

WEST HIGH'S LITERARY MAGAZINE

# WEST HORIZONS



**VOLUME 59**  
SPRING 2023

# Note From the Editors

Philip Lam, *Horizons Editor-in-Chief 2023-2024*:

When I ponder the horizon, two ideas come to mind: sunrise and sunset. Visually identical, paths differential, taken together cyclical. As we celebrate our veteran writers and artists, so too do we usher in the next generation of creatives. To write, to paint, to illustrate, and to capture is to inspire, to validate, to reconcile, and to piece together the strange and beautiful jigsaw we call humanity.

Samantha Takeda, *Horizons Editor-in-Chief 2022-2023*:

As the academic year comes to a close alongside the high school careers of the Class of 2023, I applaud those who continuously strive to create and share their work, and I'm thrilled to watch the creative futures of not just the Senior Class but also the rest of West High unfold.

To Philip: your passion and drive for good design and storytelling shows in your work and you continue to amaze me with insurmountable enthusiasm and selflessness; I look forward to the inevitable brilliance you will bring to all future Horizons and Signals publications.

# Masthead

*Co-Editors-in-Chief* / Samantha Takeda & Philip Lam

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*West Horizons Vol. 59: Spring 2023 contains all full-length submissions formatted to best align with the creator's intended viewing experience.*

*\*The opinions and views expressed through Horizons submissions are the creator's own and do not reflect that of the West Signals staff or West High School as a whole.*

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# Flavor Grenade Pluot Flowers

Amanda Bruers | 10th grade

Photography

*This image depicts a Japanese Plum tree covered in blossoms but not yet bearing any fruit. To me it represents that although the destination may be gainful, we should appreciate the beauty in the journey; we should look forward to the little things in life everyday, not just the milestones.*



# Phantom

Anika Agarwal | 12th grade

Phantom  
Darkness unveiled like gloom after rain  
Isn't water supposed to mean life

Folds like spider webs in my brain  
Trap the urge to escape

Chills, shivers, beads of sweat  
Sweaty palms, blazing forehead  
Red ears and bad breath  
Heavy legs I yearn to drag

The 8 legs across from me  
Four times my power  
Suffocate me in darkness  
As I gasp for air

Drown, drown, drown

My arms stir turbulence  
Sending ripples down the sheets  
That seemed like a depth.  
Wailing for help, for a hand

My neck stiff, and my muscles sore  
My pale white skin outshines darkness  
It sits upright and floats

# It's so fluffy!!

Jodie Cheng | 11th grade

Acrylic

*In the months of March and April, clear blue skies tend to have fluffy cumulus congestus clouds. Blending a giant Totoro figure with these clouds, which otherwise go unnoticed during the rainy months, inspired my piece.*



# The New Suburbia

Philip Lam | 11th grade

The conurbation was unlike any I had observed prior, for as a frontiersman indigenous to the rugged Cumberland Plateau, the spectacle of this quintessentially American hamlet they call “Levittown” thoroughly bemused me. This July excursion, I would later discover, was a veritable purgatory, the blistering enmity of the coruscant sun baking empty asphalt thoroughfares, desiccating neat blades of mowed lawns, and leaving nothing but scorched earth in an ostensibly treeless dystopia. Nevertheless, at the behest of forces unknown, I had made this pilgrimage no more for business than for leisure; perambulating through this peculiar settlement, I have found, affords ample opportunity for man to ruminate in his thoughts, however excoriating the heat. For what has a man but his faculties, what *is* a man save his thoughts — that is to say, the contemplations of phenomena beyond mortal jurisdiction or comprehension?

With this axiom in mind, I imagined crimson sycamores constituting the once-prolific woodlands, coupled with verdant meadows and pearlescent streams for which the pickerel and walleye made their annual migration. Centuries later, standing in their place were neat little boxes: picturesque, if not standardized, dwellings of some prototypical Frank Lloyd Wright variety, no doubt hastily erected for what I could only deduce as a suburban sprawl. And in this moment of stupefaction, I unearthed something of an anomaly as I meandered further down the flat parkway.



The lone hummingbird sat delicately balanced atop a lifeless sapling, the latter of which, at my distance, appeared deceased, but upon closer inspection, was merely infantile. A vertical wooden rod stood adjacent to the adolescent trunk, bound in bright green adhesive so as to guide the tree's growth. Despite my tepid admiration seeing such life amid barren surroundings, the hummingbird forfeited the conventional chirping and, lest its taciturnity not suffice to aerial predators, stared straight ahead as if paralyzed. Save for subtle twitches, time seemed to dilate in the idyllic hellscape as my concentration shifted to this uncanny minutiae.

What confounded me most was the creature's choice of inhabitancy: a nascent, leafless tree germinating from dugout peat. The latter's hue was fairer than the surrounding dirt, its muddled texture clearly disrupted by the footsteps of passersby. And yet, the choice could not have been more ideal: the hummingbird's steel-brown coat, with white patches and black stipplings, made one with the tree most impeccably; had it not been for the contrasting white stucco in the background, the camouflage would fool even the most perspicacious of observers.

Roused from my internal soliloquy, I had but a scant luxury to notice the capricious little bird flying off to a taller, leaf-bearing tree, which grew on undeveloped property. The tree was older, wilted, and one of but a few remaining. Encompassing this larger tree — a native sugar maple no less — was a carpet of grass; a type, perhaps, akin to that found in my native hinterlands: untamed, Douglas fir green, pulchritudinous. Combined with the putrescent sugar maple, the unkempt parcel of grass juxtaposed the freshly cut front lawns of the other houses — a nasty aberration yet to be extirpated by the realtors and contractors.

Unlike their disheveled counterpart, the lawns were immaculate and orderly. How stupendous, how suburban! And yet its assiduous caretakers had not the time of day to discard the remnants of recently-cut grass. Instead, they accumulated like mold — pleasant to the olfactories, but repugnant to the eye. I suppose the astute hummingbird knew best in its flight from the newborn tree to the elder sugar maple: to bask not in the mowed grass behind but in the wild grass in front; to entertain not the constraining comfort to its rear but the unencumbered freedom over yonder.

Behold the complacency of camouflage in a neat, convenient, agreeable, conforming world that *surely* must supplant the chaos and uncertainty of fickle Mother Nature — the obfuscations of an old, wilted tree. Alas, the nascent tree and the superficial lawns, I hazard to claim, forever shall lack the authenticity and resilience of the sugar maple; likewise, the Levittown forever shall lack the individuality and purity of my beloved Cumberland Plateau.

# Chill bear

PJ Jain | 10th grade

Watercolor



# why shouldn't i pee in this public pool

Ian Samillano | 12th grade

Author's Note: *"it's a character study about the cognitive dissonance and mental gymnastics someone could go to when they have a surface-level, hyper-individualistic understanding of philosophy, and an agenda (to pee in a public pool) (what else could he be capable of?). fear the homo unius libri."*

why shouldn't i pee in this public  
pool

stop me be the übermensch  
i'm meant to be divine  
reality? define morality  
paralysis until a socrates  
may make my mission  
consecrate it's nature to  
create and to go and humble  
lakes with a stream  
animalia amalgam may it be  
a truant one might call me  
considering myself  
merely micturating  
how bad could i be?

# Patches

Riyana Roy | 12th grade

Photography/Art (*Pen + Friend*)

*Featuring my friend, Leia-Rose Gantan, I drew various artworks on her arms and then took photos of her. I started drawing on Leia back in 2021; this is a picture from our fourth collection of photos of drawings on her. In this particular collection, the patches are closely related to Leia and her interests, such as the musicals she performed in and her favorite animal.*



# General Duchess

Annabelle Ditchman | 12th grade

Digital Art

*This piece was a gift to my dad. After my older cat passed away, I saw how connected my dad was to our pets so I wanted him to have something interesting to remember my other cat by even when she's gone.*



# Youth is an Hourglass

Ethan Lam | 10th grade

The February melancholy was an exceptionally virulent plague, with cyclical rains akin to deathly shards pulverizing the ground until mutilated earth remained. Around the West High campus, the College and Career Fair had commenced—a lazy susan of potential paths to finally arrive at some definitive purpose of existence (or so we’ve been cajoled into assuming). Some eagerly embrace this metaphorical trailblazing into the future, while others hold on tenderly to the last tendrils of childhood. College applications seem to be an omnipresent aspect of high school. Childhood aspirations are tantalizing and fleeting, superseded by a newfound sense of competition and pragmatism. Industrial factories make productive citizens out of the next generation. I am in no way disparaging higher education, but the prospect of college becomes insipid when an online survey with seemingly impeccable omniscience dictates that my best options in life are:

1. food processing
2. machine offbearing
3. janitorial work

As I convened in the gym, I hoped the confounding jigsaw they call “adulthood” had a place for me. Into the receptacle, we go!

I filed inside the stuccoed edifice; a myriad of kiosks oriented as a serpentine resembled a game board (The Game of Life?). Those who had recently entered had assimilated with the crowd by congregating at the nearest stall. USC and UCLA asphyxiated competing colleges as they elicited the most interest from perambulating parents and students alike. My parents were engrossed in the various brochures, my brother received a shirt from the United States Marines, and even I signed up for programs I will never attend in my high school career. I had to ask myself,

*What do I want to be?*

# Hope Strong

Leah Ho | 10th grade

Wire, colored ribbons, cardboard

*I created this piece to support Ukraine. I believe the whole world including artists, musicians and entire cultural community should speak out in support of Ukraine and become ambassadors of peace. This beautiful woman represents Ukraine and even though she's sad now, you can see rays of light shining through the darkness and you can see hope.*





# Feminine Rage

Amanda Bruers | 10th grade

Malala Yousafzai was shot in the head because she spoke with passion and fury against the toxic men who thought her inferior. She is now a symbol of women's rights all across the world and continues to use her words, fueled by feminine rage, for the good of all women.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg was ostracized by her male colleagues for taking an opportunity that “belonged to a man”. She led a campaign for gender equality with the power of her feminine rage, becoming a decorated lawyer in a male-dominated industry and one of the only 6 female supreme court justices in American history.

These women have many things in common.

They were both loud and angry and fed up with the sexist societies they found themselves in.

They both used their thoughts, opinions, words to fight back with the support of feminine rage.

I too am a LOUD WOMAN!

I do not whisper, or murmur, I shout.

I do not chuckle, or giggle, I cackle.

You can tell when I enter a room because I speak at a decibel that puts fireworks to shame, I shoot off at the mouth, words and sounds flying out, like I am one.

I do not hold my tongue.

If I have a thought, I say it.

If I generate an opinion, I share it.

And, as my family says, opinions are like assholes; everybody has one. So why am I an asshole for sharing mine?

Oh, that's right. It's because I'm not supposed to.

To have thoughts. To formulate opinions. We are supposed to listen, to be silent...

I don't do silence.

I too am an angry woman.

I do not have patience, or tolerance, I have a short fuse.

I do not have logic, or rationale, I have strong emotions.

They cloud my judgment as tears of frustration pour from my eyes like the rain and words, those loud words, clap from my lips like thunder.

# Polluting

Elizabeth Le | 9th Grade

Digital Art

*Showing what's happening to our ocean through a young woman who is suffocating in trash.*



# About the crickets:

Cyrilla Zhang | 11th grade

It's warm inside and there are crumbs left neglected on the floor.  
I don't blame the crickets for coming in.  
To them, the ugly cracks in my baseboards must be like gateways to salvation.

At the end of every day, I lie down on the floor and think.  
I talk to the crickets.  
I aimlessly ramble about my day, and in return, they listen.  
And even if I can't see them, I know there's always someone hidden in the shadows, keeping me company.

The crickets make good companions.

I only ever see my small friends when I've been awake for too long.  
When they find me dragging myself into the light of the bathroom, I wonder if they're checking in to make sure I'm okay.

They're better roommates than most.

Once, my dad saw one.  
He swiftly pulled a slipper off his foot and swung with the ego of a god.  
It died, and its deformed body was thrown back outside for nature to devour.

They've never caused any trouble.

I leave them alone. I hope it makes me kinder.