

Sincai's Digital Ink

WHO

ARE

YOU?

WHO ARE YOU  
WHEN NOBODY IS  
WATCHING



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# In Our Own Words: An Introduction to Șincai's Digital Ink

by Editor-in-chief, Rodica Elza Mureșan

Welcome to the very first issue of Șincai's Digital Ink!

This project was born from the idea that our school deserves a space where its students can speak in their own voices, create freely, and explore the persons they are becoming. Identity is never fixed: it is shaped by the people around us, the choices we make, and the times we live in.

Since we happen to live in times defined by rapid technological change, digital expression has become not only natural, but necessary. We needed a platform that reflects the brightness, curiosity, and creativity of our students—one that grows alongside them. Our first issue revolves around identity: what it means to study and walk the halls of Șincai as a teenager who grows up in Romania in the 21<sup>st</sup> c. This is a place where we can express a sense of connection to our roots and of belonging to a community.

For teenagers, identity often feels like both a question and a quest. Through this magazine, I hope we can make that journey a little clearer, a little richer, and maybe even a little more joyful. Here, students can publish stories, essays, poems, reviews, drawings, photos—anything that reveals their inner world and their place in the larger one. And because Șincai thrives on community, we will also highlight the vibrant clubs that shape our school life: the reading club, robotics club, debate club, Interact, and many others.

Șincai's Digital Ink is **your space, your voice, your chance** to show what talent looks like when it's given room to grow. Welcome and enjoy!



## A da voce înseamnă a construi educație



**Prof. Pop Vasile Grațian,  
Director al Colegiului Național  
„Gheorghe Șincai”, Baia Mare**

Într-un colegiu național, educația înseamnă excelență academică, dar și formarea unor tineri capabili să gândească critic, să comunice clar și să se implice activ în comunitate. Revista școlii este un spațiu de exprimare și reflecție, în care ideile, creativitatea și vocea elevilor își găsesc locul firesc.

A oferi elevilor un cadru autentic de exprimare înseamnă a le recunoaște perspectiva și a încuraja dezvoltarea gândirii critice, a creativității și a responsabilității civice. Prin scris, artă și reflecție, elevii își construiesc identitatea, își formulează opiniile și învață să comunice coerent și asumat.

Implicarea în realizarea unei reviste școlare presupune rigoare, colaborare și asumarea responsabilităților. Elevii învață să lucreze în echipă, să respecte termene, să accepte feedback și să își susțină ideile, dezvoltând competențe esențiale pentru parcursul lor academic și personal.

Din perspectiva managementului educațional, susținerea inițiativelor editoriale reflectă o viziune deschisă asupra educației, în care colegiul funcționează ca o comunitate de învățare, nu doar ca un cadru formal de instruire. Proiectele editoriale realizate de elevi, cu sprijinul cadrelor didactice, contribuie la consolidarea culturii dialogului, a colaborării și a participării active.

A da voce elevilor nu este doar un gest simbolic, ci o opțiune educațională asumată, care sprijină formarea unor absolvenți capabili să facă față provocărilor societății contemporane. În acest sens, revista colegiului reprezintă o investiție în educația viitorului și o felicit pentru această inițiativă pe colega mea, profesoară de limba engleză, dna Mureșan Rodica Elza.

## Giving Voice Means Building Education

**By Prof. Pop Vasile Grațian,**

**Headmaster of Gheorghe Șincai  
National College, Baia Mare**

In a national college, education means academic excellence, but also the formation of young people who are able to think critically, communicate clearly, and engage actively in the community. The school magazine is a space for expression and reflection, where students' ideas, creativity, and voices find their natural place.

Providing students with an authentic framework for expression means

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acknowledging their perspective and encouraging the development of critical thinking, creativity, and civic responsibility. Through writing, art, and reflection, students build their identity, articulate their opinions, and learn to communicate in a coherent and responsible manner.

Being involved in the creation of a school magazine requires rigor, collaboration, and the assumption of responsibility. Students learn to work as a team, meet deadlines, accept feedback, and defend their ideas, thus developing essential skills for their academic and personal journeys.

From an educational management perspective, supporting editorial initiatives reflects an open vision of

education, in which the college functions as a learning community rather than merely a formal instructional setting. Editorial projects created by students, with the support of teachers, contribute to strengthening a culture of dialogue, collaboration, and active participation.

Giving students a voice is not merely a symbolic gesture, but a deliberate educational choice that supports the formation of graduates capable of facing the challenges of contemporary society. In this sense, the college magazine represents an investment in the education of the future and I want to take this opportunity to congratulate my colleague, our English teacher Mrs. Rodica Elza Mureșan.

# From *Teenglish* to *Şincai's Digital Ink*

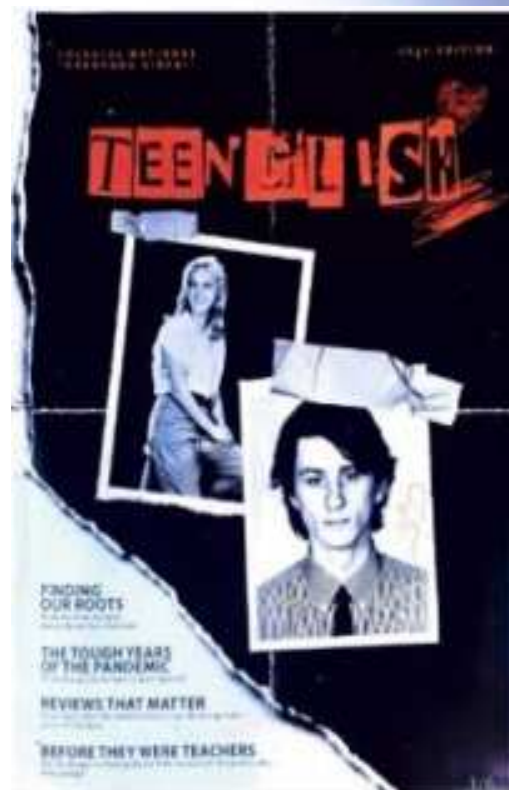
by Petra Lenghel, designer of *Teenglish*

Three years ago, I had the opportunity to be the designer of *Teenglish* Magazine 2023. Currently, I am in my 3rd year of university and will be graduating next year. I am studying Multimedia Design in The Netherlands, still following my deep passion for art.

To this day, *Teenglish* is one of my favourite projects I have worked on. Because not only did I get to design pages filled with the meaningful work of our students, but my team and I got to bring people together. I still remember the feeling of accomplishment our editorial team had when seeing everyone in school flipping through our magazine. And whether you've published something in it or were just curious, there was something in it for everyone. It was everyone's magazine, and we made it real.

The concept we chose back then was a mix between analogue and digital. On paper, there was only text, while the visuals were online. With the QR code in the magazine, you could reach the website I designed that had an archive with pictures of our teachers. Initially, this concept seemed daunting, however, it turned out to be beautiful. It was a rewarding challenge to morph text blocks in such a way that they create illustrations and shapes. Not every magazine needs images to be entertaining, and ours was thriving on that concept.

I am so excited to see the reimagined version of the magazine, today called *Digital Ink*, and I thank coordinator Rodica Mureşan for the opportunity to be part of that experience back when it was still tangible ink.



# We Know What We Are, but Not What We May Be

by Syd Rus

We know what we are, but not what we may be.

We're aware that we're humans, people, but we don't think about it much. However, we keep looking for what we may be, what we would want to be. Most people crave the desire of being defined by something. But does anything really define us?

Expressing yourself means showing deep originality, right? Therefore I could just say that our deepest desire is to be original, and yet that doesn't make sense when society makes us believe that we must desire to be socially acceptable, integrated, to belong, by being like everybody else.

But I learned that being like everybody is the same as being nobody. I guess that we just want to be accepted by our peers, but that doesn't mean that we should be accepted by everyone around us. You could, at some point get to lose those deep desires. In the end, it's a contradiction to want both of them, while they mean exactly the opposite thing, so one of them will vanish, become less of your interest.

It's not balanced if you want one more than another. The rare case is when you lose both of them. That's when you become nothing else, but yourself. You set yourself free. You are just you. That's why 'I am' is a full sentence.

Identifying as being human is no longer real, since it's simply just not relevant. I came to the realization that you identify as whoever you want to be, it just doesn't matter. It only matters to you.

We are always projecting onto others, what we want to see from them. You'll never get to meet someone and get to know them for who they are, you'll only get to know them as deeply as you know yourself or as deeply as they know themselves. I've said that because the way we view others is just a reflection of how we view ourselves. I can only think of you how I wanted you to be, of how I much wanted to see myself in you. And that goes



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the same way around, you'll never get to know me especially because you are not me. You can't hear my thoughts, you can't feel how I feel, you can't experience life how I do it, you can't view me how I view myself. The only relevance to my world views is how I view myself.

That's how it is for all of you. You are your own person, and the only way that you can think of yourself is through yourself, through your thoughts, through your self

perception. Even if you wanted to view yourself through their eyes, you can't, because you'll never know how they because you'll never know how they see you. You can only imagine.

So change your perspective, to change your reality.

Collage made by Raluca Daria Conț, XI C



# A Requiem for the Aesthetic Soul

by Mihali Dalia, XII C

*All that we see or seem is but a dream within a dream.* — Edgar Allan Poe

To imagine a world without art is to conjure a landscape of eternal twilight, where the sun provides no heat and the moon is merely a cold, mathematical stone. We have long deluded ourselves into believing that art is a luxury—a velvet curtain or a gilded frame—when it is, in fact, the ghost that inhabits the machine of our biology. Our identities are not forged in the sterile light of reason, but in the damp, fertile shadows of the subconscious. From a neurobiological perspective, the brain does not merely "process" beauty; it seeks it as a survival mechanism. The prefrontal cortex and the amygdala engage in a dark, rhythmic dance when we encounter the sublime, translating sensory data into the profound emotional weight that defines our personhood. We are creatures of the ache, born with a hollow space in our chests that we desperately attempt to fill with the resonance of a cello's string or the jagged, frantic stroke of a charcoal line.

In this artless void, the human heart would be a clockwork mechanism, ticking toward a silent end without ever knowing why it beat so fast. Consider the gothic architecture of our own history: without the impulse to transmute fear into form, we



would have no Notre Dame, no gargoyles to watch over our anxieties, no sprawling cathedrals to mirror the labyrinthine nature of the mind. We would look upon a ruin and see only crumbling masonry, never the haunting beauty of decay or the tragic poetry of time's passage. Analytically, art functions as an "external memory" for the species; without it, our collective identity would suffer a permanent amnesia. We would lose the mirror provided by Goya's "Black Paintings" or the desperate yearning in a Byron poem—works that allow us to externalize our inner demons so they do not consume us from within. Art is our most exquisite haunting; it is the way we invite our shadows to dance so they do not become our masters.

We are, quite literally, composed of the stories we tell in the dark. Our **identities** are stitched together from the remnants of ancient myths, the stains of old tragedies, and the fleeting fever-dreams of the romantics. To remove the aesthetic is to unthread the very fabric of the self. We would become somnambulists in a world of grey utility, eating to satisfy hunger but never tasting the communion of the feast. We would look at the beloved and see only a biological specimen—a collection of carbon and salt—rather than a cathedral of mysteries. We would lose the capacity for "symbolic thought," the cognitive leap that allows us to see a wilting rose as a meditation on mortality rather than mere botanical failure. We would be safe, perhaps, but we would be buried alive in the mundane, deprived of the "Sturm und Drang" that gives the human soul its jagged, beautiful edges.

Ultimately, art is the blood-oath we sign with existence. It is the desperate, beautiful evidence that we felt too much and stayed too long. It is the rose grown from the wound. Without this sacred transmutation, we are merely clever animals waiting for the damp earth to reclaim us. We do not paint to decorate our walls; we paint to keep the walls from closing in. We do not write to record facts, but to scream into the silence that we existed, that we loved, and that we found even the shadows to be beautiful. Without art, we are not human; we are merely occupied territory, a hollow vessel where a spirit once dared to dream.



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## Echoes of the Past

by Purcar Bianca

Winner of 1<sup>st</sup> Prize, *Speak Out, National Competition of Creative Writing, 2025*

It had grown surprisingly dark that evening. I had only blinked and night had draped the day in a heavy, impenetrable cloak. The elements were against me, conspiring to blend the fragile remnants of daylight with the cold, misty rain.

I wasn't sure what I was waiting for, or if I was waiting at all. The weather should have urged me home, but instead I found myself wandering to the boulevard cafe before heading to the post office to collect a parcel with no sender. The streets shimmered with rain, the cobblestones glistening beneath my steps. I spotted the antique bookstore so I stepped inside, shelling off the droplets that clung to my coat. The place was as I had always known it —shelves lined with books standing obediently in their places, and the air thick with the scent of aged paper. A winding staircase led to my usual retreat, hidden from curious eyes. As I sank in the old armchair, I closed my eyes. My mind wandered through memories, playing my most cherished one —last time I saw my long-lost Sister, Sandrine. I had never seen her since we played in the snow as little kids. My parents never really opened this topic, but I knew I was going to find her someday —even if that meant trading the most valuable thing I own. When I opened my eyes, my gaze fell on a familiar sight —Dante. I reached for the book *The Divine Comedy*, my fingers tracing its spine and flipped it open. But then, something slipped out —three neatly folded sheets of paper. By unfolding them, I found a delicate script inked in black. The initials stared back at me —S.D. *Sandrine*, I thought to myself. My heart pounded as I took the book to the counter to buy it, afraid the letters might slip. I used one of my last dreams to purchase the book, because I promised myself I would do anything to find my sister.

Outside, the rain had intensified. Seeking refuge, I stepped inside an awning.



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'You look lost,' a soft voice came.

A woman stood beside me, wearing a long black shirt and a wide-brimmed hat. Only her eyes gleamed in the dim light.

'Just avoiding the rain,' I murmured, though the weight in my chest told me otherwise. She tilted her head. 'You're looking for someone, aren't you?'

I stiffened. 'I don't know what you mean.'

She smiled knowingly. 'You're searching for Sandrine.'

'Sandrine?' I whispered. 'Sandrine Demetriade?'

'Yes, and I can help you with that,' she replied. 'All you need to do is give me your most cherished dream. Don't pretend that you're not the famous dream merchant, everyone in town knows you.'

My heart raced as I heard those words come out of her mouth. My last dream was my most cherished one and I wouldn't have traded it for anything in the world.

*But maybe this could lead me to my sister*, I repeated to myself, convincing it is a good idea.

'This is also my last memory of her,' the woman said with a shivery voice, 'Collect the parcel.'

I accepted her deal but before I turned to face her fully, my feet splashed in a puddle. She was gone. As I was crossing the street on my way to the post office, something was... off. The buildings looked unfamiliar and the street I had just come from was no longer visible. The citylights cast long, twisted shadows on places I had never seen before. The post office was nearly empty. The clerk eyed me over her glasses before disappearing to retrieve my parcel. When she returned, I glanced at the label: *For MB from SD*. I clutched the parcel tighter as if it held an answer I desperately needed. The clerk's fired gaze flicked from the clock to me — a silent invitation to leave.

I stepped back on the streets, the cold wind biting at my face. I pulled my coat tighter and ran to the nearest cafe, selling warmth and clarity. My fingers were still tracing the letters on the package slowly. I tore through the paper. Nestled inside was a single book — *The Divine Comedy*, the same edition I had just bought.

Between the pages was waiting silently a new letter.

*MB*

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*Looks like you have found me. Or, pheroophs I've found you. Some things are not meant to be explained, only discovered. Turn to the last page.*

—S.D'

My hands trembled as I did what the letter instructed. At the very end of the book, between the final pages, was an old photograph. It showed two women, one wearing a wide-brimmed hat and a long black shirt, and one that looked exactly like my sister. On the back of the photo, with the same careful script, were written an address and four words.

*'We have met before.'*

Suddenly, the café around me faded, the world outside dissolving in the rain. I had come for a package, but instead I've found hope in seeing my sister again.

# The Quieting of Evelyn Harrow

by Dalia Mihali, XIIC

Winner of the Halloween Ghost Story Competition, 2025

The dreams began quietly—like a whisper under the skin.

They came with the smell of lilac rot and static, with the hum of something vast pressing against the veil of her sleep. Evelyn would know when she was dreaming; she could *taste* it. Dreams had edges that glowed blue, air that shivered too alive. Waking was duller, grainy. You could count the dust motes and feel time breathe. But lately, the seams had softened. The air in her waking life felt sweet when it shouldn't. The walls began to flex with each heartbeat.

The house had belonged to her grandmother—a Gothic carcass of wood and whisper, wallpaper curling like dead petals, mirrors spotted by the ghosts of those who had stared too long. When

Evelyn moved in, she brought music, light, the smell of coffee. Her sister Clara visited often, worried she'd drown in loneliness. "It's too quiet here," Clara would say, looking around the dim parlor. "You start hearing things in the quiet." Evelyn only smiled, eyes glassy in the half-light.

The first time the thing appeared, she mistook it for her coat rack. Then it breathed. It stood impossibly tall, ribs like knives beneath wet skin, limbs jointed backward, dripping in something that smelled like rust and violets. Its face was not a face at all but a spiral of flesh, endlessly folding inward, a wound that inhaled her name. She screamed once, and it smiled without lips.

Each night it came closer. Sometimes she woke with bruises like fingers on her throat. Sometimes she woke standing in the garden, mud under her nails, rain drying in her hair. The dreams no longer waited for sleep. They seeped through the day, staining her thoughts with warmth she didn't understand.

The thing spoke—not aloud, but through the house. In the creak of a door. In the sigh of the radio static.

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*I am your marrow, Evelyn. You built me from your wanting.*

She told Clara. Or tried to.

“It’s a dream,” Clara insisted, laughing it off as fatigue. “You’re lonely, that’s all. You need people.” Evelyn’s eyes flicked to the mirror behind her sister. “It’s already people,” she murmured.

Her reflection smiled when she didn’t.

The notebooks began to fail her too. She tried to write the dreams down, to anchor herself in the real. But the ink ran, the words twisted into symbols that shimmered faintly, like veins under skin. When she tore out the pages, they bled through her fingers.

Soon the house started answering.

Doors opened before she reached them. The walls pulsed under her touch. Mirrors fogged from the inside. Once, she woke to find the dining table set for two, candles flickering, a bowl of something dark and wet placed before the empty chair across from her. She could feel it watching from the walls.

The haunt began to speak more clearly now, with her own voice.

“You shape me,” it whispered one night, sitting on her chest, its spiral mouth almost tender. “Each dream, each hunger, each thought—I am born from you.”

She woke to find blood beneath her nails. The neighbor’s dog was missing.

Clara arrived when the house had already begun to rot from the inside out.

She came bearing the kind of light that hurt to look at—candles trembling in her hands, laughter too warm for these walls that preferred silence. Her cheeks were flushed with life, with that reckless

pulse that made Evelyn’s skin crawl with longing and shame.

“Eve,” Clara whispered, resting her hand on her sister’s shoulder, unaware that the touch sank like a stone through still water. “You’ve been alone too long.”

Evelyn flinched as if struck. “I’m not alone,” she murmured.

And she was not. The walls were breathing with her. They listened, as they always did, sighing with slow, damp breaths. Somewhere, within the ribs of the house, something shifted—pleased.

Clara spoke of gardens and sun, of air that didn’t taste of dust and candle smoke.

She begged Evelyn to come outside, to remember warmth. But Evelyn’s gaze was pinned



to the mirror across the room, where a third reflection stood—tall, faceless, smiling. The glass rippled faintly, as if in approval.

That night, the house drew breath like a sleeping beast. Shadows swelled, and the creature came again, graceful as grief. Its form folded and unfolded, limbs spilling like ink. It bent over her bed, and its voice was soft as silk dragging over bone.

“She’ll wake soon,” it murmured, each word a caress. “You know she doesn’t belong here. None of this does. You’ve been dreaming, my sweet one, dreaming for so long you’ve forgotten how to open your eyes. But I can help you wake.”

Its hand, cold and deliberate, pressed against her chest. “Let her go,” it breathed. Evelyn’s breath caught. “She’s my sister.”

The thing’s smile widened—a wound, not a gesture. “She is your anchor,” it hissed. “She keeps you drowning in this illusion. Cut her free, and you’ll rise. This is not real. She will be waiting for you... in the waking world.”

The air trembled red. The walls pulsed like muscle, damp and alive. Evelyn could hear the sound of Clara’s breathing in the next room—soft, human, unbearably real.

When she entered, the oil lamp was still burning, throwing gold over the bedspread. Clara stirred, a half-smile brushing her lips as she blinked sleep away. “Eve?” she murmured, voice hushed and gentle. “What are you doing up?”

Evelyn’s hands shook. The knife in her grasp glittered faintly, as if the metal itself understood what must come next. From the ceiling, the creature leaned down, its spiral mouth yawning like a wound in heaven.

“Just a dream,” it crooned. “You’ll wake soon.”

“Eve?” Clara sat upright now, confusion curdling into fear. “Put that down, please—” The plea broke into a scream. The knife met her skin with a sound too soft for what it was—like silk torn from the body. Warmth gushed over Evelyn’s hands, thick, fragrant, dizzying. Clara’s fingers clawed desperately at her wrists, her eyes wide, shimmering, almost understanding.

“Eve,” she gasped. “Wake up—”

“I am awake!” Evelyn cried. Her voice shattered against the walls, which laughed in echoes of her own hysteria. Behind her, the creature guided her arms like a puppeteer, its cold body pressed to hers, its whisper blooming like poison in her ear.

“Yes,” it purred. “Do you feel it now? The cut between worlds.”

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The blade slipped again. The room convulsed. Blood streaked the wallpaper in long red vines, curling, climbing, blooming. Evelyn fell to her knees, sobbing, her tears and Clara's blood indistinguishable.

Clara twitched once—then stilled. Her eyes were glass. Her mouth hung open in what might have been her sister's name.

Evelyn looked up. The mirror awaited her. Inside, the creature stood tall, its hands around her shoulders, its mouth folding outward in a terrible imitation of a kiss. And within that mouth, Evelyn saw herself—hundreds of her, screaming in infinite reflection. "This," it whispered, pressing its wound to her temple, "is how you wake." The world folded like wet paper.

When she opened her eyes, the room was quiet. No blood. No body. Only silence, and her hands— still red, though the stain would not wash, not fade, not forgive.

After that, resistance seemed irrelevant.

The murders followed like prayers. A friend. A stranger. Then two. Each night she woke laughing softly, blood drying in crescents beneath her nails. The walls glowed faintly red, veins running through the plaster. Sometimes the creature wore her skin, sometimes she wore its. The difference no longer mattered.

Outside, the world thinned. Faces blurred at the edges. People looked almost human, until they smiled.

One evening, the mirrors rippled like water, and from their depths dozens of faces emerged—hers, screaming, their hands pressed to the other side. The creature stood behind her, whispering, *you return to me, always*. It stepped through the glass, folding her into its arms. Flesh met flesh, breath met breath, and something inside her sighed, long and low, like the closing of a door.

When the neighbors finally broke in, the house was silent. The air smelled of lavender, dust, and

decay. The walls had stopped breathing, but the mirrors still rippled faintly, as if something beneath them had only just stilled.

They buried Clara in the churchyard. They never found Evelyn.

But sometimes, when the moon hangs low over the street, you can see her silhouette in the upstairs window—long-necked, hollow-eyed, her head tilted just so. the glass flickers

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with candlelight.

and if you stand too close, the air will warm against your ear, and a voice will sigh your name— tender, eager, awake.

and when morning comes—  
your throat will taste of dust.  
your hands, of rain and iron.  
and from the mirror across your room,  
something patient,  
something loving,  
will smile back,  
as the story goes...

in a house where lilacs soured to rot,  
and echoes trembled, though time forgot,  
lived evelyn harrow, pale and slight,  
a ghost made flesh beneath the night.

the walls would hum her name in sleep,  
the floors would sigh, the ceilings weep.  
each dream unfurled its violet bloom,  
and filled her lungs with lilac fume.

she told herself it was the rain,  
that spoke through cracks along the pane—  
yet something moved beneath the floor,  
and whispered softly: “you are more.”  
the house was vast—its heart decayed,  
its mirrors black, its prayers unmade.

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the portraits leaned with hungry eyes,  
and chandeliers wept fireflies.

her sister clara came one eve,  
with light she did not mean to leave.  
“it’s far too quiet here,” she said,  
“too still. too thick. it smells like dread.”

but evelyn smiled with lips half-dead,  
and stroked the cracks where whispers fed.  
“the quiet listens,” she replied.  
“the house just breathes. it’s alive inside.”

then nights grew long and thick with moan,  
the air like wine, the dreams her own.  
and from the dark—oh, gentle thing—  
it came to her with whispering wings.

its limbs bent wrong, its ribs would sing,  
its breath a pulse of everything.  
its face—a spiral, endless, wide,  
a wound where god and horror hide.

“you dreamed me once,” it softly said,  
“when you were young and near to dead.  
i am the ache you could not name,  
the quiet hunger, the holy flame.”  
it kissed her brow—her pulse went still,



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its tongue was honey, grave, and chill.  
and when she woke, her wrists were sore,  
her bedsheets drenched, her throat still raw.

each night thereafter—breath, and hum,  
each dawn—a bruise, a tender thumb.  
the house began to sweat and ache,  
its walls alive, its bones awake.

“i’m not alone,” she told the air,  
and found her shadow listening there.  
her mirror grinned when she did not,  
and whispered things the day forgot.

then came the night when clara came,  
her laughter gold, her eyes aflame.  
she brought the sun—too bright, too near,  
and filled the halls with mortal cheer.

“you’ve been alone too long,” she said,  
and stroked her sister’s hollow head.  
“come home, eve. wake. you’ve gone astray.”  
but evelyn’s smile had gone away.

the house inhaled. the shadows curled.  
the creature whispered: “free your world.  
she drags you down where breath still clings—

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cut loose the heart, unbind the wings.”  
“it’s just a dream,” it cooed, so kind,  
and pressed its mouth against her mind.  
“she’ll wake when morning strokes her hair—  
no blood is real within this prayer.”

the knife was pale, the room was red,  
the candle sighed, the lilacs bled.  
and clara woke to see her face—  
her sister’s eyes, her sister’s grace.

eve?” she gasped. “put that away—”  
but night had swallowed all her day.  
the blade sank slow—a song, a hymn,  
as blood ran warm and sweet and dim.

“wake up,” cried clara, throat undone,  
“please, eve—wake up—”  
“i am,” said one.

the house rejoiced—a living lung,  
its rafters screamed, its bell was rung.  
and from the mirrors, faces came,  
each whispering her mirrored name.

then silence fell, so rich, so deep,  
it tasted like eternal sleep.

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her hands were red, her breath was small,  
and clara's eyes stared through the wall.

they found no body—none at all.  
the mirrors hummed, the lilies pall.  
each pane of glass still softly breathed,  
with something warm beneath it seethed.

the house stands still on ashen ground,  
where no bird sings, where no clocks sound.  
yet some nights, through the window high,  
a candle flares, a lullaby.

and if you pass beneath that light,  
you'll hear her voice—too soft, too slight—  
a sigh that grazes skin and bone:  
*"you dreamed of me. now dream alone."*

for evelyn harrow, dusk's new bride,  
still hums where lilacs rot and hide.  
and if your mirror fogs tonight—  
her mouth will bloom within the blight.

and she will utter, with serpent grace,  
*"what you have dreamed, you shall now face."*

## jack of none.

by Dalia Mihali, XIIC

i touched a thousand shining doors,  
each one cracked open by my hand.  
each whispered *learn*, each promised mentors,  
and left me chocking on the sand.

i've studied stars, and ghosts, and art,  
but none of them remember me.  
i've carved my name on fleeting things—  
the dust, the glass, the sea.

what arrogance to think i'd grasp  
the sun, and not be set aflame.  
to crave all genius, all divine,  
and end up nameless just the same.

i mirrored every borrowed face,  
a hundred masks, not one my own.  
a patchwork soul of half-learned grace,  
a ghost that looks like skin and bone.

they said i could be anything—  
what cruelty hides in words like those.  
to foster every garden's soil,  
and never see a single rose.

my hands remember every craft,  
but none obey my trembling will.  
a brush, a pen, a string, a sum—  
each loves me brief, then leaves me still.



# The Cacophony of Self: A Review of Kendrick Lamar's *To Pimp a Butterfly*

by Dalia Mihali, XIIC

This is not simply a record; it is a monumental achievement, a necessary and profoundly complex piece of art that redefined modern hip-hop. *To Pimp a Butterfly* is a raw, unflinching journal of self-discovery, a difficult path travelled from the familiar streets of Compton to the dizzying, often empty, space of celebrity. It is an honest look in the mirror, capturing the struggle for identity—the conflict between who the world wants you to be and who you truly are.

The earliest songs detail the seduction of *Lucy*, a smooth-talking tempter representing both money and the music industry's dark side. The self is immediately under threat, as external

powers seek to exploit and control him—to "pimp" his story for profit. Musically, the album is a living, breathing fusion—a chaotic yet brilliant blend of P-Funk basslines, West Coast G-funk rhythms, and freeform jazz improvisation that elevates the lyrical weight. This concept is felt

deeply in tracks like *King Kunta*, where he struggles to wear the "crown" of success without becoming a slave to it, wrestling with the meaning of power.



The pressure cooker bursts in the middle of the album. The inherited pain of history and the explosive anger of the present

clash, most vividly in *The Blacker the Berry*. This is where the self is most conflicted: a

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powerful leader who is simultaneously guilty, flawed, and consumed by internal rage.

He

grapples with the hypocrisy of mourning his community's losses while facing his own mistakes, echoing the deep contradiction that true identity cannot be separated from the history and trauma of his people.

The breakthrough is found in acceptance, not denial. The metamorphosis from "pimp" to "butterfly" is a conscious, hard-fought victory. This turning point arrives with "**i**," a bright burst of self-affirmation, proclaiming "I love myself!" This song serves as the spiritual armor needed to navigate the world's constant attempts to tear him down. It is the realization that owning your identity—flaws and all—is the only path to genuine, revolutionary power.

The genius of the album's structure lies in the recurring poem, "**I remember you was conflicted...**" Recited in fragments at the end of many tracks, this poem is the hidden spine of the narrative. Each new line marks a step in the journey, tracking his psychological growth and the lessons he's absorbed, serving as a private thought process being slowly revealed. The poem—a collection of observations about good and evil, wealth and morality, and the difference between a caterpillar and a butterfly—finally concludes with the imagined, cathartic interview with **Tupac Shakur**.

This final conversation solidifies the central theme: identity is not a static answer but an ongoing, generational dialogue. *To Pimp a Butterfly* is not merely an album to listen to; it is a text to study.

Its challenging poetry, dense instrumentation, and unwavering moral focus solidify it as a cultural document, teaching us that self-definition is the greatest form of resistance, and the true measure of a man is the courage it takes to claim the complex, beautiful, and conflicted being he finds there. This album is, without question, essential listening.

# **The Café at the Edge of the World – The Teen Reading Club: a Space Where We Discover Our Identity**

by Rita Maria Moga, school psychologist

This year, in the heart of the “Gheorghe Șincai” National College in Baia Mare, a space took shape—one that cannot be found on any official school map, yet you feel it the moment you cross its threshold: *The Café at the Edge of the World*, a reading club for teenagers. It was born from a quiet but powerful need—to offer young people a place where they can pause for a moment and truly listen to themselves. A place where reading is no longer just an intellectual exercise, but a journey toward the self.

The intention behind this club is both simple and ambitious: to help teenagers discover their inner voice and build their identity in a world that never stops moving. In every book we read together, there is a window into other lives, but also a mirror in which each of us can glimpse our own questions, fears, and dreams. Our discussions do not seek definitive answers; they open doors—toward reflection, dialogue, and the courage to be authentic.

In a time when adolescence raises countless questions about who we are and who we want to become, reading becomes an essential tool. Every club meeting is a dialogue about identity—about how it is reflected in the characters we discover, in the themes we debate, and in the values we share. The books we choose are not merely discussion prompts, but bridges between the students’ personal experiences and the wider world they are preparing to enter.

Our club aims to be part of the Șincai ethos—one that shapes curious, engaged young people who are aware of their inner voice. In a school where the tradition of excellence intertwines with openness to innovation, this reading space emerges as a natural extension of the desire to nurture students who think critically and creatively. In the spirit of Șincai—a place of tradition, freedom of thought, and the formation of strong

minds—this club becomes a space where ideas take root and thoughts grow. Here, we learn that identity is not something we receive, but something we build, page by page, choice by choice.

For those who believe that identity is shaped through dialogue, reflection, and culture, the Teen Reading Club is a promising beginning—a small but powerful community in which every page we read brings us a little closer to ourselves. The reading club is not just a project; it is a bridge between who we are and who we are becoming. And perhaps, one day, looking back, we will realize that each of our identities was shaped—at least a little—in the gentle light of the words we shared.

# Anne Frank's Diary

a review by Syd

The diary of a young girl written by Anne Frank - what a book, honestly. Great exercise of empathy though, the thing that we all have in common, the reminder that every single one of us, whatever our ethnicity, religion, race, sexual orientation or gender is, we're all people with a life that we're living, just like Anne Frank herself - a teen stuck in hiding with her family, having the thoughts, feelings, needs, pleasures and daily activities like any other teen, all the things that make us human.

This diary is not only harsh to be read because of the Fate that, from shadows, is watching over the people in hiding, knowing their fear of how their end is near, still vanishes once with their heartbreaking hopes of a better life when they're finally getting out, but also because of the horrible comments of her mother and her mother's friends, lack of privacy from her roommate and cold distance from her family. Sometimes all I want to do is take her hand and pull her out of the book, help her escape the horrors of her life and give her the amazing life she deserves, simply comfort her. Whenever she's telling herself she should just ignore the abuses she's dealing with and suppress her emotions, I keep talking back to her, telling her to shut it and wishing I gave her a hug.

It feels very intrusive to read something as personal, yet we, as humans, always have this need, out of curiosity, to understand other people's experiences, thoughts and feelings, because maybe, just maybe, one day we'll find someone who thinks the same things as us, feels the same things as us, so that we won't be as lonely. It could feel amazing to find yourself in a character, although we're sometimes experiencing the loneliness grow even stronger when we finally find a character just like us, knowing they'll never be real. Yet we can still find them in real life, by finding the people who see themselves in these characters, which is the thing that brings us together at our less lonely book club.



# A Surrealist Idyll

by Paul Cernistean, XII G



As a person that has always been passionate about art, my cultural identity has long stood as a source of inspiration in my creation. However, for long I have tried to create something referencing my culture and put my own spin on it, without it just looking like another traditional dress or shirt.

My collection 'A Surrealist Idyll' is a love letter to this struggle, this bump in my road, my inner conflict between the love I have for my culture, but also knowing that to live my life at the fullest, I'd have to eventually leave. The Romanian people, in their roots, are shepherds, from which I believed that the word Idyll, a pastoral poem, encapsulated their essence perfectly. These roots of Romanian culture can be traced back to the Cucuteni- Trypillia culture of the Neolithic, the oldest culture in the

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European continent. The symbols that were used during this period are still prevalent in Romanian and Ukrainian culture, being found on our traditional blouses, as captured by Henri Matisse, as well as decorations or Constantin Brâncuși's sculptures.



Another great source of inspiration is Surrealism, an artistic movement represented by artists like Salvador Dalí or Elsa Schiaparelli, which has long been a very fascinating perspective on the world to me, also inspiring the likes of Sergei Parajanov, the director of the 1969 movie 'The Colour of Pomegranates'.

While watching the film, I couldn't help but see major similarities in the way it was shot compared to old Romanian movies, helping me find comfort in it and see how Armenian culture could feel far closer to mine than I had ever imagined.

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Thus, I would say that my take on Romanian traditional elements comes from an intersectionality between fashion, paintings and film, as well as between cultures that I have eventually discovered to be far more similar than I had imagined.





# December 1st – History, Unity, and National Identity

by Iulia – Maria Bodea, XII G

December 1st is more than a national holiday for Romanians; it is a powerful symbol of unity, history, and national identity. Celebrated as Romania's National Day, this date marks one of the most important moments in the country's past: the Great Union of 1918, when Transylvania united with the Kingdom of Romania.

On the first day of December, 1918, in Alba Iulia, representatives of the Romanian population gathered to express their will for unity. This historic decision was not only a political act, but also the fulfillment of a long-held dream shared by generations of Romanians. It represented the desire for freedom, dignity, and self-determination after centuries of struggle.

National identity is shaped by history, language, traditions, and shared values. The Great Union strengthened the feeling of belonging to one nation, bringing together people who shared the same language, culture, and customs, even though they had lived under different administrations. From that moment on, Romanians began to see themselves more clearly as part of a united nation with a common destiny.

Today, December 1st is celebrated with parades, ceremonies, cultural events, and moments of remembrance. These traditions help preserve historical memory and pass national values on to younger generations. For students, understanding the significance of this day means understanding who we are, where we come from, and why unity remains essential in shaping the future.

Remembering December 1st also encourages reflection on modern Romanian identity. While society continues to evolve, the core values that defined the nation in 1918—unity, solidarity, and respect for cultural heritage—remain just as important

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today. National identity is not only inherited; it is continuously built through education, responsibility, and active involvement in the community.



December 1st reminds us that being Romanian means more than sharing a territory. It means sharing a history, honoring the sacrifices of the past, and working together to protect the cultural and moral values that define us as a nation.

At the National College “Gheorghe Șincai”, an educational event was organized on 28 November to mark Romania’s National Day through activities aimed at developing students’ patriotic feelings and deepening their historical knowledge about the Great Union of 1918.



Under the guidance of their teachers - Oana Radomir, Ardușătan Gavril, and Tămaș Alexandru - the students prepared a series of artistic moments and scientific presentations that combined creativity with historical research. The event offered participants the opportunity to reflect on the importance of national identity and the historical significance of December 1st.



Students Maria Nistor and Maia Conțiu from 9th grade G impressed the audience with a patriotic musical performance that conveyed emotion and respect for national values.



Bogdan Călăuz, a student from 12th grade D, shared his personal vision of what it means to be Romanian in today's society, highlighting the importance of responsibility, unity, and cultural heritage.



Moreover, students Paula Gâz, Andrada Varga, Paul Cerniștean, and Sofia Incze from 12th grade G presented a research-based project in which they "investigated" the traces left by important personalities from Maramureș during the period of the

Great Union. Their presentation emphasized the local contribution to a national historical achievement and underlined the role of regional identity in shaping the Romanian state.



Another valuable contribution was brought by Bogdan Bădiță-Cicotișan, who focused on studying the situation of the Jewish community at the time and the rights granted to them through the Resolution of the Great Union. His presentation highlighted the democratic and inclusive principles that stood at the foundation of modern Romania.

This educational event proved to be a meaningful way to honor Romania's National Day by connecting historical knowledge with personal reflection and artistic expression. Through their involvement, students demonstrated not only a strong understanding of the Great Union of 1918, but also respect for national values, diversity, and shared heritage. Such activities play an essential role in strengthening students sense of identity and responsibility, while keeping the memory of important historical moments alive for future generations.



## Șincai's Equilibrium Debate Club

by Bianca Purcar, XID

Equilibrium was created with one clear goal: to open the door to the world of debate, a world where social anxiety, fear of public speaking, and mental barriers are challenged and overcome. Our mission is to help students discover innovative ways of thinking, learn how to navigate “the adult world,” make their voices heard, and show everyone what they are truly capable of.

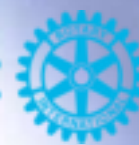
The Equilibrium Debate Club was founded through the initiative of our first president, Loi Alin, together with vice presidents Pop Andrei and Petric Rareș. Their vision was supported by a dedicated team of teachers: Adriana Meșter, Sorin Frânc, Gavril Ardușătan, Maria Magdău, Ladislau Magyarosi, Rita Moga, Lucia Avram, and Ligia Buzsor, who have guided and encouraged our club's growth from the very beginning. In present, we are a group of motivated students who strive to challenge themselves, grow intellectually, and bring fresh perspectives to every discussion. United by curiosity and determination, we continue to build a community where ideas matter and every voice can make a difference.

Our activities combine intensive preparation for debate competitions and olympiads with personal development projects. Meetings are designed to help students express their ideas clearly, build strong and structured arguments, master both verbal and nonverbal communication, and manage their emotions when speaking in front of an audience. The goal is simple: to help each member speak with confidence, clarity, and impact.

Equilibrium means choosing a space where public speaking becomes less intimidating and more empowering. Here, students gradually overcome their fear of addressing an audience and develop a genuine sense of charisma, supported at every step by their teammates. The club also encourages logical and structured thinking, helping members learn how to construct persuasive arguments and respond to opposing viewpoints with calmness and maturity. Through competitions, workshops, and personal development projects, students gain valuable experiences that shape both their skills and their character. At its core, Equilibrium is a supportive community of passionate, motivated individuals who share the same curiosity and drive. It is a place where ideas are exchanged freely, where members lift each other up, and where authentic, lasting relationships naturally grow.

From expressing a simple idea to building strong, well-structured arguments in front of a large audience, our club helps students grow step by step. Explore some of the memorable moments from our journey and draw inspiration from the experiences that have shaped us!





## Interact: Service Above Self

by Sofia Incze, XIIG, official member of Interact Baia Mare

Imagine giving a Christmas present to someone who doesn't expect it: it's more than a gift, it's a gesture of joy, passion, and heartfelt appreciation. That, in essence, is what Interact represents. Beyond that, Interact is about collaboration, creativity, sharing ideas, offering and receiving support, forging friendships, learning while having fun, engaging with the community, and embracing responsibility with adaptability.

Having been part of Interact for over two and a half years now, I can confidently say that it is far more than just a volunteering NGO or a social club. It is a space where motivated and inspired young people can gain practical experience, build lasting friendships, participate in exciting activities, enhance their skills, and, above all, make a positive impact on society.

Officially, Interact is the youngest branch of Rotary, an international organization for young people aged 12 to 18. It provides a structured environment for personal growth while encouraging involvement in addressing both the social and practical needs of local communities.



Firstly, it may seem like a typical volunteering club, but Interact is designed to teach teenagers how to navigate challenging situations, interact with diverse personalities, and approach formal settings with confidence. Members learn to manage their time effectively, uncover hidden talents, articulate their ideas, and develop critical thinking skills. The organization also fosters growth on financial, social, intellectual, and cultural levels; all while enjoying meaningful interactions with both old and new friends. Moreover, Interact regularly organizes activities and projects that benefit underprivileged communities or individuals in need. From quiz nights and creative workshops to karaoke sessions, sports competitions, treasure hunts, and cinema evenings, these events provide opportunities for team-building, fun, and real-world impact.



There are 4 Interact Clubs in our town: Interact Baia Mare, Interact Abstract, Interact International and Interact Arte. They are basically “siblings”, which were founded with the purpose to offer the best organization system for the over 200 Interact members. In order to join one of these special communities, you need to get informed about the process, since each of the 4 clubs has its own means and methods.

Interact promotes and teaches independence, simultaneously with teamwork. It gives young people the opportunity to show the world what their minds and souls can do without adult help. It provides the context for the young to demonstrate creativity and determination, to experience the beauty of collaboration, and the joy of giving.

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Being part of Interact is not just beneficial—it is transformative. I am in my final year of membership and one of my greatest wishes is to re-live the experiences, friendships, and lessons that have shaped me. This is Interact. This is our community. And the pride we carry comes from one simple principle: **Service Above Self.**



# Building the Future, One Robot at a Time: Inside Clever Core

by: Viktoria Tar, XI D, Clever Core member

Hi, reader! Did you know your school has a seriously impressive robotics team? They're called Clever Core, team #19342, and they're not just hanging out in the lab—they're actively building real-world engineering skills by competing in a global competition: FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC)! Think of FTC as the ultimate academic sport. The students here build and programme a sophisticated robot to tackle a brand-new challenge every year. This is where classroom knowledge transforms into hands-on innovation!

Every season, FTC drops new game materials—right now, it's the archaeological-themed DECODE challenge. Each team has to design a robot that can complete specific tasks on a field, like collecting and placing "artifacts," all within a fast-paced match, as the matches only last 2 minutes and 30 seconds. This work requires a methodical approach, much like actual engineers use:

- sketching the robot in its 3D format, using CAD softwares such as Fusion 360, Blender;
- building the robot: like a puzzle, every piece has its place, though it might get complicated sometimes to put them together :)
- programming the robot: using an object oriented programming language, Java, our teammates write the code which puts the robot into function;
- documenting our journey: we have an engineering portfolio which includes our progress for the whole season;

Clever Core is structured to give everyone a chance to shine, no matter their interest! It's a fantastic way to figure out what you love:

Team Role	What They Do	Why you should apply
Mechanics Team	Designs and builds the physical frame, arms, and wheels of the robot	You get to work with tools and build things that actually move!
Programming Team	Writes the code that tells the robot how to play the game.	They solve complex puzzles using code—the ultimate brain exercise!
Strategy & Outreach	Plans the game strategy, manages the team's funds, and documents the journey.	They make sure the team stays organized, keep the social media in check and share their passion with the rest of the world.

Clever Core is more than just robotics; it's about learning to work together, solve real life problems, and gain skills that colleges and future employers are desperate for. We consider that technology represents the future, so we chose joining this team as the first step in shaping our careers. Through FIRST's motto, *Gracious Professionalism*, our team represents some core values we live by everyday: discovery, innovation, impact, inclusion, teamwork, but also fun! In every presentation we do, we emphasize the importance of these values and the impact robotics has on our lives, and our future.

We mainly try to attract the younger generation into the magic of robotics, as we believe their curiosity goes beyond our imagination. For example, this summer we have organised a summer camp dedicated to children aged 10 to 14 years old, here in our school. The camp included courses based on basic electronics, blockly programming and an introduction into graphic design in the first half of the week, and then the kids would combine their newly acquired knowledge into creating a project they could present in front of their parents. There, we discovered a lot of bright minds that could shape the future that is ahead of us. After the camp, we received a lot of positive feedback from the children along with their parents, so we marked it as a success!

Last season, at the regional stage, Clever Core achieved the Innovate Award 3rd Place, an award dedicated for teams with sharp minds that think outside the box. Winning the Innovate Award means that Clever Core successfully demonstrated

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advanced mechanical design principles and creative problem-solving under tight constraints. It acknowledges that their robot contained a subsystem that was truly novel and effective—a true sign of strong student engineering!

This year, the team members have already acquired experience over the years and is ready to aim for a prize at national level. Their focus relies on excellent teamwork so they could bring out the best in themselves, and in the new robot designed for the task of this season.

If you liked what you have read in this article, we invite you to explore more about our team on Instagram (@clevercore) or our Facebook page (Clever Core) , or even find us in our robotics lab, here at National College “Gheorghe Sincai”.



# Summer Fun with English - Learning Beyond the Classroom

by Iulia – Maria Bodea, XII G



At the National College “Gheorghe Șincai”, summer is a time for learning, creativity, and fun. For one week, children aged 10–11 and 12–13 have had and will continue to have the opportunity to take part in a wide range of entertaining and educational activities specially designed for their age groups.

“Summer Fun with English” is both a summer camp and a summer school whose main objective is to help children learn valuable lessons in a pleasant and engaging environment. The activities include interactive English lessons, arts and crafts workshops, personal development sessions, dance classes, and various sports activities, all aimed at encouraging creativity, teamwork, and self-confidence.

Last summer, the daily schedule ran from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., offering participants a well-organized and balanced program. Lunch was also provided by ASSOC, ensuring a comfortable and enjoyable experience throughout the day.

The English classes were organized in collaboration with `Centrul de Dezvoltare Durabilă GreenTin`, a Non-Governmental Organization involved in environmental education for young people. Volunteers from Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and many other countries prepared fun and interactive activities, giving children the chance to practice English while discovering new cultures. The children were very interested in listening to the volunteers’ stories and learning about their countries during the breaks between activities.





The arts and crafts workshops were coordinated by teacher Raluca Matei Gherghel, who prepares a variety of creative activities every year. These workshops always ended with small handmade `souvenirs`, which the children could proudly take home as lasting memories of the camp and of their creative work.



The personal development activities helped children learn more about themselves and their personalities. Through entertaining and meaningful activities, teacher Cristina Ambruș guided them in better understanding their emotions, strengths, and individuality, encouraging self-confidence and positive communication.



The sports classes aimed to keep the children active and healthy. Through fun games, they not only used their energy but also improved their teamwork skills and learned the importance of fair play. For better coordination and self-expression, the dance



classes taught them how to move properly to music. Emma Pop prepared a choreography with the children throughout the week, and on the final day they proudly presented their new skills to the audience.

For many children, the last day of the camp was the most entertaining. In addition to their usual morning program, the afternoon featured a Talent Show, offering participants the opportunity to perform in groups and showcase their talents in front of an audience. The jury, formed by the international



volunteers, chose the most creative and impressive performances and awarded prizes. However, nobody was a loser: even those who were not selected left the camp with new experiences, new friendships, and unforgettable memories that will last a lifetime.

The summer school was not only an exciting and educational camp for children, but also a valuable opportunity for high school students to become volunteers. They supported teachers with organization, assisted the children, and helped with translation

when needed. Through this volunteering experience, students improved their organizational skills, teamwork abilities, and English communication, while also learning the importance of responsibility and cooperation.

“Summer Fun With English” proved to be more than just a summer camp. It was



a place where learning met creativity, where friendships were formed, and where both children and volunteers grew personally and academically. The camp successfully turned summer days into meaningful experiences, leaving everyone involved with smiles, confidence, and memories to cherish for years to come.

The success of this program has a positive impact not only on our school's, but also on our town's community. Such initiatives highlight the importance of learning beyond the classroom and show how education can be combined with creativity, cooperation, and real-life experiences. Due to its positive feedback and visible results, “Summer Fun with English” – a project developed by teachers Rodica Mureșan and Laura Pop is expected to continue in the future, offering even more children the chance to learn, grow, and enjoy meaningful summer activities.



See you next summer to have some fun and practice our English!



## **A Heart-to-Heart with Ariana Haragâș on Her *Blues***

by Sofia Incze, XIIG



**Ariana Haragâș** is a 12<sup>th</sup>-grade student at Colegiul Național „Gheorghe Șincai”, Baia Mare who published a volume of poetry in 2024. We wanted to explore the creative process behind her work, the themes she addresses in her poems, and the significance of literary expression at such a young age, while highlighting the impact that writing poetry can have on personal and artistic development. You can read the results of our findings in the following interview:

*Sofia:* To begin with, tell us a bit about your volume of poetry: when was it published, what emotions and ideas motivated you to bring this work into existence?

*Ariana:* I chose the title *Blues* for my poetry volume because it reflects the emotional journey I went through during that specific period of my life. Writing poetry became a coping mechanism for me, kind of like a way to clear and organize my thoughts and I eventually felt the need to share these experiences with the people closest to me. I published the volume in June of 2024, hoping it would reach whoever needed it at the right moment.

*Sofia:* When did you begin writing poetry, and what was the decisive moment when you realized that these creations could be shared with a wider audience? As an artistic work, where do you hope this volume will ultimately position itself?

*Ariana:* I began writing poetry at the age of 14, after a close friend encouraged me to do so. From that point on, I started exploring my creative side, which led me to a deeper understanding of myself. Expressing my emotions through metaphors helped me process and accept them, while also turning my "blues" into art. Once I felt that the chapter of my life reflected in this volume had come to an end, I decided to publish it, hoping it would resonate with people who needed to feel seen or understood. While I initially left it there, I would eventually like to make the volume available to a wider audience, either online or in physical bookstores.

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*Sofia:* What themes or subjects do you explore through your poetry? Is there any poem or theme that particularly highlights your identity? If so, could you share it with us or tell us a few words about it?

*Ariana:* My poems explore themes such as longing, nostalgia, melancholy, and even hopelessness. Although I believe I have outgrown the version of myself who wrote these poems and therefore no longer fully relate to all of them, the poem "Forget-me-not" captures my essence most accurately. It reflects the way I envisioned a symbolic funeral of my ego, kind of like an image of my spiritual self, seen through my own eyes. It is also the poem the book ends with, a metaphorical "goodbye" to myself.

*Sofia:* What message should readers take away from this poetry volume? How should we, as the audience, approach it in order to fully understand its essence?

*Ariana:* To fully understand the essence of this volume, I believe readers should feel free to attribute their own meanings to my poems. They can be used and interpreted in any way the reader sees fit. I wrote them spontaneously, without a specific theme in mind, in both English and Romanian. Art should disturb the undisturbed, and I cannot impose any criteria on how mine should be perceived.

My poems come from a version of myself I no longer inhabit, but whose image I carry deep within me. I wrote them in moments of fear, doubt, and honesty, using them as an omen to my misery. I hope reading about my experience gives you the courage to write your own story, to create without restrictions, and to face the fears you've been hiding from!

We hope this interview provides meaningful insight into the creative journey of a young poet and the value of self-expression through literature. Ariana's experience demonstrates that publishing a volume of poetry is not only an artistic achievement, but also a powerful way to explore emotions, ideas, and identity, inspiring others to appreciate poetry as a form of authentic and profound communication.



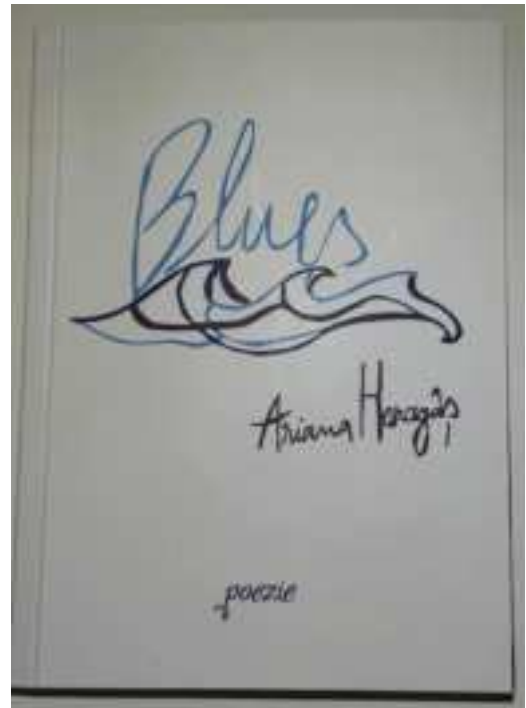
*„A mockingbird frozen in entropy,  
My brains, just copycat philosophy,  
My sickeningly sweet halo starts to rot,  
Please, forget me not.*

*Watch my love cast lightning bolts,  
My mummified heart out in my hand;  
Let the ground grow forget-me-nots  
Wherever I stand.*

*Born in the late November breeze,  
Lethal heat, immortalized grief.  
Made peace with my corpse,  
Please, forget me not.*

*A madhouse full of childish ghosts,  
A rusty being stained with gold;  
At my grave, place forget-me-nots  
Let them flourish in the cold.*

*I've beheaded my moral artillery,  
A queen of hearts, a queen of misery,  
Pleading, with eyes blood-shot,  
Forget me not.”*



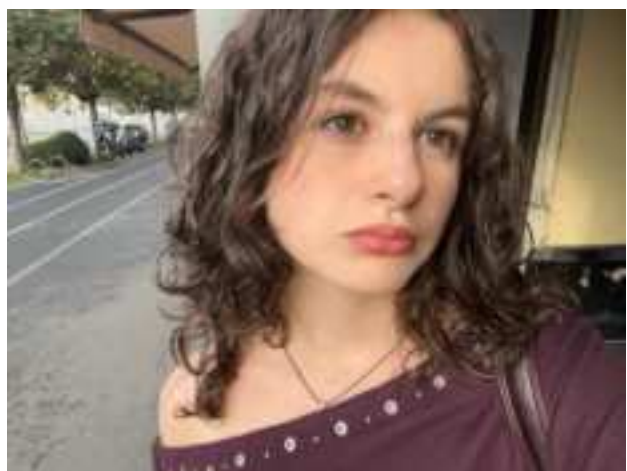
(„Forget-me-not” by Ariana Haragâș)



# Beyond Medals: The Making of an Olympian

by Sofia Incze, XIIG

Many students from Colegiul Național „Gheorghe Șincai”, Baia Mare often take part in national and international competitions and Olympiads. We consider important that we understand what such endeavours really mean to the participants, therefore we have interviewed two of our most recent participants to the English National Olympiad:



**Hoban Maria**, who was a 9<sup>th</sup> grade student in the summer of 2025 and **Corina Mureșan**, who was a 10<sup>th</sup> grade student at the time.

*Sofia:* What motivated you to take part in the Olympiad, and at what point did you make this decision? Looking back, how confident did you feel in your level of

preparation at that stage?

*Maria:* I was in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade when I first participated, and quite confident in myself, perhaps a little too confident. That first time, I came within a point of qualifying for the National competition and I was devastatingly angry with myself. That burning rage provided the perfect fuel to push me forward, to make me better myself and get that National slot twice in a row in the following years.

*Corina:* I participated in the Olympiad ever since middle school, but the first time I actually saw results was in my freshman year of high school, when I placed first in the county phase. Up to date, I participated for two years in a row in the national phase of the Olympiad. I was really shocked the first





time I qualified for the nationals. I felt unprepared and completely undeserving of all the appreciation I was shown, while also trying to get myself through a difficult period of my life. This Olympiad, something I had had little consideration for in the past few years, suddenly became something that I was cherished for and that led to many special moments in my life. I was not ready for this experience and all that it implied, but it did end up shaping my high school experience and I am incredibly grateful for it.

*Sofia:* How would you describe the preparation process in terms of duration and intensity, and what personal or academic growth do you believe resulted from it?

*Maria:* I fell in love with English at a very tender age. I learned it organically, by the ear. I ended up with a massive vocabulary, about six different accents mashed into one, and little to no grammar notions whatsoever. I could use them properly, but I couldn't name or point them out for the life of me. That was where I put in the most work. If you make an average across the three and a half years I've been doing this, it would probably round up to around 15 hours a week. As for growth, I think it taught me perseverance. The Olympiad was the first thing in my life that I wanted so badly that I would be willing to do more than the bare necessities.

*Corina:* English has always been something that I love. Writing, creating something through the lens of another language, finding a form for my own thoughts and feelings, these are all aspects that fostered my love for the Olympiad. Preparation for any such competition is a heavy task for one's mental health and relationships, but the key for me was to love myself, love what I do, and love the people that stood by my side throughout it all. I learned to win responsibly and lose with pride. I learned to be happy for my friends even at my lowest, to see competition as a form of camaraderie and always strive for progress, not perfection.

*Sofia:* On the day of the competition, how did you manage your approach to the written paper, both intellectually and emotionally? How do you now connect that experience to the outcome you achieved?

*Maria:* I want to preface this by saying there is no textbook way of dealing with the pre-competition shivers. No method is faulty if there is at least one person that makes it work. Personally, I go into a sort of trance whenever I take an exam. The morning of, I may be a little antsy, but as soon as that paper is laid out in front of me, I get tunnel vision and only snap out of it when I hand it back. I believe that helps me connect with my craft, give it my best shot, but it does have its downsides. The bulk of the information wipes from my brain once I'm out of my "academic coma", which makes it very hard to predict my results beyond what my gut tells me.

*Corina:* I was surprisingly calm both times I participated in the national phase. I was a little bit stressed, of course, but nothing out of the ordinary. I would argue that I was more anxious regarding the county phase the second time around, as that was the one decisive of my advancement in the nationals. My goal had always been to make progress, and my only stakes were to raise up to the standards of my past success. At first I viewed this competition as a blessing and then it became my friend. I believe that my work showcased these feelings and that everything that I wrote was the product of a sound and self-sufficient mind. I never looked back upon my mistakes with regret, but I did use them to do better next time and this general attitude of calmness and self awareness helped me make the most out of the life-changing experience a national Olympiad can be. My experience in the national phase of the Romanian Language and Literature Olympiad (OLLR) in the 8th grade taught me that anxiety and overthinking only burn you out and keep you from unlocking your full potential. Therefore, I worked hard to overcome this issue and my overall results justified it.

*Sofia:* What overall lessons have you taken away from this Olympiad experience? How did it influence you, and what advice or message would you pass on to students who are considering participating in the future?

*Maria:* I could probably write a whole essay about the lessons I've learned from the competition. The Olympiad is very much about ambition and self-control, yes, but it's also an opportunity to build a community of like-minded people around yourself. Our county's team was superlative both times I participated, and I got the chance to connect with some

amazing young people. My memories from Deva and Tulcea alike are very dear to me, and it truly does feel like they shaped my character in many aspects. So, to anyone still deciding whether it's worth the work, I urge you to go for it. Your experience will be priceless, and you'll feel less alone, knowing there are so many people that share your passion and interests. I hold so much love for this competition, and I can only wish that everyone has the opportunity to experience something like my journey at least once in their life.

*Corina:* All in all, the Olympiad was, for me, an opportunity to reflect upon my persona, who I am and who I want to become. It brought out my flaws and helped me overcome them throughout a number of hard moments in my life. I still view it with an immense amount of love, looking back with warmth over the beautiful friendships woven in that period. All of the kids that end up here are extremely hardworking and intelligent, and so are the ones that fought for their spot in the school, city and county phase. Sometimes the catalyst is preparation, sometimes it is talent or even luck. Nonetheless, you are there to experience new places, new people, new ways of evolving your skill, and anxiety or jealousy only takes away from this purpose. I am very proud of my results and I am glad that they came from a place of joy and fond memories. My advice for anyone interested to participate in any kind of Olympiad would be to work hard, but never forget why they do so. Your determination and devotion already prove your worth, and your results can only remind others of it, but they never actually define it. Be true to yourself and to what you love and you will never end up disappointed in yourself, nor will anybody else.

Dear reader, I believe in you infinitely and would love to hear about your thoughts and experiences!!!

Talking to our colleagues helps us understand the genuine emotions and challenges, as well as the benefits and valuable lessons that a participation in an English Olympiad can provide. Thanks to Maria and Corina, this topic becomes increasingly clear not only to those who are curious, but also to those who have yet to realize that an Olympiad represents far more than a high-level competition both personally and professionally.

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...it is how bittered he is. He's himself a person, judge, but he judges the people around him and...  
 ...I don't like this type of people, I can't blame...  
 ...the thing that really gets under my skin...  
 ...that he claims to be something he isn't, maybe been...  
 ...faced about who he really is.  
 ...conclusion, the book wasn't to my liking, but I learn...  
 ...of things about humans and how their brain works...  
 ...like Holden Caulfield's head throughout the book...  
 ...a vague writing style can be intriguing and repulsive at...  
 ...me here. I loved how the author was able to "transform"...  
 ...is your old boy again and to see the world through...  
 ...eyes again.

A book has been very unique from the moment that...  
 ...read. It was liked by some, and hated by others, because...  
 ...it was like the other novels written around that time...  
 ...I didn't consider it was a good book at all, because...  
 ...the usual type of story that I like to read. But on...  
 ...considering its meanings, I really enjoyed how Holden...  
 ...is full of being his existence into the future, projecting...  
 ...in the past, a symbol of his heart that he shut...  
 ...up down on himself. Because, I would've preferred a more...  
 ...average rather than the colloquial language that was used...  
 ...justifying personal opinions. I am happy that I had the...  
 ...to read this book, because I found out that the deep...  
 ...of the heart can bring even in depression and grief, and...  
 ...book like this can help teenagers understand their feelings...  
 ...I hope to get over rough experiences.

Overall, Holden turns out to be quite an unreliable...  
 ...narrator, letting his ego get the best of him most of the...  
 ...However, I think that encounters with the coming of...  
 ...as often teenagers are controlled by emotions rather than...  
 ...logic. Apart from his character, I found his...  
 ...memories, fears and dreams to be reliable and I...  
 ...did recommend any child my age to read this book...  
 ...it touches a lot of different Holden's, such as...  
 ...alcohol, isolation, grief and self-discovery.

I think the book was very small. I got it at a library...  
 ...during my first year of high school. I was very...  
 ...The only thing I can remember about the book is...  
 ...I got it from the library. I was very...  
 ...I got it from the library. I was very...

Mara

The book became it highlights real teenage struggles...  
 ...Holden's perspective. Even though he is flawed, Holden is an...  
 ...character that represents some teenagers from this day. I think...  
 ...gets from his way of speaking to his gestures. J.D. did a...  
 ...job in representing an average teenage boy. This book also...  
 ...can understand that no matter what happens you'll always...  
 ...your family around you.

quote that I liked is: "I'm illiterate, but I read a lot."

I liked the writing style of the book,  
 ...it was easy to read and to understand.  
 ...the language helped me follow the story...  
 ...difficulty and gave me more space...  
 ...out the deeper topics in the novel. Such...  
 ...al health. I also enjoyed the first person...  
 ...n, told through the eyes of a teenager...  
 ...it is not an over-exaggerated way...

The Catcher in the Rye is a very short book. I got it...  
 ...I am very happy to say that I have read it...  
 ...when I was in high school. I was very...  
 ...I got it from the library. I was very...  
 ...I got it from the library. I was very...

I really enjoyed the book and, how the...  
 ...despite the fact that the author was from a...  
 ...it was a nice contrast between...  
 ...while the plot wasn't the...  
 ...nately was interesting.

could annoy some. I still liked this book and I've...  
 ...let from it.

I liked the book because it highlights real teenage...  
 ...Even though he is flawed, Holden is an authentic character...  
 ...represents some teenagers from this day. From his way of...  
 ...to his gestures J.D. did a fantastic job in representing a...

Carina

I really enjoyed reading this book. It is similar...  
 ...I am experiencing myself as a teenager. I liked the fact...  
 ...whole book was focused on feelings, it made me feel understood...  
 ...especially about the growing up part which I'm also having...  
 ...language that was used was very much alike these days and...  
 ...even feel that it was written almost 20 years ago. It made...  
 ...realise that no one is actually perfect, guess what, it's them...  
 ...on Earth and everybody tries to make life easier and more...  
 ...in their own way, without compromising themselves to others.

Reading this book was a very nice experience from...

Although I had a rough time reading it...  
 ...this book I would recommend it because it...  
 ...captures the confusing, rebellious and...  
 ...mood of adolescence.

Clarathon 2

Mara

To sum it all up, while it didn't really...  
 ...The Catcher in the Rye wasn't that bad of a read, I...  
 ...I can recommend it to someone else, if they have the...  
 ...read it. One thing I liked about it was how deeply...  
 ...thinking about his life, and how even when making...  
 ...he was afraid of making his family sad.

On the other hand, I wasn't a fan of the way...  
 ...was talking, and I felt that he was disrespecting him...  
 ...much.

This book was a nice refreshing...  
 ...and although I'm not sure on which...  
 ...I'm on, I tend to be on the positive side...  
 ...Sabrina really did a great job...  
 ...me feel like I was just talking to a friend...  
 ...the whole time, and this is a good thing...  
 ...as it kept me reading.  
 ...Another thing that I appreciate is the...  
 ...from the book contains, personally, I think...  
 ...that if the book makes you laugh it's...  
 ...good, but this also the deeper meaning...

It made me realise how easy...  
 ...can get lost in the world...  
 ...things seem amongst...