The Offspring ... the English spring

2017, March • No 1

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you have a leader."

John Adams

Our Team

Vladimir Traşă – editor

Ileana Dobrescu

Ioan Scripcariu

Cristina Iuga

Ioana Mitu

Ana Fraguța Neacşu

Roxana Drăgan

Andrada Dumitru

Sarah Cristel

Raluca Tecuceanu

Sânziana Stan

Raluca Hondor

Ioana Pintilie

Bianca Gheorghe

Dorina Enciu - coordinating teacher

COLEGIUL NATIONAL "SPIRU HARET" Bucureşti

Contents

A Word from the Editors

In My World

Brexit!
Teen worries
Eu_DSA_Romania
Career. Next stop: University

The National English Language Contest 2016-2017, Bucharest stage results

Aimless Inklings

I have been watching over mankind
The Land of My Dreams

Share my passion for…

The piano
Why teenagers read in English
Help the others and help yourself!

It was written in class

Journey into the world of destruction
"To be or not to be"
Minstrel at Beowulf's banquet

We All Love a Joke

A word from the editors

Vladimir Trașă, 9 G

So, here you are, opening up the magazine. Not counting the cover, this should be the first page if everything went according to plan. And it is, isn't it? If it isn't, well, you should stop taking magazines apart. The team behind these pages put a lot of effort into them, writing the intriguing articles, designing the amazing artwork, building the new site, putting all of this together and assembling the pages in the right order.

Is this magazine online?

I think it is. You are probably reading the .pdf file. This page is for sure the first, of course, not counting the cover.

What is that?

It isn't? Make sure you have your software updated. I can wait... Yup, still waiting.

Just resume reading after you've installed the update. Done? That was slow. What ISP are you using? You should switch to another. Everything was simpler without these computers. You didn't need to write a whole paragraph just to make sure the readers are viewing the pages in the right order.

With that out of the way you should be ready to enjoy this. The last time this magazine has come out is five years ago. In this time a drone has landed on Mars, a spacecraft on a comet, another spacecraft has flown by Pluto, gravitational waves have been detected, a new Star Wars film has been launched and Felix Baumgartner has jumped from stratosphere. Maybe it's time for us to get back to earth. Maybe it's time to get back to you.

We just did.

This is the result of our hard work. This is one of the things we want to leave on earth.This is The Offspring.

"What did Britain say to its EU partners?" "See EU later!"

Ioana Mitu , 11B

OK, not that funny...I know. Someone had to lighten up the mood as I don't think anyone can stand reading one more cynical, disheartened and pessimistic article about Brexit. But could we find any way to an optimistic approach?

Is there anyone here who doesn't know what Brexit is? I'm sure all of you have heard the hipster standing outside your favourite coffee shop talking about it. All right, for the recently returned from Planet Mars I will explain. This ubiquitous and enigmatic and spine-chilling term is nothing more than the abbreviation of two words which should have never met, British and Exit. And it stands for the referendum of June, 23, 2016, whereby a momentary majority of British citizens voted Leave, that is leaving the European Union.

Want to know the reaction of the grown-ups when the results of the poll were made public? Then picture this: jaws dropped, socks were knocked off, eyebrows were raised and general panic took over. The next British reaction was: " What have we done?!!!"

As I don't want to speak for others, I'm going to tell you how Brexit changed my universe, in other words how hard it shook it.

I am a high school student in Bucharest, Romania. I work hard, I study a lot and I started learning English when I was 4. Finding out that the UK was leaving, just two years before my big adventure, a.k.a. the university, gave my dreams a major shock. And why does my opinion matter? The answer is: Because hundreds, if not thousands of teenagers like me were left wondering: "What now?" Since we started speaking we have been told to fight for our future and we have. Sometimes we forgot about our youth in the rush for hope and passion to what corner of the world they would lead us, only to be, at the very end and not even so politely, refused here in Britain. We have the right to at least ask : "Why?" Why did millions choose to put a cross in the box marked "Leave", despite the contrary urgings of an impressive coalition of political leaders, major financiers, huge corporations and David Beckham?

"To be or not to be in the EU?" The final question is this: Will some citizens inherently uncomfortable with social changes and especially migration, manage to turn the cultural clock back? Only Time, that insufferable know-it-all, will tell.

TEEN WORRIES...

These are the thoughts of a teenager after reading dozens of answers from our students regarding the question "What are your concerns about the future"?

Ana Fraguta Neacsu 10F

"The future is in your hands".That is what I hear more and more adults telling teenagers. But has it ever occurred to them that solving issues of national or international importance requires having your own affairs in order? This 'quote' comes as an additional pressure factor to the many fears and worries an adolescent has.

How does society expect them to steadily hold the future in their arms when teen-hood itself is exhausting and highly problematic? There are adolescents with anxiety, depression or serious family problems, yet people neglect those facts, only paying attention to the bigger picture.

When shaping yourself into a 'mature person', you feel the need to get validation from others. Teenagers lose their true selves and identities in the process of pleasing everyone and ultimately becoming someone completely different from what they would like to be. They either live the way they want to, and are judged, or they live with the sorrow that they cannot be themselves because it is not 'right'. After all, what is right: what you really are, or what you should be? Society tends to suppress a person's true capacity to be human, the abilities and qualities that matter, and to replace them with thirst for power and superficiality. Often, society gives young people pointless purposes to achieve.

Education is supposed to help expanding general culture and perspectives on life. However, it does quite the opposite by turning into a heavy burden which pressures teenagers to be competitive and be better than others. It does not effectively and positively encourage them to surpass their own condition and intellect. Instead of building a moral code of values and principles and, in fact, helping students apply it in real life, school places focus on grades and scores. All this 'reckless' race culminates with the Bacalaureat exam, which has become an actual nightmare. Such objective examinations have the power to influence a young person's future and even determine one's true capacities and potential, in the opinion of many. Besides that, school takes up too much time and restrains the young from discovering themselves, from achieving essential life knowledge by experiencing new things and interacting in multiple social contexts. Some parents make the situation worse by building an imposing wall of expectations between them and their children, instead of a bridge of empathy. Stress regarding their future has taken control over teens' lives and makes them forget to live in the present and genuinely enjoy this beautiful and flourishing period.

But there is yet another source of pressure on the poor teens. They seem to put pressure on one another, and that is called peer pressure. They are trying to prove themselves and be 'cool' to show that they can be just as good as others and that they are worth it. Most teenagers tend to impose a set of attitudes and standards on those around them and they become a sort of leaders around of whom groups are formed. 'If you're not with us, you're against us!'

Moreover, financial status always gets in the way of teenagers travelling, discovering, trying new things and actually experiencing social life at its finest. Just imagine how amazing it would be for an adolescent to go anywhere they wish. Money in general limits one's potential and opportunities they get to evolve and 'show what they are made of'. Unfortunately, we still live in a world where money rules, and, unless that changes, I do not see how our lives will improve.

Another factor that seems to stand in the way of all humans is TIME. It is generally perceived as an enemy. I believe that we spend so much scheduling and measuring it, that it slips away, and we choose to hate the concept instead.

Lastly, one of the most common thoughts among Romanian young people sadly refers to whether leaving the country or not. I wish I could say that they are to blame for choosing to escape the hard and the constant battle, but I cannot. Everybody has the right to choose what they consider is best for them and do it. Unless they are in a healthy, happy and steadily crafted environment, they will not be able to bring their own contribution to the world and its prosperity.

I myself believed I was all alone buried under a pile of worries, fears and insecurities. It seems this is far from the truth. The odd thing is that I thought I would feel relieved I am not the only one in this situation. To my surprise, I had a complete different reaction: It worries me how many worries are out there burdening young people who still do not know what to wear or what model of sneakers to buy, but have to figure out their future.

If only grown-ups would let teenagers make the world a better one…

Eu_DSA_Romania

Myself and a string quintet after a performance sophomore year

I have the feeling that everybody around the world should have an idea about US high schools. After all, high school life, from inner city schools to preparatory schools has been depicted in countless movies with international audience. But that's art, and art imitates life only in bad productions, so I'll tell you a few things about my high school, Durham School of the Arts (DSA), in Durham, North Carolina, USA. It is a magnet school for the arts. Magnet schools are free public schools that specialize in certain fields, mine of course, having an arts concentration. You might think that such a school will have some sort of admission process based on auditions for the different arts pathways that one might follow, and this would not be untrue for some magnet schools, but not ours. The idea with DSA is to have a school that represents the diversity of the Durham city population, which is approximately 40% African American, 14% Latino, and 46% Caucasian. If access to this school will be based on auditions, it is not unlikely that the overwhelming student body would be white, for reasons that I will not get into here. So you can only get into this school by winning a lottery. The premise is that every student is talented, they just have to find their niche, and such a school offers equal opportunity to all families in Durham. For students to have a chance to explore different arts pathways before definitively choosing one, DSA also has a middle school, so students can get in as early as 6th grade. I tried for two years before I received my spot in 8th grade. My arts pathway is piano, although in 9th grade I was exposed to several other arts classes including 2D and 3D visual art.

DSA Science Olympiad Team learning we won 1st place at regional competition. The crazy screaming dude with crimson hat is the captain, yours truly

It may be a bit stereotypical, but we really look like an arts school. Students, in general, value free expression, are more progressive and are quirkier. Think Kat from the cult classic "Ten Things I Hate About You". We drag around our instruments, or big portfolios, we record life as we live it through still photography or film, we dance, we chorale, we play in jazz bands, or string orchestras, we act, or play classical piano, like I do. But I want you to understand that it's not all Bohemian Rhapsody at DSA. Our core classes and other electives are really high caliber

On service trip to Guatemala, summer 2015. Many high school students go on service trips either in developing countries

and students graduating from our high school get accepted to top tier US colleges. Let me elaborate a bit on what I mean by core classes and electives. High school students are required to take 4 core classes every year: Math, English, Social Sciences, and Science. In addition, they take three electives. Because we are a magnet art school, at least one of our electives has to be an art class. I limited myself to piano, to leave me room for a foreign language class each of the four years of high school. Others, have 2-3 art electives. My other electives over the years have been either an extra science class, an art, or philosophy (an independent study I am taking this year). Each of these classes can be taken at any of three levels, depending on the student ability: regular credit class, honors class, or Advanced Placement (AP), the latter being a college level class. Between me and you, and based on what my parents tell me about how classes were taught at least 30 years ago in Romania, the AP classes are at the level of typical high school curriculum in Romania).

Piano practicing at home. I usually do this in the evenings, it helps me relax after the long busy days

I don't not know how important extracurricular activities are in Romania, but in the US, you are definitely judged by how you use your spare time, almost as much as you are judged by your academic ability. We have sports teams, with three distinct seasons. I was, through high school a Varsity (Varsity team is the principal team that represents a school in athletic competitions) swimmer and tennis player, and I was a captain of the swim team for two years, and am now co-captain of the tennis team. Besides sports, high schools often have clubs of different persuasions, pretty much any subject you can think of. If you find a few more students and a teacher to supervise, you can have a club on the role of Spiru Haret in the formulation of the n-body problem. I was involved through high school with the Science Olympiad club, leading it for the last two years. Students performing at top in foreign language classes are also inducted into the National Honor Society for a particular language. I have been a member of the National Honor Society for Spanish for the last three years. This is not typical, usually students get inducted in junior year (11th grade), but I feel like it is easier for us Romanian Americans to learn Spanish and being interested in their history and literature. Through this Society, we reach out to the Hispanic community in Durham and volunteer our time for different projects, and by doing so, we promote interest in the Spanish speaking world. Another national recognition is National Honor Society which recognizes students that embody a combination of interests from academic, to volunteer, to leadership and overall great character. Students are usually inducted at the end of their junior year. I have been an active member for the last year, and in this capacity, we have to volunteer out in the community, to help other high school students that need help with their class work, and represent the school.

Me and my ball of fur, Tito, our saint berdoodle, labradoodle mix

If it seems a lot, it is. We do not have baccalaureate exams at the end of our senior year, but we do have end of grade tests in all

subjects, and exams for all our AP classes. And senior year is also the year when we all apply to colleges. We have to work on endless essays and take standardized tests, like the SAT and ACT (the ones of you in 12th grade may be doing the same, and in a foreign language).

Senior night at swim meet at Duke Aquatic center

It seems that it is all work and no fun, but that cannot be farther from the truth. Because so many of our efforts are team efforts, I have a great time competing with my friends and colleagues. Friendships started first in this club or sports teams extend outside school related activities.

One of the monthly piano working recitals. Mr. Davis, our piano teacher is pictured with us

So, what am I doing next? Well, recently I found out that I was accepted into University of Chicago, and I cannot be happier. It was by far my top choice and I am elated that I am going to attend. I had applied to 10 schools to be sure I would end up somewhere where I will fit in and grow academically and as a person. I had turned down a prestigious scholarship from my state flagship university, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, to go to UChicago. I had also decided that spending a year away from academics will serve me well, so I was granted permission by UChicago's Dean of Admissions to take a gap year in which I plan to travel to Peru and do volunteer work in the Amazon, followed by a several months volunteering and learning sustainable farming in Chile and Argentina. Gap years are considered more and more by high school students before embarking into college. There is growing evidence that spending time outside academia, especially in volunteering activities helps students mature and gain empathy and understanding of different cultures around the world.

DSA medley relay team, bronze at the Regional Championships

I will leave you with an invitation to send me questions at efcraciunescu@gmail.com, in English or Romanian, like a quid-pro-quo. I help you improve your English, and you help me improve my Romanian.

Also, if you would like more information about Durham School of the Arts, visit this link: www.dsa.dpsnc.net

Yours truly,
Eugen Filip Craciunescu, Valedictorian, DSA Class of 2017, UChicago Class of 2022

Career. Next stop: University

Is it Europe, the UK, the USA or home?

Roxana Dragan, 11 D

High school: the place where you can have the time of your life, where you can make friends for a lifetime, where you can find that one true love, or most importantly, the place where you start working on that foggy future you have lying unclear in front of you. It is the time when teenagers start asking themselves more and more questions. They start engaging in lots and lots of activities just to discover more. Most of them are developing a strong interest in that one course, where they seem to understand and enjoy everything the teacher is saying. For them, high school is the key which can unlock a vision of what the future may look like.

As our junior and senior years are slowly passing, bigger decisions are to be made. The major has been picked and a list of choices of colleges is building up. From medicine to engineering, to law or psychology, everyone has picked the path they think is right for themselves. But from the point of view of a student, the hardest choice is not the major, but the college itself. Do you stay at home, hoping that the national system is going to help you become the best, or do you attend that one college half the globe away that you know is the best option? I asked a number of juniors, most of them from our high school, what they think is right for them and the options have been incredibly different.

Maria, who is in the class XI D, gave me a long, structured and well thought out answer. Having a science major here in high school, it is most probable that she will continue along this path. "Dental medicine is what I want to do. It has a lot of departments to choose from, believe it or not. As for the country I'm going to study in, well, I'm not totally sure yet. Norway and Holland are my top choices, but I haven't excluded Romania from the list either."

Dora is also from Spiru Haret National College, studying social sciences with her classmates at XI G. "I'm going to continue with social sciences during college: psychology to be exact. I want to help people, not just psychically, but mentally as well. The increase of persons battling mental diseases has grown and this is disturbing. I think this is the danger nowadays. I wish to get accepted in the USA. They have one of the best psychology degrees in the world. Also, I have a strong connection with this country because I was born there. It would be my dream come true to study where I was born and where I grew up."

Anne-Christine, one of Maria's classmates, has a different idea about what she wants to do in the future. Even though has studied advanced Physics, Biology and Chemistry, she fell in love with Economy. "I don't know where I want to study in the future. All that I am sure of is my passion for Economy and Business. I think this is a very broad subject, you need it

everywhere and anytime. It also gives me freedom and accessibility. About colleges, I have in mind this one in Holland, Erasmus."

Ileana is studying at Goethe High School. She has been studying German since she was very little and now she considers herself bilingual. "I don't know yet what I want to do, but I know for sure that I am going to attend Heidelberg. It is the best and oldest college in Europe. I have been studying German all my life; it would be a shame if I didn't use this skill in the future. I haven't studied it for nothing."

These are just a couple of examples of how teens see their future. What is very interesting is that I have known these girls for almost 6 years. I spent my high school years with them. We shared the same ideas, the same thoughts and here we are, all this time later, having different dreams and hopes.

On the other hand, they have one thing in common. All of them want to study abroad and to fulfill their career somewhere in this wide world, but none of the girls will ever wipe their true nationality from their life. They are all going to come visit family and friends, and all of them are still considering the idea of coming back home to continue their life and career here.

As for myself, I have wanted to be a doctor since I was a little girl. Medicine is my top and only choice for college. I would like to attend a college abroad, preferably in England or Scotland. I have thought about the University of Medicine Carol Davila, but my strategy is that Medicine is always hard and it's hard anywhere. So in the end everything comes down to what I want my college experience to be like.

I want to wrap up with this quote by Eleanor Roosevelt: "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." So dream big, have hopes, try to figure out what you love doing so that you can fight for that goal harder than anyone else. You can be anyone and do anything, just do it with passion and believe in what you do!

The National English Language Contest 2016-2017 Bucharest stage

Results

1st Prize Section A	Diaconu E. S. Ștefana-Maria
	Ghețu D. M. Carla-Ilinca
	Oprea A. Daria Yasmine
	Palalaie G. D. Ana-Maria
	Cristea R.C. Crina
1st Prize Section B	Albu C.V. Calin Teodor
	Petroff M.M. Andrei
	Dumitran L. Radu Ioan
	Ciuciuc Theodor
	Dumitru R. Andrada
	Mitroi N. Adina-Maria
2nd Prize Section A	Ciobănete M. Bianca Maria
	Cojocaru C. Vlad Andrei
	Nejat M. Yasmine
	Popescu A. Tiberiu Costin
	Vișoiu I. Irina
2nd Prize Section B	Magiru S. Andreea Maria
	Moșescu D. Dana
	Deaconu A. Alexandra
	Miess L. Ann-Christine
	Niculae A. Andrei-Lucian
	Mișcov M. Andrei

3rd Prize Section A

Codreanu D.G. Irina Maria
Smochină C. Șt. Ilinca-Maria
Pavelescu M. A. Ana-Maria
Iordan C. Ioana
Băcanu F. Irina
Frânculescu Ș. C. Ștefan Rareș
Dinu N. Anastasia
Cristel C.B. Sarah Maria
Mitrănescu D.A. Oana

3rd Prize Section B

Gheorghe N. Maria-Bianca
Stan B.P. Irina
Hondor A.M. Georgiana-Raluca
Podariu C.N. Flavia
Asaftei C.V. Vlad
Marica F. Ruxandra Ilinca
Berteanu D. Radu
Ciobanu M. Alin-Paul
Radu C. Ana-Maria-Elena

Honourable Mention Section A

Aioanei C. Andrei Cristian
Pîrvu M. Andreea

Honourable Mention Section B

Iuga A.P. Cristina Maria
Roșca A.A. Matei Toma
Spînu N. Alexandra
Reincke I. Paul-Alexandru
Paraschiv I. Andrei Șerban

" I have been watching over mankind..."

Dumitru Andrada 11D

I have been watching over mankind for millennia, from their first steps, to their greatest achievements and inventions. What sets them apart from any other life form I've created is their extraordinary mind, able to imagine things beyond their world and comprehension. I have fashioned them for love, creativity and compassion and built their reason so they can question their existence and purpose on earth.

It is with a heavy heart to say that humankind has both disappointed me and pleased me. Most individuals don't realise that they are destined for greatness, that they are a part of a unique world, instead they choose to shut down their souls and live life in a constant routine, looking around them with dull eyes, blinded by mundane interests. Even worse, man has evolved the most during wartime. Their whole civilization was built upon thousands of corpses. Human history is a litany of bloodshed over different ideals of ruling and power. Is this what I've created their imagination for? Killing each other, developing morbid weapons to blast, burn, intoxicate, suffocate, tear to bits their so called enemies? And for what? Pieces of land that already belong to them for they are all the same and I have given them Earth to share its pulchritude and riches...They call war honorable and serving its cause brings only respect. Many believe this is because man has always been afraid of oblivion. But when you are surrounded by death, hands deep into the crimson blood of so many lost lives and mutilated bodies with fear encrypted on their faces, what value does honor have then? The silence is your answer...

But there are still a few who have searched for my counsel and who have used their minds for better causes: artists that see the world through their imagination, transforming ideas into sounds, pictures, colour or movement, scientists who want to uncover the world's every secret, thus changing it for the better and monks, or priests who want to discover me and join my divine existence. People desire to be angels, to soar into the blue sky, but what they don't realise is that they already posses angelic wings, able to carry them through the harshest phenomena that live inside their soul, yet they cannot see the long feathery shadows that their wings leave behind. These silhouettes represent their wits, judgment and above all, ability to love, feel deep emotions and imagine.

Religion is another fascinating concept man created. I have watched with curiosity as they explained the things around them through stories of fantastical creatures, humans with great strength and wisdom. They have in time given me different names, forms, but in essence all these deities share the same core, that I am the maker of all creation. Indeed, I am their author in the story of my existence, yet I am shapeless, nameless, neither dead nor alive, a mystical energy who flows through all living things, even man itself. Humankind is a part of me, that is why I can watch over them and feel their sorrow, pain, frustration and joy, exhilaration, euphoria. If only they would realise how close we are to one another, perhaps man would open its mind and let the power of imagination take over their being. Although I have a voice, few can truly hear me, but there are some who listened to my call in the whispering of the wind, in the rustling of the leaves, in the song of the ever-flowing rivers and in the silence of the mountains. They can feel me in the cold touch of raindrops, in the soft touch of snow or grass, my presence can be found in all creation, but only if man listens to his imagination and lets go of reason.

Unfortunately, I cannot help them realise just how important they are in this wide void called universe and how much potential they truly hold. It is their fate to search for their wings of imagination and freedom, it is their destiny to love and cherish the ones close to them, it is their doom to question and doubt, it is perfect for them to make mistakes...

The Land of My Dreams

Sarah Cristel 11 E

The kingdom of Sleep is a strange one and mine, an avid reader's, even more so.

Sometimes, on restless nights, when the bedclothes cling to my body in a vice grip that I can't escape from, and my breath is stolen from my lungs, The Land of My Dreams is a prison. Too hot, too cold, clammy hands grabbing my head and squeezing hard, as if to take away every last thought and secret.

When this doesn't happen, I'm usually submerged in a shapeless void, with confusing sounds, broken cries and broken groans and faces stuck in an endless Munch's Scream, sailing past my eyes. Those nights, The Land of My Dreams is in welcome surrender to all of my worries, swinging me back and forth into oblivion.

Then there are the rare ones that I equally dread and await feverishly. It starts with the feeling that I'm sinking through my bed, all the laws of physics annulled. I have no body, I have no name, I am just me as I pass through memories and could-have-beens, watching, never interfering… although I could. The feeling of doom lurching in the pit of my stomach always stops me before I can, as if by merely changing a memory I'd take a final leap into the abyss and the thin thread of my sanity wouldn't be strong enough to hold me and would snap. The temptation is always there, lurking behind my eyelids, caressing my head and whispering into my ear.

The Land of My Dreams is a dark place indeed. But then, I never felt truly comfortable in the light.

Share my passion for…
The piano

Raluca Tecuceanu, 9 G

It connects. It's a global phenomenon. It brings us joy. It heals our pain. It's music. One of the greatest and most exquisite ways to express or even to find ourselves.

As much as it sounds cliché, music makes my life bearable. I just can't imagine going to school without my headphones on, or not playing the piano for at least one hour a day. Whether happy, sad, bored or lonely, practising this instrument draws a smile on my lips. I also met admirable people through music: lovely friends with whom I share sweet memories and interests and also my piano teacher (and my role model).

But how did I get into music? Well, it was mostly my father's ambition. My brother and I started taking music lessons at the age of seven, him playing the guitar, me playing the piano. I didn't understand, at first, what was the meaning of it, why I couldn't just spend my time playing with dolls and plush animals or watching Disney movies. But as I grew older, I began to: practising an instrument, no matter how well or badly, is a way to make your soul grow. You will get an enormous reward. You will have created something, expressing deep feelings. And it's yours forever.

People haven't always been there for me, but music always has. Maybe that's why I tend to believe that without it, life would be unbearable. I know I have something to turn to. I know I can escape and be totally free from everything, without feeling lonely. Music is the other world. I can just crawl into the space between the notes and forget: about me, about worries, about everything.

Why teenagers read in English

Sarah Cristel, 10 E

To be honest, I never liked reading well known books in the translated version. More often than not, words lose their intended meaning and whole scenes can't be translated due to word plays that only make sense in the original language. I read once about a cat named "Tabs" that kept being sent away to spy on people, to keep tabs on them. You can't translate this without it sounding awkward or forced, or without adding a footnote explaining it. Also, some slang words translated don't sound nearly as fitting in the new language, not allowing the sentences to flow as they should.

A lot of people use reading as a method of learning a language and developing their vocabulary. Without engaging a few books, your level can reach mediocrity at best. Only by reading can someone fully grasp the style and personality of a language.

And well, then, let's not forget the novelty and popularity of English as the language of social media and social expression. Not knowing English means being out of touch, and consequently not a part of the modern society. If you are a non-English-speaking individual, you already lost the start of the race, and you're pretty much shackled to the ground, metaphorically speaking. If you can't surf the internet, how can you deal with day to day life?

Plus, everybody loves a good English meme.

Help the others and help yourself!

Stan Sanziana, 9 G

I am Sanziana, from 9 G. We all know the definition of volunteering. What I want to write about here is my experience as a volunteer and why you should try it.

First of all, volunteering is all about sharing. "Sharing is caring" I might say. Being a volunteer, you get to share your time, memories and happiness with people just like you, that want to make the world a better place, people that actually have a vision for their future. You get to share a small part of your life that means so much.

While volunteering, you can actually find parts of yourself that were hidden. It really helps you discover yourself. Why? Because you are actually facing real problems (especially in charity volunteering). You get to see how life actually is and also you have to know how to play fair, you can't make decisions on your own, you always have to talk to the entire team first. All of these things get you ready for the future.

Most of the people I know bailed out because it was too hard, or because they didn't have enough time for it. But let me tell you something: volunteering is something you do for yourself. Don't do it because your mother told you to, don't do it because the rest of your friends do it too. Do it only because it's something you like and you know it helps you.

One of my favourite advantages of volunteering must be the fact that it can help you with your CV, especially for universities. Americans want to see that you explored the world you lived in, that you cared enough to try something new, that you are fearless. And volunteering is the best way to prove this to them. I know dozens of students that are now studying at universities such as Drexel or Emory because they volunteered in other countries.

Other things you will love about volunteering

-being different. People these days (especially teenagers) tend to forget about the world that is around them and only think about their instagram account, their followers and drama. If you ever wished to stand out, to be different, you can, you can stand out by doing good.

-you get to hear people's life stories. I for one, don't have the strength to do charity volunteering. I am afraid. But if you think you have the courage that it takes, do it. You won't regret a thing. You get to see real problems and understand what a beautiful life you truly have.

-you will make friends. Yes of course, you have your high school friends, and probably many other friends. But the friends you make while volunteering are different. First of all, because they have a cause just like you. They don't want to stay all day in bed watching TV, they want to be different, so give them a chance. Try to get and know them better, understand them. It will help you understand yourself and maybe you'll discover a friendship that will last forever, who knows?

It will truly change you as a person, you'll see. It opens up your mind, you learn how to work in teams, you learn how to express you opinion while respecting other people's opinions. Volunteering is a safe place that helps you find your way through life. Volunteering is something that can't be explained. You have to try it so you can truly understand it. Good luck!

Thoughts on "Hamlet" - About Revenge
Journey into the world of destruction

HondorRaluca, 9G

Revenge is the most cunning and destructive of the human diseases, leaving us no choice but to pursue dangerous instincts. A truly strong will is required to resist this urge, as impulse is quicker to prevail than sense.

In the first instance, it is widely known that the thirst for revenge is hardly quenchable. Once you feel a whiff of vengeance, you cannot cease yearning for more. Oftentimes, it can be considered a veritable addiction, which eats you on the inside. It devours you, yet you cannot see the void it creates. You are blindsided by this treacherous enemy.

Its next step consists in the appearance of various negative emotions, which become more and more obvious as days are passing by. Before you know it, you are engulfed in rage, and led by ire. Although you might have already noticed, you decide to ignore it. For you, the troubled man seeking for a complex enough revenge, the perpetual turmoil is just another form of entertainment.

Ultimately, you come to realize that poisonous thoughts are the only ones to occur to you, that you no longer feel that thrill of the little joys. At some point, this itinerary proves to be exhausting. You pose the question, "Was it worth it?".

Maybe, maybe not. "But it was unavoidable". So you say.

To be or not to be

Ioana Pintilie, 9 G

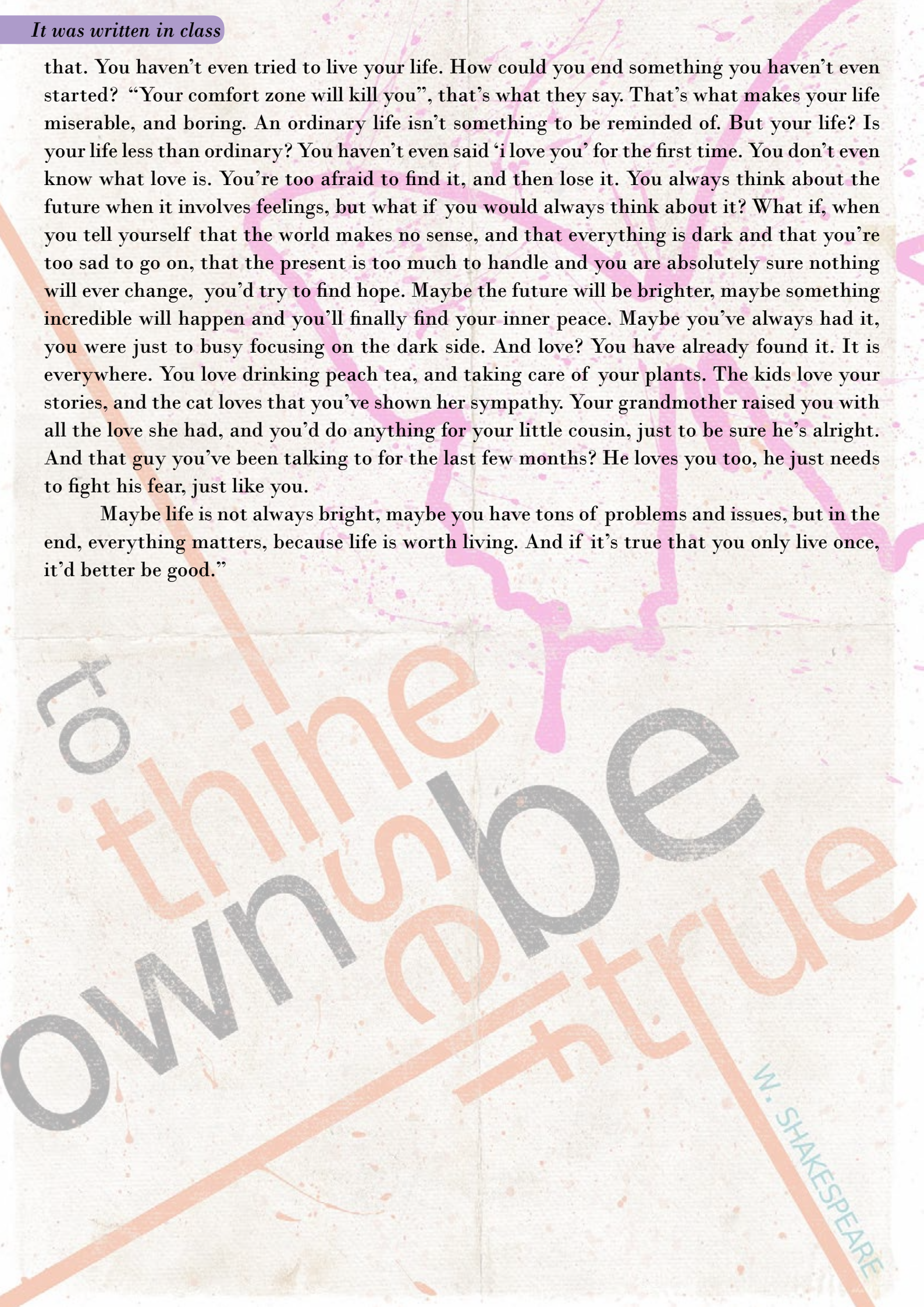
"Contemplating suicide is a phase we all go through during our lifetime. It could come around at any age, no matter how good our lives are at that point. It could happen to a middle schooler who's bullied because of his weight, a college student who has to work three part-time jobs only so he can pay his debts or a thirty-year-old who still hasn't figured out life. Even parents sometimes have this sinking feeling, like all they've done is wrong. They lost their job, or did not but it's taking all of their parenting time away. The kids aren't doing all right either, their older son is mental and their daughter is depressed.

During a life span, it can all happen. And you start asking yourself "Is it worth it? Wouldn't it be easier if you stopped right here? Right now?" When you feel like nothing matters anymore, like you don't have the energy to solve anything, or you simply don't care. It's no big deal, the kids can handle themselves. It's not like you would miss anything, right? But, would -you- be missed? No, of course you wouldn't. You don't mean anything to this planet. You're just another waste of space.

You think about it, trying to find a plausible answer. It would be fine...but what about the cat you're feeding every Tuesday on your way to the library? Or the times you volunteer to read stories there. You love the look on the kids' faces, especially when they swear they've seen Peter Pan at their window before. You wonder if anyone will use your favourite tea cup. Or your still unpacked black peach tea bags. Oh how you love peach tea, and the burning smell of white cotton candles. You'll kind of miss watering your house plants, that you're sure would shortly die after you do, because no one else knows how to take care of them. You're the only one who knows them, and they're the only ones that know you. You're not that interesting, why would anyone take time to know you? Or how you feel and how to be taken care of? Well, maybe there are a few people who do know you. Like the grandma who raised you, who still helps you sew your coat buttons sometimes. Or your little cousin, who has always admired you, followed all of your steps, and loved you with all of his heart for what you truly are. You start to feel sadness, even worse that before. And you deserve it,you're such a shallow person, you only think about yourself. Can you imagine how they would feel? How heartbroken you'd leave them? You haven't even seen your best friend in the last few weeks because of her exams. You couldn't leave now, it wouldn't be fair. You need to thank them for what they've done for you. For everything you've been through together. And there are so many things you haven't done yet, like riding an elephant, holding a snake or climbing a mountain. Why didn't you do all these things? You thought that you could kill yourself, end your life in such a pathetic way. How come you'd have the courage to do that, but you don't go skydiving because you're terrified of the rope breaking. You're a coward, you know

that. You haven't even tried to live your life. How could you end something you haven't even started? "Your comfort zone will kill you", that's what they say. That's what makes your life miserable, and boring. An ordinary life isn't something to be reminded of. But your life? Is your life less than ordinary? You haven't even said 'i love you' for the first time. You don't even know what love is. You're too afraid to find it, and then lose it. You always think about the future when it involves feelings, but what if you would always think about it? What if, when you tell yourself that the world makes no sense, and that everything is dark and that you're too sad to go on, that the present is too much to handle and you are absolutely sure nothing will ever change, you'd try to find hope. Maybe the future will be brighter, maybe something incredible will happen and you'll finally find your inner peace. Maybe you've always had it, you were just to busy focusing on the dark side. And love? You have already found it. It is everywhere. You love drinking peach tea, and taking care of your plants. The kids love your stories, and the cat loves that you've shown her sympathy. Your grandmother raised you with all the love she had, and you'd do anything for your little cousin, just to be sure he's alright. And that guy you've been talking to for the last few months? He loves you too, he just needs to fight his fear, just like you.

Maybe life is not always bright, maybe you have tons of problems and issues, but in the end, everything matters, because life is worth living. And if it's true that you only live once, it'd better be good."



Minstrel at Beowulf's banquet

Task: You are a minstrel who once performed at one of Beowulf's feasts.Your problem was that you couldn't sing. Tell us your story.

Bianca Gheorghe, 11 G

It was a humid summer night. The dinner was about to get served and I was short on time. I had to repair the top part of one of the minstrels' costume. The only problem was that he was late and I had to put the costume on him in order to see how much I had to modify it. However, I could remember this guy was pretty much my height and had the same measurements so I decided to try it on myself. It was not a good idea because right at that moment the head minstrel stormed into the room. It was already high time they started their show. He rushed me out, not listening to me saying I was not a minstrel. I mean, the costume spoke pretty clearly.

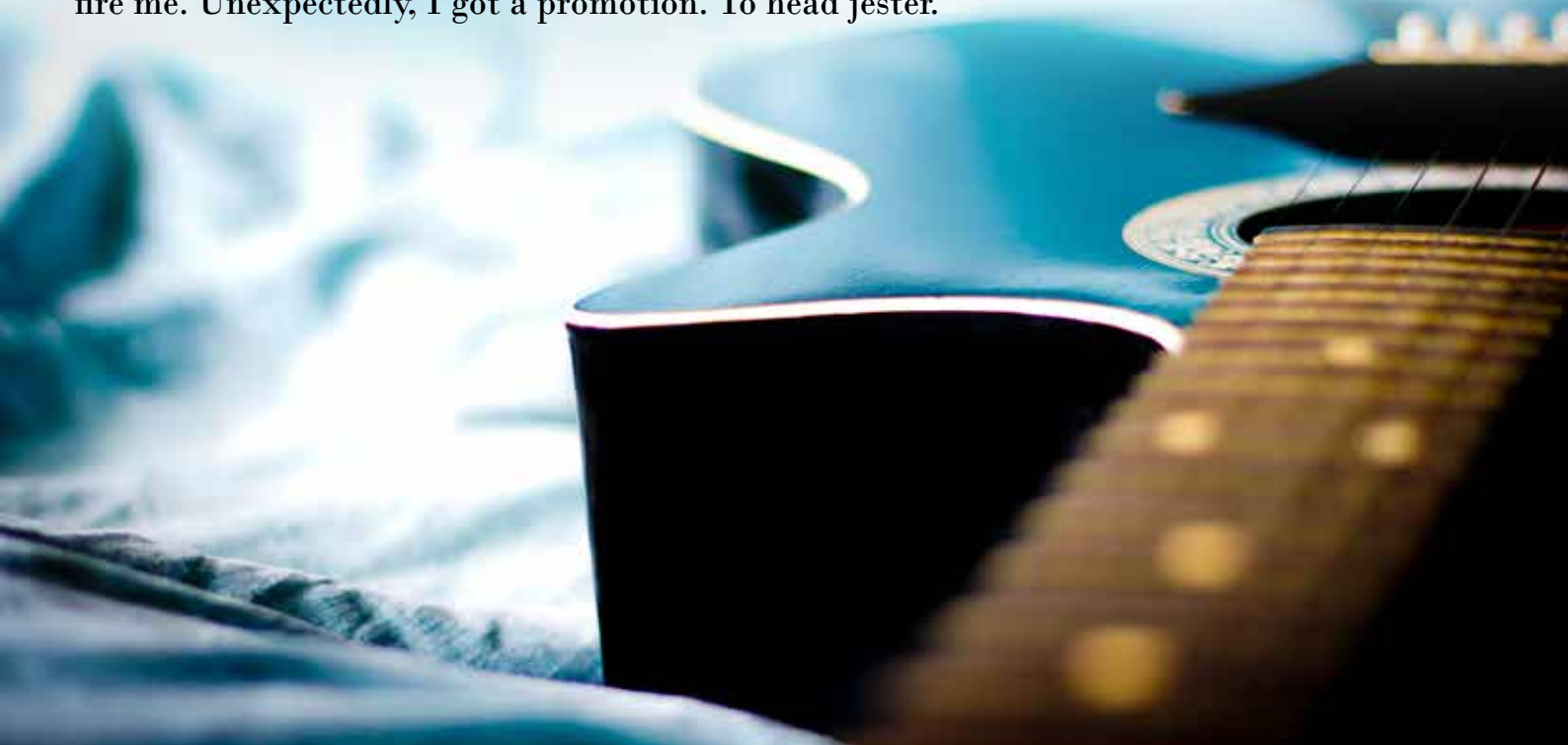
When we reached the mead hall, what I had to do suddenly sank in. At that moment, I knew I had messed up.

The experience itself is pretty blurry. It's probably because I was drinking wine from the tables whenever someone wasn't looking. I'm not an alcoholic. I was stressed.
Maybe everything would have gone alright if only I could sing. But I am tone deaf and I've got a horrible singing voice. I was a tailor! Not a minstrel!

I remember trying to play the guitar at some point but one string broke and my hope for that night also did. After that I tried to juggle because I kind of knew how to do it.

However, the wine was starting to act up so I accidentally tripped over a chieftain in full battle dress who was just gulping mead from a jug...

After I fell I think I passed out. However, the last thing I remember was King Beowulf's amused face. The next day I was summoned before him. I was sure that he would fire me. Unexpectedly, I got a promotion. To head jester.



We All Love a Joke

Riddles

Which letter of the alphabet has the most water?
If you took two apples from three apples how many apples would you have?
What needs an answer but doesn't ask a question?
How many months of the year have 28 days?
Poor people have it. Rich people need it. If you eat it you die. What is it?
If it takes one man three days to dig a hole, how long does it take two men to dig half a hole?

Jokes

Two men are on opposite sides of a river. The first man shouts to the second, "Hey, how do I get to the other side of the river?"
The second guy shouts back, "You are on the other side of the river!"

> A little girl is having a pretend dinner party with her teddy bear. She says,
> "Do you want anything to eat, Mr. Bear?"
> The bear replies, "No thanks, I'm stuffed."

What do you call a sad strawberry?
A blueberry.

> I entered what I ate today into my new fitness app on my phone.
> It sent an ambulance to my house.

Answers
The 'C'.
Two apples - the two that you took.
A telephone
All of them!
Nothing.
You can't dig half a hole!

COLEGIUL NATIONAL
"SPIRU HARET"
Bucureşti