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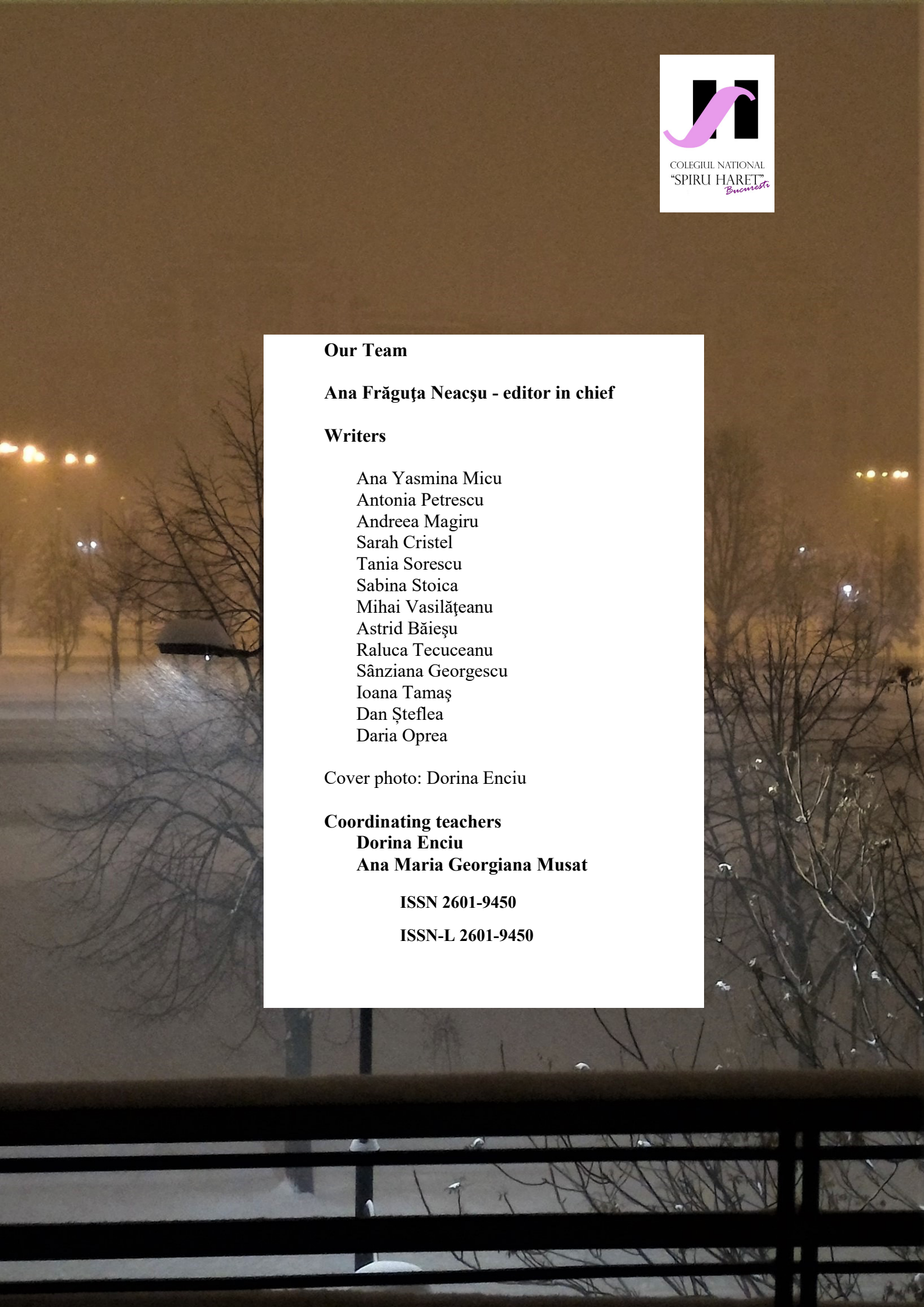

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Romania 1918 - 2018

The Great War and the Second World War

Dorina Enciu

When I was a child and barely able to spell, my mother used to take me to her home village, somewhere in the south, not very far from the banks of the Danube, to spend my summer holidays at my granddad. He was a lonely man, of few words, rough and hot tempered at times, who enjoyed a strong drink before supper and a glass of red after, visibly displeased with my not being a boy and therefore inapt to keep him company and enjoy the liquor which he made from the grapes in his own small vineyard. Sometimes we made the journey there by train, to my delight, despite the painful wake-up before the break of dawn. Most of the times, though, we boarded a battered old bus that rattled slowly along the unpaved roads, wrapped in clouds of dust. Windows open or shut, zillions of specks always found their way inside like a sandstorm, choking its helpless passengers. When it god bless reached destination, it was in the central square, in front of a small white monument looking like an obelisk with a bird with its wings spread on top of it. Below was a long list of names, which the writing said were fallen in the Great War. As I grew up I began to notice that many villages the bus was passing through had quite similar monuments, with equally long lists. Very soon I made of habit of looking for this kind of memorial wherever I went, to see if the places had contributed their share of lives to the death toll of that carnage. With disparate notions of history beginning to pile up in my mind, I mistakenly tied the name of Great War to the Second World War which, I gathered, was the biggest and deadliest conflict ever seen. I was wrong, of course. History lessons started to put the pieces of the puzzle into their places and I understood that this was in fact the First World War. And much later, also that the monuments had been put up while Romania was still a monarchy and at a moment when it was thought and hoped that such a massive conflict would never surge up again. In school I learned that the most important events had causes, internal and external factors leading up to some revolution or other. What I realized even later on was that the confusion in my young mind had not been accidental, that the Great War had been intentionally belittled in favour of the second, because it was the latter which had brought the liberation of man through communism and had to take the forefront, in consequence. After all, our National Day was 23rd August, celebrating, in the language used then, freedom from the Nazi yoke. Propaganda had reached mind much faster than information. As it always does.

In my life I travelled the country long and wide, as a tourist or on business. Once I was staying with a friend in Covasna, at her mother's house. I had visited the town a couple of times before, organizing training courses for my company. During those few weeks I had toured the surroundings, the neighbouring towns of Sfântu Gheorghe and Târgu Secuiesc, and marvelled at the politeness and eagerness to please of the locals. On a tranquil afternoon with my friend's family, I made a remark on the quiet and peacefulness among the people of the place. My friend's mother came with a neat reply: "You don't know what we've been put through." It left me wordless, red in the face with embarrassment. The memory of the war clicked again, this time with the force of the things you've lived and not only heard about. For the Romanians of Transylvania, the Union meant not only togetherness, it meant much more: it was also freedom. And they had wished and fought for that for centuries. With the naivety and perhaps the shallowness of the stranger who just wants to enjoy the place, I took everything at face value. Well, these two simple things, togetherness and freedom, are never to be taken for granted. We should know better.

My granddad, who fought in the Second World War, managed to come home safe and sound. Only that one day, while he was driving his cart stacked with the harvest which was to feed his three children and his pregnant wife, he was hit by a Russian army truck loaded with requisitioned goods and thrown into a ditch. He was helped out by his neighbours but eventually lost his right leg, crushed by one of the wheels. Not long afterwards, he also lost his wife in childbirth. My mother, 7 by then and the eldest sister, had to take care of the family.

I felt the need to share these thoughts and memories with you, the readers of this magazine, on the 100th anniversary of our Union.

Alumni Day 1918 – 2018

Ana Yasmina Micu, 12 F

12th of December 2018. The day that marks one hundred years since our school started this great tradition: Alumni Day. On this day, every year, we, Spiru students, celebrate all of the people who graduated our high school. Since I'm in 12th grade and it is my last year in high school, I wanted to make this day a little more special for me and the colleagues from my generation, as we all became a family when we entered the gates of "Spiru Haret National College", three and a half years ago.

In these past four years, I had the chance to meet not only amazing teachers and people who have became my closest friends, but also some of the greatest personalities in the cultural life of our country. If you believe it or not, some of them graduated from our school, like the philosopher Andrei-Gabriel Pleşu, who became a graduate of Spiru in 1966. As you may know from teachers or from his books, Mircea Eliade was also a student in "Spiru Haret". Personally, I discovered the teenager Eliade and a young "Spiru Haret" in "The novel of the short-sighted teenager" and I loved it. He was just like us: he found love, he read, he went through the same contradictions and hopes we all are going through now. It's amazing to see that generations, even if far away from each other, still do the same things and have the same thoughts during high school. I recently went to a conference organized by our history teachers that took place in Noica Hall. The head of the Romanian Academy, Ioan-Aurel Pop, made a speech. He spoke about the centenary of Romania. It was spectacular, and not because he used elevated words or so, but because he talked to us like an equal, even if we are just highschoolers. It was like we were talking to a friend, not to one of the most important personalities of the day.

Speaking of the activities I participated during high school, even if they took place in the building or not, I can proudly say that I saw more theatre plays in these 4 years than some of the grown-ups I know, and this only with the help of our form teacher, Mrs. Dumitru. We, at 18, managed to understand the imaginary world of Eugen Ionescu, Shakespeare and Cehov. These were the experiences that I'll never forget, because they made me realize that the world we live in is not what it looks like and you have to enjoy every moment, to be happy about every relationship you make.

When asked about their experience in "Spiru", former colleagues of mine say the exact same thing: "we were just like a family, we laughed and we cried together". Vale Panait, who graduated last year, was the head of the guitar club in our school. We became good friends as we always got into each other at concerts. She is now in her first year at the University of Foreign Languages (she studies Spanish and French). When she thinks about her experience in "Spiru", she starts to cry with happiness, because she misses high school a lot. She told me a little funny story about one time when she was in the 9th or 10th grade and the principal came into their classroom and offered them bananas and grapes. She also said that at the university not even one teacher would stay with you to understand you better. They consider you an adult already.

In the end, one piece of advice from me, that I received in my turn at some point in high school: enjoy "The Spiru experience" everyday, because you will never meet anything like this, you'll never love more than you do now, you'll never read as much as you do now, make all these moments count for your soul and make as many memories in high school as you can. Make friends, good friends, who you'll remember your whole life and don't let time get past you without enjoying it!

TEACHER PORTRAIT

Mrs VALENTINA BILCEA

Teacher of History. 20 years in our college, author of books and textbooks, coordinator of numerous projects, prize-winner with her students in national competitions and above all a cultivated, empathic and unassuming person. Time to bring her in the limelight!

Reporter: Dorina Enciu

Reporter: Why did you choose history?

Valentina Bilcea: History is a fairy tale. A scholarly one, though. It is the story of the past. It is about people, their acts of honour, their sacrifice, yet also about those actions which resulted in catastrophe and disastrous consequences.

It is also a science, the field of permanent reinterpretation of events. This is why it helps us understand the present. An educated person who knows history will have a better understanding of the present. History allows us to connect to other various domains, such as the arts, architecture, religion, literature and sociology through its complexity as a social science.

At 18 however, when I chose to study history, the decisive factor were the results in competitions and maybe also the sentimental attachment.

Reporter: How did you become a teacher and what do you enjoy in teaching?

Valentina Bilcea: I had no choice. In 1992 when I graduated there was no other option. Everything was blocked. Teaching is a difficult choice as it requires emotional involvement alongside consistent intellectual work. It is a wonderful profession, on the other hand, because a teacher works with students, that is with inquisitive, sharp, critical minds which are sometimes challenging, as teenagers are prone to being, but who are at the same time pristine, untouched by life and society.

Reporter: What is the most unpleasant side of teaching? What is the most difficult?

Valentina Bilcea: The most unpleasant coincides with the most difficult and that is the red tape. The bureaucracy in the system. Nonsensical decisions made without asking the teachers first. Bulky curricula to be condensed into a small number of classes per week. However, the main issue might not even be that of the curricula, as history cannot be cut to select bits and pieces, anyway. While here, I should also add that focusing only on the history of western states is discriminatory, in my opinion. The history of our neighbours, Bulgaria or Serbia, let's say, is equally interesting. The difficulty lies in the allocation of such a small number of classes per week. It's hard to teach the French Revolution in two classes only. In fact it's impossible!

Reporter: What is your favourite teaching method?

Valentina Bilcea: I like the interactive methods. The dialogue with the students called "the heuristic conversation". History means the questioning of historical events, as it is the field of interpretation. But it can be understood also by means of graphic representations: chronology lines, diagrams or charts, as it relies on a cause -effect relation between the events which the students are to understand. They will enrich thus their vocabulary with specific terminology and will be able to use these terms in new contexts.

Reporter: How does a student learn for history?

Valentina Bilcea: It's not so difficult if you don't learn the dates by heart but associate them with the events.

Chronology, in other words time, is the brick of history. Children are afraid of it and often see it as a phone directory, full of names and figures. But every date and name is linked to actions in a logical way. To understand it is the first step towards loving history. It is a given thought that history is an amalgamation of dates and therefore impossible to learn. It is, again, the story of people and their actions in a closer or a distant past.

Reporter: How would you describe the students of today?

Valentina Bilcea: Every generation has its characteristics. The students who are now in Spiru are well educated, eager to know, always involved in activities outside school. They are also less inclined towards self-study, more superficial and less tolerant with their peers and sometimes even with their teachers.

Ten years ago there weren't so many rules and procedures and students had no lines to follow or let themselves be guided by, but they were more determined. They didn't prepare for the Baccalaureate, they learned because they had set themselves an objective: admission to university.

Reporter: What is, in your opinion, the forte of our high school?

Valentina Bilcea: The relaxed, easy-going spirit. The students feel at ease at school. They come to school with pleasure, feel good among themselves. There is no authoritarianism. When that happens, they reject it firmly and become difficult. They are involved in a lot of projects, go to contests, make trips, have a wide range of interests. All the while, standards are high.

Reporter: Now a number of questions inspired or borrowed from Proust's questionnaire. The quality you like in a person?

Valentina Bilcea: Culture. Education. Civility. Kindness. Humour.

Reporter: What you detest in a person?

Valentina Bilcea: Stupidity.

Reporter: Your favourite painter/sculptor?

Valentina Bilcea: Romanian painters: Ilfoveanu, Șetran, Florica Prevenda. Sculptors: Virgil Scripcariu.

Reporter: Favourite season?

Valentina Bilcea: Spring.

Reporter: Favourite book?

Valentina Bilcea: Oh, this is tough choice. Maybe a favourite author, but even so, it's still hard. Philip Roth, Jonathan Franzen, Haruki Murakami, Elif Shafak. Modern literature. It's wonderful to discover a new author and read his or her books, to impatiently wait for the next. Literature gives a subjective, personalised knowledge of the past.

Reporter: Favourite flower?

Valentina Bilcea: The tulip, definitely.

Reporter: A few words to the students.

Valentina Bilcea: Find something to be passionate about. Something cultural, preferably. This will pour colour into grey days and keep boredom at bay. Be passionate in everything you do, to the smallest thing.

Reporter: Thank you very much for your kind answers.

What's that to do with me? Really? Take a good look, a deep breath and see what.

Domestic Violence

Habit or Felony?

Antonia Petrescu, 12 F

All over the world, most of the times, if not always, violence is condemned. But why do we tend to overlook things, when it comes to domestic violence? We could get an answer to that question if we look at certain cultural backgrounds, and study the way laws are implemented.

Domestic violence doesn't appear out of the blue. It stems from something deeper, which is domestic abuse. You would be terrified if you knew how many people around you are currently in an abusive relationship, where their emotions or needs aren't taken into consideration by their partner. Domestic abuse is more than just hitting, punching or just inflicting physical pain on a partner. It is a pattern of controlling behaviors that start with verbal abuse and culminate with physical attacks. The main goal of the abusive partner? Gain complete control over the partner.

But the most terrifying part about this is that abuse can happen to anyone, anytime, anywhere, without them even realizing. Some people live their entire lives as either the abuser or the abused, without even knowing it. Domestic violence doesn't necessarily "discriminate" based on class or race. Abusers and their partners can be rich or poor, and come from any race or ethnicity. Men can abuse women. Women can abuse men. You may think that a partner cursing you out after a bad day at work is "normal" or that slapping you, when you're "asking for it" is not out of the common. It all counts as domestic abuse and chances are it will only get worse as time passes, if the abused partner doesn't take action…

To sum it up, domestic abuse is any behavior that scares, intimidates, humiliates, isolates and controls the other person. And domestic violence is one of its most common manifestations. And because it's so common, it also affects people outside of the abusive partnership. Domestic violence also poses as a serious threat to children's emotional, psychological and physical well-being, if they're present in such a scenario!

A recent study published by Oakland University shows alarming statistics regarding domestic violence among men and women, alike. On average, 3 women are murdered every day by their current or former male partner in the US only! The number of women who have experienced physical intimate violence in their lifetimes rises up to almost 40 million! The percentage of women in physically abusive relationships who are raped and/or assaulted during the relationship ranges between 40-45%. The average cost of emergency care for intimate partner violence related incidents for women is $948. Imagine what the statistics looks like for the entire world. Or at least for the countries where domestic violence is almost a tradition.

Now let's take a look at the statistics on male victims. Still according to Oakland University, "1 in 7 men in the United States have been victims of severe physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime. In 2013, only 13% of documented contacts to the Hotline identified themselves as male victims - many do not report if they have been victimized. About 4% of men have been injured as a result of domestic violence."

Even though it's clear that women are most of the times the target of violence, the same things happens on the other side of the ledger. Men are physically abused by women, too. But the statistics aren't showing the exact reality, since there is this stigma around men being vulnerable...

The most obvious causes of domestic violence stem from an ideological and societal "baggage", common for any culture. Usually, in contemporary society, boys learn that men are violent, that disrespecting women is normal, and that it is okay to resort to violence in any relationship. On the other hand, girls learn that male violence is normal, that they should be embarrassed and feel inferior for being females, and that being raped happens only when they "ask for it".

We will now focus on the situation in our country. Ever since Romania has entered the E.U., there have been seminars, trainings, conferences, and even agreements on matters involving domestic violence. Why? Because Romania, next to many countries from the former Eastern bloc, is confronted with alarming issues when it comes to changing mentalities and integrating European values in their culture and society. Besides the E.U.'s efforts to implement a woman-friendly strategy in our country, domestic violence continues to be a serious problem within all levels of Romanian society.

According to "Suffering in Romania", a joint project of Occupy for Animals and The "Making the Link" Study Group, "Romania's criminal code imposes stronger sanctions, including longer jail sentences, for violent offenses committed against family members than for similar offenses which are committed against non-family members; unfortunately, however, Romanian courts have prosecuted relatively few cases of domestic abuse, as many such cases are resolved before or during trial as a result of the victim's reconciliation with the abuser and/or the victim's desire not to press charges." Which is not really a fortunate scenario, if you think about it. And it's not a way to end domestic violence on a national, let alone global scale.

Still from the same source, we can see that in 2012, 1,857 persons reported being victims of domestic violence. Of those, only 440 went to trial for this offense. Only 440! Which is not even half. In the 2010 Eurobarometer poll on violence against women, 39% of Romanian respondents said that they thought domestic violence in their country was "very common" and 45% of them categorized it as "fairly common". So, almost 85% of the people interviewed, normalize domestic violence!

Getting closer to present time, in May 2016, Romania ratifies the "Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence", commonly known as the "Istanbul Convention", in Strasbourg, according to the article "*Combating violence against all women: all EU countries must ratify the Istanbul Convention*". All European commissioners hoped that member states will consider the Convention's fundamental purpose, supporting female victims of violence, and will have no doubts in fully implementing the Convention. Romania was set to have to enter the Convention in force, on September 1, 2016. But, as many feared, the Convention hasn't been implemented. Despite the numerous pressures from the NGO's and people across the country, the Romanian government has failed to bring any change to this legal matter.

In Romania, men and women have waited for the Convention to be implemented. They've put their hopes in the justice system in order for them to finally feel safe. But if you think about it, their own legislators have turned their back on them.

Now, I've covered the pages of this article with statistics. I gave you numbers, percentages, and just bad news, overall. And even though the future doesn't look very bright when it comes to regulating punishments for domestic violence (at least), I'm confident this will happen sooner, rather than later. With every great injustice that has ever occurred in history, we've seen the light defeating the darkness. Changing people's perception and mentality over something as subjective as domestic or gender violence is very hard. This will be a long path for us, but it is something that this world must realize sooner or later. That we all deserve to live in a safer place for each and every one of us, despite gender, race, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation. So I dedicate this article to everyone's fight to abolish domestic violence. I dedicate this article to freedom.

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Is feminism an outdated concept? Are men and women truly equal?

A woman is half a witness

Andreea Magiru, 11 G

Feminism started as a power movement for gender equality but lately it has become more controversial and sometimes even frowned upon as many people tend to misinterpret it. So, what is feminism?
To be a feminist is simply to believe that everybody should be treated equally, regardless of gender. It means you think that there should be equality of the sexes economically, socially, politically and personally. When you put it like that, it's surely difficult for anybody to deny being a feminist. But for such a simple concept, it is often dramatically misunderstood.

Brief history

Over the past century, the popularity of feminism grew increasingly. The first-wave feminism of the 19th and early 20th centuries focused on women's legal rights, such as the right to vote.

The second-wave feminism of the "women's movement" peaked in the 1960s and '70s and touched on every area of women's experience—including family, sexuality, and work.

However, as the third wave emerged in the mid 1990s, led by so-called Generation X, a generation born in the 1960s and '70s, it benefitted significantly from the legal rights and protection that had already been obtained by first- and second-wave feminists. Yet, they thought the world needed a drastic change. So rather than continuing the work of the previous waves, third wavers decided to rebuild everything, by rebelling. Thus, the true meaning of the word "feminism" slowly started to drift away and grew into something many people didn't agree with.

With the rise of social media though, a new wave made an appearance. The fourth wave is represented by the resurgence of interest in feminism which began in 2012, also associated with the rise of social media. Nowadays, the focus of the fourth wave is justice for women and also opposition to sexual harassment and violence against women.

Present worries

Although we've come a long way and every wave brought new changes for women around the world, those who believe that being a feminist today lost its point are being superficial. Perhaps the most common objection to feminism is the argument that it is unnecessary, because equality has already been achieved. Unfortunately, that is still not the case.

On one hand, regarding the right to vote, Saudi Arabia granted women this right as late as 2011. However, as women there aren't allowed to leave their house without the permission of a man, very few of them can actually vote.

On the other hand, in countries such as Yemen, a woman is considered only half a witness, not being "recognized as a full person before the court." So, a woman's testimony isn't taken seriously unless it is backed by a man's testimony. Furthermore, they can't testify at all in cases of adultery or theft.
Funnily and tragically at the same time, in some parts of India, road safety rules such as wearing a helmet don't apply to women because it is thought that a woman's carefully styled hair and makeup is more important. Even in countries which are considered to be more open-minded, it is also easy to demonstrate that women are far from equal when it comes to representation in positions of power and influence.

Future hopes

All in all, feminism is in everybody's interest as research has repeatedly shown that gender diversity on companies' boards is correlated with higher productivity growth. So, by fully understanding the true meaning of it and by supporting equality we are giving everyone the same chances to succeed. Change is always difficult, but it is not impossible. After all, as E. Lockhart once said: "Do not accept an evil you can change".

Any teacher walking to school is bound to bump into groups of teenagers gathered over paper cups of coffee early in the morning, come rain or shine

WHY WE MEET UP FOR A COFFEE BEFORE SCHOOL

Ana Frăguţa Neacşu, 12 F

To start off, I am drinking coffee myself right now, folks. Not a really big surprise though. Luckily, it is not before school when I am writing this.

Seriously speaking now, what's with all this coffee drinking nowadays? Besides its addicting taste and the incredible source of energy that coffee represents in our lives? Excluding the fact that any time is a good time to drink this heavenly beverage; meeting up before school to have a shot of refreshment and a brief connection to the universe is a real thing. But what about first class? You might ask. Well, with all the respect to all teachers worldwide, first class was brought into this world to be sacrificed and prone to running late either by the hands of tragic traffic or by an extended version of C.B.S. (coffee before slaughter as students sometimes call it).

The flavour of coffee intertwines perfectly with gossip and early morning laughter to fill the quietness of the still sleepy streets. Hearing a ridiculous rumor and bonding over old stories with people can be exactly what one might need at that time of the day. It is a ritual of waking up your senses in all the good ways possible and a great and tasty opportunity to clear your mind before a full six hours of study and stillness.

However drinking coffee before school is not just about gossiping and sipping caffeine together. It can be sharing a moment of silence after a tough emotional day, collectively thinking about our uncertain future in this world where finding your voice and your path becomes more and more difficult to do. We drink to each of us achieving our goals, our deep buried dreams and most importantly, to new beginnings and…to happiness! After all, it's a new day.

Our young poets and writers invite you to read

Echo of our nightmarish dream
Sarah Cristel, 12 E

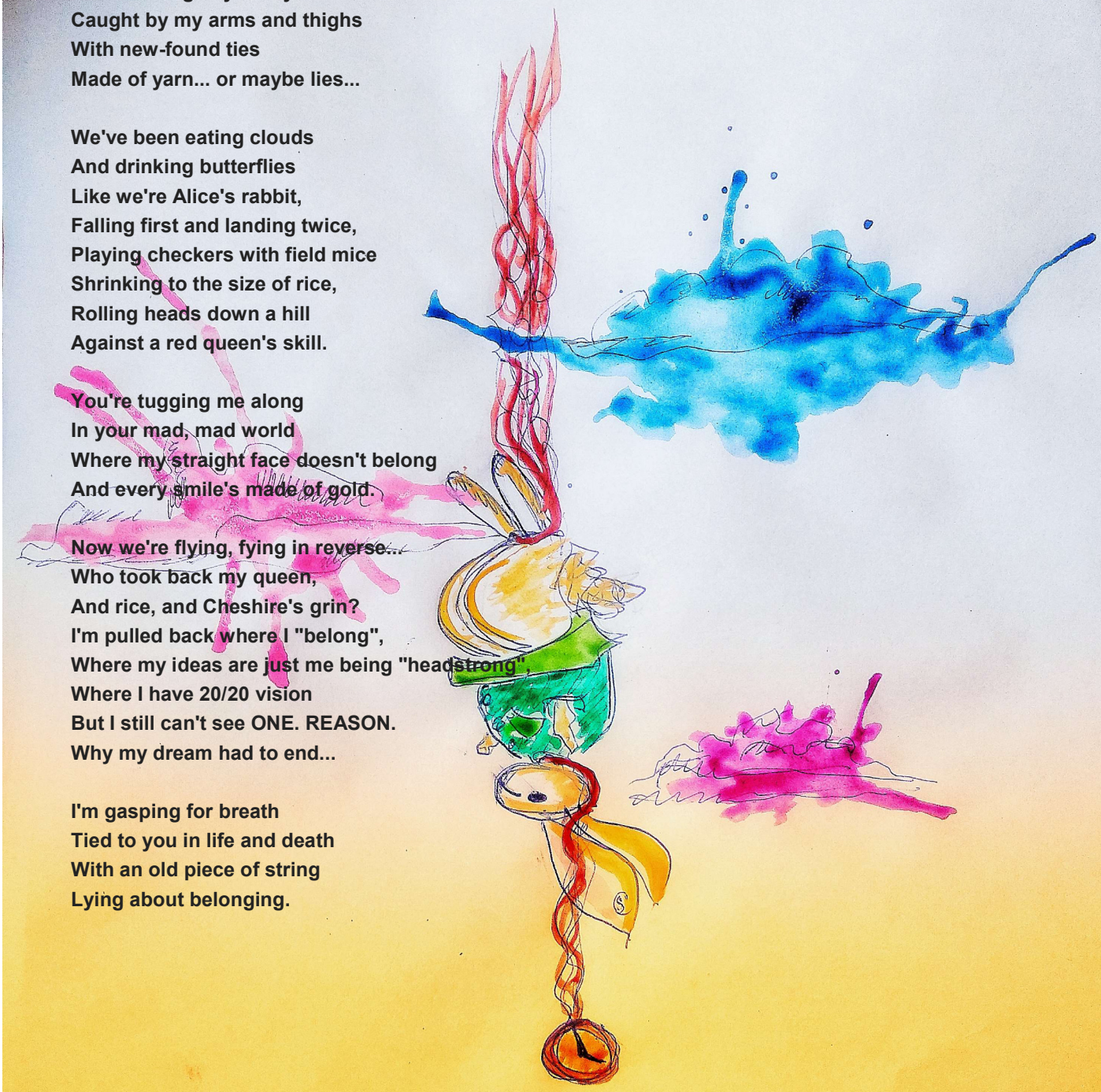
I'm drowning in your eyes
Caught by my arms and thighs
With new-found ties
Made of yarn... or maybe lies...

We've been eating clouds
And drinking butterflies
Like we're Alice's rabbit,
Falling first and landing twice,
Playing checkers with field mice
Shrinking to the size of rice,
Rolling heads down a hill
Against a red queen's skill.

You're tugging me along
In your mad, mad world
Where my straight face doesn't belong
And every smile's made of gold.

Now we're flying, fying in reverse...
Who took back my queen,
And rice, and Cheshire's grin?
I'm pulled back where I "belong",
Where my ideas are just me being "headstrong",
Where I have 20/20 vision
But I still can't see ONE. REASON.
Why my dream had to end...

I'm gasping for breath
Tied to you in life and death
With an old piece of string
Lying about belonging.



SEEPING OUT ENERGY

Tania Sorescu, 9 G

PART 1

WORK TIME

Like every time at my work place, I'm the last worker who leaves, before the secretary and the body guard, of course. Sometimes, some coworkers wait for me, leave in the same car or go to the restaurant down the street. I always take my car but today it broke down. I don't live very far so I went on foot. I started my work early, around 7.30 am. As I didn't want to be late for my meeting, I left the house at around 6.00 am. I knew the way there: left turn, two right turns, left turn, right turn and, in the end, two left turns. Easy. I arrived at 6.05 am. I knew I was too early! At the end of work hours a colleague had offered me a ride home but I refused kindly and told her that I'll order a taxi because I admit, she looked pretty tired and I wanted her to go home, relax and not worry about me. So, I rearranged my desk, took my bag, coat and hat since it had been raining all day. I left the building at around my usual leaving hour, 10.30 pm. Pretty crazy if you ask me. I went to the entrance, ordered a taxi and got turned down. Finally, on the fifth refusal I decided to walk home. "Great!" I sighed silently in a disappointed tone. I figure I should take the time to relax and look around. The street lights appeared to be gloomier then usual but I didn't think much of it. As I was walking I realized that I was walking pretty slow even though that's how I usually walk. The usual two right turns, left turn, right turn, two left turns and the last right turn. On the last turn, a man's silhouette startled me as I didn't expect to see anyone on the streets at this time of day and in this type of weather. He was just standing on the sidewalk, staring on the ground. I stopped for a second in a shocked stage as his behavior seemed odd and unnatural but continued my path as if nothing happened. He looked like he was talking on the phone but no muffled sounds came from that general direction as I got closer. I grew more and more anxious. When I was about to pass him by, I saw him looking at me from the corner of his eye. I was not into that so I started walking faster as I wanted to get out of that alley. I really hoped that he wasn't following me. When I arrived home safe and sound, I locked all my doors and windows. I got into something comfortable, slid in my bed and picked up the book I was reading.

PART 2

NIGHTMARISH NIGHT

As I was reading, I had weird vibes. It was my encounter with that man. He was very creepy, I can't deny that. I tried sevral times to get him of my mind but I just couldn't. His eye and the way he was looking at me seemed soulless. After I finished about five chapters, I looked at the digital clock on my night stand. It was 1.00 am. I figured I should get some sleep as the next day I still had to show up to work. I tucked myself in bed after putting the book away. As I turned off the light, I heard a knock on my front door. It seemed really weird at this late hour. Anybody in their right mind would have ignored it but I couldn't think straight at the time so I went to answer it. As I looked through the peephole, I couldn't believe my eyes. HE was standing on MY porch. The man I had seen before! He had his back turned, so I couldn't see his face. I decided not to open the door so I went back to bed. After ten minutes or so, I heard a knock coming from the back door. I wanted to check to see if my fears were true. There was no peephole but a big window next to the door. When I looked outside, HE. WAS. THERE. I slowly went back upstairs so he wouldn't spot me, and tried to get some sleep. At 3.00 am, I woke up to get something to drink. When I opened my eyes, I saw him. Standing in front of my bedroom window, staring at me. It was too dark for me to see his face. I could've sort of distinguished his soulless eyes, peering at me through the glass in the darkness of the night. I instantly closed my eyes and tried to fall asleep. The next morning, I looked around my house to see if I could find him anywhere. He wasn't in my house or anywhere. So I did my morning routine and headed to work. I looked at my watch, it was 7.27 am. I was going to be late for the first time in my life!

PART 3
SPILLING HORROR INTO DAYLIGHT

After having to run to get to work in time, I hysterically looked at my watch: it was 7.30 am. I arrived just in time for the first meeting of the day. At some point in the meeting, my boss took me outside the conference room to talk. He told me to take a break because I looked tired. I knew it was nonsense so I politely denied. He told me in shock that my eyes seemed extremely tired. I didn't have enough time to look in the mirror, so I told him I needed to go to the bathroom and rushed in to see my face. My eyes were blood shot and swollen. After I splashed some cold water on my face, I went back to the conference room and told my boss that I was going stay on in the office but woud se no one. He agreed and, at the end of the meeting, I headed to my cubicle. My coworkers asked me if I was alright as they noticed my devastated look and I told them I had had a pretty rough night and nothing else. One of them insisted that I should tell them what actually happened and I just couldn't hold on. I told them about the strange man staring at me through the night and how he kept appearing around my house. They were all shocked, except one. My next door neighbor, Ashley. She said that something similar had happened to her to, when she was younger. "It is said that this creature or monster in some versions of the story, haunts the living and feeds off on their energy" she said. I was confused at first, but also intrigued. I didn't really believe her because she had always been into this type of subjects since I first saw her. Everyone around was annoyed by her creepy stories. I had to admit, I was starting to be a little fed up to as she always brought up these subjects. But today was different, I believed her more than usual. This time, it felt real because, I had experience it on my skin. "It's called The Watchman" she continued, "He looks over a small town and, when he spots his victim, he consumes every single bit of energy until the person's dead". One of my best friends told her to shut up and get back to work because she was obviously startling me, evidenced by my dropped jaw. I did not know what to do or believe. I tried to convince myself that the man was just a crazy person who wanted something from me maybe. But then, something came to mind. If he was a normal person, then how did it get up to my bedroom window? My bedroom is on the first floor of my house! I tried waiving it off with the thought that he might've had a ladder with him and that's how he reached my bedroom window.

PART 4
THE END

Once I got home from this stressful day, all I wanted was a nice warm, relaxing bath. That's exactly what I did. While I was lying in the tub, I heard a strange thud coming from inside my house, so I instantly stood up in my tub and stupidly asked who was there. No response. I waited there, looking stupid trying to hear possible footsteps underneath my obnoxious loud breathing. After about five minutes, I heard some shuffling right behind the bathroom door. I froze in fear, not knowing what to do first. Get out of the tub and grab a towel or try to escape and run out of the house, naked, on the cold night street yelling for help. Knowing it was the end of fall season and beginning of winter, I rethought my second option as I realized that I would freeze within seconds of leaving the warmth and comfort of my house. The shuffling became louder and louder and somehow turned into banging on my bathroom door. I rushed out of the tub and grabbed as quickly as I could my towel and, once I considered myself prepared for any situation, swung the door open. At that moment, I opened my eyes and it was morning, again. I had to get up and get ready for my appointment with the doctor. I had to tell him I remembered what happened. Later that day, when my appointment finally came, I rushed to the doctor's office and told him my dream. He ambiguously asked me "Do you remember why you came here in the first place?" I responded with a confused "Where?" "In the Stanley Mental Asylum of course!" said the doctor ironically. Confused, I look around. Where was I? Why was I actually in this place to begin with? Then it all came back to me. I remembered the night I got fired from my job. An intruder entered my home and I brutally injured him. But that intruder was my brother and he wanted to surprise me with the good news that I would soon become an aunt. Thank God I didn't kill him! I can't believe I could've done that to him! But so much stress piled up inside of me; I had to let it out somehow. And that's why I'm in here. Rotting until the last day of my life, questioning my sanity as my possible grandchildren will come visit old crazy granny.

A few tips for senior students - and not only! - from student to student

How to organise your time in your final year

Sabina Stoica, 12 E

It is well known that the final year is the most stressful and important school year because it ends with the Baccalaureate exam. Basically, the admission to university and the outset of our career depend on this assessment. When it comes to achieving maximum results, learning to manage your time is a must.

For many students studying is a difficult endeavour, especially when you have to strike the right balance between learning, relaxing and having fun. It took me two months until I finally found out how to juggle with all my duties, like preparing for the exam, doing research for university, trying not to ignore my hobbies, spending time with my friends and family, and, the most important thing, getting enough hours of sleep. However, here are some tips for using your time wisely, from one student to another.

First of all, setting up a study schedule can reduce the level of stress by teaching you how to set aside the necessary amount of time for studying. After listing absolutely everything you have to do, mark down all the deadlines for your projects and the examination dates, so you won't be tempted to leave important tasks until the last minute. Assignments and projects should be prioritized based on their level of importance. The time required for learning depends from one person to another, so discover yours and reserve those hours exclusively for that.

Secondly, the time spent doing what you like is very important for your mental health. Don't forget to take breaks, since they are a crucial component of any study session, your brain needs to get some rest. Many studies have found that pausing for a moment to relax and reboot is essential for productivity and success. After you finished your daily hours of studying, do anything to disconnect, you deserve that. Always find time for socializing and spend some time with the ones who make you forget about everything that's stressing you out.

Thirdly, you have to accept the fact that sleep is food for the brain. Even though it seems an efficient idea to sacrifice your nights in order to finish what you have to do, it can be more harmful than you imagine. You may think that a cup of strong coffee will solve all your problems, but, unfortunately, no pills, vitamins or drinks can replace good sleep. It is well known that the lack of rest can really affect your mood and limit your ability to learn, listen and concentrate, so make sleep a priority.

To sum up, my advice for everyone who has to deal with a stressful period is to put some effort into creating a homogeneous mix between what you have and what you like to do. Once you put yourself together and understand that not only study itself is important, you are really prepared for the final year.

Love for Letters

You've heard about the Orient but, what about its languages?

Astrid Băieşu, 12F

Alright, so you chose a humanities profile in high school. That's great! I don't like mathematics either. The real question is, what university will you go to and how will you make a living in the future. I am not writing this to talk about the many options you have and how to choose the best for you, because it's your job to sit down and think about that. (Actually, rather than sitting down try to get up, talk to different people, ask teachers, search the web, discuss with friends, family and generally get out of your comfort zone by trying different things.)

After doing all of the above, I settled on going to the University of Bucharest, more specifically to the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures. But what language, you ask? English of course, what a silly question. Still, it's too easy with only that, isn't it? I love a good challenge and wanted to study something new, unique, unexpected, that I looked up to all my life to and that would never bore me…and that is… Japanese! A whole new culture perfectly mirrored in its language that has three different alphabets, including Chinese characters, and an ancient tradition of writing it the right way because we wouldn't want to upset the Gods now, would we?

こんにちは

Don't be scared by the description I just made. Japanese is a beautiful language that you must have heard or seen before in movies, animations, car names, restaurants and so on. While we as Europeans can't usually find a difference between the Asian languages, there are many. For example, Chinese is that language written with only those overly detailed and difficult looking characters. It sounds a bit like a song because it is a tonal language, so the pronunciation is very important. Japanese on the other hand, uses Chinese characters but they are always followed by hiragana and katakana in a sentence, with readings different from the Chinese ones. It is a language composed by syllables that always contain or are a vowel. It uses a pitch accent but other than that it is really easy to read once you know the basic alphabet - hiragana. Korean uses a quite unique and fun alphabet - hangul, that consists of blocks made of little lines and shapes, each representing a letter from that word, just like a game of Tetris. When spoken, you'll notice a lot of consonants paired together and a certain phasing.

你好

안녕하

Did any of these languages stir up your interest? Wait until you find out about their traditions, food, philosophy and what we all love, pop culture. I will allow you to go and find out more about Oriental languages now, without taking all the fun out of it. I personally recommend doing your research while eating a bowl of ramen, shou mian stir-fry or jajangmeyon noodles.

Did you know that possession of a few grams can send you to jail? Well, mind that cause as you know, it's not the big fish but the small fry who get caught!

A Visit to the Bucharest Court of Justice

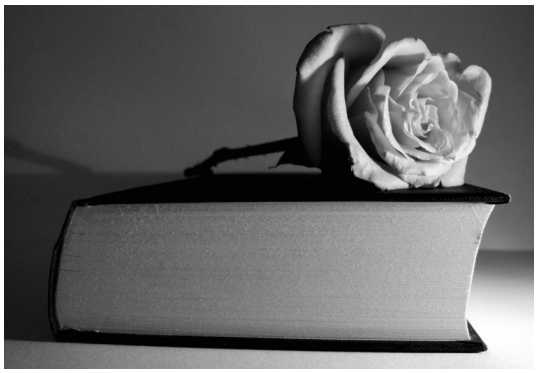
Mihai Vasilăţeanu, 10 F

A court of justice is an important institution we have all heard of from movies or from the experiences of others. But not so many of us had the chance to enter one and even less to witness a trial. Therefore, I have always had a keen desire to visit it, especially because I want to become a judge, and I was so happy when it actually happened.

The Bucharest Court of Justice is located in the centre of Bucharest, on Unirii Boulevard and has its headquarters on the site of a former mall. Also, it has 8 levels, 6 on the surface and 2 underground. A judge and a registrar, accompanied by 2 gendarmes, welcomed us and after a short presentation of the building, our hosts had the kindness to invite us to attend the hearing of a tax evasion case. The order of taking the word in court had been explained to us previously, so our interest had been spurred to the max and we couldn't wait to see how it all happens when fraudsters are finally brought to justice. We entered swiftly and on tiptoe a hall where a lady judge presided from the height of a long desk on a platform. Below her was a clerk typing at the computer, to whose right the prosecutor, seated at a smaller desk, was peering intently into an open file. Facing the judge from a few metres away, in the centre of the room, stood the defendant, a squatty Asian woman in a track suit and sneakers, with a white jacket on, flanked by her tall blonde lawyer in black robes and a large ungainly man who turned out to be the interpreter. The prosecutor, a petite young lady with short fair hair, asked surly and firmly for the payment of the full amount overdue, and also for a huge penalty payment and also for something like a five year prison term! The lawyer said that the defendant will pay in full and pleaded against imprisonment, arguing that the tax authority had not notified the defendant about her dues. The defendant had the final word and promised in the hoarse voice of her interpreter that she will pay and pay and never make the mistake again. The judge would pass the sentence later on. Case closed!

In the last part of our visit, we were guided in an elegant room with a big round table, where judges discuss administrative problems. We were presented cases of teens of our age who sold drugs or firecrackers, in order to warn us not to do illegal things, even if it may not seem so serious, because we could easily destroy our future. Maybe you didn't know, but possession of only a few grams of the wrong stuff can send you to jail!

To sum up, I believe it was an interesting visit for all of us, from which we all had to learn something useful.



Ashes in the snow

Raluca Tecuceanu, 11 G

Have you ever wondered what a human life is worth? That morning, my brother's was worth a pocket watch.

Between shades of gray tells the story of the Vilkas family, and closely follows Lina, a fifteen year old girl on the brink of an exciting year ahead, with the promise of a glittering summer and a prestigious art school before her. Then, with a sharp knock on the door in the middle of the night, all of Lina's dreams are shattered as she, her mother and younger brother are carted off in secret with dozens of other Lithuanians to Siberia.

"Oh, this is another cliché book about genocide during World War II. Not interested. I've read a dozen of these." – these were the first thoughts that galloped through my mind while reading the cover of the book. I couldn't have been more wrong. This book is a must. The whole plot is nicely complemented by heartwarming and nostalgic flashbacks. The descriptions aren't overwhelming; the dialogues are witty and add composition. It has a little bit of everything, at the same time being an authentic book. In order to tell this story Ruta Sepetys visited Lithuania several times interviewing survivors, historians, and members of Parliament. She also spent time inside train cars and Soviet prisons. She said she specifically chose to write about the people sent to the Artic because they had some of the worst living conditions. The reason she did this extensive research was because the story is based on her family's own history: her mother was a refugee. After digging and learning more about her roots she realized she needed to tell this story.

Lina's journey is not unlike the thousands and thousands of those experienced by the survivors of World War II. Heartless soldiers, degrading conditions, famine, abuse, death and sickness everywhere. However, this book brings a spark of originality through the way the characters are built. Despite these dark conditions and the evil lurking around every corner, Lina and her family and friends found hope and joy in the smallest of things - an unexpected kind gesture, a small piece of bread, a book, a comforting hand on the shoulder.*"Our sense of humor," said Mother, her eyes pooled with laughing tears. "They can't take that away from us, right?"* Even when the situation became desperate, Elena Vilkas always made sure that her children maintained a positive attitude and tried their best to get through the horrific situation they were put through. She realized that while the officers can force them to leave their home, to work for strangers in a distant land and to give up all their possessions, the only thing they could not take away was their positive attitude. In many cases, this made the difference between life and death, as those who were more determined to live had a better chance of surviving.

While reading, my emotional pendulum swung from one end to the other, which was, to be honest, extremely weird and amazingly exciting at the same time. To give you a brief example, imagine feeling rage, fear and exhilaration all at once. I don't personally enjoy reading about the heart-wrenching events during wars, but I do take heart in the relentless human spirit. Even in the midst of death and abuse and the most inhuman conditions, these characters have an ability to find hope where there is none, and to survive when it would be so much easier to just give up. *I planted a seed of hatred in my heart. I swore it would grow to be a massive tree whose roots would strangle them all.*

Ashes in the snow, the movie adaptation, is expected to be released in January 2019 and I have to say, it has been a long time since I felt so excited about going to the cinema. I am really curious if the movie will beat the book, but I seriously doubt it. It may be a close tie though, as the president of Lithuania, Dalia Grybauskaitė, was invited to the premiere and gave a moving speech about the occupation of the Baltic states: "This is for sure a testimony of truth about Lithuania". I guess we will have to see.

Want to fall in love with Romanian writers? (And get good grades in Romanian… consequently) Read on!

Hearing The Museum Speak
The National Museum of Romanian Literature's innovative Audio Guide

Sânziana Georgescu, 10 H

It is a known fact that nowadays technology plays a fairly big part of our society, including its cultural aspect. More often than not, museums will provide visitors with audio guides meant to raise the attractiveness factor of the galleries and exhibitions, but they usually fall flat, don't they? The text is dull and read in a robotic-like fashion and the information in itself is anything but engaging– that's the reason why the National Museum of the Romanian Literature took it upon itself to change that.

The team behind the project, "*Da' De Ce?*", wanted to take it up a notch and create audio guides that would appeal not only to adults, but to teens and kids as well. My classmates and I had the chance to get early access to it in order to respond to a survey about the text. The first question of the survey was "*What makes an audio guide 'cool' to you?*" It was somewhat difficult to answer, but it all cleared up for me once we entered the *Writers' Room*, which is dedicated to classic Romanian writers, like Mihai Eminescu, as well as more contemporary names, such as Nichita Stănescu. In the fragment to which we listened here, instead of having a single voice monotonously narrating the whole thing, the text was split up between two voice actors, delivering the material in a natural and dynamic way. But, to me, what sets this audio guide apart from others is the fact that it creates an image of the writer's life as a human-being, not only professionally-wise; it talked about passions, pastimes and relationships, without leaving out what made the writers well-known – their work. It also complimented the gallery perfectly, seamlessly jumping from a writer's display to another's.

I have to say that the extracts to which I listened sparked my interest for hearing the entire audio guide while wandering around the museum as soon as it is done and out for the public, and I am sure that a big part of my classmates would agree. I recommend you to give it a try too, but until then I will leave you with the same question I was asked: *What makes an audio guide 'cool' to you?*

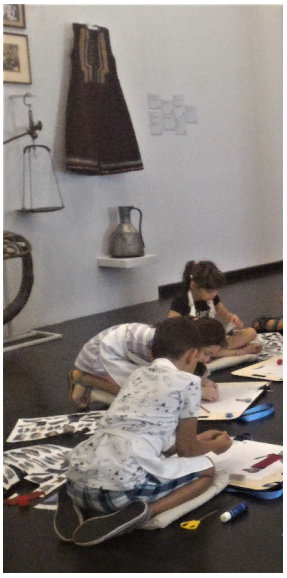
Ioana Tamaş, a student in her final year, has been working as a volunteer helping out children with special needs do their homework and generally teaching whatever they needed. Here is something she would like to share:

Do's and don’ts when working with children

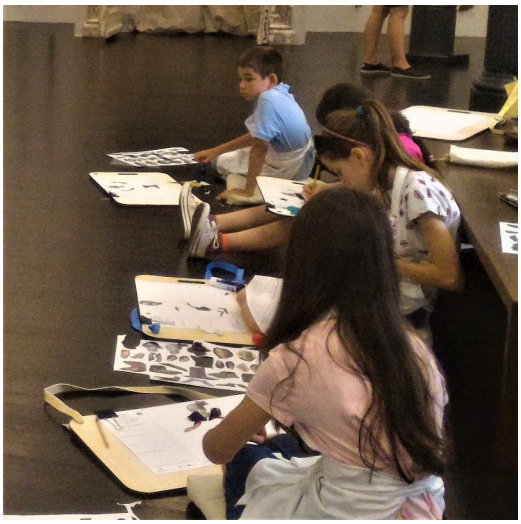
Ioana Tamaş, 12 E

Working with children is a valuable opportunity both for you and for the little ones to discover interesting and unknown parts of your lives, involving playing, outdoor activities, literature and logical lessons of Physics and Mathematics.

When teaching children, you must take care of the way you talk to them: do not be impulsive, don’t make reproach, start or carry on quarrelling with them, but explain and correct their mistakes in a calm and kind voice, full of love. Thus, kids will learn from their past and also they will not fell hate and repulsion for you.



It is very important when playing with the little ones to do interactive social activities outdoors. In this way, they will learn the names and the characteristics of the flowers, the birds or the animals they will discover nature and the world around them. By touching the leaves of emerald, the graceful petals, by hearing the pleasant sparrows, by observing the tiny universe, kids will become more sensitive, they will be able to admire the beautiful side of the life and they will always find an open window to the silence of the marvelous landscape.



When reading fairytales, stories, poems or solving mathematics problems, developing both the imagination and the logical thinking, you, the teacher, and the pupils should gather in a circle and have a picnic. It is important to involve all the kids in these activities and let them compose stories based on what had been read, expressing their feelings by drawing or even speaking and asking for advice. For the logical part, you should bring the little ones different plays, like Sudoku. Doing this, children will learn in a nice interactive useful way the basic concepts of the school subjects.

Working with children symbolizes, in essence, a lesson of life, which teachers must give to pupils with plenty of love, joy and good-humor.

"Mad Jack Churchill"

Dan Șteflea, 12 F

We've all got our favorite British individual, ranging from the distinguished and cunning cigar-lover and cunning Prime Minister Winston Churchill, all the way to the popular writer and prominent social media personality J.K Rowling.

It's safe to say that the British folk are quite unique when it comes to their behavior and customs, and this isn't a new characteristic of theirs. Just take a look at their history for a bit and you'll certainly find a man or woman who seems a bit interesting to the foreigner's eye.

But this sort of uniqueness doesn't stop at our big names in British history. Now, if you were to ask anyone about what they think about your average British guy or gal, you'll probably hear the following answer, having one or two tea-related remarks as well: "They're very fond and respectful towards their own culture and history."

Back to the individuals, shall we?

Let me tell you a story of a British man that started out as your average guy that joins the military prior to WW2 , and ended up as the living personification of the British stereotype, minus the tea obsession.

In comes John Malcolm Churchill to the center stage, a simple man born in Sri Lanka. Some may know this man better by his nickname: "Mad Jack Churchill". Despite his name, he wasn't a relative of the previously mentioned Prime Minister.

He started his life by moving around a lot, from country to country, ending up in the UK in 1917. Joining the army in 1926 and serving for 10 years, he left to pursue his then-passion of being a newspaper editor and a male model. That's somewhat odd, huh?

Well, this is just the beginning of his story so buckle up for one of the strangest lives a man could live during that time. Besides those two passions of his, he was one of the best archers in Great Britain at the time, as well as being an avid bagpipe player. Now we're getting into the more peculiar aspects of his life.

Later on, during the 1940's Jack gets sent in the crazy hell-fire that was the French front during the German invasion. You'd expect a soldier during the twentieth century to be equipped with modern weaponry. Well, one German soldier expected the same thing out of his enemies, until he sadly met his end at the end of one of Jack's arrows during a gunfight.

So far, we've got one of the best archers in the UK fighting alongside his trusted bow in WW2. Neat, right? If he's skilled, why not use it, huh?

Insert a few naval invasions during the Allied offensive in Norway, where our dear Jack decided to bring his renowned bagpiped to the frontlines. His fellow squad-mates later claimed that he was playing “March of the Cameron men” during one of these invasions, before throwing a grenade and charging straight into the gun-fight. Needless to say, it’s becoming clear why his nick-name was “Mad Jack”.

Afterwards, our “average” fellow took a long detour through Italy, particularly Sicily, where he brought out the last trick out of his bag of weirdness, a Scottish Broad-sword, which he later ended up losing in a hand-to-hand combat situation in a town named Molina. On his way there to retrieve his sword, he met an American patrol that was heading towards the enemy lines. He told them that he was going his own way, and that he was not going to return there for a “bloody third time”, after they refused to turn back.

So, we’ve got an angry British man, being sent from place to place in WW2, with his trusted bow, bagpipes and broadsword.

After being twice captured by the German SS divisions, and subsequently escaping being sent to concentration camps, due to being confused as a relative of the British Prime Minister at the time, Jack was sent to Burma to fight in the East-Asian Theatre. As soon as he landed in India, he was informed that the war was over, following the two nuclear bombings in Japan. Jack was quoted as saying: “if it wasn’t for those damn Yanks, we could have kept the war going for another ten years.”

How a man such Jack survived WW2 with medieval-themed weaponry, it may be anyone’s guess. After all, his motto was that if “any officer goes into battle without his sword, he is improperly dressed”. Nobody expected him to actually live by his motto during one of the deadliest conflicts in human history.

Following his retirement, our special fellow decided to move to Australia to pursue his new-found desire to surf. He even created his own surfboard.

As I’ve said in the beginning, our British fellows are unique in Europe, such uniqueness coming from their varying temperament and desire to honor and respect their heritage. Considering the actions of “Mad Jack Churchill”, this may as well be a nation-wide characteristic.

On theatre and what it can do to you

Daria Oprea, 11 G

I think I ought to say that I never thought I would come to do this. When you're in the middle of your teenage years you anxiously begin to think of the future and what it holds for you and start asking yourself whether you do actually have something to bring to society. I think those were the circumstances in which theatre came into my life.

A friend of mine announced me that they needed a replacement for someone who knew how to sing in a musical which was about to come out. I was very reluctant to do that and never in a million years would I have thought that this window opening for me would bring so much joy to my life. The most meaningful thing that I earned was an actual purpose in my life, because as cliché as it may sound, I didn't quite have a concrete path. I had things I was passionate about and a few abilities, but not necessarily something I would strive for. I guess that's why I believe it sort of saved me, because it gave me a new perspective and it taught me how to explore myself. Regarding that, theatre helps you understand yourself and somehow shows you why you are the way you are. It's quite therapeutic and what strikes me is the fact that it's amazingly easy to relate to so many characters and to accept that the good and the bad you keep within your soul are useful for your art and therefore important pieces of what you're about to become. I find it difficult to describe exactly what I'm trying to say, but for certain theatre manages to exteriorize the darkness and heal it.

I also came to be more understanding and empathetic. Truth is, I cry much more often than I used to and I'm glad it is happening so, because things begin to sort of settle down for me. I strongly believe that humans are too much of emotion and too little of actual rationality, but what they tend to do instead is use the part they are the weakest at. Emotion is perhaps the very base of each thing that we do, beside reflexes and physiological reactions. When you start analysing yourself and trying to befriend your own persona, you gain more control, stability and maturity, which I think is another point theatre successfully ticks in my life.

To me it is all in all a therapy, an escape and something that puts passion and drive into my spirit. It really takes most of my time and occupies most of the space of my mind, and that makes me think of the fact that I wouldn't know what I'd be doing with my life unless there was theatre.

What Makes (You Write) a Good Story?

It's Alchemy* (of writing) combined with Homeopathy* (of reading)

Harry Potter Grows Green with Envy!

Ana Maria Georgiana Muşat

Ingredients:

four brilliantly written short- stories, by masters of the genre, carefully chosen by a gullible teacher, for whom eternity has been invented so that (s)he could understand that Hell is paved with good intentions;

a bunch of brilliant, yet gullible, English proficient students (the latter asset is NOT a must), with pristine minds, not yet altered by the daemon of reading

Lesson 1. Setting the scene

Writing class, with 9th grade bilinguals. Bound to teach (how to write) narratives.

Pens squeaking. Guitar chords pinched by stealth under the desks. Students giggling. Teacher grumbling. Enveloping shaorma odour tickling nostrils (it's about lunch time). Students dozing. Chalk grating, accompanied by Teacher's stentorian voice: "WHAT MAKES A GOOD NARRATIVE?" A yawn is skilfully stifled, yet another one gloriously breaks the background noise, like a castrated tenor's voice in an empty cathedral.

Pens squeaking (in the algebra notebooks, skilfully hidden under the English stuff, as a test in Math is looming on the horizon). Teacher sighing. More guitar chords pinched. Students giggling. Teacher raises tone, desperately attempting a question, more convincingly: "What are the ingredients of a good narrative?" (S)he is wearing a "Don't worry, Saturday is coming" motivational T-shirt. It' s only Monday, but it has been chosen for didactic purposes (the ice- breaking stuff, in order to instil a friendly,non- inhibiting and cooperation mood among students). It seems not to work, though, as poor being has to resume the question, this time with an entreating tone, adding another eliciting prompt: "Could you give me an example of a well- written story? What have you read so far?"

A chorus answer splits the silence, as grand and majestic as Handel's "Hallelujah": "HARRY POTTER!!!!"

2. Lesson 2. Main body

Same characters and stage properties. There is some new stuff, though. Brand- new handouts. And students divided into groups. The more, the merrier! New ingredients are added to our stories: a well- grown American Trout , provided by Jerome K. Jerome, a semi- barbaric king , a passionate princess and a fierce tiger, all supplied by Frank R. Stockton and his puzzling ' The Lady or the Tiger", a Tell- Tale Heart, prodigally offered by Edgar Allan Poe, and a sinister Landlady, created by Roald Dahl.

A new ordeal added: Read the stories (one story allotted to each group, to avoid indigestion). Identify the ingredients that make them challenging, well- written stuff. Spot new vocabulary. Then, brand- new tasks. Be writers, yourselves! Of the same stories, or to be more precise, of paragraphs attached to them!

Lesson 3. Ending

The outcome is presented as follows. And, dear readers, wouldn't" t you agree with me that Harry Potter would grow green with envy? Grab his potions and wand, and quickly disappear in the night, wrapped in his magic cloak?

Alchemy= 1. a science studied in the Middle Ages, that involved trying to change ORDINARY METALS into GOLD
2. magic (according to LONGMAN Dictionary of Contemporary English)

Homeopathy= a system of medicine in which a disease is treated by giving extremely small amounts of a substance that causes the disease (according to LONGMAN Dictionary of Contemporary English). It should be added that homeopathic treatment consists in a long process, that takes place during extended time span (that could be associated, in a somehow exaggerated manner, with furnishing one's mind with reading material)

It was written in class (I)
A sequel to "What makes (you write) a good story"?
How our reading students have become writers themselves

Read Jerome K. Jerome's short- story "The Trout". Compare the four accounts of the way the trout was caught, paying attention to the way the subject was brought up. Imagine an additional character with a different version of capturing the trout. Write your story.

Summary

The two main characters ("George and I") are puzzled when four different people give them a different account of how an immense trout (hung on the ceiling at the inn where they are put up) has been caught. Of course, each one of them pretends to be the real author of the impressive capture. The ending is unexpected and meant to make readers howl with laughter: the beast accidentally collapses and smashes into thousands of pieces, only to make our main characters (one of them the writer in disguise) conclude that the trout had actually been made of plaster.

My Trout

Popovici Daniel, Lungu Mihai, Preda Luca, 9 A

Ah! I can't help noticing the way you're all looking at the trout. I am the one who caught the beast and I've got quite a story about it.
I am not a fisherman and I have no knowledge about fishing, yet, one day, dumb luck struck me. It was like that….
My friend asked me to come and help me on his fishing boat. There were some problems with the engines which needed constant mending and I had the job of watching out if anything got caught while my friend was down fixing things and I had quite a good catch. I managed to take on the fish all by myself and when my friend came to see what my problem was, he was astonished.
By the way, if he tells you he caught it, he's a liar!

2. Read "The Lady or the Tiger", by Frank R. Stockton. The author puzzles the reader, by leaving to him/her the freedom of choosing the denouement of the story. Write a paragraph in which you make the ending obvious to the reader, by choosing the alternative that you prefer.

Summary

A "semi-barbaric" king has a genuine and harrowing manner of doing justice. The convict is thrown in an arena and forced to make a life-or-death depending choice: open one of the two doors in the arena. Behind them there stands either a painful death (a fierce tiger) or a blissful life (being wed to an enchanting lady). The same faith is reserved to a handsome young man, guilty of the crime of being the princess's secret lover. The princess (as semi-barbaric, we are told, as her father) too, has to make a choice, after having discovered the secret of the doors: shall she send her lover to death or see him married to another woman, by a subtle pointing of her hand? The writer leaves it all to the reader's choice.

The Lady or the Tiger?

Solomon Maria-Raluca, Lanbă Mălina-Georgia, Ioniță Carina- Bianca, Popescu Vladimir, 9 A

As he opened the door, he could see a pair of scary yellow eyes staring at him in the dark. The boy realised that his lover had sent him to a painful death. He started running as fast as he could,

chased by the huge tiger.
The princess was crying with crocodile tears as she was watching the chase. After a minute of running in the arena, the boy suddenly stopped and stared at the princess. " Why?" he whispered, as the tiger jumped on him and killed him.
"If I can't have you, no one can. Better are you dead than in the arms of another woman."
After days, the princess ran from the castle, because the king wanted to marry her with a stranger, but all that she could think about was her lost lover. She ran into the forest and sat by the fountain where she and the boy used to spend their days together and cried until her final breath.

3. Read Roald Dahl's 'The Landlady". The ending of the story is merely suggested, by skilful allusions. Continue the story, by re-writing the ending, in a more direct manner.

Summary

"The Landlady" is just another "noir" story impregnated with dark humour, written by the well-known author of "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory". No happy ending, this time! Billy Weaver, a gullible young boy in his teens, is looking for a host in an unknown city, where he has been offered a new job. He is into an apparently cosy and friendly house, with a fairy-tale appearance, similar to the gingerbread house in " Hansel and Gretel", at an unreasonably cheap price, owned by a suspiciously welcoming landlady, who, in the end, proves to be a modern copy of the witch in the above-mentioned story. The writer only induces the idea that poor Billy has become another victim of the sinister landlady, by mentioning the name of two boys that had previously signed in the guest book and who remind Billy of the names of two people whose disappearance had previously hit the newspapers headlines. Since the landlady serenely mentions the fact that she keeps the beloved next to her by stuffing them, it is quite plausible that the unfortunate boy would share the fate of the parrot and the spaniel in the parlour.

The Landlady

Zarcu Amalia, Sâmpetru Maya, Radu Raluca, 9 A

It was then when Billy got terribly frightened, so he decided to leave. But the moment he tried to get up, not a single muscle responded. He was stuck in that armchair. The teenage boy wasn't even able to talk. All he could do was witness his death.
The landlady noticed that her poisoned tea had worked. "Mr. Perkins, it's time for you to meet Mr. Temple and Mr. Mulholland. But first let's make sure you won't leave us." She carried him on the third floor, where she entered a room which resembled a lab.
By the time the sun was rising, Billy was standing side by side with the other two unlucky- fated young men.

4. Read Edgar Alan Poe's "Tell-Tale Heart". Re-write the moment when the main character confesses his murder, from the perspective of one of the policemen summoned to investigate the case.

Summary

Our main character confesses the terrible crime he has committed (it is a lunatic's confession, as the readers are to find out). No one would ever discover his minutely prepared perfect crime, were it not for his inner driving force that enforces his confession. Or, was it a murder, after all?

The Tell-Tale Heart

Miclea Alexandru, 9 A

One cold night, we were sent to investigate a reported murder attempt. Someone had heard a scream from his neighbour's house. We knocked on the door. The man greeted us. When we told him why we were there, he claimed the scream had come out of him while sleeping, and that the old man was out of town.
He then led us into his room, where we began to chat. As we were discussing, the man was starting to panic. He then confessed his crime, pointing at the floor, where the corpse of the old man was lying, and yelled:
"Here! Here! Here! - it is the beating of his hideous heart!"
We then proceeded to retain him, and take him to the police station, where he would await trial.

Photographs:

Antonia Petrescu - *Domestic Violence*
Andrei Băicuş, 2009 - *How to organise your time in your final year, Ashes in the snow*
Roxana Năstase - *Hearing The Museum Speak*
Daria Oprea - *On theatre and what it can do to you*
Dorina Enciu - *Alumni Day 1918 - 2018, Teacher Portrait, Why we meet up for a coffee before school, How to organise your time in your final year, A visit to the Bucharest Court of Justice, Do's and don'ts when working with children*
Internet photos - *My favourite Brit*

Painting: Sarah Cristel - *Echo of our nightmarish dream*

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