

# JOURNEY

Agoura High School's English Honor Society presents  
the 2019 Literary Magazine



*When I Look at Her* by Cassidy Jacobsen

# Editors' Note

Producing the 2018-2019 Literary Magazine, *Journey*, has been a great pleasure for us. When a board member first brought up the idea of producing a literary magazine in August, we immediately realized that this would be a great way to bring together talented students while also showcasing the amazing artwork and writing that these students have created. We would like to thank our incredible Parent Faculty Club for making this dream a reality; without their funding we would not have been able to print the Literary Magazine. We would also like to thank our advisor, Ms. Davis, for assisting us along the way, and the English Honor Society members for being a part of this organization. However, we also could not have produced this magazine without the talented artists and writers who submitted their works. Whether or not their work was published in the magazine, we are extremely grateful for these students and their willingness to share their art or writing. Although we tried to feature as many submissions as possible, due to the large amount of submissions we received, not all of them were able to be placed in the magazine. To view all accepted submissions, including full short stories, please visit the website: [www.ahsliterarymagazine.weebly.com](http://www.ahsliterarymagazine.weebly.com).

We are a chapter of the National English Honor Society. For more information on English Honor Society or questions regarding the literary magazine, visit our website at [www.agouraehs.weebly.com](http://www.agouraehs.weebly.com) or email [agouraehs@gmail.com](mailto:agouraehs@gmail.com).

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**AHS English Honor Society Board 2018-19:** Izzy Lopez (president), Sogol Gharaei (vice president), Nicky Munson (secretary), Genna Gams (public relations)

## AHS English Honor Society 2018-2019



**Top row (left to right):** Advisor Marnie Davis, Sogol Gharaei, Stella Kotik, Joaquin Najera, Ian Conolly, Adina Beck, Nicholas Munson, Izzy Lopez, Maylian Wu, Ginny Ghang, Cassidy Cho, Hannah Jo, Lee Bahir, Itai Tismansky

**Bottom row (left to right):** Kiana Brizendine, Jake Gerber, Michaela Springer, Hadara Gordon, Genna Gams, Alexander Munson

**Absent from picture:** Danica Kern, Daniel Nathanson, Lola Case, Oulu Zhang, Quinn Akemon, Shiran Erlich

# little haiku letter for you

by Ella Michael

Do I tell you that  
I still write poems about  
You, who holds my heart?

Or do I tell you  
It was not love, or was it?  
- That I don't know which.

Maybe I tell you  
That our story is not done  
(You say otherwise).

Do you picture me  
Here, counting out syllables  
Like a lovesick fool?

For I loved you as  
Someone to trust and care for.  
But was I in love?

That is the question  
I revisit like the hand  
Of an antique clock.

So I say goodbye  
To a story that could have  
Been a fairytale.

And I say hello  
To a life I have yet to  
Introduce me to.







*Broken Doll, Woolsey Fire by Blake Sabbagh*

## **Flames** by Maxwell Diamond

Fire flying from afar,  
Flames licking at the wall.  
People screaming in fright,  
Desperately trying to call.

Alas, it was all in vain,  
With no time to pack,  
People scrambling to flee,  
With just the clothes on their back.

Memories left behind,  
Embers gnawing at picture frames.  
Old books burning to ash,  
A house gone up in flames.

# Success - 20 Feet Ahead

by Kiana Brizendine

My mom used to tell me, "The difference between a successful person and a failure is how hard they work." In the near-future, I see myself in the successful category.

I squint my eyes to focus on the scene at the top of the mountain above me; wind dances around a twisty tree's branches, and sunlight bounces off the leaves and cascades onto the brush below. Soon I will rest there, and I will be a success. When I look at the bottom of the mountain, I will think: "It's all so little."

A wooden sign with an arrow pointing up introduces me to the trail: "Success is this way!"

I hitch my backpack onto my shoulders. As I take my first bouncy step, my right foot plunges deep into a muddy rutt.

Balancing on one foot, I shake off my shoe and whip my backpack off my shoulders to rummage for a pack of tissues, an extra pair of socks, anything. Finding nothing of the sort, I zip my backpack closed again... so what if my shoe is wet? The mountain awaits.

Setting out again, I barely dodge a red, gray, and white crime scene at my feet. A mouse drowning in the mud puddle, turned inside out, flies zipping about. I avert my eyes and find I have to plug my nose, too.

"Suffer now to succeed later." I can endure more than this—this is nothing! Mincing around the mouse, I get back into the groove of walking, doing my best to ignore the lactic acid building up in my legs.

The sun inches its way across the sky, approaching the horizon. So many successful people have made it up this trail in one day, or so they say. Considering all the work I have put in so far, I expected the trailhead to be much farther away.

My legs refuse to go on, but if I stop, I will fail. I'm better than that—even if my current circumstances point to a future where I am unsuccessful and mediocre. I can't live a life where I never feel the warmth of sunlight, the gentle whisper of the wind, or the soft cushion of the brush beneath me.

My knees buckle and I sink into yet more mud which seeps into my clothes, my ears, my hair. I can't do it anymore. Limp, I slide down the mountain until another wooden signpost stops my descent. Peering through the mud caked on my face, I read the sign: "Success—20 feet ahead." It points down and to the right, veering away from the regular trail which continues straight up.

I must have made it.

I crawl out of the mud, wipe my hands on my jeans, and trudge down the trail to success. I turn a corner, but instead of my twisty tree in dappled sunlight, I face a boxy, beige building. Standing in front of it is a lanky man with an awkward grin who pushes his glasses up the bridge of his nose.

"Welcome to success! You're a lawyer now," he says. He escorts me through colorless halls, past a tiny window, and into a lifeless cubicle. Harsh fluorescent lights cascade onto the beige walls while the AC spits cold gusts of air, rustling a mountainous pile of paperwork. I know what I'll see if I ever look through that tiny window. But I'd rather be successful.



# My Life's Performance by Ivan Law

Throughout the past seventeen years of my life, there has always been a part of me that holds a question that I fail to answer each time it protrudes from the cracks in the walls I have built around it. "Who am I?" Ever since I could understand the concepts of being different, being abandoned, being judged, and being loved, I have asked myself this question.

At the age of five, my parents moved my sister and me into the city of Calabasas from Downtown Los Angeles. After struggling with their business, the rent was too much for my parents, and we were forced to abandon our home and move in with my great aunt in Los Angeles. Tensions arose between my mom and father until he left us, shattering the world around me into millions of pieces. My mom wanted the best for us, so she got a job driving the bus in the Las Virgenes Unified School District (LVUSD). Though we lived in LA, we still made the journey to our schools in Calabasas as they provided a better education than most of the schools in the Los Angeles area. Even though it was painfully hard to wake up at 4:30 in the morning, we continued to drive two hours to attend the LVUSD schools.

I knew from the time I started in school that I was different from all of the other people who surrounded me. In a sea of porcelain faces, I was the only one who resembled the soil beneath the pavement. People would always touch my hair making remarks such as, "It's so squishy" or "Why is your hair so weird?" The comments stripped me of my identity piece by piece until there was nothing left of me. These subtle actions caused me to feel as if I were not meant to be where I was, that I did not belong in that place. I also knew I did not belong in the community I lived in. Whenever I would look around at other African American boys walking down the street in Downtown Los Angeles, I could see the obvious reasons as to why I did not belong. They didn't care about school but were more interested in becoming professional athletes. I dressed differently, I spoke differently, I acted differently, I am different.

I constantly felt as if everyone would stare at me whenever talks of racism, African Americans, or discrimination arose. I was included with all the other children, yet in my mind, I was isolated because of the color of my skin. I encased my feelings of pain in a cage to protect myself, but I now realize that I only inflicted more pain upon myself. These experiences cause me to tread lightly when it comes to speaking out with others. A fear of offending others presides over me, forcing me to stay silent when ideas run freely in my mind. I now realize that offending others is a part of life, and I must speak my mind if I hope to make a difference in this world we live in. Silence is my enemy that I fight every day.

Many have gone through trials in their lives that test their endurance and challenge their beliefs. We all encounter them each day when we wake up to perform in front of thousands that never truly see who we are. The masses only see the side of us that seems to be joyous and unconflicted on social media, and through the face we present to them. We are not a victim of our circumstances; we can make a difference with our time to change those barriers. We can find out who we are and become who we want to be.



Equal Work, Equal Pay by Aliyah Santi









# The Dreamer

by William Cutler

Arthur erased a mistake he made in his log. He mused about where the mark went, and how it could be erased so completely. For the now thirteenth month in a row, he awoke at precisely 7:25 A.M., logged his time, and wrote a small summary of his dream. Something about vines, ravens, and boa constrictors. He shuddered at recalling these details; it was not a pleasant dream. But he did take comfort in his scrupulous log of his unconscious imagination. He fancied it gave him a sense of observation and, thereby, control.

He dressed, showered, ate his protein cube, and headed out into the hallway of the apartment building and down the stairs. There were no problems with the elevator itself, but Arthur hated the confinement, especially if a neighbor were present and he were obligated to converse. Once out into the world, he walked with purpose towards the bus stop, briefcase in one hand, lunch in the other. A passerby greeted Arthur with a friendly "Good Morning." Mildly startled, Arthur reflexively mumbled an attempt at reciprocation and continued on.

As he rounded a corner, he collided with an immaculately dressed man in a three-piece with shaded spectacles. The impact knocked the briefcase out of Arthur's hand; its contents spilled messily onto the otherwise neat, grey sidewalk.

"Watch it!" the suit barked.

Arthur mumbled a 'sorry' and looked up sheepishly at the man. Arthur could not see his eyes behind the shades, but still sensed the man was following something or someone with his eyes. The man continued at a determined pace, without any further regard to Arthur or the situation that just unfolded. Arthur collected his papers, but realized he was now running late. He quickly turned the last corner, but the bus was just leaving. It would be thirty minutes before the next bus arrived.

It was such a rarity that Arthur had nothing to do. He walked into a nearby park and meandered about, making small talk with the pigeons.

"Oh, I'm doing just fine," he quietly responded to the inquiries of one bird.

Arthur turned his attention to the scenery; he found the small piece of green to be quite peaceful. It was circular, roughly one hundred feet in diameter. A thin dirt path bisected the park, with rows of small flowers adorning either side. One single oak tree in the center dominated the small saplings spread throughout, its canopy covering much of the park and a small stream that travelled perpendicular to the path. Under the imposing oak, Arthur sat on a bench next to the small stream. He observed, amidst the gentle current, a frog eyeing a buzzing fly, waiting for the fly to make its final mistake. Arthur found himself rooting for the insect, but the amphibian found its mark and earned a snack. The pesky fly was no more.

Arthur noticed then a small plaque on the base of the oak tree: "Planted in memory of R-- Brad----." Some of the etching had been worn away.

An official in uniform was approaching others in the park, requesting to see their park passes. Arthur searched his briefcase for his, but without luck. He now nervously checked his pockets and his wallet; he must have left it in the apartment. Arthur quickly moved out of the park as the official walked in his direction, calling out to him. He wanted to avoid the confrontation of not having a park pass, and walked briskly, but the officer could legally run faster.





# Ancient Fear

By Ella Michael

This fear of the dark I have,

Is only a twinge in my heart

When I go downstairs to take my medicine

- when I forget to -

And I think to myself:

"I love the stars too fondly to be fearful of the  
night."

A quote from somewhere that I forget.

But this fear that I feel,

It is from my ancestors.

Years and centuries and ages ago

When fire was safe,

And night meant death.

And caves flickered with handprints,

And the red glow of embers.

This fear that I feel only rarely now

Is from my ancestors.

I carry this ancient fear

With pride.

For look how far we have come.

Surely we can go even further?



# Wisdom of the Sea

by Sogol Gharaei

Fresh air fills my lungs  
saltwater brings me ease  
and my feet are planted in the grass  
far from grains of sand  
I know the dangers of the sea  
so loving yet cruel

my lesson is in session  
and I must confess I am in a trance  
I know the dangers of the sea  
I search the golden sky  
as my feet bury themselves deeper  
the white fingers of the sea graze my skin

I jump back  
I know the dangers of the sea  
my phone is in my hand  
and through my phone screen  
I feel at ease  
Slowly, I go forward  
the graze is gentle  
slowly, wind's palm pushes me farther  
even when it knows the dangers of the sea

as the water grabs my ankles  
I fall in love with the beautiful danger  
I lure myself into the trap  
no pity is given by the sea  
just a smirk as my back hit the sharp rock  
as pain erupts and travels over my body  
I can't cry because I knew the dangers of the sea

trusting the sea left me in pain on the grains that once covered me  
the cushion of the earth is gone  
even the golden sky is ashen black  
my phone is swimming in the water  
none of it matters  
once again  
I trusted the sea even when I knew the danger



*Cut It* by Zoey Zirlin



# Patient Zero

by Adina Beck

I woke up that morning with a throat as dry as the desert. Mr. Roth, my English teacher, would chastise me for using the cliché. However, Mr. Roth isn't reading this, and I've racked my melting brains for the past several minutes trying to think of a comparison both spectacularly original and more apt- to no avail. Anyways, my throat wasn't just dry but hurt terribly, like I'd skinned it on the pavement. Well, it was mid-winter, and there was "something" going around, so I prepared myself some chamomile tea, choked down my Cheerios, and walked to school per usual.

Of course, in retrospect, I should have realized something was catastrophically wrong when I sat down, achy and shivering, at my desk. I should have just stayed home, asked my mom to leave her shift at Sears, and slurped chicken soup in bed to the background noise of daytime television. In short: isolate myself in a heroic attempt to protect the healthy populace from the "something." However, unfortunately for humanity, I've never been one for self-sacrifice. That, and I had an important English test in first period. I was committed to continuing on with my day like normal, ignoring my symptoms entirely and devoting my whole attention and undiminished mental faculties to learning.

Things did not go as planned.

At question thirty-three of my exam on Camus (I knew it had something to do with allusion but I was losing coherency) the room started spinning. The walls elongated and shrunk, a miasma of oil slick haze and jagged neon lines dancing in front of my eyes. I was transfixed. Finally, someone had added a bit of color to the place! The grout lines of the blue, tiled floor stretched with the loose ease of Silly Putty, collapsing into a shimmering dark pit at the center of my vision.

I blacked out. I think. The desk was hard under my pounding skull and I vaguely registered that my drool was soaking into the Scantron. Mr. Roth looked up from his desk, dignified mustache bristling, and mouthed words I couldn't understand. The next thing I knew, I felt the soft, cool hand of class president, Vivian Malone, on my shoulder, guiding me gently to the nurse's office. I stumbled through the quad, leaning heavily on her, half-conscious, my knees sending up jolts of pain at each step. My head lolled uselessly against her shoulder, and I got an unappreciated look down her blouse.

Eventually, a shambling mess, I was delivered to Ms. Bracken, who busied herself fetching the thermometer while I stretched out on the cot and examined the various anatomical posters on the wall. I felt desperately tired, my eyelids, indecisive, fluttering open and shut - only pain keeping me awake. The ache in my knees had not abated, instead spread up my nervous system like a live wire. My brain pulsed against the confines of my skull. My hands shook and the tepid indoor air felt like icy fire. Through bleary eyes I saw Ms. Bracken as a giant crow descending upon me, talons outstretched, and as she stuck a thermometer into my panting mouth, the plastic seemed to me as tough and deadly-sharp as a claw. I hacked out a hoarse and muffled scream, lurching weakly from the shadow of her blustering wings. Finally, the thing was removed from my lips, and I saw her eyes boggle comically at the readout. Her face went deathly pale, her hands flitting around, impotent hummingbirds, finally perching on the wall phone.

**This story is continued on the literary magazine website: [www.ahsliterarymagazine.weebly.com](http://www.ahsliterarymagazine.weebly.com)**



# Built on Bandages

by Rachel Perlmutter

am I the only one who can hear it?

*my eyes close*

yes, there it is again;

that underlying chaos that exists in the formidable Quiet.

it bounces off the walls and echoes through my skull,

pounding like a drum without a beat

so intensely I can no longer decipher it from my very own thoughts.

the whispers of the Silence manifest into screams.

am I the only one who can hear it?

*I inhale deeply, holding my breath.*

the Emptiness assumes its own presence, filling the entirety of the room.

I feel my heart bruise and my legs collapse beneath me,

suddenly I'm on the ground.

the Quiet is staring me straight in the face

and I can feel Her smiling at at me through the darkness, like an old friend.

She holds me down and the immensity of Her roaring voice grows louder and louder.

am I the only one?

*I exhale and sit up.*

She strikes me again through the stillness.

face held against floor, my breath quickens.

searing and seeping through my being,

Her words weigh down my body.

even at the thought of getting back up, I am already down again,

over and over I try until I cannot move.

*I call for help.*

who can hear it?

the feeling of fear becomes so common it is numbing.

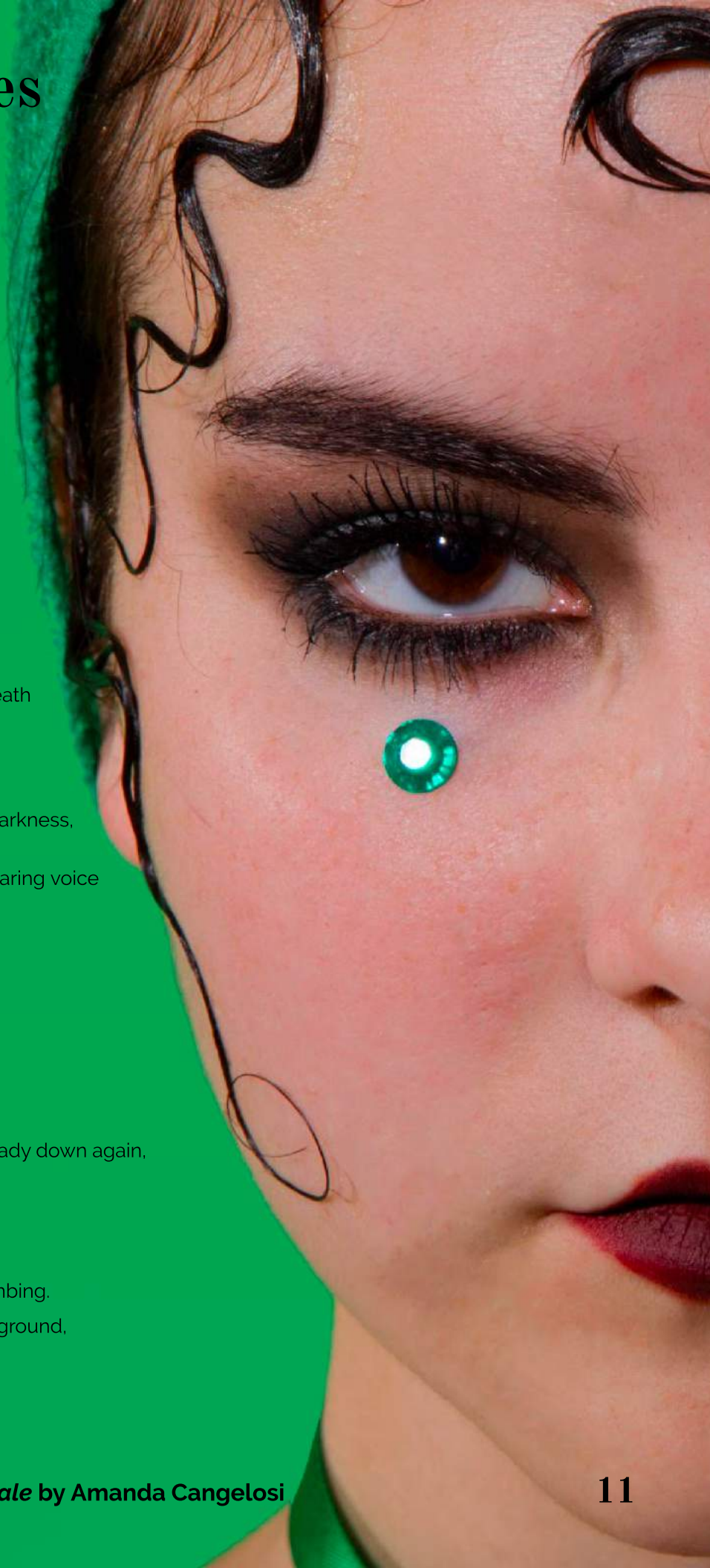
I am left but a void speck of nothingness on the ground,

all alone with the Silence.

I am built on bandages.

*my eyes open,*

She is only but a reflection.







# Move On

by Leenoy Margalit

I think that I think about you more than I should  
I know that you think about me less than I wish you  
would

I wonder if you're as happy as you look in your  
pictures

I hope you are—

I hope the years have been kinder to you than  
they were to me

I stalk your high school smiles

And I wonder if I'll ever be happy like that

You are there with your friends and a drink in  
your hand

You wear nonchalance well

The way it has never really fit me

You are a world I do not know away

In a time zone I can't catch up to

You have moved 7,000 miles on

And here I am

Learning what you have already  
mastered

Trying to grasp what it means

To let go