By Lorraine O’Brien

Writing can be an exercise in self-examination, self-expression and, to a degree, self-determination. Who knows where the grouping and reworking of words from a news report, a literary piece or a recipe can lead you? It’s about putting words on a page and getting started. The journey of creation is another thing. Let’s look at the writing process of a Year 10 student. He reads a feature article about an accident at sea during the Sydney to Hobart yacht race and imagines himself on board a fishing vessel, off the coast of Tasmania. He writes:

Ten foot seas. Icy cold winds. Deep, black water. I am standing here, puffing away on my stale cigarette at the stern of the boat. It’s stupid o’clock in the morning and I think I have hypothermia.

Are you as interested in the time of the day as I was? Jonah Allen’s “Through the Eyes of a Deckhand” began with the words, “I am here,” and developed into a dramatic monologue, a personal journey of seamanship with tragic consequences.

Imagery of the sea and the river is sprinkled throughout this edition of Impressions. Artwork captures sea birds and fish, a photograph captures the complexity of aerated water, another a swimmer in a multi-dimensional world. Max Giudice, in his story “Another Day” writes:

Steve was in touch and aware of the river and the wind; he visualised the coming shifts from the clouds, could see the wind dancing on the water and spreading like a cat paw.

It stands to reason that a sailor would use personal experience to bring credibility to a narrative of navigation and skill on the Swan River. His is a tale with a satisfying ending.

Writers know that the only thing that matters is how you finish, how you tie up narrative strands. As Ezra Pound said: “It doesn’t matter which leg of your table you make first, as long as it stands up in the end.” Well, we have a variety of ‘tables’ for you in this 2014 edition of Impressions. Included here are winning entries to the English Department’s Creative Writing Competition: work by Stefano Tudor, Year 11 and James Wilson, Year 9. The winning entry to the PD Naish Poetry Competition was Joseph Brough’s “The Genius in the Idiot Box”. The writing of Christian Meares and Edward Galluccio, both winners of Creative Writing Academic Prizes, are also featured, along with prize winning artwork and other fine creative pieces. The front cover was inspired by the work of Year 10 students, Tom Pennell and Joel Ross.

These written and visual stories represent the creative endeavours of Preparatory and Senior School students at Christ Church Grammar School. They stand up to scrutiny. I hope you enjoy reading this rich and varied collection.
Sean Morgan, Year 4
Arjun Brian, Pre-Primary
The Real Facade

Christian Meares, Year 12

“It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible...”
Oscar Wilde – The Picture of Dorian Gray

I. Leaving the Branches
“All things truly wicked start from innocence”
Ernest Hemmingway

Entering a new world, a big world
Filled with new people and new experiences.
My legs are shaky at first, just trying to
Find my feet.
It feels like the first time I ever had my training wheels off.
I wobble around a bit, but eventually I gain my balance,
Gain my composure.
There are so many pretty girls here; I want to be like them…

One of them told me to never leave my place without my face—
A protective layer to make people think I’m pretty.
Sound advice.
Trust is what makes the world go round, and this girl
Had a trusting face.
It’s like being the leaf that falls from the branch. You don’t
Know where you’re going, but you hope that you’re not going
To fall onto cement.
I like landing softly, on the water… But not the ocean.
I’m happy here, in my puddle. Floating precariously above the water.
Waiting. Hoping, that one day, other leaves will join me.
Whilst the butterflies are swarming in the cool summer breeze,
I just watch and take notes…

II. The Ladder
“Look like the innocent flower,
But be the serpent under it”
William Shakespeare – Macbeth

“Did you see Cass at that party with Michael on the weekend?”
I saw her. Lust on full display.
She should know better, you’ve always got to have
Your best face on.
This puddle can be like a gated courtyard.
You’re stuck in the middle, with everyone on the balcony
Peering, into every aspect of your life.
Like CCTV. The heat of that eye always on your back. One knowing glance, one hushed whisper. That’s all it takes, to knock your mask off.
And as it falls to the floor, taking what seems like hours to make that short journey, you’ll stand frozen and helpless, as it smashes to a million pieces.
One slip, just one… And you can drown in this shallow puddle. If Darwin could be here and see this, he’d surely write a theory. Survival of the fittest? No!
Survival of the brutal…
My face is always in its place. But I wouldn’t call myself brutal.

III. Flying Above the Clouds
“Unhappy as the event must be … we may draw from it this useful lesson: that loss of virtue in a female is irretrievable; that one false step involves her in endless ruin; that her reputation is no less brittle than it is beautiful; and that she cannot be too much guarded in her behaviour towards the undeserving of the other sex.”
Jane Austen – Pride and Prejudice

I’m a butterfly now. I’ve learnt to harness my power.
I can use it. Use it to get whatever I want. Do whatever I want, to whoever I want.
Some would make the journey or the ultimate sacrifice just to be in my presence. Wars are raging in other parts of the puddle. Meanwhile, I’ve got a face to protect.
I can’t be seen with anyone inferior. I must hover above the rest like Icarus. But I’m so tired.
I hope that tiredness doesn’t give me black rings around my piercing turquoise eyes. They may look pure to others, but there is a fire burning underneath, that not even that cool turquoise can extinguish.
“I’m taking Ryan”, “I’m taking James”
They’re both ugly. I’d never even be seen in public with them.
Like a prophet, I tell my loyal subjects what I think.
I let them into my world, if only for a brief glance into Eden’s contrived elegance.
The advice that made me who I am.
I told her to never leave her place without her face—
A protective layer to make people think she’s pretty.
Sound advice.

And who wouldn’t appreciate such guidance.
After all, my image is made of the purest porcelain,
Concealing the cracks that are beginning to form underneath.
A jaded soul? Perhaps.
But a butterfly, nonetheless. The radiant beauty that makes
People stare just a second longer… Blurring the lines between
Flattering and creepy. I only want to be stared at
By people on my lofty plain.

IV. Out of Tune
“There’s nothing worse in life than being ordinary”
Alan Ball – American Beauty

Entering a new world, a big world
Filled with new people and new experiences.
A world I am bound to conquer, just like
I conquered the last.
My feet are solid under me, I have a bounce, a spring,
A radiance that people will find irresistible.
There are so many ugly girls here; I would hate to be like
them…

Bang! Crash! Squeak!
Beep! Buzz! Crackle!
Static…

I feel like a blur, or a shadow.
I don’t even really recognise myself.
Do people recognise me?
What’s even going on? How dare they!
A litany of lifeless souls surrounding my aura,
Dirtying it. Seeping into my pores like nostalgia.
Nauseating. On an island in the middle of a puddle,
But it does not feel like my puddle.
Surrounded, but alone at the same time.
The same tried and true tactics are not quite as powerful here.
These people do not understand the value of a porcelain face.
Leaves are fading on the surface of the puddle.
Its mirrored surface does not acknowledge their presence.
The puddle’s ecosystem is changing.
Plankton are tuna. Whales are tuna.
The ecosystem is evening out.

Crunch! Creak! Splat!
Thud! Thwack! Thump!
Static

V. Picasso
“For I have known them all already, known them all—
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons…”
TS Eliot – “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”

By now, the colour of my wings has lost a little lustre.
The turquoise of my eyes has muddled to a less striking hue.
The puddle reflects the grey clouds above.
The cracks no longer show in my porcelain mask.
They’ve been fixed. But they still exist…
‘Friends’ come and go:
“Have you seen Angela’s new interior design job?”
It’s hideous. The marble’s not even Italian.
Champagne lunches with a whole host of empty vessels,
The mundane, the inane, the downright depressing.
God knows why I grace them with my presence.
They’re only acquaintances after all.

Dropping her off to new world, a big world
Filled with new people and new experiences.
Her legs are shaky at first, just trying to
Find her feet.

So I stop her, before she closes the car door,
And impart the purest wisdom;

I told her to never leave her place without her face—
A protective layer to make people think she’s pretty…
Sound advice.

Nothing means anything.
But I have my most important possession.
A face for the world to see.

Autumn comes again; the leaves fall from the branches.
The puddle now resembles a salt lake.
Leaving an old world, a small world
Filled with old people and old experiences.
If thou be lucky in pursuits against the prevailing night, thou might feel
A faint glimmer, that alights in the sleepless soul
for the briefest moment.
But nought more than a glimmer, flickering reminder of forgotten things,
That does but inspire a faint hope for a future which is in itself hopeless.
But that flickering light, tantalisingly close, stirs something within us all,
A collective yearning to be more than what we are, to seek relentlessly
That one star in a thousand milky night skies that caused what we felt,
What we can still feel, if only we could unite and abandon inner desires.
To transcend the inherent characteristics of one’s race is not natural,
But to endeavour to temper them, and kindle a flame of future promise;
Is asking this putting too much faith in something unstable, untameable?
The darkness within all of us, could it not be matched by equivalent light?

Why must we be driven by lust and ambition, when together we are strong?
As if some otherworldly quality prevents us from realising our potential
Stumbling blindly after false ideologies - oh raging wind and stormy sea,
In light of all instinctive flaws - cannot all miserable men enlightened be?
In black depths man wades, unseeing, unaware; blasphemous impotence!
What insulting scorn we show in wasting gifts given us in pathetic quarrels
Which involve no-one, but somehow, with gaping jaws, engulf everyone.
Inhibitions drive us and we march on; blind, deaf, muted to what could be.
And that faint, flickering glimmer is driven out of us time and time again
Out, out, it goes, and then with an unfaltering certainty we ourselves go,
Continuing to pass by like decaying fish refusing to swim with the current,
Ironically, it is because we are human that we must in the grim end repent.
Selection

James Wilson, Year 10

The harsh, white light pierces my closed eyelids.

As my eyes adjust to the glare a sharp mechanical voice barks from a speaker.

“Subject 1011667, please proceed to Correction Facility 390.” A faint whining sound ensues as the examining table folds away. I walk through the dull, metallic corridors and make my way to the exit. As instructed by the machine I get on the sleek bullet-like train. The doors hiss shut, a giant snake capturing its prey.

The train slowly winds its way through the city’s dense fog and the old urban areas, run down by years of overpopulation. The train begins to accelerate as it reaches the outer limits of the city. It continues on its predetermined path carrying its precious cargo to their destination.

The train pulls up with a swish of soft air and the doors glide open. Passengers file out in droves toward the white building, Correction Facility 390. The building doors swing open, beckoning us inside. The throng slowly shuffle in. As the last bodies enter the building the doors swing shut with the faint click of a closed lock.

The tightly-packed crowd of bodies waits in anticipation for something to happen. The soft murmurs run through the crowd like waves at the beach, washing up against the walls and rebounding around the cool, metallic walls.

At last a voice cuts through the murmurs. At first soft, but slowly growing louder.

“Welcome to Correction Facility 390. I hope you had a pleasant journey.” The crowd collectively agrees with the voice.

“Please proceed down the hall into the next room,” the machine announced.

The group becomes dense as we move down the bottleneck corridor and file into the next room. Again the metallic voice rings out across the room.
“Place your identity cards and any other valuables in the collection bins.” The room slowly moves as one. Each person removes their identity cards and valuables, placing them in the black bins that slide from the walls.

“Remove your clothing and continue down the hall for showering. Boys on the right and Girls on the left,” I strip down and move to the right, placing my clothes in a collection bin on my way through.

The next room is dark and cool, with soft, grey concrete walls and a small ventilation shaft in the ceiling. The grey dregs of sunlight filter through the bars. I look around. I know but a few from our time in The Institution. Only the top achievers in The Institution. The smartest, fastest and strongest are here. How odd that we should be the ones to fail selection. However, I knew that after correction we would become part of the fabric of society. In my eyes I see myself and all these people like a lost herd of cattle. And The State is the farmer. Raising the weak to walk among the strong. Or was it beating down the strong to crawl with the weak? I never figured it out as the metallic voice rang out across the chamber.

“Prepare for the first stage of correction.” A sharp metallic click resounds around the room. And five small pellets drop down through the grill, bouncing on the floor, smoke slowly falling off the round oblong bodies. The smartest are the first to fall. Their hands grasp desperately at their throats as if one breath means the world to them. As the cloud of gas reaches my feet the harsh taste of almonds dances on the back of my tongue and down my throat. Slowly extinguishing the warmth from my body, until the darkness takes me. And all the others in Correction Facility 390.

My eyes flicker open. Head pounding, ears ringing. The strident sound of machinery renders my senses idle. Paralysed, my eyes flicker about the room. Conveyor-belts containing bodies are coiled around the room like demented caterpillars. The cold, white bodies lay lifeless or like me, paralysed. Ahead, the conveyer passes an electric probe. Crackling with blue and black energy it slaughters like the hand of death itself. Destroying the soft commodity of life with one cruel stroke of power and greed.

As the conveyer approached the probe, time itself seems to slow down. Becoming but a series of still photographs. My senses heightened, I smell the burning flesh. The thick aroma seems to coat the very air inside the building like a thick fog. As the conveyer belt draws me to my final departure, I close my eyes in silent prayer. The knowledge that someone might save me was my only comfort.

Classified - For the President’s Eyes Only.

Mr Winslow receives the message late at night. As he read the words a cruel smile spreads on his face. The message read:

Subject 1011667 - EXTREME RISK.... TERMINATED.

James Wilson
The old man sat on his porch, staring with growing anxiety at the black limousine parked across the road.

He didn't hear the car coming down the street. He never saw it park. He had just reached over for a drink of water and when he turned back it was there, stretched out on the opposite side of the road like a huge, black dog basking in the sun. He didn't want to confront whoever was behind the wheel. He just wanted to sit where he was sitting and pretend it wasn't there, hoping that maybe it would just go away. At the same time, he knew he couldn't do that, because it wouldn't go away, it wouldn't leave, it would just sit there, ruining the view, ruining his day, getting bigger and bigger, growing closer and closer.

The old man felt a shiver dance down his spine. He had to confront it now. With lead in his feet, he shuffled out onto the sidewalk, his tongue a vast, rubbery desert and his skin a landscape of rolling hills. He crossed the road and approached the limousine with the air of a man walking to the gallows, arriving at the door with downturned eyes and twitching fingers. He tried to force his hand to reach up, to rap on that cold, hard glass and summon whatever lay within, but every time he seemed about to do just that, something from behind that tinted window drew his hand back.

And then, without so much as creak or click, the door slowly swung open.

From behind the wheel stepped a man immaculately dressed in a black suit and tie, a gold-rimmed chauffeur's hat worn low over a face as blank, smooth and white as paper. In fact, the man's skin was so white that it made him look almost like a walking corpse, while his hair was as black as the ravens calling incessantly from above. This same colour was reflected in his eyes, which were so dark they looked like whoever had painted his limousine had decided to give its owner a little of the same colour as well. Those terrible, vulturine eyes now fixed on the old man like the lens of a sniper, watching, waiting, and he couldn't help but flinch beneath their lightless, pupil-less gaze.

“Why are you here?” he blurted out, unable to bear the weight of the silence any longer. The stranger’s eyes darted up and down; surveying him, studying him, like a bug under a microscope, all of his secrets, all of his sins, lying bare before him. Silence once again ensued in the space between words, but then the stranger’s lips parted, and he began to speak

“You know very well why I am here,” he replied curtly, his eyes never leaving the old man’s. His voice was soft yet cold, its rich tones stroking the ear with its smooth, melancholy tones, while at the same time stinging it with its icy touch. It somehow reminded the old man of a snake slowly winding its way up a tree, though he could not say why. “It’s time to go now, Robert. You have to say goodbye.”

Fear wrapped its tendrils around the old man’s mind, and suddenly it felt like it wasn’t his heart beating in his chest, but an elephant that was trapped inside him and was now fighting hoof and tusk for its freedom, pounding and pounding against its bony prison with blind fury and relentless strength. Luckily, fear was swiftly upstaged by its follow-up act, anger - blind, desperate anger - and his anxiety was pushed aside in favour of furious defiance, burning through his veins and seeping into his bones as if molten iron had been injected into his bloodstream.

“I’m not getting into that car,” he snapped back, spitting it out before his courage waned, before the iron cooled. “And if you don’t clear off soon, I’ll call the bloody police.”

The stranger just sighed. “You people... always preferring threats and anger to logic and reasoning.” He took off his hat and placed it on top of the car, letting his greasy, black hair fall to his shoulders. “There is no version of this in which you go anywhere but into that car, so I assure you that we’ll save a lot of time spent arguing if you would just...”

“What if I just walk away?” The old man interrupted, shocked at how sure he sounded when he said this, when inside he felt like little more than a scared little boy trying to make himself seem bigger than he was. He was even more shocked when the stranger broke out into a broad grin and began to laugh - a hollow, cheerless laugh that sent the few remaining hairs on the old man’s neck standing up like exclamation marks.
“So, what if you do?” the stranger asked, still smiling that transparent smile. “There is no escaping fate, Robert. There is no escaping that which must be done. That is the unfortunate truth and you must stop pretending that you do not realise it.”

He extended a hand, meaning to place it on his shoulder but the old man stepped back and turned away, walking back to his house with his head down and hands stuck firmly in his pockets, refusing to believe, refusing to accept, refusing to relinquish that which he had fought so hard to keep. He couldn’t leave, he couldn’t go now. He had so much to live for, so much left to do. His heart was aching and all he wanted to do now was walk in his front door and hold his wife close, whispering in her ear all the little things he knew he should be telling her every day. Every minute. Every…

“Welcome back, Robert.”

The old man looked up. Shock hit him like a tidal wave and he took a hasty step backwards. His skin felt like there were thousands of grubs wriggling underneath it and he was suddenly very cold. How could he have... he can’t have... His mind was racing so fast he could barely keep track of his thoughts. The old man felt the elephant resume its efforts with renewed vigour, while his guts began to slowly sink down past his femurs. It was... can’t possibly... how could he have... The old man still couldn’t quite process what he was seeing, so sudden was the shock. All he could focus on was the sly, crooked smile of the stranger as he leaned against his limousine, the very same limousine that he had just turned away from to walk home.

The old man felt sick. Jaw still agape, he staggered backwards, needing to get away, needing to escape that sickening smile, those horrible eyes. He spun around, praying to God that he would be welcomed by his dainty house with its little green gate and neat front yard, praying to be home, praying to be safe on his porch.

A man in a chauffeur’s suit smiled at him from beside a black limousine.

Screaming now, the old man felt a wave of shudders rack his body. He turned again, frantically searching for an escape, a way out, a chink in the armour that had enclosed him like a glass over a spider, but every time the old man turned away from the stranger, it was to become face to face with him a second later. It was like some kind of grotesque hall of mirrors,
one in which there was no end. The stranger was everywhere; he was everything. Every time the old man turned, he was there, drawing closer and closer, his smile growing broader and broader. All he could do was run in circles, round and round like a dog chasing its tail, never getting anywhere, solving nothing.

And then the old man felt something on his shoulder, and everything stopped. The stranger stood with one hand gripping the old man like a crow grasps a lizard, his intense, dark eyes once again studying his face with disturbing fervency. “You can’t run from me, Robert.” There was no longer any trace of a smile on his face. “You can’t escape the inescapable.” He let his hand drop.

The old man wet his lips, but did not try to run. He knew it now to be pointless. The elephant had finally ceased its ruthless assault and was beginning to retreat back into his chest, and the pain was following suit. He looked up at the stranger.

“There is really nothing I can do?” he asked, looking deep into the eyes that no longer seemed so soulless, so terrible, only sad, pitying. “No way out?”

His lips pursed and the stranger shook his head. “Well then,” he continued. “I guess there’s only one way left to go.” He suddenly felt very tired.

“I guess so,” the stranger replied, still solemn as a statue.

Sighing, the old man looked down the street that he had come to know so well, tears running down his wrinkled cheeks as he thought of how he would never see it again, how he would never see any of it again. He didn’t feel ready to go just yet. There seemed too much left to do, too much left to enjoy for him to leave it all behind now. He was sure going to miss the world; all the good it had given him, all the beauty it had shown him, all the love it had allowed him. It was hard to believe it was all over.

But, at the same time, he felt relieved, for during the last few seconds of the old man’s life, as the stranger gently guided him over to the limousine and opened the door to let him in, he felt something even he had yet to experience.

Peace.
As the working week entered its eagerly anticipated closure, 
The streets swelled with ebbing tides of bodies. 
Cafés, restaurants, bars and nightclubs buzzed with 
wild excitement, 
But the once exhilarating hub of amusement had long 
lost its appeal.

I struggled for breath among the swarming crowds, 
Caught in a rip of confusion, 
Drowning within the incessant flashing of neon lights, 
Silenced by the ceaseless click clack of footsteps.

I longed for stillness and serenity, 
A rare gift in today’s world. 
But I knew of a place, a parkland that lay west beyond the city, 
filled with flourishing fields of wildflower.

Barefoot, I strolled peacefully through the familiar clearing, 
And rejoiced at the soft touch of the lush, green grass. 
A sweet smell of pine replaced the fetid odour of the streets. 
I paused and embraced tranquillity.

The trees offered a reliable break from the breeze, 
So I often rested alongside the trunk of an old willow. 
I sat perfectly still as the day drew to an end, 
Silently admiring the untouched beauty of the landscape.

My return to the old willow was as often as days rolled by, 
Moments of solace transformed to years of comfort. 
Under the old willow there was nothing to worry the 
simple mind. 
A rare refuge to escape the predicaments of life.
Social Media

Jason Wong, Year 10

So type in your email, password, press enter
A whole different universe through the screen in which you venture.
A world made of lies, which constructs our own identity.
Lies that break the walls that hold us up, and grow us fundamentally.

It’s changed the way we go about
Our school, our work, our life.
It’s changed the way we see reality
So dark some resort to the knife.

We’re victims today to the technology we’ve created.
Certain people seem decorated and integrated
Whilst others are pushed aside.
We fight for one-upmanship. We fight to become “liked”.
And in the attempt, we make others feel bad despite,
trying to survive in this society of Social Media.

Phoebe Prince felt the darkness, felt the pain,
Felt the isolation, an attempt to retain
The values in life that were keeping her alive.
But in the end, she lost the drive to survive.

So type in your email, password, press enter.
Say what you want and be honest, but remember
This is all a counterfeit community.
But if we don’t change the way we participate,
It will become a battlefield.
Humanity with an expiry date.
First Day

Sam Elias, Year 10

Couplet
Studying poetry today you will,
Sit at attention and ready your quill.
My name’s Mr. Lit and today’s my first day,
If you all listen carefully, this will be child’s play.
In each poem there are hidden structures within,
So without further ado, let us begin.
Avoid awful alliteration always, is the first lesson you will learn,
If you start to use it, it will be of great concern.
You didn’t want onomatopoeia? Well boohoo,
Pipe down now, or present your poem impromptu!
I’ll bet you all a billion to one someone’s used hyperbole,
I would recommend now, you take it out urgently.
Use metaphors or you’ll be dead to me
Always write quotes in pencil, 2B or not 2B.
Avoid similes as you would the plague,
And sort of, like, you know, don’t be vague.
Now recite this after me if you would, class,
If you don’t, I assure you, you will not pass.

Ode
Oh, poetry,
You are as beautiful to me as any woman.
With your transcending, cream pages light as a feather,
You flow as a river gliding into the deep, dark sea.
The expression contained inside your leathery walls is unmatched.
Oh, to sit by a tree and read you all day would be a dream,
To fill my mind with your eternal mystery would be bliss.
I am overcome with ecstasy when I read your words aloud,
I am overcome with grief when the light goes slowly out.

Triolet
A triolet poem I will teach you last
And after this you are free to go
With eight lines total, five repeated, unlike in the past
A triolet poem I will teach you last
With rhyming scheme ‘ABaAabAB’ it does contrast
All this information I do freely bestow
A triolet poem I will teach you last
And after this you are free to go
The Genius in the Idiot Box

Joseph Brough, Year 11

I
Every minute of every hour of every day,  
As long as we can remember,  
The screen feeds.  
It feeds the with untold arms,  
Caring to feign the same inane  
Care for every mundane Jack and Jane, proffering  
Crude comedies, ridiculous realities,  
Appalling animations, pathetic period pieces.  
The screen feeds yet,  
Drawing blank faces with white eyes  
Ever nearer its glowing lure and snapping  
Prison bar teeth together,  
Grimacing a satisfied smile.  
The soiled hands of the screen,  
Strike shovels into the brain,  
Finding and flinging dissenting opinions,  
Digging mental pathways  
That lead innocent souls towards a hidden agenda.

II
The evening news flickers to life.  
The same suave speaker  
Reads the same sordid stories,  
Every night, on  
Every channel.  
Another three children,  
lost to the highway.  
Gasps and sighs and tears emitted nationwide.  
Another three children,  
leave the hospital for the first time.  
Their cries never reach deaf ears.  
As the doorman farewells already departed  
visitors, he fails to announce arriving guests.

III
A seamless segue sweeps smoothly into the next topic,  
Overseas conflict:  
Our boys, or maybe theirs,  
laying down their lives, or maybe ours,  
To push those people  
Out of that country  
Into that country.  
But  
They’re already here.  
Down the road,  
praying peacefully to foreign gods,  
In the supermarket,  
buying food for their children,  
Maybe even  
watching the evening news  
and fearing for their families.
Stay in your homes, cries the chief.
The force is on the case, they say,
But the force is the same as you or me.

Pushed onto the streets,
filled with fear and suspicion,
and handed a gun.

A force for panic, a force for terror.

Just one officer, having a bad day,
Just one innocent, in the wrong place at the wrong time,
The shouting.
The shooting.
The stiff.
The street fights.
The spread.
The sadness.

Suddenly,
Everyone’s talking about it.
We can’t trust the police, now?
What has the world come to?
I can save your souls!

One voice drowns out all.
We have the situation under control.
Do as we say, and all will be well.

Hello there!
Yes, over here!
Don’t be afraid –
I’m the genius in the idiot box.

Come over here, take the weight off those poor feet of yours.
They must get awfully tired, standing around all day,
Endlessly walking hither and thither,
In eternal haste.

Come to me, and find relief from all the hardships of life.
I’ve got some friends who’d all love for you to take some time off –
maybe I’ll let them chat to you, tell you about what they do.

You might make a new friend,
A new toy to keep around the place.
Wouldn’t that make you happy?

Sit down,
Turn your brain off,
Stay awhile,
Stay forever.
I’m always here.
And isn’t that good news for you
A Place in My Heart

Kartikeya Kaushal, Year 6

The sun is rising over a cliff, enlightening the surface a ruby red of wonder
The river has a place close to my heart
The delightful, dewy ocean of sea green emerald grass you must never plunder
My heart yearns that we are never apart
The river is as perfectly peaceful as I have ever seen
It is as bizarrely beautiful as anything could have been

Whispering trees away in a mesmerising movement
Cacophonies of birds squawk with glee
The river needs no improvement
The motor of a boat hums like an irritated bee
Calm, cool river water beckons me in
Disliking this terribly tranquil place would be a sin

Bringing back memories from the past
Slimy jellyfish like excited children bob up and down
This happiness will forever last
This perfect place will never make me frown
Sweet, cool wonderful winds run like a stampede of horses,
Over my skin. The river fills me with strength, the best forces.

School Chant

Kailen Anderson, Year 7

C.C.G.S. the school for only the best,
We always win and never rest.
We only fight off the naughty little pests,
For C.C.G.S. is our only nest,
We strive through all our tests to prove,
That we are better than all of the rest.
If we are damaged we get back up and fight
We fight all day even through night.
We do not stop until they pop.
When they lose they offer to clean our school, happily,
Instead we say it’s okay, and they leave rapidly.
We come home and cheer with grace,
For we will always win the race!
Dear Stranger

Tyler Hung, Year 11

As I staggered to my desk, my knees weak and my hands trembling, I started to reflect on what type of life I had lived. Was it a good one? Filled with happiness and joy, devoid of regret and hatred? No, I decided. But it was certainly an interesting one, and so it was then, with a little over a day and a half to live, that I decided to share my story. I pulled out my pen and started to pour my soul out onto the page.

‘Dear Stranger,’ I wrote, ‘My name is Jeremy Astaccio, and this is my story. When I was born, my parents smiled and they showered me with presents and kisses and love, and everything was good. When I was six, I learned to ride my bike. I would speed around the neighbourhood, while my mother smiled and my father recorded it for us to cherish for years to come. But when I was eleven, I waved goodbye to my father, dressed in khaki with a duffel bag and a gun, as he got in the back of a van and it drove away. And my mother cried and so did I, and we went inside and never talked of him again.”

I paused for a second. It wasn’t easy to remember these things, but as my days on earth drew closer to an end, I thought to myself, “My life has been a lesson. A lesson in war, in pain, in trust and in love.” I continued to write.

“When I was fifteen, I had to fend for myself. My mother would stay up all night drinking and crying, and then I would carry her to bed while she softly wept for her dead husband. And I would skip school to mow lawns and take out rubbish, so that we had food to eat and a roof to shelter us from the rain. When I was twenty, they knocked on my door and I signed up straight away. I would fly out in two days to fight for my country. I had to say goodbye to my mother for what could be the last time. And she cried and kicked and scratched and bit, but nothing could convince me to stay.”

I stopped again to reflect on what had happened. I remembered the doctor’s face, as he told me that my worst fears were confirmed. I remembered bottled-up frustration, having no one to tell, no wife, no kids, no family, nothing. And I remembered my hands as they shook with the magnitude of what I had just been told. One day to live, one day to live, the words assaulted my ears, forced me further down into the pit of my despair. My eyelids grew heavy and my face sagged, but I had to keep writing.
“So I went to war, and it was every bit as horrible as I thought and I killed and almost got killed, with ringing in my ears and ice in my heart. Until one day I was alone. I walked and walked and walked. I cried for my mother, for my father, and for God, and no one came. Later, we came across a man. He was alone and unarmed with a look of resignation on his face. He showed no emotion, except for his eyes. His eyes blazed fire, they were the eyes of a man who had seen everything there was to see. His hands were dry and chafed - they were the hands of someone who had worked his entire life, and, as his enemy surrounded him, they remained perfectly still.”

I jumped a little at a noise behind me, before realising that it was just a poster falling down. After many years, the war was still on my mind. Once you have seen the things I have, it stays with you forever. Once more I pressed pen to paper.

“I remember the nod and, hands shaking, I put my gun to the innocent man's head and squeezed the trigger. I squeezed hard, I squeezed the trigger like the war had squeezed me, hard and fast with no pauses and no time to reconsider. And I remember the gunshot was too loud, and then there was silence, like the calm after the storm, as I took in what I had just done.”

Slowly, tears began to well in my eyes. That was a memory that I had shared with nobody, and the taking of a human life had hit me harder than a wrecking ball.

“Shortly after that, I left the army, and I met the most beautiful woman of my life. We got married, and soon after she gave birth to twin girls. Except we realised we weren't happy. I told her nothing, and in return she gave me nothing. The love was there, but it was buried beneath guilt and doubt and pent up frustration. And so it was to be, only three years after the birth of my, of our, twin daughters, we separated. She got everything, the house, the girls, everything.”

And it was at this last sentence that I began to cry, to openly weep, for the loss of my relationship, and the loss of what it all could have turned out to be.

“I'm sorry,” I said to the empty space, as I imagined that the love of my life was still there. And yet she wasn't, and never would be. I felt the energy and life leaving my body as I prepared to write down my final few sentences.
“And so, with a heavy heart, I moved here, to Texas, while she went to Manhattan, to raise the children by herself. And I lived my life without love, and without laughter, and without joy. Until one day I fell ill, and I went to the doctor and he told me that I had two days to live, and that I should wrap up my affairs and, basically, prepare to die.

And so here I sit, doing what I was told. But I ask you, I beg of you, whoever reads this, to do two things. Two simple things. First, pass my story on. Tell everyone you know, spread my story far and wide with the hope that one day, people like me will learn. And secondly, don’t do what I did.”

I took a deep breath, a shuddering gasp as I tried to suck the necessary air into my lungs to continue.

“Don’t bottle up your anger, or your hate, or your feelings. Write down what angers or worries you, and then tear up that piece of paper and let the birds make nests from it. Throw your feelings to the wind in the hope that one day, they may come back to you and you can feel again. And I’ve drawn my life for you, and it’s not pretty. The sketches are fairly rough, but they tell the truth. I threw away all my chances, I was ravaged by war, and I pushed away anyone who ever loved me. I had no time for love, and now love has no time for me. And nor does life.

Finally, thank you. Whoever you are, thank you, for reading this, for understanding me, for everything.”

I finished writing. There was one last thing to do. I pulled out my phone and called the woman who I had always loved so dearly. It went to answer phone, but that was all I needed.

“Helen,” I said, “Look. I don’t have much, or any time left. But I just wanted to say I’ve always loved you, and I’m sorry.”

And with that I dropped the phone and closed my eyes, listening to the sounds around me and imagining what my life would have been like had I done things differently. I cleared this thought from my head. What good would it do to dwell on past mistakes? I started to grow tired.

Slowly, carefully, I meandered to my bed, stopping at times to look at old photos and treasured belongings. I lay down, all energy drained from my body, and closed my eyes, thinking about what I could do tomorrow, if there was one.

“Write down what angers or worries you, and then tear up that piece of paper and let the birds make nests from it.”

Tyler Hung
Another Day

Max Giudice, Year 12

It was a Sunday morning like any other that December. The sun was rising increasingly early and it startled Steve into consciousness as it peeked through the slit in his curtains and projected onto his face. He arched and extended his lax body under the cool comfort of his sheets, tensing his shoulders and cracking his neck into life. Half asleep, he reluctantly slipped out of the comfort of the bed.

“Mmmm, it’s too early,” moaned Steve.

Yawning and still half asleep, he walked to the window and drew his curtains, momentarily blind as the sun burned his open eyes. As his vision refocused, the stunning river came into view. His house on Bay View Terrace looked eastward over the Swan River. It was lit up; the sun’s rays tinged the streaky clouds pink, reflecting on the shimmering mirror of the water in beautiful contrast. The purple blue skies gradually faded and the river followed into its deep blue-green state as the sun rose overhead. This was Steve’s place and he knew it; the river was where he had grown up, sailed, laughed, enjoyed himself, and thrived.

Steve could feel the sun on his skin and it warmed the house and its old jarrah floors. It warmed up the land, too, and Steve knew that it would cause the afternoon’s sea breeze, overriding the weak easterly, as it always did. Steve loved that he knew how everything worked. It made him feel more in touch with everything, especially the river; he could predict the changes in the wind and feel it shift out there. He looked out over the water to the Royal Freshwater Bay Yacht Club, where the moored boats swayed in the gentle, warm easterly, and the old polished wooden yachts on the jetty glimmered in the sun. To the right, past Point Walter spit, opened Melville Water, the greater expanse of water on which he would later be sailing.

“See ya later, mum, I’m off!” said Steve.

“Alright, love, have fun. And be safe!” his mother said, lovingly.

“Yeah, of course,” replied Steve, chuckling.

He turned onto Stirling Highway, and the traffic was calm in the morning’s heat. He drove past the University on his way to Mounts Bay Sailing Club, reminding him of the countless days studying there. He could never see himself using his degree; he just loved being active and doing things constantly, he couldn’t see himself sitting down all day at a desk. He wanted to sail professionally, and he was well on his way.

He drove through the open gates into the club, and unloaded his dad’s old VW Golf. “Gear, sails, food, water, sunscreen, harness. Yep, all here. Good to go,” Steve quietly stated.

He walked from the gravelly car park to the lawn; yellow dry patches spotted it where the sun and sailors had left their mark. It stretched down to the river, first meeting and merging with the shiny sand and down to the water’s edge. The land was heating up and the dying easterly was struggling against the building sea breeze. The wind ran ripples over the water, causing it to change to a darker shade of blue, and it provided a cool change in the air. He walked over the grass, past various dinghies and younger sailors, to his boat and crew; Dave and Alex. Alex skippered and was twenty-six, two years older that Steve. Dave was on main and was Steve’s age. Steve was on bow, trimming kite downwind and jib upwind. They were all sponsored in the 18-foot skiff, and paid to travel globally to compete in various classes. Steve loved it; traveling and sailing, while getting paid for it.

“Hey guys, how are we?”

“Not bad man, how are you?” replied Alex.

“I’m great. Looks like a roaring south-wester today!” exclaimed Steve.

“I know, it’s gonna be awesome,” said Dave, a big grin on his face.

“Alright,” said Alex. “Let’s get rigged and ready to go!”

The feel of the air rushing over his face and through his hair was addictive. Out on the wire, skimming centimetres from the water’s surface, the salty, familiar river water sprayed onto Steve’s face and body. It felt cool and exhilarating, comparable to flying. There were seven other 18-foot skiffs out on the water and they were all there to win the friendly race. The wind was ever increasing and the start was approaching.
Beep, beep, beep, beep, beeeeep; their synchronised watches signalled the start.

“Alright, boys, let’s do this!” shouted Steve, enthusiastically. “We’ve got this one,” echoed Dave.

They flew through the start line in the roaring breeze, coming off it ahead of the other boats. Steve was in touch and aware of the river and the wind; he visualised the coming shifts from the clouds, could see the wind dancing on the water and spreading like a cat paw. He felt the chop of the waves in his legs as they charged through it like it was nothing at all, and all the while he could feel the sheer strength of the wind in his arms from the ropes in his hands. He called the tactics and communicated the conditions he felt, and he was one of the best at it, at one with the elements surrounding them.

His whole body ached with the strain of working, but he embraced the pain and fought through it, knowing it would pay off. The top mark was fast approaching, and they were coming into it, convincingly in front. The clouds were thick and menacing and heading their way. The air temperature suddenly plummeted with the building wind. The new gusts on the water were dark and angry, and headed straight for them.

“Oh shit, this is gonna be hectic, boys,” warned Steve. “Hold on, this will be rough. Ease heaps of jib and, both of you, get back!” yelled Alex, apprehensively. “Alright, get back. Hold the set… Now! Go, go, go!” bellowed Alex, half scared, half exhilarated.

Steve’s arms burned as he pulled up the massive spinnaker but he got it up as fast as ever. He was out on the wire before the kite had filled, and he felt the tug of it in his hands. There was so much power pulling against him; pulling him in. He controlled it and they flew down wind. They were going so fast in the skiff that it felt incredibly calm. The wind was in front of them; they were faster than the wind speed. Everything disappeared, it was just him with the familiar ache in his arms, the river, the wind, the spray and him. He was flying through the air. The wind was building and they gybed into it. He was out first on the trapeze wire, kite in hand, and the others followed. They accelerated extremely quickly; there was so much force in the sails.
"Oh, shit!" laughed Alex.
"What? What’s the matter mate?" asked Dave.
"The rudder... it’s snapped off. I have no steering!" shouted Alex.

The boat remained flat and on course despite the lack of steering but, as the next pressure line hit them, the flow over the foils changed and disaster struck.

Steve felt the sudden deceleration of the boat underneath him as it sharply rounded up, and the side gashed deep into the river. But he wasn’t stopping. He just kept going. He flew through the air, still attached to the trapeze wire and kept going. He was swung around the front as the boat turned up beneath him and his body jerked, like a rag-doll, as the wire became taught. Within a second, he was flung violently around the front of the boat and into the cool, familiar river water... beneath the blanket-like kite he once held.
Under the water, everything was a peaceful trepidation. Steve shook, writhed, twisted, flailed and fought the water. The tight trapeze wire was pulling him into the tangled mess of the sails, and after what seemed like an eternity, he managed to unhook himself. He swam upwards, searching for air, but all he got was the mass of the kite. It was an impossible task; the kite was too large, and every time he came back up to it he found no air and the suction of the kite around his body only made things worse. His lungs were on fire, burning for more oxygen. His body took over his mind and gasped in the water. The burn subsided and, as the water filled within him, it was cool and comforting, somehow serene. Then everything faded.

On the shadowy and wrathful water, one boat violently lost control; the bowman was flung around the front of the skiff as it reeled sharply into the wind. He landed in the water still hooked onto his trapeze wire, and the boat capsized on top of him, the kite falling over him like a sheet. The others were thrown into the water, swam back to their boat, and climbed onto the centre board, looking for their companion. The trapped young man made an attempt to get out. Angry arms could be seen under the spinnaker, obviously the bowman’s, flailing. The thrashing abruptly stopped. The other two dived back into the water. With knives in hand, they swam around to the great sail, hacking at it. Safety boats pulled up and others jumped in to help. Some of them dived in to help rescue their drowned friend. They pulled him out of the water under the torn kite, and they heaved Steve onto the rescue boat, laying him down. They felt his cold body; there was no sign of a pulse. He breathed life back into him, and the boy startled awake, after what seemed like an impossible time. He violently breathed in before collapsing back onto the damp floor, alive once again.

At Royal Perth Hospital, Steve lay asleep on a hard bed, his family surrounding him. His breathing was long and methodical. He dreamed of the river and the incident that had happened only hours before. His recollection and reliving of the event was something tranquil. He partly embraced his death; he was content with dying there. The river had always lived within him, been a part of his life and the river almost took him for its own; he belonged there after all and he knew it. He drifted into consciousness, dazed, and as he blinked his blurred vision away, his family came into view.

Fearing the worst, Steve’s family enquired about his condition: “Are you okay? How are you feeling? I was so worried!”
“I’m fine, seriously. I’m feeling okay,” Steve replied.
“You died, Steve!” his mum said hysterically, as she broke into tears.
“But I’m alive now, Mum. And I’m gonna be okay.”
“Are you sure you’re alright, son?” his dad asked, concerned.
“Yeah, I’m good, Dad.”

He propped himself up in the bed, and looked out the window. From his room high up in the hospital, he could see the river. He could see where his boat lost control, where he got trapped, where he drowned and where he was resuscitated. It had calmed down now with the dying temperature and it was hard to believe it was so vicious only hours before. He forgave the river. It was always out of his control.

“When can I get back out there?” asked Steve, chuckling.
Time

Aditya Muthukattu, Year 5

Time keeps rolling with never a care
No matter who what, when or where
Because time keeps going - there's no delay - there's no replay
Turn wasted moments into nights and days
And you'll regret
And never forget

If you can fill a minute another sixty seconds' run
And an hour of sixty minutes could fill a mile of fun
What about a day with its twenty four hours?
Could be the opposite of a week of indolence
And you'll never regret
And never forget

Though some may think that time goes forever, Life doesn't
So make the most of your chance
To live your life in a happy dance
And nobody shall overcome your wisdom
And you'll never regret
And never forget

All the wise shall remember that
You may fly ahead of the clock
But at other times shan't
Because sometimes you can't
And if you never forget this rule
You'll never regret…

Spring

Harry Colvin, Year 1

Warm sun
Cow's being milked
Sheep growing new wool
Trips to the beach
Having ice cream
Swimming in my swimming pool
Bees flying in the air
Baby birds being born
Blooming flowers
Farms growing
Evening sunlight shone through a film of summer evergreen. Wind: a soothing respite. The river: a stream of life, source of calm, epitome of beauty. Here sat I, the serenity having no impact. For I- I was absorbed in my thoughts, withdrawn into a shell of misery incarnate. For I had seen; yes, I had witnessed man’s greed in its purest, unadulterated form. And now there were none. None to restore my faith in humanity, for I am quite certain now, it had never existed.

The room was a mess, as usual. The dirty sink overflowing with last week’s dishes. The table, stacked high with unpaid bills and rent, but predominantly drafts that ‘lacked meaning and depth that would be forgotten in a week,’ or so the editor had said. And then there was the pantry, stacked high with numerous, luxurious boxes of nothing, for that was all that remained, save for the coffee.

I was reclined in my favorite (and only) armchair with my customary cup of coffee and humming along to American in Paris, a new hit that had used up the last of my spare cash. It had a tendency to be broadcast around my flat in an attempt to elevate my spirits, an event that was occurring with alarming frequency of late, but that was nothing new.

I often reflected on the motives behind my decision to become an author, for I was not a man of amaranthine self-esteem and courage and the constant rejection of publishers had taken its toll. I was a wreck, and New York in the 20s just didn’t seem to be my decade.

It was then that my thoughts were interrupted by the banal ring of the telephone. It was Felix.

“James, old chap, why not come down for a drink at the Sands?”

I’d met Felix at the local club Sands a few months previously. I was there for the music. He was there for the drink.

“I’d love to, but I’m afraid I’m literally down to my last dollar,” I said.

“Don’t stress, I’ll buy you one,” he replied cheerily.
And so later that night I found myself with Felix at the Sands, scotch in hand and succumbing to the rhythms of the music. We sat at a rather battered old table, cigar smoke floating around the room and deliberated over some of the more mundane facets of life.

With an estate in Southampton, unemployed and with a pile of inherited cash, the contrast between Felix and myself could not be more evident. A Harvard Law dropout, Felix had his parents removed from his life at sixteen in a car crash and was left with their complete possessions. And so it was that Felix embraced a life of affluence that few could parallel.

I looked at my watch. 1:07am; the effects of the alcohol had taken their toll on my weary body and I was lethargic to the point of maladroitness.

"And then he said…"

"Felix," I interrupted, "I really must be getting back."

"Easy on, old sport. I have a little something to show you first," he said with a knowing wink.

We got unsteadily to our feet and wandered out the door of the club. The cold breeze that had been lying in wait, hit our faces with a force akin to a hurricane, revitalising and rejuvenating.

The alley had a mysterious feel to it, dim lamps flickering, our shadows in caliginous silhouette and the figure. Whatever it was, Felix was as unconcerned as always, rambling on about his latest Rolls Royce. I listened absentmindedly with the occasional single syllabic response, my attention singularly focused on the ever nearer, ever larger embodiment before me.

Then my eyes were opened.

It was a black; slumped against the wall covered in all manner of mismatched assortments and garments, eternally seeking the futility of warmth. It was a pitiful sight to behold, but what could I do? In many ways, I was no better off than he. I ruefully gave him a wide berth, expecting Felix to follow suit. But no, lost in the circumference of his own narcissism, he took the road most travelled by and stumbled over the legs of the old man onto the hard, unforgiving sidewalk.

"These accursed, infernal animals!" he shouted.

"Why, they are the very apotheosis of abomination! A blight on the world!"

And with that he set into the defenseless figure. Foot connecting with head, blow after blow after blow, an arm raised in futility, the final cry, silence.

That which I had sensed in Felix had at last come to the fore. The beast had broken the restraints and lashed out with unquenchable vengeance.

And then it was back to the world of new Rolls and indulgent extravagance. I was no longer listening. I daren’t confront him, so I tacitly extricated myself from the grasp of the deranged, psychotic being. There was no other choice.

The trial was held late May. I went for justice, not for friendship. Publicity there was none, for what was unfamiliar? I watched on in furious silence as the prosecutor stood up, fumbled his words, refused to question the accused and returned to his seat with a look of serene boredom on his face. The lawyer, the very antithesis of the prosecutor, stood up and captivated the courtroom with passionate discussion.

"My client has been involved with a terrible misunderstanding. A violent unprovoked attack on my client… self-defence… a tragic accident."

"Not guilty… cleared of all charges."

It was all over in a matter of minutes.

I watched in enraged, sickening silence as the jury, judge and prosecutor all uniformly filed out with their smug expressions, full of confidence that justice had been served.

It wasn’t my place to say anything. What power could I have over such people?

I bent down to look at my reflection. The river alone was true. Weakness. It spoke out stronger than ever, for what courage was there in breaking the iniquitous bonds of man in silence
“A stream of life, source of calm, epitome of beauty ...”

Michael Lukin

Nic Dormer, Year 12
Riki Wylie, Year 8
Jack Johnson, Year 12
Jake Patmore, Year 10
Jack Lewsey, Year 10
Matthew Shelton, Year 12
Searching for a way out of this city, out of my mind.

Hunter Jackson

Cameron Moffat, Year 12
A Way Out

Hunter Jackson, Year 11

I was driving and searching. Searching for a way out of this city, out of my mind. It was yelling at me, “I told you so, I told you so.” I mean, it was my mind that gave me the idea in the first place and then it left my body to do the dirty work. I was the one who had to clean the knife, wash the blood-spattered floor and, of course, hide the body. I looked in the side mirror and was struck by my reflection. My pale face was smeared with blood from my thick, unruly beard, across my small, hook-like nose, and to my emerald eyes. An American Indian preparing for tribal warfare. I ran my dry, calloused hand down my blue denim jeans. I liked the feeling immensely, especially now my hands were chaffed raw from the bleach and scourer, which added texture to my sensory experience.

My eyes were slowly enticed towards the vibrant night sky and away from the road. For the first time the stars ceased being incongruent and disorderly and had instead combined to create a harmonious display. The luminous crescent moon was the centerpiece, like a chandelier to a ballroom, and this focal point provided me with a direction to drive. My eyes flicked back to the road and I noticed the white lines that marked its centre were now on my left. As I began to form the words “How odd?” a piercing horn bleated out its punishing melody. The truck was merely ten metres from my panel wagon and had it swerved the same way as I did we would have collided. Luckily, we turned opposite ways and maneuvered around each other as if performing a synchronised dance. A thick bead of sweat ran down my forehead before finding its way down the end of my nose. It sat precariously on the tip for a brief moment before plummeting to its death on the butt of my gun resting on my lap. Up ahead the road opened up into two lanes on both sides to accommodate for the petrol station that loomed in the distance. I swiftly guided my car through the traffic and cut off a blue Suzuki in the process. In return he gifted me a loud, continuous beep from his horn. By reflex, I gave him the middle finger, released some obscenities from within and pulled into the desolate car park.
The automatic doors slid open slowly as if they were cowering before me. “Hi, how can I help you?” a small, slender Indian cashier said in a fitting accent. He had a large protruding nose that drooped down almost to the level of his mouth and cauliflower-like ears that peeked out from the side of his head.

“How much?” I grunted, indicating the fuel bowser I had used. The man immediately tensed up, as if he sensed danger.

“What?” I growled, getting angrier by the second. The man was stunned and I followed his gaze towards my shirt. I looked down and noticed a severed ring finger thickly caked with dark blood sticking out of my top pocket. I had wanted the expensive looking gold ring and so had put it there momentarily while I finished cutting up the body. I must have forgotten. In my peripheral vision the man was searching under the desk for the duress button.

“What’s wrong?” I queried in a malicious tone.

“Please leave sir, I don’t want any trouble.”

I couldn’t help but chuckle to myself at the hilarity of the situation. “With pleasure, mate.” I grabbed my goods and walked out into the car.

The darkness crept into the corners of my eyes as I glided peacefully down the dusty country road. Either side, the pastures rustled in the silent wind and the artificial dams gleamed like seas of melted mirrors in the moonlight. A disheveled sign adjacent to one of the farms stood like an impoverished beggar crying out. The farms out this way had been hit hard by the drought. I pulled over next to the sign and lay down on the bonnet. The darkness went behind my eyes and I fell into a blissful sleep.

I awoke to the distinct crack of a rotten twig: that loud, echoing crunch. I jerked up awkwardly and looked to the source of the sound. Aided by the proximity of the sun to the horizon, behind the sign I could just make out a pair of boots poking out. Polished to a crisp and spattered with mud on the sides. I reached for my gun in the front seat and my neck went stiff with fear and anguish; it was not there.

“Get off my property!” a wiry old man exclaimed while raising his worn-out shotgun towards my face.
“Whatever, mate. I’m going.” I inched towards the driver’s door and reached for the handle. Suddenly, I remembered. “Give me my gun.”

It was the only connection I had to my past and yet it also reminded me of the murder. The man repeated his command more slowly this time and cocked his gun. Tentatively, I edged behind the wheel and slowly pulled out back onto the road. The man’s eyes were hardened and looked directly towards my top pocket.

As I accelerated, I swerved into the unsuspecting man and soon I towered above the man’s limp, fragile body as it was consumed by the pool of blood cascading from his head. As he lay there, I couldn’t help but notice the look on the man’s face. It reminded me of my past victim, the one I dismembered. It was fixed in a conflicted stupor as if he was struggling to decide on something. What a silly thing to think; he’s dead and that’s that.

Suddenly, I was struck by an overwhelming sense of grief and I collapsed next to the man. I sobbed and let my tears drop onto the earth; the first moisture this parched land had tasted in months. My mind began to squall. It was screaming out vulgarisms and telling me how weak I was. I reluctantly followed its orders and piled the old man’s body into the trunk. I searched the man and found a key ring, his wallet, and my gun tucked into his tattered jeans.

Twenty metres from the sign was a rusted gate left slightly ajar, presumably where the man had come from. I drove up the quiet driveway, withered olive trees scattered either side. Ahead stood a white farmstead, archaic and decaying: clear signs of the man’s economic struggles. The door was a large, oblong block of oak with a heavy, tarnished doorknob in the shape of a lion.

I knocked twice, half-suspecting someone to answer, and then slid in the key and turned. The door creaked open and the light from an aged light bulb illuminated the dismal scene. It was clear that what I had seen from outside was a facade to the house’s interior. The floorboards looked like white ants had got to them years ago and the paisley wallpaper was peeling like sunburnt skin. I ran my hand along the hallway and my fingers picked up clumps of dust and plaster, like a clod of dog hair.

At the end of the corridor stood a lonely antique table with intricate engravings on the legs, as if searching for company. The sun hid behind a cloud and its light followed suit, leaving the room in a state of melancholic gloominess. I reached the table and searched for any sign of life; there was none. No photos, letters, books: nothing. This man had nothing and I took all he had left away from him: life. I lent against the wall and slid down until I was sitting on the floor. I pulled out the man’s wallet and found his driver’s licence. ‘Mr James Woods,’ but he longer needed a name.

I proceeded further into the depths of the house, as an adventurer would do in a cave. The walls hosted no paintings, portraits or anything in that vein; they were bare. I entered the kitchen and saw, on top of an old jarrah table, one rusted fork and a metallic-looking plate. These utensils jolted my mind’s hunger reflex and soon I was grabbing at the fridge door. I hadn’t eaten in two days. I must have forgotten to eat. A solitary can of tuna was perched on the top shelf, the sole source of nourishment. The man’s situation dawned on me and I began feeling less guilty for my rash actions. Perhaps he wanted a way out but didn’t have the guts to follow through. Either way he had no family and no future. Suddenly, a peculiar thought occurred to me and I let it linger and propagate within my mind. Suddenly, the darkness retreated completely and I could see everything in a new, invigorating light. I was looking for the bathroom.

Come on, he had to have one. I rummaged vigorously through the medicine cabinet above the ceramic basin. Finally, my eyes locked onto the razor like a man possessed. I lathered my beard thick with shaving foam. As I stared into the mirror absorbing my new identity, I slowly but surely removed my beard.

I made my way back out of the house grabbing a packet of matches from near the fireplace as I left. The golden sun rose like a chariot of hope and I felt it to be a sign. I opened the trunk and clambered over the man’s body removing his clothes and replacing them with mine. I drove the car silently towards the perimeter of the farm underneath a tall fig tree. I examined the man one final time and found under his feeble forearm a pair of steel-rimmed spectacles, subsequently replacing them with my gun. Having lit a match and dropped it into the fuel tank, I placed the glasses on my nose. They were a perfect fit.

With a final glance at the burning car I made my way back to the farm; I had jobs to do.
Athena’s Owl

Richard Tien, Year 12

I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labour, and this was the reward for all my toil. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.

Twelve o’clock, on a midnight dreary,
As I flip the numbers, weak and weary,
Outside, in the mist that vanishes then appears,
Amongst the frantic feet that scramble from tired ends to beginnings,
And minds that are mazes, connecting beginnings to ends (rags to riches);
Outside on the green tree you rest.
Content inside your little nest.

With unknowing wisdom, how do you mock us, simple bird? How blissful your mind, ever unstimulated.
Sweet is your sleep, whether you earn much or little, You know no worries, all belittled.

The sunlight slips into the city
And strangles us back to life,
The screams of a thousand alarm clocks
Begin the long day’s strife.
The sallow faces riding frenzied feet
Begin to permeate through the city streets,
Toiling to make more than ends meet.
In the tree the bird sleeps.

But you simple bird, you know nothing of life –
The rarities, the complexities, the joys of annuities!
You will wake and aimlessly drift, lost in the city,
Like a plastic bag that lingers with the winds (Yet still you are so happy?)
But I am Ozymandias, ‘King of Kings!’
The brightest diamonds I have bought,
The finest champagnes I have tasted,
(The youngest women I have loved).
Upon my lips I have savoured the sweetness of success.

And bitterness burns my tongue, still,
As I look upon you, base bird.
Although you own nothing, everything is yours;
The world is your oyster, not mine!
If I had known life before, of money and materials,
I had known it not as it was ought to be known.

O wise eagle of Solomon, Owl of Athena!
You have flown me above a rocky realisation,
And dropped me at a hundred feet.
I fall towards a painful truth:
That I toiled in vain throughout my youth,
And nothing but experience is gained underneath the sun.
Two ageing men, one rickety run down boat. Hardy and I, the only souls one hundred miles out from Tasmania’s south coast. Laying and hauling octopus traps. Day in. Day out. For weeks on end. The way I would describe it - the ideal recipe for utter boredom. Set them out while it’s still dark, before the birds are even awake. Then haul them up just before the sun sinks. Below the horizon.

Ten foot seas. Icy cold winds. Deep, black water. I am standing here, puffing away on my stale cigarette at the stern of the boat. It’s stupid o’clock in the morning and I think I have hypothermia. I do not remember why I signed up for this deckhand job. This is my tenth straight week out here and it’s starting to take its toll on my mind.

The siren sounds, I grab ahold of the cold side rail of the boat. I hear the sound of Hardy’s faint voice floating on the stormy sea. It surges over the side like a predator after its prey. The water rages across the deck like a flash flood. I feel the true power of the water as it takes hold of me. Wraps its arms around me. I hold on for my life. It is then that I see. The wave’s grasp fastens around Hardy. Throws him overboard. I hopelessly watch as he drifts further and further away. He is sucked under. Captured by the deep, dark depths of the ocean.
Physicist Leonardo Vetra smelled burning flesh, and he knew it was his own.

It had all started a couple of days ago with the release of this new-fangled device that boasted it would be plugged into your nervous system. It would project everything from work to TV and even games, onto your eyes. It was named the EyeGlass. As usual when one of these devices came out, everybody went on a hoard-like rampage to buy one. Everyone, except Leonardo Vetra, an everyday physicist who was speculative about what this device would do. So he stayed away from it.

Over the coming weeks it grew increasingly popular which meant he heard non-stop from everybody around him how indescribably awesome the EyeGlass was (EG for short). Left, right and centre he heard about this stupid device, and yet he still pushed away everybody who tried to convince him to buy one.

By the time four weeks had passed he had had enough of the non-stop harassment from colleagues, billboards and passing people on the street. As Leo briskly walked down the hallway of the university where he worked, he was contemplating succumbing to the peer pressure and finally getting the stupid device, when he realised everybody around him was standing still with their eyelids firmly shut. When he went up to one of the human statues he recognised him as one of the students that he had regularly seen traipsing the stone cold hallways of the physics department. He poked and prodded the student to determine if he was awake, and yet he received no response. He then checked the heart beat and found it was still pounding its regular rhythm. By now he was beginning to think this was some cruel joke that they were playing on him. Until suddenly, like clockwork, everybody's eyes slowly crept open.

As he sprinted down the hall, with his tie flying behind him, the cold, black pupils of everybody around him followed his every movement. When he found the door that led out to the parking lot he turned around only to realise he was being followed, ever so slowly, by the black-eyed shufflers.

When he opened the door to the parking lot he saw a state of decay lying throughout the sprawling metropolis in which he lived. There were cars piled on top of one another, and billowing smoke coming from god knows what. Yet he heard no sound of fear or pain that should have accompanied this picture of desolation and sorrow. All he heard was an eerie silence. But he could not stop for he knew the terrors that lurked behind would soon be upon him. As he dashed toward his car, he shoved his hand deep into his pocket, fumbling for his keys. By the time he finally wrenched them out he saw that the shufflers were picking up speed and were now coming towards him in a jog.

He couldn’t stop looking at these robots that he once knew were people, but who now came towards him in unison like little toy soldiers. By the time they were within two hundred metres of him he snapped back to reality and took off towards his car. When he got to his car, Leo started thumbing through his keys, all the while glancing over his shoulder to see how far away the shufflers were. They were closing in, and fast.

Two hundred metres, he found the right key.

One hundred and fifty metres, he opened the door.

A hundred metres, he turned the key. Nothing!

Eighty metres, again nothing.

Fifty metres and finally the old rust bucket lurched into life.

His car screamed out of the parking spot and he saw that they were on his tail. As the tyres spun on the bitumen, one of the shufflers jumped onto the car just before the wheels gripped into the road and he sped away.

He weaved through the roads half trying to get this thing off his roof, half dodging the smouldering wreckages of cars, and yet it would not let go. Before Leo knew what was happening, a head appeared at the top of the windscreen and slowly the body came behind, the shuffer's dark pupils never leaving Leo's. Suddenly a hand burst through the windscreen sending...
glass everywhere. Leo couldn’t see a thing as a hand came reaching for his throat. In his panic the wheel of the car twisted and turned, avoiding multiple crashes, but his luck finally came to an end.

Leo awoke to the sight of his pants catching alight, he tried to stand up but his legs were too sore to move, the flames slowly starting to crawl up his khaki pants. With the amount of strength he had left in him he undid his belt and wrenched the burning pants off his legs.

When Leo awoke again, it was to the deep, red glow of the spring sunset and although it was beautiful he knew it would bring terrors like no other in the night. When he tried to stand up he felt the full extent of the pain as it shot through his leg like a bullet, but he knew he had to get off the road and find shelter. He limped over to the side of the road imagining how peculiar this would look if the world hadn’t gone crazy - a man dressed in a white shirt and only his underwear, limping off down the street. He’d be a mad man.

Leo was too scared to go into any of the houses fearing what might be lurking inside, so he continued to hobble down the crooked street looking for a deserted service station or a deli to fuel his rumbling stomach.

As he rounded the corner he spotted a single, glowing light that was too small to be a wreckage and it bobbed in the night. Leo began to advance with a slight air of trepidation for he could not know whether this thing was friend or foe. When he was within 15 metres of the light, he hid behind a bush to watch as they passed by. He saw that it was a group of five shufflers wandering down the street looking for survivors. The obvious leader of the group had a torch in his right hand. These things were not like the dumb zombies he had read about in comics. As they came closer and closer, Leo sunk further and further into the bushes. His eyes never leaving the shufflers, and that was his downfall.

They had almost passed when he took a final step backwards and his leg became caught under a root. He came toppling to the ground, snapping a twig as he fell. When he looked back up he saw five pairs of jet black eyes staring at him through the darkness. His body was too petrified to react. The leader was upon him, striking him across the back of the head, rendering him unconscious.

Physicist Leonardo Vetra smelled burning flesh, and he knew it was his own.
Let me tell you a story. I lived my life believing that I could change the world. I lived my life believing that I could have a family, one that would be ecstatic as soon as I returned home. “Home”... Before I continue, let me tell you what “words” are.

Words are tools. Words can be a tool of destruction; words that cause anger, hate, war - and death... or, words can be a tool of meaning. That’s about it. But someone’s Word is completely different; someone’s Word is someone’s promise. You break silence with words; but silence can be remade - just let the words flow until it is forgotten in the wind.

But someone’s Word is indestructible, as abstract as love, as purposeful as believing in God. Sure, we don’t need to believe in God; but if you have nothing left, all you can do is pray - and hope your prayers come true. It’s the same as someone’s Word, isn’t it? You don’t need to believe that it’ll come true, until you have nothing left; and you’re hoping for it to come true and make all the difference in the world to you. Having said that, let’s move on with the story.

To start with, there was this boy. Well... now that I think about it, he was more of a young man. This young man had the passion of a warrior amidst battle. He had the drive of a soul, eager to rise from its last story, to its next. And the strangest thing was: he loved. That’s just it - he loved. If you think about it, what warrior would want to be with a lover instead of in a battle? Or what soul would want to stay with the same story, which has ended, instead of starting anew?

Anyway, this young man was walking down to his school. The sun was playfully hiding behind a wave of bushy yet fluffy, white clouds, its head just poking out to see if anyone had spotted it. The wind danced and sang past the young man’s ears. The sweet scent of roses sprang across and up his nose as he inhaled softly. The soft feeling of grass made his feet feel like they were walking on pillows. The subtle taste of watermelon still danced on his tongue from when he ate his breakfast. He was an “A” grade student at school. He had the ability to do great things.
But the thing was: he wasn’t thankful for what he had. He had a house, a mother, a father, a brother, intelligence, luxuries. Things people would kill for, I guess. However, sometimes he’d wonder if he was just a number, not a person. It made him sad. Sad things are most important to someone, don’t you think? He didn’t notice the scent of roses, or the taste of watermelon on his tongue, or the sun, or the wind, or the soft feeling in his feet. He didn’t care for the perfect weather because he didn’t feel like this world meant it just for him.

“Excuse me,” a voice had said to the young man from behind him. It was a shaky voice; shy, scared and bothered. “Do you have anything I could eat?” the voice finished.

The young man turned around and gazed upon a girl, a homeless girl... His heart pounded into his chest as he stared mesmerised at the girl. He could barely breathe. The girl had long, orange hair that matched the colour of the sun when it sets over the hills. Oh, how it was so beautiful... Her sky blue eyes stared back at him ashamedly. Her soft, pink lips - as pink as the watermelon he had eaten for breakfast - were shut tightly, stopping her from saying another word.

Her skin, as white as snow - as enchanting as snow too - was defiled by dirt. Her physique was very... beautiful... She was about a few inches shorter than the young man and was as lean as a model. Even her voice - it was as soft as the wind. Her voice danced and sang past the young man’s ears and made him breathe in softly, as if a calm sheet of air was begging to be useful. Everything about this girl was... well, perfect... it’s the only way to describe her, I guess.

“5-Sure, of course.” he replied, swallowing loudly.

The young man dropped his bag and rummaged through it hastily, looking for his lunchbox. He pulled it out and offered it to the girl.

“Here, take whatever you want.” he said, staring at the girl again. Of course, you could imagine what she would say - something so... unusual.

“Is there anything you don’t want?” she asked politely. Her voice echoed through the young man’s ears like a melody.

He smiled and opened up the box. The girl gazed at the food inside, like it was something out of this world.

“Have all of it,” he said. “You look like you need it,” he finished, noticing the girl’s eyes fixed on his food.

“Are you sure?” she asked, looking back up at him.

The young man nodded, still gazing at the girl’s lustrous eyes. The girl slowly reached out with both hands to receive the treasure from the young man. Her hands gently slid against his when she held the box and made him feel warmer than usual.

“Thank you...” she responded gratefully.

Wait! I think ‘gratefully’ would be an understatement. She was more... huh, I guess there’s no word to describe how she said it. Probably because the way she said it never would’ve existed if it weren’t for her. If it were a phrase, I guess the young man had changed the world for her.

The young man was walking to school the next day too. He had his eyes fixed on where he had met the girl, a green hill that overlooked a flat, serene lake. He eagerly searched for the girl - and he found her. He ran up to her and all she did was look at the sky.

“Hey,” he said softly.

The girl smiled happily and looked down to him. And from then on, they kept seeing each other, at the same spot, under a tree that was placed on the hill. He would spend hours with her. She told him that she couldn’t remember the last time she laughed the way she did with when was with him.

The young man would stay with her until dark, then lay with her when the stars came out to say ‘hello’. He would tell his mother that he’s ‘at a friend’s place’.

One night, he fell asleep next to her. He was later woken by the sound of a serenade - an angelic voice. He saw the girl singing softly, her eyes sparkling with the stars. Looking at the sky, she was searching for her perfect world. That was when he saw the real her... Her eyes pierced past the divide, searching through the gaps in the fog, seeing sweet freedom through the clouds.

When she finished, the young man gently touched her lips with his. He was thankful that she was there, for he realised, and still does now, that a single person can change someone’s world.

“I Love you,” he said passionately.

She paused for a few minutes. “You do?” she replied finally.

“I give you my Word,” he whispered in her ear. And in that very spot, they made Love.
One day, the young man finally decided to bring the girl to his house. He told his family about her, and how she was homeless. And the words that came out of their mouths... in front of her too...

“...I don’t want her anywhere near you! She’s probably sold herself just for food, the slut! Either you stay with us, or you can live on the streets with her!”

And the girl cried, “Just make it easy for me and don’t follow me,” she said lifelessly to the young man. She didn’t want him to go through what she had gone through... and she ran out the door, crying.

When night came, the young man left a note to his ‘family’ saying: “She’s worth more than this life.” And left.

He set out to the hill, seeing nothing but darkness, for the moon too didn’t want to live that night. You see, the anatomy of a lover is 1% logical thinking, 99% imagination and an infinite amount of love. An infinite amount of heart... The love they had was infinite; a lost aura, abstract to all, but them. The invisible man searched for his perfect world, and he found her.

He stared lifelessly at his lover, her blood dripped from her chest. He read a note she held in her still-warm hands.

“Jin,

Thank you for being my universe. Thank you for making me feel free. If I can’t be with you in this world, then I’ll be with you always, inside you, because there’s no other place I’d rather be than in your heart.

Yours forever, Arna”

He sat beside Arna’s body, and the boy wrote a story, awaiting death.

This is my story...
For those living in perpetual hunger,
And whose basic needs never lie satiated,
Mastered by the human need for a simple commodity;
In which the lucky few have an unlimited supply.
Nice to think that while we dispose wastefully of food,
Every impoverished soul starves while we wallow in ignorance.

Living in Australia it is easy to forget
That people elsewhere are the same species.
Those starving in undeveloped countries are there by fate,
And it could be you in their hopeless position.
How is it that some people have too much money?
But instead of helping spend it on needless materialised commodities.

Many folks attempt to join the fight,
But inevitably forget about what’s right.
Because it’s easier, money joins the side of disdain,
Seemingly flippant towards starvation’s pain.

Even for those who feign compassion and care,
It is impossible to hide the human instincts of self preservation.
It is easy to be ungrateful for what we have when
We do not know the situation of the unfortunate majority.
For those who dread the death count every night,
For those who can’t bear the suffering of the day,
They live in hope, yet never act.

It is time for those who have the power to make a change,
To banish the foul fiend of hunger lurking near,
Plaguing the future citizens of our world.

Should neglect become the dish of the day for those in need?
For those poor souls who are limited in aspirations
By the boundaries of their position on the social hierarchy.
For those whose dreams and hopes lie deceased
Among the piles of food that those in privilege let go to waste.
I extend my heartfelt sorrow, and have decided to act upon my instincts.
But instead of actions the easiest thing to do is forget.

We shall all feel bad momentarily,
And then most will drift blissfully back into the realm of privilege.

In the words of Thomas Gray
(Ignorance is Bliss)

Angus Barber, Year 11
Welcome to the Party

David Neilson, Year 11

‘Please state your ID number’, said the monotone voice, emanating from the device in the wall.

‘1024241,’ I replied. God, how I hated these things. Why couldn’t they use real people? Stingy bastards.

The device flashed green, and the lifeless voice said, ‘Your ID has been accepted. Please enjoy your day. Remember, hard work makes a happy life!’

I was tempted to swear at the wretched thing. No, hard work does not make a happy life. How could so many people believe this propagandist bullshit? With much discipline I managed to reign in my anger. To swear at one of these devices would only attract the attention of others; perhaps even the Guiders.

The door beeped open and I hurried inside. I was now in a gargantuan cavern-like room, filled to the brim with hundreds of workers, all in the same sky-blue uniform as myself. Sighing, I hurriedly shifted my body over to my share of one of the massive tables. No one looked up when I arrived. They all just sat there, staring placidly at the metallic table, or far off into the distance. We had been taught that talking is a time waster - time that could be better spent manufacturing uniforms.

I sat there for around two minutes, the room as silent as a graveyard except for the Guiders walking on the iron platform above. It was said they were there to keep us safe, and to help us if any incident should befall anyone. After the two minutes, a siren screamed, indicating it was 6:30am and everyone whipped into action.

Six minutes later, a thin, wiry man came in and sprinted towards his desk. I did not look up. No one did. Except for the Guiders. Within thirty seconds, two of them had manoeuvred themselves down onto our level, and stood behind the wiry man. The man tensed his shoulders, as though sensing them.

‘1020537, get up.’ the monotonous voice droned.

The man’s tense shoulders began shaking and a loud sob escaped from his mouth, like an air bubble from a deep-sea diver.

‘Please! I swear I will never be late again - I’ll come to work early, and finish later!’

The guiders stood motionless behind him, the only other noises the swishing of fabric and hands working quickly.

‘1020537, this is your last warning. Get up.’

The man sobbed more loudly and tried to run. As fast as a snake, one of the Guider’s arms shot out and grabbed the nape of the man’s neck. The Guider then fastened his other arm around the torso of the man, preventing his arms from moving. The wiry man began panicking, and frantically squirmed, but to no avail. The second Guider withdrew a needle from his belt and carefully plunged it into the wiry man’s neck. Almost instantaneously, the man sagged forward and was carried out.

For the next 16 hours, we worked tirelessly to create uniforms. Every now and again a loudspeaker would say things like ‘Remember, the Party knows best!’ or that one line that I hated more than anything else - ‘Hard work makes a happy life!’

At the end of the sixteen hours, another siren went off and we were released in blocks of one hundred. After I had left the capacious chamber, we herded ourselves through one passageway. Stripping naked, we shuffled into a room large enough for one hundred of us. As we entered, we put on the Air Gills - a device that went around one’s head, allowing them to breathe underwater. A Guider would always make sure the device was fastened securely, as to prevent accidents from happening - a while ago, some people had unintentionally taken off their masks and drowned in the room. It was a very strange affair - throughout the entirety of their drownings, they were smiling, as though happy.

Once my mask was secure, I entered the large, windowless room. The floor, walls and roof were all made of the same metallic substance - the only evident item of interest in the room were the massive rotors, stretching across one entire wall. Once everyone had been shepherded in, a gap opened in the ceiling and the room began filling with water. Five minutes later, we were completely submerged, and the rotors were turned on, spreading some kind of chemical throughout the room.
Ben Nagappa, Year 12
After another five minutes of this, the room emptied and then refilled itself. This time, there was no chemical being pumped through the rotors. After this, the room emptied for a second time, and the rotors roared deafeningly, like the aircrafts of old must have sounded close up.

Once this was done, we were led out of the room and given back our uniforms. We dressed ourselves, before being led by the Guiders back to our cells. My cell was two metres by two metres, with nothing but a metal bed in it. Once I was in my cell, I sat down on the bed and stared lifelessly into space, waiting for the Guider to leave. It was disrespectful to move without their permission while they were nearby. Once he had left, I lay down on my bed and stared up at the ceiling that had been my escape for the past Lord knows how many months, years or even decades I had been in this cell.

You see, the ceiling was filled with cracks, as abundant as strands of silk in a substantially sizeable spider’s web. These cracks, for the fifteen minutes in which we had light, had kept me from going insane. Don’t you see? These cracks had been rivers or ravines or rifts in my imagination. They had not only quelled my insanity, but had also helped me see some joy in this life. And for the next fifteen minutes, I stared at those cracks with ecstasy secretly flowing within my veins.

The next day was probably the most peculiar I had ever bore witness to. It started routinely - buzzer at 6:00am, breakfast of some brown sludge at 6:10am, preparing for work, and then the work itself. At the end of work, I was prevented from leaving the room by two Guiders.

‘You will follow us.’ It was all they said, and of course I obeyed.

They led me up onto the level where the Guiders usually watched over the workers. They led me into a small room, where there was a man wearing the yellow mask of a Justicer. My insides quailed with fear, but I tried to remain expressionless. The two Guiders left the room, closing the door behind them. A real door. I hadn’t seen one of these since I was taken in. And the carpet. I couldn’t believe it. There was an actual carpet, a nice, red plush thing.

‘It has been brought to my attention that you have been seen sighing and showing unsavoury expressions. You know these kinds of emotions are not tolerated by the Party.’

I sat in complete silence, my heart beating so loudly I’m sure the women in the Breeding Area could hear it.

‘As a result of your behaviour, you will assist me in a matter of great importance.’

The man gave a sadistic grin. ‘Don’t you want to know what it is? No, I won’t tell you. I’ll let you feel it.’

He led me into a small room where I was told to lie down. Of course, I obeyed. They strapped me down, removing all my clothing. They inserted wires, sensors and the likes into me. And then I screamed for the first time in my life.

Now, I lie in this cell, writing to you. You see, they gave me this paper and pen to write down all of my past, and all the thoughts that I could recall. They said they will come later and question me, see if I feel the same way as I did before. But, the truth is, I no longer feel that way. The Party has opened my once closed eyelids, enlightening my mind and purging the sickness from my body. The torment they put me through is totally understandable - how else would they remove the evil from within?

If I pass the test, and they see that I truly am a reformed person, I may be so lucky as to go through Guider training! Imagine the honour I would bring upon the Party. Or rather, I shan’t imagine it as imagination is bad for the mind.

For a second there, I thought they had arrived! My excitement is getting the better of me. It was just 1020537 again - he’s been here longer than I have. It’s a shame he refuses to open his eyes to the glory of the Party. I suppose they’ll have to send him away soon.
I see trees of green, red roses, too,
I see them bloom, for me and you
And I think to myself
What a wonderful world.

Louis Armstrong – “What a Wonderful World”

I see a series of broken images, startling visions,
The wasteland you have made me
Charcoal-faced children scurry like mice
Towards the broken trap of a shelter
Made from flickering neon lights.

A man trudges home, boots wet
Scraggy, long hair tied back
Behind drooping eyes and sallow cheeks.
Once upon a time his mother told him
“The rich don’t have to worry,” and he believed her.

Now,
Every day,
The man toils in grey factories,
Whose asthmatic chimneys puff
Billowing, black clouds of smoke.
He lies awake staring at the vacant sky
Waiting in vain for the moon
And the twinkling little stars;
Waiting to die.

It is dark, is it night or day?
Would it matter anyway?
Like an etherized patient, there is no feeling in this portrait,
Just a vacuum of empty space-time until he wakes up.
Suddenly, hanging far above an empty church,
A screen bursts to life while thin men watch
With eyes like a thousand empty hermit crab shells
“Countdown in 3, 2, 1, Happy New Year!! 2084!!
Sponsored by Honda, the power of Dreams.”

There is a pause.
The words seep into your throat like sour lemons.
And then the feeling disappears.

And in the midst of it all, a single white daisy
Growing through a tiny slit in the pavement
So small, so pure…
The man crushes it with the sole of his leather boot.
He looks down and just carries on.
Just laugh and wipe away the tears,
There’s no room for it here.

Every moment that passes
Every tree that is cut down
Every wild bonfire of plastics
I am like the flailing fish swimming away
From the roaring march of a black oil spill.

And you are boats beating against the current
Towards the green light
That fills the dark, endless night.
The first rays of morning sunlight wrapped around the colossal rock structures of Blue John Canyon, producing playful shadows on its reddish brown surface. Darren raised a trembling hand, shielding the wild wind, which was whipping small specks of dusty sand into his eyes. He swallowed anxiously as he quickened his pace to catch up with Daimo.

Daimo was his father, a robust, barrel chested and confident figure with curly brown hair and ocean blue eyes. Darren had always looked up to Daimo. He found him to be a role model, a guide when he was lost, a saviour in times of hardship and now, Daimo was helping Darren conquer one of his biggest fears.

Darren’s vision became disorientated and his stomach began to churn as the sheer height of the cliff face came into sight. He visualised himself scaling the craggy, stone surface of the canyon. Darren cringed at the thought and pressed his face tightly in the palms of his hands attempting to eliminate the nauseating sense that heights often had on him. He glanced towards Daimo, took a deep breath and calmed himself, knowing that such a lion-hearted man wouldn’t possibly let any harm come to him.

Daimo walked steadily across the uneven surface of jagged stones, each stride powerful, confident and fearless, like a lion pouncing after its prey. Darren, on the other hand, struggled as he staggered over the rocks with his arms outstretched like a wounded springbok lost in the African savannah.

“How much further is the climbing site?” complained Darren as he stumbled, gaining distance behind Daimo.

“Just up ahead, son. Almost there,” encouraged Daimo as he bounded effortlessly over the large boulders, gesturing his son onwards.

The pair walked swiftly towards the base of the large rock surface, which they were about to climb. Small patches of shrubbery sprouted from the cracked rock like the hairs on the chin of the wrinkled elderly. Hot, sticky beads of sweat trickled down Darren’s face, cascading onto the sizzling sand, beginning to evaporate almost instantly. The monumental rock face stood tall, reaching about 100 metres in height.
and towering above the others in the canyon. It was a giant amongst dwarfs. The mere sight of it caused Darren’s heartbeat to quicken. He turned his focus to Daimo, who was currently in the process of examining the long, black safety rope that the harness would be attached to whilst climbing.

“It looks good. Are you ready, Darren? This is it,” declared Daimo beginning to equip his harness.

“As ready as I’ll ever be,” nodded Darren, lying flat on the ground, fatigued from the hike.

Once they were both attached to the black safety rope and Daimo had double-checked each rope and tightened each strap, he signalled for Darren to begin the ascent to the top of the canyon. Darren remained motionless. What if I fall? What if I faint halfway to the top? What if I don’t make it? Darren regretted his decision to try to conquer his fears.

“What’s wrong, Darren? Are you alright?” exclaimed Daimo, worried about whether he was pushing his son to an extent far greater than his abilities. As Daimo’s question lingered in the soundless air, Darren caught sight of Daimo’s eyes, filled with hope and belief. His smile was joyful and relaxing. For once in his life, Darren believed in himself.

“I’m fine now,” proclaimed Darren with this newfound courage surging through his body.

He gripped his harness firmly as he began to climb. Darren steadily placed a hand on the jagged edges of the rock. He hauled himself up, placing his feet on the protruding sections of rock that emerged from the canyon’s wall. He gripped tightly with his hands, tugging gently on the pulley, pulling it up with him as he went higher. Darren glanced to the right and saw his father climbing up beside him, nodding at him, motivating his son onwards. Darren smiled in return, appreciating his father’s assistance and urged himself onwards, up the canyon. Slowly and steadily he climbed.

Roughly 30 minutes had passed and the sun was higher in the sky, gleaming its giant, golden rays of light onto the canyon. Darren mopped his sleeve across his face, soaking all the globules of sweat that had accumulated above his brow. As Darren climbed further and further up the canyon, he became increasingly unaware of his height above the ground.

“Darren, slow down a little. You’re moving quite quickly,” said Daimo. Darren stopped immediately, and involuntarily glanced beneath him at the ground, many metres below.

“Aaaah!!” Darren squealed as he clutched the side of the canyon, his muscles tensing violently. As he did this, he started to feel light headed, his vision became hazy and he started to sway back and forth. Daimo immediately jumped into help his frightened son, but little did he know that this action alone would lead to a situation much worse than he had ever imagined.

Daimo leapt towards Darren, who was still clutching the rock, desperately not daring to open his eyes. As he sprung forward, he was unaware that his harness was still attached to the safety rope, tangling his rope with Darren’s and creating a muddled knot. Daimo hung like a spider entangled in his own web. He began to lean his body weight back and forth. The rope began to swing. As Daimo continued to swing, little did he notice the heat was amplifying the friction between the ropes. Daimo noticed the threads of the rope beginning to burn, and thrust his hands in front of him in a desperate attempt to slow his swing speed, but it was too late.

Without warning, a deafening TWANG!, before a panicked yell from his father resonated through the expanse of Blue John Canyon. Moments of silence passed. The seconds felt like hours before finally a faint thump of a limp body hitting the ground many metres below was heard. Darren gasped, his eyes still firmly closed, hoping that the series of sounds he heard had an alternate explanation.

As he opened one eye and slowly glanced downwards at the ground, making sure he was still firmly gripping the canyon wall, he caught a glimpse of his father’s dead body, now mangled and twisted, lying limp on the rocky ground. Darren winced at the sight, pinching his eyes closed once again to rid the effects of the height. As he slowly regained focus, he came to the realisation of how serious the situation currently was. He tried calming himself, only for childhood memories of his father to break him down into tears. Darren remained on the face of the canyon, weeping uncontrollably and unsure of what to do.
After Darren had calmed a little, he decided to go with the only logical option – to climb back down. He hesitated and thought for a whole minute. If he didn’t continue, all would have been in vain - his father’s death, his attempt to conquer his fears. All in vain! Darren placed one foot above the other, ignoring the nauseating feeling that the heights were continuously firing at him. He climbed and climbed. A mixture of anger and confidence drove him onwards. Exerting every final reserve of energy, Darren tugged firmly on the pulley attached to the safety rope, allowing him to complete it to the top of the canyon. He hauled himself onto the lip of the canyon and began to untie his harnesses.

Darren scanned his barren and isolated surroundings. He gazed into the distance in search of another human being.

“HELP! Please! HELP ME!” shrieked Darren at the top of his lungs. To his bewilderment, some hikers heard his calls and began to run to his aid. Darren wept as tears ran down his cheeks, a mixture of joy and misery.

As he glanced back towards the canyon, the shadows cast a figure of his father across the walls of the canyon, waving proudly at what his son had accomplished. “Thanks, Dad,” muttered Darren.
While I quietly sit on the bench beside the tracks,
I can’t help but feel lost, unsure of my goals
Passengers seem to move with purpose, confident strides like
gazelles in the wild
A sprawling, sterile, meticulously-planned marvel of
architecture,
Glossed tiles sprinkle the station, potted plants accompany the
lone ticket stalls.
Timetables seem inviting, listing hundreds of destinations
Trains roar overhead, hungry for the long journey
Yet they remain alone, isolated, untended,
And carriages carefully compartmentalised, confined to
themselves.
I survey through thousands for a friendly face, but find none.
I lock eyes with a passenger behind the porthole.
The meeting is fleeting, mere chance.

Suddenly a metronomic tick begins to sound as the train
departs.
Faster and faster it beats, creating an eerie harmony with the
piercing blare of the horn.
Above lies the arched glass roof, sun beaming through,
perhaps cast by an unknown figure.
Rays arch off the metallic surfaces, instantly giving a beautiful,
ethereal quality to the station.
Yet the quality is quickly gone, replaced by the muted tones of
sunlight.
A dark tone plays over the loudspeaker, inviting those to
embark on the last train.
I contemplate getting on. Instead I leave the station.
To walk would be far better than to board.
Smelling the flowers is the real reward.

A Forked Fortune

Jarad Hee, Year 11
The Moments Worth Remembering

Edward Galluccio, Year 9

There have been many times in the last two years in which I have felt very lost, two years in which I have spent a lot of time thinking, well, more deeply than usual anyway. The places where I have gone to do said thinking have always stuck in my mind; the Cottesloe train station, the back of the French classroom, my bed, the toilet. One that I have always found to be especially therapeutic is the hill that slopes onto the golf course from the oval in front of my house which has a fantastic view of the ocean and some of the freshest air you can breathe. Most times I walk by that hill without giving it a second glance. Some days, I do sit down, days when I’m tired, when I’m scared, when I need to seek refuge in the sanctuary I find in being alone. It was on one of those days, as I stared blankly out at the setting sun, that I felt that familiar feeling stir within me, that deep, unsettling feeling that always left me on the verge of tears. I didn’t know if it was the sun bleeding across the sky, or the waves marching tirelessly across the channel, or the clouds watching in silent indifference from the horizon. I didn’t know if I was feeling sad, or happy, or desperate, or all three at once. I didn’t know if I somehow found the sun symbolic of existence, starting off with such fervent brightness and ending with such dark relief, or if it was simpler than that. Maybe it just reminded me of the beauty of, well, life, the emotion that could be seen in the most emotionless of things. Maybe it’s just one of those moments, those little fragments of existence that for some reason are lodged permanently in my mind. A quiet dusk on a secluded beach, salt drying on my skin and sand clinging to my face. A cragged old turtle drifting gently over a smiling reef, so relaxed, so content. A dog lying limp on cold tiles as I watch from the corner, tears fighting their way out over my eyelids and a sickening cocktail of anger and sadness rushing into my brain. Those pieces of me, those chinks in the armour, those touchstones for the soul, those moments where I both recoil from and revel in my insignificance, where I feel like the world stops for a few seconds, and I’m not just rushing towards death like a sprinter to the finish line, like a pirate off a plank. I hope there will be more of those moments, but as Lou Reed once said:

“I guess I just don’t know.”

iRobot and Apple’s Quest for World Domination

Ben Kempson, Year 8

“Introducing the new iRobot, iRob for short, a revolutionary piece of technology created by Apple to imitate a human down to its last feature!” the man shouted to the crowded room, his excitement getting the better of him. The man on stage flung the red velvet cloth into the air, dramatically revealing what was hidden beneath… a perfectly normal man. Now this was something everyone at the Apple technology conference was not expecting. “This robot has been programmed to eat, drink, sleep, talk, walk, and much, much more! In fact, this robot has something that no other robot has...” The man paused, soaking up the anticipation in the room, drawing out the moment. “This robot has... a mind of its own! That’s right, folks! Apple has created a robot that is programmed to walk, talk, think... just like us. Our plan for the future is based around iRob, and the data we collect from him. Whether we create more of these humanoids lies with what he can observe and iRob’s findings. For now, ladies and gentlemen, goodnight.”

After further testing and the powering up of iRob:

iRob sat down on his small leather chair, in the corner of the Californian Library. He thought for quite a while, all alone, no sounds, no distractions, just him and his thoughts. “How do I go about this? Where do I start? How do I find the answer?”

Now iRob was sitting there, thinking, because of a very peculiar task that the committee of Apple had given him. What does it mean to be human? What sets us apart from the apes and the other creatures of this earth?

“Well, to find out what it is to be human, I must research this species,” iRob thought, slowly standing up and walking over to the ‘History’ section of the library. There, he quickly and efficiently picked up the bookshelf and carried it back.
over to his quiet corner, where he proceeded to plough through the first book in the section. “There are definitely some advantages of being a machine,” iRob mused, copying each individual page to his vast memory drive. When he had finished with ‘Humans, The Beginning,’ he proceeded to take each book, one by one, and flick through the pages. From ‘Early Human Life’ to ‘The Humans of the Future’, each book was copied and stored in his memory and scanned for important data and events.

After each and every one of the books were completely finished and downloaded to his drive, iRob carefully analysed the data received, going over every copied page. “Human history and evolution was a complicated process,” iRob stated, reading over the many adventures of cavemen. As he analysed more and more, he started questioning Charles Darwin’s theories, he pondered about Hitler’s motives, and thought deeply about what determines everything we do. And finally, after around one minute, he had the answer.

At the Apple headquarters:

“I believe that I have made some interesting developments on the question that was assigned to me, but further testing and experimentation is needed,” iRob presented to the Apple committee. “Through reading through a complete history of humans, their actions and their consequences, I have deduced that a major part of being human is our will to be the best, or better one’s self or a society. This is demonstrated through many cases. Why did Germany start the Second World War? Because they wanted better rights and conditions for their people. Why do people commit suicide? Because they believe they will go to a better place, or that they are making themselves or the world better off if they cease to exist. Why do people invent things? To make doing things easier, or to improve their lives. With your permission, I would like to collect more data on this matter, as I believe if I can fully understand what it is to be human, I can actually BE a human, and help other humans. That is Apple’s purpose now, right?”

The chairman of the committee paused momentarily, before looking at the other committee members. Finally, he gave a nod, before speaking out. “Permission to do further extensive research on ‘being human’ approved.”

iRob pondered, seated in his favourite leather chair in the corner of the Californian Library. History and philosophy books were strewn around his feet. What could he do? He had to fix everything, make all people and things happier and give them access to everything they need. He needed to improve their lives. With this thought in his processing unit, he got to work.

“He did WHAT?” yelled the chief executive of app production in Apple, his face turning a dark purple. “What do you mean iRob has made all apps free for public use? When? How?”

“It happened sometime this morning. He has hacked into all our systems, and changed the coding in the app store so that no money transactions are made when the app is purchased. I have also had reports of no money transactions being made when using the Electronic Money Transfers around the Washington area, which means that no one is paying for what they’re buying,” explained the messenger. “This could be disastrous for not only us, but the economy.”

iRob was very pleased with himself. There was to be no more hunger, no more wasted money on things such as food or clothes. Since all funds were made electronically, it was simple enough to make sure no money was pointlessly taken from everyone. This would make everyone feel better, when everything is free. And being better is the human way. Because he had not been programmed to understand the economy, and how this would affect the economy, iRob had no idea how much trouble his actions would cause.

California State Government Building:

The Governor of California was having a bad day. People were taking advantage of what Apple had said to be iRob’s naivety, buying luxurious items, expensive cars and large amounts of food, which had already cost the state government millions. The government’s coders had already almost completely fixed the problem in most areas but the loss could not go unnoticed by Mr Governor. He would have to schedule a meeting very soon with Apple to discuss compensation for what had happened.

iRob wanted to find out how to make all things in the area even better than his more recent improvements. Using his computer chip implemented in his body to search the web, he found himself constantly copying books on Washington, the parliament and modern problems. He came to another solution; the government. They are always manipulating people, and are selfish people who only care about themselves, and what’s best for them. Therefore, iRob came up with a plan to take over the government…

And then Apple turned him off.
The Boy

Ian Cash, Year 11

It was just two weeks after his 13th birthday when everything he owned, loved, and belonged to was stolen from him by a thief in the night. All his power was lost.

The boy was your stereotypical teenager. He was a little below average height with short, black hair and from a middle-class family. He was even quite popular amongst his peers because of his comical and optimistic outlook on life. The boy lived in Aleppo, the largest and capital city of Syria. Now it was all gone. He was awakened by a sound in the middle of the night, so loud he was frozen in place like a deer caught in the headlights of a hunter. The ceiling collapsed and everything went black.

When he opened his eyes, the boy didn’t seem to be hurt. Then the realisation struck him like lightning. His home had been destroyed from another missile strike. The boy started to sob as he saw the carnage around him.

He screamed for his mother, but she did not answer. He screamed for his father, but no reply was heard. He screamed his baby sister’s name, but there were no sounds to be heard except for the crying mothers of other families that had lost their families in the background. His life, as he had known it, crumbled down on him in a matter of seconds.

Everything was gone. His parents had planned to leave Syria and go to Australia in two more weeks with the money they saved in a little purple bag.

A week passed. The boy didn’t know what to do. He just wondered aimlessly around the war-torn streets like a zombie scavenging for food. He was hardening up a bit though. He was tougher. He felt a spark of resilience in his heart. He didn’t know the source, but he could feel the light of hope.

With nothing else to do, the boy decided to go back to his home, or what was left of it, to see if he could find any old memories from his previous life. As he was searched through the carnage of brick and mortar something caught his eye; it was the colour purple. In fact, it was the only vibrant colour he had seen in a week, besides the shiny, golden bullet casings or the plastic bags that rolled by him in the wind when he was walking down the street looking for food.
What he discovered sparked a glimmer of hope for a new life. He had found in all of the destruction the little purple bag that his parents were hiding money for their escape to Australia. They had been saving since the armed conflict between the Bashar al-Assad regime and the Free Syrian Army had broke out. The boy knew what he had to do.

Word on the street was there was a group of Syrians going to Australia in two days and he had the money to pay for his passage. The boy set out in the cover of night with a full moon overhead to light his path. He travelled at night to avoid the Syrian Army looking for civilians to kill. Searching for a place to stay for the night, he came across an old abandoned cargo train. This served as perfect cover to sleep safely through the night. Though exhausted, he couldn't sleep that night because of the plague of war, poverty, and death in his nightmares. Also the sounds of AK-47s rattling through the night didn't help.

The boy awoke to the sounds of war on a beautiful, sunny day with a nice breeze. But there was no time to take in the beauty that was left in his country. He grabbed his coins and set off quickly to arrive at the "bus" before it departed.

Arriving at the bus, the boy was overwhelmed and confused by the number of kids the same age as himself trying to escape. Most of the boys were alone; some were with their sisters or mothers. All were desperate. His heart turned from the country he once loved and called home and it turned into hatred or confusion; the boy wasn't quite sure.

He thought to himself, "Why are people fighting?"

There was no time to contemplate his tragedy because he was forcefully herded onto a bus and driven off to a secret airport. Again, the boy was driven from the bus to a flimsy airplane not worthy of flight. Though he had never been on an airplane before, the boy was quite excited about the journey. As the engines roared and the propellers began to whirl, the boy became very anxious and quite scared due to the mystery of Australia. All he knew about this place was it was multi-cultural, the people were friendly, and there was no war. As the plane lifted from the runway, the boy slowly drifted into a deep sleep and dreamt about Australia.

The boy woke to the decrepit plane landing or falling out of the sky like a ton of bricks. Something was strange about this place though. It was raining and the buildings were dominos just waiting to crumple to the ground. He was then herded onto a decrepit boat. At first glance, he couldn't even recognise it as a boat. It was a death trap made of rotten wood that now had fifty women and kids on it, including himself. On an overloaded boat with insufficient food and water, the desperate occupants and the boy began to slowly drift away from the grey land into a vast, terrifying ocean in search of security.

The first few days weren't that bad. Beside the sunburn during the day and being wet and cold at night, they still had water and food. The boy had made a few friends. One week passed. Everybody was starving. Two people had died. With barely any food or water left, the boy began to lose hope in his struggle for freedom and escape from oppression. As he was thinking about his life, which wasn't much since he was only thirteen, a huge grey monster appeared on the horizon. Helicopters came over them. They were Australians. He recognised the flag. Jubilation rushed over him. Finally freedom had been achieved, or that is what they thought.

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Two years later the boy is still in prison. He doesn't know why or how long he will be there. Actually, he doesn't know anything anymore except his name. His name is Yusuf.
It’s Nothing

Hock Yew Tan, Year 11

You see, we focus on the colour, the wheat, waving like water in the sea of sun drenched gold, the manipulative green sky, enticing blue mountains, a dry yellow sun and loving cottages, with presumably lovely people inside. And yeah, the brush strokes, quick and disjointed yet pulling this piece together, all swerved in a way that you feel that joyous tingle, starting on your head, trickling down your neck and into all four limbs when the zealous zephyr this madman creates makes itself so obvious it basically slaps you in the face. And then you place your attention on the reaper and you see the image of death in it. That’s what he saw, the guy who painted this, and why shouldn’t he?

This man understands you. Here he is, all alone, like a slave struggling in the full heat of the sun to reach the end of his turmoil, struggling through the golden field as if it were an endless wasteland with the shining glimmer of a slightly less miserable wasteland. And as soon as he reaches that he realises, “Nah, it’s just the same, oh well”. And so, you may want it to end, you don’t want to die, you just wished you didn’t exist, and for all those people who loved you, you wished that they didn’t so you wouldn’t feel a duty to exist. Everyone you loved loving and everything you loved doing suddenly lost all meaning as if your brain threw all that relentless joy down into a miserable black hole leaving behind the nothingness that you feel now.

And if I see this painting, and I see and feel as much as you feel, I would probably understand, that maybe, it’s all pointless bullshit, and no one could possibly tell you otherwise, but maybe it isn’t. And when you don’t know what’s in that miserable wasteland you’re in it feels strangely like there’s still some hope. But I don’t know. All I know now is that nothing in this death is sad soaked in a sea of such fine gold!
Gary Song, Year 9
“Within me, is the key …”

Bertie Smallbone

Matthew James, Year 12
i am a little boy (no great man)
i do not pretend to understand ‘big world’ problems
i know not what motivates, and drives,
or why they fight over small matters
i just sit, and watch, and wait

i am a little boy (far from your angry turbulence)
i know not what you do for a living
or why you cannot sleep soundly at night
   i know only that when with me
you do not worry about today, tomorrow or yesterday
you live to fight the tide of life

i am a little boy (far from the disorder of what is your family)
i know not why you smile in front of the children
or why you quarrel behind closed doors
   i only know that within me, is the key
to easy laughter, and to discover joy without words

i am a little boy (small, compared to your outside world)
i am ignorant of so many different things
but I do know my friends, sister and brother and friend
i know the sounds of their laughter
   the gentleness of their voices, as we talk together at night
know the touch of their arms
when we playfully fight
i know those of you who keep me warm
and I know you are wondering of what you are missing
   when you walked out that door

i am but a little boy (no great man)
but I do know a great deal