to rid myself of frustration and ‘let it all out.’ There have been times however when I have found myself stressed and anxious, especially on the academic front, in my perpetual drive to attain a well-rounded and successful academic career. I am self-driven and have aspirations for the man I want to be and the world in which he will live. I am that kid who squeezes every drop of the lemon out, working and competing hard on all fronts. However, success comes with sacrifice and often I find myself feeling life’s pressures. As I have matured, I am learning to cope in tense situations and am fully aware that life is meant to taunt and provoke so that one can uncover the reason for their being.

I have lots of interests and hobbies and I am fascinated by the world around me. I am hugely privileged and thoroughly appreciate my blessings. Most importantly however, I am cognizant of my responsibility to give back to society. I want to make a difference in this life, to the environment and to people less fortunate than myself.

There is an enchanting power that nature possesses that cannot be measured or explained. When I lie under the Milky-Way I feel I can leave myself behind and immerse myself in its magical powers under the silence of the stars. There are no limits to imagination, no boundaries, borders, or confines. No one telling me what or how to think or behave. Freedom at the very core of your existence. For a brief encounter the difficulty of human life is erased, and a dream of perfect bliss unfolds.

Soon, all my worries disappear and life seems irrelevant. What is the reason for stress? My life here on earth feels trivial thanks to the construct of time that society has imposed itself. Mitch Albom sums it up perfectly when he says: “Man alone measures time. Man alone chimes the hour. And, because of this, man alone suffers a paralyzing fear that no other creature endures. A fear of time running out.” If I am lucky, I will live to 80 years old, but earth has been around for around 4,543 billion years. Who am I, and why was I chosen to set foot here? These dark rabbit holes open all around me, just like those beyond the stars, engulfing everything that dares take it on.

Enough!

After a while reality kicks in as responsibility and terrestrial life resumes. I am ready to take up the challenge and make this world a better place. I am excited for the future and feel charged. I feel educated with my eyes wide open. I now know that I can always escape into the unknown world of heaven and nirvana to refuel and reevaluate when life's pressures build up. I can always trust the discomfort of the stars to illuminate me.



Mr. George Harris
Headmaster of Hilton College
College Avenue
Hilton
3245

Dear Mr Harris,

RE: Homophobia Letter

I am writing to you today about the prevalence of homophobia at Hilton College. We have all heard the accusations thrown at all boys boarding schools about toxic masculinity that often ends up ostracizing people who do not quite fit the mould of being heterosexual. We need to address this all too common issue which negatively affects our everyday experience at school.

I am in grade 11 and am naturally surrounded by testosterone infused friends who, in moments of weakness, have made blunt and insensitive comments to each other. The dangerous part about these comments is that the person delivering them has no idea how it truly effects the person they are speaking to. Not only that, but these comments can often develop into bullying on emotional or even physical fronts whereby the perpetrator has no true idea of the implications and derogatory meaning behind his original remarks. I believe one of the biggest problems we face at our all boys' institution is how being gay or being viewed as having 'gay tendencies' is considered weak and is followed by being excluded from various groups or activities.

I will go as far as to say that if someone is being too kind, uses overly expressive hand gestures, speaks differently or is a little bit socially awkward, the first judgment made by a typical boarding male student is: 'Why is he so weird, is he gay or something?' This is the sad, harsh and often marginalised truth about what goes on behind closed doors.

We must embrace, with wide open arms, the word *tolerance*. It is only after open discussions with my peers and reading widely, that I have realised these social behavioural patterns display a complete lack of education. In a school like ours where education is pivotal, this must be highlighted with urgency, as ultimately it reflects on us all if we cannot accept people for who they are.

It is something that needs addressing and I feel with the help of global guest speakers and constant open discussions, this often-neglected topic can begin to be addressed. Silencing homosexuality and denying that it exists is one of the key issues that remains. A culture of respect and dignity of all people must be instilled despite our many differences and sexual orientations.

I believe we have all at least grown to accept that we are not alike. We must extend this sensitivity and acceptance to people from the gay community and do all that we can do understand their perspective.

Yours Sincerely,
Jack Waterhouse



The Storm

“A storm in a teacup is often a spill-over from a storm from within” – Paul TP Wong

His elongated fingers grasped the porcelain teacup cup like a vulture’s talons wrap around a branch. Mr. Bentley absorbed the thermal energy radiating from the surface of the petite fine-bone China cup. A fragile zephyr permeated the air as it carried a prickly cold touch that descended through his Patagonia jacket and into his crepey skin.

A seasonal weather change had arrived as the leaves turned brown and the winds crisp. He graciously raised the cup edged in gold leaf to his narrow lips. The steam from the surface of the liquid Brownian motion condensed on the tip of his nose. As his lips made contact with the porcelain, Mr Bentley’s frail frame burst into life. The burning sensation rippled through his face, down his arms and sent a twitch of agony to his hand. That sudden jolt sent a wave of dark infused Rooibos tea onto his white collared Polo shirt. Not quite the start to the day that he had hoped for.

Mr Bentley rushed to change into a shirt that was azure in colour. His Tag Heuer struck a quarter to the hour. He rushed around the kitchen counter and swooped down to grab his bundle of keys as the rearing horse on the Porsche logo brushed against his palm. Outside, the great cumulonimbus clouds twirl and curl creating magical and fantastical images. He grabbed the cold metallic-car-doorhandle and slumped into his seat. He revved the engine and dark plumes of smoke evaporated up into the atmosphere. He proceeded along his daily route to the office, weaving through the traffic and hustle and bustle of the city centre.

Suddenly an apparition appeared and just like a bird of prey screeches, the back breaks engaged with a haunting sound. Expletives exploded, exacerbating the enormity of what could have transpired. There was a deafening sound of silence.

This tall lean male figure materialised from behind his haggard cart of recyclable raw materials. Fierce eyeballs locked into a formidable embrace. "What the fe fi flo fum," Mr Bentley exclaimed with his hands gesticulating wildly in the air. The reclaimer looked dumbfounded and narrowed his eyes questioningly. The expression on his face said it all. He responded with great dismay and said, "Lidume ladlula." (The thunder has passed)

Feeling no remorse Mr Bentley cruised to his office. As habit dictated, he proceeded to his red Smeg kettle. Next to it, nestled the familiar Earl Grey tin with squeaking hinges, stuffed with aromatic teabags. He carefully began his ritual, crafting his cup of tea to perfection. He slowly dipped the tea bag in and out of his cup, allowing the tea extract to diffuse and create the correct intensity for optimal taste.

Mr Bentley gently lowered himself into his plush jet-black leather chair. Salivating for his first sip, he knew to take more precautions this time. Reclining back and sinking into comfort he contemplated the morning's events. A snigger slowly stretched across his crinkled face as he recollected his annoyance at having to change this Polo shirt.

The snigger morphed into a grimace as reality took hold. The innocuous incident of spilt tea had infected his mood. He realised how selfish he had been, driving to the office and unleashing frustration on an innocent upstanding citizen. He had let his emotions cloud his reasoning and instigate the storm within. The thought swiftly came to fruition that it had all been just a 'storm in a teacup.' The events that unfolded were so trivial and Mr. Bentley had let his emotions rain-down. A regrettable incident which gave him time to reflect on his own inadequacies.



Spencer Wright

The Bookshop

Columns of soft light seeped into the room through open windows and loose boards in the roof. Warmth emanated from the rich oak shelves and the now scraped away birch floorboards. A thin film of dust had settled over an unmarked book at the checkout counter. An array of books populated the shelves of the store, blissfully unmarked and unsorted. All comfortable in the company of each other, waiting in idleness for any disturbance. Each bookshelf held collective beauty, every book subtly forming the image of the shelf. The collaboration of each book, of differing shades and texture, formed the visage of each bookshelf, all unique yet unremarkable. Identity was both lost and created in the sum of each book's individuality and forgetfulness. Silence permeates everything, broken only by the aged groaning of the time-worn building.

Surrounded by chaos, it stood in defiant tranquility. Dead, granite buildings loomed over and around the shop like dreadful gods disdaining an inferior being. Brazen and loud advertisements sat equidistant from each other in disingenuous symmetry and

screamed for attention. Heartless, these buildings stood for no purpose but ego, soothing the fragile mind of scared men, falsifying power through arbitrary means. The taller and more imposing the building, the more ironically false it was, reaching for non-existent affirmation in the sky. Cars drive past ignorant of the chaos they perpetuate.

The humble exterior of the Bookshop was suffocated by the smog of the city. Every plank was beaten and darkened while protecting the peace within. The sloping roof sagged with age and every window was embraced by a thick smudge. Only the wistful flicker of candles through the windows gave away the life within the bookshop. Leaves had somehow found their way to the roof of the store, resting messily like the hair of an ancient sage. Rust covered the sparse hints of metal on the Shop, running along the gutters and hinges of the door. The smell of rain seeped through the cracks of the Shop, isolating it.

Inside, each book remained selfishly shut, excluding the world from its secrets. The threaded hardcovers acted as prison bars of knowledge, titles on the books acting as proud declarations of the willing prisoners within, all holding unimaginable, unknown tales. Entire worlds sealed behind the pages, now long dormant and complacent. The Youthful vigor of a new story and its urge to be told now completely lost to the timed sagas. The prying eye now met with the formless visage of the bookshelf, with each book's character seamlessly falling away for the whole.

Only one stood unique. Quietly waiting, close to freedom and expression, yet unable to change its position. It lay in anticipation on the counter, pensively reaching for freedom, yet trapped by its own inaction. Its story and its message were bursting at the seams, willing the pages to flow open and free. But no motivation could will open its cover. Inside, a world of endless wonder existed, filled with vast expanses of jungles, desolate desert dunes, people broken by harsh realities, and heroes fighting to change them. Imagination oozed from the closed pages, fighting the inertia of the book, but were destined to fail in the face of no reader.

Not even a shop attendant resided in the shop, it was forgotten and abandoned. The tranquility of the Shop would remain indefinite, undisturbed, and permanent. The tranquility that had arisen from the defeated formlessness of each book, the complacency of each story and, the uncaring bystander unwilling to ignite change was false and decrepit. For, no curious soul would wander inside, and no stories would be set free.



Grade 10

Jack Hampson

The Whistle

A shrill whistle shatters the silence. Screams deafen my ears as I try to get a grasp on the situation. Flakes of dirt rain down from the ceiling like smog smothering a city. The ground beneath me shudders. I look across the unlit room. The fear in my companion's eyes makes my blood run cold.

The whistle grows louder.

My gun lies nestled in the palm of my hand. The barrel is warm. I run my hand down the cool shaft. The coarse, sharp rust scrapes my sensitive hand. The wet, sticky mud meets my blistered feet. My legs send a bolt of pain shooting through my body in protest. I clench my tired, muddy boots so hard that my knuckles started to turn white. I carefully place them on my feet. My helmet observes me from the floor. I hesitantly place it on my exposed head, knowing what the future may hold.

All I can hear are gunshots. They are deafening in the darkness like the drumroll of death.

I hobble to my dear companion. His eyes grow wide. Fear drains all the colour from his face, he begins to succumb to the brutal situation. His fear is contagious, spreading like a terrible disease throughout the trench. I am determined not to let the fear get hold of me. I am determined to die bravely.

The whistle grows louder.

As I step out into the cold abyss of the trench, my fears meet reality. A scene of horror greets my eyes. Countless soldiers lie lifeless on the muddy floor. I take a moment to remember the time I spent with these comrades, a time not so long ago. An icy wind sends shivers down my spine, drying the line of tears that stains my cheeks. I miss my mother's touch, my father's voice and my sibling's laughter. I wish I could go home, I wish I could sleep in the comfort of my bed, I wish I could taste my mother's food again. For a brief moment I dare let my mind wander back to my childhood, back to the days when worries were few. In that brief moment, as I am surrounded by the fury of death and utter despair, I vow that should God spare me from this horrific nightmare and allow me the grace of being reunited with all those that I hold dear to my heart, I will love fiercely and forgive freely. I silently offer up a prayer and make a deal with the Almighty above.

I have succumbed to my fear. I am a dead man walking.

The whistle has arrived.



Oliver Joyner

The Best Feeling in the World

I watch, and I wait.

My feet dangle in the freezing water. My face is soaked, the drops coming together to run into my eyes and drip down my chin. The warmth that I have left runs to my core to shelter and protect what little remains. I watch the sea, lost in the rhythmic percussion of waves crashing all around me. My eyes are steady on the horizon, my face lit by the last orange rays before the twilight beckons the stars.

I rock on my board, creating ripples that dissolve into nothing, making me feel insignificant and helpless against the force of the ocean. The mysterious waters of the deep hold much more than meets the eye. One moment it is a dreamy calm pulse unmatched by any other force of nature, but in a blink of an eye, these serene waters turn grey and form mountainous waves. In an instant, the currents can turn on you. The sea is an unpredictable world and not for the faint of heart.

Everything is still and calm when out of nowhere I see it. A growing mountain rising towards me. Slowly but surely it gets closer and closer, the blue-green face frowning at me, the ripples on the top are like long white flowing hair dancing in the wind. I turn, and I paddle using all my strength, reaching as far forward as I can, pulling with all my might as I start to move. Gaining speed with each stroke. I feel the mighty body of the wave lifting me up as if I am nothing.

I reach the top of the wave. I glance down at the water below. The surface is like an everchanging mirror turned half liquid. I spring up on my board, rising to my feet. I drop in to this magnificent wave from what feels like the edge of the tallest building in the world. Soaring down the face, my board cuts through the water like a knife through butter. The lip feathers in the wind momentarily before pitching forward to explode in a foaming mass of white water. As I cruise along the slowly dying wave, I watch in slow motion as it peels along, as controlled and orderly as you like. It is quite possibly the best feeling in the world.



Kearabetswe Khoele

New Music, New Me

“Almost game time, boys, it’s our first soccer match of the season. Warm up properly,” The coach says to our team as our bus enters Michaelhouse’s gates. The chairs in the bus reek of overused deodorant with a hint of tobacco. Everyone in the bus has contributed to the deodorant smell, but the tobacco aroma must be Kevin. His tracksuit is the aftermath of a *who can blow the biggest cloud of smoke* contest on a Friday night. Whenever he casually skips practices to clear his mind, he’s really just filling his lungs with methane and nicotine.

He still hasn't been caught. And he still plays sport like he has a third lung.

I loathe how he can have silver spoons shoved in his mouth and still not brush his teeth, while I need to take the time and effort to wash the dishes. This isn't even the crazy part. What I struggle to understand is why I have to wash the dishes and still not eat.

Without a single person in sight and with today's miserable weather, I can't help but feel an uninviting presence as the bus enters enemy territory. I plug in my earphones, sink into my seat and play my favorite song.

The bus hisses to a halt, and the sound of seatbelts unclipping follows.

Normally I'd be vibing and bopping my head to my music, but something's off with me today. My hands won't lift off my legs and my legs aren't in the mood to extend right now. Listening to music always used to calm my nerves, so why am I numb?

Maybe it's because I'm not listening to my music, I'm listening to all my regrets and dark thoughts. I wish I could tell myself that the regret that the worst hockey season I've ever had has finally ended. I can't. This feeling isn't just regret, it's a whole array of different emotions that hit me like a groundswell of waves.

Hockey season was during winter season. It was cold and unforgiving. But, much like how winter comes to an end, and becomes spring, my regrets from hockey season could fade, and in place of the regret, lasting memories could brew in the soccer season.

I'm the last man in the bus and I can see that coach has noticed. I imagine steam coming from his ears.

I'm paralyzed.

"Time to go, Kea!" coach howls at me.

My music sounds louder. It feels like I've been listening to the same music the whole season. I study my music app. There it is. My song has been on repeat the whole time. I play the next song.

Coach has had it with me now. He unleashes a storm, but I'm muted to the sound of his thunder, my eyes are fixated on his two chins fighting each other and the spit escaping his mouth. He forces me to get up and pull my bag from under my seat. It's time for a new beginning. A new song, and a new me.

Finally, I get out of the bus.

Finally, the next song plays.

Finally, I unplug my earphones from my ears.



The Journey: Response Letter to Myself

Dear Kea from the past

Unfortunately, I don't have a time machine, so I'm writing you this letter instead. I know that writing letters isn't your niche; you're used to autocorrect and blue ticks. People your age are absurdly attached to their screens and are constantly looking for Kudos when there is a whole world around them to explore and find their place in. What you are looking for on that screen that you are so devoted to doesn't compare to what is behind it. If only you had realized that sooner, you would have been a more productive person. You might have even surpassed me in productivity.

It looked like you had such high expectations for The Journey. It wasn't as physically challenging as you thought it would be. I mean, you have been through some serious physical torment in the past, but those mountains weren't that tough. It was the mental and emotional aspect that was the most challenging. I have never believed in emotional and spiritual awakenings, but those 24 hours of solitude made me a believer!

Despite all your mislead conjectures, you were right.

You were right about how little time two weeks is. About how just smiling will take me places. What's more, you were right about how I should take the opportunity to journal seriously, because of the impact it may have on my life. I know that you are not one to write down your thoughts and feelings on pieces of paper, but after this camp, I might as well label myself as an addict.

I'll spare you the details of all the positive clichés that I discovered on camp and list them instead.

The Journey made me...

Realize how long 24 hours really is and how much we can do with it.

Notice how important family is.

Appreciate the situations I've been put in and the opportunities my parents have given me.

Give journaling a chance and effectively organize my thoughts.

I've also uncovered several negative thoughts and behaviours during the journey and I'll proceed to work on them. Regardless, I can finally look at you through the mirror and say...

We are not the same- we have changed- and like 'Nkhono' said while gripping her cane, "You will fly, my eagle."

Love,

The Kea that wishes he had a time machine

Ben Kok

A Long, Rough Road Leading Nowhere

A screeching melody brings my dream to an abrupt end. Harmonising with it is the bass of the raspy snore that drove my ex-roommate to the verge of insanity. Reluctantly, I roll over and blindly search for the right button on the alarm as a thin beam of sunlight filters between the blinds to pierce the slits of my squinted eyes.

The stain from the smell of tobacco is still ripe under my fingernails. I hate myself when I smoke. However, last night the nicotine was a crucial ally in the war on the anxiety preventing my sleep; it momentarily silenced the constant whisper of pressure for the day ahead, at least for long enough to claim some rest in the early morning hours.

The icy tiles sting my bare feet as I fish for my CV from a sea of notes, textbooks, and empty chip packets. Beside it is my desk lamp, bulb still warm. Its bright yellow eye is the sole witness to the days, no, months, of my passion, preparation, and determination.

The kettle's whistle echoes throughout my small apartment but eventually drowns in the ocean of traffic below.

No milk. No sugar.

Stepping out onto the balcony, the chilly wind pinches my cheeks on its way inland and my sore throat is soothed by a gulp of warm coffee. A grin emerges from my dry lips when I compare the steam flowing from my mug to the mist lurking on top of the mountain in the distance. The view is my favourite part about living in Cape Town. It always manages to humble me, reminding me of my insignificance.

Lukewarm shower water (a product of the broken geyser) drains the remaining lethargy from me. Quick glances at the notes pinned against the wall assist me as I go over my speech while I button my shirt and fix my tie and collar. The poor pale walls have been wearied by hearing these same words repeated endlessly, yet I utter them once more, leaving no room for self-doubt in my mind.

A croaky groan creeps out of the exhaust as I do a final inspection of my hair in the rear-view mirror. It is 8:43. My interview starts at 9.

My palms leak sweat onto the cold leather steering wheel as I realise: 12 years of school and 5 years of studying lead me here. 17 years of diligence, as persistent as the waves eating away at the beach to my right. The buzz on my phone indicates some words of support sent from my mother.

Each rotation of the wheels brings me closer to my future. After all those hours of working behind closed doors, finally their hinges are about to break. After tediously planting and nurturing, finally I can bear the fruits of my labour. All the stars are swinging into alignment.

I can see the future so clearly.

If only the taxi running the red light was as clear to me.

Epilogue:

After missing out on the U14 and U15 A team rugby I was determined to make the U16A team. 2 years of early mornings, long runs, rigorous gym sessions and lonesome skill training put me in an excellent position to achieve my goal. I thought my hard work was due to pay off soon. That was until I broke my arm in the rugby camp before the season.

This story is a depiction of my emotion through this process.



Dear Ben

Dear Ben,

The Grade 10 Journey was an enriching experience crammed with an array of emotions, from the sunny hills of hope down to the gloomy depths of despondency. What stood out for me was the lack of the noise we have become so familiar with in our busy lives. This abundance of quiet was a major catalyst for reflection, unearthing many realisations buried deep in the roots of my subconscious. This letter serves as a knot, binding the learnings floating freely in my head to the tangible foundation of written word.

The first of my realisations was appreciation. My lack of appreciation to be specific. I was wrapped cosily in my sleeping bag, stowed neatly in my 2-man tent; my stomach thoroughly satisfied from 2-minute noodles saturated in a creamy cheese and mushroom sauce. Yet, all I could think about was how horrible it was sleeping on rugged ground as opposed to a soft mattress. The next day we passed two young boys. They sat happily beside their hut-like home enjoying their lunch consisting solely of 2 slices of plain white bread. My greeting was returned with a gleaming toothy smile accompanied by an enthusiastic wave. It was then that a wave of shame washed over me and drenched me with the embarrassment of my entitlement the previous day.

Living in our school bubble often blinds us to our privilege. This event taught me the value of being thankful for the small things. Look at life in terms of what you have instead of losing yourself searching for what you don't.

My next lesson was understanding the true volume of silence. I constantly found myself entrenched in the middle of arguments over the smallest and most irrelevant things. This became apparent to Mr. Kirsten and towards the end of the journey when we were trailing at the back of the group, we had a long conversation regarding the effectiveness and power of simply letting things go. He said that the strain I felt from these altercations were clearly noticeable and that they were dampening my mood long after the final point was made, and word was spoken.

Disagreements steer our emotions down a negative road without us realising it and we often allow them to ruin our day. The best way for us to negate this is to pick our battles wisely without wasting energy on the pointless things. Sometimes saying nothing says more than saying something.

My final learning was of my insignificance. The view from the top of Mt. Gilboa took my breath away(as did the climb up it). From the top, you could see dozens of hills rolling into the purple horizon, with thick green blankets of trees clinging to their sides. If one of those millions of trees were to fall over, what difference would it make? Its thud might echo throughout the forest for a few seconds and attract someone's attention temporarily, but after a few years of decay, even the soil it was once rooted in would have no recollection of its existence. Wandering in awe through the vastness of nature humbled me with an overwhelming feeling of insignificance and unimportance in the wholistic scope of the world around.

Although we act like it sometimes Ben, the world does not in fact revolve around us and we are merely passengers aboard the ship of life. Perhaps maybe we shouldn't take life so seriously and simply sit back and enjoy the ride sometimes.

To conclude, the Journey was an incredible opportunity for self-growth and refining my identity. Although the expression is clichéd and often an over exaggeration, "life changing," is certainly an appropriate way of describing my journey.

Keep well and take care,
Ben.



Nic McLeod

Memories

We all travel through life not remembering every conversation, we have with every person, but specific personal memories will be remembered forever. No matter how good or bad of a person you were to someone, they will never remember exactly what you said to them but rather they'll remember how you made them feel. "They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel." – Carl W. Buechner.

I think every great person has said some great things that they should be remembered by, but most people will remember them for how they made them or their families feel, this is just how the world works and how great people become who they are.

We all try to be the best friends, teammates and just generally the best possible versions of ourselves that we can be, in doing this we make our world a great place! Many great people that have lived on this earth know that people will not remember them for what they said but rather what they did and how they made their communities and different families feel. These different feelings that people go through make memories that we will never forget. During my short time at Hilton

college, there have been different types of leadership throughout the matric groups, and these determine the way your life at that certain time will play out. Last year, we had a great group of leaders at our school, and it made Hilton college a great environment to be in with memories I will remember forever, whereas a few years back in grade 8 our leaders went through an extremely rough patch, I think that this brought the atmosphere in the Hilton college community down a bit and didn't have the same ever lasting memories that you would have with a better leadership group. Referring to these different times at our beautiful school, we can see how much of a difference having good or bad "vibes" can make in our memory making and our enjoyment of a certain place or even person.

Every time in history has their positives and negatives or their ups and downs but these are all determined by how people were made to feel and not by just by what someone had said. In positive times people were made to feel like they were free and had equal opportunity to their human rights whilst in times of negativity, people didn't feel like they were free or even had rights. They were rather struggling financially, and this made it even harder for people to feel good about their leaders and people of high power in their communities and the world at that specific time. South Africa is currently going through a rough patch, but I think most people will remember it for how we reacted to the crisis and overcame it, how people went from being scared and worried to being happy and free like our lovely country normally is.

As I have traveled through my life, I have learned many lessons about how such little things that people do, can make me feel so good or so terrible about yourself. All these different times bring back memories and this is what makes everyone's lives so different and unique! This brings me back to Carl W. Buechner's quote, "They may forget what you said, but they'll never forget how you made them feel."



Matthew Peters

Alone in The African Bush - *So peaceful, yet so chaotic.*

It is hot in the Sabi Sands. The bright afternoon sun beats down on the bonnet of the army-green coloured Land Rover as the rubber from the tyres moves slowly over each grain of sand.

The sounds of many little bee-eaters litter my ears with their chatter but they are then drowned out by the distinct call of the African Fish Eagle as it echoes through the wilderness.

The smell of my own sweat is overpowered by that of freshly dropped elephant dung. Excitement runs through my veins, as I navigate the car around each corner; a new segment of land for my eyes to scan. I read it like a book, searching between each tree as if it were a space between words, observing each blade of grass as if it were a letter, truly studying the landscape. This is a skill. A skill which I have managed to perfect. A master of my senses. A chief of patience.

From the greatest of the African Elephants to the tiniest of the Carpenter Ants, every organism plays a part in this complex and fragile ecosystem. Like a science experiment, if just one measurement is out of swing, the entire project will be. There is no margin for error in this delicate environment.

As the once-so-strong sun begins to droop lazily over the horizon, it leaves a soft orange light for the clouds to catch. The temperature dips and the innocent impalas prepare for the complete takeover of the wrath of darkness, perhaps the deadliest killer in the wild.

The whoop of the evil hyenas begins like a siren to announce the commencement of the purge. The quiet whirr of the Land Rover stops as I slow to identify the tracks of a male leopard in the smooth whisps of the Sand river bed. My hunt begins.

Looking up every Marula tree and under every Gwarrie bush, my eye manages to catch the elegant flick of the white tipped tail of the leopard I have been looking for. Lying peacefully in the dense long grass is the elusive animal. So graceful lies this creature, but like anything in the wild, I know that if the opportunity arises to kill, this cat will quickly transform to become a merciless, violent killing machine.

I sit in silence, in the dark and I listen. I listen to the sounds of the bush around me. I can hear the slow lethargic movements of an elephant wallowing in the nearby watering hole. Again, the laugh of the hyenas in the distance is matched by the annoying buzz of a mosquito circling around my head. I look up to see a bright sky filled with stars. As I watch them blink, it almost seems as if they are watching back. Watching the chaos of the night unfold.

The African bush is a place to be admired. A place that can be so calm, however when day turns to night, so violent and unforgiving. Mother nature, an artwork that no man could ever replicate.



Matthew Stewart

Breathe

At first, a trickle

Then a stream.

And then a torrent.

Freezing, murky water rises quickly above my ankles. A slow shiver works its way down my spine, a mixture of terror and cold. The *Fair Maiden*, once my pride and joy, will soon be my eternal tomb.

The gushing and splashing of seawater are the only sounds that reach my ears. It would have been almost peaceful if that relative silence did not foreshadow my imminent death. Suddenly the peace is ruptured by the sound of the hull protesting against the tremendous pressure being applied by the mighty ocean.

The water now encircles my waist.

The room is bathed in a deep red, emitted by the emergency light, that only helps to accentuate the severity of my situation. Outside, no light manages to penetrate the thick darkness that surrounds the boat like a blanket; as if even the rays of the sun are afraid to venture this far below the ocean's surface. I notice a light cloud of steam escaping my blue, cracked lips. I ironically ponder which death I will succumb to fastest: hypothermia, the oxygen running out or drowning. Looking at the speed at which the water is rising I imagine it will be drowning. A low laugh rumbles from deep within me at the sheer ridiculousness of my situation. "The captain truly goes down with his ship," I mutter to myself.

The water has now risen to my chest.

The stream is flowing with much greater intent now. It is as if the ocean senses that the battle between sailor and sea is nearly won and is eager to claim what it sees as rightfully its own. The chill of the water is like a hand gripping my entire body, slowly squeezing out any air left in my already struggling lungs. My legs have long since lost any feeling and I'm certain my arms will soon follow them. I can taste the staleness of the air tainted with faint trace of salt.

I notice my reflection staring back at me with a look of peace and acceptance on his face. The water begins to lap at my chin like a young dog playfully greeting a child. All feeling of the cold has left me and has been replaced with a slight warmth that fills my entire body.

The water reaches up and smothers my mouth and nose. I try to hold my breath to no avail. The unforgiving ocean steals the air from my lungs in a cloud of bubbles. My instincts lead me to twist and struggle, using up what ever precious reserves of oxygen are still left. My heart pounds in my ears. My whole being screams for breath. The water holds me in a tight embrace, never tiring, unrelenting.

Darkness floods the edges of my vision. I cannot resist the urge any longer.

I breathe.



Grade 9

Wim Ebersöhn

Extension Writing

Scorching heat, relentless sun. Dunes as far as the eye can see, reflecting so much light off it is a sea of brightness. Beads of sweat roll down his forehead clinging to his skin, his dark hair plastered to his scalp under the helmet. He concentrates, ignoring the sudden itch in his side, he has been trained for this, he is ready for this. Fixated on his target he adjusts his sights and prepares to fire. The rifle is an extension of himself, an extra limb. Finally satisfied he pulls the trigger back and feels the resistance. The rifle has jammed, sand must have found its way in.

He has no time to waste, no time to fix it. Instead, he pulls another, slimmer rifle off his back, wrapped in a cloth to protect it. This one is clean, free of sand grains, and ready to fulfill its purpose. He sets the sights and finds his target again; it has moved again. This time when he pulls the trigger back the rifle spurs to life like a living creature. One silent shot and his mission is complete, the target is down.

As he treks back to camp he wonders if it is worth it, being so far from his family. Then he shakes his head, dismissing these thoughts. He has to do this, it is his duty to his country, and his family. Still, he can't seem to fully commit to this resolution and continues to think. He hasn't seen his son in three years, he must already be an adult by now, probably with a family of his own. As for his wife, well she would still be there when he returned, ready to welcome him home with open arms. If only he could leave this hellish landscape and go home to the people he loves.



Injured.

Alluring orange, poppy yellow, radiant pink, colors normally seen on a sunset, were the colors of the bird that sat in front of him. It was a dragon finch a rare and beautiful bird. It cocked its feathered head at him, its beady black eyes filled with curiosity. He looked at the finch with a tilted head, long, greasy locks hanging over his face. One eye was visible, a dull glazed blue, all the spirit and fight gone from it.

At a first glance, he could easily have been mistaken for a human or even an elf, but that all changed upon a closer look. Some of his features were indeed human, but his skin color was a sickly grey, similar to ash. Well, it would be an untruth to call it skin, for he was covered in small scales from head to toe, linking together like intricate chainmail.

His ear, for he was missing one, was tattered and torn, and the tip was curved, like that of an elf. He had a lean, strong chin and his nose was slender, though visibly broken in at least three places. Blood had trickled down his cheek flowing from a shallow cut on his forehead.

As for his garments, once considered of royal court standard, were faded with age, and torn in numerous places. Ribs clearly showed under his ripped shirt and his right leg was swollen to the point it threatened to break through his cotton breeches.

The dragon finch became more intrigued by the half-dead figure, hopping closer, as to get a better look. His hands were large and slender, with thin fingers ending in sleek, curved blades of talons. These very talons suddenly lunged out at the bird, skewering it. The figure suddenly sprung to life, grimaced in pain as he sat up with great agony.

As he held the lifeless finch in his clutch he whispered a prayer, thanking his gods for a meal. Then he devoured it in a single bite, the blood running down his chin. Instantaneously color returned to his face, and a spark ignited deep within his eye, whilst the other remained hidden. He licked the blood from his chin, savoring every drop.

He then pulled back the breech leg, hissing through his teeth in pain. The flesh beneath his knee was a deathly purple, and a thick white fluid was seeping out of a cut. He leaned over to his rucksack, which he had been leaning on, retrieving a small box of crimson powder, a vial of blue liquid, and a flask.

He spread the powder over the swollen area and the cut, then lifted the flask to his lips, drinking deeply. Coughing violently, he poured the blue liquid over the power and screamed in anguish as purple smoke rose from the union. He collapsed from the unbearable pain and unconscious, returned to the ground.



William Kitching

A Nightmare Playing on Rewind

The wind was howling through the gaps in the glass walls that lined the front of Ellis House. I could hear the cracking of the coldness crawling over every centimeter of glass present in the building. Despite the thickness and sheer weight of my duvet on top of me, it does not shield me from the penetrating blades that is the cold. My smart watch vibrates on my wrist, and its ear-shattering chimes spring me out of bed. I reach for my side table and heave myself up, groaning, whilst my blood rushes to my head, relieving me of the dizziness caused by my sharp movement to reposition myself. Perched on the edge of my bed, I place my sock-covered feet on the floor, and they immediately retreat closer to me as they feel the intense coldness below. Still in a coma, and too lazy to lift my feet, I glide along the floor, like a skater on ice, albeit lacking any daintiness or control. As I reach the door, I lift my heavy arm to rest on the handle, and use nothing but gravity to force it downwards, my hand slipping off and falling beside me. I project my right leg forward, preparing for another slide, but I'm halted by the carpet of the hallway that can only be compared to sand paper. My only option now is to lift my feet, and stumble towards the towel room,

where I extract my still-damp towel from the evening before. I catch a gust of the warm, heated room's breath on my skin, and decide to embrace the welcoming feeling for a second or two. I begin to walk back to the dorm, the underside of my socks barely kissing the surface as I move forward, through the door and towards the far side of the dorm. The only place to escape the cold is the shower. I strip down until I am bare, close the door and latch it with an abrupt and rushed click, prepared to find asylum in the place I am about to travel to next. The water turns on and I am transported to a completely new dimension. My limbs and extremities begin throbbing and tingling as the boiling hot water pours down on me.

I step outside and I am engulfed in cold, cold, and more cold. It's safe to say; I feel its presence. I am tossed around by the frozen wind; my nose and ears experiencing the pain. They sting as I am hit by this invisible force. My joints creak and groan, like a machine that hasn't been oiled, or like the breaks of a bicycle, biting onto the rim of the wheel, trying with all their might to stop the bike. Being outside makes me feel like a wooden puppet- stiff, and confined to a small range of movement. The sun is, ironically, shining, and its rays bounce off the carpet of snow covering the road, burning my eyes. I forcefully maneuver myself towards the dining hall.

After wading through the ankle-deep snow, I reach the dining hall in what feels like an eternity of fighting the elements. I seize a wisp of the smell of bacon. I take a short, sharp sip of the hot chocolate that was waiting for me at my destination. My teeth are the first to feel the wraith of the substance, as they react by constricting and send a shockwave down my spine. The heat of the hot chocolate ignites millions of fiery sparks throughout my mouth. I go back for a bigger sip, which I follow down my throat into my digestive organs, bypassing my biceps and thighs on its way to the tips of my fingers and toes. Lacking any motivation to eat, I dismiss the smells and tastes of the dining hall and depart.

As I exit and begin the long trek back to the House, it was déjà vu. Only this time, I would be travelling downhill. Maybe the ice-skating practice on the dorm floors will come in handy as I navigate the slippery terrain back to where it all began. I follow this same routine daily- its repetitiveness making me lose my mind, like a nightmare playing on rewind.



James Moore

My Safe Place

My safe place is an enclosed bubble of being myself in a nonjudgmental and creative space. This space fills you with emotions which are extraordinary and seem to be indescribable. This place creates an unintended ambition of what is around the corner and unlimited excitement that makes your throat and stomach leap to your mouth. For me, the safest place in the world would be me on my motorbike exploring the beautiful mountains.

The magnificent mountains in all their godly presence ooze out water like sweat perspiring out of its forehead and down its brow. The paths seem to be endless, winding into the unknown and igniting the spirit of adventure and curiosity as a boundless child without its mother. You feel a radical sensation of freedom in your body like a dew drop ramping off a leaf into the abyss when you feel the coolness of the wind in your hair.

The inseparable bond between man and machine is as strong as dry ice clinging on to a raw tongue. The connection is unimaginable and it sparks a fire inside your soul. This internal fire takes over, speed and focus create a rush of warmth that swiftly fills your body as if you were about to jump into a cosy bird's nest. The wheels of the machine just seem to keep going and going, effortlessly overcoming obstacles and working to achieve a common goal to whom is upon it.

As the peace of the gigantic mountains settles inside of you, the tension of regular life seems to fall away. You start listening to the imminent sounds of nature, rivers rushing, birds soaring above and far away you hear the echoes of the baboon's call which creates an aura of the extraordinary creation we live on.

The altitude increases, so does your heartrate, you feel your lungs begin to wheeze and your body starts to retreat. Your muscles begin to seize in pain when the relentless cramps start to set in. You feel the vultures circling you creating a sense of exposure that gives you a quiet fear. You start to wonder about what awaits around the corner. You find yourself gasping for air and praying that the end of the climb is near. Then suddenly you feel that success is not far away and a rush of energy fills your body as if a wave of desire crashes into you and leaves you with a new need. The need to keep on going that gives you a hunger to proceed. Your tedious and exhausting work finally rewards you when you see the glorious views that seem to have no end.



Munashe Musora

My Safe Place

Everyone has this place, a place of comfort, an escape to get away from the confinement of reality. A place that brings blissful comfort. For many it is the convenience of a place called Home. Your home is a place that accepts you for the person you are. It is a place that will hold you warm and cozy in days when you feel lost and when life may feel disoriented. For others these places to detach from actuality are considered peculiar, for some this might be the abundance of the outdoors, for others it is the vast expanse of the sea, however for me, my 'home' is on the alluring, delicate terrain, the football field.

My home is a special place, it is where many people share a common ground of triumph, delight, and sorrow. The sounds of joyous spectators, jubilation and a breathtaking atmosphere that sends adrenaline running through every blood vessel

in my body. Whether I am observing or playing, the voice of football sings to my heart, inducing my heart to beat to its rhythm. The sounds of the goal net rattling and the sounds of the marching players trampling around the field create a song, a football anthem synonymous with the beautiful game. My home is a landscape, situated amongst the 1700 hectares of land that can be found within the McKenzie Gates at Hilton College. 105 meters of evergreen grass contrasted with the striking autumn colors, however appreciating the well-maintained pitch during the dry climate. The trees that surround the field danced in sync with the wind. Overcoating the field is an overcast sky that combines with the Autumn leaves that fall to the solid ground one by one, whilst the tinted grey sky embodies the typical Autumn Day in the midlands of Hilton, Pietermaritzburg. The tall poles distinguished two goals which stood on either side of the field, these goals were the catalyst for the motivation in scoring in these goals. The field was decorated with distinct markings that separated 2 halves. the field mown in pattern that enhance its natural beauty that sets the stage for 90 minutes of rivalry. The trees were almost fully bare, but the ground had been illuminated with vivid orange, luminous red and chestnut brown leaves.

My home is my home because it is where I experience extreme elation and heartache. It is where I witness a flying ball reach its top corner destination from a potent strike that directed the ball feeling every bit of energy mustered up to kick it. it is also where I witnessed the very same ball fly high, missing its intended target which sent 11 boys crying in misery. Nonetheless the beauty of the game was evident and inevitable, it was competitive and had galvanized hundreds in unison. In the end what makes football so special is its ability to pull in people from all walks of life, and always football finds a way to end up end a universally positive experience.



Olwakhe Shezi

Reflective Essay

I'm generally a very optimistic person and more often than not handle emotionally challenging travails well. I don't like staying mad at people after fights or arguments. I am very quick to forgive and move on from negative confrontations very quickly. A simple apology is enough for me to move forward and continue positively after a fight. This is a characteristic of mine that I highly value and am very grateful for. I enjoy peace, laughter and joy amongst my friends and family and fight with all the bones in my body the idea of holding grudges. Not to sound cliché but I truly do believe life is too short to make a conscious decision to stay mad at someone and hold grudges. That's not to downplay anyone's pain and say you should always forgive people, because I understand how frustrating and sometimes heart-breaking friendships and relationships can be but I find that burying the hatchet is what has helped me to stay so positive and relatively problem free with all of my relationships. And more than that it has certainly helped me become the person that I am today.

Another major thing that I hold to extreme value and really love about my life are my parents.

There's not a day at school that goes by where I'm either writing a test or completing an assignment and lose the idea of what I'm doing it for. Everything I do at Hilton College I do for my parents. Before I had even set foot on the school campus my parents made it crystal clear to me that I wouldn't have the same benefits, privileges or experiences as the other boys in my school. My mother had sacrificed a lot to be able to send me to Hilton and wanted me to enjoy my time here, but she never forgot to remind me to stay humble, and to work as hard as I could. And so I do. Of course, as a teenager I don't always get it right and am far from perfect but deep down, whether I know it or not I'll always aim to make my parents proud. I value my mother because of how hard she works for me and my sisters and it does more than inspire me when I see where she is today despite the fact that she came from a family of poverty. I'm still a kid right now so there's not much I can do to show my mother just how much I appreciate and value her except to let her know that I truly do value her and above that is for me to work hard and make her proud.

The last thing that I love and deeply value, and it may come as a bit of a surprise, is access to such a wonderful and wholesome education, especially at Hilton College. As a child and more specifically a student I think that it's very easy and happens all too often that we take things for granted, particularly education. We are so caught up in what we wish we had that we forget to show and have gratitude for the things we do possess. I understand as much as anyone how stressful school can be. School has given me physical pain, arguments, tears and disappointments. But above all that it has given me something that I quite honestly couldn't live without. A purpose. I know from personal experience just how unproductive I can be especially during school holidays, and how easily I can make a whole day feel like 6 hours. I wake up late and sleep even later and this all negatively impacts me. Without school I find myself in many situations where night time will come and I'm left with nothing but the feeling that a day has been wasted. However, when I'm at school it's the opposite. At school I feel like I have a purpose, goals, something to set my mind on and make sure I don't laze away the whole day. Whether it's sports or academics, as much as we hate to admit it working hard and feeling tired after a long day's work is a lot more rewarding and offers a lot more positive reinforcement than sitting at home. Through education I have given pride not only to myself but to my parents as well. Whether it's on the sports field or in the classroom the idea that school offers me a chance to make my parents proud and simultaneously gives me a feeling of purpose is the reason I will always value education.



Storm: Ororo Munroe

The day began as normal as it could have been in Manhattan, New York. Businessmen in their cashmere suits hustling along the pavements. Social workers in an almighty distress in worry of arriving late to work due to no transport. The loud mind dismantling noise of cars, limos, taxis and buses all brushing past each other in efforts to reach their respective destinations. Road rage never far from either driver, impatient pedestrians and even the hotdog cart owner blasting demands at his workers all made up a normal, chaotic and very busy day in Manhattan. But then suddenly, a rain drop. A storm?

It couldn't have been I thought. As far as I and everyone else was concerned the day was set to be bright and cloud free. It had been hot that day, especially for Manhattan so the last thing we'd expected was even the slightest raindrop. Regardless of our expectations the clouds began to grey, quicker than I had ever seen before, quicker than I believed to be normal. Suddenly a huge crack of thunder followed and with it a vicious strike of lightning that struck in the middle of the road causing cars to swerve, hooters to beep, drivers to shout and pedestrians to scream. The scenery of all the mayhem alone was enough to shock anyone but definitely not as shocking as what I saw when the dust had settled. I couldn't believe my eyes and rubbed them as if waking up from a bad dream, but to my shock and disbelief a woman had appeared exactly where the lightning had struck.

My shock was quickly diverged when I saw her. She was like no woman I had ever seen before. Her hair, white as the clouds that had just previously accompanied us, her eyes a beautiful mesmeric crystal blue, and her, skin, her skin a warm serum of a soothing mud like brown. Curiosity empowering me I moved closer. She seemed scared, and confused, as if she herself didn't know what was going on. Was she aware that she had spawned from nothing but a lightning strike? My eyes connected to my dismantled brain fixed on her, and by the look on her face everyone around was looking at her too. Beginning my strides towards her to offer help I was quickly taken aback. No sooner than she had struck into existence she started to smile. Not the smile that I had assumed would go with her appearingly soft and vulnerable nature. No, a devilish smile, resemblant more of a smirk now that I had gotten closer.

Fear struck through my body the way the lightning did when she rose, as she didn't rise on her feet but extraordinarily started to float. As she got higher the less I saw a confused and vulnerable young woman, and the more I saw a twisted, evil look of relief of a woman who'd looked like she had all the power in the world. I also noticed that as she began to rise those beautiful blue eyes that had initially caught my attention were now marvellously turning white, which strangely reminded me of the time when I had ended up with salt in my eye after sneezing on my plate. The difference was that the white that was in my eye right now was nowhere near as painful, but rather amazing, my eyes fixed on her like white glue, enchanted by her miracles, nearly hypnotised. Her hair had stayed white but was also starting to glow, and only added to the hypnotic element that brought to her appearance. She rose and rose until suddenly she stopped, nearly 100ft in the sky. Her fantastic white hair had now draped across her face, slightly covering but not completely hiding the white eyes she had acquired. She tilted her head up to the heavens, arms wide, palms open facing the sky, and with one deep breath...snapped her fingers.

Within a split second the rain viciously began to pour, thunder struck louder than anything I had heard before, lightning being the only source of light after the sky's graced into a dark grey. No sooner as it started to pour the rain turned into hail, the hail into snow, and very easily had left everyone disgruntled and frightened. Chaos and pandemonium spread like wildfire as everyone tried to get under shelter or drive away in their cars. The sky now as dark a grey as the waning moon. The hail and snow coming down in ferocious quantities, still keeping the beautiful white glistening that its creator also possessed. The merciless weather conditions continued as if they were never going to stop.

Then with a snap loud enough to be mistaken for thunder, but crisp enough to be resemblance of fingers, she disappeared. And as quickly as it had all started the snow became hail, the hail rain, the rain from a light drizzle to a complete halt. The dark grey sky quickly revealed its shades of blue and within seconds was as clear as it had been before the storm. Trauma and fear still deeply within everyone evident by their quakes and tremble began to decompose. Everyone as if controlled, with the same question on their mind: Who and what was that? Later that day when evening had crawled and along with it the familiar sense of peace it was discovered that the woman was a news reporter and photographer for Manhattan times. Her name, Ororo Munroe. However, people who had been a part of or had heard the story called her by a different name. A name perfectly matched with the scenes of that day. That name was...Storm.



Luke Spear

The Most Embarrassing thing that has ever Happened to me...

It was an icy, windy, and miserable day. A phenomenon to Mpumalanga... All of us tried to pull our long, olive green socks above our skinny, bony knees. Our colourful lunchboxes that were packed to the brim with snacks were lined up and ready (an essential for young grade fours). The classroom was alive with excitement as we giggled and talked about the adventure that lay ahead, but I had no idea that it would be the most embarrassing day that I have ever had.

We were on a history trip to the Samora Machel Monument and Museum, set in the heart of the Lebombo Mountains on the border of South Africa and Mozambique, a good hours' drive from our school through the townships that lay at the feet of the giant hills. We were all quivering and every minute or two someone would dare to ask how much further until our destination. Of course, I still had no idea that in a little while, I would be crying of embarrassment.

As we arrived, the mist barrelled down the mountain side as if to embrace us. An eerie chill ran down our spines, silencing us. Our excitement was suspended in the air, almost as if the mist was carrying it back down into the valley. We trudged up the almost invisible path that led to the Wailing Pipes. It was as if the pipes were crying

to us, reminding us of the people who died. We did not dare to speak, the only noise were the cattle bells of the village, Mbuzini, below. And still, I did not know that I would soon be suffering in my own embarrassment.

We were all shepherded into the museum. The hallways were lengthy and tunnelled into darkness due to a common power outage. A chilly draught tickled our cheeks, and the only sound was the water that leaked onto the musty floor. All forty of us crammed into the stuffy and damp corridor. Squashed, I began to feel dizzy, I felt like the walls were closing in on me and started seeing double of everything until the next thing I realized I had hit the floor and all I heard were blurred echoes of children shouting all around me. I had fainted...

After I had woken up, I felt eighty eyes staring at me. I honestly felt too weak to look back, I just sat there. My teacher was saying something, but I couldn't make out the words. Everything was just spinning. The next thing I knew, we were all on the bus back to school, our trip was cut short all because of me. I was bombarded with questions and some nasty glares. Then, out of nowhere I burst out crying and my cheeks were stained with rivers of tears. I felt so guilty and embarrassed because I had "let my class down".

When I look back on this today, I think to myself how natural it is for someone to faint and it is not that bad at all, but when I was in the moment, I felt like a complete idiot partially because it was something that had never happened to me before and mostly because I had no sense or control over it. I will never forget the emotions I experienced that day, but I will also take a lesson with me, "When you can't control what's happening, challenge yourself to control the way you respond to what's happening, that is where your power is."



Grade 8

Andre Boshoff

The Calm Before the Storm

I look up to see an oval-shaped ball flying straight at me. It starts off high and slow, but then, arching its way towards me, speeds up, and like a rocket ship coming in to land, thuds at my feet. I study it carefully, seeing the countless seams and the number 3 on the back, having no idea what it means. I pick it up, feeling the rough leather and beautiful craftsmanship. I smell grass, hope and sweat everywhere. This is the first rugby match of my life, my first match of bulletjie rugby.

A movement up ahead catches my attention. Fifteen boys are sprinting towards me, drawn to the rugby ball in my hands like a magnet. I start panicking. I look to my mom on the side of the field, hoping for some reassurance, but instead I look into frightened eyes. That was when I start getting scared, and when I'm scared, I do one thing: run! I turn and run, oblivious to the shouting around me, having only one goal in mind: survive. When you're small you think like that; if you don't do something you're going to die. And that was how I felt, if I didn't escape, I was going to die.

The thought of dying just made me run faster, and soon I was nearing a thin, white line with two big sticks in the ground. The sight brought back a memory of before the game when our coach was talking to us, "Jy moet die bal agter die lyn druk om te wen." "OK," we all answered "But why must we pass backwards when we want to go forward, it makes no sense?" our so-called captain asked. "I didn't make the rules," he says, limping away. "Good luck!" he shouts over his shoulder. Why would we need luck?

The words of my coach play over and over in my mind, like a broken record: put the ball behind the white line to win. I run faster and the white line draws nearer. I jump and fly over the white line, wind whipping my hair in every direction. Thud, I fall heavily on the ground, my breath knocked out of my lungs. Damp grass covers my entire body. Panting, I turn towards my teammates. My coach storms onto the field, "Great run Andre! Next time try to score on the opposition's side.



The Storm of the Century

I heard the storm before I saw it, as the thunder growled at me like a hungry wolf ready for its overdue meal. The pelting rain slashed horizontally at my aching body, making me slip and tumble on the slippery deck of the ship. I could feel the electricity coursing through the air, the metallic scent lingering after every strike. The wind was trying to pull me apart and feed me to the starving ocean. The waves were bullying the ship, making the deck groan and complain under the onslaught. The witch-like

rocks were looming nearer and nearer, their arms stretching towards the bulk of the ship, their fingers sharp and jagged. The sky was dark as the clouds swallowed up the sun, causing us to rely on the brief flashes of lightning for light. The waves were getting bigger and towered over the beaten ship. Lightning struck the mast of the ship and erupted in sparks and flames that endured through the freezing rain. The ship was sinking, and I sank with it, with pride!



Tochi Ezenwugo

Diary of a young Nigerian Boy in Trouble

“TOBENNA!!” The prey’s eyes instantly bat open while fear and panic build rapidly in his heart. It had been a usual Friday afternoon nap, until now. The prey checks his watch: 17:24, seems usual. But what is unusual, to the prey’s surprise, is that his predator is looking at him with eyes that could start a fire. Her belt bared, her feet set apart and on the balls of her feet, she resembles an executioner of the Old English times, ready to dish out lethal punishments. The two remain still, analyzing each other, waiting for someone to make the first move. Where the predator is superior in strength, the prey makes up for it in speed. Knowing this, the prey dashes forward swiftly, dodging the predator through the door, and speeding up the hallway.

The Chase is on.

The predator regains balance and trudges after the fugitive screaming, ‘Mgbe m jidere gi, i ga-enweta ya!’ ‘You’ll have to catch me first!’ the prey screams tauntingly sprinting into the backyard. The prey hides quietly under a tree, wondering why this early version of Judgement Day has come upon him. He had simply come back from school, kicked his ball around inside the house, broke his mom’s vase, hid it under the living room mat, and gone to take a nap. A terrible look of horror spreads over the prey’s face. *That* is why she was chasing him. ‘She must have seen it when she got back from work!’, thought the prey, Tobenna. His mother, Akomolafe, was a lively, kind woman who grew up on the hard streets of Enugu State, Nigeria and migrated to sunny old Phoenix.

“Toby!”, shouted the boy’s sister Chi. “There’s a spider in my room, please come kill it!” Toby, still being the hunted prey, weighs his options. His mum is still on the other side of the house, because he took the long way around to lose her. He knew his little six-year-old sister was terrified of spiders, so he decided he would give it a shot. His mind instantly went back to the countless spy movies he’d watched and read. He slowly and carefully shuffled to the side of the house, and with his back pressed against the wall he quietly shuffled to his sister’s room, his heart sending shockwaves through him that rattled his bones every time he heard the slightest movement. “Okay, so where is this spider that needs to be killed?” He says as he walks backwards into his safe haven. When the boy turns around his heart drops like the blade of a guillotine as he sees his predator giving him a devilish grin.

“Your luck has run out, my prey,” says the predator as she goes in for the kill.

EXTENDED RESEARCH WRITING

Tanner Bailey

How was social media, specifically platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, a contributing factor towards the polarisation of the Republican and Democratic parties in the United States of America’s political spectrum specifically during the Trump era from 2015 to 2020?

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Introduction

The first online platform that coined the term 'social media' was Six Degrees which came to fruition in 1997 and allowed individuals to upload a profile and make friends with other users (Hendricks, 2013, pg. 1). Today there are thousands of social media applications, with many more being created every day. As a result, the space in which to voice opinions, ideologies, beliefs, and suggestions has become unquantifiable. Social media's prevalence in society is unmatched by any other form of technology seen before. It can be found all over the globe and has become a staple platform for entertainment and communication for its users. However, as stated by Sophocles, "Nothing vast enters the life of mortals without a curse". To the countless users across the world that have become oblivious to social media's subliminal effects, this quote holds relevance. The uninhibited connection between people due to social media has allowed for two possible outcomes. One being an environment in which two or more people can collaborate and complete an action with a higher level of productivity. Secondly it can cause a reconstruction of ideologies and ultimately divide those who have opposing viewpoints. Thus, leading to the antithesis of the prior outcome where people begin to reject each other instead of working together.

The power to shift one's ideals and augment their behaviour is one stripped from fiction. However, due to social media's evident effect on the human brain, this idea is slowly becoming an astounding yet hazardous reality. Social media has become a place in which to incite civic engagement and collectively reinforce a belief upon a population. However due to the fragility of the human mind, the strategical influx of ideas and perceptions on a group of people can ultimately lead to a change in their behaviour and thus a shift in their beliefs. It is therefore imperative to discuss the possible implications social media may pose on the political structure of various economies due to the unpredictable change in social paradigms. Hence this essay will discuss the possibility of social media's involvement in the polarisation between the Democratic and Republican parties during the Trump era from 2015 to 2020.

Agenda

This question will be explored through the initial conceptualisation of the term 'social media' and by providing the proven effects it has on the human brain. Thereafter, a definition of the word polarisation will be provided, followed by a set of subsidiary questions that will be discussed. They are as follows:

- How does social media cause a change in behaviour?
- How and why is social media subjective in its allocation of information?
- How do beliefs turn into actions?
- Does digital media use equate to an increased potential for political engagement?

The political structure of the United States of America will then be discussed before linking its divided system of values to the strategic reinforcement of certain ideologies by means of social media. In doing so, it is possible to determine whether or not social media was indeed a contributing factor to the polarisation of both political parties. Due to the possibility of other factors playing a role in the separating of the two parties, it is impossible to determine whether social media was the exact cause of an intensification of political views. However, through speculation and analysis of relevant research, it is possible to formulate a reasonably accurate idea.

Conceptualizing Social Media

What is social media?

Social media is defined by the Oxford dictionary as, "websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking". In this essay two prominent social media platforms will be analysed, Facebook and Twitter. Facebook is an online platform that allows communication between its users, it grants users the ability post comments, share photographs, and post links to news or other interesting content on the internet (Nations, 2020, pg. 1). Twitter is an online news and social networking site where people communicate in short messages called tweets. "Tweeting is posting short messages for anyone who follows you on Twitter, with the hope that your words are useful and interesting to someone in your audience" (Gil, 2020, pg.1). The reason these two platforms are the main focus for this essay is because of the single key attribute they both share, which is that shared

content can be made publicly accessible. The use of this tool is evident in three major spheres of the economy, these being:

- Public use
- Commercial use
- Political use

Public use can be seen as messaging friends, sharing ideas and posting pictures of oneself. Commercial use is categorised by advertisements and finding out what customers think of your business. Political use is often crisis communication and citizen engagement (Tran & Bar-Tur, 2020, pg. 1). All three uses have a common objective and that is the translation of information from one person to the next. Social media allows people to communicate with a vast audience in a fast and effective manner, this can consequently expose people to different perspectives and create an environment in which people can evaluate their own beliefs to see whether or not they oppose those of the greater population.

A large majority of interactions in today's world are online connections, especially in the younger generations. However, when two people connect, it is constantly financed through a duplicitous third party who is paying to manipulate those two people. Thus, creating a global generation of people who were raised within a context where the very meaning of communication is manipulation (Lainer, 2020, pg. 1).

Social Media and The Brain

Neurological effects

Neurologically, social media affects different parts of the brain in unique ways. The inclusion of different combinations of stimuli can trigger a variety of reactions throughout the brain, thus social media's effects on the brain can appear in countless ways. A relevant effect is positive attention on social media, which is when a person attains likes on either Facebook or Twitter. This accumulation of likes causes an activation of the brain circuitry linked to reward, including the *striatum* and the *ventral tegmental area*.

The ventral tegmental area is one of the major components responsible for forming the rewards system in people's bodies. When social media users obtain positive

feedback, such as likes, their brains fire off dopamine receptors, which is facilitated in part by the ventral tegmental area (see appendix A).

Social media stimuli can also affect the brains emotional and decision-making processing functions. In a study that observed the brain activity in adolescents, it was revealed that the parts of the brain that dealt with emotions showed a visible reaction when applicants felt excluded. Social exclusion can often force people to change and adapt due to the degradation of their emotions which can ultimately lead to a change in that persons behaviour. This consequential change in behaviour can either be positive or negative and ultimately depends on the purpose of the person's actions.

How does social media cause a change in behaviour?

Actions

After analysing relevant data, it is evident that social media can indeed change a person's behaviour. It is therefore appropriate to examine the possible implications it may have on other facets of a person's social presence. In a recent study published by the academic article Media Psychology it was found that users within social media groups begin to mimic the behaviours of other people within the group. This mimicry results in the reinforcement of a social identity due to the prolonged engagement in a group and ultimately changes a person's behaviour over a sustained period of time. Due to the interconnection between actions and behaviour, users actions would in most cases appear different to those before the reinforcement of certain social identities took place.

Cognition

The way in which a person perceives, and processes information is also subject to change. Due to social media's ability to secure and maintain our attention it is urgent that we understand its impact on our thought processes and decision making. Imaging studies have disclosed information surrounding the neural differences which may possibly justify these changes in processing functions. Functionally, those who participate in intensive media usage perform worse in distracted attention tasks, even though displaying an increased activity in right prefrontal regions (see appendix B). The right prefrontal regions are naturally stimulated in response to distractor stimuli, thus the detection of an increase in the activation of these regions in

conjunction with poorer performance indicates that a substantial increase in the consumption of media requires an increase in cognitive exertion in order to maintain concentration when encountering distractor stimuli (Firth, 2019, pg. 1). Structurally, high levels of media consumption are connected to reduced grey matter in prefrontal regions associated with maintaining goals in face of distraction (such as the right frontal pole and anterior cingulate cortex).

Emotions

Social media has the power to affect a person's emotions in numerous ways. A common phenomenon called FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) can often lead to someone feeling isolated and depressed. Another cause is the feeling of inadequacy about one's life or appearance as social media is often filled with things deemed by society as 'perfect'. Both of these effects extend through to the idea of exclusion or the desire to fit in. Social media has taught many of us that anomalies are often shunned and isolated from the majority of the population. This leads to many people, especially the younger generations, looking for a way to fit in, whether that be supporting a particular sports team or advocating for a political group. The truth stands that, human beings are social creatures and will follow the crowd when the decision arises, the timeless need for social praise has led many of us to become so invested in social media that we begin to live a second life. This extreme investment of time can be hazardous to a person's psychological wellbeing and can often cause severe depression or anxiety when they are criticised or shunned while on social media.

How and why is social media subjective in its supply of information?

With thousands of posts, pictures and videos being published every minute, the amount of content floating around in cyberspace is immense. For users who follow numerous accounts on numerous social media platforms, sifting through this plethora of information to find what they are looking for would be impossible, that is why there are algorithms. Algorithms do the legwork of showing you what you want while filtering out all of the irrelevant media you are not interested in. It takes constant note of a user's view time on certain videos or images and theorises their interests. Thereafter it pushes specific media that is selected for their taste. The reason this is done is to one, ensure that the user attains the most utility possible and two, on a more sinister note, so that the user becomes more addicted to the

media they are consuming and ultimately comes back for more. This addiction generates immense revenue for these social media platforms but also causes a reinforcement of certain beliefs due to the subjective supply of information to each specific user based on their preferences.

This reinforcement of specific principles through social media is used by numerous advertising agencies as well as certain advocacy groups. An advocacy group in a political context goes well beyond the idea of simply supporting but rather the term suggests a systematic effort by specific individuals who seek to develop or accomplish specific policy objectives (Obar, Zube and Lamp, 2012, pg. 4). In an article published by the Penn state university press, quantitative research was formulated in which a survey was sent out to 1000 advocacy groups based in the united states (each with differing political and ideological orientations). After analysing the feedback, it was found that 100% of the advocacy groups answered yes when asked “Does your organization use social media to connect with citizens?” with the majority of the groups reporting that they used Facebook and Twitter as their main platform in which to connect with citizens (see appendix D). When asked to classify social medias in terms of their ability to incite civic engagement (an individual or group activity addressing issues of public concern) Facebook was ranked first with Twitter at a close second with the majority stating that they were adequate platforms for “notifying citizens about relevant dates, events and government deliberations”, (Obar, Zube & Lamp, 2012, pg. 13). The groups were then asked which social media platforms were useful for ‘mobilising citizens’ and the majority voted Facebook and Twitter as the best social media for inciting public effort.

In light of the survey discussed above it is evident that social media platforms namely Facebook and Twitter, are powerful tools that can provoke civic engagement and collective action from the public. This can be linked to the overarching notion of subjectivity in the supply of information due to the algorithms in place. These advocacy groups use the algorithms to their advantage and target citizens who fall in line with their political goals which ultimately leads to a situation in which a person with specific ideologies is motivated to incorporate their beliefs into their behaviour and thereafter act on the basis of their political or ideological views. With this in mind it is relevant that we discuss how beliefs become actions.

How do beliefs become actions?

Beliefs and actions are separate in themselves but are connected when looked at in unison. The idea is that a belief is the trust and confidence that something either exists or holds truth whereas an action is “an event that an agent performs for a purpose, that is guided by the person's intention” (Wilson, 2016). The word ‘intention’ holds specific relevance when looking at how a belief transforms into an action in that when a person decides to take that step and complete an action, the intention of that action is underpinned by their beliefs. For example, if someone believes that a certain person should be president and they thereafter vote for that specific person, the intention of that action is to positively affect the person’s chance at becoming president which links back to the central belief that the person should be president. This illustrates how actions are caused by belief due to the intention of the action. Therefore, if you change someone’s beliefs, you change their actions. In a political sense, each political party in the United States of America (the Democratic and Republican party) contain a certain number of people that vote for them and this number is variable depending on what each party advocates for. However, due to the introduction of social media the ideologies of citizens pertaining to each party has intensified. This intensification of beliefs would lead to a subsequent intensification of actions and explains the irrational actions that took place during the Trump era and how members of each party viewed opposing members as ‘less than human’. An intensification of opposing views can often lead to an increased separation between each group and it is therefore necessary that we define the concept of polarisation and discuss its implications in a social setting.

Polarisation

What is polarisation?

Polarisation is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as, “division into two sharply contrasting groups or sets of opinions or beliefs”. The word polarisation can be used in many contexts however this essay will focus on its involvement in a social context.

Social context

In a social context the term polarisation refers to a situation in which there is a significant disagreement between two groups of people due to opposing beliefs

pertaining to politics or other spheres of life. In a political sense a polarisation takes place between two political parties and in the case of this essay the focus is on the Democratic and Republican parties of the American 'political spectrum' ("a system to illustrate and categorise different political positions in relation to one another" (Heywood, 2017, pg. 1)). Each party advocates for specific views, the Democratic party is seen as liberal and supports certain concepts that are fairly new such as same sex marriage or abortions. The Republican party opposes the Democratic party and is seen as conservative (averse to the dismantling of past laws) and tend to support past laws such as a flat tax rate and the death penalty. The clear contrast between the ideals of each party acts as a platform for polarisation to take place between its members depending on the severity of each persons ideologies. As discussed previously social media has undoubtedly caused an increase in the strength of certain beliefs whether they be political or not and in the context of politics this intensification of ideologies has led to extreme actions enacted by both the Republican and Democratic parties and ultimately points towards the polarisation that took place between each party during the trump era.

Does digital media use equate to an increased potential for political engagement?

In the book Australian Politics in a Digital Age a survey was completed that recorded the age distribution of social media usage across platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. The results were then depicted in two separate graphs (see Appendix E and F). The results appeared to correspond with a US study that showed a "predisposition of adolescents to partake more in low-resource-intensive activities such as information acquisition, which is linked to political socialisation" (Chen, 2013, pg. 79). "Political socialisation is the learning procedure by which people acquire an understanding of their political identities, beliefs, and behaviour through numerous agents of socialization, such as parents, classmates, and institutions" (Longley, 2021). However, the study uncovered a non-linear correlation between media consumption and political engagement which showed that at a certain point the level of social media use begins to decrease the tendency of political action amongst citizens. This exemplifies the "presence of a more subtle set of drivers than merely equating social media use with the increased capacity for political socialisation and mobilisation" (Chen, 2013, pg. 79). However, when looking at both graphs side by side it is evident that there could be a connection between the extensive usage of

social media in the younger age range and the tendency of younger people to formulate their own political views and ideologies. This speculation ultimately points towards the idea that a higher level of media consumption, specifically social media, can lead to an intensification of political views through the encouragement of political socialization due to the vast amount of information received through platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. The overall likeliness of this idea and whether or not it would impact the Democratic and Republican parties directly should therefore be discussed.

Discussion

The information that has been presented throughout this essay shows a number of points. These being:

- Social media does affect the human brain.
- Social media does have the power to manipulate a person's behaviour.
- Civic engagement and collective action are possible by means of social media.

These points hold relevance when discussing whether or not social media did in fact strengthen the existing divide between the Democratic and Republican parties during Trump's presidency. It is evident that social media affects a person's behaviour in the realms of actions, cognition and emotions and these are important when looking at the political socialization of citizens specifically in the United States of America. The obvious fact that addiction has been used to increase revenue of these organisations has in turn led to the reinforcement of certain ideologies in those who have experienced an increase in their media consumption. Hövermann (2020) noted in the Netflix documentary The Social Dilemma that "If you're not paying for the product, then you are the product", this quote holds relevance as many social media platforms do indeed encourage addiction amongst their users in order to increase their profit margins. The subsequent reinforcement of information has led to an intensification of certain beliefs regarding many facets of life including political orientation. The connection between media consumption and the tendency to formulate a political identity as referred to earlier on in the essay points towards the idea that people who consume larger amounts of social media do not necessarily

have a greater tendency towards political engagement but rather, they possess a higher predisposition towards internalising their political beliefs and incorporating them into their everyday behaviour.

However, the idea of political engagement is still a major effect of social media. This can be linked to Twitter banning Trump as punishment for inciting violence at the U.S. Capitol. Twitter specifically raised the possibility that Trump's tweets could have mobilized his supporters to commit acts of violence around President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration. This sudden intensification of political views highlights the idea that social media usage does not purely translate to political socialisation but engagement as well. The overall outcome of the situation depends on its context within politics. Therefore, simply scrolling through social media will not magically result in a person acting on their political views but rather formulating their political identity. On the other hand, if a situation in which a presidential figure incited civic engagement through social media were to occur, (such as the Trump during Biden's inauguration) it would be conventional to see physical action take place on the basis of political orientation.

Although political socialisation is inferior in its ability to affect the political spectrum of a respective economy. These ideologies could be displayed in a more social setting in which a person begins to judge those around them on the basis of their political orientation and whether or not it juxtaposes their own. The constant need to judge those around you would ultimately lead to people beginning to reject one another and therefore a polarisation between groups of people would take place.

Conclusion

After clarifying the difference between political engagement and political socialization in the previous discussion it is imperative that we acknowledge social media's contribution towards the polarisation of the Democratic and Republican parties during the Trump era. The clear argument displayed in this essay acts as a source of confirmation towards the idea that the subsequent intensification of political beliefs after an increase in consumption of social media did possibly cause US citizens to judge one another in a harsher light and begin rejecting one another on the basis of

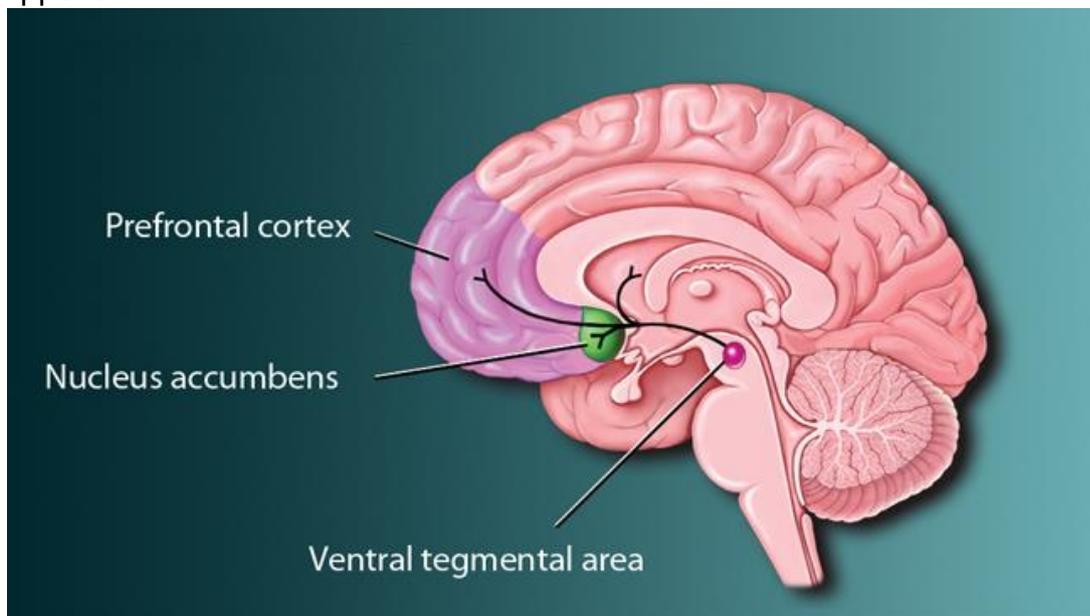
political orientation. The direct link between media usage and political socialization, specifically in the younger generations (20-29) as shown in the study included in the book Australian Politics in a Digital Age agreed with the US study and thus confirms that there is an extensive use of social media among American citizens. The study included in the journal article Advocacy 2.0: An Analysis of How Advocacy Groups in the United States Perceive and Use Social Media as Tools for Facilitating Civic Engagement and Collective Action, showed that social media was indeed an effective tool for provoking civic engagement and encouraging political socialization. With the inclusion of relevant research, there is a high possibility that social media was a contributing factor towards the polarisation of both political parties and that its presence in the US economy has led to many of its citizens becoming judgemental and speculative of those around them due to their opposing views on the political situation.

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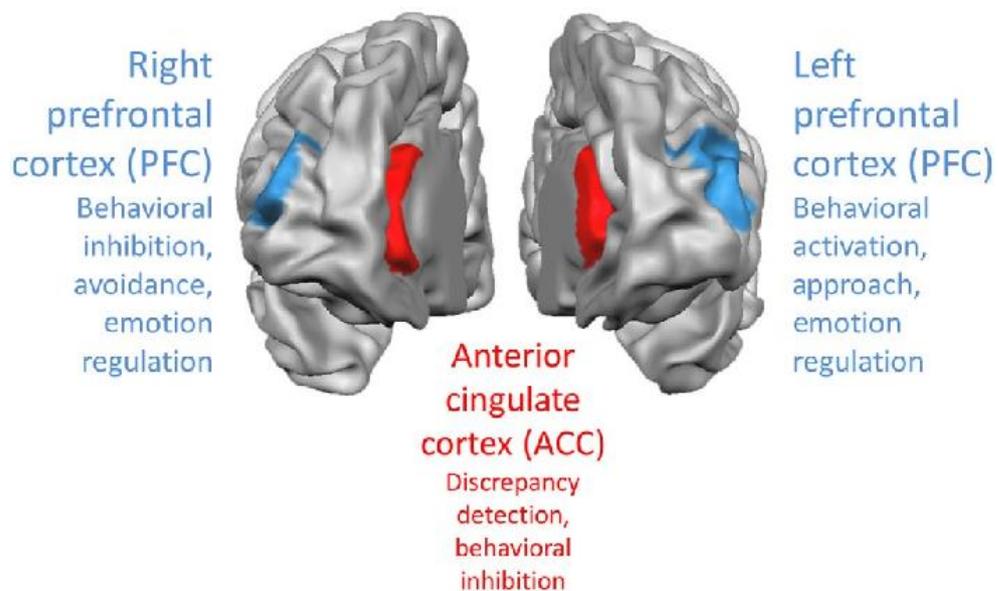
Appendices
Appendix A



Source : BrainFacts.org (Bates, 2009)

Url : <https://www.brainfacts.org/archives/2009/nicotine-addiction>

Appendix B



Source : ResearchGate (Jonas et al., 2014)

Url : https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-core-brain-regions-that-our-model-assumes-to-underlie-threat-and-defense-The_fig1_261699050

Appendix C

Table 1: Online Outreach Workers by Organization Size.

| | Employees | | | Volunteers | | |
|---|-----------|--------|-------|------------|--------|-------|
| | Large | Medium | Small | Large | Medium | Small |
| Site Development and Maintenance Workers | | | | | | |
| 10+ | 5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 4-9 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 2-3 | 10 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 24 | 8 | 3 |
| Social Media Workers | | | | | | |
| 10+ | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| 4-9 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 2-3 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 1 | 11 | 9 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 23 | 7 | 2 |
| Total Online Outreach Workers | | | | | | |
| 10+ | 9 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| 4-9 | 9 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 2-3 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 2 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 21 | 5 | 2 |

Source: Advocacy 2.0: An Analysis of How Advocacy Groups in the United States Perceive and Use Social Media as Tools for Facilitating Civic Engagement and Collective Action (Obar, Zube & Lamp, 2012)

Url:

https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.5325/jinfopoli.2.2012.0001.pdf?ab_segments=0%252Fbasic_search_gsv2%252Fcontrol&refreqid=excelsior%3A3c6fa06a74c38da26e07a383ed9d5090

Appendix D

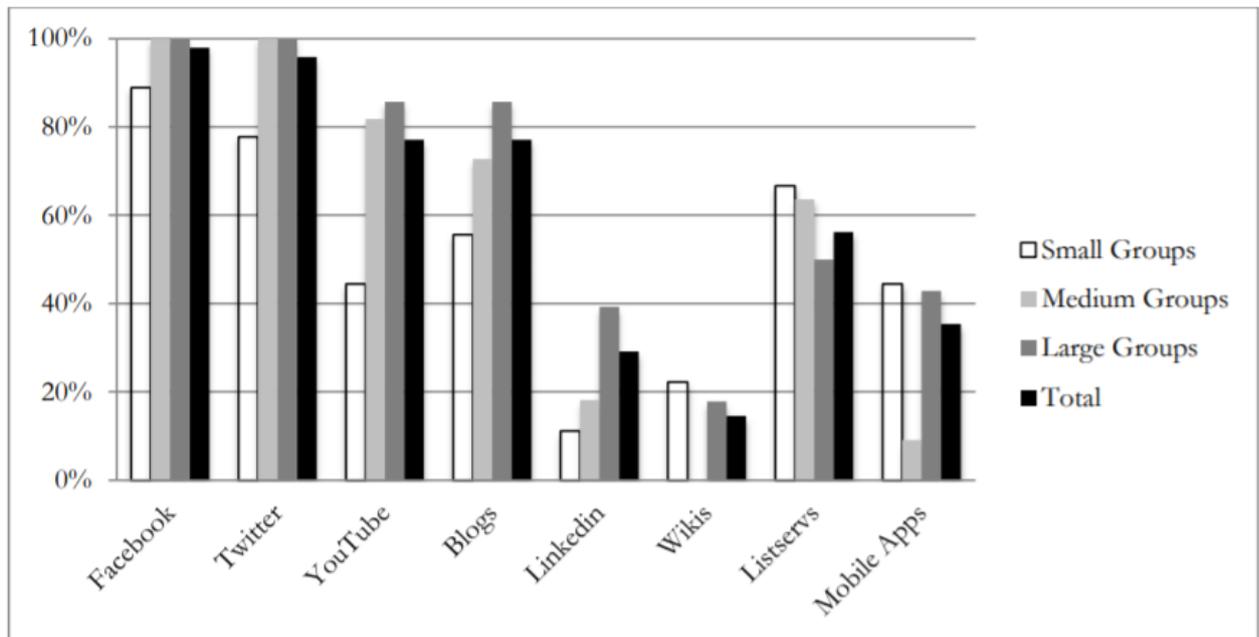


Figure 1: Percentage of Advocacy Groups Using Social Media to Communicate with Citizens.

Source: Advocacy 2.0: An Analysis of How Advocacy Groups in the United States Perceive and Use Social Media as Tools for Facilitating Civic Engagement and Collective Action (Obar, Zube & Lamp, 2012)

Url:

https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.5325/jinfopoli.2.2012.0001.pdf?ab_segments=0%252Fbasic_search_gsv2%252Fcontrol&refreqid=excelsior%3A3c6fa06a74c38da26e07a383ed9d5090

Appendix E

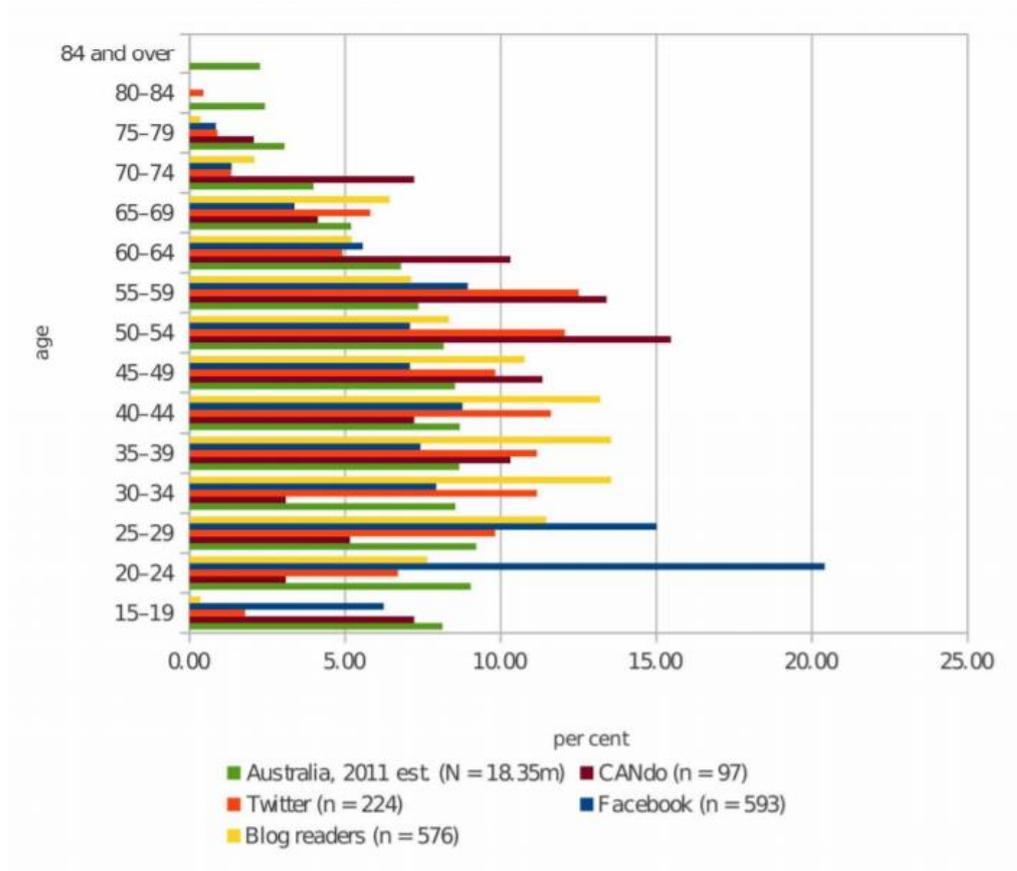


Figure 17: Age distribution of social-media survey respondents, compared to N

Source: Australian Politics in a Digital Age (Chen, 2013)

Url:

https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/j.ctt2jbkkn.11.pdf?ab_segments=0%252Fbasic_search_gsv2%252Fcontrol&refreqid=excelsior%3Aa2c243f74f4cc3cd4e20e862f69c51b7

Appendix F

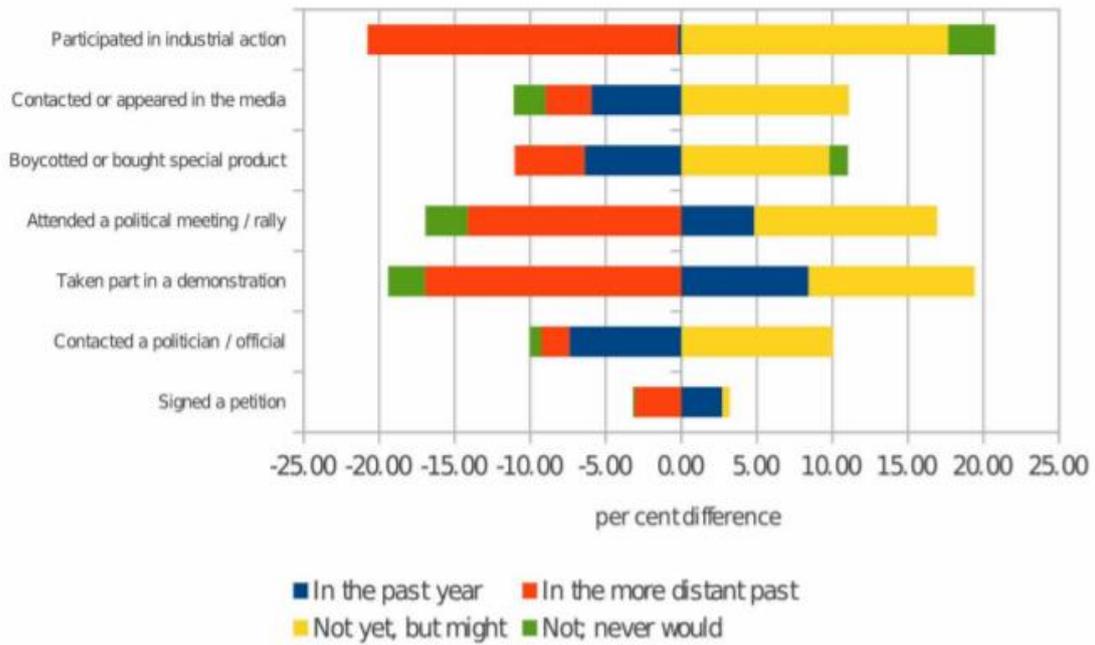


Figure 18: Difference between the political engagement of users of social media (n = 1393)

Source: Australian Politics in a Digital Age (Chen, 2013)

Url:

https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/j.ctt2jbkkn.11.pdf?ab_segments=0%252Fbasic_search_gsv2%252Fcontrol&refreqid=excelsior%3Aa2c243f74f4cc3cd4e20e862f69c51b7



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