

FALL 2024

TST QUOTABLES

ESSAYS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

MR. ALLEN'S AP ENGLISH III CLASS





PREFACE

EDWARD ALLEN, TST UPPER SCHOOL ENGLISH

There is something special about seeing one's writing in print. There is, I believe, a satisfaction, a joy in composing something important enough to write about, then polishing the piece, and finally freeing it to the printed page for others to read.

I have told my writing students through the years that once something they have written is published, that piece, in a sense, is no longer theirs. The piece now belongs to its reader, who is free to interpret it, visualize it, and even in his own mind, change it into whatever meaning he pleases. And that whole process is a joyous one, one that I am determined my students get to experience each school year.

The above is the motivation behind our Trinity School of Texas annual publication project, a project that allows every Upper School student to originate a piece of writing, run it through an extensive revision and peer editing process and then emerge with what is a polished piece of writing to share in a publication.

Some of the pieces in this booklet will be chosen by TST freshmen, sophomores, and juniors as the subject of an analysis essay, one of the three essays students are required to write from scratch on the College Board's rigorous Advanced Placement Language and Composition Exam given each May to juniors. Similarly, among the three essays that seniors compose on the AP English Literature and Composition exam is a poetry analysis. My feeling is that students are more motivated to compose a quality analysis over a peer's writing as a part of their analysis training than to compose such a writing based upon some random essay or poem furnished by the College Board. In fact, this very concept former TST Headmaster Gary Whitwell and I presented at the College Board AP 2018 National Convention in Houston.

For this 2024-2025 school year, the freshmen composed personal philosophies in their THIS WE BELIEVE booklet, a collection inspired by the NPR program and the companion THIS I BELIEVE book, which was the freshmen summer reading assignment. The sophomores recounted personal experiences which impacted their value systems in their STORIES OF SIGNIFICANCE booklet. Mindful that the juniors will have to respond to a given piece on their AP Exam in May, I asked them to select a memorable quote from [goodreads.com/quotes](https://www.goodreads.com/quotes) and respond to their chosen quote for their TST QUOTABLES booklet entry. Finally, the seniors were asked to reflect upon their academic career leading up to their senior year and to define their goals, hopes and/or dreams for the future in their REFLECTIONS booklet.

This project recognizes what is often the most overlooked step of the writing process--the publishing step. Students rarely see their own writing as well as the polished writing of their peers in print. This project affords our students just such an opportunity—and you are the beneficiary! Enjoy!

DEDICATION

This collection of student writing is dedicated to Courtney Stern, TST Registrar and Administrative Assistant to the Head of School.

Courtney completed the layout of this year's student editions of *This We Believe*, *Stories of Significance*, *TST Quotables* and *Reflections*, and students directly submitted their original writings to Courtney. Courtney also arranged for all the photos to accompany each publication, a mammoth job within itself.

Since her arrival, Courtney has established an inviting yet professional atmosphere to the TST front office. In her time here, she has developed a reputation for her kindness, her attentiveness to the needs of the staff and her dependability. We at TST are truly grateful to have Courtney on our TST staff.

Courtney's tireless work to see this publication project to fruition is so appreciated! Thank you, Courtney, for making possible this year's student publications!



TRAVIS BURNAMAN

“Here’s to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They’re not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify, or vilify them. About the only thing you can’t do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward. And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.”

— Steve Jobs



Travis Burnaman is a junior at Trinity School of Texas, who arrived at the school last spring. He is extremely passionate about his artistic talents. But will most likely be some kind of engineering major in college.

I've never seen myself as normal—a self-proclaimed “extroverted introvert” or vice versa. Of course, I feel that brings up the question “Is anyone normal?” Who knows? Suppose you've ever spent time talking to me or, if you're a weirdo, intentionally eavesdropping on my conversations constantly. In that case, you'll quickly notice a few things about me: my interesting sense of humor, my dislike of the school dress uniform, and especially my passion for art.

One thing about art is that it can have very puissant messages, or not if the artist doesn't want to, but that isn't me. With my writing and artistic ability, I wish to have an impact like some other great artists, and ever since I was little, I've always dreamed of creating something that moves people with a deep and inspiring message or theme in my art that also resonates with me. Even if I find it difficult to keep up my artistic passions because of things such as school taking up so much of my time, I try to express my creativity in any way I can, be it through writing, small sketches, or full-on digital art pieces. I've always been into art all my life. I don't exactly remember how my art journey began, but the first major thing I ever did was fill an entire small journal with a comic story. During my lifelong journey with art, I don't think I've gone a year in my life without making a complete, (or at least a piece of) art that is complete in my eyes, as I don't think that tiny me knew the difference between doodling and working on a piece I expected to finish.

One thing I've heard my English teacher stress in class

often is putting your “voice” into your work; someone else in one of his English classes may have just dismissed such a viewpoint as “just make it seem like you wrote it.” But that is most certainly wrong. A known fact of art is that art reflects the artist, which includes writing, which is exactly what voice is! One thing about my art is that, in certain examples, it can be strange and complicated. With that in mind, if my art reflects myself...well, I think you can easily piece that together yourself.

“Alright, alright, but why does you being weird and quirky matter?” you may ask. Well, just like what's stated in the quote, the misfits change the world! In every form of art, the not-of-the-norm indie artist creates a piece of art that causes a change, including video games, writing, and traditional art! People such as Pablo Picasso inventing cubism, Tolkien writing *The Hobbit*, and Toby Fox devising *Undertale*, were individual creators just trying something new and unique, and look at them now! Cubism led to many different branches of modern traditional art; Tolkien's story is still

being continued to this day and his *The Lord of the Rings* series is one of the most well-known book series ever; Toby Fox is currently working on another almost more popular game than his last. So, look, being quirky means you get to change the world, which is exactly what I want to do with my art.

Now, I think it's time to address the elephant in the room: how is my position as an artist really that weird though? Some other people are in a similar position and are even more of a misfit than I am. Well, again, is anyone “normal?” And if everyone isn't normal, then being abnormal is the new normal. All the people I used as examples earlier are/were just normal people. They may not have been normal in the specific artistic piece that had a major influence, but outside of that, they're just people like you and me. Everyone has an inner weirdness that, when embraced, can help you make a change in the world!

So again, whether you're “crazy” or “normal,” you can change this world if you understand yourself enough to see your own inner quirkiness!

“The Art of Weirdness”



Ellie Cochran is a junior at Trinity School of Texas. She's very enthusiastic about sports and plans to study kinesiology at any school that will accept her. She hopes to become an athletic trainer for some big sports team.

ELAINE COCHRAN

*“Well, life is too short, so love
the one you got.”*

– *Sublime*

Ever since I can remember, I've always loved 90s rock music. I still remember my dad playing “1979” by The Smashing Pumpkins in the car and asking, “Ellie, who sings this?” while covering the little screen with a crack down the middle in his truck. And when I got it right, he would turn the radio up and we would sing at the top of our lungs with the windows down. Ever since then (at the ripe age of 6), I would only listen to songs by Foo Fighters, Nirvana, Radiohead, The Goo Goo Dolls, and the list goes on. And while my dad isn't a big fan of Sublime, they became one of my favorite bands.

My dad (Keith) has been more of a lyrical enthusiast than just listening to music. He also taught me to pay attention and try to find the “story” that the artist is trying to portray in their songs. So when I heard the song “What I Got” by Sublime, it instantly became one of my favorite 90s songs. The story, if

you haven't listened to the song, is about how we only have one life and how it can be taken from us in an instant. When I think of this song I think of just living! This life is all we got so just appreciate it.

When I started high school, it took me a long time to learn to enjoy my life. I had to realize that it's such an awesome thing to experience and that my life does matter. Over my two and a half years in high school, I feel like my personality has grown from the stereotypical depressed pre-teen to more of a lighthearted and hard-working adolescent. I found myself asking, “If I died right now, would I have loved the life I lived?” And the answer was usually no, so I decided to change that answer to a yes. So here we are!

So no matter where you are in life, live every day like it's your last. Go on that wild camping trip in Big Bend, or try raw herring in Amsterdam (it's not good), or go talk to some stranger on the street in Paris. The world is too big just to stay inside and live every day the same.

KILA COLLINS

“Nothing is more revealing than movement. The body says what words cannot.”

– Martha Graham

Every day, I drive the two minutes from my house to a small building across the street from a Whataburger. It’s a chaotic place; girls are talking, stretching, practicing dances and turns. It smells bad—especially the dressing room. Once class starts, the talking ceases. The only sounds are my teacher calling out the combinations, the classical music drifting from the speaker, the occasional creak of a leather ballet flat, and a chorus of girls’ joints cracking. It’s my favorite place on Earth: The Dance Studio.

I missed all but two Homecoming dances from middle school to high school. I’ve turned down dozens of hangouts. I’ve lost countless hours of sleep because I do my homework after dance. I walk with pain because of dance injuries I did not let heal properly. I dance five days a week and usually have an extra rehearsal on Saturdays during recital season. All in all, it’s a

lot. Over the years, I’ve been asked “Why?” frequently. “Why can’t you take a day off? Why do you keep doing something that hurts you? Why don’t you just quit?” These people mean well but I don’t know how to answer with anything other than “Because I love it.” I love everything about dance. I love the sound of pointe shoes on marley. I love the exhaustion after a good run of a dance. I love the pain from a good stretch. I love the rush of adrenaline when I’m performing on stage. I love dancing my emotions out, leaving my stress, my bad days, my anger, my joy on the floor. I think Martha Graham understood this utter inability to express everything a dancer feels about dance. She was one of the mothers of modern dance and Graham technique is sharp, direct, and honest. It really does reveal the emotion through the movement. But more than that, Graham devoted her life to dance, choreographing over a hundred performances, and founding a dance company and a dance school that still exists today. She poured her energy into dance.

I don’t have the words to describe why I love dance, but the energy I pour into it attests to just how much it means to me. I think that’s what Martha Graham is talking about here, that even when you don’t have the words to express what you feel, what you do will reveal what you can’t say. So, no, I still don’t have the answer to “Why?” but my actions stand as my answer because “nothing is more revealing than movement.”



Kila Collins is a junior at Trinity School of Texas. She has been dancing for thirteen years and prefers Graham Technique to Isadora. She wants to major in Forensic Science and hopes to never stop dancing.



Clayton Courington is a junior at TST. He currently hopes to study finance and economics at the University of Notre Dame and pursue a career in investment banking. He hopes his life can serve to create many ripples through the vast sea.

CLAYTON COURINGTON

“I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.”

– Mother Teresa

The world is a vast ocean. Its surface is sometimes calm but most often turbulent, with crashing waves and violent currents. In the face of this vastness, it may seem impossible for an individual to change the course of its waters. But, as Mother Teresa said, we can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples. Obviously, it's not likely that one can change the entire ocean, but our individual actions—like stones cast across the waters—can send ripples, affecting the tides of society.

In today's world, fierce currents of inequality, poverty, political instability, and a myriad of other complex issues ravage society; frankly, it's overwhelming. Amidst such turbulent waters, it's easy to think an insignificant pebble

won't change a thing. However, when combined with many other pebbles, the ripples a pebble creates can grow into an insurmountable wave changing the course of a fierce current. The Montgomery Bus Boycott, the founding of the Red Cross, even the discovery of penicillin are all examples of pebble drops leading to these waves of change.

Additionally, the ripples made by stones cast across the waters can also make change on a smaller scale. A compliment, an acknowledgement, or even just a smile can make a difference in someone else's day. A compliment could lift someone up, an acknowledgement could make someone feel heard, and a smile could offer comfort to someone who's struggling. You never know. These seemingly small, insignificant ripples can have an effect far beyond the immediate perceived impact; just like how the ocean is shaped by an amassment of tiny movements beneath the surface, society can be transformed by such “stone drops.”

When navigating the turbulent waters of the world, it's crucial to remember that everyone possesses the stones to create waves of change. Ultimately, the key is in casting your stones thoughtfully, understanding the ripples they could create.

CAROLINE DANIEL

“It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to our enemies, but just as much to stand up to our friends.”

– J.K. Rowling

I can relate to this quote on many levels. But having just finished the novel *The Haters* by Robyn Harding, I am drawing on the main character’s experience in the book. The character of Camryn Lane is a school counselor, a mother to a teenage daughter, a “ride or die” type of friend, and a recently published novelist. Her dream of being a published writer turns to a nightmare when a coordinated attack from online trolls derails not only her new book but her entire life. Camryn can’t trust anyone in her circle because it’s obviously someone who knows her best that started it all.

Just like Camryn, though never to the extreme in the book, I’ve experienced “haters.” Social media creates a false sense of familiarity

and people definitely love to give their opinions whether positive or negative. It’s weird that relative strangers feel the need to take you down, but then there are the times when someone whose opinion actually matters to you might take a swipe. And there’s nothing quite like a group chat amongst friends where you are the main subject and grievances are aired but all done conveniently behind your back, except that really good, true friend that takes great pleasure into telling you all about it. And like Camryn, I’ve felt isolated and ganged up on at times.

However, in my experience, while it is difficult to stand up to friends whether just one or the whole group, it sure can be satisfying and worthwhile for your peace of mind. You can easily separate the friends who are really there for you and the ones not. True friends will respect your feelings and not only apologize but work to do better. These friends will also have new respect for your boundaries and realize that they can’t just walk all over you.

Camryn had to learn all this in the cruelest ways possible. Her story with all its twists and turns still yielded a happy ending. My story is still unfolding as we speak and hopefully, it continues that way.



Caroline Daniel is a junior at Trinity School of Texas. She doesn't know where she wants to go yet, but wants to stay close to family.



Zachary Daniel is a junior at Trinity School of Texas. He hopes to attend Texas A&M for his Animal Science degree. After college, he plans on earning a gazillion dollars, maybe more.

ZACHARY DANIEL

“Courage is being scared to death, but saddling up anyway.”

– John Wayne

The urge hit me. I knew it would come sooner or later, as it always had. I rushed to the bathroom and took one last “nervous pee.”

I’ve found myself in the same situation time and time again throughout my life. Washing my hands and coming to terms with myself in the mirror one last time before walking out and facing the next hurdle in front of me: sitting in the locker room before a football game, scribbling on a SAT cover page, and, of course, climbing into the stirrups in search of the next blue ribbon. Would I say that I was scared to death? No, not necessarily. Was I nervous? Yes. By all means, yes.

I believe society’s view of courage is extremely skewed in today’s day and age. In a world of fearless heroes and godlike athletes, many people are led to believe that

being “courageous” is simply not feeling fear. However, we’re humans. Feeling fear is part of life. Everyone feels fear. Yet, courage is how you handle fear.

I typically try to not let myself worry about the future or what’s to come. But when the future becomes the present, and adversity lies right in front of me, you can often find me biting my nails, pacing, or...walking out of the bathroom.

But think about it- in any situation, what do I have to lose? Like really, what’s the worst that can happen? Win, lose, or draw, I live to fight another day. It’s never the end of the world.

Courage is knowing that failure is possible, acknowledging that something can go wrong, yet still doing it anyway. So climb in the saddle, grab the reins, and start spurring your way through life.

*“Feeling fear is part of life.
Everyone feels fear. Yet,
courage is how you handle
fear.”*

EMILY DARWIN

“You only live once, but if you do it right, once is enough.”

– Mae West

The average human lifespan is 82 years, eighty-two years. “Life is short” is a very common phrase, but our lives are very long. I think the perception of how short life is comes from an over-focus on the future. When you have lived a smaller fraction of your life, it’s easier to look back on all of your accomplishments and failures, but once you hit 41, reflection can be overwhelming.

As I write this essay, I am 16 years old. If I lived to be 82, I’d have 66 years left. 80% of my life still untouched and empty. I would live all of my life more than four more times. At 41, I’d be halfway; that’s already my 16 years repeated two and a half times, and then I’d have the space to do it all over again. I have been alive forever, and I am only 16. At 60, I would still have more than my 16 years left. But, at sixty, I’ve already used 75% of my life, I only have 22 years left which I have already lived three times. And

I am already done with those 60 years—but that’s not how life works.

My entire life growing up, death haunted me, but more than death, what haunted me was life. I had about 80 years left to live and that terrified me. With no past to look back on, I only had what was in front of me, and it was a lot. But as I’ve gotten older, my perspective has shifted; our personal life history can’t be mapped out on a timeline the same way a place or thing’s history can be.

At 16, I have 66 years left. But those 16 years are not erased. I don’t have 66 years left; I just have 82 years. Whatever point I’m at, my life is still the same the length. Everything that has happened in the past ten years has gotten me to where I am now. The mistakes we make aren’t there to hurt us; they’re there to teach us.

The time we have left might not be, but our lives are long. We are here with a purpose, and God knows what he’s doing when he plans how long we’ll be here. We each have a personal mission and the length of our lives have been designed to be the exact amount have time we need to complete them. When I am 82, I don’t want to be overwhelmed by reflection; in those 82 years, I hope I have found several minds to continue living in. Though my consciousness will no longer be on earth, the life I lived will be. Time is linear. Our lives are not.



Emily Darwin is in her third of four high school years. She is 16.6 years old, about 15.3% of her expected life.



Avery Drever is a junior at Trinity. She doesn't know what she's gonna do, but it's not going to involve math.

AVERY DREVER

"Beauty is only skin deep, but ugly goes clean to the bone.

– Dorothy Parker

Our world is full of beautiful people. Absolutely drop dead gorgeous people. The type of people who can turn everyone's head in the room. Sometimes the more someone talks to me, the prettier I

see them; yet, most people I have conversed with have had the most perfect skin, face, body turn out to be, well... hideous. I think to myself sometimes, it's so cruel that God would waste such a pretty face on such an ugly soul. Now I know I'm far from perfect, but I will be forever thankful that I'm not ugly to my core with a "justifiable" appearance.

What even is beauty? Humans standards for beauty have changed drastically. In the Middle Ages, being well-fed was a sign of wealth and beauty. Now, if you aren't unhealthily skinny, you don't have "bod goals" as my generation likes to call it. Or what about that one lady who made the unibrow a trend? Now if you have any hair on your face that isn't accepted by society, you're shamed. My point is beauty isn't really real determined by appearances. Some of the prettiest souls I know have insecurities from our inadequate society. Since all of our beauty standards are severely misguided, why don't we just judge people by their actions, goals, values, or beliefs? I think where we go wrong in today's time is picking and choosing irrelevant junk to praise about people instead of the good stuff.

My mother always told me I was beautiful, as all mothers say to their daughters. My mother, however, was never the type to let me act "ugly." She would tell me that "even the devil can appear as beautiful." Of course, young me didn't necessarily understand what she meant. Now that I reflect upon her words, I couldn't agree more. In

kindergarten we were taught (along with our ABC's) that, "it's more important to be pretty on the inside rather than the outside." Little me really resonated with Mrs Simmons' words, so that I built up the courage to say something to my arch nemesis in the first grade. She had stolen my boyfriend and told everyone they held hands on the swing set; so, naturally, I was enraged. I told her she was not as pretty on the inside as the outside; therefore, she was ugly. She cried the rest of the day. Even though kindergarten and first grade are drastically different from the state of my life now, the message still lingers.

Growing up, I've come to realize that "pretty" people are everywhere. Beauty on the outside is such a common and boring thing nowadays. I want to be pretty on the inside. There's something you don't see every day. I've spent a lot of time in my teenage years reflecting on things I learned about life earlier. I believe in showing people your value from within is far more credible than what you (and everyone else) is naturally born with.

"Beauty on the outside is such a common and boring thing nowadays. I want to be pretty on the inside."

WILLIAM DUNN

*“If you can’t laugh at yourself,
who can you laugh at?”*
– Tiger Woods

In most sports, athletes rely on teammates for support, but golf stands apart as a game that demands individual accountability. When you step onto the course, it’s just you and your skills. Any mistakes—whether embarrassing or simply frustrating—fall squarely on your shoulders. One misstep can send the ball veering off course or result in an unwanted slice, leading to frustration that can easily compound your challenges.

Tiger Woods would say, “If you can’t laugh at yourself, who can you laugh at?” This quote goes so much further than just golf and should be applied to life. You can’t focus on the past because it can’t be changed; the only thing that can be changed is what you choose to do next. Whether it’s on the golf course or in your everyday life, you

will make mistakes that you can’t take back. But it happens—it’s life, and you are just learning to live it. You really need to focus on what you’re going to do next and less on the past.

This philosophy has been a guiding principle in my life, often echoed by my family long before I picked up a golf club. Their consistent reminders to “laugh it off and move on” taught me the importance of self-acceptance and responsibility. You have to take responsibility and move on; you just can’t dwell on the past forever or it will consume you. You have to forgive and forget. My parents would always say this to me whenever something upset me, and it really stuck with me. They would tell me to laugh it off and move on. This approach prevents anger from clouding my judgment, allowing me to maintain a clear focus.

Overall, you’re going to make mistakes in life, and the thing you have to focus on is that those mistakes are in the past, and you can’t do anything about it now to change your situation. So all you can really do is laugh and move on. Although something bad happened, life won’t stop for you to catch up, so you just gotta laugh it off and keep moving. The point I am trying to make is that you really just have to laugh the bad shots off and move on. You have to focus on the next shot, and you can’t do that if you’re focused on what happened in the past.



William Dunn is a junior at Trinity School of Texas. He wants to go to UNC to study Marketing in order to have some future-just in case the golf doesn't work out.



Patrick Dzudie is a junior at Trinity School of Texas. He spends his time with friends, family, and basketball. He doesn't know where he will go to college, but he is determined to play college basketball and study sports medicine in hopes of becoming a physical therapist.

PATRICK DZUDIE

*“Unconditional love is the greatest gift
we can ever give.”*

– Amy Leigh Mercree

Nobody owes anybody anything. Oddly enough, sometimes we're still given things we don't deserve. You don't expect things from random people in your life, but you get them from people who love you. Even if you might not get

along perfectly with your people all the time, these people will always show up when it truly matters most. That's exactly why Amy Leigh Mercree was 100% right when she said, "Unconditional love is the greatest gift we can ever give."

I don't hate my brother, but as a child, he made it impossible not to. Growing up, I was convinced that everyday he made it his goal to find a new way to push me over the edge, and that was the only thing he was good at. I thought having a brother was supposed to be exciting, but unfortunately, that wasn't the case. Whether it was fighting for the remote, the passenger seat in the car, or over who did what chores, there was always a fight, and we always clashed and butted heads like rams. I didn't take Prince's nonstop rebellion against me lightly, and the never ending conflict between my brother and me forced me to grow petulant towards him. The day I decided to change my perspective on my brother, it created a night and day difference. I matured to realize he was his own person, and when I accepted him for who he was and would continue to be, our once spiteful relationship was flipped on its head. I learned to be patient with my brother. Anyone who knows him without a doubt will say that is extremely hard to do, but I eventually put our differences aside because I love my brother.

I'm blessed to have grown up in a home with two parents that I can confidently say have loved me unconditionally. As a child, my parents did everything possible to make me happy, and even if they didn't buy everything I imagined having as a child, the greatest gift I received and valued from them was their genuine support for activities in life I enjoyed like basketball. I'll

"I believe that kind of love is one of the most precious gifts in life, because not even money can buy it."

always remember what my parents did last summer for me and it will always be in the back of my mind to reassure me they are always supportive. During the summer, I went to a week long basketball camp run by accomplished players and coaches from the college to NBA level. Their job in that week is to train campers focused on bringing their skills to the next level and continue to succeed in basketball. Although this camp is costly, my parents overlooked the prices and signed me up to help me achieve my goals in the sport. I was excited to make the most out of the experience and soak in as much information from every coach I could, but the same day I arrived at camp, my eagerness and opportunity to learn was thrown right out the window. On my way to the basket to attempt a layup, I sprained my ankle on a defender under me and my week of camp was over in a moment's notice.

I knew immediately it was all over. My left ankle wasn't even strong enough for me to get up and walk off the court. I was helped away by the trainer at the camp and accompanied to the hospital. Before I knew it, my ankle had grown to the size of a golf ball. I was three hours away from home, and even in the presence of all the medical attention

I was given, I felt small, hopeless, and alone. I couldn't even imagine what was next for me, and the excruciating pain of my throbbing ankle didn't help. It was 11 at night and when I was finally able to call my parents, they comforted me and I felt solace when they told me they were on the way from Longview to see me in the hospital. Although they had just driven three hours that same day to drop me off and three hours back, they were willing to drive back at almost the middle of the night to be there for me. My aunt and uncle lived 20 minutes away from the hospital and they arrived shortly after I did, but my parents still showing up considering the circumstances of that day was special for me and gave me a sense of relief I needed through one of the most frustrating challenges I have faced all year.

My parents showed up when I needed them the most, and acted immediately without any hesitation. If I was on my death bed or just out sick with a cold, I know my parents would be there for me just the same. I believe that kind of love is one of the most precious gifts in life because not even money can buy it. So, to me, nothing beats unconditional love.

GABRIEL JAGERS

*“ I desire the things that will
destroy me.”*

– Sylvia Plath

Imbued within the nature of humanity is a heart that yearns for another, but when the longing becomes a necessity, you will find yourself lost at sea. You have thrown yourself overboard for a kraken to consume you.

Love is a facade, a multifaceted amalgamation wearing a jester’s mask to fool the naïve and spite the well read. We fool others into believing the versions of ourselves we present is the true version of ourselves. Only you know all the thoughts and feelings that shaped you into who you really are, but if no one knows the true you, how could one love you? All they are loving is the mask you put on for them.

Despite knowing this, you continue to cling onto the hope the one you love isn’t putting on a show—that you love them for who they really are and not who you believe them to be. But they, too, fell into

the trap and love the mask you wear. The real you loves the fabricated them, and the real them loves the fabricated you; this is unrequited love, a kind of love that tears apart the mask you painted and the soul to whom it belongs, a kind of love that detaches a heart from an already severed body, a kind of love that makes loving again impossible.

You are void of emotion because you fell out of love and you realize the happiness you had isn’t worth the dread you’re enduring, yet you still want more. Love is a drug, a drug that tricks you to believing you are in a dream, only to end in a nightmare.

You awake from the nightmare while floating to the surface of the sea. The kraken spat you out, your ship has left you, and you notice that you destroyed and betrayed yourself for nothing.

*“Love is a drug, a drug that
tricks you to believing you
are in a dream, only to end
in a nightmare. ”*



Gabriel Jagers just turned 17. He's a junior who talks a little too much but can still find joy in silence.



London Jennings, a junior at Trinity School of Texas, has always had a deep passion for art, singing, and video games. While she hasn't quite pinned down her future path, one thing is clear: her heart is set on a career that allows her creativity to flourish. Whether it's through the stroke of a paintbrush, the power of her voice, or the immersive worlds of gaming, London is determined to shape her future around the art she loves.

LONDON JENNINGS

*“Good people are like candles;
they burn themselves up to
give others light.”*

– Turkish Proverb

There is a Turkish Proverb that reads “Good people are like candles; they burn themselves up to give others light.” Now, wait a second; re-read that. Do you understand it? Let me explain. Good people are the ones who

would do anything just to see others succeed. They put themselves down to let others shine--or in other words, "they burn themselves up to give others light." But why? Why do these good people ruin themselves to just please others?

Ever since I was young, my parents always told me to be kind, even if others don't reciprocate that kindness. "Treat others how you want to be treated," they'd say. So, I would go out of my way to be kind to everyone, no matter the cost. One thing my parents neglected to tell me (not that it's their fault) is that some people will take advantage of that kindness. I had to learn the hard way that not everybody has true kindness. Some people are really good at faking it. They act like they have a bone in their body that actually cares for you, and like every logical person, you believe it; welcome to manipulation.

Manipulation is a scary thing; people can just be so good at pretending. Someone I used to be really close to was VERY good at this game of manipulation. They were experts at pulling strings. Whether it was to make me believe something they said or, to guilt-trip me into doing something with them, I would always fall in. It was just a repeating cycle and then finally, I found out the truth. They had messaged me and told me "I spent too much time with them" and they didn't want to be my friend anymore because of it. That shattered me, but it also made me grow as a person.

Now, don't get me wrong, I still fall into the hole of manipulators,

"Now, when I hear that Proverb, it's not just about sacrifice anymore; it's about the quiet strength of resilience."

but I've learned how to figure out if the people I meet are manipulators or if they are genuinely good people. Over time I've come to learn that the Turkish proverb is only partly true. Good people may burn themselves to give light, but that doesn't mean they have to completely destroy themselves in the process. You can be kind without sacrificing yourself.

The hard part of growing with genuine kindness is learning the difference between being selflessly kind versus being someone's stepping stone. Manipulators tend to thrive on this imbalance; they know how to make you feel like a candle, burning you up until you're completely burnt out, whilst they are fully satisfied with what they have selfishly stolen from you and not giving you back anything in return. And it's exhausting. It's taken me years to finally understand that kindness doesn't mean I have to take every blow, every demand, every guilt trip.

Kindness, the kind that lasts, is balanced. It means being generous but also having the

strength to be able to say "no" when needed. It means protecting your candle's flame and understanding that you're not responsible for someone else's happiness at the cost of your own well-being. I'm still learning day-by-day to find that balance, but I no longer feel obligated to be the person who burns without regard for myself.

Now, when I hear that Proverb, it's not just about sacrifice anymore; it's about the quiet strength of resilience. It's about those rare kind-hearted souls who continue to shine, even when life starts to dim them, who pour light into the world without completely burning themselves to ashes. It's knowing that you don't have to lose yourself to be kind, to be good. And when you finally meet those people who don't steal that beautiful light within you but give you the same in return, who see the light in you and nurture it to its fullest potential instead of extinguishing it--that's when you know you've found something real, something worth holding onto.

BOONE MCHANEY

“Life is a series of commas, not periods.”

– *Matthew McConaughey*

Most people have heard the term “life goes on.” In the quote above, Matthew McConaughey implies that life does, in fact, go on, with no end until death. Throughout your lifetime you face many challenges and difficulties, but as we all know, life doesn’t end until you unplug from the world. Ups, downs, lefts, rights-everything goes the way God planned. You just learn to deal with everything that comes your way.

In my life, I have seen others hit a wall that is hard to get past. For example, the Young Men’s Service League (YMSL) is an organization designed to volunteer in the community for the less fortunate. Throughout my time in the organization, one activity that has stood out to me is the AMBUCS ramp builds held most Saturdays. AMBUCS is an

organization created to help the disabled find a source of movement. Whenever you arrive to the location you are building a ramp, you realize that the task at hand is helping the less fortunate break through the “wall.”

AMBUCS has a group of regular volunteers for these builds who are mostly retired men who enjoy donating their talents for the greater good on a Saturday morning. These older men spend time teaching the young men of YMSL how to take raw materials and transform them into a life-changing ramp to provide accessibility to the resident. Seeing the family that you’re helping use your creation is truly touching and allows you to recognize that hitting the “wall” is hard but getting through - or helping others get through - is the best feeling. I like to think that through my work with AMBUCS, I am acting as a comma in the lives I am touching.

Commas are a part of life. Throughout each day, you face many challenges and help others in different ways you don’t even know. The commas of life are what build us up in life. The period comes at the end of your lifetime. Just like in school, the period comes at the end of the sentence. The sentence of life ends with a period.



Boone McHaney is a junior at Trinity School of Texas. He is the quarterback for the football team. He plans on attending either Texas A&M University or University of Texas at Austin to study sports management and add more commas to his life.



Bri Medina is currently a junior at Trinity School of Texas. She loves to play volleyball and wants to be an orthopedic back surgeon.

BRIANNA MEDINA

“Pessimism leads to weakness, optimism to power.”

– William James

Pessimism often creeps into life, corrupting the mind with doubt and insecurity. Conflicts arise, making it easy to believe that failure is inevitable and efforts will never measure up. Each year can feel like

a cycle of uncertainty—constant worry about whether grades will hold up, goals will be achieved, and whether the future will ever become clear. Despite these recurring fears, success often follows. Still, the fear of failure lingers, creating a loop of anxiety.

Optimism, on the other hand, provides clarity and strength. It fuels the drive to set meaningful goals and empowers you to pursue greatness. For instance, I aspire to become an orthopedic back surgeon. Yes, it will require a long time in school, and that is one of my biggest concerns. I know I'm not the smartest person, but I am willing to push myself harder to succeed.

Optimism isn't just about blind hope—it's about putting in the work. Even though I'm an optimist, I understand that some challenges, like chemistry, require a lot of effort. To get a good grade, I have to work hard, study late at night, and sometimes even ask the teacher tons of questions. But all that effort pays off, as I see better results every day. It's the same with volleyball—if I don't practice, my performance on the court reflects that, and it can make me feel like I've failed. However, when I practice daily, I gain confidence because I know I'm improving.

Yet, even with all that effort, doubts can creep in. Thoughts like “What if I fail?” or “What if my dreams fall apart, leading to financial ruin?” weigh heavily on you, like stones in a backpack that drag you down. Pessimism will always be there, lurking in the background, but you have to push those negative thoughts out of your mind, believe in yourself, and let go of your insecurities. Nothing in life is free. You have to work hard to get what you want. If you want to feel confident, show that you're trying and putting in the effort every day. In the end, it's optimism that gives you the strength to keep moving forward—believing in a future where you can overcome challenges and achieve your goals. Optimism is power, and it's what turns hard work into success.

“In the end, it's optimism that gives you the strength to keep moving forward—believing in a future where you can overcome challenges and achieve your goals.”

EMILIO MENDEZ

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn’t do than by the ones you did do, so throw off the bowlines, sail away from safe harbor, catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore, Dream, Discover.”
– Mark Twain

I’m scared. Scared of not being good enough. Scared, one day, I’ll be faced with a challenge and fall short, knowing that I could have overcome it past all expectations. Scared, one day I won’t be able to provide myself with a future. Scared I’ll look at myself in the mirror 20 years from now and be disappointed. Scared of being a failure. This fear has driven me away from life, friendships, relationships, jobs, and most importantly, joy.

In all my 16 years of living, I have always lived within my “comfort zone,” never leaving, never really changing, just growing. But as I grew, so did my comfort zone. As I grew bigger, taller, and smarter, my comfort zone grew as well. My environment bore many fruits, such as my peers, parents, friends and opportunities. My genetics and environments

shouldered the burden of reality for me throughout my life, providing a misleading yet comforting fog around me. I was conscious of such fog, but scared to leave it.

However, one day I woke up and found the fog which once shrouded my life protruded upon by a black smoke that sprung from flame and burnt down my home. At that moment, I had never felt such depravity. It was as if someone had robbed my heart. God was my only option that day, for he was the only reason I was able to smile.

We had to move. It was a quiet, and simple home. Despite this, I was still engulfed in fear. Losing my home viciously forced me out of my comfort zone. Thankfully, school started up, a routine appeared, and my life settled. School gave me a way to work things out, it also provided me with an opportunity to escape my despairing reality. I was able to smile again. Then the homework came, and with it, stress. This stress caused me to take long walks to clear my head. Long walks became my therapy. And with this therapy came thought, and with thought, came a solution. I know what God does for me is good. So if God is on my side, then how could fear possibly stop me from doing anything?

However, even with my “newfound” ideology, I could never truly get rid of the fear. But I realized it was never about not having fear. But being able to cast fear aside and live life to its fullest anyway. And such was my choice. To cast fear aside, throw off the bowlines, sail away from safe harbor, catch the trade winds in [my] sails. Explore, dream, discover.



Emilio Mendez is a junior at Trinity School of Texas. He wants to become a civil engineer. He loves his family, his cat, and money. But he loves God even more.



Austin Robinson attends Trinity School of Texas and plans to become a Bass Pro champion. He enjoys playing basketball and fishing in his free time.

AUSTIN ROBINSON

*“If I fished only to catch fish,
my fishing trips would have
ended a long time ago”*

– Zane Grey

Most of my weekends are spent either fishing or playing basketball. Basketball is my favorite, but when it comes to fishing, it's a no-brainer. When I just need a day to kick back and relax, I can always rely on fishing. Sometimes I just fish for the enjoyment of it or the reeling of a fish and saying “It's a five-pounder!” Then you get to tell everyone you caught a “five pounder,” when it was really only two. Sometimes fishing isn't just to catch fish—it's for the memories.

Some fishing memories go well and you catch tons of fish, but others go south like this one. On this fishing trip, it was my cousin and I who went to a fishing spot we had found. It was a little gloomy and cloudy that day, which made it perfect to fish. We had set up our rods, with my cousin using a top water lure (with two treble hooks), and me using an artificial lure on a Texas rig. Once we hooked our lures up, we started fishing.

About an hour into fishing, we were three fish in, and it started

to get slightly windy. Once the wind picked up, the line from the reels started to swing effortlessly towards me. My cousin slowly reeled in, trying to catch this giant that was following his lure. After he reeled in, unsuccessful at catching the fish, he went for a long cast to “attempt” to catch it. He tightened his grip, loosened the drag on the reel, and planted his feet to where he could get a good cast. As he did this, I was about five feet to the left of him, casting into the weeds. My cousin finally went to cast and whipped my arm with his lure. One barb from each treble hook went into my arm. My cousin looked around, clueless of where his lure went. We both simultaneously looked at my arm and saw the two hooks deep into it.

I dropped my rod, with it still being cast out, and started freaking out, realizing my worst nightmare had come; it was like being pinched by a crab. My adrenaline was still high so I couldn't feel much. My first thought was to call my dad, but then I realized that I had seen enough Bass Master tournaments to learn how to get a hook out. Once I got the hook out of my arm, I was relieved, free of the thought of yanking the hook out.

Since my rod was left on the dock, I had to go back to retrieve it. On the end of the line was a three-pound bass. This made me realize that not all fishing trips are just to catch fish; they are about the memories. And the lesson I learned from this was to never be around my cousin when he is casting. Not all fishing trips have a good ending—but this one definitely did.

JENNIFER WAGNER

“The lesson is that you can still make mistakes and be forgiven.”

– Robert Downey, Jr.

Everybody in this world makes mistakes. The hardest thing to do is forgive. It does not matter how many mistakes someone makes, you can and should always forgive because we all only live once.

People will always judge you for the mistakes you made in the past, and they do not understand how much such judgment hurts somebody. I went through a lot of bad mental health crises because of people not being able to forgive and making the worst out of my situation. Having friends who understand the importance of forgiveness and who support me in my moments of weakness have been very important in maintaining my stability. These friends not only offer me their forgiveness, but also remind me of the importance of forgiving myself. In my relationships, forgiveness has been a game-changer. Holding grudges only hurts everyone involved.

Knowing that mistakes are normal has helped me accept myself

more. Instead of beating myself up for not being perfect, I see mistakes as chances to learn and improve. This mindset has made me more resilient and kinder to myself, helping me better handle life’s ups and downs. By choosing to forgive, I’ve been able to heal and strengthen my bonds with friends and family. Life is not about ignoring the hurt but about addressing it and then letting it go. This has made my relationships deeper and more meaningful.

Lastly, the Robert Downey quote ties in with my faith. I believe that a stable life has God at the center, and I often seek guidance from Him. Knowing that divine forgiveness is always available reassures me that I can always find a way back, no matter how many times I mess up. This belief gives me a solid foundation and helps me make better choices, keeping me grounded.

In the end, forgiveness isn’t about forgetting what happened or pretending the hurt didn’t exist—it’s about choosing to move forward and not letting those mistakes define us. By learning to forgive others, and more importantly, ourselves, we open the door to growth, peace, and stronger connections. Mistakes will always be a part of life, but how we handle them is what really matters. With forgiveness, we have the power to heal and make our relationships and ourselves better. And knowing that God is always there to forgive us reminds me that, no matter what, I always have the chance to make things right. It’s this understanding that keeps me grounded and helps me keep moving forward, no matter how tough things get.



Jennifer Wagner is a junior at Trinity and is hoping to be able to go to an Ivy League school. She enjoys playing sports and spending time with her family and friends.







