Colegiul National "Spiru Haret" Bucuresti

THE OFFSPRING

"The mind once enlightened cannot again become dark."

THOMAS PAINE

NO. 3 December 2017

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COLEGIUL NATIONAL "SPIRU HARET" Bucureşti

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Colour

Vladimir Traşă, X G

In 2007 Romania joined the European Union, accompanied by our neighbours across the Danube. At the time I was just a 5 year old, so anyone could assume that the most I can recollect is seeing some swings or my blue little bicycle being brought by my dad on -what seemed like- the never ending path leading to the block of flats I lived in. Of course I remember the stains too: the one from the mustard on my pants, the disgusting one with puke on the carpet on my bedroom floor, the orange juice on my pillow and the blue pity on what I will call "the blanket". Looking back, it wasn't seen as a stain by the people surrounding me, like my parents: what they saw was more of a long-waited splash of colour on the pale red that people like them had tried to get rid of in 1989. These people had hoped the colour would grow stronger. They thought the *seemingly dying red* would fight back now and then, but this would only make the *blue brighter* and the red more washed.

BUCHAREST. 2016-2017.
Fed up, with their hope carrying their legs, the same people began to take "action", if you may. Cold weather didn't matter, hundreds of thousands of individuals gathered in the squares of the capital. I went, with my parents, to one of the first protests. That red was again in front of my eyes. Big building. The blue surrounded me. Humans. By this point I had learned to not tolerate the red. No one told me to, I just caught that disgust like a cold, as a lot of the people sitting now in the school desks did. I thought I would feel the same while being in the crowd, with the atmosphere and all that. And I did feel it. Protest one. Protest two. Protest threeee-aaah, not so much. Despite the slogans, you can figure out something else.

THE CROWD
The determination and angriness in the shouts disappeared. They weren't protesting anymore, they replaced their "Saturday night out" at the restaurant or theatre with the Sunday night at the "protest". At the time of writing this article it seems like they are just going for a walk in the middle of the streets instead of the park. Shouting at buildings because they can't shout at their bosses. And you can't blame them. They probably feel invigorated doing this after a week full of work and worries.

And they were right. The blue took a good half of the blanket by assault. And now they push it further. The blanket will become what they want. Than a splash of red will appear. As the people in the streets rage, blue will be overwhelming. Rinse and repeat. It's almost funny how close the 10-year anniversary is to the Brexit. And we should take a close look. Brexit, a mistake or not, has a strong foundation: the blue on the Union Jack started to take control.
So here we are: With the two colours more or less in balance. It's time to match how bright they are. Take the time to thank the crowd.

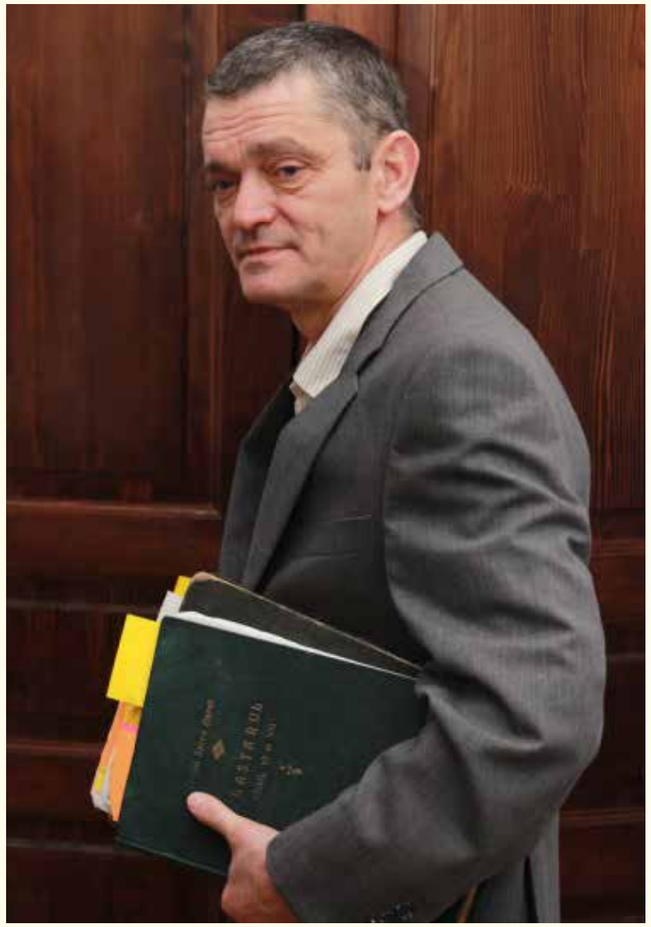
VICTORY SQUARE. 2017.
As you look at the lovely faces in the crowd you can hear one phrase.
"It's your turn." Undoubtedly.

TEACHER PROFILE
Mr. ALEXANDRU CONSTANTINESCU
Teacher of Mathematics and for 9 years Head Teacher of Spiru Haret National College

Reporter: Ioana Mitu, 12 G

Ioana: What was the best thing which happened while you were the head teacher of our school?
Mr. Constantinescu: The best thing was, essentially, the rise in the overall quality level of the students currently enrolled in our college. The fact that our school has gradually grown, through their performance, to a place among the best schools at present.
Ioana: Three ways in which the office of head teacher changed you as a person?
Mr. Constantinescu: There was no way in which this could have changed me. Before becoming head teacher I was vice mayor and became accustomed to holding positions requiring social interaction and communication. Prior to that I used to be a teacher, confined to my ivory tower, away from the realities of life. I think public office actually showed me what real life is like, what people are really like.
Ioana: The easiest thing in your life?

Mr. Constantinescu: Well, that is mathematics.
Ioana: The most difficult thing in your life?
Mr. Constantinescu: Family life. I feel I should have been closer to my family. Always involved in my work, maybe I wasn't always there when they needed me. My children have turned out well, though. They have careers and families. My wife and my children have been wiser than me. They understood me.
Ioana: Why did you put school first?
Mr. Constantinescu: It all depends on the way you are. I was the kind of person who dedicates their life to what they are doing. When you do something, you must put your soul into it. You must give. The higher the office, the more you must give.
Ioana: What were the challenges of being head teacher?
Mr. Constantinescu: On one side there were the parents. They belong to a different generation. See things differently. Prioritise things differently. Are under ever higher stress. You have to understand their point of view. On the other side there were the teachers. Teaching spares you the daily worries other jobs entail. On the other hand, you are underpaid. I had to understand that when asking my colleagues to do extra work for school. Children are in the middle. But they are the most important. Everything has to be done in their best interest.
Ioana: As your student, I noticed you put a lot of passion into teaching kids, into opening their minds. You smile when you solve an exercise at the blackboard. That's so rare and admirable.
Mr. Constantinescu: You have to love what you do.
Ioana: How did you come to love mathematics?
Mr. Constantinescu: When I was a child I loved reading. I still do. My brother was good at mathematics. One day my father told me, quoting from Sienkiewicz' *Quo Vadis*, that in ancient Rome one could find a poet on every street corner. So I joined a special mathematics class in tenth grade and found out it was easy. Then I developed a passion for it.
Ioana: Is mathematics a language?
Mr. Constantinescu: It is a universal language. The only one everybody can understand. And the easiest to learn. Another precious aspect is that it is outside all ideologies. Nonpolitical. When after 1945 most of the professors at the university were forced out or sent to prison directly, those belonging to the mathematics department remained. I had the best teachers.
Ioana: A word to the students and the other teachers?
Mr. Constantinescu: Do your job and do not expect much in return.
Ioana: Thank you!



Spiru on the inside

5th Grade Kids in Spiru: how did they deal with the pressures of a full exam? (Romanian, Maths & English written tests!)

Reporters: Antonia Petrescu, Ana Frăguţa Neacşu XI F

We asked our class of fifth-graders about the experience of sustaining a written examination and a speaking test, in order to enroll in *Spiru Haret*'s middle school. Some of them talked about the excessive pressure they had got from their parents, a year prior to the exam, others about how the choice of taking the exam was their own and their parents had been very supportive.

1. How did your parents act in the previous year, before the exam?

Livia: They pretty much became fixed on the idea that I needed to pass the exam, so they would constantly tell me to go do my homework and study for the exam.

Radu: Even though I received a big amount of pressure from them, they've always been very supportive. They have actually told me that even though I would not pass the exam, I would still be going to school, so I shouldn't feel sad or be disappointed.

Liv: My parents had been very strict and had put an immense pressure on me, telling me constantly that I have to pass the exam. Moreover, after studying every single day, for a whole year, in order to get a good mark, now I needed to study harder, so that I could adapt to the 5th grade curriculum.

Alex: The idea of taking this exam and switching schools was actually mine, so my parents had been encouraging me throughout the whole year and hadn't put any pressure on me, whatsoever.

David: Even though my mom would put pressure on me, she hadn't been anywhere near excessive with me. Her idea was that I shouldn't work a lot, but do it constantly. Sometimes, she used to work with me. We would be solving the same exercises at the same time, and afterwards we would compare them and see where the mistakes were.

Rareş: Not only that they hadn't put pressure on me, my parents had actually encouraged me constantly, always telling me that I'm smart enough to accomplish anything I want.

Andrei: My parents thought that switching schools would be a beautiful experience, because Spiru is a good school, with prestige. But a lot of pressure was put on me at the end of the year, because I started studying when there wasn't a lot of time left before the exam.

2. What are your expectations from Spiru?

Andrei: I expect to have very good teachers and to be surrounded by friendly kids.

Eddie: I hope that the teachers will be well-prepared for class and that I will blend in with my classmates.

David: I really want to study English, Mathematics and Romanian more.

Ruxi: Honestly, the biggest expectations that I have from this school are from the teachers. I can already see it. The teachers are cheerful and willing to teach kids with a big smile on their face, bright with hopefulness. I would also love if teachers could help us develop our emotional intelligence and give us advice, whenever needed.

Rareş: I expect to evolve not only intellectually, but also emotionally. I'm also pleased to be part of such a friendly class!

Livia: I came to this school to learn and prepare for the Olympics and then, become the doctor that I want to be.

Ştefan: I want to learn Math very well. After all, Spiru Haret was a mathematician.

3. How do you feel among the older students?

Alexia: At first I was a bit worried and a bit scared, because I thought they would pick on us. I thought they would be mean, but they were not.

Răzvan: I feel very good and they are in fact really cool with us.

Andrei: Other middle school students talk to us, but older students not quite, but I remember they told us once that we were cute.

Ştefan: I feel completely normal, like everyone were the same age.

Rareş: We were kind of privileged to be the youngest ones, and when we first went out in the school yard and the high school students saw us they said: 'Aww'.

To wrap things up, the kids were extremely open with their answers and gave us a good insight on how this whole experience turned out to be for them. They truly deserve our appreciation and respect for going through such a challenging experience at such a young age.

The music of languages

Ana Maria Georgiana Musat

The European Day of Languages 2017 Celebrated through Music at **Spiru Haret National College**

A language is not just words. It's a culture, a tradition, a unification of a community, a whole history that creates what a community is. It's all embodied in a language.
Noam Chomsky, linguist

Music is the universal language of mankind.
W. Longfellow, American poet

Proclaimed by the Council of Europe in 2001, December, 6 th, The European Day of Languages aims at encouraging *language learning across Europe*, as well as *promoting linguistic and cultural diversity of Europe*, emphasizing *learning a language other than English, plurilingualism and intercultural understanding. (1)*.
Celebrated across Europe through various cultural and educational events and activities, the teachers of foreign language in our college and their students chose their own way - through music- as, beyond sophisticated academic and much too specialised definitions, music has always been the most powerful and effective motivational instrument in the acquisition of a foreign language- the so-called *involuntary acquisition*.
So, under the coordination of Mrs. Mihaela Zoicas, teacher of French and inspired organizer of numerous cultural events in our school, a musical performance took place, gathering teachers and plenty of students in the front yard, and making the others take a break off their regular classes and listen to it from behind the open windows of their classrooms.
And there we were, wrapped in the spirited chords of Beethoven's *Ode an die Freude*, adopted as the official anthem of united Europe, diligently and forcefully conducted by our dedicated colleague, Mr. Radu Panait, the teacher of German and his 7th grade disciples, in an exquisite performance that united our voices in a thunderous choir.
After this epic debut, our students went on to play and sing from their favourite bands and musicians, also making other music composers and performers known to the audience - from Amy Winehouse to Brel, from *Hit the Road, Jack!* To *Mademoiselle chante le blues*, from brilliant rock ballads to mellifluous and melancholic French chansons.
It was revealed, once again, that there is a fine line between music and poetry, as they both appeal to our sensitivity, that there is a strong connection between the art of sounds and the mastery of foreign languages, as both require an ear for sounds and nuances- *the music of languages*.
But, above all, the previously mentioned elements- music, poetry, languages, are part of a more complex entity- culture, and this is the reason why they are the most effective instruments in raising our cultural awareness, by being the expression of the cultural environments that produced them.

1) Wikipedia. The European Day of Languages

Humanitas in high schools

This June the final stage of the national contest **Humanitas in High Schools** took place, pronouncing the team of **Spiru Haret National College** the **winner** of the competition. It is, as you may have guessed, a reading contest, where teams have to read set books and answer questions based on them. As the end of the academic year rollercoaster rattled and rolled, with final grades, the prom and good –byes in tears, speeding towards the mighty clash of the Baccalaureate, this event went almost unnoticed. In recognition of the importance of their achievement, we decided to interview the teachers who coordinated our team, in other words, the winning teachers, Mrs. Ioana Dumitru and Mrs. Valentina Bilcea.

Reporter: First of all, warmest congratulations to you and the children! This is a victory we all might have something to learn from. My first question is: What does this win mean to you?
Mrs. Ioana Dumitru: The joy of reading! The true reason why I got involved in the project is the joy of being able to read side by side with my students and travel the cultural spaces in their vibrant innocence. We make discoveries together! Isn't that precisely what defines a teacher?
Mrs. Valentina Bilcea: This was my third year as coordinating teacher in the competition. I must confess that at the beginning I was driven by the need to win. Now that we were victorious, I'm starting to feel again the pleasure of reading. It's like a return to my old self!
Reporter: What was the most difficult thing in preparing for the contest?
Mrs. Ioana Dumitru: Biggest of all obstacles! TIME! Reading one thousand pages in a single month is not easy. Students have homework and test papers. The competition educates will and perseverance.
Mrs. Valentina Bilcea: Difficulties arise from the cultural level of the students, their speed at assimilating information, their quickness in understanding the questions and, finally, from the nature of the books themselves, as they belong to such widely different fields. Most of them need a lot of explanation and further reading.
Reporter: What were the qualities of your students which impressed you most during preparation?
Mrs. Ioana Dumitru: Intellect, the ability to extract the essence from a text, team spirit.
Mrs. Valentina Bilcea: Dedication, first. I would agree that team spirit and intellect come next.
Reporter: What was our team's edge over the others?
Mrs. Ioana Dumitru: Team unity. It took two years to build that. It took acumen and hard work. That is the basis for creativity.
Mrs. Valentina Bilcea: Determination. They wanted to win and they did. We worked hard. It took hours on end. I think that if it had not been for us, the teachers, the team wouldn't have succeeded. We sometimes re-wrote the books for them. At one time, for example, the set books were cookery books. We became theoretically experts in Romanian and American cuisine.

Reporter: A special moment in the competition?
Mrs. Ioana Dumitru: A special moment in the final stage? Definitely, when we were declared winners. I feel that we fully deserved to win. We dominated the competition at every stage, ranking first all the way. We were better than old and reputed colleges from Bucharest and other cities. Better than 37 other high schools, to be exact.
Mrs. Valentina Bilcea: The unforgettable moments were when students were missing answers to extremely easy questions, when you knew they knew – it felt unbelievable!
Reporter: A few thoughts about the future?
Mrs. Ioana Dumitru: Being a teacher is not only about competitions. My biggest wish is to continue in good health and be able to enjoy this gift from God which is working with outstanding students. To be able to meet their expectations and teach them to live "in the light of culture", as Constantin Noica said. Great thoughts? I am a perfectionist. Just like any teacher. The students who took part in the first competition have already obtained a Master's degree and some are working on their PhD. Many of them came to attend the final stage of last year. Such a pleasant surprise! These emotions, so pure, are worth all the effort. I feel I'm living again my adolescence by their side. Along the six years of competition we read about fifty books, all published by Humanitas, from very different fields: religion, history, philosophy, music, physics, biology, mathematics, mythology, anthropology, literature and frontier literature such as memoirs and diaries. It is not a facile project. It involves hard work. Nevertheless, I think it is the type of project which defines me.
Mrs. Valentina Bilcea: I'd like us to win again. Win each stage. All the same, it will be alright if we don't. The beauty of it all lies in the emotions: the preparation, the wait, the fervour of the examination sessions. Emotions.
Reporter: Thank you very much and good luck!

Pen to Paper

Ioana Iordan, X D
Entry Essay for the Academic Summer contest

Ordinarily, my experience in the British educational system started with menial surfing of the web. After a while, an unusual title caught my eye regarding international summer camps. All an applicant had to do was write an essay about 4 certain subjects they would enjoy studying and why, hence my decision to enter. I remember choosing literature, history, mathematics and music, having decided to create parallels between seemingly unrelated fields of study.

Mere weeks later I received a reply to my application e-mail.
It congratulated me on distinguishing myself from the other candidates and invited me to meet the head of the association organising the contest. I learned that the Academic Summer programme working with IntegralEdu had been creating international camps worldwide for scholars. As my parents and I decided that I would spend a week in London and one in Cambridge, I grew more and more excited for the departure date.

Detaliation of the excursion will appear in the following issue

Melting Pot

As an ambitious person with widespread interests, I enjoy studying any discipline as I believe learning about any single field of study betters ourselves. However, I have chosen why I would be overjoyed to study the following four disciplines.
Firstly, I would enjoy studying literature. It is the study of the everlasting human means to transpose ideas and inner affections into art. For one reason or another, people have always been drawn to indirect ways to exteriorize themselves. Literature is a codification of human nature as the individual shies away from vulnerably exposing themselves, camouflaging emotions and sentiments. Concealment of feeling is viewed as the manifestation of the ideal.
Secondly, history is an intriguing domain to inquire on, the most fascinating and complex chain of causality of events known to mankind. It is the lone possibility for us to study and understand ourselves. History is slightly humorous but also antithetic as it unveils the colossal differences between humanity and society currently versus the past, while at the same time it emphasizing *the stagnation of human nature. It is the ultimate subliminal message; it allows us to learn from our mistakes: it lies right before our eyes yet it often is ignored and only perceived subconsciously.*

I have a perpetual interest in studying mathematics, which everything in our world is based on. Despite being anchored into definite principles, the field allows room to toy around with unseen and unremarked variables which dictate all and postulate anything. The only limitation in mathematics is where one's creativity ends, as it ultimately relies on the individual studying its ability to tirelessly shift ideas around. It is our generation's duty to answer all of the "why's?" of our world. A great example of why such minds are needed is the Collatz Conjecture, a numerical algorithm currently impossible to prove, requiring the invention of multiple links in the field.
Music is the field I adore delving into most. I consider it one of the few, if not the only pure discipline. In music, you are not confined to any one standard, it is freeing and the realm in which creativity flourishes. Bound to nothing, the novice is the sole force dictating the outcome.
Despite one being vastly different from the other I find the chosen domains well-rounded. Studying both cerebral and creative disciplines stimulates the brain. I would love furthering my knowledge in these domains.

Are we too dependent on gadgets?

Ana Frăguţa Neacşu, XI F

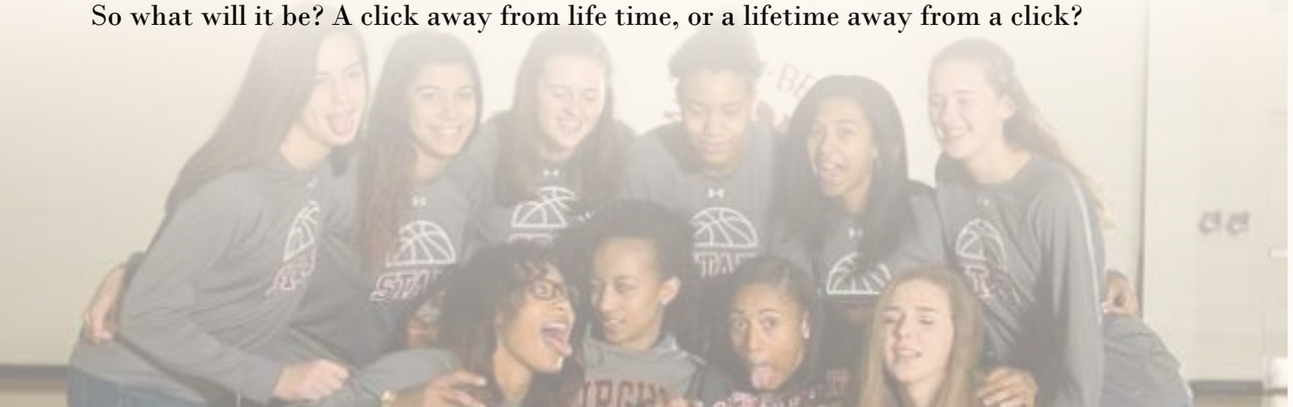
What would you do a full week without your phone? Let me tell you the real answer: you would use your tablet instead. And if you do not possess one, you would resort to your computer or laptop. It is a vicious cycle, that's what it is. (Surprise: you are trapped in a vicious circle/ cycle.)

We have started to check our pockets to see if our phone is there, rather than our keys or wallet. It sounds absurd, I know, but sadly, it's true…The one word that comes to my mind is addiction. Of course, technology has its 'perks', I cannot deny that, but hasn't it become a way of life rather than just a form of simplifying it? Let me develop on that.

First thing in the morning we check our phones to see if we have any notifications, text messages or calls. While on our way to school or work we use them non-stop: on the street, in the subway, sometimes even while driving, and I'm not talking about emergency cases. We are on the phone during lunch breaks, social gatherings, in class and even in the toilet. Life passes by without us realizing that. I'll give you a few examples. We are too caught up in our apps and social platforms to give a helping hand to those in need, whom we might walk past every day. We don't pay attention to our loved ones and what is going on with them, which leads to lack of direct human interaction, and even loss of relationships. Nowadays we live in a cyber world where we do not communicate face to face, inhale fresh air, or connect with nature and the other beings. Everything that we 'feed' online is just replies which keep us in our comfort zone and also in a little bubble of ignorance and isolation. A proper name for this would be the 'Mother Technology' effect.

I fear that this neediness which has emerged from excessive use of technology will bring a great deal of sorrow and regret a few years from now. I assume you are accustomed with hearing that people regret not appreciating and expanding quality time spent with the ones they care about, except when they are gone. In the close future, one of the main causes for that could be technology. The core elements of human existence are feelings, memories, relationships and accomplishments. But how will they remain standing if tech only strips them away from our lives and offers illusions instead?

So what will it be? A click away from life time, or a lifetime away from a click?



To the states and back

Ilinca Păun, X G

Not many people know what living in the United States implies, neither had I until I got to actually go through that and I can tell that it was quite an experience.

For starters, living there is not necessarily as cool as it sounds. Being surrounded by strangers who are different in so many ways is not easy. It is sometimes hard to fit in because people are not always as friendly as they might seem. Living in such an environment involves a lot of maturity, responsibility, and courage. Because I lived alone, in dorms, I could not see my parents more than twice a year. Also being an athlete on a scholarship involved a lot of work, making it almost impossible to keep up with school (homework, projects, essays), my social life and the feeling that I was so far away from home.

I have to say that you have to be strong enough to resist there even one year. Not being able to open up to somebody and to talk to an adult in order to fix your problems, as I was used to back home, was the hardest part. As an individual, you have to realize that you are alone and that everyone is by themselves. You don't always get the help you need.

There were of course good parts in living there; being around so many people, with different cultures and backgrounds was interesting. All of the trophies, the medals and the good grades gave me a lot of satisfaction. Being able to participate in volunteering programs was also new for me. And last but not least, some people that I have met there will forever be my friends, even though the distance may separate us.

So for me, having the opportunity to go over the Ocean and face up to so many things alone, was definitely a life experience that changed me in so many ways. It helped me grow, become more mature, take risks on my own and be more thankful for what I have back here in Romania.

To be or not to be…competing?

Raluca Tecuceanu, X G

We live in what very well may be one of the most competitive societies in all history. Every person has the strongest desire to push aside their coexisting citizen and emerge on top, calling themselves "the best." This selfishness is imposed and encouraged in different environments. One of them is school.

It starts in Preschool, when a child is given gold stars and ribbons for doing the best coloring. Teachers are already implementing a competitive drive within students, a need to be better than the others. The children that don't get the ribbons or the stars, look at the colorful picture they just drew and don't understand why they aren't rewarded. Then, they start feeling the desire to be the best rise up within them and adapt their coloring styles to that of the rewarded child. They stop coloring for fun.The simple idea of creativity is destroyed by a system that demands conformity.

For years and years the competitive spirit grows within students, replacing ribbons and stars with grades and awards. Society has done an amazing job of making itself a miserable place, because the further this spirit progresses, the more stressful life gets. The tension that runs between the kids competing for the number one spot is intense. This is the major flaw within the educational system. They force every student to take the same curriculum, and then force them all to strive to be the best.

Don't get me wrong, I don't entirely hate the idea of competition. If used in moderation, it can have a good impact on our evolution. Competition can foster initiative in children to do work more efficiently and make them gain higher self-esteem and confidence when they grow up. However, if children value winning too much, they will forget about the initial purpose of their task. It could also misshape their way of thinking. Life is not always about winning or losing. Enjoying the process of the competition might be more meaningful. For instance, the competition for the disabled is to promote the spirit of not giving up and be positive simultaneously. It makes them more confident and happy towards their life.

My strong belief is that education must be more embracive; it must eliminate this mindless sense of competition and better encourage every style of thought. We must learn that the key to success stands in not taking things to extremes.

In my world

All Hallows Day or the Devil's Work?

Ana Frăguţa Neacşu, XI F

THE TRUE ORIGINS OF HALLOWEEN

Are you sure you're ready to find out that Halloween is not all costumes, pumpkins and parties?

Contrary to popular belief, this celebration that has now spread across the world is not exactly based only on scaring away the spirits of the dead, and certainly not an 'All Saints Day'… Occultism and Paganism are in fact part of the main elements which caused the celebration of 'Halloween' to come into existence. Its origins date back to the Celts who lived 2000 years ago on today's territory of Ireland, England and the North of France. The Celts believed that during the night of Halloween the border between the world of the living and the world of the dead shrank and the ghosts of the latter returned to hurt humans. The druids, who were Celtic priests, lit huge fires in which they sacrificed animals. On this 'occasion' people wore costumes crafted from skins and heads of animal origin. After the fires were put out, their ashes were kept as amulets, as they were believed to keep people safe from evil, no matter what shape or form it took. Another source states that it all started over 3.500 years ago, way before the advent of Christianity. Faith in witches, wizards and magic was adopted on a large scale. The thing is, the druids were powerful in the Occident. Their cruel and barbaric behavior was beyond imagination. I'm talking again about sacrifice, but of humans this time. People were tortured in unbelievable ways and used in satanic rituals. Curses, dark spells, slaughter and sacrifices played a significant role in this 'cool' celebration that has taken over almost everyone nowadays.

The message that I wish to pass on is that many people enjoy Halloween completely oblivious of its origins and largely rely only on some accredited sources of information. The ugly truth comes out only when you dig deeper. I am well aware that some of you are not going to believe a word from the above. But I think it's important for you to be open-minded and start looking into things before swallowing every piece of information that is given to you on a plate by the media. Do not tune in to a certain perspective or opinion simply because the majority does.

A little tour in the world of medicine

Carla Ilinca Gheţu, X D

Educational. Academic. Awakening experience.
During "Saptamana Scoala Altfel" (a week of school dedicated only to cultural purposes like visiting or other developing activities), one of the most important projects our college, Spiru Haret, has taken us to, was visiting 'Facultatea de Medicina Carol Davila' aka. The 'University of Medicine' from Bucharest.
It was a broadening experience in terms of 'scientific training', since most of us, the teenagers who came to visit also want to graduate from this university in the near future.

We had three dedicated first year students take us on a really detailed, full and intense tour in which they presented us their world. From tips and tricks to actual intel on what they wish they had known before applying to this university. They got us all implicated and motivated by only seeing them love what they learn about.
Of course, the most exciting part, the new one, was seeing and analyzing corpses. Without diving in too much detail and sounding too macabre, it was a very interesting thing to see. Pretty intense but worth it in the end.
The building itself was amazing, the library was exquisite, the history behind everything was remarkable to listen to, the students were really friendly and full of jokes. We felt it like home even if it was not our everyday sort of thing. We didn't feel like intruders: the people there were very warm themselves.
While we were there, wandering, we started realizing the fact that we were surrounded by future doctors. This was a very exciting and impressive moment of our day. We suddenly got more motivated to learn from their life. We wanted to become part of this community more than ever before.

Indeed, it was a day I keep going back to. It is one of my happy moments.
Best opportunity to understand the way this domain works: directly from the source.

Extracurricular

Under the Rule of Law

Mihai Vasilăţeanu, IX F

Have you ever wondered what the Law School looks like from the inside? As I have once had the opportunity to visit it with my classmates and our English teacher, I am ready to answer the question and share my experience with you.
On a cold November day I was waiting for my colleagues to arrive and admiring the outstanding statues of Licurg, Solone, Cicerone, Papinian, Iustinian and the imposing Art Deco style building of the faculty.

After we had finally gathered, our tour began, and we entered a big festivity hall called "Aula Magna", designed to look like an amphitheatre. There, the dean and two students explained all about the history of the school, the legal field and the opportunities you have after graduation. For example, if you want to become a judge or a prosecutor, you will have to spend two more years at the National Institute of Magistracy and after you pass some difficult exams you can start making justice. The good thing is that during this period you are being paid, even if you are practically still a student. If it tempts you to be a lawyer, that would be easier to achieve, as you will only have to take two exams, the first one right after you get your degree, and the second one after a couple of years of practice with a master. Besides, if you speak French fluently and do not bother sacrificing your free time to study, it is worth attending the French-Romanian College courses, as you will have a double degree diploma from the Sorbonne University and Bucharest University, which can help you get a job in one of the foremost institutions of Europe, such as the European Court of Human Rights or the European Court of Justice.
One of the most impressive things about the Law School is the giant library where thousands of very old and new books are stored. It is a real pleasure to walk through the bookshelves and admire the big "culture forest". Also, if you want to read in a peaceful atmosphere, without other disturbing people around, the reading hall is the best place to go to. Furthermore, we witnessed a Roman Law course and some of our classmates even put down some of the professor's explanations. Maybe, in their imagination, they had already become students of this prestigious faculty.

In the end, after our marvellous visit, many of us wanted to follow the courses of the Law School.

School with a difference

For some years now, the academic year was enriched with a week of non-formal education, commonly known as "Scoala Altfel". Our college has capitalized on this precious opportunity by organizing international trips, much to the delight of the students able to participate.

Our travel reporter has been to…

Slovenia and Serbia, this time

Cristina Iuga, X G

"The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only one page." – Saint Augustine

The month of November was highlighted by a trip that I went on with my high school, a travel to Slovenia. On our way to this not so known place in Europe, we crossed other countries such as Hungary and Serbia. The most impressive aspect of our high school's excursion is, from my point of view, the locations we saw because they are not your "typical" vacation spot and will probably be more like the type of place from which you can learn something.

A mesmerizing area located in the southwestern part of Slovenia is the Postojna cave. It is the second-longest cave system in the country as well as one of its top tourism sites. The interior is a fantasy world, where stalactites and stalagmites reign. You plunge into it on a train resembling the ones you come across when visiting city centers. It takes you to the different levels of the cave. What I found most surprising about the cave was that this is the unique habitat of an animal called Vivarium Proetus. To describe it, I would say it looks like a white lizard with a longer tail. You've got to be patient enough, though, to be able to take a snapshot of this agile critter! Words are too meager and mundane to give the foggiest idea of how impressive this place is.

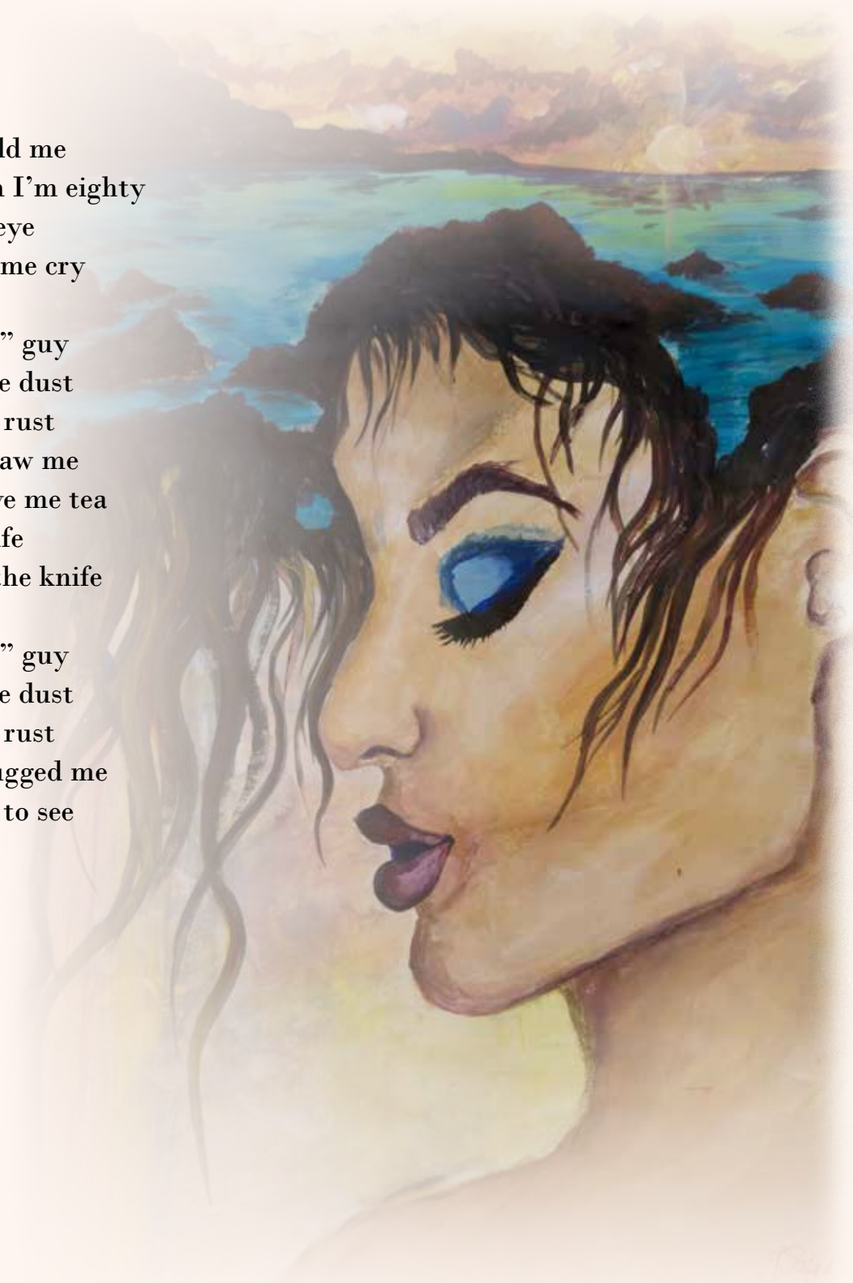
Another impressing part of our trip was Belgrade, the capital of Serbia. As you may know, this city has had quite a journey in recent years. Those unfortunate events have led to a complete stagnation of the evolution of the architecture and overall improvement of the city. However, I believe that there is a strange charm in the disarray of Belgrade and that it is important for us, young people, to see the havoc war can wreck on civilized countries, even, such as our neighbours' one . The city center has remained almost intact, breathtaking, as the rest became quite damaged.

Lastly, the most important lesson that I have learned is that every place has its own enigmatic beauty.

Fortune teller

Sarah Cristel, XI E

An old woman once told me
I'll die tomorrow when I'm eighty
And I looked into her eye
What I saw had made me cry
No job, I passed it by
No love, she met "that" guy
No friends, they bit the dust
No heart, clock full of rust
And old woman once saw me
Took my hand and gave me tea
Said I'll lead a bitter life
Told me I'll jump off the knife
No job, I passed it by
No love, she met "that" guy
No friends, they bit the dust
No heart, clock full of rust
An old woman once hugged me
She raised up a mirror to see
Old woman at eighty
That woman was me



Basketball - a way of life

Reporter: Daniel Coca, X G

Basketball is a dynamic sport, and one of the most popular team sports around the world. Its popularity, which has been intensely growing in Romania as well, makes it very exciting, both to watch and to play.

Basketball is a common game among teenagers, enjoying a special place in high-schools, where many competitions are held every year.

I myself am not so fond of basketball, but my two colleagues, Răzvan David and Rafael Onişoară, are very passionate about it, as they play for two very good teams for their age group. They are also members of Spiru Haret National College basketball team, which has recently won the Bucharest Interschool Tournament.

As I was interested to find out more about their passion, I've decided to ask them some questions.

The interview

Interviewer: *Boys, thank you for taking the time. I'll get right to the questions. First, how did you come across basketball?*

Răzvan: The first time I got in touch with this sport was four years ago, when I moved to School no. 193, in the sixth grade. There, I found out that some basketball courses were being held in the school's gym and I decided to go and try it out.

Rafael: I came across basketball when I was eight years old, because my mother really wanted me to exercise.

Interviewer: *Moving forward, as we all know defeats are part of the game, what do you find most difficult when losing a match? How do you get over a loss?*

Rafael: For me, the most difficult thing when losing a match is to know that I did my best, yet did not win. Over the time, I learned to get over a loss by training harder and never giving up.

Răzvan: I should add that the most difficult part when losing a game is that it hurts. It hurts when you make a bad game as a team, because people expected something else from you and your team-mates. It is a tough feeling, which you can only get over by staying motivated, focused and giving your best in training. The most important thing is to learn from your mistakes, stay together as a team and become stronger.

Interviewer: *Very impressive. Now let's get to the joy of playing the game. How do you feel when you play basketball? What emotions does it bring?*

Răzvan: I can't exactly describe the emotions which try me when I play basketball. For me, the court is the place where you concentrate on what you love. Playing basketball brings happiness to me, it's essentially one of the greatest feelings you can imagine.

Rafael: Indeed it is. Playing the game makes me feel free from everything. The court is the place where I feel the greatest emotion.

Interviewer: *One last question. What does basketball mean to you?*

Răzvan: Basketball means everything to me. Spending hours and hours in training, preparing for the next big game, it has taught me how to be competitive, but also selfless. It improved my temper, making me more disciplined. It became a way of life and I can't see myself giving up on it.

Rafael: I feel the same as Răzvan. The way basketball has influenced my life is great. I learned to see the bigger picture, that a loss is not the end of the road. I became more positive and started learning from my mistakes. It truly is a way of life and I can't imagine living without it.

Interviewer: *Thank you very much for your answers, I wish both of you nothing but the best!*

What Dancing Means To Me

Diana Andrei, Nikita Cornea, X G

Diana and Niki love dancing. Diana has trained to become a professional and has already won competitions. For Niki dancing is a lifelong passion. Together with a group of girls in our school they took part in the dance competition the "High Schools Conflict" . Each of them has something about dancing which they want to share with us.

Reporter: *When did you start dancing?*
Diana: I started a long time ago, with ballroom and Latin dances when I was 4 years old and I took part in important competitions. For me it is not just a hobby, it is a passion.

Reporter: *Have you ever had important results?*
Diana: Yes, I participated in a lot of national and international competitions. In some of them I reached the end and I got placed I, II, III. I won medals, cups and got many flowers.

Reporter: *Which was the most important experience for you?*
Diana: I think the first one was the most interesting for me, because even if I had a lot of emotions, I got the first place and that made me feel special and very happy. That was like a head start in my dance life.

Reporter: *Do you want to be a dancer in the future too?*
Diana: Yes, this is my dream. I want to be a dancer in the future and I would like to have my own academy and also help other children learn how to dance better than me. But until then, I want to prepare myself much better for the future to participate in the 10 Dance World, to represent Romania and to win.

Reporter: *Have you ever practised other styles of dances?*
Diana: Yes, I tried hip-hop and street dance for one year, but my thought was with ballroom dance all the while because this is what makes me happy and it is also more elegant.

Reporter: *How would you describe your experience with "High Schools Conflict"?*
Diana: I remember that there was a great deal of pressure on us, because all of us wanted to win and we were much stressed. Many people supported us and we didn't want to disappoint. But despite the fatigue we had a beautiful experience that I will certainly never forget. I learned how important it is not to give up. I have lived great moments with wonderful people and very dedicated colleagues.

Reporter: *Are you going to return to sports dance?*
Diana: I think this is the best for me, because I have grown up with ballroom dance and now, being on a very advanced level, I'm getting ready to go back into the contests.
Reporter: *I wish you the best of luck!*

Nikita Cornea
Reporter: *Why do you love to dance and what does dancing mean to you?*
Niki: The definition of dance is to "move rhythmically to music, typically a set sequence of steps". That is such a lifeless definition of what dancing really is. To me, dancing is everything. Dancing is an art form. Dancing is a lifestyle. If I didn't have dancing, I would definitely not be the person I am today.

Reporter: *How long have you been dancing?*
Niki: I do not remember the exact time when I first started to dance but I know for sure that it all started when I was little. I was three or four years old when my parents noticed that I was dancing to the music on the tape recorder. Even if I have learned choreographies from TV shows or invented them, dance has always been a part of my life.

Reporter: *How do you feel when you perform?*
Niki: Dancing is like dreaming with your feet. When I dance, I forget every worry I have or anything that is going on. Whether school isn't going well or a friend has a drama or anything like that, when I put on my dance shoes, all of that goes away. When I feel connected to a song, there is nothing else in my head except me and the song.

Reporter: *What inspired you to organize the "High Schools Conflict" („Conflictul Liceelor)" last year in our high school?*
Niki: First of all, it was the desire to get involved in an extracurricular activity. Also the fact that this contest had not been organized before in Bucharest, made me want to get involved. In this way we created a team consisting of high school students with whom I managed to participate in the contest and take second place.

Reporter: *What did this experience mean to you and how was it?*
Niki: This experience was wonderful and unique and I would definitely want to repeat it. Dancing creates unbreakable bonds. That is something that cannot be repaid. I am beyond grateful for the amazing people I have met through this experience. Some of the people I have met because of the competition have become very good friends of mine.

Reporter: *What is your advice for people who want to start dancing?*
Niki: No matter what your skill level is or whether you're a competition dancer or not, we are all in the same boat. To be a good dancer you need to be able to feel the music and express that feeling with your body. For the beginner dancer, it is important to become familiar with the rhythm, so you can try out a few basic steps in the comfort of your own home to build up confidence and maybe after that you can even go to dance classes.

English classes are always creative and fun! The dullest teacher would go though much trouble spoiling them! Having previously focused on major problems such as the meaning of life and revenge (it's all Shakespeare and his Hamlet's fault), we will now turn to grammar.

In this issue:

English grammar with tears of laughter

Ana Maria Georgiana Musat

Dear innocent reader,

The Written in class series was designed as a way of recognition for our worthiest and gifted students' toil within the English classes, so that their sustained efforts be rewarded by confiding their names and creations to posterity via the printed word.
Among the sweet or bitter tools of torture that we mercilessly use to the benefit of our students' proficiency in English we can count creative writing activities, which have proved to be as effective as a psychological weapon. Creative writing makes the English classes more colourful and enjoyable, while developing our students' creativity and their ease in expressing themselves in written English. Talented or even genius like writers (but never being aware of that), our students need an urge (or a bump, when there is the case), to burst to the surface, with the effervescence of a volcano.
To this purpose, an invaluably resourceful book is Mario Rinvolucri' s Creative writing, from which we selected a few activities. One of them is writing to grammar words, in which students are encouraged to write short letters addressed to parts of speech, tenses, punctuation marks, or other language issues. As teenagers are prone to confession, they are supposed to humorously express their anxiety, frustration, admiration or any kind of feelings to the otherwise inanimate, dull and colourless addressees. A perfect opportunity for them to take revenge!
The outcome was absolutely outstanding, as you will remark when reading the following gems or treats. We went to great lengths and burnt the midnight oil in order to select the very best ones among dozens of excellent productions.
Here you can read some samples. Indulge!

Dear Future Perfect,

I have to admit that you are so unique that I can't even think of something more twisted than yourself. Of course, you make everything more formal, elevate someone's language and for that I thank you. However, due to that you make me question the English language and suspect that it appreciates tongue twisters and indecisiveness. Honestly, I only desire to comprehend your logic. You are similar to a teenage girl who can't make up her mind between two stunning gowns.
You might as well clarify this once and for all so that students wouldn't be tormented by you anymore. Just choose between future and perfect because being both kind of sounds ridiculous.
Anyway, I hope you will answer all our questions at some point, to put our minds at ease. However, I suspect I will have figured you out by the time you answer.
With adequate respect and personal despise,
Maria

Maria DINA, 9 C

Dear Comma,

I have always wondered why you are so huckle-backed. Is it because you carried many heavy bags as a child or you were born this way? I really want to know, because I don't want to end up like you. Mom is constantly telling me to disburden my school backpack or I will grow old and crooked. Please, tell me so I can prevent being like you.
I'll be waiting for your answer.

Love,
Blanka

Blanka BOGOZI, 9 C

Dear Full-Stop,

I wish I was as popular as you. I admire the way you end every sentence in style. As long as writing has existed, you've been around closing all kinds of sentences forever. Probably, I'll use your round existence till my last days, as your usefulness never changes.

Best wishes,
Christian

Cristian DUCU, 10 C

Dear Adjective,

I need to judge a situation here, so it's really not the right time to go into the missing adjective policy! I am writing to you because I haven't heard from you in like…I don't know…two days?! I really am terrified that something happened to you because you like to show up on every occasion to talk with me about other people's life…or to gossip with me (it's really the same).
Within the last two days so much has happened and I needed to work with the adverb to describe the events; can you believe it?! So, please, come out from wherever you are and help me decide if I like my friend's dress or not!
Hope you are doing well on your vacation island,
Bianca

Bianca PÎRNUȘ, 9 B

*Dear *,*
I was eager to know about why you are so pointy. When I first saw you, I thought the point fell into a cactus and the pricks got stuck to him. What happened to you?
I am demanding an explanation for your sudden change. Since we last met, I went to a therapist. He told me that he knows you. What happened, full stop, got depressed, did you cut yourself into this shape? It's ok, you're perfect just the way you are, your shape does not define you, but I'm still looking forward to an explanation.
Best regards,
Yours faithfully,
Andrei

Andrei TEODORU, 10C

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Photographs

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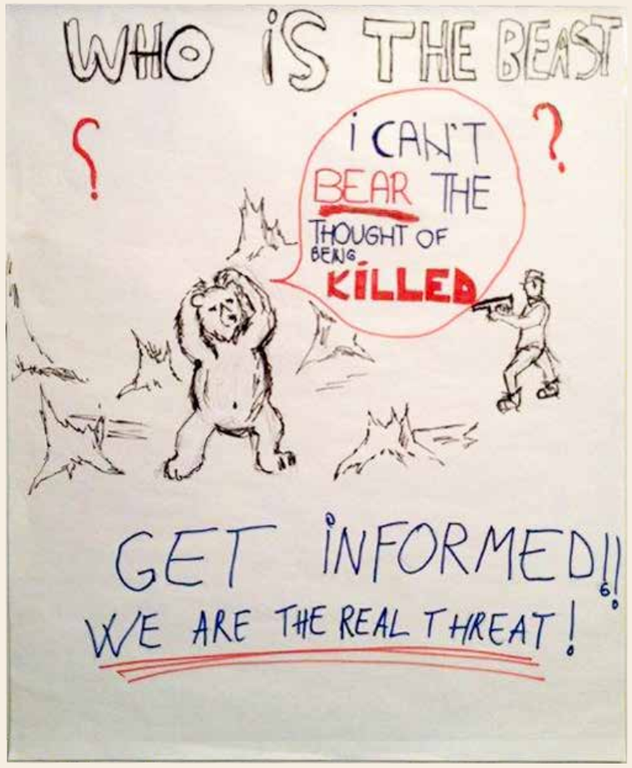
- Ioan Scripcariu – *Grammar with tears of laughter*



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