

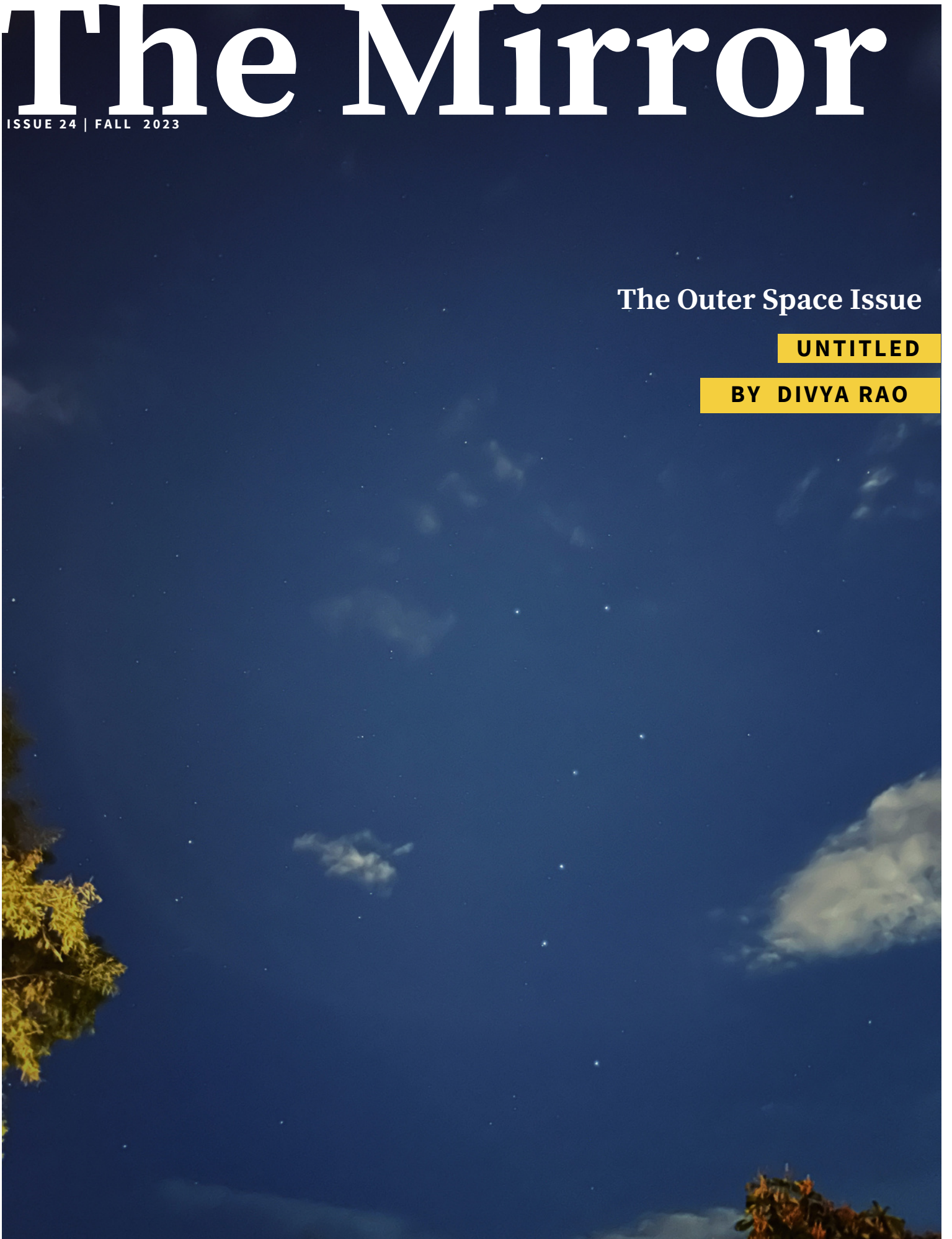
The Mirror

ISSUE 24 | FALL 2023

The Outer Space Issue

UNTITLED

BY DIVYA RAO





FOREWORD FROM THE EDITORS-IN- CHIEF

L Y D I A V L A H O S
A N D
S T E L L A
D A V E N P O R T

Our passionate preoccupation with the sky, the stars, and a God somewhere in outer space is a homing impulse. We are drawn back to where we came from. - Eric Hoffer

As time passes and humans evolve with technological innovations that connect the world, one fascination has always been prevalent: the sky. From constellation, to astrology, to the mythology that coincides, human have been looking up at the night sky in wonder, in want for an explanation to this big beautiful mystery.

THE MIRROR

LITERATURE

Foreword	2
Untitled <i>by Anonymous</i>	4
My Frog, Globus <i>by Amaya Pangilinan</i>	5

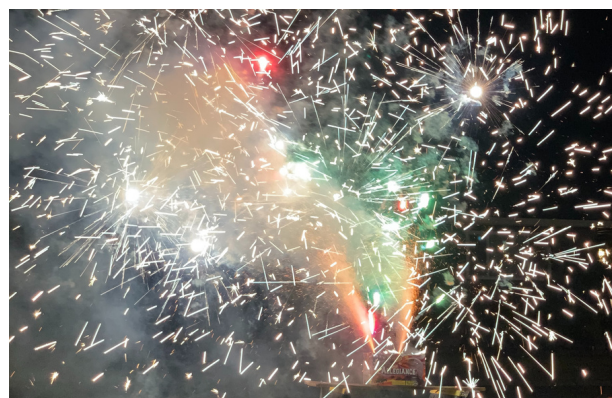


Tropes in Storytelling <i>by Lydia Vlahos</i>	6
Resilience <i>by Victoia Yee</i>	11
Life in a Daydream <i>by Jianna Reyes</i>	14
I'll Meet You In The Stars <i>by Nayeli Kojima</i>	15
The Stars Shone On <i>by Lydia Vlahos</i>	18
Through the Eyes of the Sun <i>by Ava Forte</i>	22
An Ode to Rural California <i>by Anonymous</i>	23
Just In Space <i>by Kathryn McWilliams</i>	24
A Mind of Extremes <i>by Anonymous</i>	26
A Smart Girl's Guide <i>by Stephanie Olvido</i>	27
Best Friend <i>by Cecilia Falcone</i>	29
Mama's Rocking Chair <i>by Charley Viley</i>	30



VISUAL ART

すきなことだけでいいです <i>by Anonymous</i>	9
Photo Collection (Cover) <i>by Divya Rao</i>	10
The Sip <i>by Miah Covarrubias</i>	16
Escape <i>by Miah Covarrubias</i>	17
Untitled <i>by Miah Covarrubias</i>	17
Messages from the Stars <i>by Delilah Ordonez</i>	19
Street Fire: A Photo Collection <i>by Lydia Vlahos</i>	20
Nothing <i>by Yixin Huang</i>	30
Dying Star (Back) <i>by Lydia Vlahos</i>	32



Visit

STFRANCISHS.ORG/MIRROR

to download this current issue

I'm floating.
I don't know where I am.
All I know is that I
can see the world from so far away,
I've lost my way.
I'm in outer space,
I have no place
on Earth.

I'm floating.
I don't know where I've been.
I can feel the sand inside my socks
but there's mud on my shoes.

Where was I?
In the mountains, on the shore?
There's no way to be sure

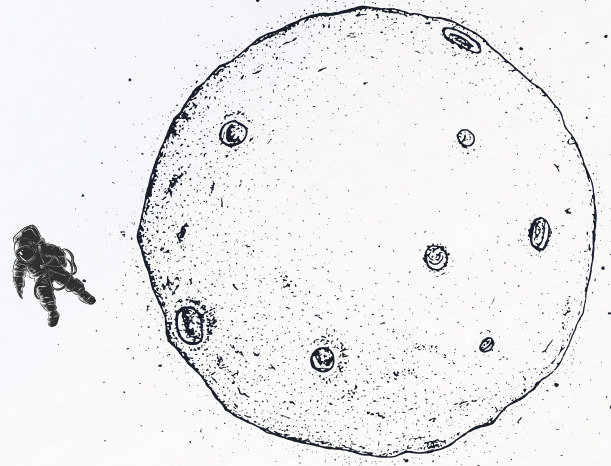
I'm floating.
What have I been doing?
Going from class to class,
staring out of the glass,
seeing the sun move
some days fast, some days slow.
Then come home.
Then sleep.
Then *try* to sleep.
(So tired I can't sleep)
Then wake up.
Then *try* to wake up.
(So stressed I become relaxed)
Then realize months have gone by,
and I was floating this whole time;
Life skipping along with a string in her hand

Will she let go?
What will happen if she does?
Will I watch from outer space forever,
so alienated from society,
Hearing conversation, but not understanding,
seeing the world, but not clearly,
touching the ground, but not feeling -

What will happen *if* I lose myself...?

Correction:

What will happen *when* I lose myself?



untitled by anonymous



MY FROG, GLOBÚS

by Amaya
Pangilinan

there's a frog that lives in me
his residence goes unnoticed
until the days he decides to be
snacking on my words like locusts
he sits, perched in my throat
this place, the frog, he dotes
gluttonous, continuous eating
the words, from my chest, fleeting
i cough, i spit, i yawn
i choke and cry, i want him gone
but still he sits, words devoured
no sound I make is completed
eternal torture leaves a coward
'til he hops back down, my cords now
greeted
with air and sound and space
the color comes back to my face
a deep breath, a word, a smile
but it's only for awhile
'til my dweller tortures me again



Tropes in STORYTELLING



WRITTEN BY
LYDIA VLAHOS

EDITED BY
STELLA DAVENPORT

Tropes are the backbone to good and captivating stories, whether the stories are movies, books, or television shows. Tropes have been attacked by many, who criticize tropes' predictability and unoriginality

However, tropes are not clichés. Tropes are writing tools that authors, directors, and screenplay writers use to make a story dance to the comfort of familiarity to keep the reader engaged. A trope's familiarity is how stories from relatability are an essential part of all storytelling that engages audiences and gives familiarity to the story.

A trope is a literary tool that can be identified by a large majority of the audience. Victoria Greene, a freelance writer, describes tropes in books as "...a narrative staple— something an avid reader will see crop up in some form over and over again across the literary landscape." Tropes can

vary from a character archetype, such as the comedic-relief-best-friend, or a plot device such as the romantic there-is-only-one-bed-what-will-we-do. Most tropes can be recognized by many because of their regularity.

Tropes are important because as tools, tropes create a story beyond the superficial. In the words of India Holton, a published author and online article writer on writing and storytelling, "...Often derided as clichés, tropes actually go much deeper than that. They reflect universal experiences and archetypes, which is why they speak to us so strongly"(1). The familiarity in tropes helps the audience process the stories with an already present understanding. Tropes are a reflection of "universal" or common experiences that most audiences have been through (Holton). The familiarity of the story speaks to the recipient on a level past the superficial.

Tropes are used to develop a special relationship with the listener. John Green, a famous author and academic, explains the art of storytelling as an author in a CBC article: "You draw them in and make people feel that they're welcome into the story because you know the listeners have a role to play. The listener isn't a passive person >





just sitting there; they're creating along with the teller." The relatability of tropes makes the listener active. Tropes bring the audience into the story, providing a role, and investing the listeners in the plot. Storytellers use tropes, not because of a lack of creativity, but because there is a desire to reach out to the audience, take their hand, and travel through the story together.

All tropes can be used well. Author Adam Hiene explains, "Tropes are what make stories run. A story is not good or bad based on whether or not it has tropes. ALL STORIES HAVE TROPEs. A story is good or bad based on how those tropes are used"(1). Skilled storytellers will manipulate the tropes to obtain familiarity while retaining the audience's attention. The first common strategy for story tellers to uniquely use tropes is to be "Trope-savvy" or lean into the tropes (Heine). A stand out feature audiences liked about the show, "Avatar: The Last Airbender," an animated television series that received widespread acclaim from audiences and critics for its characters and themes, is how the show is always aware of its own tropes. Sokka, a main protagonist, is presented as if he knew he was the comedic character, the plan character, and the-guy-in-the-group-that-was-"normal." The main friend group of the show knew that is was silly (and yet a little bit serious) when they came up with a name for their group, "Team Avatar," (The Boy In The Iceberg). The title is so trope-accurate, it seems no one could come up with it except for the audience. The team-of-misfits trope is addressed by the characters themselves which makes the plot entertaining and less heavy, a perfect example of leaning into the tropes. Another technique to draw in audiences is to "subvert the tropes" or flip the tropes inside out (Heine).

The movie "Megamind" was fantastic because even though the film used all the superhero tropes, the movie never played the tropes straight

forward with no manipulation. "Megamind" took one of the oldest tropes (the villain captures the girl, threatens the hero, and then the hero outsmarts the villain), then twisted this trope (the villain defeats the hero) creating a surprise plot twist from the start of the movie. This subversion of the tropes to start the movie keeps the audience guessing the whole time. The creators twisted the trope in a way that caught the audience off guard. There was a sense of familiarity, but the way the screenwriters spun the tropes made the story unique and engaging. The last common way to stay away from the criticism of cliches is to "layer tropes" which give a story "different elements and expectations," (Argyle Fox Publishing). The famous young adult book, *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins is a compelling story: children are forced to fight to the death on national television, raising the stakes from the beginning. The story becomes more compelling when Suzanne Collins introduces more conflict at the end of Act One:

"Handsome lad like you. There must be some special girl. Come on, what's her name?" says Caesar.
 ...
 "I don't think it's going to work out. Winning ... won't help in my case," says Peeta.
 "Why ever not?" says Caesar, mystified.
 Peeta blushes beet red and stammers out. "Because ... because ... she came here with me."
 (Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games* 150-151)

This famous book plays into two popular romance tropes namely instant love and a love triangle, on top of a life-or-death reality TV survival game. The two District 12 champions (Katniss and Peeta) are supposed star crossed lovers going into a deathmatch where only one can survive. Suzanne Collins uses tropes to heighten the suspense of the entire story. Peeta is fighting to the death, but he is also going to have to kill the girl he loves to survive. This leaves the audience with many questions and a want to continue. Collins uses her tropes strategically by layering them expertly. The love story is integral to the conflict, heightening the suspense of the entire book making readers enthralled, not knowing what will happen next; the complete opposite of cliches. All the tropes come together to make the story complete, and helps the storyteller write a familiar yet engaging story.

Compiled with already present experience, tropes give audiences expectations. Tropes give comfort because of predictability. Amanda Patterson, an author and founder of *Writers Write*, states, "Tropes work because genres work. We like to have stories that fulfill our expectations as readers." As fundamental parts, tropes with an air of predictability are more enjoyable to audiences. If an audience is in a rhythm of understanding because of the comfort around >



the tropes, a storyteller can better convey the story's message. When expectations are fulfilled, the lessons and emotions of stories are expressed with clarity and empathy. However, common criticism has come up surrounding tropes. Writer Victoria Greene explains, "It's tempting to believe that our individual stories are profoundly unique... but the component parts are much the same. Since stories work through resonant commonalities, and there's only so much variation in the human condition, it's powerful to return to the things that speak to the struggles and triumphs of the average life." Though tropes are not the heart of the story, tropes are woven into a story to provide familiarity. Just alone, a story is not complete. Moreover, tropes work not because people love monotony, but because it is powerful to tell about the struggles of an "average life." For a storyteller to retell common familiar struggles in new ways, captivates audiences. On top of that, the beauty in stories stems from the universality of conflict and relationships. Foreby, the universality of the human condition comes from tropes.

Whether sharing a story involves conveying important information, creating a communal experience, or building familial connections, "a story's most important function is to remind listeners that people are not alone in the world..." (Hennebury). Stories with a lesson or reminder show audiences someone has had this problem before. Stories of other people's experiences help audiences see feelings, fears, and hopes as universal. Tropes, with their roots in familiarity and universality, give stories the ability to connect with an array of people from all walks of life. In a CBC article, storyteller and improviser Alex Mason shares just how little differences there are when the big picture of humanity is observed: "...people...are ultimately the same as when people were sitting around campfires telling stories and being entertained." The universal appreciation of stories is what makes tropes not just important but necessary. Tropes bring familiarity, establish common ground, and help grow relationships built on the sharing of universal experience and emotion. Because of these strong bonds audiences have with stories, tropes used in the right way will help any storyteller. Tropes will be in stories and part of the storytelling experience. In the hands of a skilled storyteller, tropes can be the ingredient that reconstructs even unique ideas into engaging art pieces. With the universality of tropes and the familiar understanding of stories, stories can do what stories do best: inspire. ♦

"a story's most important function is to remind listeners that people are not alone in the world..."



The longest un tethered spacewalk ever, by NASA astronaut Bruce McCandless, aboard STS-41-R. Image credit: NASA.

好きなことだけでいいです

Sukina koto dakede īdesu



Translation: "Just do what you like"

by anonymous

The inspiration was the song "Suki na Koto Dake de Ii Desu" by PinocchioP covered by Emu Otori, Rui Kamishiro, and Hatsune Miku. The Wondahoi is included because that's WonderlandsxShowtime's catchphrase that was made up by Emu Otori. I also decided to draw PinocchioP's mascot, Amaima, in the background. The stars with certain colors are a reference to the WonderlandsxShowtime 2D MV of Nijiro Stories by OSTER project and sung by Nene Kusanagi, Rui Kamishiro, KAITO, and MEIKO.

A PHOTO COLLECTION OF THE SKY



By Divya Rao



Resilience

A Key Component to Going Far in Life and Education

WRITTEN BY
VICTORIA YEE

EDITED BY
LYDIA VLAHOS

Adversity is hard to overcome in one's life. Each person handles different obstacles and reacts differently to certain situations as they move through life. Building a mental and emotional structure to overcome obstacles is an excellent first step to the challenges one faces growing up. Resilience is an important quality to have. To be resilient is to have the ability to overcome difficulties fast. Implementing components to overcome adversity quickly is critical to going far in life and education.

Resilience is commonly associated with making mistakes. Everyone makes mistakes in life; messing up is part of human nature. Humans make mistakes in friendships, relationships, daily interactions, and school. However, learning how to use mistakes to learn and grow is necessary rather than letting them hold one back. Many believe making mistakes is nasty or negative. Every mistake one makes should be looked at as an opportunity to evolve.

Even though being resilient is an excellent quality, there is a dark side to resilience that people often fail to acknowledge. In 2017, Tomas-Chamorro Premuzic and Derek Lusk wrote an article about the dark side of resilience. They stated, "For example, extreme resilience could drive people to become overly persistent with unattainable goals. Although we tend to celebrate individuals who aim high or dream big, it is usually more effective to adjust one's goals to more achievable levels, which means giving up on others" (41). Most times, when people are "good" at bouncing back from setbacks, they believe that anything is possible and from there set goals which are not so achievable. The overall question is how far can resilience get someone in life, and why is it important to be resilient in education?

Resilience is a skill that needs to be learned. Some think every person is considered resilient. However, this is different. Some people are not good at bouncing back from obstacles, and part of the reason is because they were not taught how.



From a young age, it is essential to learn how to overcome negative life experiences and move on. A good way for someone to be taught resilience is through old teachings. The world has evolved from many different groups of people. In 2015, Dr. Nash, a doctor at Providence, talked about why older adults are an excellent example of resilience and claimed that "Older adults can often acknowledge the difficulties of life without losing sight of why they want to keep living" (3). One of the best factors of being resilient is that one has to move on from experiencing difficult situations without getting off track of the good and vital things in life that are still there. Older people have experienced more hardships and adversity in life than younger people. Therefore, they have gathered many tactics on not letting mistakes be a setback from the good in front of them. In 2020, Julia Watson did a TED Talk on *How to Build a Resilient Future Using Ancient Wisdom* and talked about how everything in our world came from something before us, and as our world expands, we get to see the fantastic things our ancestors ➤



The International Space Station. Photo: NASA

built. She makes the point by saying, "In our rush towards the future, we tend to forget about the past." That is very true in our world today. As people, it is a human tendency to be overconsumed with the present and even the future that we often forget that we would not be here without the people who came before us and who built the world we live in today. It is essential to use the teachings of ancient wisdom to learn things in life. One can use ancient teachings to move forward with life instead of letting the past consume them and letting something out of reach take over our thoughts. Bouncing back from adversity is an important skill, especially in school. Students face much adversity in school, like failing tests, friendships, and trying to achieve academic success, which isn't always easy. However, there are ways to build resilience using everyday skills. In 2019, Jeremy Sutton talked about ten resilience skills: problem-solving, goal setting, stress management, self-care, improving self-awareness, and finding effective coping strategies and, from there, incorporating them into daily life.

There are numerous ways to improve and build resilience in educational settings. Failures are all a part of the process when it comes to school. As one gets older in school, they face more challenges within the academic and social aspects of school. Coming back from hardships in school and even outside of school is difficult to learn. It takes time, patience, and a good mindset to figure out how to see the good in bad situations. Part of students building resilience in school is through what they are taught. Teachers must implement strategies for students to learn how to overcome failures in academic settings. In 2021, Sarah Gonser wrote an article talking about five ways to build resilience in students, and her tactics given are setting brave goals, modeling learning from mistakes encouraging students to take

considerable risks, labeling and teaching difficult emotions, and writing and talking about human resilience. Resilience needs to be taught and normalized in school. From a young age, if kids don't understand how to recover from mistakes, they will not get very far in life. Not being resilient causes one to be stuck on things that are not in their control anymore. That is one of the worst habits to have. Letting failures consume the mental part of the brain can overstimulate one's being and, from there, can cause them to get into a bad mental state and could lead to mental and emotional spirals. Most people can say that letting the past consume one's present life makes everything worse. Part of the reason people enter a negative headspace is because they are trying to fix mistakes from the past that can not be changed. People often have this notion in their heads that they can go back in time and fix friendships that are already broken. It takes up much mental capacity and can lead to mental spirals. It can be a turning point in making people realize that they are not as resilient as they once thought.

Growing up, most people face a lot of challenges and obstacles; however, when someone is younger, they tend not to think deeply about problems. Kids need to be taught growing up that making mistakes is okay if they learn something from them. Sure, kids are taught that mistakes are okay in life and adversity is part of growing up, but most times, they are not necessarily taught how to overcome the obstacles they encounter throughout life. The biggest challenge kids face growing up will be struggling with mental health. Most young people tend to hold their emotions because they believe they are surrounded by peers who can not relate to anything they are going through. Keeping feelings bottled up can cause one to lash out, and it can affect many friendships and relationships. As people get older, they start ➤

to learn how to incorporate resilience into their life. The first step is to figure out ways not to let these adversities hold them back. It takes time and patience to learn what works for an individual. Ultimately, it takes realizing that life is not perfect and is not supposed to be. Life is about learning how to use the challenges one faces to grow as a human being and become a better person. The only person someone needs to live for is themselves. A simple piece of advice can speak so many different volumes for someone. It is essential to be resilient because friendships and relationships will be affected over time if one does not learn how to work over the obstacles.

Overall, resilience is one of the most unique gifts one can be taught in life. Mistakes are what make human life so wonderful. Failures are one of the most significant aspects of human nature, and knowing how to overcome them is crucial. Consuming oneself with the past is draining and will blind a person from what's ahead. There are many ways to self-teach and practice resilience, but forms need to be conditioned and integrated into someone from a young age. We need to normalize teaching strength in schools because as we grow, the challenges we face become extensive and more complex. Ancient wisdom has built our society today, so it is essential not to forget where all came from. Adversity is one of the best teaching moments that can happen in life. It is vital to look at the positive in every situation. ♦



AP English Literature and
Composition creative project
inspired by Ian McEwan's
Atonement

by *Jianna Reyes*

Life in a Daydream

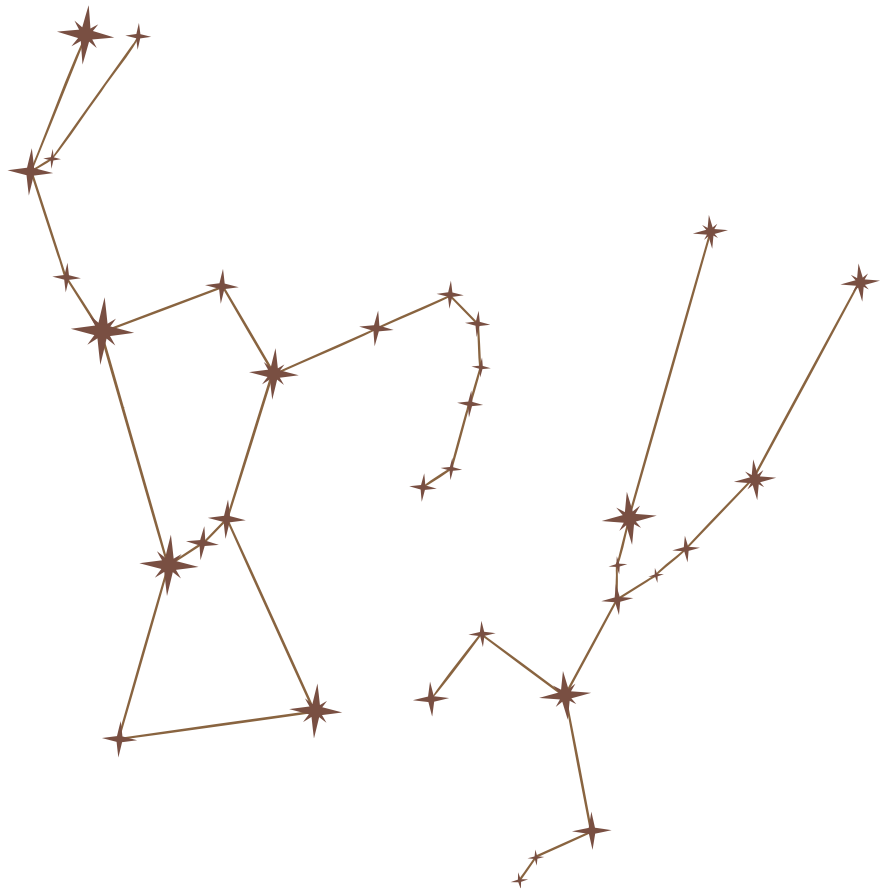
Young girl simply runs alongside mother,
Though without words, nothing silence dilates.
Their special connection nothing negates.
Visions of tenderness for each other;
The dry atmosphere, laughter makes better.
Hands reach, for the feeling of touch inflates,
A feeling of love holding hands creates.
A true bond, one of infinite power.

Mother and daughter, imagination,
Solely something dreamt and hoped to be true.
But Death, with daughter in His possession,
The poor, distraught mother without a clue.
Relying on a false evocation,
A deceptive daydream of things untrue.



I'LL MEET YOU IN THE STARS

by Nayeli Kojima



This does not tarnish my love for
Frolicking around with Taurus and Orion
While shining down on you from above
Covered by clouds but always there
Dim on some nights but always there
Lost in the city lights, but still, I'm always there
Eternally separated yet can be touched
You see stars when you see red
With black or green, or white or blue
They are present with any feelings of dread
I'm in the twilight sky, brightened by the moon
And you too will meet me in the nocturne
But I pray that won't be anytime soon

THE SIP



This piece is based on a quote I read. “We swallow greedily any lie that flatters us, but we sip only little by little at the truth we find bitter.”

- Denis Diderot

A VISUAL ART COLLECTION

By Miah Covarrubias

Falling in love influences a culture that averts others from noticing unwanted aspects of love. This influence can be seen in various forms, such as art, literature, and music, where love is often portrayed as an idealized and romanticized experience. These cultural expressions of love can create a sense of enchantment and fascination, making it easy for individuals to overlook or downplay the less desirable aspects of love, such as heartbreak or unrequited feelings.



ESCAPE

UNTITLED

The extreme measures people had to take to reach the moon required many sacrifices that had an impact on the environment as well as many people, which led me to question: was all the hardship and damage worth it?

THE STARS SHONE ON

By Lydia Vlahos

**The stars shone on, but not for me
Quietly a minute in their eternity**

**The snow still froze, but not for me
Soundlessly dust under her birch trees**

**The wind blew strong, but not for me
Robbed of breath no one could see**

**The waves crashed violent, but not for me
Petrified coral bones stand tall in the reef**

**The world madly spun, but not for me
Only what was, not what will be**

**The sun eclipsed one day, and all for me
Presently
Alive
Grateful
For my eternity**



MESSAGES FROM THE STARS

By Delilah Ordonez

STREET FIRE

A PHOTO COLLECTION

BY LYDIA VLAHOS

FIRE ECLIPSE



THE BIG BANG



MOTHER COMET

SPACE FLARE



Through the Eyes of the Sun

By Ava Forte

A sky blanketed
With endless night
Suddenly peaks
A bright blinding light

To the calm east
Shadows stretch long
To the unknown west
Pitch ebony rules on

To the east dark blues blend,
Orange and gold
Heat creeps in kisses
Replacing the night's cold

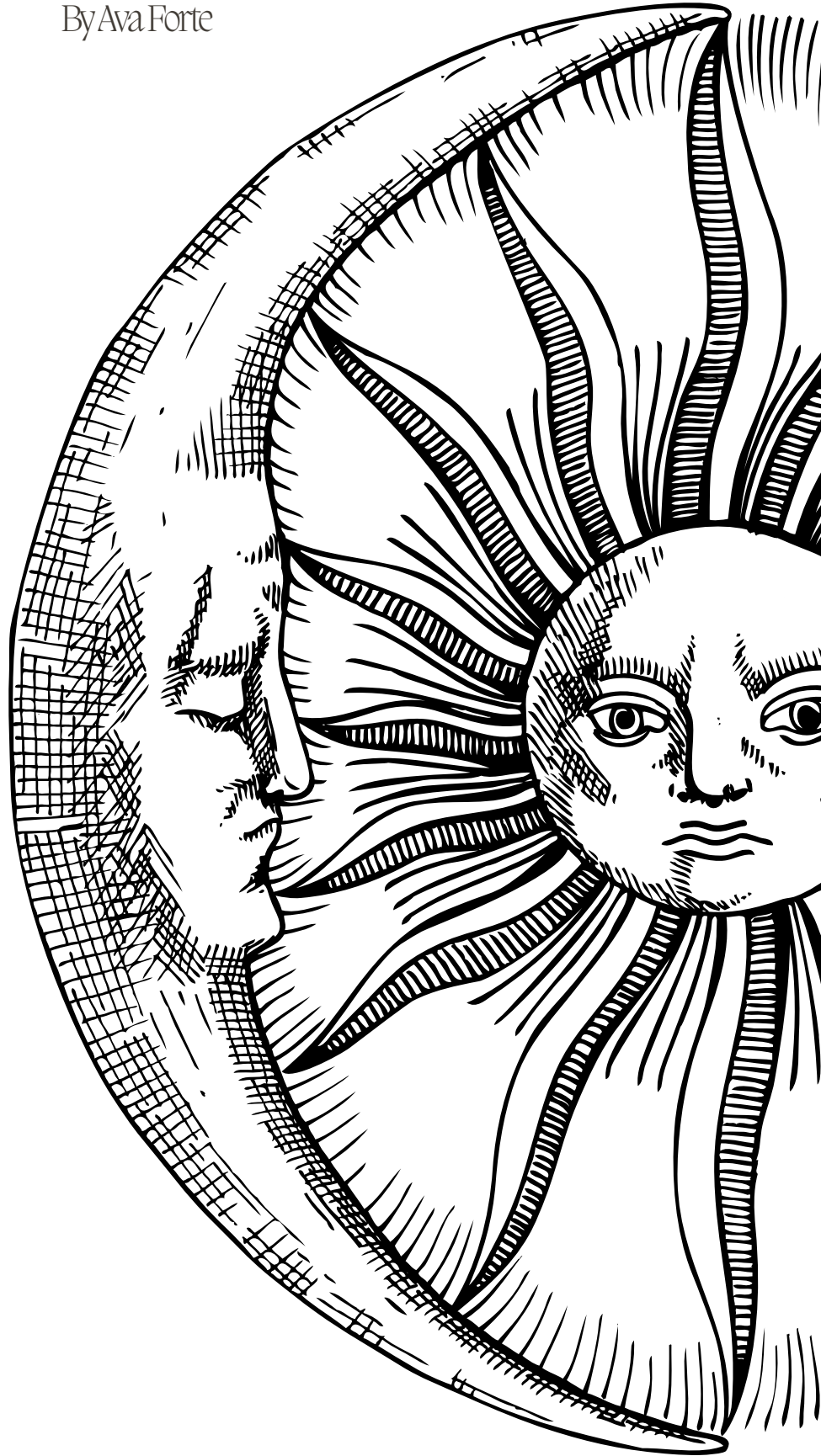
The light awakes the world
A new day dawns
The yellow greets the sleeping
With heavenly songs

To the chilled west
Charcoal keenly slumbers
Strains await
Against time's steady lumber

The grand light will bathe
The earth in swells
But in the end leave,
As pitch as a well

On cold water
Starry seas reflect
Soft glows on waves
From the sky, collect

Stars, brave hunters
Appear ablaze
Crescent goddess accompanies
In the rolling of days



AN ODE TO RURAL CALIFORNIA

By Anonymous

The dusty, dry forgotten corners of California
The wire fence roads that movie cameras have never graced
Forged by farmers whose crop only ever yielded humbleness
Soft-haired cows the primary witness to our flaming sunsets
In elementary school
We had all scratched our arms on the bark of trees older than our
grandparents
And held the feed can for the livestock as they ate

Now
White-shoed, cleaned-handed people with sea spray in their lungs
Have bought all my former friends' houses
Calling them 'quaint'
With Hollywood stars in their eyes
And fresh pavement below their feet

And no knowledge of how to make peace with the star thistle come
spring
How to dig ditches to prepare for winter flood
Or how to burn bonfires in the fall
So the coyotes can slink through a smokeless summer

I'm leaving soon
My family then after
So our house's carcass can be possessed by people with more cars
than they can drive
Who have never looked a sheep, goat, or horse in the eyes, knowing
it's your own, knowing only you can protect it

I do not hate the rich or coastal
But I'll wish the deer a solemn goodbye
Knowing the new inhabitants will never say hello

NOTHING

by Yixin Huang

JUST IN SPACE

By Kathryn McWilliams

I'm just in space.
Separated, ever so slightly
From the rest of the world.
"Wake up," they say.
But why would I
When in actuality
My dreams are far better than reality.

I'm just in space.
A foggy haze,
An opaque horizon.
"Snap out of it," they tell me.
I don't want to.
My head is so safe
When the real world's just a place of harm.





I'm just in space.
But now it's not so nice.
My thoughts are an anchor
When I am the boat.
Rocking uncomfortably
Chained too long
Unable to move myself fully away.

I'm just in space.
Now I want to leave.
I finally listen
But the thoughts that encapsulated me still linger.
The world is still problematic
But why would I go back to the drowning space of my mind?

A MIND OF EXTREMES

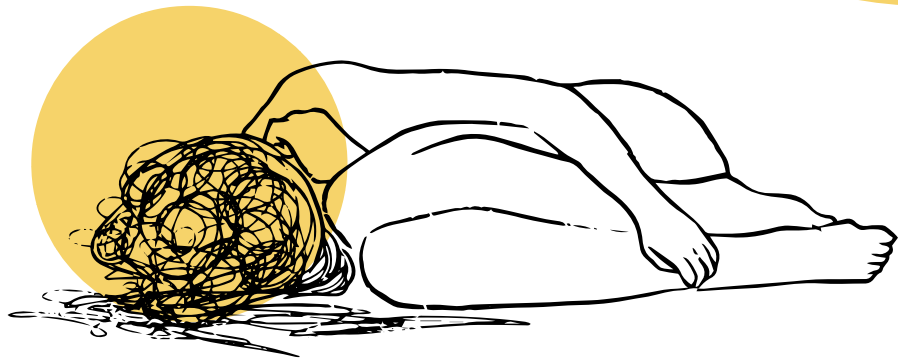
By Anonymous

Even in the many bodied sweat of this family restaurant kitchen
My fingers whimper from frigidness and my muscles ache from shivering
My core wants something I tell it again and again I am giving it

Even alone leaning on my car in the wet, dark November morning
I am sweating out a fever, nauseous with heat
My core begging for something I tell it again and again I am giving it

My core doesn't know what I tell it
To burn with such passion and hatred, acrid, horrible
Or to freeze dead with such emptiness, the lacking more noticeable than the being
Is what it knows
As it rots behind still bright eyes

It is not that this soul wants to die, not necessarily
Just that it's begun to mistake the sting of death with the shock of a kiss
And cannot seem to tell the difference between the hug of the earth around its bones
And a hug



A SMART GIRL'S GUIDE TO BEING THE DAUGHTER OF IMMIGRANTS

**Inspired by Sherice Kong's "A Smart Girl's Guide to Being an ABC" and from American Girl's "A Smart Girl's Guide to Friendship Troubles".

By Stephanie Olvido

I. Advice

Dear American Girl,
I feel disconnected with my culture. How can I reconnect?
- Lost in translation

Dear Lost in Translation,
Disconnection is more common than you'd think! It's a good thing we live in a world built on connection. You should buy some translation books from Amazon, start streaming movies from your homeland, and listen to songs online in your mother tongue. But you will find that this is hard, since you will be busy with school, and work, and friendship drama, and everything else you can think of. Your parents are far too busy to help you learn. The time will slip away from you just as fast as the language of your people!

So stay lost! Allow yourself to get swept away by the great, white waves of American culture, washing out your mother tongue, no longer fresh off the boat. You are sixteen years too late to learn, anyway. Tangle ng and nga in your mouth. Repeat the same three phrases to your relatives during the holidays. Write poetry and essays and sad journal entries about your everlasting pride for a culture that is not really yours.

In your teenage years, you will visit your grandparents in the motherland after ten years. You see the lines of age that mark their faces. You will see your cousins shy away from you in fear that you will judge their English. You will catch your tongue, carefully sifting among the Tagalog you learned on the plane ride over. You grieve a language you don't know. You grieve a heritage that ended with you. You grieve your grandparents who are still alive.

AMERICAN GIRL

A SMART GIRL'S GUIDE TO BEING THE DAUGHTER OF IMMIGRANTS

**Inspired by Sherice Kong's "A Smart Girl's Guide to Being an ABC" and from American Girl's "A Smart Girl's Guide to Friendship Troubles".

II. Quiz

Are you a good Filipino? This fool-proof quiz will tell you all you need to know! Circle your answers.

1. **Your relatives are here for Thanksgiving. Your favorite aunt is at the door. You...**
 - a. Say, "Mano po", and guide her warm hand to your cold forehead. You remain in silence as she converses with your mother in Tagalog. Despite the warmth, you feel colder than ever.
 - b. Shake her hand. American holiday, American greeting, American English! You tell her that you're glad she's here.
2. **While in line at the supermarket with your friend, the cashier was speaking Tagalog on the phone. She seems nice. You want her to know you're Filipino too. You...**
 - a. Quietly say the one phrase your parents drilled into you. She doesn't hear it. After you and your friend leave, your friend asks you why you were so quiet when you tried to speak to her.
 - b. Say nothing. Grab what you bought. Pay with cash. Tell the cashier to have a good night in your plain American words. You wonder why both your courage and your mother tongue have orphaned you in this moment.
3. **Oh no! You've been mistaken for the only other Asian girl in your class. She's Vietnamese. The instructor says her name instead of yours. He realizes his mistake after you frown. He apologizes. You...**
 - a. Say, "It's okay". You both know it's not okay. You both know it's not the first time and it won't be the last.
 - b. Silently nod, then walk away. The white girl next to you asks why you have tears in your eyes.

What your score says about you:

Mostly A's: Nice! You can still remember the shape of your ancestors' language on your tongue. With a lifetime of work ahead of you, you may finally be 'Filipino' enough.

Mostly B's: Maybe stick to English for now! This was never your home, but you should try to make it yours. Where else can you go?

BEST FRIEND

She was my best friend. All through those days, weeks, months, years. We were real, true best friends, the kind that tell each other everything about anything and laugh until they can't breathe and their stomachs hurt. Always laughing, crying, talking, calling into late hours that never seemed to end. Inseparable from the moment we connected on that bench. Her house was almost mine, and her family treated me like one of them. She was makeup and hair and skincare and fashion, she was boys, and she was self-criticism.

And then, she was gone, like a child's doodle scrubbed off the wall by an angry mother, like a vanishing trick done by a magician. But it wasn't a trick: she had left me. I watched my phone, holding my breath, waiting for a ring or a buzz or a ding. I sent message after message and called once, twice, three times, and soon my mind was little message bubbles and under them, read at 4:00, 5:00, 6:00, 7:00. I waited, but the reply never came. It never came, and my chest was tight and my music was crying, sobbing into my ears.

Monday, the place where we met, school, and it was like I didn't exist. I sat on that bench where we spoke for the first time and I saw her, but she didn't see me. She, who was makeup and fashion and boys, and then there was me. That day, I was blue, like the ocean before dusk, blue like the sky after it rains. She was gone and I will never know why. She made me cry choking tears, and I will never know why. She used to tell me, before I met you, I didn't like you. I wondered if she was only pretending, pretending to like me for two years until she could shake me off her back. I wondered if I was too much for her, too big for her. I was out of space, I was out of her space. She told others I never liked her, that she would do little things. I cut her off for my own good. I wished she would talk to me. I would ask, was it the way that I followed you like a puppy, or was it the way that I wouldn't let you cheat off of me in English? Was it the way I wouldn't let you make a fool of yourself in public? The girl who went from my life to my enemy in a day, the girl who taught me how to love myself, to hate myself, the girl to whom the last words I spoke were I love you, and she didn't say them back.

MAMA'S ROCKING CHAIR

A VIGNETTE BY CHARLEY VILEY

Mama's rocking chair. The rocking chair that hugs you with its worn-smooth arms. The rocking chair that rocks you like a baby in a cradle. The rocking chair that keeps you safe even when the world is against you. Mama's rocking chair. She rocks me and rocks me early in the mornings before I leave for school. Even on the worst mornings, mama's rocking chair shielded me from letting my own buried emotions take over. She was just the same, being rocked by her mama, Emma, in those cold desert mornings in Palmdale when that was all they had. Emma's mama, Grandmommy, rocked her in a house that was covered in wrinkles on the outside yet still full of life on the inside down in Georgia. My brother was, too, rocked in Mama's rocking chair in a tired blue house that was much too small for a family. But he grew up like a tree, tall and strong, and leaves that small house to make a life of his own.

Close your eyes and sleep, she says—I feel the deep orange colors of warmth while being held, like feeling the sun illuminating its heat down on you while sitting on the sand. But the moment ends too soon, and then I have to go far away, to cold, dank walls filled with metal desks, with a dreary old lady speaking in monotone. But without warning, Mama's rocking chair grows old. I grow too, and soon Mama's rocking chair can't hug me anymore; it can't keep me in its quiet mornings where everything is new, and everything is an adventure of my own. I learn about the secrets of the world and my life. I don't realize that one morning I will be rocked and that it will be the last time. But while I grow, Mama's rocking chair gets wrapped up tight in plastic and put away in a place not even I can reach with a ladder. I forget all about Mama's rocking chair. I don't think about how uncomfortable it is to be wrapped and shoved away. I don't think about how it must feel to be forgotten and left waiting for the joy of another child to hold in its moribund limbs. Waiting to hear the hummed lullabies and feel the gentle rocking with the warmth of a fire as its companion.

In a younger time, there was Mama's rocking chair and me. And nothing to wonder but what had been packed for lunch or what game to play at recess. That time has slipped into the depths and can only be a memory now. But sometimes, I wish there was a ladder tall enough to reach Mama's rocking chair again.

WORKS CITED

“The Importance of Tropes in Storytelling” by Lydia Vlahos

Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. First edition. New York, Scholastic Press, 2008.

Greene, Victoria. “Recycling: Why Storytellers Like Shakespeare Love Tropes,” Ideas, Ideas Orlando, March 26, 2018, <https://ideasorlando.com/blog/recycling-why-storytellers-like-shakespeare-love-tropes/>.

Heine, Adam. “Tropes vs. Cliches,” Adam Heine, June 10, 2011, http://www.adamheine.com/2011/06/tropes-vs-cliches.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+AuthorsEcho+%28Author%27s+Echo%29.

Hennebury, Christine. “Storytelling is not just entertainment. It's a fundamental part of being human,” CBC N.L., Mar 29, 2020 6:00 AM NT, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/storytelling-is-human-1.5511027>.

Holton, India. “Why Romance Needs Its Tropes: A Defense India Holton on the Joy and Universality of an Oft-Derided Genre Staple.” Lit Hub, March 18 2022, <https://lithub.com/why-romance-needs-its-tropes-a-defense/>.

McGrath, Tom. 2010. “Megamind.” United States: Paramount Pictures.

Patterson, Amanda. “What Is A Literary Trope & Why Should I Use One?” Writers Write, August 11 2020, <https://www.writerswrite.co.za/what-is-a-literary-trope-why-should-i-use-one/>.

“The Boy In The Iceberg.” Avatar: The Last AirBender, created by Bryan Konietzko and Micheal Dante DiMartino, season 1, episode 1, Nickelodeon Movies, Blinding Edge Pictures, The Kennedy/Marshall Company, 2010.

“What Are Writing Tropes & Why Do They Matter?” Argyle Fox Publishing, last viewed December 2 2022, <https://argylefoxpublishing.com/credits/>.

“Resilience” by Victoria Yee

Gonser, Sarah. “5 Ways to Build Resilience in Students.” 26 March, 2021, <https://www.edutopia.org/article/5-ways-build-resilience-students/>

Lusk, Derek. Premuzic-Chamorro, Tomas. “The Dark Side of Resilience.” 16 August, 2017,

Providence. “What We Can Learn from the Resilience of Older Adults.” 15 March, 2021. <https://www.providence.org/news/uf/649895077>

Sutton, Jeremy. “What is Resilience, and Why Is It Important to Bounce Back?” 3 January, 2019, <https://positivepsychology.com/what-is-resilience/#resilience-skills>

Watson, Julia. “How to Build a Resilient Future Using Ancient Wisdom.” https://www.ted.com/talks/julia_watson_how_to_build_a_resilient_future_using_ancient_wisdom



Part of "Street Fire: A Photo Collection" by Lydia Vlahos Title: Dying Star

CONTACT



themirror@stfrancishs.org



stfrancishs.org/mirror

**THE
MIRROR**

**ISSUE
24**