

WEST HIGH'S LITERARY MAGAZINE

WEST HORIZONS

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Editor's Note

For nearly 60 years, West Horizons — West High School's Literary Magazine — has served as a creative outlet in all forms of art, for all creatives on campus. Submissions of painting, drawing, photography, literature, poetry, prose, and beyond exemplify the diverse set of skills, talent, and passion wielded by the West High student community.

West Horizons Vol. 58: Winter 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.*

Masthead

Editor-in-Chief / Samantha Takeda

Editors / Eli Fauni, Sarah Han, Lauren Ng, Kate Phan, Alexssa Takeda, & Cyrilla Zhang

Adviser / Melanie White

Table of Contents

<i>My Chocolate</i> / Zara Simon	4
<i>Simply Together</i> / Esther Lee	8
<i>The Fire Starters</i> / Ethan Lam	9
<i>Ghibli Nostalgia</i> / Alexis Harper	11
<i>Maybe</i> / Kate Moon	12
<i>The Wheel</i> / Kayla Dadivas	14
<i>Money can in fact buy happiness</i> / Lilian Morrison	15
<i>Cat Art</i> / Kayla Dadivas	18
<i>Linguistic Artistry</i> / Yuhan Jia	19
<i>On the Accusation of Being Disloyal</i> / Philip Lam	20
<i>When Leaves Fall</i> / Misora Yamasaki	23
<i>I Wish You Were Here</i> / Kyna Sarhaya	24
<i>Sway With Me</i> / Roger Ayad	25
<i>Sorry</i> / Kyna Sarhaya	26
<i>For My Sleeping Beauty</i> / Misora Yamasaki	18
<i>Sitting in Class</i> / Catherine Piotrowski	29
<i>Untitled</i> / Samantha Takeda	33
<i>The Things We Do</i> / Simran Bhattacharya	34
<i>Nihon'nobi (Front cover)</i> / Roger Ayad	

My Chocolate

Zara Simon | 10th grade

Author's Note: *"This piece was dedicated to my grandmother."*

YOU HAVE ANOTHER CAVITY

"That's why your tooth is hurting," said my dentist.

...

STOP EATING SO MUCH CANDY

"I'm paying so much for your teeth, but you just don't get it do you," my mom said angrily driving the car.

"I've only been eating the Hershey's chocolate I swear" I say defending myself
"Well **stop**" she replied

But I couldn't stop, I won't stop.

It's the last thing I have of her.

The dark brown like her skin.

That sweet sweet chocolate that somewhat resembled her.

~~I needed it now, more than ever.~~

I needed now more than ever.

her,

...

THE FRIDGE IS THE LOUDEST THING IN THIS HOUSE

Always making a sound, always getting me caught.

"Put it down,"

I look over my shoulder and see a large shadow, knowing it was my dad, but still scared.

Damn, I've been caught. Stupid fridge with that loud sound.

Won't even let me eat my chocolate.

THE WALL BETWEEN US

Was always strong but somehow she broke it down with a single Hershey's bar.

Ramming the language barrier between us.

Finally the walls crumbled d

o

w

n

Even though she couldn't speak English, the chocolate spoke it for her.

Telling me that she loved me through the artificial sweetness of the bar.

The only difference between her sweetness and the chocolate's, was that her's was real.

I wish I could have bought her a candy to remind her I loved her back.

But a smile would have to do for now.

...

FOR NOW DIDN'T LAST MUCH LONGER

"She passed Zari, there is no more grandma Sally."

So no more chocolate?

"No more chocolate"

UNLIKE THE CHOCOLATE

The cancer that killed her isn't sweet.

I wish it were.

...

THE FUNERAL

Was sad yet I don't remember crying. Until I saw chocolate by her grave. Opening it and taking a bite, like I usually would.

Only this time the chocolate was bitter

salty, because of my tears.

...

READING THE "87% CACAO" LABEL

Wishing she was 100% alive.

NO CAVITIES THIS TIME

“Eating less chocolate I see,” my dentist said smiling

“Yeah, definitely less chocolate,” I say with a forced laugh and smile.

The only real smile I would give was for the woman who was in the ground.

Her sweetness buried with her.

...

ON THE WAY HOME

My mom didn't get mad at me like before.

Because she

knew

We both

knew

Why no cavities were in my mouth that day.

Simply Together

Esther Lee | 12th grade

Graphite on Bristol

This piece demonstrates how choosing to partake in a mundane activity with your partner is a clear way of expressing your love for them. I wanted to honor the simple ways humans can exhibit their love and care for others. This art piece specifically holds a lot of meaning as it captures my parents doing an ordinary chore but by doing it together, it demonstrates much more endearment.



The Fire Starters

Ethan Lam | 10th grade

They say the color white is so pure, so hopeful,
but all it has given to me is anguish.

My folks have always told me that in Chinese culture, white represents mourning and loss.

First, it was the clandestine white envelope:

formal and bona fide,

my name, **ETHAN LAM**, plastered on its front—the black font juxtaposed with the light envelope.

But letters that spell out a diagnosis are never something you want to read.

The shock, the incredulity, but also the relief.

Knowing adversity is better than restless ignorance.

Next, it was the white walls of the rooms.

How polished, how industrial!

Of course, children's hospitals invariably embellish their walls,

various designs splashed with endless hues

as if to obscure the fact that its residents don't live in a convalescence cubicle and instead

live in a playground, a jester's jungle.

But it's hard to ignore the jarring, brusque edges of the doors and windows that impale the eyes like a brutal Cubist painting.

The white walls are like gilded metal.

White is the color of Hell.

The incessant hospital visits,
the x-rays,
the specialists,
the plethora of white documents containing tentative prognoses.

They never bothered me.

Just don't say, "I feel bad for you."

I suppose it is a generic expression of pity from most people,
or maybe they are just uncomfortable having to listen to the burden of someone else's
sorrow.

They don't say it to comfort the person suffering; it's to comfort themselves.

Pity? Why do I need your pity?

Would I still elicit your pity if I were normal*?

There is no distinction between pity and benign condescension.

Youth is the most enigmatic antagonist, a surreptitious agent that works against us,
feeding us naïvety and a sense of impregnability while germinating the seeds of aging and
disease (the irony!)

Since then, I feel as if I've aged for decades.

But I still don't know what suffering is;

I am neither a sage nor a survivor;

I don't take comfort in false optimism or sugarcoating the pain;

But sometimes, when there is no light at the end of the tunnel,

we have to strike the match and nurture a fire for ourselves;

"Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass; it's about learning to dance in the rain."

*by *normal*, I mean *blessed*

Ghibli Nostalgia

Alexis Harper | 12th grade

Acrylic Paint

I've always had fond memories of Hayao Miyazaki and films of his that I would watch back in my childhood. This piece expresses the same bright, cheery feelings that I reminisce about with Studio Ghibli movies and its creator.



Maybe

Kate Moon | 9th grade

I can't stop thinking about you
About what we could have been,
But I guess fate had other plans
For you and me.

I can't stop thinking about you,
I can never seem to let you go.
There's just no one like you,
Not in the whole wide world.

I can't stop thinking about you,
I know I should forget and move on.
After all, no one remembers you...
No one but me.

I can't stop thinking about you,
When we laughed in the warm summer sun;
Even though it was so long ago,
It feels like yesterday.

I can't stop thinking about you,
How we did some stupid things,
But it all turned out fine.
Until it wasn't.

I can't stop thinking about you.

One minute you were here and the next you were gone.

Like a flash of lightning,

Never to be seen again.

I can't stop thinking about you.

With every breath comes a memory,

And I feel a stab of pain

For the person I knew, who I'll never know again.

I know I should forget,

I know I should move on,

I know I should be past this,

But I can't, and I'm not

So I guess you're still here, in a way.

The Wheel

Kayla Dadvivas | 12th grade

Acrylic Paint on Canvas 24" x 18"

I have been working to expand my range in the arts and it was really fun for me to paint this portrait of a classmate more passionate for the 3D arts.



Money can in fact buy happiness

Lilian Morrison | 10th grade

Growing up we've always struggled financially, I can't remember a time when we didn't. My childhood was a consistent cycle of being financially stable one day and the next not so much. What's more is that on the days we were financially stable we were the happiest because we didn't have much to worry about, but on the opposing days it was completely opposite.

One day at lunchtime, after my 8th grade English class discussed if money is capable of buying happiness, my friend Reyna decided it should still be talked about.

"Money can't buy happiness," she confidently said.

"Why not? I think it does," I said between bites.

"Money doesn't buy happiness, you can be happy without money," She replied.

"Huh, I guess you're right," I answered quickly, trying to enjoy the rest of my sandwich. She gave me a look that told me she didn't believe that I actually thought that, she was right, I didn't.

Reality is, I didn't think she was quite right. Matter of fact I didn't think the phrase "money can't buy happiness" held any truth at all.

I went home that day and as I was waiting for dinner, that question popped up in my head again. Can money buy happiness? I did believe that you can be happy without money, I've seen and experienced it, but the two phrases were barely the same. I concluded that I would just ask my mom.

"Mom," I started, "Do you think money can buy happiness?"

"I don't know, do you?" She replied, cooking up the last dish for dinner. My mother was never big on directly answering my little questions, so stubbornly I repeated her question back.

"I don't know, do you?" I said.

She chuckled, “No, money can’t buy happiness. Many people are happy without it, including us.” With that, dinner was done and so was my mom with my inquiries. For me, well I was left confused with the unanswered question, can money buy happiness. I began to think.

When the phrase “money can buy happiness” comes up, the majority of people think that they don’t need to buy every materialistic thing that they want in order to be happy, and while that is slightly true, my thoughts are completely different. When I hear that phrase I’m not thinking about how many things that we can buy if we had money rather how our worry would be replaced with happiness if we did have money, at least for my family.

Looking back at a time in my childhood where we would depend on my mom’s check that she would receive every two weeks, I was constantly being told we couldn’t afford much, especially stuff for school. I remember asking for p.e. clothes but I was always told that we’ll be able to afford all of it next week, but by next week after my mom paid everything off we still weren’t left with much.

“Mom, my school is telling me that I need to buy p.e. clothes by this Thursday,” I said.

“How much is it?” My mom replied

“The whole set is \$15,” I said. Already knowing the reply she would have.

“I’m sorry baby, maybe next week, we don’t have it right now,” she said with disappointment in her voice.

“Mom, it is next week,” I said in the nicest way possible.

“I know, but I promise, promise we’ll have it by next friday.” We sat in silence until I silently walked away.

This was my childhood, filled with promises and apologies all because we didn’t have enough money. These moments were not happy moments, matter fact they were awkward, sad and honestly a punch in the gut. Even at the time I knew that if we did have enough money these moments would be completely different. My mom wouldn’t sound so

disappointed, I wouldn't feel bad for asking, and my teacher wouldn't have to receive a note saying "we'll be able to afford the p.e. clothes next week". In these situations, you get to thinking the phrase "money can buy happiness" could be true.

As a child I could see the demeanor change when my family would come to a realization that the money we had just wasn't going to cut it this time, and it wasn't a "we don't need money to be happy" demeanor either. Granted, we were still positive: laughing, smiling, joking around, and more but it certainly wasn't the same. When we did have enough money we would laugh a bit more, smile a bit more, and joke a bit more. I'm not saying my family's happiness revolved around money because it didn't, but coming to the realization that we had enough money definitely would've put a bigger smile on our faces than this did.

My childhood was filled to the brim with those moments of realization and looking back on each one I realized those moments produced the same emotion: sadness and worry. I also took into consideration the emotions in moments where we did gain enough money, which was happiness. With that, I came to a conclusion that money is capable of buying happiness. Whether it's buying the things you love or just knowing that you do actually have enough money this time.

Imagine if you were in the shoes of someone whose life is a consistent cycle of being financially sustainable and the next second without warning you weren't. Every week it was the same thing, same cycle, same procedure, and there was no easy end to that cycle. In this situation, wouldn't money have the capability of making you happy?

If we look at it on one hand, being happy without money isn't impossible but on the other hand, money making you happy isn't either.

Cat Art

Kayla Dadvivas | 12th grade

Pen and Marker on Paper 6" x 4"

I sketch a lot of cartoon cats because it's very relieving to draw small cute things without the pressure of creating perfect pieces all the time.



Linguistic Artistry

Yuhan Jia | 11th grade

Linguistic artistry exists in sparsity—

They discard their sagacity

And desist antiquity with alacrity!

Why resist sophistry

When indeterministic mysticists

Spread their egoistic pseudostatistics?

Then should one embrace finality?

Behold profanity and inanity:

The binary scourges of reality

Oh the humanity, such a calamity

That devoured vivacity,

And enflowered opacity.

On the Accusation of Being Disloyal

Philip Lam | 11th grade

I don't know how or why we got here,
But do you ever fear that if you say something a bit off-color,
(Sorry, the politically correct term for this would be "politically incorrect"),
Perhaps a shortsighted or misconstrued claim,
That swims against the swift currents of popular sentiments,
That you might be denounced/excoriated/canceled?
When did we get to the point where,
Instead of scrutinizing the opinions of others,
We are disparaging their character?

This might—and should—sound facetious,
When you approach your neighbor's porch and their doormat boldly asserts,
"If you're conservative, you can f*** off."
But it isn't.

This might—and should—sound perfectly innocuous,
When a Chevrolet pickup, adorned in patriotic livery,
With a flag that jingoistically exclaims "Let's Go Brandon!",
Pulls up alongside you at an intersection.
But that scares the crap out of me. (Pardon my directness.)

I've never understood how inflammatory rhetoric,
And party loyalty became such good friends with Americans;
How subtlety has been drowned out
By the dichotomy of the left and right,

A cacophony to me, but a partisan's delight.

They have made us distrust one another based merely upon,

A word we say,

A poster we hang,

Or that distinct red cap my neighbor likes to wear.

So I've chosen to sever ties with partisanship.

I am Disloyal.

Disloyal is analogous to Moderate.

A Moderate, many argue, is wavering, ambivalent.

Take the midpoint of the two extremes and you have thus derived my politics.

No concrete stance,

Subject to the capricious whim and will of the left and right.

A result.

The dependent variable in the political equation.

No conviction, just position.

To Democrats, I am a hypocrite: an intransigent colleague like Joe Manchin.

To Republicans, I am a RINO*: a traitor to my country like Liz Cheney.

But what if Moderate didn't mean relative position,

But instead the nuanced outlook of each individual?

What if Moderate meant being able to find common ground?

What if Moderate meant an escape from parochialism,

from the antiquated dichotomy of left/right, red/blue?

*RINO= Republican in Name Only

I am a Moderate because my views will never fit neatly
into the political
jigsaw of one side
or the other.

Conservatives, say what you want about my “wokeness”;

Liberals, say what you want about my intolerance,

But one thing’s for sure:

Disloyalty to party is devotion to self.

When Leaves Fall

Misora Yamasaki | 11th grade

ibisPaint

*When leaves fall, I feel cold
if it's cloudy. However the
changing season need to
circulate earth like as we
need to circulate to
maintain our bodies.*



I Wish You Were Here

Kyna Sarhaya | 10th grade

If you were here

We would tell each other jokes at lunch

We would talk about our problems

We would complain about our math homework

We would reminisce about our middle school memories

We would remember our old jokes

We would go to Chuck E. Cheese

You would tell me about some cool animal facts

And I would listen

I would tell you about my day

And you would listen

We would laugh together

Cry together

And most importantly

Face our problems

together

But you're not here

You're a thousand miles away

Sway With Me

Roger Ayad | 10th grade



Sorry

Kyna Sarhaya | 10th grade

Did I deserve the name-calling?

Endless pain?

We were just 12.

To all the boys that tormented me

P.s. I still despise you

Always and forever, me

To the one boy who crossed my boundaries:

Are you the same person you were three years ago?

Because your hate-brimmed eyes

still

lack racial tolerance and gender equality

Because you

still

haven't said "sorry"

To the one boy who refused to call me by my name:

Are you still the same person you were four years ago?

Because you knew exactly how much you would hurt me by calling me

"Felicia" or even

"Useless"

Because you knew I would hear you when you asked my PE friend

"You didn't invite Kyna, right?"

Because you

still

haven't said "sorry"

To the one boy who body-shamed me:

Are you still the same person you were four years ago?

Because you always seemed to inflate your ego

when you shamed me for being in regular math

Because you would never shame another guy classmate

for their arm hair

Because you

still

haven't said "sorry"

To the one boy who always made me the butt of the joke:

Are you still the same person you were four years ago?

Because you found joy

out of calling me "irrelevant"

Because you

still

haven't said "sorry"

To all the boys that tormented me

I want to tell you something

I'm not the same person I once was

I'm sorry I won't tolerate your mistreatment anymore

For my sleeping beauty

Misora Yamasaki | 11th grade

ibisPaint

I drew a Japanese entertainer named Jel to show we're going to protect his group and I thought he want to keep have act with this group. He begins take a hiatus after summer break of this year.



Sitting in Class

Catherine Piotrowski | 10th grade

waiting

~~dying~~

The clock on the wall- my life, my blood,

Choosing my next decision

I am not a human but a vessel for the concept of time

Don't be overdramatic

Oh well

...

Tick

Tock

I

Tick

Tick

C

Tock

Tock

K

Tick

Tick

T

O

C

K

Tock

Tock

Tick

Tick

Tock

Tock

Tick

Tock

My heart colliding, merging, becoming one with the rhythm

ta- **TUMP**

ta- **TUMP**

ta- **TUMP**

Finally, my *salvation*.

...

B R R R R R

R R R R R R

R R R R R R

R R R R R R

R R R R R R

I am human!

~~Am I?~~

Walking out of class, weight lifted from my shoulders

I feel the *breeze* through my hair, whispering sweet nothings

the warm sunlight caressing my face

Mindlessly walking, my legs are not my own!

To find a cruel piece of sidewalk, grotesque to all eyes except mine

Waiting for the companionship of another

???

But what do I see?

More of the cruel, cruel sidewalk

I want to lay my head here, but only for a **second** . . .

OW!

That always hurts.

. . .

Untitled

Samantha Takeda | 12th grade



The Things We Do

Simran Bhattacharya | 11th grade

Never have I felt a mother's loss for her son.
Never have I felt a partner's loss for their partner.
Never have I felt a sister's loss for her sister.
Never have I felt metal pierce my skin.
Never have I felt a bullet in my head.

Never have I felt crushed by the weight of a hundred people.
Never have I felt the tremble of the fear of death.
Never have I felt the pain of a bomb as its pieces burn my insides.

Never have I felt that suffering.
Never have I felt that grief.
Never have I felt that distress.

But it doesn't take your world to end to know it hurts.

Maybe I will never know the pain of seeing my son's grave for the first time.
And maybe I will never know how my body reacts to nine rounds as it punctures my heart.

It's not to say that this pain is meaningless.
It's not to say that this feeling is void.

But if we have to know how it feels every time to want to make a change, we will be frozen in time forever.

We cannot create experiences we have never had, and it is wrong to say that we need to.
But only saying we sympathize with those who have suffered and moving with our lives is not enough.

It is time to stop justifying our actions with nonexistent experiences, and start so we can prevent them.

It doesn't matter if you think you'll never know the fear of loss, or the shattering pain of losing yourself.

We need to take personal responsibility in the world. Our actions, our consequences.
What is killing this world isn't just our blame on others, but our selfishness for not taking action ourselves.