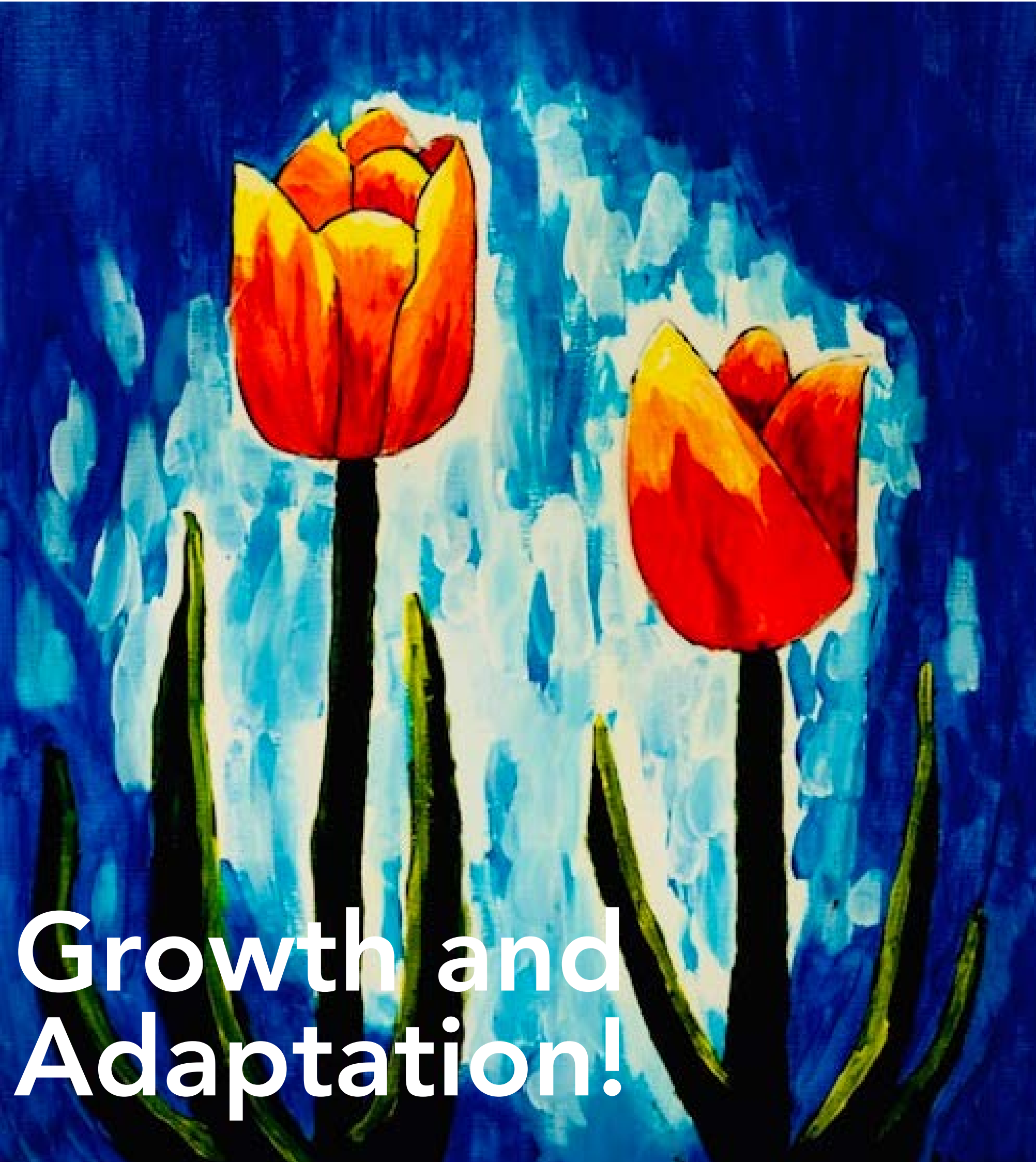


iWRITER

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By Kids, For Kids Magazine



Growth and Adaptation!

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Kate-Yeonjae Jeong

DEPUTY EDITOR

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ART DIRECTOR

Sanjna Pandit

ASSISTANT ART DIRECTOR

Shaivi Moparthi

LEAD COPY EDITOR

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COPY EDITORS

Shaivi Moparthi

David Liu

Tanvi Padala

Sanvi Pandit

DESIGN EDITOR

Shaivi Moparthi

WRITERS

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Sanjna Pandit

Shaivi Moparthi

David Liu

Sophie Yu

Kate-Yeonjae Jeong

Prisha Shivani

Tanvi Padala

Sanvi Pandit

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Helen Zhang

Cami Culbertson

COVER ART

Shaivi Moparthi

STUDENT ART

Tanvi Padala

Letter from the Editor

Dear readers,

The season of bloom is finally here: the grass is greener, the sunshine is warmer, and the days are longer. With the spring season in full swing, it's hard not to notice the great changes happening before us. Not only is nature shifting all around us, but potentially with us, as both communities and individuals.

For many teenagers and youth, spring marks the approaching conclusion of a school year and brings forth a time of reflection. As the summer vacation nears, we are able to step back in order to reflect on how we have transformed over the past few seasons. In order to adapt to change, we must take the time to reflect and bloom, much like a flower does after a long season of winter.

Changes are uncharted territory; it can be daunting as new experiences can feel foreign. Embarking on something you have never tried before can lead to uncertainty and doubt, but in order to grow, we must take that first step of acknowledging what is shifting.

Growth is not linear and is a continuous process. There are many ways to find inspiration for growth; whether you find it in nature, arts and literature, or even engaging in your local community, you will find that there is so much life and potential influences blossoming all around you.

This spring, our iWRITER team is enjoying the flowers of change planted from our time of exploration and, with it, growing right along the buds. For this issue, the iWRITER team and I are excited to share with you how we find avenues of growth, all expressed in unique, creative ways. Enjoy!

Happy reading!

Kate-Yeonjae Jeong

Editor-in-Chief

I WRITE because I have a passion for being able to share my reflections and thoughts with others. I write so I can share the spark of joy that writing gives with many other interested students.

PS: Be sure to submit to this year's iWRITE Publishing Contest. This year's theme is sports! Read more about the contest here: <https://iwrite.org/our-work/publishing-program-sports>. The deadline is April 30, 2023.



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Symbols for Spring

Happy April, everyone! It is that time of year again. Flower petals shyly peek from their buds, fresh rain-drops wait in the clouds, and students soak up their classroom musings as final exams near. It may seem like just another season on planet Earth, but what is it about spring that offers this comforting notion of growth?

The concept of growth is rather beautiful, and it contains many different facets—physical, mental, spiritual, and so forth. In all of these areas of growth, we are not stagnant. Our ability to grow despite even the greatest challenges and to emerge better than we were before the adversity befell us is a testament to perhaps the greatest strength of the human experience: adaptability.

Many different symbols from around the world offer a visual representation of growth and adaptation. With these symbols in mind, we can reflect on our own personal growth and development. Think about it: the growth and expansion of technology and easier access to the Internet has given us the benefit of finding images and symbols that speak to us. The following symbols share the commonality of representing growth, yet they each have their own different way of connecting with us.



The Celtic Spiral

Also known as the Triskelion, the Celtic Spiral is said to have originated from as far back as the Neolithic era. It is actually three different spirals with a seemingly never-ending loop. This depicts the ancient Celtic belief that all good comes in threes: we are constantly in motion, evolving, and growing.



Dharma Wheel

The dharma wheel, or the Dharmachakra, is the perfect symbol of personal growth and change. The wheel looks like the steering wheel of a boat, and its eight spokes depict the eight principles of the Eightfold Path, the Buddhist teachings of rightness of belief, resolve, speech, action, livelihood, effort, thought, and meditation. The eight spokes of the steering wheel remind us to embrace growth in wisdom and strength as we row our boats through life's ups and downs.



Inanna

A popular Sumerian myth tells the story of the goddess Inanna and her journey to and from the underworld. Despite the difficulties she went through along the way, she maintained bravery rather than giving up altogether. Inanna's growth mindset and desire to become a better version of herself is an example for us as we approach the challenges that life throws at us.



Koi Fish

Not only do these fish have beautiful patterns and hues reminiscent of the sun, but they are also an important symbol of growth in many Chinese and Japanese legends. One famous story tells of how despite swimming against the current of the Yellow River, a koi fish was able to reach the top of the waterfall and turn into a Golden Dragon. The fish transforming into a dragon symbolizes how we can grow through our determination in the face of obstacles.



Ajet

Translated as "horizon" or "mountain of light," the Ajet is an ancient Egyptian symbol used in the writing of hieroglyphs to represent growth and transformation in both the sun's rotation and our lives. The symbol also shows the god of the underworld, Aker, who is depicted as two lions facing away from each other. This represents the past and the present, as well as the eastern and western horizons of the Egyptian underworld. This image highlights the cyclical nature of life and how we are all growing every single day.

These are just some of the various symbols for growth and adaptation; each carries a special meaning and has important roots in history and culture. If motivation to keep growing is ever needed, these symbols are only a thought away. With that, here's to a delightful spring season of growth!

BY *Sanjna Pandit*

I WRITE because writing cultivates my ability to be eloquent and express my feelings and ideas. I learn more and more about myself with every new thought that I put on paper. My mind forces me to enter a whole new realm of imagination and discoveries that I never knew I could reach.



Sports and Dance:

How Physical Activity Encourages Growth

Growth for many high school students is measured by academic achievement, but for three students at Kinkaid, there is another core passion in their lives which allows them to recognize their growth—athletics, whether it be in dance or sports.

High School students stay active for a number of reasons. Some try to stay in shape and healthy, while others consider exercise an outlet that allows them to lean into their passions. The Kinkaid School offers a variety of sports activities for students to pursue that keep them active but also makes them strive to improve.

Two seniors at The Kinkaid School demonstrate the growth mindset sports plays among teenagers. With college on the imminent horizon, they reflect upon the role sports has and continues to have in their high school lives.

Cade Duncan

Cade Duncan, ranked second in Texas for swimming and twenty-fifth in the nation, has continued to improve as a swimmer for thirteen years. He began swimming when he was eleven by joining a year round club team, Team FINS. He later shifted to DADS club, a local Houston facility that offers a team that promotes positive attitudes towards swimming and competition.

Cade's journey has not come without challenges. What he struggles with most is continuing to stay motivated. As he progressed and became a faster and faster swimmer, improvement became harder and harder to recognize. Similarly, as you age and improve, you are placed in far more difficult competitions where you are up against better and faster swimmers. For example, if you're the fastest swimmer in one level and are able to move up, you suddenly become the slowest swimmer in the harder level and have to work all over again, even in cases where the better swimmers are those younger than you. Despite this, Cade is able to look past comparing other swimmers to himself and recognize what he has accomplished.

“One thing you have to stick to though is thinking about how far you've come along and how much you have improved. You have to try and avoid comparing yourself to others and instead look at what you have improved on and what you have been successful at accomplishing. By focusing more on yourself rather than what you are to others, you can stay mentally strong and continue to improve, grow, and push forward.” said Cade.

Cade uses specific tactics to recognize how he has grown as a swimmer so that he can maintain his motivation to grow. At the beginning of a season, Cade establishes goals for himself that he wants to achieve by the end of the season. These goals may include dropping times in meets, improving form, and developing better race strategies. Another way Cade is able to measure his growth is by recognizing what has changed since his last race. Main points of comparison are whether or not Cade can hold a faster interval, improve his pace, and how long he can hold a pass.

What underscores Cade's motivation to improve is his love of swimming. He is able to love everything about swimming, even the days where he has to practice hard sets to perform better in meets.

“For the most part, I am joyful, for I'm doing what I love, but it can be hard; the hours needed and the commitment and discipline levels needed can be grueling and thus I have to sacrifice a lot of other commodities, such as social events and sleep. Despite this though, I believe that it is worth it in order to pursue my dream of being an Olympic gold medalist and a world record holder.” said Cade.

Alice Ma

Alice Ma, a current senior and president of Kinkaid's dance company, has been honing her technique and improving as a dancer for fourteen years. Alice began her training at three years old with J&H Dance school, where she first began with folkloric styles of dance and ballet. She was able to immerse herself further in the dance scene when she began competitive dance at six years old with a modern solo.

Across Alice's many years of dance, she's recognized her growth and the journey of what made her the dancer she is today. Learning how to measure her growth has shifted in recent years as her perspective on dance has changed. Originally, Alice measured her growth in her technical improvement: seeing how many more revolutions she could get in a turn, how high a leap was, and if her flexibility improved. She eventually found that this way of measuring her growth and success diminished her love of dance.

“I soon learned that I could not measure my growth in dance this way because dance wasn't just about the technique and skill, but it was about the passion. The passion was the reason why I kept dancing in the first place, why I spent countless hours in the dance

studio rehearsing and tiring myself out.” Alice said.

She began to measure her growth in the quality of her movements and how she felt towards her dancing. For example, Alice would set goals for herself to loosen her movements and feel the music in her dancing instead of hyper-fixating on technique.

“Throughout my high school career, I've been able to cultivate my thoughts to focus on this feeling, which has allowed me to become so much more connected with myself and has given me an outlet to express my emotions.” Alice said.

Alice is still growing as a dancer and overcoming her own challenges as an artist. In recent years, Alice has choreographed dance showcases at Kinkaid and improvisation in class—responsibilities which have propelled her to overcome self-consciousness. At her former studios, improv dance and choreography were never skills that were focused on as it is at Kinkaid.

“When I came to Kinkaid and was forced to improv in class, I could not get any movement out of my body. I just stood there like a deer in headlights with nothing in my head.” said Alice. She signed up to choreograph for a showcase at Kinkaid her junior year and found herself without any ideas. Alice was forced to take non-traditional methods and perseverance to find her choreography. She knew that the process of choreographing would improve her as a dancer, so



she took on the challenge with pride.

Today, Alice motivates herself to continue growing by exploring new dance styles. She was originally taught in traditional ballet but has since branched out into genres like jazz, hip-hop, and tap. These forms stretch her in new ways; the foreign nature of new genres excites Alice and motivates her to continue exploring, improving, and loving her dance.

Closing

Physical activity challenges students' mentality and bodies. Not only does it allow students to learn the importance of sticking to their goals and not doubting themselves, physical activity also lets students stay physically fit and watch their growth at a non-academic level.

BY Cami Culbertson

I WRITE because it makes me feel powerful. Normally in my everyday life, I feel small or insignificant in the grand scheme of things. When I write and have the ability to publish, I feel like I am making my mark. Even if what I am writing about seems small, the fact I can share my voice in works like magazines where I am alongside talented writers, makes all the work I do feel significant to me. I enjoy keeping what I write, no matter how old, so I can reflect back on the work I have done and feel confident. Writing is the articulation of everything I cannot express otherwise.



The iWRITE Ambassador Program

Did you know there's a new way for adults and teens passionate about spreading the love of literacy to get involved with iWRITE?

The iWRITE Ambassador Program is an opportunity for volunteers to lead groups of elementary school students from Title I public schools in the Houston area in writing their first short stories. The focus of the program is to scaffold both reading and writing skills for academically struggling students using the iWRITE Journals as a conduit.

Mr. Evan Carlson joined the Ambassador program in February 2023. As a part of the education program at Houston Community College (HCC), he was required to do a certain number of observation hours in the field, and his professor recommended that he get involved with the Ambassador Program. He has loved the experience so far.

"I have groups of about five students at a time," Mr. Carlson said. "It's very student-led. They can have discussions, and my role is helping them take all the ideas they have in their heads and funnel them into one coherent storyline."

He remembered a special moment when he and his students were organizing their plot line notes and had a moment of creative fun.

"To get our ideas for our stories organized, we played a game: the one-word story game. Everyone says one word at a time to build the story. As it got going, it got more and more chaotic and pretty funny! It led to some great discussions about how you pick ideas and organize and condense them to put in your story."

Mr. Carlson said one of his favorite parts of the program was seeing the "lightbulb turn on" in his students' minds as they arrived at new ideas.

Mr. Diego Gutierrez started working with the Ambassador program at the end of March 2023. He also got involved through the HCC's partnership with iWRITE.

"The biggest learning curve was that there are so many different learning levels among the second graders I'm working with," he

said. "But that's balanced out by how fun it is to interact with the kids, hearing their experiences and turning their ideas into full-fledged stories."

Mr. Gutierrez recommends everyone who is interested in getting involved with the Ambassador program contact Ms. Sheri Jacobs (sheri@iwrite.org) and try it out. One does not need to be an HCC student to apply for the Ambassador program. Anyone wanting to share their love of reading and writing with Houston-area elementary students is welcome to volunteer!



BY Eshaan Mani

I WRITE for the rush of adrenaline I feel when my pen touches the paper. It is that exhilarating experience and the opportunity to not only get my voice out to the public but also be able to be the voice of inspiring people and organizations that inspires me to write.

Failing Forward: Stepping Stones for Success

Thomas Edison once said, "I have not failed 10,000 times—I've successfully found 10,000 ways that will not work." Our minds are ingrained with the idea that failure is something to avoid at all costs, often straying us from being able to improve from our mistakes. Failure provides us with valuable insights on what we do differently in the future to better meet our goals and achieve success. What follows are strategies that highlight the importance of learning from our mistakes, and how we can deal with failure.

Ability To Feel Emotions

Jonatan Mårtensson wisely stated that, "Feelings are much like waves: we can't stop them from coming, but we can choose which one to surf." It is perfectly normal to feel disappointment, frustration, and sadness when dealing with failure. By pushing down these feelings, you are not letting yourself completely process the situation. Accept the reality of your situation to move on from your failure, learn from your mistakes, and continue working toward success.

Self-Compassion

"Self-compassion is simply giving the same kindness to ourselves that we would give to others." - Christopher Germer. Instead of taking the frustration of your failure as an opportunity to self-sabotage, choose kindness and understanding for yourself. Don't be self-critical as you're not alone, everyone makes mistakes. Failure is a vital step in the learning process. And by treating ourselves with care and affection, the results will be fruitful.

Growth Mindset

Follow the advice of playwright George Bernard Shaw, "When I was a young man I observed that nine out of ten things I did were failures. I didn't want to be a failure, so I did ten times more work." Failure is just one bump in your road, don't let it stop you from reaching your potential. By adopting a growth mindset, you will be able to take risks and tackle challenges that you would have never thought of attempting before. Persist in the face of setbacks because you never know what the outcome might be.

Revisit Your Goals

The quote "If you don't know where you are going, you'll end up someplace else" by Yogi Berra emphasizes the relevance of revisiting our goals. When we experience failure, it can be tempting to give up or lose sight of our objectives. However, by taking the time to reflect on our goals and assess whether they are still relevant and achievable, we can regain a clearer sense of direction.

Identify areas of improvement and strive to work towards those goals, and a sense of accomplishment will soon wash over you.

Seek Feedback

Ken Blanchard said that, "Feedback is the breakfast of champions." Just as breakfast is essential to fueling our bodies for the day ahead, feedback is essential to fueling our growth and development as individuals. While feedback can sometimes be difficult to accept, it is important to embrace it as an opportunity to learn and grow, rather than criticism or judgment. By seeking feedback regularly and using it to inform our actions, we can become stronger, more resilient, and better equipped to face challenges in the future.

Learning from failure and mistakes is a crucial part of personal growth and development. It provides valuable information about what we need to change in order to achieve success in the face of failure. When dealing with a bout of failure, it is important to give yourself room to feel emotions, be kind and compassionate towards yourself, adopt a growth mindset, revisit your goals, and seek feedback. By utilizing these strategies and practicing resilience, you will not only become a stronger person but will learn an important life lesson. You can turn failure into a valuable learning experience which will help you achieve your goals in the future.

And like Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Jalen Hurts said, "You either win or you learn." Strive to work towards those goals, and a sense of accomplishment will soon wash over you.

BY Nia Shetty

I WRITE because of the joy I feel when I put a new idea down on paper. To be able to bring feelings and emotions to the reader, through ideas that I get to express.



Reborn

She was completely alone. No people, no animals, not even a mosquito. She had gone down into the bunker believing that when she came back up, everything would be the same, that it would have been a false alarm again. But as she took in the silence settling like powdered glass, her breath stuttered in her throat.

Something was wrong. Nothing had changed, per se, but there was an eerie sort of movement in the stillness, yes, something that ebbed and flowed in a way that was all too raw and unpolished for concrete and metal. The air had a certain tangible sweetness to it, something fresh and warm and so... alive. The familiarity of the scent sent her thoughts spinning into freefall, and for a second she saw something fresh and green and light, and the air under her sweating palms had the rough, grainy texture of wood. She took a deep breath and shook her head to clear it. There was so much fog.

Fog that stirred, fog that shifted, fog that lingered like an unpleasant smell against bare skin. She was surrounded in a fog so dense it obscured all thought and blurred all reason.

She stumbled, bracing a hand against a wall for support. The cool metal enveloped the fog, drowning out waves of confusion with the distinctive tang of iron. As long as she touched metal, concrete, something manufactured, she would be alright. Nothing could confuse her.

She pushed further into the bunker, examining unturned cans and plates like they could reveal something to her. But all she found was gleaming steel and immaculate concrete. This both settled and unsettled her, and she withdrew a hand from a concrete bowl hastily, trembling as she tried to control the fog now possessing her mind.

What's happening?

It had been years since she'd thought clearly. Or maybe it had been mere months. Or days. Or hours. Either way, time before seemed to follow a monotonous, repetitive script. Until that day when the sky began falling.

So she had descended into the bunker, determined to wait out the chaos until it was safe to go out. She had been trained to do this many times before, as the world was so close to utter collapse that apocalypse training seemed ordinary.

Once I would never have dreamed of this...

She shook off the thought, the fog in her urging her to stop thinking in abstract, to start sorting out the metals and concrete and plans, but she couldn't bring herself to do it. She took up a piece of lead from a nearby shelf and sat on the cold stone floor, turning the metal over and over in her palms, watching the world disappear to a cloud of mist.

She lived in a world of metal, concrete, and monochrome. Not black or white specifically, no—she seemed to exist in a turmoil of gray.

Shades of gray, fog of gray, gray coiling like molten metal on cold stone. Life, warmth, color—these concepts seemed so abstract, so unreal, and yet even the mere thought of them was enough to send the fog into a tailspin, forcing her mind away from the thought.

She had lived in this world ever since she could remember, but her memory was short. All seemed to begin and end with a haze of silver mist, one that sparkled like steel and yet, when she tried to force her way out, hardened into solid concrete.

Near the back of the room, shrouded by shadow, something caught her eye. Perhaps it was the way it smelled, earthy and warm and so much like home. Perhaps it was the way it looked: rough around the edges, unpolished, slightly rotting. And when she walked over and touched it, it softened slightly under her touch, splintering to give way to her palm.

No metal moves like that.

She ran another finger down the surface, then another, until she was gripping the pane with both hands, trembling all over, unable to believe what was happening.

The wall was made of wood.

Ancient, rotting wood, trembling like a live creature under her flesh. She could feel the fog building, trying to cover the wood with a sheen of polished silver, but she knew what she saw and persisted, clawing at the wood with splintered fingers, unable to believe it. She gave it a slight push, tentatively, as if to see what would happen. Then her knees buckled as fog reared back, and a vision swarmed her eyes.

Destruction, despair, death. Birds falling, fish drowning, screams like she'd never heard before. And worse yet, trees falling to the ground like kindling, extinguished of life, enveloped by a tsunami of concrete and metal and fog that destroyed all color and left no movement. Fog cutting through memories like paper. Fog taking root in her skull, swallowing her brain and confusing her thoughts.

Someone had destroyed her world. Some fog had taken all semblance of life and switched it with plastic, metal, concrete. And something was hiding it from her.

She put a hand on the wall, and the ancient wood seemed to swell under her touch.

Name?

She hesitated, startled by the question. It didn't seem possible, and yet the wood spoke to her in a voice she hadn't heard in a long time, one that tickled her memories, drifting and dancing through wind like a scrap of elusive paper. She felt compelled to say Fog, to raise a hunk of metal like a prayer, but instead of holding steady she felt her hand tremble and shake, and the fog's once familiar embrace felt alien and... dangerous. She felt as though she was halted at a crossroad, one path blocked by a familiar mist and the other by a familiar fear. The wood had asked the question to her, not anyone else. What to believe, which path to take—it was her choice to make.

And she had never felt so powerful.

She ignored the fog sweeping behind her, urging her to keep lying, keep believing in the illusion around her. Instead, her numb fingers relaxed, dropping the lead and sending another name spilling from her lips.

“The Dryad.”

Something flew out of the wall, slicing open thin air as if it would reveal something. She watched, rooted to the spot, as wood ripped through fog, fog she didn't even know existed, fog pretending to be metal, fog hiding the world from her, fog creating an illusion of steel and concrete and monotone and gray. She watched, transfixed, as her true world was revealed and the old pane of wood disintegrated to embers in front of her.

She was standing in a forest, one with trees and life and so much color she could hardly bear it. She could see the fog, coiling just beyond the tree line, so dense and light and dark and bright that a moment of clarity struck her like a bolt of lightning. She turned, taking it in.

It was some kind of fossil, each tree nothing more than a crumbling exterior. The bark looked dead and hollow, and the leaves drooped sadly, too tired and exhausted to hold even the shallowest of hues. But even this faint attempt at green was more color than she had seen in ages. The world around her was dead, and yet she had never felt more alive.

I'm the Dryad. It was me. It's always been me.

The Dryad trailed fingertips along a tree, watching the fog behind her eyes slowly lessen. The leaves rustled, wispy fibers revitalized, rapidly

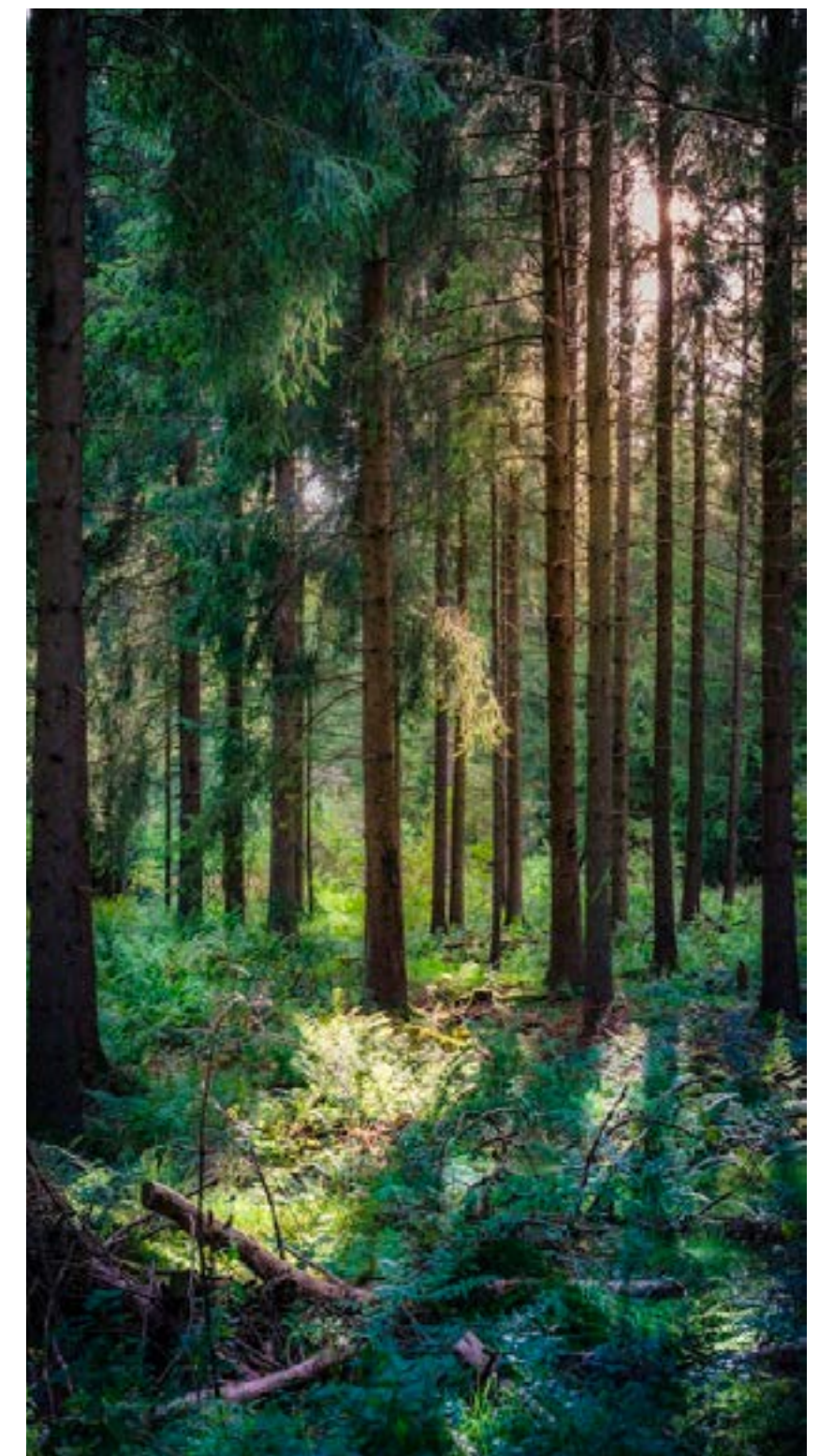
gaining strength as they reached towards the ceiling bunker in earnest yearning. Under her touch, the spiny bark turned pearly white, the leaves brilliant shades of green and gold.

Then the Dryad passed on, and the trees crumbled to smoking cinders behind her. When she reached the end of the forest, she looked back. All that was left of the trees were mounds of ashes. She turned and started walking again.

The Dryad walked through the graveyard. She remembered everything.

BY *Helen Zhang*

I WRITE because, in a world where so much is uncertain, my imagination is always reliably creative and available. I know that, in times of stress, poetry and literature are always ways to find release and consistency in my life.



A Place for Poetry

Featured Poems From the *iWRITER* Staff

LATE AT NIGHT

Push and touch
like a loving
fever,
gripping and
disappearing.
It
was late
but i told myself
i have a
story
to tell

when there always seems
to be a helicopter groaning about
and your thoughts are louder
— fingers resting
silently on the
keyboard.

I tell
myself
i need silence;
then it's
too quiet.
i need white noise;
then it's too
white.
then turns to...
copters

BY David Liu
I WRITE to help others escape to worlds full of color with characters of energy and nuance. To create a place where someone can find refuge, if only just for a few seconds, is something that I love to do.



SELF-PORTRAIT AS A CATERPILLAR

I spin myself into silky strands
of dew-glossed string beneath
the fuzzy underside of an oak leaf. Hang like
a silver teardrop— let me be, let me swing side to side
And when my silver lining crumples and sheds,
and I sink deeper into my fragile shell—
listen to the soft humming come to a
stop.

Can you see them? Thin glass veins
stretching down the length of two
rice paper wings, still, small—
almost tucked beneath
my soft cuticle.

And when my wings grow,
come watch me break though
the thin ice, crack,
and thaw below,
the apricot
sun.

BY Sophie Yu
I WRITE to let my thoughts, feelings, and ideas spread across the paper. To form and create a story that can be told in any perspective, described with any words. Writing can create a whole new world.



SPRING HAS SPRUNG

the blades of green seem to elongate before my eyes,
bearing vibrant buds from their stems,
sucking in the sunlight as if it was all they knew
singing out to me with entrancing,
but hesitant movement
joy
blooming in their wake,

the melody quiets to a stop,
as the song with uncertain lyrics morphs into a melody
of newfound confidence
full of potential
flowers unfurling,
embracing the dewy spring air
urging me to come near
join them

i succumb to springs' pleas,
growing with the buds
forever swaying to the melody.



BY Prisha Shivani
I WRITE because it is a creative way of expressing your thoughts and ideas through words. iWRITE has given me the opportunity to write and publish, sharing my pieces with many people.

THE OBSCURE REBELLION

There was a girl standing on a vast stage, and she could vividly hear the sound of the crowd cheering her name. She wondered at that moment, “I embarked on my journey by being so obscure to the world, with so little, and yet became so illustrious and awe-inspiring. How?”

There was a girl who lived with her father; their lives were sustained on very little gold. Her father was quickly becoming ill; he didn’t have time to become old.

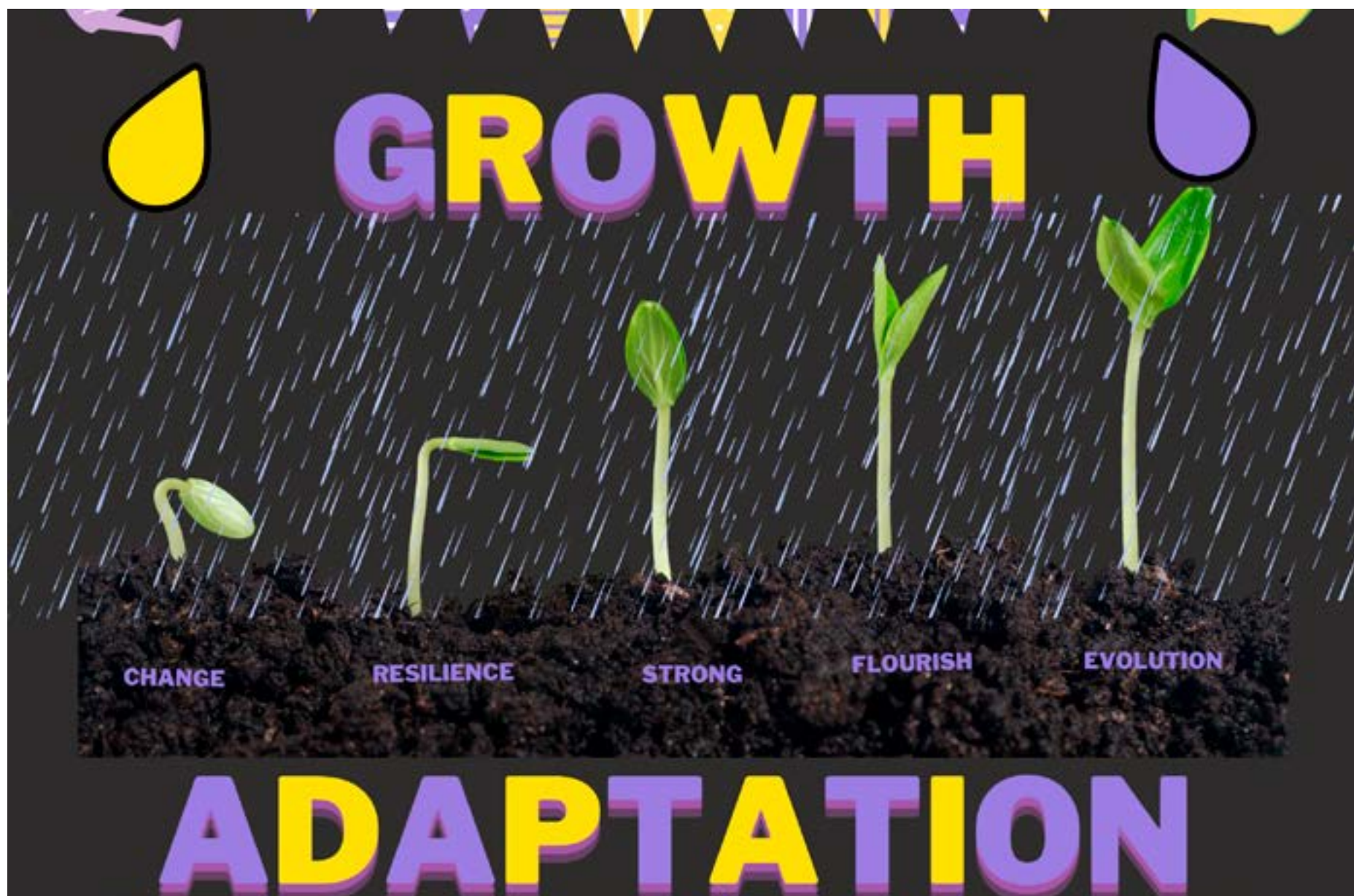
A fortnight later, he was dead, and her life became glum and cold. The girl had to earn for herself and take many risks that were bold.

Constant oppressions for women kept placing barriers like a very towering wall. She couldn’t accept these unjust obstacles; women couldn’t be in control. She decided to fight for women’s rights, so they wouldn’t feel powerless and small. If she didn’t speak for women, who would stand up and resist their tyranny once and for all?

This girl was passionate; she would never stop speaking her values and held her head high
She may have started small, but ended up achieving incredible goals, showing she really did try.
As she spoke at rallies to women groups, she felt their ecstasism extend to the sky.
They would confront the men who originally didn’t let them go beyond their capabilities and fly.

Her voice had started like a whisper but gradually echoed with power to be heard,
Her eminent speeches and campaigns were known with the help of women who fought as well,
Her ideas would inspire youthful girls to achieve their goals that could cause society to stir,
These ideas would propel them forward in society with grace and style, as time would foretell

BY Tanvi Padala
I WRITE because words are the sound of my thoughts and let me be creative. Through writing, I can escape to impossible worlds, experience magic, and create imaginative characters. Writing brings a tremendous amount of joy and relaxes me.



THE SEEDLING'S JOURNEY: A RESILIENT, ENRICHING TRANSFORMATION

A seed buried deep within the moist clumps of dirt,
Roots stretch, finding nourishment from the ground, and the plant unfurls,
Tiny leaves form as the plant shoots upward, beginning a growth spurt,
At last, the plant starts to bloom above ground, adapting to this “new world.”

As a very young toddler, she quickly grows each day,
She learns about her family and bonds with them,
As she sees this “new world,” she also develops stronger skills that will stay,
As she steps outside the house, she sees that nature is such a gem.

A sprout now, the plant has adapted to life above the ground,
It’s become a little taller each day as it stretches with more leaves,
It observes the insects flying and the vast sky permeating all around,
The bright shining sunshine and the gently drifting rain it receives.

The young girl, curious about her surroundings, is beginning to flourish,
She starts kindergarten and is grasping information about various new subjects,
Starting from a toddler girl, now a taller elementary school young lady has begun to nourish,
She’s making new friends and learning how her community’s traditions are kept.

It was a seedling, but it continually grows stronger in unpredictable weather conditions,
Though there are many unexpected phenomena, it continues to thrive and stay resilient.
It notices its fellow seedlings’ flowers and leaves sprouting with many similar versions.
It is beginning to transition from a seedling to a strong plant as it reaches its fulfillment.

The young girl journeys through elementary school with many new adventures,
With countless new acquaintances and a variety of new friends,
She gains more knowledge and participates in new hobbies as she ventures,
To transition into a mature, taller, and wiser young lady and transcend.

The seedling has become a full-grown adult with its final additions,
It changed on its journey from a small seed to this large green vegetation,
As a seed, it needs the sun, water, and warmth to make its transition,
Standing near the home’s picture window, it is the flora that maintains its station.

The girl transformed into almost an entirely new person, being shaped through coalescence,
She’s more knowledgeable about her community, which she now

thinks of as cool,
As she exits childhood, she enters adolescence,
And gets ready to embark on new adventures in her community and middle school.



BY Tanvi Padala
I WRITE because words are the sound of my thoughts and let me be creative. Through writing, I can escape to impossible worlds, experience magic, and create imaginative characters. Writing brings a tremendous amount of joy and relaxes me.

BOOK TALK

Love and Gelato is an action-packed novel that will make you feel like you're sharing this journey with the main character, Lina. This book is written from Lina's point of view.

Love and Gelato is about who you are and staying close to your roots. The story follows Lina, an American teenager, who moves to Florence, Italy, to spend time with her father. Because this was her mother's dying wish, Lina is forced to go along with it. Though Lina isn't excited at all, she doesn't know what lies ahead of her.

Lina is not having a good time in Florence, mostly because her father is the caretaker of a cemetery. As she is slowly getting used to the new environment, she meets a boy her age named Ren. This is where the story really takes off.

Lina is given her mother's old journal to read. At first, she is afraid even to open the book, but soon, she unravels surprising secrets. With the help of Ren, she uses clues to find out what happened when her mother came to Florence.

Author Jenna Evans Welch uses historic sites to create this lovely story about a girl who is finding the truth—about herself and the people she loves. As I read this book, I wanted to explore the streets of Florence myself, just how Lina and Ren did.

A remarkable and uplifting read, *The Book of Hope* by Dr. Jane Goodall delves into the role hope plays in our lives and the impact one person can have on the world. From her personal experiences to those of people and communities all over the world, Goodall highlights the power of optimism, perseverance, and collective action in the face of adversity.

This book is split into four sections: The Amazing Human Intellect, The Resilience of Nature, The Power of Young People, and the Indomitable Human Spirit. In each of the chapters, Dr. Goodall and her co-authors reflect on their own personal experiences and discuss the lessons they've learned about making the world a more compassionate and environmentally friendly place.

The book's emphasis on the interdependence of all living things is another of its strong points. Dr. Goodall asserts that in order to build a more equitable and sustainable society, we must first acknowledge our common humanity. Dr. Goodall's unique perspective makes each essay in *The Book of Hope* stand out. Her story will leave readers feeling encouraged and inspired to take action because of her evident love for the outdoors and compassion for animals.

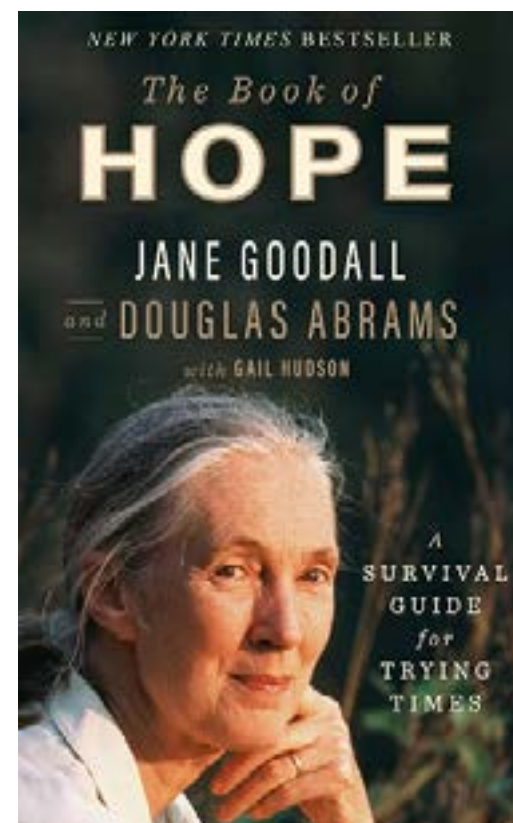
The Book of Hope is beautifully written and an essential and inspiring read that comes at a crucial time, spreading a message of optimism and hope in a society that often feels oppressive. Goodall's stories are both uplifting and thought-provoking. *The Book of Hope* is an eloquently penned and a motivational read that will resonate with anyone who values the planet and seeks to make a difference in the world.

I truly understand Lina's struggles with love, family, and friendship. I recommend *Love and Gelato* for anyone ages 13 and up who want to read a sweet and compelling story.



BY *Sanvi Pandit*

I WRITE because writing is my way to share what I think and feel. Composing stories and poems helps me tell the world about myself without feeling scared.



BY *Shaii Moparthy*

I WRITE because writing is a way for me to express myself and it helps me connect to my artistic side. I enjoy writing because it allows me to reflect on experiences that I have encountered. Writing is something that I truly enjoy, and it has always been one of my greatest passions.

Writing Recommendations

Spring can bring lots of inspiration. Whether you find that through the blooming nature all around you or growth within yourself, there are always avenues for creative self-expression. Try branching out (no pun intended!) and tapping into any changes you're experiencing with the writing prompt below:

1. Write a haiku that centers around the use of sound to describe spring.
2. Write a fictional short story about a teenager confronting a huge shift in their family dynamic. Perhaps their sibling has left for college, or he is moving to a new city, or maybe they are meeting a new family member. How does the main character handle this situation?
3. Write a creative nonfiction piece about the time that you underwent a great change in your life. What was the change, and how did it influence you? How did you feel? Who was around you, and did they impact any of the change at all? How do you feel now?
4. Write a poem about your favorite part of spring. Why do you love it?
5. Write an ode dedicated to your love for the spring season. Try incorporating personification to bring your experience with the season to life!
6. Create a black-out poetry piece (block out certain lines of your choosing and keep the lines you like!) by looking up 2 art pieces centered around themes of spring. Use each of the art's descriptions to create a remixed poem with a new meaning.
7. Write a letter to your future self about a change that you are experiencing right now. Express your true emotions and don't hold back. What do you think will happen in the future?
8. Write a short story in the style of a fable teaching how a positive mindset about something is capable of bringing change.
9. Write a creative nonfiction piece about what your life was like last spring. Did you do anything memorable? Did you see anything that was notable?
10. Write about the spring season from the perspective of something inanimate, such as a number, an everyday utensil, or a machine.



BY *Kate-Yeonjae Jeong*

I WRITE because I have a passion for being able to share my reflections and thoughts with others. I write so I can share the spark of joy that writing gives with many other interested students.

iWRITER Issue 12 Team



Eshaan Mani, Kate-Yeonjae Jeong, Sanjna Pandit, Shaivi Moparathi



David Liu, Nia Shetty, Sophie Yu, Cami Culbertson



Helen Zhang, Tanvi Padala, Sanvi Pandit, Prisha Shivani