

Breathe.

Volume 1, Issue 3

Spring 2016



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A literary magazine written and composed by the 7th grade GATE
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Opinion and Argument

Goodbye Common Core, Hello Individuality

by Isha Nagpaul

Adults and children all over the world have one quality that cannot be replaced, nor retrieved, no matter how hard one tries to do so. This quality, individuality, however, it is often not used to its full potential. School systems have programs such as Common Core, which take away the opportunities for creative and structured thinking. With programs such as Common Core, students grow up to be the same. They have no unique qualities after being pushed through these courses. Without creative individuals, the human race will suffer greatly.

The Common Core system is just one of many systems that unknowingly perform this action. Each person is different, and no two people are exactly the same. A child comes to school with an eager mind that is ready to be filled with knowledge. Children first enter Kindergarten at the age of four or five. At such a young age, these children are waiting to absorb as much as they possibly can. However, they all have different speeds of learning. Some children may learn slower than others. According to the Huffington Post (Pica), if you start something before the brain is prepared, there will be trouble.

The Common Core system has set standards that all teachers have to live up to. The Huffington Post (Pica) correctly states that these teachers know that such standards are inappropriate for different children. The slower learners have trouble keeping up with these complicated standards. They may be good in one particular area, but these standards are forcing them to do things a certain way and learn that way as well. The kids are not allowed to practice their individuality. They are not given an opportunity to excel at their own speed. These students are forced to learn at the same level as other students no matter how simple or difficult it is for them.

Not only is Common Core a system that pulls the plug on creativity, it is also does not live up to the proper standards that it should live up to. The Washington Policy Center (Butcher) says that the standards fail to meet the content targets which are recommended by professionals. It is of insufficient quality. The Washington Policy Center (Butcher) also says that the cost for this is around sixteen billion dollars. It is both a waste of money and a waste of time. The Common Core System should not be given permission to completely take over the way a school teaches.

The Common Core System seems to want every student to learn the same. The limitations it has set does not let a child excel academically. A brilliant child would not be able to share their brilliance with the world if their brain has been forced to think simple skills the same way everyone else does. Colleges look for unique individuals who stands out compared to the average motivated student. With the Common Core system, students will all turn out the same with almost no difference. Students will all think similarly and be forced to adapt to those teachings.

Although the Common Core System does not promote individuality, it also keeps a sense of order. It helps children who are falling behind become slightly quicker. It puts these students on a better track than the one they are currently following. It makes sure that everyone is moving together and this way everyone is learning the same thing. The problem would be that they hold back the more intellectually and academically capable students. These children need a time to shine but with all the standards, they do not get to due to the fact that they are being forced to learn things that are not even up to par.

Without kids who are able to excel and go further in life, humans will just become mindless drones that all have the same amount of information. Had the common core standards not been placed, students would be moving at their own paces and most people would have had a better time learning and teaching in schools. With the Common Core system, constantly bringing students down from achieving their full potential, students will never be able to show their true potential.

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How Well Do Standardized Tests Show People's Intellectual/Academic Level? by Gianluca Pagano

Standardized tests like the SAT, ACT, or any international/national tests have been used to judge how a country or state are doing education wise, but these tests may not actually show the true potential of individuals or even a group of people. Standardized tests have been a part of education in America since the mid- 1800s. These tests used to be only intended for kids, but now they are used to evaluate teachers and even the educational system. Many people, such as students and even parents, have been noticing an inconsistency lately. Schools now focus a lot more on preparation for these standardized tests through homework and classroom time. These standardized tests are not adequate and they need to evaluate more topics.

The first question is if these tests evaluate youths on what they should know. Some say that these undermine America's critical thinkers. The tests must require some valuable knowledge or skill. Even if a student does poorly on a standardized test, he or she may advance in a different area. For example an individual may exceed in math, but may struggle in science. Standardized tests are an unreliable way of measuring student performance. They only measure a small portion of what makes education meaningful. And because of the excessive amount of preparation, some students do not learn anything helpful because of it. An example of this is China displacing Finland from the top ranking of the 2009 PISA because, as said by Jiang Xueqin, Deputy Principal of Peking University High School, "Chinese schools are very good at preparing their students for standardized tests. For that reason, they fail to prepare them for higher education and the knowledge economy."(Zhao)

A test can give one stress or make an individual nervous which can cause many insensible blunder. Also, time limits during standardized tests can contribute to the increasing stress levels of students. Time limits just show the least of what someone can write or whatever the task is in a rushed time (which would not be as decent as something thought through). This means that these standardized tests will not show the foremost of someone's abilities in a certain area or multiple areas. They undermine America's ability to produce innovators and critical thinkers.

Standardized tests have been in human history for a while. The earliest known standardized was in the seventh century in Imperial China (Post). The tests tested people's knowledge on Confucian philosophy. In the Western World, the Industrial Revolution went through a movement of getting farm workers and factory workers to get an education (Walker). Standardized tests promoted the newly expanded student body to be tested efficiently. In the mid-1800s Horace Mann and Samuel Gridley Howe introduced standardized testing to Boston's educational system (Coulson). The tests were given to judge and compare the different output of each school in Boston.

Although that these standardized test may not accurately test someone or something, they do have positive uses. Standardized tests do not allow "social promotion" which basically means a student will advance to upcoming grade without showing any sort of academic skill or knowledge, even though they do not access that sort of skill very well. The machines may be more accurate than a teacher on a standardized test. This is because someone is more likely to accidentally make a mistake than a machine is. But teachers are more understanding and not as literal as machines or computer. Also, more stricter tests may encourage students to prepare for it more (although that may cause a problem because a student might not be focusing on other

things beside preparation). It is more often seen that students are studying for a large scale test like standardized tests than a student studying for small tests of quiz.

Standardized tests in many cases frighten students or simply just put a lot of stress on students. They inaccurately test students because of the way time limits are implemented. They do not demonstrate the true potential of an individual. Tests such as the PARCC do not have many subjects, undermining the people that may advance in a subject like science, history (social studies) class or even a concept that is useful in life. Although there are some benefits, standardized tests are inaccurate in the way it tests individuals and the educational system.

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What are the Disadvantages of GMOs? by Gianluca Pagano

Genetically-modified organisms (GMO's) have been a topic that over the past twenty years many have been fussing over, especially with many cautious of what they eat health wise. People argue if these GMO's or bioengineering is actually helpful health wise and economically. A lot of consumers would like to be sure of what they are consuming and if they should be worried about it or not. Although tests have been shown, we do not truly know if GMO's are healthy for us. It appears that we are in the biggest unfunded human experiment in history.

GMO's are not actually what they are called by most people. They are genetically **engineered** organisms. The word modified could mean a wide variety of things such as creating hybrids with animals/plants. Unlike GMO's, crossbreeding/hybridization occurs with two similar species that do not get ill effects from hybridization for centuries. GMO's forcefully breach the naturally occurring barriers between many species. GMO's actually is when a genome is altered or spliced by bioengineering and its DNA has one or multiple genes that are naturally not found there ("GMO's Defined"). An example of adding one's genes to a different organism are having strawberries and tomatoes getting fish genes so that the product is more resistant to the cold, or when dairy cows are injected with the genetically engineered hormone rBGH (also known as rBST) to increase the milk production, etc ("GMO's Defined").

GMO's can harm and cause conflict with farm animals that we consume. There have been cases where the animal dies or becomes seriously ill as an effect. They even have to put animals down because of contamination. In Hesse, Germany, many cows died suddenly when they were fed with Syngenta's genetically engineered maize cow food, and as a result of this incident, the authorities in Germany decided to slaughter the rest of the cows to avoid having the mysterious disease to get out and contaminate other cattle houses. Our lamb has also been affected when grazing on a Bt cotton field in Warangal District, Andhra Pradesh. Nearly two thousand sheep died and many were ill. Farmers reported that the sheep became dull/ depressed after two to three days, having post-grazing cough with nasal discharge, reddish and erosive lesions in the mouth, bloating, blackish diarrhea, sometimes red colored urine, and death within five to seven days of grazing on the Bt cotton fields (GM Watch).

GM crop contamination/pollution is a critical environmental hazard. Most plants are pollinated by insects or birds over a several-mile range. This means that the pollen of a GMO plant can cross fence lines and move into fields that are all natural (non GMO), certified organic fields and even out into the wild (Kimbrell). This cross pollination illustrates a huge difficulty in controlling GMO technology. There is no recall on genetics. GM crops pose additional environmental risks, such as accidental harm to other insects and any animals in the ecosystem. The sheer prevalence of GMO crops also threatens biodiversity in the seed supply, making us more vulnerable to pest outbreaks. The US Department of Agriculture conducts no monitoring to see if any GMO crop has harmed the environment once it is released (Farmer's Life).

GMOs also have affected the actual farmers. Farmers used to be able to simply pick a couple variety of seeds given to them by a regional dealer. In the beginning of the 1990s, GMO's were starting to be developed. Now, the farmers were given GM seed with traits of different organisms by biotech companies (Royte). Although that means less pesticides for the crops, farmers are forced into planting these seeds by these powerful companies, and have no chance to counter them if they would like to. Also, these GM seeds are sterile so that the farmers cannot get more seeds out of the crops, giving them no other choice but to buy more of these GM seeds

provided. One of these farmers, Huegerich, decided to experiment. He planted three hundred twenty acres of natural/conventional corn and one thousand seven hundred with GMO corn. To his delight, the conventional fields yielded around 15 to 30 more bushels every acre than the GMO fields did, with a profit margin of up to \$100 more per acre with the natural corn (Royte). GMOs are in many different crops and it is almost guaranteed that most of the population of America eat GMOs on a daily basis without knowing what they are truly consuming. Crops with the most percentage of being bioengineered are soy with ninety three percent, corn with ninety percent, sugar beets with ninety percent, and cotton with ninety percent (Farmer's Life). Although so much of America's crops are GMOs, they do grow faster, bigger, and are more resistant to certain things depending on how the crop was modified. A lot of conventional packaged food are GMO, at least one of those ingredients mentioned before, most likely soy, but probably more. It is almost impossible to avoid GMO foods now for they make up around seventy percent of our processed food are GMOs.

Monsanto is one of many powerful companies that produce GMOs and are responsible for a lot of the GMO foods produced. Surveys repeatedly show that ninety percent of Americans that take these specific polls would strongly prefer that GMOs were labeled (Main, Emily). Even though GMOs have infiltrated our processed food, when a law or rule is about to be passed that will require GMOs to be labeled, food manufacturers would successfully defeat anyone that tried to release this information. Monsanto is like a flash point for anyone who wants to oppose their ways. Many find this suspicious and wonder why companies like Monsanto are using many resources to be secretive (like plethora of money). Monsanto are also responsible for making Roundup, a popular herbicide used on GMO crops. Apparently, Roundup can cause birth defects, and the same could happen with Agent Orange, another herbicide (Organic Consumers).

A lot of evidence has shown that GMO could be a problem, not a benefit. We are not completely sure on if GMOs are healthy enough. Also, Monsanto and others try to conceal negative research down on their bioengineering. Money plays a big factor in the GMO topic, and can lead to greed and taking advantage of people like the farmers. With many suspicious cases and incidents, it is safe to say that trying to avoid GMOs is a better option than supporting it.

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Informative Articles

Dangerous Toys by Aditi Bauer

Toys are a very prominent part of a person's childhood. With nothing to do, children can have lots of fun playing make-believe with their dolls and shaping colorful sculptures with Play-Doh. Yet, with all the happiness that comes with it, there is also a dark side to these toys. Some classic toys from throughout history have been getting reports of serious injuries and possibly even death.

Sky Dancers, the classic toy from the 90's, is not as graceful as intended to be. Just mount the doll on the base, pull the string, and Sky Dancers fly high above you, with fluttering plastic wings. They made their big debut in 1994 (cpsc.gov), and proved to be very popular. Yet, instead of these magical beings entertain and mystify young children, they involved more injuries instead. These toys were the cause of chipped teeth, scratched corneas, and even concussions and broken ribs. After 170 reports of these incidents, and 150 reports of injuries, the company Galoob Toys Inc. announced they were recalling these toys (cpsc.gov). Since then, the toys have been re-released in 2005 by Play Along Toys, and have been redesigned to hopefully cause less injuries.

One iconic doll that just about any owner loved were Cabbage Patch Kids. They were released first in the 1980's and even came with their own adoption certificates. The Snacktime Kids dolls was one of them, released in 1996 (cpsc.gov). It used a mechanical jaw to mimic chewing when fed plastic food. But, it wasn't just plastic food that they ate. There have been reports of hair or fingers getting caught in the doll's plastic mouth, while they were chewing. However, neither the Consumer Product Safety Commission nor Mattel, the manufacturer of Cabbage Patch Kids, identified a serious injury hazard with the toys (cpsc.gov). Yet, Mattel still voluntarily recalled all of the Snacktime Kids with a refund of \$40, which was 500,000 consumers at the time (nytimes.com). While Snacktime Kids are a no-show, Cabbage Patch Kids still are very popular.

While almost every kid likes toys, they will probably love to eat delicious sweets even more. The classic Easy Bake Oven seems like the perfect combination. But, it too, has its issues. The pink and purple oven includes a mock stovetop and a front-loading oven. This oven, however, had the tendency to trap hundreds of young children's fingers inside, where they could receive second or even third-degree burns from the heating coils. One girl even needed a partial finger amputation from the burn (mentalfloss.com). The company Hasbro recalled nearly one million of the ovens in 2007, double the amount of Snacktime Kids, and possibly even more dangerous.

Toys are a very important part of childhood. There are many toys that can bewilder us with the things they can do, such as flying, or include us in a simple action before only used by adults, such as baking. Yet, not including the toys above, there are many toys out there that are a danger to children's lives. The most important thing to do is to keep children safe, and out of reach of things that could potentially harm them. *Especially* toys like these.

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The Fire That Scarred a Town by Gavin Chiu

Centralia was a coal town in Pennsylvania. It started in the early 1850s. The first mines were established in 1856, called the Locust Run Mine and the Coal Ridge Mine. Afterward came the Hazeldell Colliery Mine in 1860, then the Centralia Mine in 1862, and the final Continental Mine in 1863. With all these mines, the town got significantly large for its time. By the 1900s, 27,000 people had moved here for its vast and abundant supply of coal. However, a large town comes with a large price, as too many people had too much trash. In 1962, Centralia, Pennsylvania, tried to burn all its garbage. Little did they know, lighting this fire would ignite another that would still burn to this day--one that would turn Centralia into a ghost town. Now, where trees and grass are, there used to be a neighborhood. A neighborhood with no one in it, but it wasn't the fire that destroyed it. The fire never touched the surface. In fact, it never even burned a blade of grass. This is because the fire was completely underground.

Before the garbage fire, coal mines were popular and the abundance of coal caused the cost of business to decrease. With this happening, when Centralia lit the garbage fire, they put the garbage in the underground, less-used tunnels that ran beneath the town. This mistake would cost the entire town their homes and lives. The coal would ignite from the fire and burn vigorously. The fire is averaged to be 732.2 degrees Celsius. The surface can be heated up to 482 degrees Celsius, hot enough to melt lead. In Centralia, the fire spreads 15-23 meters every year. With the expanding fire, the ground begins to sag and give way. All around the abandoned town there are holes in the ground, some larger than others. According to *Popular Science*, by placing a hand into the hole, one can feel the heat radiating from the ground. Another fact from *Popular Science*, states The Department of Transportation had to shut down approximately 1220 meters of highway because the fire weakened the ground supporting the weight of the cars and the highway itself.

Just as people slightly contained the fire, a new threat literally rose from the ground. Toxic gases, which were much more dangerous than fire, were emitting from burning coal that was escaping through the weakened ground. *Popular Science* says in their article that in 1981, a 12 year old child was walking in his backyard when the ground opened underneath him causing a 42.5 meter sinkhole to open. By falling into this hole, this child was barraged with carbon monoxide gases 30 times the healthy amount. Thankfully he survived but what made the situation scary was that this could have happened to anyone, at any time, at any part of town. After this incident, the government paid 42 million dollars to relocate the citizens of Centralia.

However, after all this commotion and tragedy, the fire still has not been put out. People have tried to flood the tunnels, but the fire flared back up. People tried cover holes in the ground to reduce the amount of oxygen getting to the fire. Contradicting the previous strategy to stop the fire, air vents were installed to redirect the fire. Unfortunately, nothing worked because of one key factor: anthracite coal. Anthracite coal is a very special kind of coal beneath Centralia. The composition is what makes the extreme difference. Coal is primarily made of carbon. Humans are 18% carbon, plants are 45% carbon, and the average black coal used industrially is 60-80% carbon. What makes this anthracite coal special is it is 92-98.9% carbon, more than any other coal. A significant increase in carbon, results in a longer burn, and more energy is released. However, following the previous point, more energy equals more carbon dioxide.

Currently, 40% of the world's power is from burning coal. 6.5 pounds of coal is burned by each person, globally. In 2010, the United States burned 1 trillion tons of coal, equivalent to

the weight of 2,877 Empire State Buildings. When coal is burned, multiple things happen. Primarily, energy is released, with the emission of tiny particulates. According to the World Health Organization, burning coal particulates cause a million deaths each year. Burning coal also releases toxic gases usually carbon dioxide. Out of the 35 billion metric tons carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, 50% is made from burning coal. The gases trap the sunlight in Earth's atmosphere, raising temperatures, causing the emphasized global warming. The government wants to make coal somehow cleaner, but nothing is yet feasible with the current technology. The only solution that has come close to solving this dilemma is Mother Nature's. Each tree can absorb 2 kilograms of carbon dioxide from the air, however, that would mean *each* power plant would need 1.5 billion trees. To put make the problem a little more proportional, there are approximately 13,140 power plants in the world. By doing some quick math and receiving a very large number, the Earth would need 19.711 trillion trees. With that answer, there are only 13 trillion trees in the world. A more reasonable choice is turning to a different source. For example, Greenland, an icy land of glaciers and penguin imposters, has geothermal energy. Geothermal energy is when heat from the Earth's mantle is used as energy. This is a reliable source and is a strong contender against coal. Another example is hydro power. Currently Hoover Dam produces a little over 2000 megawatts yearly, enough for 6 cities. However, only 9% of the world is using renewable energy. For this Earth to prosper, the 9% has to grow to a much larger amount.

This brings the topic back to Centralia. One mine eliminated the population of a whole town. Burning coal shows on a bigger scale not only what it can do to a town, but to our planet. It wasn't the fire that destroyed the town, it was the after effects of the fire and burning, the gases and weakening ground, something that had the potential to do something much worse. *Popular Science* says the fire burning under Centralia will naturally burn out within 102 years. Hopefully, by that time, or possibly sooner, the entire globe will have a more renewable resource of power. If so, this would mean the coal burning in Centralia, will be the last coal to burn on Earth ever again.

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Totalitarianism by Shane Connors

In short, a totalitarian government is a system of rule that aims to take full control over every aspect of a people's life. This includes, but is not limited to, actions, thoughts, facial expressions, speech, even one's beliefs, minute things that could tip off that one is not completely conformal. This is the government system that George Orwell prophesizes in his novel, *1984*. Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union were prominently close to the publishing of the novel, hinting at the purpose of the novel being not simply entertainment, but a warning to many people.

In the novel, every citizen of the superstate known as Oceania is required to be monitored by their "telescreen", which is basically a television that works both ways. Whatever one sees, the other side can see them as well. Atop that, these telescreens are impossible to turn off, excluding (although even this is not completely known) the wealthy "Inner-Party", an exclusive sect of the government of Oceania that have increased privileges and power. Among the Inner-Party, there is a sub-sub sect of individuals known as the "Thought Police", whose job is to monitor for abnormalities that could hint that something is awry, or that the person being monitored could have differing ideologies than the Party, or the government, requires them, by unwritten law, to believe.

The Party members, or citizens, are even told what *not* to like. In a ceremony performed every day at one's place of work, the "Two Minutes Hate", as they call it, the participants are ushered into an outburst of unwilling anger towards the mythical "Emmanuel Goldstein". Goldstein is said to be the leader of a fairytale "Brotherhood", the stereotypical secret rebellion. The idea of this rebellion is to both conjure propaganda that the government uses to keep its people containable, and to lure nonconforming people into the trap of attempting to join the Brotherhood. When Winston, the main character of the novel, attempts to join, he thinks he succeeds, and that it is the secret underground association that he thought. But, it wasn't. The Brotherhood that Winston believed that he was now a part of was merely a scheme from the government designed to pull his abnormalities out so he could be punished for them.

The assumed purpose for *1984* is to warn the people of the world what a highly populated country like England would be like under this type of rule. In the novel, the same food is eaten every single day. Every morning, there is a regimented workout performed on the telescreen, and if one's facial expression is any different from what the Thought Police expects, that citizen could be detained.

When a citizen is detained, they are brought to the Ministry of Love, where they are subjected to cruel torture and starvation. The punishment has no real purpose, but as they are beaten, the "thought-criminal" is demanded to practice "doublethink" which is the act of both accepting and denying something at the same time. For example, in the novel, while he is beaten, his torturer demands of him that he says "Two plus two makes five." Winston is expected to know that it really makes four, but also that if the Party wants it to be five, it would be both simultaneously.

A common reference in the book is to the war. The Party expects its citizens to believe that they are allied with Eurasia and that the war was with Eastasia forever, even though a large population of the citizen's jobs are to change all references to the change all records that they had actually been at war with Eurasia the entire time. The war of the novel is not a war as one would imagine it now. It is still gun-fighting, yet the spirit of the war has changed. The purpose of the

war is no longer to vanquish the enemy, but to have a constant need to produce and expend supplies. This is to make sure that the common citizen of Oceania never has enough of what they need.

To finish, totalitarianism is a form of government that intends to control every facet of life. No matter the action, it will have control. *1984* was written to warn people not to submit and let this kind of rule prevail and rule their lives tyrannically. George Orwell does a terrific job explaining the dangers of totalitarianism, as well as writing a great story to go along with it.

The History of Poland by Matthew Dumiec

Poland has gone through a lot of pain and agony throughout their history, but not everything in Poland's history was bad. In fact, there have been a lot of great things that happened for Poland. Poland became a country when Duke Mieszko I, converted to Christianity, after marrying Dabrowska of Bohemia. One of the first universities in Europe was founded in Krakow in 1364. At the time, Krakow was the capital of Poland, before Warszawa became the capital in 1596.

In 1382, the crown was passed on to a 10-year old girl named Jadwiga. After Jadwiga married Duke Jagiello of Lithuania, Poland created an alliance with Lithuania that lasted for 400 years and increased Poland's boundaries dramatically. Poland prospered culturally, spiritually, and economically. In 1543, Nicolaus Copernicus published *On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres*. Copernicus proposed the fact that the earth revolves around the sun, and not the other way around.

By 1569, the Polish Parliament (called Sejm) unified Lithuania and Poland into one state. The Sejm now decides who will become the next king, instead of it being passed down to family. However, the Sejm allowed foreign candidates to even be put under consideration, and during the time of the Royal Republic, only four kings from eleven were native Poles. Also, during the second year of the Royal Republic, the Sejm gave religious equality. Roman Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Protestants, Jews, and Muslims all lived together in peace.

In the 1700s Poland's neighbors, Russia, Germany, and Austria, all wanted to own Poland. In 1772, the First Partition of Poland had begun, and Russia, Germany, and Austria all took a piece of Poland. During the Second Partition of Poland in 1793, Russia and Germany took half of what was left of Poland. In 1794, Tadeusz Kosciuszko, a famous general who helped win the American Revolution, started a rebellion for Polish independence, but was not able to defeat the Russians. In 1795, the Third Partition of Poland happened and Austria, Germany, and Russia took Warsaw and Krakow. Poland does not exist for the next 123 years.

In 1903, Maria Sklodowska Curie made history, becoming the first woman to receive the Nobel Prize in physics. She won the prize with her husband and Henri Becquerel, for their work on radioactivity. She won another Nobel Prize in 1911, except this time, it was for chemistry. Maria became the first scientist to win two nobel prizes. She received the prize alone, after her husband died in 1906.

Germany and Russia attempted to eradicate the Polish culture. Both the German and Russian language became official languages in their parts of Poland. However, under the Austrian partition, Poles were allowed to retain some autonomy. Poland experienced mass emigration because of poverty. Around 4 million out of 22 million Poles went to the United States prior to World War I. With the three countries that occupied Poland at war during World War I, Poland became the main fighting ground. Polish people were forced to join their occupying countries' army. A person who lived in the Austrian part of Poland could be shooting at a family member in the Russian or German part of Poland.

When World War I ended, Germany gained some of Russia's land. Germany gave the land to Poland calling it "Krolestwo Polskie." Germany was hoping that Poland would have a strong army and help Germany when they needed it. Poland then gained the western area of what is today Ukraine and Belarus from Russia during the Polish-Soviet War. During the 1930s, Poland signed non-aggression pacts with Germany and the Soviet Union. These pacts proved to

be pointless when Russia and the Soviet Union sign a non-aggression pact with plans to divide Poland again.

Hitler invaded Poland on September 1st, 1939. Then, on September 17th, 1939, the Soviet Union invaded eastern Poland. Executions, mass arrests, and exiles began. After that, Hitler attacked the Soviet Union in June of 1941, and Poland remained under Nazi control for the next three years. Many Polish people were deported to labor camps, and the Polish intelligentsia was executed. Most of Poland's Jewish population, but also many non-Jews, died in the Nazi death camps set up throughout Poland in Maidanek, Birkenau, in Oswiecim.

In 1945, Russia's Red Army defeated the Germans. Afterwards, Russia set up a communist-dominated government for Poland. Also, In February 1945, Russia, the United States, and Great Britain met at the Yalta Conference, and decided to keep Poland under the Soviet Union's control. Also, when the war ended, more than 6 million Poles died. That was approximately 20% of Poland's population at the time.

In 1978, Karol Wojtyla was elected as Pope John Paul II, becoming the first non-Italian pope since the 15th century. John Paul II served as Pope from 1978 to 2005. John Paul II's pontificate is marked by attempts to bring the church closer to people, apostolic pilgrimages, and respect to life. He traveled the world, visiting more than 100 countries, to spread his words of faith and peace. In 1981, an assassin shot John Paul II twice in St. Peter's square in Vatican City. Thankfully, he was able to recover from the injuries. He even forgave the attacker.

In 1980, a small strike that began in Gdansk spread to the whole country. It was a Solidarity trade-union movement that began in the Gdansk shipyards. The movement had economic and political goals, and 10 million members almost immediately to its beginning. Lech Walesa was the leader of the movement. Lech Walesa was an electrician who later received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1983. The communist party was forced to allow free elections in Poland in 1989. It was a victory for the Solidarity party.

In 2004, Poland finally joined the European Union. Poland has fought many wars to become the evolved country it is today. It has expanded its borders and gotten its independence. Although Poland had a lot of devastating periods throughout their history, they have certainly have had an impact on the world. Poland will be forever remembered for it's success.

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NaCl by Victor Hu

Sodium chloride (NaCl), or more commonly known as salt, is an essential nutrient to many living things, in addition to playing a highly significant role throughout human history and numerous cultures around the world. Nowadays, you can find salt (sometimes iodized, another essential nutrient) in just about any average household, usually used as a seasoning. But in the past, its use as a preservative for various foods was incredibly vital, in addition to serving many other more minor uses. As a result of this, salt became both a symbol of purity and permanence in many religions, regardless of where they originated. Various places have prospered depending on how they utilized and controlled salt. Many people underestimate the importance of salt, not realizing how great of an effect the mineral truly had.

Today, salt is usually associated with problems such as high blood pressure and damaged kidneys/heart, and overeating it has become somewhat of an issue. However, salt's components, sodium (Na⁺) and chloride (Cl⁻) ions (hence sodium chloride), are important electrolytes that balance the amount of fluids in your body and allow your muscles and nerves to function correctly, in addition to a range of other purposes. This makes salt incredibly necessary to support living things, contrary to what some people may think.

The main reason salt was so important in past centuries was for the preservation of foods. Today, this obviously isn't a very large problem. However, in a time where there was no such thing as refrigeration and food would spoil in days, salt was incredibly important to keep bacteria from overrunning the food, and the food from going bad. Salt works by drying up a lot of the moisture in the food, so most bacteria will have a difficult time surviving there. Curing meats and fish with salts, for instance, may increase storage time by months or even years depending on the storage conditions. Fruits and vegetables could be pickled by submerging them in brine.

A safe and secure food supply was terribly important because, in case something such as a drought or other disaster happened and there was a particularly bad harvest, everybody would not immediately starve and die. They could live temporarily off the preserved foods until the next harvest, where there will be (hopefully) more food. Food could now also be brought over long distances for journeys or perhaps to trade, and food that must be grown in a specific season could be eaten throughout the year, instead of reserved for that specific season. (Kurlansky)

Because of salt's role in preserving food, salt was an expensive commodity. Roman soldiers, for instance, may have been sometimes paid in salt or allocated a certain amount of money to buy salt, which is where we get the word "salary" from. In some parts of Africa, salt was even traded in equal amounts for gold, where salt was not easy to obtain, but gold was. Governments, such as the Chinese, French and Indian, obtained large amounts of money from the heavy taxation of salt. If one had great amounts of salt, one held power and wealth. (Kurlansky)

Of course, the taxation of the valuable mineral was generally disliked by the average commoner, who gained no benefit from the salt tax, yet heavily relied on salt. This was the start of much social unrest. For instance, the Salt March, led by Mohandas Gandhi, a significant nonviolent protester in human history, was protesting against the tax British officials had put on the production of salt, back when India was a British colony. Later, this was a factor in the Indian Independence Movement.(history.com) Another example of this was an unpopular salt tax called the French Gabelle, which was also a contributing factor in the French Revolution.

Though governments were able to gain a lot of money from taxing salt, it usually ended up disrupting social harmony.

Salt has also found its way into religion and customs around the world. In many religions, for instance, salt has been thought to be able to chase away evil spirits and purify an area. Throwing salt over one's shoulder has been thought of as getting rid of bad luck, a superstition that is still relevant and believed today. Spilling salt, on the other hand, is generally regarded as bad luck, which may have come from salt being a precious commodity, and not to be wasted. An example of this is *The Last Supper*, one of the world's most prominent religious paintings in human history, depicting Judas spilling salt, a bad omen. Practitioners of Judaism sometimes will dip bread in salt, seemingly symbolic of one's connection with god. (salt-of-the-earth.com)

Salt's importance in human history cannot be understated. Preserving food, its main purpose, was vital for emerging civilizations. One could even state that salt's value was on par with gold, having been traded as such in some parts of the world. Although salt's prevalence in the modern world has generally become much less significant with the invention of things such as refrigeration, its considerable effect on cultures around the globe and human history has remained unforgettable.

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Penicillin: An Age of Antibiotics by Tyler Wu

When one goes to the doctor for a bacterial infection, such as strep throat, most likely they will be prescribed an antibiotic, in this case that of perhaps amoxicillin or cephalexin. After all, they are efficient and their accessibility is not difficult. Days later, they might have been completely rid of the bacterial infection. These bacteria-killing and restraining substances are unrivaled and their results are optimal.

An antibiotic is a compound made from bacteria and fungi that halts the growth, or directly kills bacteria. Penicillin works by stopping the development of a substance in the cell wall of a bacterium. By weakening the cell walls, the bacteria eventually die from osmotic pressure (How Does Penicillin Work?).

But, these (modern) antibiotics are actually only a recent improvement. Thus, it would be difficult to imagine life before this discovery. Back then, nonfatal diseases such as pneumonia or gonorrhea proved to be life-threatening. Infections from even small scratches or cuts could result in deadly blood poisoning (Penicillin: the Wonder Drug). There was simply no way for doctors to cure them, making these minor issues we consider today a major problem.

Modern antibiotics are continuing to advance in terms of their scope and effectiveness. This is evident all across the world, with myriads of people saved each year from the use of antibiotics. With each following year, the impact of antibiotics becomes even greater, countless more people saved.

But, all of this advancement and progress that society has built on for the past eighty to ninety years can be traced back to the fortuitous result of one experiment. This is what makes the story of Alexander Fleming and his Oxford peers, and the discovery of the first antibiotic of its kind, penicillin, such a legendary and memorable one.

Penicillin derived from just a mold; it was not created, but rather a substance found in nature. The mold that was discovered was an uncommon substance called *penicillium notatum*, which was simply an unexpected result of an experiment conducted by a professor of bacteriology, Alexander Fleming (acs). Like many other great discoveries, it was based on chance. He once said, “When I woke up just after dawn on September 28, 1928, I certainly didn't plan to revolutionize all medicine by discovering the world's first antibiotic, or bacteria killer, but I suppose that was exactly what I did.” (pbs).

The experiment was used to test *Staphylococcus*, bacteria that causes boils and sore throats, among other illnesses. Of these samples of bacteria, which were set on petri dishes, he found one dish to contain something perplexing. Within the colonies of the bacteria grew the mold, *penicillium notatum*, and around it was an area clear of the *Staphylococcus*. Intrigued by this, Fleming set out to further discover the uses of the mold (acs).

The professor, on the verge of discovering something major, tested this mold on various other bacteria, including *meningococcus* and *diphtheria bacillus* among many others, which the mold was able to kill. With this knowledge, his next course of action was to isolate the penicillin from the mold “juice”. But to his chagrin, penicillin quickly proved to be very unstable, and they did not have the resources needed to continue (acs).

Alexander Fleming then published his findings and research in a science magazine, briefly telling about the potential of the mold having medical benefits. From this small published article soon came a booming interest in the mold internationally. But without being able to isolate penicillin, and with the numerous of bacteria that were insensitive to penicillin, the uses

of it seemed very limited (acs). Other scientists, especially bacteriologists, attempted to isolate penicillin, but to their disappointment, were not able to.

Luckily, the dilemma was solved when a group of professors (most notable of them Howard Florey and Ernst Chain) at Oxford University were informed about the mold. Although Fleming was the first to discover the mold, these professors were the ones to be able to transform the mold into the life-saving substance we know today. Part of this was due to the superior amount of resources they had and their chemistry backgrounds that Fleming did not possess (acs).

The group's work on penicillin began in 1939, the beginning of World War II. This date had a large significance in the impact and process of isolating penicillin. Although they did have many resources, they were still difficult to acquire, with most of Britain involved in the war (acs).

Through the process of achieving their goals, they morphed the laboratory into a penicillin workhouse. Because they needed vast quantities of the mold juice/liquid that would be filtered (hundreds of liters of it a week) for experimenting and for trials, they also needed the space for it to grow. They utilized almost everything, including baths, beds, and tin cans. Eventually, they were able to develop a fermentation vessel, which made it easier to grow and saved space. They hired some people to look after the process, but for low pay. Other chemists involved in the process used their methods to extract the penicillin from the mold filtrate. New techniques were developed, such as the one by Edward Abraham, which would be crucial in removing impurities from the substance before trials (acs).

Their tests proved to be very successful. They showed that penicillin could protect mice from infection of the fatal *Streptococci*. The first human test, who had developed a life-threatening infection from scratching his face after pruning roses, miraculously recovered, but soon died because there was not enough supply. This led to the issue of the mass production of penicillin.

The Oxford professors' first thought was to bring the substance to British chemical companies, but they were occupied with the war. They brought the issue to American companies, most notably the pharmaceutical companies. Not long after, millions of units of penicillin were produced, and its impact was huge. The impact of penicillin cannot, however, just be attributed to its effects as an antibiotic. Its commercial success and significance were, on a large part, due to the mass production of it (acs).

The discovery of penicillin was of course a landmark in the world's history. Alexander Fleming, Howard Florey, and Ernst Chain won the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1945 for it (Nobelprize.org).

The importance of penicillin cannot be understated. It quickly proved to be an efficient antibiotic, which would aid greatly to wounded soldiers, and in 1944, became the primary treatment for armed forces in the military of Britain and the U.S.. Penicillin was used to treat many on D-Day, an invaluable asset towards the victory of the Allied Forces. The discovery of penicillin made the practice of amputation nearly obsolete, as well as many other inefficient and rather needless methods (acs). Today, some magazines estimate that in total, penicillin has saved approximately two hundred million lives (New World Encyclopedia). Penicillin has definitely proved that it is befitting of the title of the "miracle drug".

But its effect cannot be just limited to the amount of lives it has saved. It reaches to the scientific community and the world as a whole. The story of penicillin not only unravels more

about medicine, but also about other important ideas, such as that innovation is key to the successes of society, or that cooperation is necessary for innovation.

From the story of penicillin came the revolution and transformation of the medical sciences. Penicillin undeniably ushered in an age of medical discovery and advancements. This discovery has led to many more antibiotics, and, in the process of creating the final product, humans have also been able to utilize the concept of antibiotics into other branches of medicine, as well. This “miracle drug” did for humans more than just miracles. It did something far more complex and intricate than one could understand in a lifetime.

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Literary Reviews

Red Queen
by Zuha Anjum

Red Queen, written by Victoria Aveyard, is an interesting tale. Aveyard writes of a segregated society in which one's fate is determined by the color of one's blood. The silvers being the elite that enslave the reds, and rule over them. The book is about a girl named Mare Barrow, and she has a mutation, making her blood a mix of red and silver blood, a blood that is proven to be stronger than the silver blood. It is about her rebellion against the situations she is driven through. *Red Queen* is a book that has intricately woven characters, as well as an interesting plot. They resonate with one after completing the book. The pair, Maven and Farley, are set up to be two characters that do not communicate with each other much, but their histories and actions make them one of the best pair of foils in the entire book. The two characters have a few similarities, but their strikingly bold difference, set them apart from each other.

Farley and Maven have really fascinating personalities. One is an evil Princess Peach while the other acts like a good version of Kylo Ren. They are hard to interpret characters in the beginning, because they are not the best with their emotions, especially Maven and his big reveal towards the end. One can begin to differentiate them with their histories, as they have a few differences to compare. Both their parents have very commanding personalities and that is what leads the characters to be so different. Maven's mom is a typical evil queen, waiting to rise to power. She has Maven become her ultimate pawn in the game she had planned. After all, his actions result in her victory. Farley, on the other hand, has a commander as a father that is leading the rebellion. But he becomes a character to look down upon because of his horror filled aura. When Mare, the female protagonist, asks him to help recruit others with abilities like hers, he denies and plans to encompass her if she does not get rid of that idea, and blend in with the other *normal* people. Farley could have been like Maven, because he follows his orders. And she has been doing that for a great many years, but she rebels and does what she imagines to be just.

Maven has always been taken lightly because he 'knows' he will never become King, as he is younger than his brother. He knows he will always remain inferior, the main character describing Maven as, "the shadow of the flame." The flame, in this case, being his brother, Cal, and him being the shadow. He is perceived to be the kind, yet *slightly* jealous brother. Later on in the story, his plan is revealed on how he was just acting as the shy and sweet guy, just to shock them all and act as the cruel and jealousy-spiraled person he is. His plan all along was to act that he was in favor with the main character, Mare, in front of her. But, then in front of his brother and father, he acted like he was in their favor, the opposed Mare. Everyone fell for it, except for his mother, who was with him all along. His mother seemed to be controlling him. Although, there are parts that make one feel that his real personality is slipping through, but then his mother tightens the hold on his leash.

Farley is a character that can really be discussed, but still remain mysterious, that is the polar opposite of Maven. Even back when Maven was hiding his interior motives and his personality, they seemed to leak in from time to time, but not with Farley. She is predictable, yet strong, whereas Maven can be unpredictable, yet, he is horribly weak. Farley has a controlling father that has put her in charge of a rebellion, a dangerous mission for his young daughter. There are a number of times in which her father acts like a complete and utter emotionless alien. Instead of being like Maven and going on with her parent's plans, she chooses what is right. She is a true leader. She does what she sees right, it does not matter whether she has disappointed her father or not.

Aveyard captures the two characters in sync, as they differ from each other. Maven can be a bipolar personality and Farley can relate to many of the other characters. But, when one puts them together, they are conceivably the most identical pair of foils in the book. The two are not the only characters that Aveyard does justice to. All of her characters are put in situations that bring out not just the best, but the worst in them, and that really shows what type of person they are. It breaks their shell and cracks the true person beneath the layers. That concept is one that is definitely applicable to life itself. This book is not a fable or such, but it ends up having a droplet of a moral, nonetheless.

The Giver
by Deekshita Gorrepati

The Giver, written by Lois Lowry, is a piece that had no limits when it comes to imagination and creativity. Lowry made sure not to create any boundaries that kept her from doing what she desired. Unlike many of the books, this one had a plot that was very original. It has one build up a burden of thoughts that may possibly never be answered. The theme aligns itself far away from clichés, and one has to admire Lowry’s triumph, as it is quite difficult to catch a theme that is so original. It also tells people that perfection is not the answer, rather, it is the problem. *The Giver* was also capable of explaining the importance of these memories that we hold and how it is our job to preserve them.

Taking place in a utopian society that is confined yet filled with contentment, readers will experience a world where everything is organized, maybe a bit too organized, leading it into problems. One will come across to a 12 year boy named Jonas who is about to turn 13, changing his life entirely. When the day finally comes, he is given a special duty that no other is given, the Receiver of Memory, who has the duty of holding the entire community’s memories, both good and painful. He meets the Giver, where he learns the inhumanity kept from him making him feel disgraced to be part of this community. After learning that Gabriel, a newborn that was going to be “released” (killed), he decided to leave town with the help of the Giver. Though the end is not exactly very clear, it hints the existence of a civilization, but since this book is part of a series, the civilization might have been a likely phenomenon.

Unlike many authors, Lois Lowry had the capacity of entralling the readers with a riveting plot. Lowry tried to create an idea that was as original as possible while representing the creativeness that she held. She was able to prove that one cannot limit their innovation. Lowry took one’s thoughts and wrote it down on paper, no matter how difficult this task was. For instance, many people would have indeed wondered how life would be with such a “perfect” utopia, but explaining that is not simple, especially with the kind of world we live today. When Lowry describes how Jonas begins to see color, it makes one ponder over why we recognize colors as we do. While entertaining the readers, the author tries to feed us with more questions about this world’s origins making the world we live right now feel just like a dream. As the story gradually progresses, the author tries her best to eliminate the typical reality one would find in most books.

The character development is an obvious element that makes this book a mind-controlling masterpiece. At the beginning, Jonas seems to understand that he was beginning to feel apprehensive because of the turning point in his life that was approaching him (Lowry, 4). The idea of getting a job intimidated him. Jonas was worried that he would not meet the expectations and that instead he would make a fool out of himself. When the Chief Elder handed him one of the most important jobs as Receiver of the community, Jonas felt isolated from the rest. It is as if this change was going to negatively affect him more than it was going to benefit him. However, as Jonas becomes more acquainted with the Giver, his opinions towards his new job begins to change. There seemed to be more excitement as things seemed to slowly unravel themselves to Jonas.

Such skills helped build up to a theme that one may find incredible. As humans, we face pain in our daily basis and this is what makes our lives pleasurable, believe it or not. Lowry tries to point out that memories are significant to human life, even though it may seem to sound more gratifying this way. The community in *The Giver* eliminated all negative sensations in hopes of

eliminating pain altogether. What they do not seem to understand is that people will keep repeating mistakes because they do not remember their errors in order to correct them. For instance, the Chief Elder orders to “release” people feeling convinced that this change will benefit them, but with the lack of memories, they are not aware of the terrible crime they are committing. Holding this thought in one’s hand, one cannot experience pleasure without pain because there will be nothing to appreciate since they never encountered with pain before, well they do not remember it.

As a professional author, Lowry makes sure to fascinate them with her talent. The book slowly shaped Jonas’ character from a concealed character to one that readers will favor. She tries to link every scene in a manner that makes it unique. Using her creativity as a bait, she manages to grab hold of reader’s minds and take it to her control. *The Giver* is a serpent seeking for the right time to bite its prey and poison it with the mysteries that this world imprisons.

The Land of Stories: *The Wishing Spell* by Mihika Iyer

The Wishing Spell is an intriguing book that draws the reader in through its many characters, settings, and themes. It is about two siblings: Alex and Conner Bailey, who drop into a book that is given to them by their grandmother. This book is called *The Land of Stories*, and it has been with the Bailey family for many years. When they fall, though, they have no idea where they are until they meet a giant frog who tells them to use a spell called The Wishing Spell to come back to their world. Unfortunately, for them, the ingredients for this spell is spread across *The Land of Stories* and sheltered by the most dangerous villains in this dimension. This book takes the reader's imagination on an enchanted journey through the worlds and keeps them on the edge of their seats throughout the whole time. The glue that holds this story together is the theme, determination. It is clearly portrayed throughout the story, but is highlighted in some places more than others, and pulls the story along.

As stated before, *The Wishing Spell* is a book that depicts the theme all throughout the story. One such place is when Alex and Conner are kidnapped by trolls and goblins. These horrid creatures capture and enslave the twins. At night, they are thrown into a cell and guarded by two goblins. They are surrounded by a large amount of people who just gave up and lost hope for freedom. Fortunately, the twins do not. They try every possible way of escaping until they decide to call the gullible princess and try to convince her into releasing them. She hears their cries, runs into the "Cell Room", sees Conner, and immediately falls in love with him. This is when Alex has an idea. Conner would kiss Princess Trollbella in return for their freedom. She agreed (to Conner's dismay) and let them get away. Once she left the Cell Room, the twins freed the rest of the slaves and they all escaped. All, except for an old man, who risked his life for the rest of the prisoners. This part of the book shows the theme very clearly because if Alex and Conner were not stayed hopeful and given up, they would be slaves forever and still be stuck in the fairytale dimension.

The chapter that took place in Cinderella's castle made the theme extremely clear. The first item on the list of ingredients for the Wishing Spell was one of Cinderella's glass slippers. Fortunately, for Alex and Conner, there was a royal ball that day in celebration of the birth of the baby princess. Sadly, the twins did not have invitations. This meant they would have to sneak in. Even though this situation could have put them in prison for life, they remained determined and put together a plan to sneak in *without* invitations. In the end, the twins succeeded, not only in getting the slipper, but also in displaying the theme yet again. If they had given up hope and intentness, they would be stranded in the fairytale dimension forever.

When the twins arrive at Sleeping Beauty's castle, another example of the theme is revealed to the reader. They saw that the entire kingdom was asleep. The enchanters and witches had all just left, reporting that this kingdom was forever going to be in this state and they had tried everything in their power to reverse the curse. Luckily, the young king and queen had not lost their hope. They stayed determined and called in a new set of people. This time they called the wizards and scientists. Conner immediately felt sorry for the king and queen and gave his input: the rubber band trick. This was the practice of snapping the rubber band on the wrists of the people, bringing them awake with a small pain that was not enough to hurt them, but enough to shock them and wake them up. Even though this seemed silly to the king and queen, they were determined to wake up their sleeping kingdom, showing an incredible display of the theme: determination. This silly trick ends up working, bringing in a little of irony that a child's trick

worked, rather than the work of that dimensions greatest magicians and scientists. If the young rulers had not stayed determined, their kingdom would have been asleep forever.

The last display of the theme in this story was when the Evil Queen's castle begins tumbling down while the twins are inside. Alex and Conner are determined to get inside and defeat the Evil Queen, so they keep going, depicting the theme perfectly. Once they get inside, they hear the Evil Queen's sad story, which makes the theme shine even brighter because the Evil Queen was determined to be with her old boyfriend who was trapped in her magic mirror. When the twins find out that their grandmother was the fairy godmother and Alex was the heir to the throne of magic, the Evil Queen begs her to put her inside the mirror with her love. If the Evil Queen lost hope of ever seeing her boyfriend again and was not determined, she would have lost him forever. If Alex and Conner backed out at the start of the castle tumbling, they would never have gotten back to their world, or figured out the truth about their grandmother and family. This scene is perhaps where the theme is most evident.

This piece shows that the book *The Wishing Spell* has the theme of determination. It is portrayed clearly throughout the book in many situations, including the ones above. It shows how the theme creates and resolves conflicts, and pulls the story along. In many cases, if a character did not show willpower, they would fail or lose. This shows how important the theme is for this specific story and how dull and boring the characters, setting, and the overall story would be without it. In the end, the reader can see that the theme is shown clearly in many parts of story, can make the whole book more interesting, and give them a better experience reading this book. A life lesson can be learnt from every book, this one being one with a great lesson to teach.

Everything, Everything
by Jalen Opinion

Everything, Everything, by Nicola Yoon, features a girl named Madeline Whittier who is allergic to almost everything in the world. Madeline's disease is known as SCID, or "Bubble Baby Disease". She is so allergic that she has never left the house once in her seventeen years of living. The only glimpse of the outside world she gets to see is through a window, and everything in her house is mostly white. When a boy named Olly moves in next door, her whole life is flipped upside down.

Nicola Yoon is an extraordinary writer because of her unique idea for this book and an unexpected plot twist near the ending. Yoon's book takes one on an adventure with her character, Madeline, whose nickname is Maddy, or "Mad" for short. The only people Maddy ever sees is her nurse, Carla, and her mom. Maddy's brother and dad unfortunately died in a car crash when she was little, and her mom tries to avoid the topic. Her mother is a physician, and in order for people to visit Maddy, they would have to endure an hour-long decontamination process, which is a big pain. All the friends Maddy has ever known were all over the internet, and she takes online classes. She enjoys architecture very much, but hates that she cannot leave her house to attend "physical" school.

As mentioned beforehand, Maddy has never been outside. This means she has never felt the warm kiss of the sun, the grass tickling her feet, or the wind flowing through the air. Those are things we experience, yet Maddy has never experienced these things even once, and she is now entering adulthood. Maddy has just turned eighteen when she hears a moving truck from next door. She takes a peek out from her window, and that is when she first sees Oliver, otherwise known as Olly. Maddy describes him as tall, lean, and he wears all black, and a black knit hat. Olly spends most of his days on the roof, hiding from his abusive, alcoholic, dad.

Olly's bedroom window is directly across from hers, so he writes his message on his window, and that is when it began. They first start out by emailing and doing Instant Messages, and Maddy spends hours talking to him. When Carla sets up a secret meeting for them in Maddy's house while her mom is away, Maddy just falls more in love with Olly. During his visit, Olly also learns of the disease she has. A few days later, Maddy sees Olly's dad in a drunken rage, one that has never been as powerful or seen by Maddy before. She takes a leap and rushes outside to try to save Olly, and that is when her mother finds out that she has been meeting with him in secret. Maddy's mom fires Carla immediately, and she also takes away her laptop so Maddy cannot message Olly anymore.

Maddy soon takes another risk; one that puts her life in danger, her life potentially ticking away. Yoon includes pictures of bits written by Maddy, such as her late-night Instant Messages with Olly, and charts that shows the daily checkups she goes through. Yoon also did an excellent job with balancing the lightheartedness and serious events. Like said, her plot twist is certainly unexpected, and Yoon's debut novel is well written and has sad, funny, and romantic components.

The book *Everything, Everything* has only one seemingly cliché element. It is when Olly moves in next door and Maddy falls instantly in love as if on first sight, but other than that, their love is cheesy no more. It is hard to put down the book once you have started, and Nicola Yoon's book is a quick, but not too quick, read. Hopefully, Yoon will make a sequel to *Everything, Everything*, for it is practically assured that many fans are dying to read more.



Short Fiction

When They Left Us

by Deekshita Gorrepati

Every moment, of every day, of every month, of every year, I think of our dismal life and how that one argument, that one night, and that one stupid car changed our lives forever. These memories were attached to my mind, repeating itself like an old movie until my body no longer could take it. As we reverse time, it always comes back to that one decision that opened our parents' tunnel to heaven and blew out the candle that held our family together.

I walked home taking miniscule strides, hoping that the more steps I took, the farther away I would get from home. I mean, I love my home, but today was a different chapter. After what seemed like a few minutes, I came to realize that I had arrived home. *'Was facing my problems the right thing or should I just turn back around? Should I call Aiden and talk to him about it first?'* I was standing in front of my house, but I was in a dilemma at this point and I knew that staying there wasn't the best idea, especially when living in a crowded neighborhood. I opened the door and began to walk in. With every step I took, the knot in my stomach grew tighter. I felt like walking straight towards a tornado, rather than the other way around. Though I regretted it, I dragged my legs along with the rest of the body reluctantly.

"Hey, hon, how was school?" my Mom asked. I hated the thought of imagining my Mom without the smile that glistened every time I saw her.

"Fine," I replied as a smile managed to shape at the corners of my mouth.

"Are you sure? You don't sound fine. You should know by now that our mother-daughter telepathy is quite strong."

"For God's Sake, Mom, we don't have any telepathy!"

"Ok, whatever you say. So now, tell me what's bothering you, honey."

"Well, um, you see, um, nevermind, it's actually really nothing now that I think about it," I said trying my best not to give it away.

"Tell me right now or I will get the..."

"No, no, not the clown, please no, I'll tell you."

"So, what happened?"

"I might have, um, seen Dad, um, at Starbucks, with this woman, and, like, they were holding hands." The last few words came out so fast that I never got to see my Mom's last smile. At the same time, I was thankful it was off my chest. "But I'm sure Dad would never do that to you."

"Yeah, me too." Disbelief and rage ran across her serene face as she said this. Mom was never good at hiding her feelings. At that exact moment, Aiden walked in merrily, which gave me the feeling that things weren't going to get any better.

"Hey, Mum! Guess what?"

"What, hon?" Mom asked with a melancholy face with a tint of frustration.

"I won the Math League!"

"I'm so proud of you. I knew you would keep the family tradition going. Avery, want to say anything?"

"Yeah, of course. Good job, keep up the good work." I replied, still wishing I never told Mom.

"Why the sad mood, Sis?"

"No reason," Mom and I said simultaneously.

"Well, mother-daughter telepathy is strong, isn't it?" Aiden smirked.

“FOR THE LAST TIME, WE DON’T HAVE ANY TELEPATHY! WHY IS IT SO HARD TO UNDERSTAND?” I yelled in exasperation.

“Aiden, why don’t you go to your room and finish your homework?”

“But, I don’t...” Aiden began.

“No “buts”, do what I said! Since when have I stopped making things clear!” At this point, it was obvious that Mom hadn’t let go of the conversation we had a bit earlier.

“Okay?” Aiden said, sounding confused.

“Wait up, I wanna come too,” I yelled. I didn’t want to make things more awkward between Mom and me. And not only that, my twin had the right to know what had happened.

“Alright,” After finally arriving to his bedroom, which unlike mine was tidy and welcoming, we sat on his bed. His room gives you this indescribable feeling of comfort and the sun’s vibrant rays send a glossy, gold sheen around his room that blend with the leaves of autumn.

“So what’s up with Mom today?” Aiden asked flipping his brown hair out his face exposing the other eye, which was an eerie shade of green due to the sunlight reflecting on it.

“Well, you see, this morning I found dad--um--with this woman holding hands,” I said trembling.

“WAIT, WHAT?! HOW COULD DAD DO THAT?! YOU MUST BE MISTAKEN!” Aiden yelled while boiling with rage. It was weird to see Aiden’s normally calm and unruffled face slowly turn into this indignant monster. His emotions spewed like an exploding volcano and I could almost see the smoke coming out of his ears.

“I know it sounds unbelievable, but it's what I saw and so I thought Mom should know,” I was praying that what I saw had a different meaning, but I was 99.9% sure I was right.

“STILL! DAD? CHEATING ON MOM? Does that even sound BELIEVABLE? Why would you even tell Mom this? Couldn’t you have at least asked me? When did you start taking decisions without me? Do you realize that our family will be separated because of you? Have you realized what you’ve done?” The last few words came out of his mouth and hit my heart like daggers. What Aiden was completed true and I couldn’t control myself. *Was this family going to tear apart because of me?*

“STOP! JUST STOP! Whenever I do something, I do it for the family’s benefit and plus Mom has the RIGHT to know!” I yelled, incapable of controlling my anger.

“I’m sorry. It’s just, well, our family has always has been so happy, and with this in our way I don’t how to react. I guess I’m just not use to it being this way,” Aiden admitted.

“It’s alright, I guess I overreacted a bit, too. So what should we do?”

“Our only option is hope for the best,” Aiden said with his head drooping down.

“Yea--” my voice was drained by the doorbell which hinted that Dad had arrived.

“Guys, we will be back in a while. Stay safe alright,” Dad told us as he came traipsing down the stairs while shuffling through a stack of papers in a frustrated manner. Just then, the papers went flying out of his hands.

“Let me help you there,” I said politely reaching for the papers.

“NO! I meant no, it’s alright. I got it,” he said trying to calm himself. My eyes averted to the paper that was lying at my feet and I managed to sneak a look at the paper. What I saw still haunts me in my dreams. I didn’t think that my stupidity would lead to my parent’s separation. I never thought it would go this far. Noticing my eyes, Dad immediately removed the paper out of

my sight. Right behind him, Mom walked down, without saying anything. Her eyes were tearing, but she tried to restrain them.

“So, where are you guys going?” I said acting like I didn’t have a clue. The very second I said that, they looked as if they got caught onto Dilemma’s spider web.

“Um...to the mall to return that... watch I got the other day,” Dad muttered.

“Oh, I see.”

“Anyways, bye guys. Like I said before, stay safe,” Dad reminded walking out behind Mom, she still hadn’t said a word.

“And how long do they think they can keep it a secret?” I asked annoyed.

“I really don’t know,” Aiden said. As he said this, a small tiny crystal bead slowly rolled down my face. I couldn’t hide the emotions anymore and that’s when I let go everything I was holding in. Before I knew it, those beads turned into streams of tears. And my brother didn’t do anything to stop me.

It was no more than two hours since Mom and dad left when sirens engulfed through every corner of the house. Fear entered through our veins and I could have almost sworn that I skipped a heartbeat. *Where were Mom and dad? Why was it taking them so long?* Questions were making their way into my head as I tried my best to prevent them from breaking in. And then the doorbell rang; I didn’t have a good feeling about this. Last time, the bell rang things didn’t go so well for us. I reluctantly walked towards the door and began to gently open it. I felt fear and desolation thrust through the door.

“We have to take you to the hospital, orders from the police department,” the police officer told me and Aiden.

“Um...any problem?” Aiden, who was standing next to me asked.

The police officers looked at each other and then one said, “Your parents got into a car accident.” There was great sympathy in his voice, but I didn’t care at the moment. My parents had gotten hurt and that’s all I cared about. I couldn’t stay a second, I needed to see my parents. I rushed the officers outside my house and Aiden and I made our way into the police car anxiously.

“Get going!” I yelled at them. The car roared and began to go through the empty night. I looked at the stars, the ones that represented all of my ancestors that once lived. Tears rushed down my cheeks as I wondered if my parents had joined them as well. I forced that thought out of head. *No, they weren’t dead. They will keep fighting and will never give up. I will have hope in them.* We parked in front of the hospital and before the car came to a halt I rushed out. My safety wasn’t a higher priority than my parents.

The lady at the counter was very polite, despite the way I was with her. She seemed to know how to handle situations like this and directed me to where my parents were. I ran through the hallway, wiping the tears off of my face as they continued to cascade down. My mind kept replaying the memories of my family when we were happy by ourselves, with no one disturbing our peaceful lives. I arrived right in front of the Intensive Care Unit hoping that God was on my side. I was so busy praying that I didn’t hear the doctor, who was apparently calling my name for the past few minutes.

“So what happened? Are my parents okay? You haven’t failed me, have you? Can I--” I was so worried that I didn’t even let the doctor talk. “Accept my apology, I tend to hyperventilate a lot. You may talk.”

I saw regret in his eyes as he began to talk. “The t-thing, umm, i-is,” I stopped him, he didn’t need to say any more. Rage began to go up my sleeves, but I controlled it as much as I

could. The hollow hole in my heart grew bigger and bigger every second. I could feel someone stamping the word, “loneliness” across my life as pools of raindrops flooded the room.

“Can I please see them?” I asked, whimpering. I walked into the room and saw my parents lying peacefully on the uncomfortable beds. The smiles were missing and emptiness dominated their faces. I looked at their frail and pale faces while tending to have trouble breathing. I felt like the Titanic sinking along with the remaining happiness in my life. I could feel all the forces on Earth suck everything leaving nothing, but darkness behind. That’s when I shut my eyes, but unlike my parents, only temporarily.

* * *

Two days passed since Mom and Dad passed away and Aiden and I knew that we weren’t lucky enough to get adopted. But, then again, one should never lose hope. We were at the police station when our aunt, one that I’ve never seen or heard of in my life, asked to adopt us. Our faces once filled with grief, now glowed, blinding everyone. What we didn’t know was that this was just the beginning of our *unique* life.

Bolshevik

by Achyuta Murli

The clock struck twelve, signaling the end of the long, hard, day, working with no stop. All the workers worked extremely hard in the harsh, cold country of Russia. But, this was all about to change. Our story starts with a young man, who hated everything about his country. The rich lived in chic fashion while the poor saw gruel as an average dinner. Our young man was an orphan who hated the royal family, a man by the name of Vyacheslav, or Slav for short. Slav was on his way to the Anti-Czar rally. The rally was a secret, and only a few people knew about it. Here, they would talk about how much they hated the czar and give their personal experiences of pain. Unknown to Slav, today would be different. Slav walked through the curtain with his best friend Anatoly. They had been friends since their birth.

“So, Slav, you ready for this rally? I heard they are going to talk about rebellion. I can’t wait to overthrow those fat slobs called the royal family,” Anatoly said.

Anatoly had a lot of hate toward the royal family. The czar Nicholas II had given his father a life sentence for dropping some silverware. His mother died in a prison for a crime she did not commit. As for Slav, he never knew his parents. Anatoly’s father was good friends with Slav’s father but Slav’s father forfeited his friendship with him. Anatoly’s father was kind enough to take Slav under his wing.

“I’m ready. My father was killed by the czar,” Slav said.

“Uhh, yeah, sure, maybe he was,” Anatoly said in an unsure voice.

They walked into the abandoned factory that they were using as a meeting place. They walked into the cheers of “death to Nicholas!”

“Whoa, I didn’t sign up to kill anyone,” Slav whispered under his breath.

However, Anatoly jumped right in on the cheer. There was a sort of gleam in his eye, a gleam Slav did not like.

“Anatoly, snap out of it! *Успокойся!*” Slav yelled in desperation.

“Sorry Slav. You are right. I need to calm down,” Anatoly said.

Suddenly, the speaker of the rally saw Slav and Anatoly.

“Brothers Slav and Anatoly, so glad you could make it!” The speaker said.

“Brother Vlad, we wouldn’t miss it even if the world was ending,” Anatoly said.

“So, you missed the first part of what I said. The revolution is happening. We are taking back our country!” Vlad said.

There was a cheer that went up. Slav, for the first time in his life was happy. The czar would be overthrown.

“Brothers and sisters, are you ready for the revolution?” Vlad asked.

“YES!” The crowd yelled back.

“Then, head back to your homes. Muster all the weapons you can gather. And get ready for the revolution!” Vlad yelled.

The crowd ran out yelling screams of happiness. They were all happy, all of them except for Slav. Slav was stunned by Vlad’s words.

“Why do we need to muster all the weapons we can get,” he thought, “Are we going to kill to get our objectives?”

When Slav brought it up to Anatoly, he, too, was troubled. Vlad always preached peaceful revolution. Anatoly, however, got over that fact. He did not care, and he gave Slav a piece of his mind.

“You should not let it bother you. Get over it. The czar is the evil one here. Not us. And if he dies, so what? He has killed countless of us,” Anatoly reprimanded Slav.

“I guess you are right,” Slav said, still unsure of his position of killing the czar.

They woke up to the sound of guns firing and screams on the road. The revolution had begun! Slav ran out into the streets and saw soldiers and common people fighting. Over it all he could hear Vlad yelling words of encouragement. However when Slav looked for him, he saw him at the top of a building, not fighting. Anatoly came up to Slav with a sword.

“Come on Slav, let's go fight,” Anatoly said.

Slav slapped him and said, “Don’t be foolhardy. We will be surely killed if we try to fight.”

They watched the entire battle from the safety of their house. The tides were constantly being turned. First, the soldiers were winning, then, the common people were winning. There was no definite winner. Many times Anatoly wanted to go help, but Slav always said “Don’t you remember what happened last time? We can’t let that happen again.”

“Yes, my comrades, fight! Fight for freedom!” Vlad yelled.

He was shot down by a soldier. That is when the common people surged forward. They rushed to protect Vlad. Anatoly rushed forward into the battle. This time Slav did not stop him, he joined him. Vlad was a good friend of theirs and they would not allow him to be harmed.

Anatoly led a charge with the cry, “For brother Vlad!”

Everyone followed behind him and they attacked with one strong surge. They pushed back the soldiers and even took some ground that the soldiers had. Anatoly and Slav were leading the charge. The soldiers retreated back. A cheer went up. Everyone rushed to Vlad’s side.

“Anatoly, Slav, thank you for leading the men. You have helped the revolution,” Vlad gasped.

“It was our pleasure brother. As long as you are safe. I just hope that we helped.” Anatoly said.

Slav looked around. The neighborhood was filled with cheers; they had won the battle. But Slav only saw the casualties. The streets were filled with the injured. Many men who Slav was friends with had died fighting.

‘Were all these losses worth what they had gained? What had they even gained?’ Slav thought.

But then all of those thoughts were whisked away as he was picked up onto soldiers and marched down the streets with him and Anatoly being praised. They were carried all the way to the royal palace. Slav noticed that it was empty except for freed servants cheering. No one who had power in the Russian monarchy was around. Neither was the czar. Once again the thoughts left and he was filled with happiness. One of the main leaders of the revolution was a man named Joseph Stalin. He heard how Slav and Anatoly helped and he congratulated them.

“You are true heroes of the revolution,” he said to them.

The two boys were led to a nice house in the countryside where they would live in lavish leisure.

It had been three months since the revolution was successfully carried out. Slav was in the garden playing a game with Anatoly when a thought struck him like a sledgehammer.

“Anatoly, I have a question for you,” Slav asked.

“What is up, Slav?” he said.

“What happened to the czar?” Slav asked.

Anatoly stopped suddenly and yelled “Shut up Slav. Stop caring for the man that killed my mother! All this lavish lifestyle will disappear if you start asking around about this topic! For once you need to stop being so inquiring.”

“I don’t care for him, I want to know what happened. Doesn’t any part of you want to just know what happened.” Slav said.

“Maybe but if we go venturing into this everything we have will go away from us. Anatoly said.

“I’m sorry Anatoly, but I need to know.” Slav hung his head.

“Don’t go, Slav! You’ll ruin both our lives you selfish jerk!” Anatoly yelled.

“I’m sorry Anatoly,” Slave said.

“I know who your father is! If you go, I won’t tell you!” Anatoly said.

“You-you knew my father! And you did not tell me! What kind of a friend are you? You betrayed my trust, Anatoly! Slav yelled.

“I could not tell you. For if I did, you would not be able to live with yourself. Slav, your father was the czar,” Anatoly said.

Slave backpedaled in shock. He was in unbelievable denial.

“No! You must be lying. You’re trying to stop me from going to find out what happened!” Slav yelled.

“No, Stalin put us out here in the countryside because he did not want anyone finding out. He does not want anyone to know about you,” Anatoly said.

Slav ran all the way into his room and locked himself in. He sat on his bed and thought, *‘Am I really the son of that monstrosity? Is the man I hate my father?’*

“Slav, come out of there! I know this information must shock you but you are not the same as the czar.” Anatoly pleaded.

Slav opened the door and walked out.

“Now more than ever I need to find out what happened to my father. I do not care whether you are coming or not. The decision is yours. But, I’m warning you, if you do not help me then you get out of my way.” Slav said.

“I’m sorry Slav but I can’t come. I wish you good luck.” Anatoly said.

Slav snuck out and headed for the car.

“Where are you going master, Slav?” The driver asked.

“Just into the city,” Slav said.

“Yes sir,” The driver said.

Slav never saw how far away they were from the city. He never saw all this countryside. Soon they had reached the inner gates of Moscow.

“Anywhere specific?” he asked.

“Yes, the Kremlin. I have an appointment with a man named Stalin.” Slav said.

“I warn you, he might have changed since the last time you have seen him.” the driver said.

Slav walked and he noticed that many of the officials he knew were gone. He didn’t even see Trotsky, which was odd considering that he was quite powerful in the Russian government. Then he walked into a room and saw Stalin.

“Slav, my comrade, how are you doing?” Stalin said.

“I have a question, my comrade. What happened to my father?” Slav said.

Stalin laughed nervously and said, “Who was your father, my comrade?”

“Cut the lies, Stalin. We both know who my father was.” Slav demanded.

“I would watch my tone when talking to the ruler of Russia. You should show some respect to me, Slav.” Stalin said, his tone getting more annoyed by the second, as if he was being attacked by a gnat.

“Lenin is the ruler, and Trotsky is next in line.” Slav said.

“Ha! Lenin is dead and Trotsky is exiled so, Slav, I am the ruler of Russia. And you know what? I will tell you what happened to the czar. He was taken to a camp and he was shot. Just like the rest of his and your family.” Stalin laughed and said.

“How could you? That was not right to kill them!” Slav yelled.

“Slav, is your faith in the revolution wavering?” He asked sarcastically.

“No, yours is!” Slav said.

“Either way Slav, you have become a thorn in my side. And thorns need to be taken care of. Good-bye, Slav.”

Two guards grabbed him.

“No! NO!” Slav yelled.

Editors' Note

Thank you for taking the time to read our 7th grade Gifted and Talented class publication, produced here at Green Brook Middle School. This magazine was a massive editorial undertaking for us. We are deeply grateful to our copy editors, Shane Connors and Victor Hu.

-Editors-in-Chief, Matthew Dumiec and Gianluca Pagano