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The Rule of Law

Vladimir Traşă, 12 G

The beam of light emitting from the media's spotlight is, for sure, a starting point for anyone interested in knowing what might affect them in their day to day lives. Scouring through the darkness is not an exact science, but it does bring up some important subjects to be put in the public space.

„Statul de drept", as we know it from the news, was in this very spotlight even though the explanation of what it is or why it is important fell short. It deserves another try. A surprise, considering how little there is to explain. Especially in contrast to its importance: a part of the foundation of a healthy democracy. No wonder we stumble upon it.

A significant part of it becomes obvious the moment you translate it into the language you read right now. „The Rule of Law" is slightly lacking in meaning compared to its Romanian equivalent. In any way, its descriptive nature serves us right at the moment. The rule everyone must follow, no exceptions, is the law. More precisely, the constitution is the bill all should consider, especially including additional laws written up by the state. Face to face with a judge – no matter if president or unemployed – a citizen is faced with the law, as are his actions.

A well known phrase: No one is above the law and everyone is equal in front of the law. Grasp the „and" right. Everyone is equal in front of the law *because* no one is above it as well.

For these words to stay true, for the state to sit straight, if you may, some precautions are considered.

Above all, the separation of power is meant to deter attempts to harm the rules. The *legislative*, *executive* and judicial branches are torn apart by design: it takes a ludicrous amount of power for an entity to both *write* and *enforce* the laws, all while the judicial system can just say „No" to laws (obviously more complex than that).

Meanwhile, almost ironically, the state itself is defined inside the doctrine as equal partner to the civil society. Civilians are all, potentially, „everyday heroes". (Aww, look at you!) Protests most visibly reflect that, while more quiet groups keep track of what people behind the windows of ruling palaces are up to.

Fairly easy to understand. Fairly easy to forget, too, at the red light on an empty narrow street.

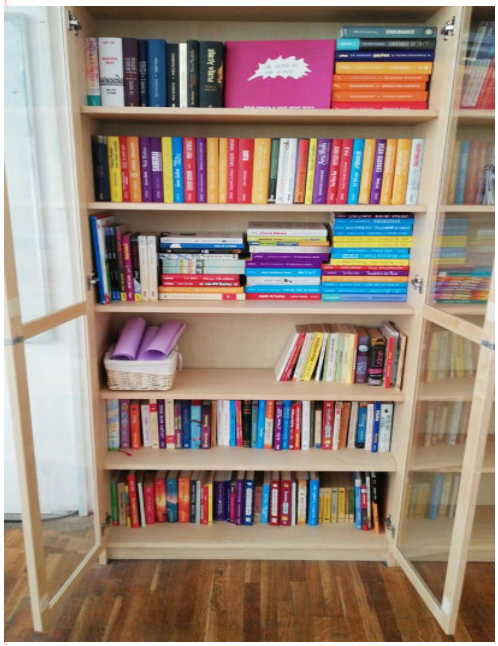
If you were elected by the citizens for a position of authority, president of the country or of a chamber of Parliament, you are still a citizen. After stealing a car, and getting caught, your importance to the state is not taken into account in front of the judge. Funny enough, you may be actually in more trouble, because you unlocked a whole new level of felonies.

The Rule of Law is here to make it especially clear that if you use money or influence in order to avoid the equality, ironically, that equality plunges out the window. You do serve the same sentence for stealing the car... But with sprinkles and a cherry on top?

„Walking lonely as a cloud”. On the eve of Alumni Day 2019

The never-ending changing of school months, the variable lengths of the semesters, the last minute projects evaluations and tests are enough reasons for teachers to get into turmoil at this time of the year. Or maybe start re-reading the old British poets, to stay and keep calm (or sane). Burning the midnight oil, the school managed to continue its good traditions thanks to ardent and enterprising students and teachers. The first two months and a half of this semester have passed, not without some truly outstanding results.

Quite recently I have played a game with my students, which they found most challenging. It’s called ”Linking Stills”. The students are given some snapshots which they have to link while posing and answering questions. So here I am, “walking lonely as a cloud” through the school’s corridors, when I come across a most peculiar artifact: the great-great grandpa of this very machine I am typing now at. All yellow and shiny; the letters on the round black keys look faint and inviting. The old typewriter is placed under a glass case, next to some yellowish pages onto which a brilliant mind poured over bits of soul and sparkles of genius. In a partnership with „Editura Cartea de Pariuri Literare”, Spiru Haret National College launched a cultural project addressed to your young. The project, entitled- “Romanian Contemporary Literature-Apropos” is coordinated by Mrs Camelia Săpoiu, teacher of Romanian Literature. On October 4, our school had the greatest privilege to welcome and admire the nonagenarian poetess Nora Iuga, whose sharp but heart-melting verse intrigued and fascinated the young and less young audience. At the sight of her old typewriter and copies of manuscripts, the poetess rewarded us with the brightest smile possible. At home. This is how she, and us felt. The poets Albert Denn and Mihai Ivașcu were also highly appreciated by our students, who were encouraged to step into the secret world of versification. The project is also involving teachers and students from Spiru Haret College of Chișinău, for whom our students are currently collecting various books written in Romanian. This extraordinary initiative brought tears into the eyes of the Moldavians students when on Skype were told that by the end of the year a small van with books in Romanian will have crossed the Prut.



You did guess the connection between literature, poetry, old typewriter and Skype, didn’t you? Well, here comes a tougher one: what could possibly link the tiny Lego piece to Physics, to coding and to mentoring? The answer is to be found at the Robotics Club, right next to the gym. Busy as bees, the 6th and 7th graders are being mentored by their older peers of RoboSapiens Robotics Club about coding and robots making. Both teams are diligently preparing for the two important competitions to come next year: First Lego and FIRST Tech Challenge. On the right route, motivated and resourceful, the two teams will hopefully find themselves on the podia next spring.

The European Language Day could not have passed unnoticed by the Spiru students. In a multitude of languages (English, French, German and Romanian), the students found inspiration to ”meme” a cartoon or a photo. Some results were hysterically funny!

Good news never stopped this semester: the National Book Trailer Festival, concocted by our two Romanian teachers- Mrs Camelia Săpoiu and Ms Ștefania Ciobanu has joined the BFFF. THE BOOKTRAILER FILM FESTIVAL is promoted by 'A. Calini' Scientific High School in collaboration with: -Lower secondary school "Giosuè Carducci", Brescia; -Polish secondary school "Zespol Szkol Ogolnoksztalcacych nr 2", Nowy Targ ; -Bulgarian secondary school "Atanas Dalchev", Sofia; -Croatian secondary school "Gimnazija Karlovac",Karlovac; -Romanian secondary school "Colegiul National Spiru Haret",Bucarest; -Italian secondary school in Madrid; -Italian secondary school in Barcellona. (see: https://www.booktrailerfilmfestival.eu/festival_competition_announcement_XII_european_edition_2020.php?fbclid=IwAR21hmvlPskVc0HIjZ0kdIfhKlulcoGZ2H1xF_kp7gIEfxNlHZPMHqnC82Y). Who knows? Maybe next May, among the winners, some of our students will rise and shine.

One piece of (excellent) news never comes alone. After a short five year break, Spiru Haret National College won a visit at the European Parliament, in Belgium. The students involved in EUROSCOLA project, coordinated by Mrs Corina Buzoianu (teacher of Romanian) and Mr Alexandru Constantinescu (teacher of Mathematics) will fly to Brussels on March 5th, 2020 to participate in the EU Parliament. Their message- „Education makes us free", noble and compelling, was publicly embraced by renowned Romanian artists, such as actress Maia Morgenstern. (see: https://www.facebook.com/pg/Euroscola2019-CN-Spiru-Haret-Bucure%C8%99ti-2433388510057961/posts/

The walks trough the corridors of the 105 year old Spiru Haret National College will never cease to cast spells, awe or inspiration on the lucky wanderers.

Whether you witness heating debates among students on the last Maths problems of the Laurențiu Panaitopol Contest (another stepping stone in the college history), or hear students strumming their quitars, you will feel, deep at heart, that here things happen. On the eve of the Alumni Day, I recall the words of Andrei Pleșu's (an Honorable Spiru Haret Alumnus): "*If you give yourself a little break, if you take a restful, curious and passionless look around, you will find plenty of reasons to be joyful. Things (still) work. There are still wholesome people, full-of-life traditions, and miraculous meetings. You can live. You can live well. One can (still) live beautifully*".

Dana Cornelia Sburlan
English Teacher and Educational Counselor

We had the silly idea of asking some of our students what they consider to be art

What is art?

Mira Amarandei, 9G

"Art is a diverse range of human activities in creating visual, auditory or performing artworks exposing the author's imaginative, conceptual ideas or technical skill, intended to be appreciated for their beauty or emotional power". This is what Wikipedia says art is. Of course, it is not wrong, but it is not right either. I would describe it as incomplete. It is simple and not simple at all to say what art is; some say that it is a way to express yourself, to reveal your emotions or to escape real life. All of these are true, but there is so much more than that. So what makes art, art? The standards of the present artistic current? The art critic's opinion? Your parent's opinion? No, no and no. Who can declare what art is and isn't? What is ugly or beautiful? How can you contest the fact that someone's emotions poured on a piece of paper is not art, because it doesn't look pleasing to you? There are too many questions and so, so many answers, nobody knows what is right and what is wrong and that is precisely because there are no such things in art. What I think is that art has an accumulation of definitions that were absorbed from all past meanings and, most importantly, it is an ongoing process, it has no boundaries. It is like an infinite pouch willing and asking to hold more and more, always seems to be stretching to the maximum, on the verge of breaking, but it never does.
What others say art is:
"We all know art is not truth. Art is a lie that makes us realise truth." - Pablo Picasso
"Art is a revolt, a protest against extinction." - André Malraux.
On this topic, I believe some people are inspired to create art, because of their desire to leave something behind, for the next generations to see, to feel like you have accomplished a greater purpose than yourself, something that will not only outlive you, but something eternal.
Once, a kid raised his rushed scribble that seemed to look like nothing and asked me: "Is this art?"
The truth is, I didn't know how to respond back then. But now, the answer would be yes, as long as you have a purpose (even not wanting to have a purpose is still a purpose), something behind it all, then it is art. If you want it to be art, then it is art, indeed.

What Is Art And What Is Not?

Sânziana Georgescu, 11 H

It’s not the first time this issue is talked about and most certainly won’t be the last. But is it at least somewhat important, or even at all? Art has been a part of human nature for as long as mankind existed. From the Upper Paleolithic and its primitive cave paintings, developing into some of the most reminiscent eras of the human kind, such as the Renaissance, and reaching what we consider contemporary art. Different styles, different materials, different techniques, different ideologies. Our views upon art varied over time, just as art itself underwent changes.

After all, what do we actually mean by art? The short answer: a form of communication. The long answer, which isn’t really an answer but more of a statement that feeds into our inquiry: anything created with the mindset of making art and is meant to express emotions, feelings, ideas, values or whatever the artist wants to share with the society. Art seems to be too complex to have a set definition, though.

Nowadays we see a stark contrast between what used to be common in the art world back then and what contemporary artists create. The evolution of technology plays a great part in this, as rather often the traditional canvas, paint and brushes are traded for a graphic tablet and a stylus. It doesn’t mean that one is better than the other, but that artists have even more ways of creating their pieces. Despite this, art has the same core function: a means of communication for artists worldwide to speak their mind. Be it an art gallery, a street vendor or even an Instagram art account…

When it comes to the message conveyed by an artwork, the problematic becomes even more complex. The beauty of art is that it doesn’t have to be beautiful. Art can be pretty, calming and colorful while it can equally be messy, outrageous and dark. It can be simple or it can be compound. It can make you escape routine or bring you down to earth, to the harsh reality. Whether it sheds light upon the high points or the low points of our existence, we can’t label creations as art or “non-art” based on how optimistic or negativistic they are.

Does all of this bring us to a point where we can for sure delimitate art from not art? It’s hard to say. A cutely drawn anime girl, a gorgeous oil-painted landscape or a realistic photographic portrait of a man - as long as it was created with art in mind and by the need of expressing a message, it seems only fair for it to be considered art.

Alexandra Enescu
class 2015

Alexandra climbed the highest mountain this summer. Higher and higher until she went out of our sight.

The train

The alarm clock sets off. I wake up. Pick up my phone and see a text from Corina, asking me to buy a ticket for her too. So early? I look at the time. It's 5:40. The train was at 6. There's something fishy here. Still sleepy, I throw a second glance at the time. 5:40. Train at 6: What?! I had set the alarm for an hour later. I sit for a moment in the darkness to think. Shall I tell her I'm not coming? That would mean reaching Moeciu on my own. I try to figure out how long it would take me to get there, piecing together memories of the schedule of trains and departure hours of Brasov buses. I would then climb alone and eventually catch up with them. I see myself up to it. I'm still holding the phone, ready to text her. I've already written I woke up too late. She may be wondering if I'm still coming.

I get out of bed. It's 5:45. Get dressed, gather in haste what was still left to pack, get downstairs. Look for a taxi. It's 5:52. A taxi draws up in front of the non-stop store on Luterana. I know that driving fast it would reach the station in 6-7 minutes as it's early morning. I head towards the driver, put a smile on my face and beg him in a faltering voice to take me to the station quick. "Pretty please, could you take me to the train station in 5 minutes? 8 minutes? Pleeease!" His answer falls heavy "What do you take me for, young lady? A jet plane?"

The next second bus 178 springs up from nowhere. Halleluiah! God's own angels sent it! I board it. It's 5:53. I get jittery. Text Corina. To my left Maria, a friend, gazing blankly. We greet each other. She's back from a party. It's as if we are in two worlds apart: she's calm and tired, spent. I am in frenzy, on my toes, trying to stretch time and imploring all the traffic lights to stay green. The picture of the two of us together, she seated and gazing dejectedly out of the window, me stuck to the door almost to kick it open, looks cinematographic.

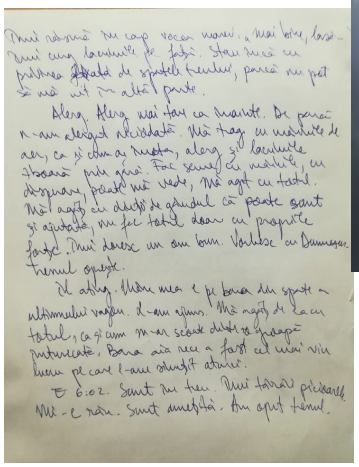
It's 6:00. I jump out of the bus, plunging through the huge crowd struggling to board the bus before I could get off. They swear. Let them swear. I'm running. I'm running at full speed, with all my might, ramming into the air before me, defying gravity, as if to wrench myself from the invisible substance gluing my feet to the ground, as if to start flying. I'm on the platform now. I can see the train at the other end; it's gone, looking small far in the distance. I'm running. I propel myself ahead with all my power, my backpack is dangling, I could just fling it off, my shoes are undone, didn't have the time to tie the laces. I'm running faster than ever, I feel I'm putting all of myself into it, my every cell darts forward and yet the train is far away and getting farther. How am I to catch it? If it goes on and I keep running, it will be impossible for me to catch it, it's elementary physics. How am I to outrun the train? My thoughts are broken by a cleaning man who sees me racing in despair. "There's no way you can catch it". Shame rises inside me. I'm ridiculous. Why should I run after a train which has already left? Who am I to fight windmills? I am still running with my eyes fixed to the train which seems now closer, as if hesitating before leaving the station. It is closer now, but I can't run anymore and I won't catch it anyway.

I'm not running. I've stopped. My panting is loud. Coughing and breathing uncontrollably. I feel my heart throbbing throw out of my chest. My ears ring. Tears burst out. The train is so far away. My phone is in my hand. I text Corina that I'm near but I can't reach it. Frustration melts me down. I'm weeping. My feelings wrap me and run through my whole body, I could kneel down and wail. "You won't catch it", rings in my ears. My father's voice echoes again "you won't make it". Then my mother's voice "why don't you let it go". My tears are flowing down my face. My eyes are still glued to the back of the train; I am not able to take my eyes off it.

I'm running. Faster than before. Faster than ever in my life. I pull myself through the air using my hands as oars, as if swimming, I'm running and my tears are scattered around the station. I'm waving my arms desperately, maybe he sees me, I'm holding onto that. I'm hanging on my teeth to the thought that maybe there is some help for me out there, maybe I'm not doing this all by myself. I wish for a good man. I talk to God. The train stops.

I touch it. My hand is on the back rail of the last carriage. I've reached it. I cling with all my being on to it, as if it's heaving me out of a dark pit. That cold rail was the liveliest thing I felt right then.

It's 6:02. I'm on the train. I'm dragging my feet. I'm sick. I feel dizzy. I stopped the train.


Mi-au rămas în cap vocile noastre, a mai bătut, lovit. Mi-am lăsat bocancii pe lângă. Stau încă cu privirea ~~fixată~~ de spatele trenului, parcă nu pot să mă uit în altă parte.

Alerg, alerg mai tare ca înainte. De parcă n-am alergat niciodată. Mă trag cu mâinile de aer, ca și dacă m-aș scufunda, alerg și lacrimile sfâșiază prin aer. Fac semne cu mâinile, cu desperare, poate mă vede, mă agăț cu toată. Mă agăț cu dinții de gândul că poate sunt și ajutate, nu fac totul doar cu propriile forțe. Mi-aș dori un om bun. Vorbesc cu Dumnezeu. Trenul oprește.

Îl ating. Mâna mea e pe bara din spate a ultimului vagon. L-am ajuns. Mă agăț de la cu totul, ca și cum m-ar scoate dintr-o groapă întunecată. Bara aia rece a fost cel mai viu lucru pe care l-am simțit atunci.

6:02. Sunt în tren. Mi-i foarte greață. Mi-e rău. Sunt amețită. Am oprit trenul.

More than just Bucharest

Sara-Maria Tudosie, 9 G

Steady and continuously changing, the former 'little Paris' does not receive the attention or the respect it deserves.

On the 4th of March, 1977, a terrible earthquake shook not only the capital and all the souls within as well. Buildings fell, screams echoed for days and yet Bucharest rose from its ashes. Many of the old buildings were destroyed, and this was the opportunity for the former communist regime to build dull blocks of flats.

Still, Bucharest is not a city that just survives—it's one with vivid actions and living.

We are a city that cannot be kept quiet. The people of Bucharest cannot and will not be refrained from expressing themselves.

Nowadays, it should be much simpler though. The youth are not being suppressed and we perform, we shout, we have a chance to say "no".

My point is, this country is amazing. The people, the history, the land—as far as your mind might travel, it will at any time encounter a spot radiant with the spirit of our culture. And we should embrace and respect that. Nonetheless, more often than not, it looks like we do exactly the opposite.

Let's admit it—we don't appreciate the pieces of culture in our city. The statues lay covered in old paint and rust, the interwar buildings are falling apart and yet we do nothing. For instance, I cross on a daily basis a little old neighbourhood that echoes I. L. Caragiale's time. Small old houses, narrow streets, even the smell seems different. I was not aware of the history of this neighbourhood. And I think this is not only my fault, but it's also due to the inadequate way of promoting our city. We should flag these places, present them any time we have the chance and be proud of them.

So how do young people express themselves? Let's take graffiti first. I have known graffiti all these years as a form of destruction. And most of the time, it is. It covers the avenue of Tineretului. It is actually a pleasant view and, although personally not a fan of graffiti, it impressed me the first time I noticed it. It was not an alarming, neon cuss word or a catch-phrase of some teenager in a rush. It was executed clearly, in no hurry and with patience. The two things required to make people like me go from repulse to amazement. It was something beautiful, in its own particular way. It caught my eye and made me follow every twist and turn, search meaning behind the sprayed walls and enjoy the fact that someone had finally allowed this new form of art to develop the way it was supposed to.

I unglued my eyes from the window and sighed, waiting for the next time I would see some other piece of attention-grabbing new art.

That does not happen often. Not in my case.

There are however old places which have kept their fascination intact over the havoc of time.

While crossing Mântuleasa street, upon looking at the old houses, those which have once granted Bucharest the name of "little Paris", a sad smile crossed my face. It was broken but with a soft glance. I could see the carriages instead of shiny cars and hear the hooves of horses go *'clip-clap, clip-clap'*. In the evening, the roses that guarded the gates smelt softly, while the oil lamps were glowing shy in the twilight. A lady, tall and fragile as a reed, got off the carriage, and closed her organza umbrella.

For a moment, I was back at the end of the 19th century. Then the moment passed and the spell was broken. A honk came loud and angry from one of the cars.

It brought me back to reality, to *now.*

Therefore, I invite you, from time to time, to look around more carefully. To observe the buildings, find the history of the streets. To ask yourself why an avenue has a certain name. To really see the city.

And appreciate it.

SPECIAL HANGOUTS: THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF ROMANIA

Cristina Iuga, 12 G

As a 12th grader I am hangouts-wise, if I may say so, and could tell you about a good number of places ideally suited for a chat with your friends. Today I'm going to tell you about a special one, my uncanny hangout. About a year ago I started noticing a slowdown in my preparation routine. It soon became clear that I could no longer focus on studying at home anymore because of the incessant assault of a multitude of distractions such as my phone, the television, the laptop and many other unpredictable interruptions (such as visits to the fridge) which took turns in diverting my attention from the open books and notebooks piled on my desk. Having the desire to pursue medicine as a career, getting ready for the admission is a race against the clock. The problem needed an urgent solution, so I asked my teachers and friends about a quiet place which could accommodate me in such a way that it would force me to get glued to my chair and not look left or right. They recommended Biblioteca Nationala, hinting at something like the austere atmosphere and, funnily enough, its motivating people. Odd combination, you'd say. But they weren't wrong. Well, for those of you who still need to know, the place itself is located near Piata Unirii, conveniently close to our high school. That was one of the first reasons why I decided to start going there, since all the places I have to be in every day make me literally zigzag the town.

To enter the premises you have to register in the data base and then you will receive a card with your name and picture, which you can get taken on the spot. Once inside you will see that the ground floor is an open area, large enough to drive a car around. For a study place you can have your pick between the lecture halls and the free area. The difference between the two is that in the lecture halls you are not allowed with food or drinks and you have to turn your phone off; the free area does not have any restrictions. You can choose according to your mood. Silence and the law of not causing the slightest disturbance rule supreme.

Although necessity drove me there first, after a while I began to appreciate the social aspect of the place. While out of the building for a breath of fresh air I made friends with a few older students, undergraduates in the field of my aspirations. Over many a cup of coffee precious information and insight into the medical student life were passed on to me. To be honest, all of the people that go here have unique life stories and different views but they all inspire me to keep working as they remind me of my purpose.

Therefore, if you are in need of constraint in order to help you keep your attention focused, meet interesting people and feel inspired, I advise you to try out this place. And maybe give a thought to all those millions of books so close to you! Surely there must be something in there for the most finicky of you!

Seneca Anticafe - The ideal place to hang out with your friends

Alexandra Zaman, 9 G

This is not an advertisement. I chose this place because it really gives me the best vibes after a long day at school, or on the contrary, after a boring day at home. You will fall in love immediately with this little corner of culture and relaxation. If you are a jazz lover, welcome to Heaven! This place is a library, book shop, meeting place, teahouse and studying place, so practically it`s a 5 in 1. Pretty convenient, huh?

Wondering why they play only jazz? Because if there were loud music, it would distract you. So you only have low-volume relaxing music, not distracting heavy metal. Personally, I am not against any type of music and I love musical diversity, but have you ever tried gathering your ideas for writing an essay or solving a math problem while listening to heavy metal? I guess not. But still, if you managed to concentrate, then you have my respect!

Anyway, the advantage is that you can have everything of the above for only 8 lei per hour. Again, pretty convenient. And let`s not forget the fact that Seneca Anticafe promotes recycling and the walls are covered with motivational messages about how important a clean environment is.

I think this paragraph will be the most interesting. Aren`t you tired of going with your mother to every single old library and waste your time until she finishes searching for the perfect book? I must say it often bores me, too (sorry, Mom, no offense). But how about going into a spacious, richly and beautifully decorated place and read there or maybe study for your tests/ exams? Don`t throw rotten tomatoes at me, but someone has to get a passing grade in them! And if you just want to come and talk with your friends or make a project, then you can have a seat in the no-restrictions room, where you can talk as loud as you wish, considering you don`t disturb others. You can have some tea, lemonade, a biscuit or some fruit. It`s up to you. Sorry, coffee lovers. This is an ANTIcafe. They don`t serve coffee, but they don`t mind if you bring your own!

So if you are ready to spend the time of your life with your friends, family, or even some strangers, grab a cup of coffee - pardon me, tea - and enter another dimension: Seneca Anticafe.

Fear. Fear is something we all fear. But is it really such a bad thing?

You won’t believe what this person said about fear!

Teodora Costache, 10 G

Fear takes many shapes and sizes in our perception of it. Sometimes it's seen as a crippling feeling, at other times it is merely a nuisance. I wanted to try and see the good and the bad side of fear and better my understanding of it.

When I think about fear I see it as an emotion. Similar to joy, sadness, anger, disgust or shame, it is triggered by a feeling or a distinctive thought which in its turn brings about a bodily reaction. In this case the trigger is a threat to our person. One of our fear responses is pretty typical of what you would see in a cartoon, big, wide eyes to see the world around you better and the mouth hanging open. Other than facial expressions, you also get blood rushing to your feet. Helpful in case you need to run away! All the while, when in danger we need to make sure that we make the best decision in order to save ourselves so, for a moment, fear freezes us so we take in information and process it. Although most of these reactions aren't very useful today, ages of evolution are hard to erase. Old habits die hard, right?

From a biological point of view, when it comes to fear, there are only three parts that matter. The amygdala, the "emotional" brain, the hippocampus, which is basically our memory card, and the prefrontal cortex, short-term memory and helps in receiving information from the outside world. The amygdala's job is to recognise a potential threat and respond to it, whereas the hippocampus and the cortex analyse the context and make sure the response is accurate. Imagine a hippo running at full speed towards you. Terrifying, isn’t it? The amygdala thinks so too. It will send a response through the whole body to make you get out of there. Now, imagine a hippo lavishing in a pond at the zoo. Not so terrifying. The response will be a lot milder, maybe just an increased sense of curiosity or just a higher heart rate.

Although it is not entirely understood how the fear circuit works in the brain, we know for sure that those three parts are the major players. Take for example Phineas Gage, who had his whole frontal lobe destroyed by an iron pole and became completely uninhibited, losing his sense of fear and self-consciousness. Or this other patient, S.M., who had a damaged amygdala. As a result, she was unable to recognise fear in other people's faces. These observations, among many others, of patients missing one of these key brain parts, enabled scientists to construe some of their functions.

Although a fundamental coordinate in all human (and animal) world, fear is undeservedly ignored or sometimes even outright ridiculed.

When the fear circuit and the other things working alongside it aren't working properly we encounter different disorders. This is very noticeable during puberty. While the brain isn't necessarily breaking apart, the teenager certainly is. Due to a lot of hormonal changes the brain is left vulnerable. A study carried out by Harvard University shows that most people suffering from mental illness have had an early start during childhood or adolescence. In Romania, mental illness is highly stigmatized, most people never going to the doctor for such issues or outright ignoring any professional opinion given. Even though some schools have hired psychologists for this, they are very rare and can usually only be found in urban areas. The rural part falls victim to more domestic and substance abuse as well as early school leaving, all of which are very damaging towards the mental state of not only teens, but adults also. Not enough resources are being allocated for this issue and this is starting to show in the daily behaviour of daily people.

Socially speaking, the media's relationship with fear is somewhat hypocritical, in my opinion. On one hand, there is the belief that fear is the thing that stops you from living life to the full and that it should be disposed of. This can be observed not only in movies, TV shows and books targeting a younger audience where character tropes seem to run rampant. The protagonist of most of these stories seems to lack any sense of fear, most of the time their whole character arc being their journey to show 'bravery'. Likewise, this can be observed on Youtube, with people pulling dangerous stunts, doing parkour without proper equipment, jet skiing in a pool, all for the sake of online popularity. One the other hand, you have news outlets which use fear as a way to entice you to read their newspapers and articles. Sensationalized headlines that use language meant to cause an emotional reaction to get you to read. Popular wording used in such cases includes: You won't believe what this person said about…, Parent worried for children because…, This is scarier than anything you can imagine!

I would like to make sure that my point is understood. While fear, when it's at its extremes, could be a debilitating experience for a lot of people, the complete removal of fear wouldn't do us any more good, as it is a mechanism set in place to protect us. Despite our, sometimes, skewed perception of it, it is a good thing.

Book Review – "Star Wars: The Weapon of a Jedi"

Aurelia Popescu, 9 G

"Star Wars" – a global phenomenon which has captured the heart of kids everywhere since the 1980's, now at its last chapter as "The Rise of Skywalker" will soon be premiering all across the world. As the saga's end is nearing, let's take a look back at one of the books which spawned in the wait of the sequel trilogy to rise, "Star Wars: The Weapon of a Jedi".

Written by Jason Fry, a very well known author in the "Star Wars" universe, the book's purpose is to bring out the nostalgic part in its fans with its story taking place between the 4th and 5th episode of the saga, with the beloved hero Luke Skywalker taking on yet another challenge in order to fulfil his training in the Force. However, the book also gives a few hints to the movie "The Force Awakens", as the blurb on the cover says: "Hidden within the story are clues about the highly anticipated new film". At that time back in 2015, every detail regarding the beginning of the new trilogy was very important to the fandom. The book also features art by Phil Noto, an artist very well known for his comic book issues in the Marvel and DC universes.

In the difficult times after the destruction of the Death Star, the hero Luke Skywalker is sent on a recon mission in the heart of the Empire. After running into some trouble with some of its ships in a restricted system, he is forced to take refuge on the planet of Devaron. Guided by the Force, he will continue his training as a Jedi while facing imperial and local threats joined by his loyal droids, C-3PO and R2-D2, as well as his new devaronan friend, Farnay.

"The Weapon of a Jedi" is an easy book to read, however full of detailed action scenes and descriptions of the characters, suitable for any "Star Wars" fan in the galaxy. Everyone can get captivated in the X-Wing and TIE fighters fights or the ones based around Luke's blue lightsaber, just as in the other books written by Fry. I recommend this book to every Jedi in training. And don't forget about the final chapter of the Skywalker saga, "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker", which will come out on the 20th of December.

THE EXPANDING UNIVERSE AND THE BIG BANG

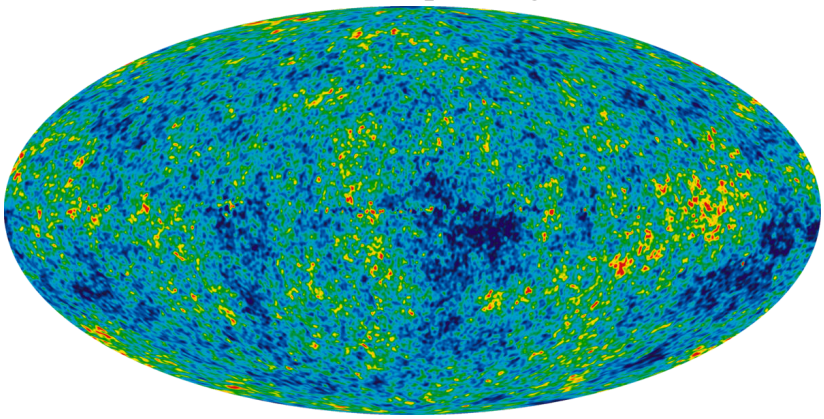
Matei Dăianu, 7th grade

This text is about modern-day cosmology and our understanding of the Universe as a whole. It will be a journey that will take you from Hubble's discovery of an expanding Universe to our newest and most fascinating ideas about the origin and evolution of the Universe.

THE END OF THE STEADY STATE MODEL:

The Steady State theory was an idea accepted by most scientists back in the days. It postulated that our Universe is in an infinite unchanging state, so it had no beginning and no end. That was mostly accepted until in 1929 Edwin Hubble discovered that there were other galaxies out there. One hundred years ago it was believed that The Milky Way Galaxy was the only galaxy, so it represented the entire Universe. By measuring the distance to distant objects, he discovered that they are outside our galaxy. Back then we thought that the discernible objects were just interstellar gas and dust. Well, our Milky Way is just one of the hundreds of billions galaxies in the Observable Universe. Back to Hubble, he didn't just discover that there are other galaxies in the Universe, but he also discovered that the farther the galaxies are, the farther they move from us. The Universe must have been expanding. This phenomenon is called The Doppler Effect. Imagine the sound of the cars. The closer they are the noisier they get. This also true with light. The only difference is that the closer the object is the bluer it gets. So, if a galaxy is speeding away from you, it will have a reddish color. This is also called the Red Shift. Hubble also discovered a law, which is of course called Hubble's Law. It says that the velocity at which a galaxy moves away from you is proportional to its distance from you. So, if the galaxy A is 2 times farther from an observer than galaxy B, it will move 2 times faster. The equation of Hubble's Law is this: $v = H * d$ (where v is the velocity, H is Hubble' constant and d is the distance of the galaxy from the observer). From the assumption that the Universe is expanding, a catholic priest said that a long time ago the Universe had to be a small point, which he called the primitive atom. Imagine the Universe. Because it's expanding yesterday it was smaller than today. Go back until you reach a moment in the past when the Universe was smaller than an electron. We call that moment in time The Big Bang. At that instant moment of creation our equations tell us that Gravity is infinite. This is because we haven't yet developed a Quantum Theory of Gravity. What we do know is that entropy was 0 at the Big Bang. The biggest evidence for the Big Bang is what we call The Cosmic Microwave Background Radiation. The Big Bang model suggests that in the first hundred years after The Big Bang the temperature was very high. The electron ran freely throughout the Cosmos. So the photons were constantly absorbed or emitted by electrons. The photons didn't have enough time to produce radiation. 380 000 years after the Big Bang, the temperature went down to 3000 degrees Kelvin. The electrons were caught by atoms in their orbits and the photons were free. They left a faint background of microwaves. The Cosmic Microwave Background Radiation was detected. It was a good sign. That radiation is the farthest light we observed. Since we don't have access to an earlier time, we can only have theories about the Primordial Universe, with this is that there is a difference between the Big Bang singularity and the Black hole singularity, because the Big Bang happened at the beginning of time. The Big Bounce suggests an infinite cycle: the Universe expands until it reaches a maximum size and collapses until it reaches

the Planck's length and bounces back into an expanding Universe.

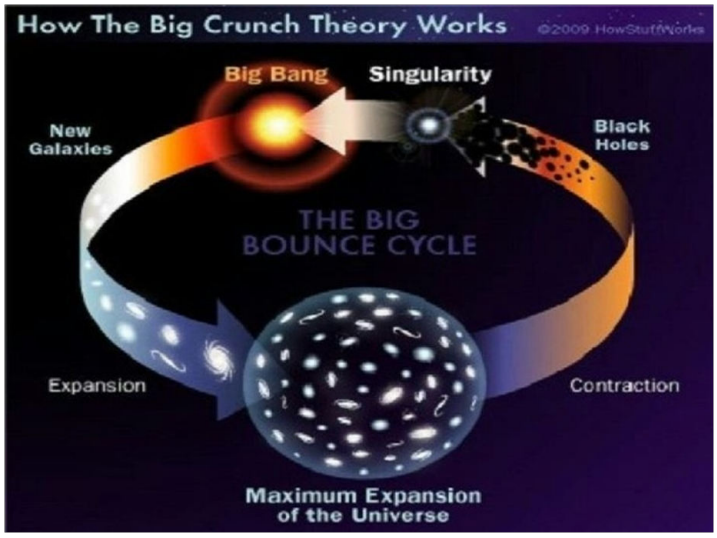


This image shows how uniform the Universe was back then. Because of this uniformity some problems were found. For example, the Universe didn't have enough time to be so homogenous. This problem can be solved by Inflation, which says that after 10^{-42} seconds after the Big Bang, the Universe doubled its size and expanded very rapidly, and was flattened by its own expanding so fast. This made the Universe homogenous.
So, this is the end of the Steady State Theory. Cosmologists believe that the Universe began 13.8 billion years ago.

POSSIBLE ORIGIN FOR THE BIG BANG: **THE BIG BOUNCE**

The Big Bounce model comes from a theory called the Loop Quantum Gravity. In this theory there is a minimum size an object can have. It's called the Planck Length. The equation is this:

$L_p = \sqrt{\frac{\hbar \cdot G}{c^3}} = 10^{-33}$ cm.The theory says that nothing can be smaller than that. But if an object collapses to this size it will bounce back. So, that means that the Big Bang could have been created by a collapsing which bounced back into the universe we see today. In my opinion the most beautiful part of this theory is that it explains so naturally the expansion of the universe. A pre-Big Bang Universe collapsed and bounced back into the expanding Universe we see today. Another alternative may be that we are living inside a black hole. In our Universe there are many Black Holes. They are formed when a very massive objects collapses under its own weight. It also reaches the Planck Length, since it's a singularity after all. When it reaches the Planck Length the object may expand like in the Big Bounce Model and create another Universe. So our universe may be inside a Black Hole from a 4-dimensional universe. The problem with this is that there is a difference between the Big Bang singularity and the Black hole singularity, because the Big Bang happened at the beginning of time. The Big Bounce suggests an infinite cycle: the Universe expands until it reaches a maximum size and collapses until it reaches the Planck's length and bounces back into an expanding Universe.



Two Gems

Our young poets and writers invite you to read

Alexandru Iordan, 11 D

Behold, for on your path of ascension two gems rest in dormant silence! A monument of fading glory faintly shining like a fadeless legacy with a purpose half concluded… and another that serves as the harbinger of your future. That which shall predict your fulfilment is your high school.

It was born not very long ago, in 1913, to serve one unique purpose: that of guiding children closer to success. A hundred years later it hasn't changed its course, yet it meets something like never before. Challenge was brought upon the clearness of that gem and so it was about to shine brighter than never before or be turned asunder by the very trial that former student submitted it to. Coming to school on a whiteout cold winter night, he felt the very stinging concert of old cracking buildings and the lengthy passage of the street that his childhood burned deep into his memory. Nobody either considered him interesting or found any of his ideas valuable but that made him persevere and become successful. He spent years studying and trying to fulfil his only and very ardent dream of restoring something that had been lost. So far had his feelings and lust for restoration brought him that the man did things beyond the humanly achievable. The journey was full of excitement and mystery because he did not only focus on a perished existence but also made a life of his own. He crossed paths with the most brilliant of people and harnessed their valuable words into one single state-of-the-art piece of marvellous engineering. Having been proven successful, the blueprint of the first ever constructed time machine had to be used once again inside the high school's engineering room. The clocks were ticking against the purpose of restoration. Rumours had spread and the greedy began swarming the world. Only desolation awaited his existence with failure at hand. So meaningless was he on the great scheme of things that he had to move quickly. But he needed time, lots of it to build his machine. And there unfortunately had been none trustworthy enough to lend him enough hours. One good friend had he left and the last to bewitch him with kindness and sincerity, his former desk mate who on that winter day warned his friend. Coming to visit him one night he noticed several police cars struggling on the road. The creator of the time machine had to be warned of the incoming threat so he quickly texted a message and bought his friend some time. When the police reached the place he pretended to be the one looked after while the true pursued one had already made it out with a bag of scrap, the blueprint and thick clothing. He travelled along the dark streets and kept his wits against the style-so-fresh frostbites caused by the powerful blizzard that tried to camouflage him from those who sought him.

He reached the front door. Light was coming from the inside yet it somehow felt like it was being disrupted by the strong wind, like childhood rematerializing in ripples of light. The same gatekeepers he left to the oblivion of his memory after he graduated in 2021 reappeared

in front of him… older, wiser and playing the usual game of backgammon. They recognized the man and old sparks turned dead shadows into vivid fire. It was the homecoming of their even-better-than-their-best-backgammon-buddy who came to accomplish his dream. They talked for a while and then they guided him towards the engineering room. It was time to take hold of the rudder and reshape the wrongdoings of his teenage years into success. It was a matter of love and its power to change reality, especially for all those wonderful years when everything was so sincere.

So he started working and following each step on his blueprint precisely. He was so excited to meet his love again and by each and every step he felt even closer to it. As soon as he finished a thought struck his mind. He geared up and locked the door. Morning was coming, but the storm was not fading. He went to see a house right around the corner where he knew his girlfriend would live. It was no longer inhabited because it seemed its last function was that of a high-end restaurant that had hit bankruptcy. If she wasn't there then something bad must have happened to her after finishing studies. He went back to his time machine…

Somehow something strayed from that high school's tradition. Someone did not become fulfilled because they chose not to believe they could shine...but luckily there was one among all in that generation to become a saviour. He loved her from the moment he saw her. Unluckily the time had to make a loop in order for their time to start.

He travelled back in time and by some mechanism only he knew he also restored his teenager age. He had prepared for that day for years so he knew it was the perfect time for him to succeed. He went out of the room, locked the door and made sure nobody could get inside by stealing the key and hiding it beneath a plant pot. Knowing nobody noticed, the boy started running to meet his love because a great burden would have weighted heavily upon his soul if failure prevailed. He met her… for the first time… and with a 10 years' old excitement he walked her around the school. They got on so well just as if they had known each other for a lifetime. There was little time to celebrate though because the time machine had still been inside the engineering room and he had to bring her to it and vanish into a time period only he knew would make their love everlasting. Whatever they did was unknown, but it surely made the high school shine brighter years later. Nobody felt their absence because everyone thought they both had to move out…of town… urgently.

So… there you see two important gems on the Italian street. There is one where offspring rise, where things so simple become very difficult and getting to know someone can oft be as difficult as building a time machine and messing stuff around even worse than in a "Terminator" movie. The other gem? A beautiful house built in 1895, owned by Miss Matilda, a relative of the royal family. In time it became an irrelevant beautiful residence… until the love of two former students came to once again make it shine.

Quite lengthy? I guess the street is even longer than this and even more mysterious than… it seems.

JOKER – A MOVIE REVIEW

CORVIN GHIȚĂ, 10 A

This movie is not going to be (and should not be) understood by its audience. It is a revealing story of a complex man, living in an even more complex society, with clear rules, boundaries and expectations. The movie, despite its title, has nothing to do with the comic book stories of Batman vs. Joker. Many scenes which were considered unsettling do play an important role–they reflect the personal development of the main character, and also how society managed to fail him as an individual.

Arthur Fleck is the name of the leading figure, a man in his 40s with a rather peculiar syndrome – uncontrollable laughing at random time intervals. Having such a disorder would cause others to react – there are many moments when one should take a serious stance and behave accordingly. Therefore, his evident (and justified) lack of self-control has encouraged people to treat him as an outcast, a person which no one wants to associate themselves with.

I believe that the presentation of his evolution is very thorough – there are no times in which the characters behave unnaturally, or when the scene itself seems hard to believe. Everything develops into a horrifying climax, then ending beautifully, leaving those who watched the movie utterly speechless.

Arthur begins as an unhappy man trying his best to make others smile around him, this being deeply reflected in his career choice as a clown. The action takes place in the 80's, in the uttermost dystopian city of Gotham, governed by the rich and leaving the unprivileged (including Arthur) suffer and live in poverty in the famished outskirts. One ordinary day he found himself surrounded by a number of violent teens – he was assaulted and greatly injured. Upon hearing of this, one of his colleagues decided to give him a real gun. To some extent, Arthur needed this kind of protection. And he pulled the trigger when he again was confronted with a similar situation.

Arthur murdering those men, while wearing a clown mask unintentionally started a massive movement in Gotham, people protesting the government's lack of interest in their own city and the well-being of their citizens. The joker became a statement – it was a change in society that no one expected, and yet they had always desired. The clown makeup was a reference to the Anonymous mask, a decentralized international group known for its various cyber attacks on the USA and UK governments. Therefore, Arthur became a leader, an anarchist whom the people wanted and deeply respected.

This review is not meant to dive into the profound aspects of the plot – I am certain that the movie is far too impressive for its story to be uncovered. The actors starring in this creation – Joaquin Phoenix, Robert De Niro, and many more, have proved yet again that their acting is beyond excellence. Their seamless and natural reactions merge wonderfully to create the daunting story, one which is bound to leave some unhappy and appalled.

To sum up, I firmly believe that this movie is not for the comic book community – it is for those willing to take on a different perspective of society, how unforgiving and divisive it is, and how a suffering man was pushed to insanity. This is not meant to say that the Joker is entitled to murder and generate chaos – it is only a perspective, an opinion meant to be watched and appreciated.

Horror movies and why they're both adored and hated by people

Briana Prejoianu, 11 B

Horror movies are usually a hit or miss with audiences. Depending on the person, horror movies could both be seen as the most entertaining piece of content to ever bless this planet and also as a horrible abomination sent down from hell to haunt us. Anyway people feel very strongly about hem, be it in a good way or a bad way. Today I'd like to present both the good and the bad in this genre.

I'll start with the good since it's always better to start off light. Watching horror movies is one of the best social activities. First of all it can turn out to be hilarious, based on your friend group and obviously on your ability to stomach the content presented. From my experience there are 4 types of friends to a horror movie. The scaredy cat, the meanie, the joker and the neutral. The scaredy cat is pretty much self-explanatory. This type of person will jump, scream and sometimes even cry at the tiniest hint of supernatural activity presented within the movie. The meanie could not exist without them. The meanie is that friend that makes sure to always scare the aforementioned type when the time feels right or to just make fun of them for the whole entirety of the movie. This one is either really annoying or really fun depending on your morals and the scared one's temper. Speaking of making fun, the last interesting type is the joker. This person will make sure literally no one could physically get scared by the movie by ruining the atmosphere every 5 minutes with weird remarks or ridiculous scenarios. The actual last type is the neutral. This one is just indifferent. Doesn't get scared, doesn't really care about other shenanigans, just tries their best to enjoy the movie as much as possible and to be honest, how dare they consume content the way it's supposed to be consumed? All jokes aside, this is the only category that is there for the movie itself and not for other friendly encounters.

Obviously watching with friends is not really the only fun way you can enjoy such movies. Horror movies are considered to be one of the top picks for date nights, excluding romcoms. And why is that you may ask? Well that has to do with the scaredy cat I talked about earlier. Who wouldn't want their partner snuggling up to them out of fear of what's to come on the screen, turning to them for the protection they so desperately crave? No one in their right mind would dislike that! (Doesn't matter that most times in this scenario the "scaredy cat" isn't even scared, just looking for an excuse to get close).

Apart from the social aspect, these movies could also be enjoyed alone, but these cases are quite rare unless it's Halloween, for reasons I'm about to give in a bit.

Now that we're done with the good, let's talk about the bad. Horror movies have a notorious reputation of being considered horrendous from a critical standpoint with few gems actually getting decent ratings. Unfortunately, they are usually chaotic messes with too many plot holes to count, with awful narrative flaws and incredibly unlikable characters. You may think it's not that big of a deal as long it does its job of scaring the viewer, but here I am to correct you. Horror movies can rarely scare you if you do not care about the characters or if you don't get invested in the story. Cheap jump-scares can only do so much until you get used to some disfigured figure popping up on your screen for the nth time. Caring about the characters however? Wouldn't you be on edge every time a threat popped up in their way, rooting for your favourite character while also being terrified of the possibility of their death? What about the story? What if a horror movie had such a good story that it could mentally scar you with or without the gruesome imagery? There is no such thing these days unfortunately. There are only visually dependable movies which sometimes manage to even mess up that department. Unless directors start abandoning clichés and start focusing on more than the amount of cuts on some zombie's face, we won't see a rise in quality or popularity too soon.

Do we place importance on people's aspect or on their intellectual abilities?

Bichir Maria, 12 F

What happens to tattoos when you are looking for a job? This is one of the problems of today's society which puts in difficulty a large number of young people who express their style through the art of tattoos.

Many studies show that tattoos are no longer an impediment to finding a job, but is this really the case? Or is it just a simple study? If self-care is committed to auditing and consulting, is there a visible problem when it comes to employment?

In most countries that have not banned tattoos, for religious reason, the problem is finding a job when you have some tattoos in sight. The employer has the freedom to refuse a possible employee, if he is dissatisfied with this aspect, without breaking any law.

Let's reach a happy first case, of tolerance towards tattoos. In 2013, in the Czech Republic, an individual named Vladimir Franz, composer and painter, provost at the Theater Faculty in Prague, participated in the presidential elections. His body was 90% covered with tattoos. This created a real political discussion on a possible victory and what could happen in this case with international relations. It was sanctioned by many people but it had enormous support from the young people who saw this candidate as a good example for the whole world. Unfortunately, Vladimir Franz did not win the elections and so, welcome back to the question if people's appearance matters more than their intellectual abilities.

Coming home, let us analyze the measure introduced in Romania by law no.360/2002 regarding the status of officers through GEO no. 53/2018 in force from July 2, where it is specified that candidates can participate in competitions or examinations for the position of police officers fulfilling, besides standard conditions, the following criterion: "he/she shall not have tattoos or ornamental elements, of any kind, applied, inserted or implanted on/in the body or covered by clothing, in the summer outfit". Although police officers are theoretically allowed to have tattoos, these have to be either out of sight or covered during the program. Thus the question arises whether an individual's freedom to have tattoos is real, when they are restricted to be in less visible places or to be masked.

However, this problem arises in many professions, which should not depend on this criterion, but on the intellectual capacities. Company policies regarding tattoos on board companions clearly mentions the prohibition of the existence of a tattoo on the body (Qatar Airways, Etihad Airways), and some allow tattoos only if they are covered by the uniform (Emirates, Wizzair etc.).

Two laws go head to head, because one allows for a tattoo from the age of 18, and the other restricts young people's right to have tattoos to find a job. What should a young man do who wants to express his creativity through a tattoo, but still needs a job? Currently, they are subjected to prejudices ignorant of the fact that the appearance of tattoos determines neither the intellect, nor the experience of an individual. It is a case of discrimination, which unfortunately cannot be invoked in any complaint, because most regulations mention that the employer has the right to choose their employees according to their desired criteria.

As we are discussing the status of police officers, stewards, teachers, or many other professions, it is clear that the preference goes towards individuals without tattoos. But this highlights a big problem for young people in today's society, who create a story through tattoos and are either forced to give up certain jobs or give up tattoos. However, neither of the two are a good option for a society that wants equality without prejudice.

Tattoos: why, how and the way they influence us on a daily basis

Abe Răşenescu, 12 G

Nowadays, when you think of tattoos, you're probably either one of those who think of sailors and prison inmates or one of those who immediately think of popular artists like Lil Peep, Post Malone and many, many others. Alternatively, you could belong to the vast majority of normal people with no commitment issues whatsoever.

Even though tattoos are more acceptable in present, they went through a lot of perception changes. From the oldest times they used to represent a sign of power but that kept changing over time, now they only being an aesthetic statement mostly. If you don't believe me, take a look for yourself of how tattoos were represented on native Americans, political figures celebrities and ordinary people.

As a young tattoo artist I come across the question "**Why?**" quite often. It comes in many shapes and forms but at the end it's still "Why did you get those on you?" and "Why are you doing this?" In a way it's weird to explain the process of deciding on a design and then getting it permanently on you but as you would expect there are a few steps to be taken before you make the final decision. It is firstly extremely important **not** to go with the flow as many young people do – I've had 13 year olds come up to me asking for random face tattoos just because it's cool. After that, just ponder on the idea of seeing that design everyday and if you think that's what you want just go for it!

Now on the topic of why I have chosen to cover half of my right leg with tattoos…well I'm not really the type to do things by the book so mostly I designed all my tattoos and just went for them as soon as the design was ready.

With the addition of tattoos to your look, you'll have to expect the usual "**How?** Did it hurt? Is it permanent? Can I touch it?" so let me just clear those right up. Most tattoos are done with a special machine or a special tool if you're going for handpoked traditionals and yes, most tattoos do hurt at least a little. For the other 2, it depends on each person to answer.

But one of the most interesting question is "**How do tattoos influence us?**" Well there are more perspectives to the question – if you are tattooed (even though they have become more common amongst young adults) then you might be seen as more intimidating and be considered a punk but regarding how having tattoos changes your view of the world…eh, it really doesn't, the most it will do is give you a confidence boost.

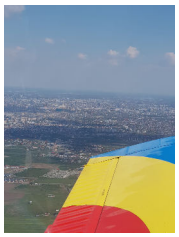
With this being said, the bottom line is that despite how popular tattoos are at the moment, there is still lots of prejudice and misconceptions surrounding the subject. But if you really want a tattoo, my advice would be to make sure to get what you want and just have fun with it!

Did you know that about tattoos?

- Ancient Britons wore tattoos. One tribe was named by the Romans "Picti", which means "The painted people"
- The Roman term for tattoos was "Stigmata" because they were used to mark slaves or criminals
- Emperor Constantine (306-373 A.D.) banned tattoos considering that they blemished the body, which was created "in God's image"
- the word "tattoo" comes from Tahiti, its root meaning being "to hit" ; tattooing was brought to England by Captain Cook who voyaged to Tahiti
- tattooing was a hobby of the aristocracy at first because it was expensive
- after tattoos became cheap, they were seen as a mark of lower class
- Sir Winston Churchill had an anchor tattooed on his forearm
- Thomas Edison invented the machine that ultimately became the tattoo machine. He is believed to have had a geometric model composed of five dots, a quincunx, tattooed on his arm.
- The hippie movement made tattoos an acceptable form of self-expression
- The US Marine rules and regulations allow no tattoos above the collar bone or on the wrists, ankles or knees

The millennial dream of man to fly

Text and photos: Mihai Vasilățeanu, 11 F



You may wonder why I chose to write this article and suggest such a niche career. Well, the answer is that I am currently studying to get my ultra-light plane pilot license (ULM), and I've even experienced some flights in a small plane like this, in order that I could properly step into a pilot's shoes and see how it really feels when you manipulate such a machine - an unbelievably thrilling and enjoyable experience. Flying is like a dream and it really has been a dream and an ideal almost obsessively haunting man up until he achieved it. Now it's flying invisibly, stealthily as it is called, and that has also been attained, although not available to everybody yet.

Commonly when thinking about aviation perhaps the first image that strikes our minds is that of an astonishing commercial aircraft that takes us to our long-awaited holiday. Few people, however, have a slight idea about the work of the pilots, who not only skilfully fly those enormous machines, but also do their best in order for us to enjoy a safe, pleasant flight- therefore, we're going to put ourselves in a pilot's place and discover more about this fascinating career.

Historically speaking, aviation has been of great interest for people ever since the dawn of humanity. In Antique China, around 200 B.C., a primitive form of flying object appeared, similar to a present glider, the famous kite. However, its origin has lead to controversy among scientists, some of them stating that the kite was actually invented by a Greek named Archytos, who lived in the 4th century. The main inspiration for flying came from contemplating the flight of the birds, and man went on to actual attempts to fly like them, in a dangerous competition to overcome the forces of nature, this turning out to be a failure at the beginning. Leonardo da Vinci, in 1493, was the first who approached flight in a scientific manner. He designed the incipient form of a helicopter, this being the first known drawing of any helicopter-like machine. Regarding our country, Romania also has a rich tradition in aviation. At the beginning of the 20th century, pioneers such as Henri Coanda, Aurel Vlaicu, Traian Vuia and George Valentin Bibescu made important contributions to early aviation history, building revolutionary aeroplanes and contributing to the international scene.

How fascinating the background of aviation is! Now, let's immerse ourselves in this captivating world and life of a pilot- first of all, aviation is divided into three different branches, depending on their purpose. Firstly, there is military aviation, with the aim of protecting a country's air space and boundaries. Then civilian aviation comes, consisting of a variety of branches, like transport (people and goods), sports, and general aviation, which represents the private transport and recreational flying component of aviation.

Probably the most popular of all is the civilian commercial transport aviation, frequently envisaged as a desirable career, so we're going to focus on it and its advantages and disadvantages. First of all, the flight training time to become a pilot is relatively short- you need approximately three years of theoretical and practical training to achieve the first rank in civil aviation, First Officer (co-pilot), also depending on the country you live in. Furthermore, you constantly get to know a bewildering variety of new and interesting people, as crew members change frequently, and so do your passengers and everyone else involved in the industry. In addition, it is a very satisfying job, considering the countless benefits you get, like wandering all around the world to marvellous holiday destinations and getting paid for it or receiving perches such as considerable discounts or even free flights for some members of your family. What is more, once you achieve the highest rank in civil aviation, that of Captain, you are assigned a series of powers: from the very beginning, you decide whether the flight will even take place or not, generally depending on weather conditions. After that, you are mainly responsible for everything related to your passengers and aircraft. As Captain, you can officiate marriages during your flight or even declare a person dead. Moreover, should a passenger happen to behave so improperly that he puts the passengers' safety in danger, the captain is able to put the person under arrest.

On the other hand, exciting though it maybe, this job also has its disadvantages. To begin with, after successfully finishing your flight school training, the hardest part will be finding a job: as you only have 100 to150 hours of flight experience, many airlines won't even bother to reply to your application. So, at the beginning, it is recommended to take on any job to gain experience. For example, it is better to accept a job as a general aviation or private jet pilot than stay on the ground.

Apart from the ups and downs of this career, you may now ask yourself what steps should be taken to achieve your long dreamed goal, that of becoming a pilot. First of all, you have to follow the courses of a flight school, which generally takes from 2 to 3 years. However, paying for flight school can be very expensive, and, unfortunately, flight schools do not offer scholarships at all. Therefore, you may have to start saving money long before your application or find someone who would lend you the money, the costs rising up to around 43.000 Euros in Romania, for example. In addition, a flight school certificate is no match to a university degree, so most pilots usually take up university courses, relevant to their working field, so that they can fulfil and broaden their technical skills and knowledge about aviation.

All in all, becoming a pilot has always been a most heated desire for many people, including me. Personally, I can't think of something more enjoyable and relieving than floating through the air, on your way to a wonderful destination. Maybe others think differently, but what we can all agree on is the fact that when it comes to your career we should all follow our heart, establish a goal and fight to achieve it.

Winston Churchill- the British Bulldog

Daniel Gabriel Coca, 12 G

Perhaps the most influential British personality of the last century, Sir Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill is widely known as the brilliant statesman who saved the United Kingdom from the brink of defeat during the Second World War, but how many of us have had the curiosity to look into other aspects of his life?

The purpose of this article is to draw to light what made Winston Churchill the renowned and respected politician that, along with many forgotten heroes, managed to save the free world from the German war-machine.

I will try not to bore the reader with endless facts about his upbringing and only present some essential background information.

Winston Churchill was born on the 30th of November 1874, in Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire and was of rich, aristocratic ancestry. He had mixed American and British lineage, but was born in Britain's governing elite, as he was a direct descendant of the Dukes of Marlborough. His grandfather, John Spencer-Churchill, 7th Duke of Marlborough, had been a Member of Parliament (MP) for ten years, a member of the Conservative Party who served in the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli.

Although achieving poor grades at school, his early fascination with militarism saw him join the Royal Cavalry in 1895, after graduating from the Royal Military of Sandhurst. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the 4th Queen's Own Hussars regiment of the British Army, based at Aldershot. As a soldier and part-time journalist, Churchill travelled widely, including trips to Cuba, Afghanistan, Egypt and South Africa. He saw action in India, Egypt and during the Boer War in South Africa.

While in the Army, he wrote military reports for the Pioneer Mail and the Daily Telegraph, and two books on his experiences, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force* (1898) and *The River War* (1899).

As regards Churchill's political views, these have shifted over time, but for the most part of his political career, he was a member of the Conservative Party. In one letter he declared himself "a Liberal in all but name", and his agenda comprised a mix of reformist and conservative perspectives, as he supported the promotion of secular, non-denominational education while at the same time opposing women's suffrage, referring to the Suffragettes as "a ridiculous movement".

Churchill was elected as Conservative MP for Oldham in 1900, before defecting to the Liberal Party in 1904 and spending the next decade climbing the ranks of the Liberal government. He was First Lord of the Admiralty (the civil/political head of the Royal Navy) at the time of the disastrous Gallipoli campaign, which he created. Heavily criticised for this error, he resigned from this position and travelled to the Western Front to fight himself.

What boosted Winston Churchill's popularity, as well as the morale of his nation, were his emblematic speeches, which certainly have their place in history.

In his first address as Prime-Minister to the House of Commons, he gave the famous "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat" speech. One historian has called its effect on Parliament "electrifying". The House of Commons that had ignored him during the 1930s "was now listening, and cheering". Churchill followed that closely with two other equally famous speeches, given just before the Battle of Britain. One included the words: "... we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender."

The other: "Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves, that if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, 'This was their finest hour'."

At the height of the Battle of Britain, his bracing survey of the situation included the memorable line "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few", which engendered the enduring nickname The Few for the RAF fighter pilots who won it.

His speeches energised the nation, which fought bravely against the German invaders, and by 1945 managed to draw them back to the walls of Berlin. However, Labour leader Clement Attlee's unexpected General Election victory in 1945 saw Churchill out of office and once again concentrating on public speaking. In his 1946 speech in the USA, the instinctive pro-American famously declared that "an iron curtain has descended across the Continent", and warned of the continued danger from a powerful Soviet Russia.

By the time of his re-election in 1951, Churchill was, according to Roy Jenkins, "gloriously unfit for office". Ageing and increasingly unwell, he often conducted business from his bedside, and although his powerful personality and oratory ability endured, the Prime Minister's leadership was less decisive than during wartime. His second term was most notable for the Conservative Party's acceptance of Labour's newly created Welfare State, and Churchill's effect on domestic policy was limited. His later attempts at decreasing the developing Cold War through personal diplomacy failed to produce significant results, and poor health forced him to resign in 1955, making way for his Foreign Secretary and Deputy Prime Minister, Anthony Eden.

Churchill died in 1965, and was honoured with a state funeral.

Finally, what is to remember about the great personality of Winston Churchill is that, even in the worst of times there is hope, and to put it through his own words, "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.", a firm belief we should all adhere to, because it echoes the crucial life lesson to keep striving, regardless of the circumstances.

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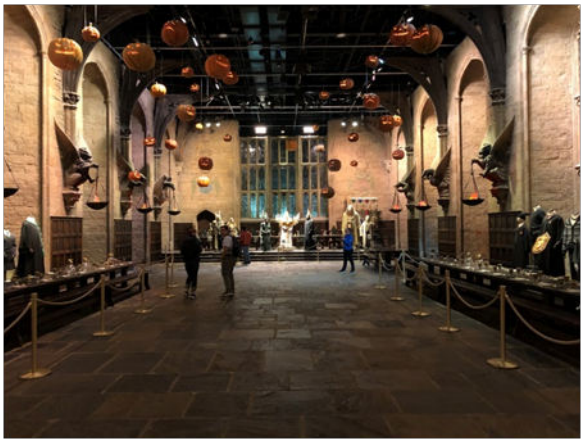
TWO KIDS IN TOWN –

Our short list of London TOP PLACES

Nora Micu and Mihai Cretu, 7th grade

Nora and Mihai: **The Harry Potter Studios** : The Harry Potter Studios are not far from London. They have a large variety of Harry Potter related objects, items from the movies, food and merchandise. There are 13 rooms: the entrance filled with posters and clothes from Fantastic Beasts and The Crimes of Grindelwald and a cement plaque where Emma Watson, Rupert Grint and Daniel Radcliffe once left the imprints of their hands; a main room where you can buy your ticket and get your Harry Potter passport, Mr. Weasley's flying car and all sorts of iconic Harry Potter props. Then you enter a room with a large screen and you watch a clip about the Studios. At the end of the clip, the screen rises and the Entrance Hall appears. You get inside and see all of your dreams come true. You can visit the Gryffindor common room, be amazed at the sight of the Burrow, gaze upon Dumbledore's Pensive and even hang out at Hagrid's. You can go into a sketching room, see a miniature Hogwarts and relive movie scenes in the Hogwarts Express. You can drink Butterbeer and buy anything you want in the HARRY POTTER STUDIOS SHOP.



Mihai: **Mada me Tussauds** : If you were to ask me what I would personally visit again from all of the interesting tourist attractions in London, I would pick Madame Tussauds. Sure, I had imagined that it would be a well-made wax museum, but I had no idea that it would be quite so high-caliber. All of the wax figures were extremely well-made and I was amazed at how surprisingly well they mimicked the "real deal". The whole attraction is split up into 10 parts, each portraying an area of celebrity. I couldn't possibly have enough time to mention each and every one, but if I were to mention my favourite one, it would be the "Music Zone". It contains wax figures of "The Beatles", "Freddie Mercury", "Michael Jackson" and many more. Last but not least, recently, a "Marvel Zone" was added, which also contained a 4D movie cinema. Sure, the effects were good, but in my opinion, the story was rubbish.

Nora: **The Welcome Collection** is a museum in London based on old medicine related artifacts. The building also has a large library with hundreds of interesting books. There are many rooms. One of

them shows historical artifacts, like Napoleon's toothbrush and old dentist chairs. Another one hosts a large collection of objects that shows the way people in the medieval times looked at a human's anatomy. There is also a coffee shop where you can enjoy a cup of coffee while reading one of the books.There is a modern medicine room, where you can learn the importance of healthy eating and the use of stomach surgeries.When I visited it, I was given a leaflet with a mystery hunt, and I had the time of my life solving the riddles. This is the kind of museum that I would like to get lost in, and I strongly recommend the visit if you are in London.

Mihai: **Sea Life:** Sea Life is an aquarium with a large display of fish, insects and some other wonders of nature (weirdly enough, the centre I visited also had penguins, and that rocked). Thus, the regions are categorised through climate characteristics. There is a polar region, desert region, rainforest region, a.s.o. One of the cool but dubious things you can do there is stick your head through a unyielding globe-like structure, to be able to observe the different insects from up-close (and personal). Other than that, there's not much to say… Sure, it's a good aquarium, but if you're not a hardcore fan of zoology, you may not find it that interesting. The store, on the other hand, is pretty popular among the tourists. I, myself, found the items a bit childish, but there are some nice key-rings you could buy.

And now, we have a short interview with one another:

M: So, question number 1: What was your favourite part about the Harry Potter studios?

N: I think it was the miniature Hogwarts, the many details blew my mind! What was your personal favourite part?

M: I really liked the Forbidden Forrest. It added a nice eerie feeling to the whole tour.

N: What was your favourite part about Madame Tussauds?

M: My favourite part about Madame Tussauds was the "Beatles" wax figures, but I still have some complaints. In my opinion the 7 HOUR tour was a teeny bit too long. . And your's?

N: My favourite figure was Emma Watson, since she's my favourite actress.

M: What are your thoughts on the whole Sea Life deal?

N: I think it's a beautiful place to visit, and it's the ideal attraction.

M: To be honest I didn't expect you to say that, seeing as how to me, Sea Life was just a boring kids' attraction.

N: So would you like to visit the Wellcome Collection?

M: Sure, seeing as that it contains a massive library, it's one of its prime points.

SICILY – ITALY'S HIDDEN GEM

Text and photos IACOB ȘTEFANIA MARIA, X H

"Sicily is an island lying outside time, where past events endure in an external present, a beach on which the tides of successive civilizations have heaped in disorder their assorted treasure."
Vincent Cronin, The Golden Honeycomb
"The purity of the outlines, the softness of everything, saggy of colors, the harmonious unity of the sky with the sea and the sea with the land ... who saw them once, he owns them for life."
Goethe
Visiting Sicily has been one of the loveliest experiences I've ever had. Even though I've travelled to many places in Europe, Sicily was something completely different for me. This not-so-small island located in Southern Italy was the best opportunity for me to discover another side of the world. With its unique cultural diversity, Sicily is and will forever continue to mesmerize in a way that no place has done before.

Why Sicily in the first place?

Sicily has never been such a popular destination as for example Rome, Milan or Venice. To be honest, I didn't know so much about Sicily before choosing it as my next destination. Of course, like most people, I knew that Sicily was famous (or should I say "infamous"?) for being the place where the Mafia was created. I was only to find out later that the actions of the Mafia in Sicily don't mean anything in comparison to the vast history of this island.

But let's get back to the first point. How did I choose Sicily? Well, at the beginning of February, I just wanted to travel to a warmer place, as I am a person who cannot stand the cold. I had to choose between visiting Palermo, Sicily's biggest city, and Valencia, a city located in Spain. At that time I was watching an Italian TV series from the '80s called 'La Piovra' in which the action was taking place in Palermo. When I found out it was really filmed in Palermo, I was sure that booking a ticket to Sicily was the best choice I could make.

First impressions

When I got out of the plane it was already dark outside and I couldn't see much from the airport which was right next to the beach. The only thing I could hear and feel was the summer-ish breeze and the Mediterranean vibe of this location. Because of this I can say that it was exactly what I have ever wanted from my holiday!

Sicily only showed its beauty at daylight. I have never been so impressed by a city's culture before visiting Palermo, because one can never see just so much of a country's culture on streets and monuments. It is actually a beautiful mix of 4 cultures – Roman, Byzantine, Arab and Norman – which gathered together to create the unique city that stands today. If Palermo was the Italian Capital of Culture in 2018, it is not by chance. When the Italians were asked to make a short description of Palermo in the 'Capitale Italiana della Cultura' brochure, they produced the most accurate preview of what this city really is – the expression of European culture that has engaged in dialogue with the Arab world. Moreover, it is the product of dominions that throughout the centuries have been established here, shaped by the ability of its inhabitants to welcome different cultural influences and mold them into a new culture through an original redevelopment process. Both today and in the times past, culture has been a tool of contrast, of knowledge of the others and an instrument to overcome differences as obstacles to peaceful coexistence.

Favourite spots in Palermo

Palermo's TEATRO MASSIMO

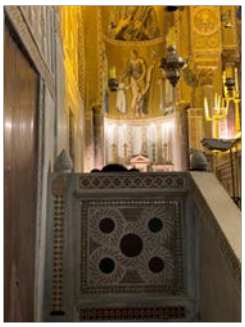
It is one of the greatest opera houses in the world (the third place, after the opera houses in Paris and Vienna), designed and built by G. B. Filippo Basile. Its construction was opposed by many – who criticized the choice of the site: two convents had to be demolished to make place for the new building. Furthermore, it was highly argued that the theatre was excessively large for the city. Umberto I himself, the King of Italy and Sicily, never visited the theatre because he believed that it didn't fit the city's architecture. However, Teatro Massimo will always be one of the most famous symbols of Palermo.

QUATRO CANTITHE CATHEDRAL OF PALERMO

The present-day building is the outcome of a series of additions and alterations carried out in various periods from the 12 century onwards, which saw the appearance of parapets and spires, belfries and buttresses, each telling a story about a time in Sicily's history. The best illustration of the island's rich history may be the Arabic inscription on the far left column of the cathedral's entrance. The inscription, a verse from the seventh Surah of the Quran, was etched during the Islamic rule of Sicily, from approximately the 820s to the 1070s, when the site on which the cathedral now stands housed the Great Mosque of *Bal'harm* (the Arab name of Palermo). Therefore, I strongly believe that this is one of the best examples that in Sicily nothing is what is seems to be!

QUATRO CANTI

This was the most sumptuous monumental crossroads to be created in Europe in the early 17 century. From that period through into the 19C, it was the geometrical centre of the city. The four architectural façades are a clear expression of the idea of imperial power. The architectural complex was also called 'Teatro del Sole' (Theatre of the Sun) because at any time of the day at least one of the four corners will be lit up by sunshine. Quatro Canti was designed by using Italian and mostly Spanish architectural influences.



THE ROYAL PALACE AND PALATINE CHAPEL

Palermo's Royal Palace is the most famous historical palace in the city and one of the most important in Italy. It was the seat of the kings and viceroys of the Kingdom of Sicily and now houses the Sicilian Regional Assembly. The history of the site prior to the construction of the Palace is still controversial. It was presumably occupied by a building used by the Byzantine and later, Saracen governors.

The Palatine Chapel is made entirely in mosaic and even though it has major Byzantine influences, some Arab elements can be seen in it.

LAST GLIMPSE OF SICILY – AEROPORTO DI PALERMO 'FALCONE BORSELLINO'

I find it really interesting that the airport was given the name Falcone Borsellino in memory of the two leading anti-mafia judges - Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino- who were murdered by the Sicilian Mafia in 1992. It stands as one of the international anti mafia fight symbols.

To put it in a nutshell, I must admit that Sicily has been a unique experience for me, as it showed me another perspective on the world. I used to say that the European culture is the richest, without knowing or seeing anything else. Now that I have also seen how cultures less known to me gather into a symbiosis to create something so powerful, I have totally changed all of my opinions about different cultures mixing into one. I would definitely recommend visiting this hidden gem of the Mediterranean in order to discover another way of life than the one we're used to.

„Walking lonely as a cloud". On the eve of Alumni Day 2019 photos– Dana Sburlan
Editorial team, contents and *More than just Bucharest* photos –Dorina Enciu
Two kids in Town– Nora Micu and Mihai Creţu
Internet photos: *THE EXPANDING UNIVERSE AND THE BIG BANG, JOKER – A MOVIE REVIEW*, *Tattoos: why, how and the way they influence us on a daily basis*
The train translation– Dorina Enciu

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