

AITCHISON COLLEGE, LAHORE

CHRONICLES

2025-26



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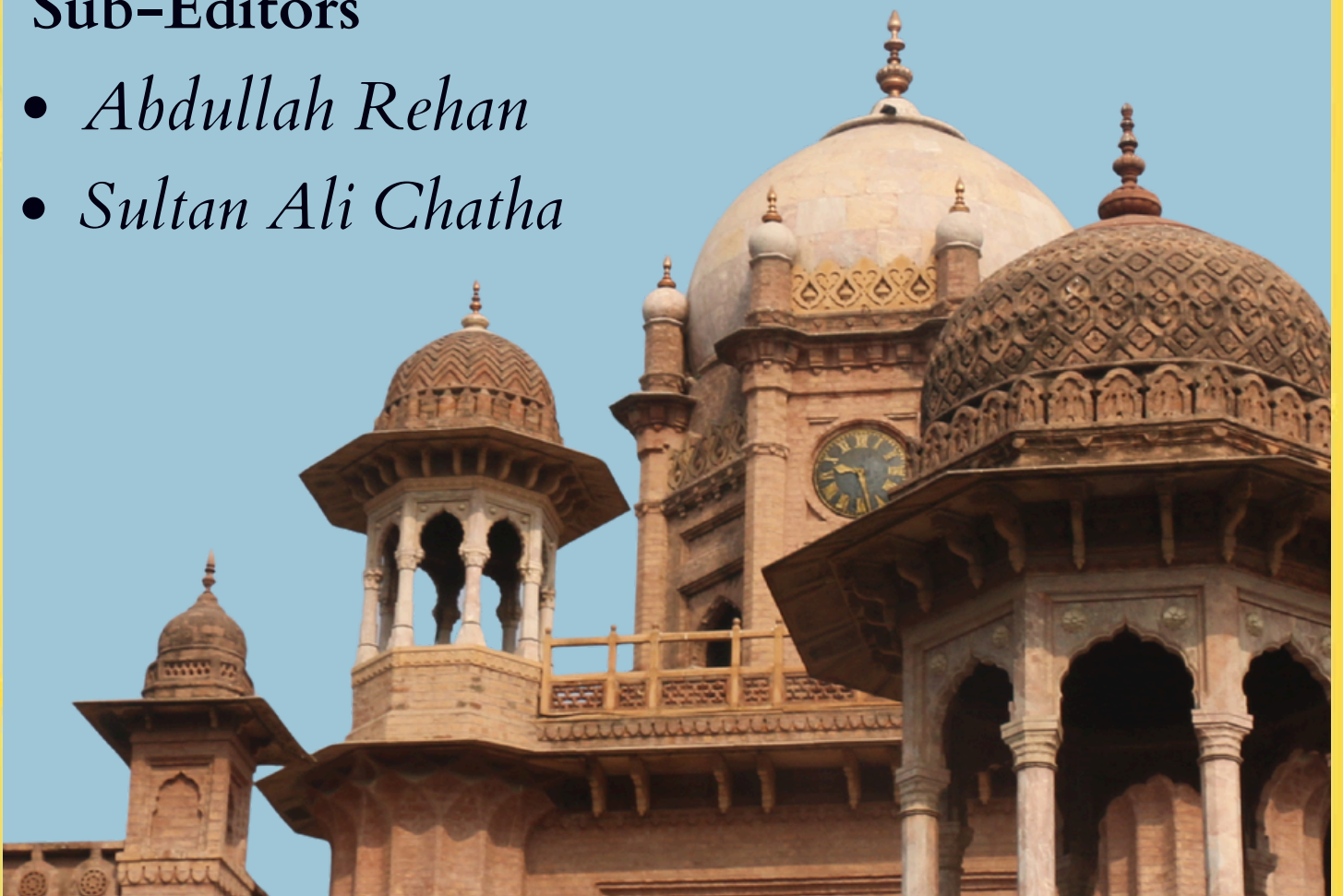


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A Note from the Editorial Board



Guiding the editorial team throughout the process has been a rewarding experience, and it has been inspiring to witness the dedication, creativity, and commitment shown by the students involved. The publication stands as a testament to the talent and intellectual curiosity within our school. From thoughtful articles to creative pieces, each contribution reflects the enthusiasm and effort of its writer. I commend the editorial team for their hard work in bringing this edition to life. I hope that readers will find these pages both engaging and reflective of the vibrant spirit of our school community.

Ma'am Amina Farrukh Chaudhary
(Staff Advisor)



As a Staff Advisor, it has been a privilege to support the students in producing this year's publication. Their initiative, teamwork, and attention to detail throughout the editorial process have been truly commendable. This magazine is more than a collection of articles; it is a celebration of student intellect and creativity. The editorial team has worked diligently to ensure that every piece included here meets a high standard of quality and thoughtfulness. I extend my congratulations to all who contributed and hope that this publication will be both enjoyed and remembered by its readers. Here's to another successful year for AC Chronicles.

Ma'am Aaiza Nadeem Ghauri
(Staff Advisor)

A Note from the Editorial Board



Dear Readers,

Our school is alive in all the obvious ways, but these pieces carve out the quieter corners: the half thoughts that linger after class, the ache that does not have a name yet, the small, stubborn jokes we tell ourselves to keep going. Poetry and prose, yes, but mostly proof that we are paying attention.

Here it is – another quiet landing of voices that somehow refused to stay silent. The pages you are going through are built from late night drafts, crossed out lines, and the kind of courage it takes to submit something when you are not entirely sure the words are ready.

I am proud of every contributor who trusted us with their work, and prouder still of the brilliant community that keeps making space for it. You are reading the evidence that we are still thinking, still feeling, still writing it down.

Thank you for meeting us here.

Chaudhry Muhammad Raayed
(Chief Editor)



As Sub-Editor, it has been a privilege to assist in shaping this year's publication. This magazine would not exist without the dedication of the writers and the effort of the editorial team who worked tirelessly to ensure that every piece reflects the quality and spirit of our school. I hope that as you read through these pages, you appreciate the creativity, thought, and effort that has gone into each contribution.

Abdullah Bin Rehan
(Sub-Editor)



Producing this edition has been a collaborative effort, and I would like to thank all the writers, editors, designers, and staff advisors who dedicated their time and effort to bringing it together. Their enthusiasm and commitment are truly commendable. Serving as Sub-Editor for this publication has been a meaningful opportunity to support the editorial process and to contribute the final design of this publication. I am grateful to have played a part in helping bring these voices together in one collection.

Sultan Ali Chatha
(Sub-Editor)

Culinary Diaries



Chicken Karahi: A Wonderfully Welcoming Meal

First, I collected a small bunch of juicy tomatoes, and a bunch of fragrant thyme as well as bay leaves. There was something grounding about the simplicity of it all: chicken, whole black pepper, tomatoes, bay leaves and ginger. I started by heating cooking oil in a pan, letting the tomatoes soften until they released their juices. The chicken followed, releasing a rich aroma that filled the kitchen.

Then began the slow ritual of adding broth. The world outside seemed to pause as I focused only on the pot before me, watching the karahi transform from bland chicken to beautiful delicacy.

When the chicken finally reached that perfect balance, tender but still with a little bite. I stirred in a generous handful of black pepper.

I finished it with a sprinkle of green chillis before spooning it into a bowl.

Sitting down by the window, I took the first bite. I was instantly transported to the days where my mother would make it for me along with a hot steaming Roti. It tasted like warmth, like patience turned into flavor. She always made it on rainy days and dished it out to the entire family. She was always the Centerstone, always bringing the family together and leaving everyone with smiles. By the time I finished, the sun had begun to sink low, painting the kitchen in gold. I wiped the tear rolling down my cheek. I wished our entire family could reunite once again for a meal but alas everyone has their own paths to traverse. I washed the dishes slowly, still feeling the quiet contentment that only a day spent cooking can bring. The Karahi wasn't just dinner, it was a diary entwined with flavor.

Recipe

- 120 ml (120 ml) oil
- 1 small chicken, bone in and cut into
curry pieces (approx 700-800g or 1.3-
1.7lb
- 5 medium sized (600 g) tomatoes,
very finely diced (do NOT blend or
purée)
- 1 bulb garlic, minced approximately
2.5 tbsp
- 2 tablespoon ginger, minced
- 1-2 teaspoon salt or to taste
- 2 teaspoon paprika/kashmiri red chilli
(essential for a red colour)
- 1.5 teaspoon crushed black pepper
- 0.5 teaspoon coriander powder
- 1 teaspoon kalonji onion seed,
optional
- 2 green chillies slit in half lengthwise
- ¼ cup (25 g) ginger cut into
matchstick pieces

Abdullah Bin Rehan
H1



Masoor Daal on a Heavy Afternoon

I took out a cup of masoor daal and washed it slowly, letting the grains slip through my fingers as the cloudy water cleared. The rhythm of it was almost meditative, as if my hands were doing the thinking for me. I set aside an onion, a few cloves of garlic, turmeric, salt, and cumin, ingredients so ordinary they felt dependable. On days like this, I didn't want excitement; I wanted certainty.

As the oil heated and the onions softened, their smell wrapped around the kitchen, bringing with it a sense of familiarity I hadn't realized I was craving. I added the garlic and listened to it sizzle gently, then poured in the daal and water. The pot began its slow simmer, and I stayed nearby, stirring occasionally, watching the lentils soften and lose their sharp edges. In that quiet moment, I felt myself doing the same.

When the daal thickened, I prepared a simple tarka, pouring the sizzling cumin over the surface. I served it with plain rice and sat alone at the table. The first bite was warm and grounding, reminding me of days when my mother would make daal without asking if anyone wanted it, because she already knew they needed it. As I finished the meal, I felt lighter, as though the daal had absorbed some of the weight I had been carrying. It wasn't just food, it was a small act of care, given and received.

Recipe

Masoor Daal (Red Lentils)

Ingredients

- 1 cup masoor daal
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 2-3 cloves garlic, chopped
- ½ tsp turmeric
- Salt to taste
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 2 tbsp cooking oil or ghee
- Water as needed

Method

Wash the masoor daal until the water runs clear.

In a pot, add daal, turmeric, salt, and water (enough to cover by about 2 inches).

Cook on medium heat until the daal softens and thickens, stirring occasionally.

In a small pan, heat oil or ghee and add cumin seeds. Let them crackle.

Add chopped onion and cook until translucent, then add garlic.

Pour this tarka over the cooked daal and mix gently.

Sultan Chatha
C2-H



A Flavorful Chicken and Potatoes

I peeled the potatoes carefully, letting them pile up beside me, uneven but honest. The chicken sat ready, familiar and unassuming. I gathered ginger, garlic, salt, and black pepper, ingredients that had lived in our kitchen for as long as I could remember. This dish didn't require attention to detail, it required patience, something I was learning slowly.

As the chicken browned in the hot oil, the sound filled the space around me. I stood there, turning each piece gently, feeling anchored by the simple act of cooking. When the ginger and garlic went in, the aroma reminded me of evenings when the whole house would begin to smell like dinner, when voices echoed from room to room and everyone knew they'd soon be together.

I added the potatoes and a little water, covered the pot, and let it cook slowly. Every few minutes, I lifted the lid, checking on it as though checking on myself. When it was ready, the chicken was tender and the potatoes soft enough to break with a spoon. I ate it with fresh roti, each bite steady and reassuring. It tasted like home, like peace, like the kind of meal that reminds me of my mother and whispers "I'm here" even when things don't always go to plan.

Recipe

- ½ kg chicken
- 2 medium potatoes, cubed
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 1 tbsp ginger-garlic paste
- Salt to taste
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 3 tbsp cooking oil
- Water as needed

Method

Heat oil in a pot and add onions. Cook until soft and lightly golden.

Add ginger-garlic paste and stir for 1 minute.

Add chicken, salt, and black pepper. Stir well.

Cook until chicken changes color and releases moisture.

Add potatoes and enough water to partially cover everything.

Cover and cook on low heat until chicken is tender and potatoes are soft.

Chaudhary Muhammad Raayed

H2



Tea, Toast, and Remembering those who matter

I boiled water for tea and placed two slices of bread into the toaster. The quiet hum of the kitchen felt comforting, like a pause between thoughts. I brewed the tea with milk and sugar, stirring until it reached the exact color I remembered from childhood. It was a small detail, but it mattered.

I sat down and dipped the toast into the tea, letting it soak just enough. The taste instantly transported me to evenings spent with my grandparents, sitting beside them in silence, feeling safe without needing to speak. There was no rush then, no expectations just the shared understanding that being together was enough.

As I finished the cup, I felt a quiet ache, the kind that comes from missing something you once took for granted. Still, there was comfort in knowing I could recreate that feeling, even briefly. I rinsed the cup and plate slowly, carrying that warmth with me. Sometimes, the simplest meals leave the deepest marks.

Recipe

Ingredients

1 cup water
1 cup milk
1–2 tsp tea leaves
Sugar to taste
Bread slices

Method

Boil water in a saucepan and add tea leaves.
Let it boil for 1–2 minutes, then add milk.
Add sugar and let it simmer until the color deepens.
Strain into a cup.
Toast bread slices until golden.
Serve warm, dipping the toast into the tea

Raayed Khaqan
H2



A Humble Vegetable Curry for a Quiet Evening

I chopped carrots, peas, and a single tomato, arranging them neatly on the cutting board. The repetition of the knife hitting the wood felt grounding, each cut pulling me further into the moment. I heated oil and added cumin seeds, listening to them crackle as they released their warmth into the kitchen. It was a sound I had heard countless times growing up, yet it never lost its comfort.

The vegetables went into the pot, followed by salt and a pinch of red chilli powder. I stirred slowly, watching the colors deepen and soften. As the curry simmered, I stood nearby, thinking about how many meals like this had been made without any occasion at all, just another day, another effort to nourish.

When I finally sat down to eat, the sky outside had begun to darken. The curry was simple but complete, each flavor clear and honest. It reminded me of evenings when conversation wasn't necessary, when being present was enough. By the time I washed the dishes, the kitchen felt calm, and so did I.

Recipe

Ingredients

- 1 carrot, sliced
- ½ cup peas
- 1 tomato, chopped
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- ½ tsp red chilli powder
- ½ tsp turmeric
- Salt to taste
- 2 tbsp cooking oil

Method

Heat oil in a pan and add cumin seeds. Let them crackle.

Add onion and cook until soft.

Add tomato, turmeric, chilli powder, and salt.

Cook until tomato breaks down.

Add carrots and peas. Stir well.

Add a little water, cover, and cook on low heat until vegetables are tender.

Lajwar Jamal
H2



Late-Night Keema

I started cooking much later than I should have. The house was quiet, the kind of quiet that makes every small sound feel louder than it is. I chopped onions without thinking too much, letting my mind wander as the knife hit the board. The keema had already been defrosted, sitting there like a decision I had finally made.

When the oil heated and the onions went in, the smell spread quickly, filling the kitchen and pulling me fully into the moment. I added ginger, garlic, and the keema, breaking it apart with a spoon as it browned. There was something comforting about the repetition of it, the way the meat changed texture under my hand.

As it cooked, I thought about how many late nights in this house had ended the same way, someone hungry, tired, unwilling to sleep yet. By the time I added green chillies and a squeeze of lemon, the keema was ready. I ate it standing up, with roti straight from the pan. It wasn't nostalgic or symbolic. It was just what I needed right then, and that felt like enough.

Recipe

Mir Zain Mahmood

H2

- ½ kg chicken or beef keema
- 2 medium onions, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp ginger-garlic paste
- 2–3 green chillies, chopped
- 1 tsp red chilli powder
- ½ tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- 3 tbsp cooking oil
- Lemon juice (optional)

Method

- Heat oil in a pan and add onions. Cook until lightly golden.
- Add ginger-garlic paste and cook for 1 minute.
- Add keema, salt, turmeric, chilli powder, and coriander powder.
- Cook on medium heat, breaking up the meat, until moisture dries.
- Add green chillies and cook for another 2–3 minutes.



Breakfast Parathas

I woke up earlier than usual, not because I had to, but because my body refused to stay asleep. The dough had been resting overnight, waiting quietly in the fridge. Rolling out the parathas felt familiar, even though my hands were still half-asleep.

The tawa heated as I brushed oil over the dough, watching it puff and brown unevenly. I flipped it a little too early the first time, then laughed at myself. Some mornings don't require perfection. I served them with a fried egg and leftover achar.

Eating at the table, I remembered school mornings when my bag would be packed and forgotten, when breakfast felt rushed but necessary. Today, there was no rush. Just the sound of chewing, the warmth of tea, and the strange comfort of having nowhere else to be.

Recipe**Ingredients**

2 cups wheat flour

Water (as needed)

Salt (pinch)

Cooking oil or ghee

Method

Mix flour, salt, and water to form a soft dough.

Rest dough for 20–30 minutes.

Divide into balls, roll out, brush lightly with oil, fold, and roll again.

Heat tawa and cook paratha on medium heat.

Flip, apply oil, and cook until golden on both sides.

Serve hot with egg, yogurt, or achar.

Muhammad Ali Musa Khan

H2



Evening Fried Fish

The fish had been marinating all afternoon, quietly absorbing spices while the day went on around it. By the time I heated the oil, the sun had already started to set. The first piece hit the pan with a sharp sizzle, instantly changing the mood of the kitchen.

I turned each piece carefully, making sure the crust formed just right. The smell brought people in from other rooms, drawn without being called. When it was done, we ate together, talking over each other, reaching across the table.

It wasn't sentimental or emotional in the obvious way. It was loud, messy, and slightly chaotic. But somewhere between the laughter and the empty plates, I realized this was what I'd remember later, not the recipe, but the noise.

Recipe

Ingredients

- ½ kg fish fillets or pieces
- 1 tsp red chilli powder
- ½ tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- Salt to taste
- Lemon juice
- 3–4 tbsp cooking oil

Method

Marinate fish with spices, salt, and lemon juice for at least 30 minutes.

Heat oil in a frying pan.

Fry fish on medium heat until golden and cooked through on both sides.

Remove and drain excess oil.

Serve hot with roti or rice.

Sheikh Abdul Moiz

H2



Poetry & Prose



White Cradle

Angels descend from above,
bringing breath, bringing peace,

Veiling the oak skyscrapers
and the summits under them.

Then they rise up
to ascend; their pilgrimage.

As their sighs caress my face;
a moment of blindness,
a moment with only faith,

Within which I know that if I fall,
They will catch and carry me
beyond the shroud that wraps our world.

Chaudhry Muhammad Raayed
H2-F
18514

The Apple Tree

Looking back, I remember running through the long, lush grass, pretending that we were at battle and trying to take cover. I would always find myself behind the old apple tree in our front yard. This was my favourite spot. The thick trunk, like a bodyguard, protected me from the imaginary bullets that flew towards my body. I would lean against it, and for some reason, it was comforting to have something sturdy to lean on.

Now, it's almost ninety years old and stands perfectly centred between my house and my detached two-car garage. The base of its trunk leaves the ground at a slight angle, giving the impression that it's leaning forward. The surrounding ground is uneven and bumpy, with roots weaving in and out of the earth as if they are seeking a breath of fresh air. Unlike the rough and deeply grooved surface usually associated with trees, my tree's bark is smoother and pimple-like, with sections scaling off in sheets.

The actual trunk is only eight feet tall and not very wide, but the height and span of the branches shoot out twice that size, making it top-heavy. Although not an enormous tree, it dominates the nearby scenery. As the oldest and wisest vegetation, it demands seniority from the surrounding landscape. Over the course of one year, my apple tree takes on multiple faces, demonstrating the circle of life.

During the winter months, the apple tree is grey and lifeless. Having been stripped of all leaves, its limbs are barren and jagged. Frozen in place, they stiffly poke out into the air and are reluctant to sway, even for a harsh winter wind. The tree appears dry and brittle. The birds no longer favour it for shelter. They have abandoned their previous home for the pine trees on my neighbour's property.

The tree elicits a cold and sad feeling. It is physically present yet somehow absent at the same time. Unlike death, this is a temporary state. The tree remains silent and still during this brief hibernation. As the season shifts into summer, the apple tree slowly comes back to life. Previous monotonous shades of grey change to various shades of vivid colour.

In the summer, the apple tree reaches its full glory. Plush and green, it stands tall and proud. The branches reach out high, tickling the power lines above it. The leaves rustle carefree with delight while dancing in the wind. Full of activity and sound, it has become somewhat of an airport, as the birds continuously fly in and out of its thick foliage. Chirping and singing can be heard from early morning until late at night.

Trees are truly a marvel of nature, and if we don't protect them, we are only betraying ourselves. Trees provide food, shelter, and even the air we breathe. Without trees, life would simply cease to exist.

Wasiq Shahzad
C2-I
19703

Everything we Stand For

"Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without words
And never stops at all."

, Emily Dickinson

What is hope? Is it a feeling? It can be, but that is not hope; it is so much more than that. Hope is everything. It is what makes us; it is what breaks us. You don't define hope; hope defines you. Hope is Quaid-e-Azam, the reason Muslims still prosper. World War II didn't lead to Pakistan, hope did. Hope is a deprived nation, still engulfed in inequality, but with that glimmer that it will lead to great things, to freedom.

Hope is Martin Luther King, thrown in jail and completely isolated, but in his cell was something greater than a companion, it was hope. Hope for freedom, hope for a better tomorrow.

Hope is the refugees sitting around a campfire, singing old tunes. They are deprived of everything, but what stands with them is hope. Their bodies are covered in wounds, but their hearts are spotless, protected by hope. This is the audacity of hope.

So, hope is not a feeling, it is everything. It is everything we stand for. Hope is the reason we live, the reason we prosper. The audacity of hope is something greater than we can comprehend. Hope is not a feeling or emotion; hope is the foundation of everything in our lives.

Ahmed Naveed Aamir

C2-A

18923

Where Perseverance Commands Success

Amidst colonial grandeur and campus wide,
A legacy of knowledge, it stands with pride.

Boys in blazers, eager hearts on fire,
In classrooms and fields, they aim to aspire.

Traditions held close, where friendships are found,
Aitchison's hallowed halls, with wisdom abound.

From cricket pitches to the stage's bright light,
They learn and play from morning till night.

Their stories told in Aitchison's embrace,
Carry courage and pure wisdom's grace.

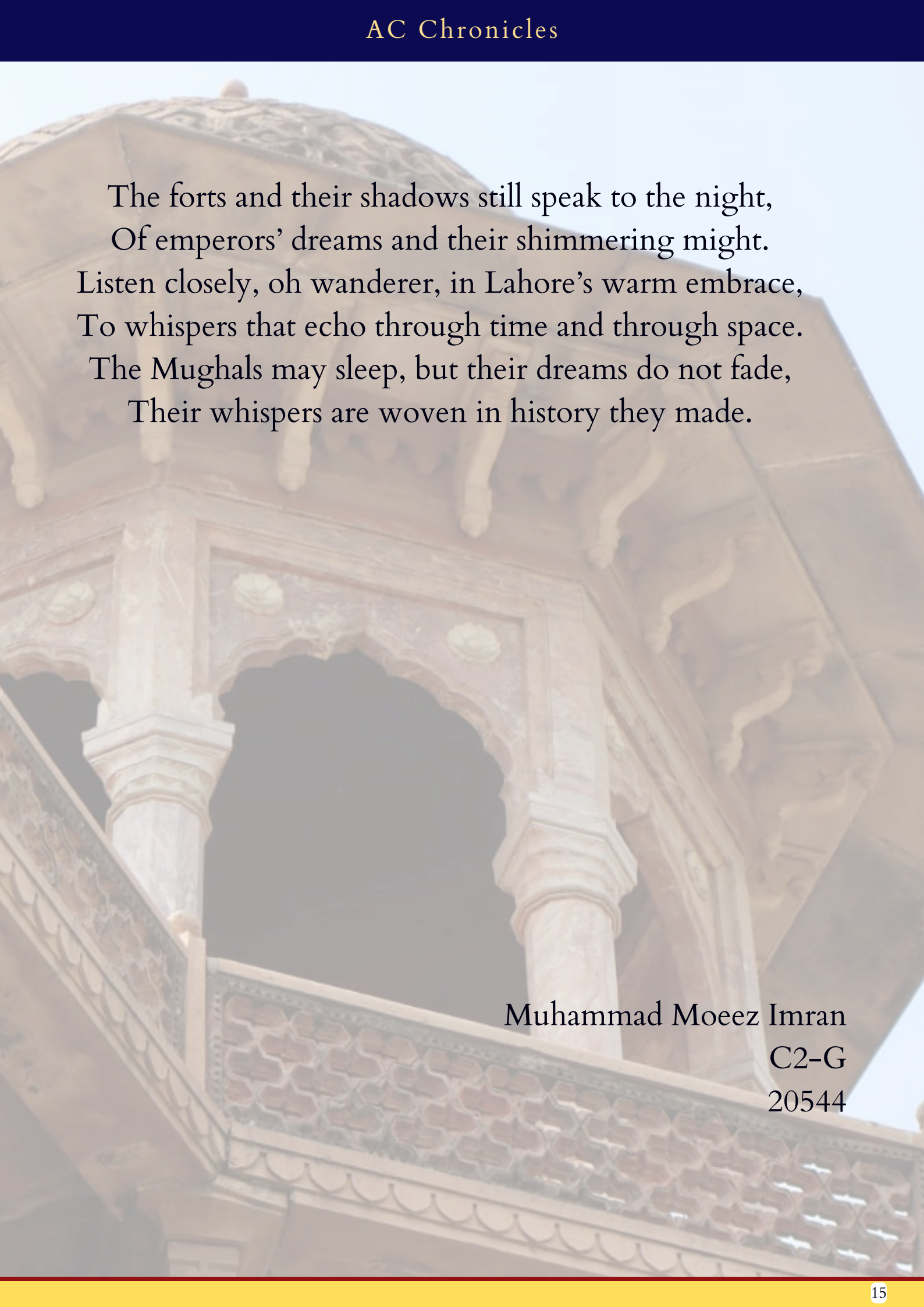
A symbol of excellence, for generations to come,
Aitchison College, where all dreams are welcome.

With noble ideals and values so high,
In Lahore's heart, it touches the never-ending sky.

Musa Nasir
C2-K
18851

A Mughal Whisper in Lahore's Walls

These walls are not silent; they hum with the past,
A melody timeless, a song meant to last.
Their arches and carvings, a history's frame,
Each brick holds a whisper, each stone bears a name.
The Badshahi Mosque, a prayer in stone,
Its domes rising high, where faith stands alone.
The gardens of Shalimar bloom with old grace,
A Mughal's love letter etched into this space.
Minar-e-Pakistan, though newer, still hears,
The echoes of battles, the laughter, the tears.
The Ravi flows softly, its waters now frail,
A witness to stories too grand to curtail.
The bazaars of Lahore, alive in their flair,
Hold whispers of traders whose wealth filled the air.
From silk to spices, from art to decree,
The Mughal age flourished, a reign proud and free.
But not all was splendor; the whispers do tell,
Of struggles and loss where proud empires fell.
The calligraphy etched on the mosque's mighty face,
Speaks quietly still of divine human grace.
Oh Lahore, oh Mughal, your whispers endure,
Through ages of change, your beauty is pure.



The forts and their shadows still speak to the night,
Of emperors' dreams and their shimmering might.
Listen closely, oh wanderer, in Lahore's warm embrace,
To whispers that echo through time and through space.
The Mughals may sleep, but their dreams do not fade,
Their whispers are woven in history they made.

Muhammad Moez Imran
C2-G
20544

Birds of Aitchison College

If Lahore is the city of gardens, Aitchison College is microcosm of this city. The numerous kinds of plants embellish the large grounds and house all kinds of birds. Everything about the anatomy of a bird reflects its ability to fly. Birds come in a huge range of colours, which help them to camouflage.

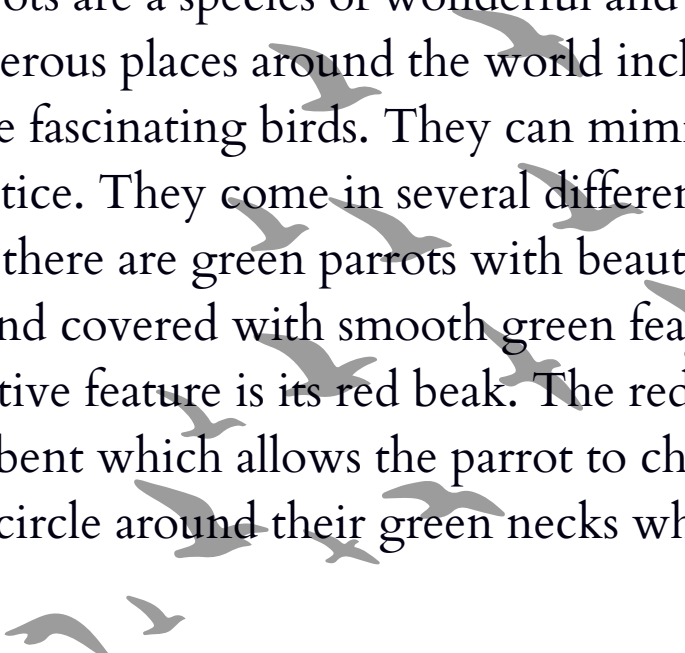
Owls: Owls are the rarest bird in Aitchison College. These owls belong to the special category of birds that sleep during the day and wait up at night. They make different types of noises like hooting and growling. They have round shaped eyes like tube in shape. Owls can turn their heads almost all the way around.

Woodpeckers: Woodpecker is also a rare kind of bird in Lahore and this rare bird can be seen in our college. They are sometimes seen drilling a hole in the towering trees of the school and seen flittered across the sky. They do this to find insects to eat. They wear a diclinous colorful sheet which helps to recognize this small creature even from a distance.

Pigeons: Pigeons are known as incredibly beautiful and attractive birds. It is a small, domesticated bird. They eat seeds. There are also white pigeons that fly in the clean air of Aitchison college. They are found in many colors such as white, gray, and brown. They have noticeably short hair on their body, which helps them control their body temperature.

Eagles and Kites: Eagles are always wandering on top of the students, finding some food to eat. They plunge and dive on our food. They have good eyesight and flight. The beak, feet, and irises are all vibrant yellow. A kite is lightly built, with a small head, partly bare face, short beak, and long narrow wings and tail. Kites are buoyant in flight, slowly flapping and gliding with wings angled back.

Green Parrots: Parrots are a species of wonderful and majestic birds. Parrots live in numerous places around the world including our institute. Parrots are fascinating birds. They can mimic human language with practice. They come in several different colours but in Aitchison College, there are green parrots with beautiful green wings, a long tail and covered with smooth green feathers. The parrot's most attractive feature is its red beak. The red beak is quite thick and is a little bent which allows the parrot to chew its food. They have a black circle around their green necks which make them look unique.



Migrated Birds: There are a lot of migrated birds in Aitchison College. Bulbuls are one of them. Bulbuls are medium-sized songbirds. Some are colorful with yellow, red or orange vents, cheeks, throats or supercilia, but most are drab, with uniform olive-brown to black plumage. Some species have distinct crests.

We should pray that all these and other birds stay there to see many more generations of Aitchisonians.

Muhammad Shafae
C2-G
20536

Burning the Ashes

In a world consumed by strife and pain,
Two conflicts rage like storms in vain.
Palestine and Israel, torn by hate's demand,
While Russia and Ukraine stand, locked in stand.
In the heart of the Middle East, turmoil reigns,
Where history's wounds have left enduring stains.
Gaza's cries and Jerusalem's ancient stones
Witness a struggle etched in sorrow's tones.
On one side, a quest for freedom's light,
On the other, a land's ancient right.
Yet, as these lands clash in endless feud,
The hopes of peace often seem subdued.
And far to the east, where Europe meets,
Another battleground where suffering repeats.
Russia and Ukraine, locked in frozen war,
Where voices are silenced, cries ignored.
Seeking resolution, a path we must find,
For peace in the hearts and peace of mind.
In the face of conflict, let's strive for peace,
For a world united, where all violence may cease.

Rayan Sajid

C2-I

20524

Ventures of AC

Dust of hallways, whispers in the breeze,
Memories unfurl like turning leaves.

Teachers' smiles, warm as the summer sun,
Hugs that mend, battles bravely won.

Words of wisdom, echoes in the head,
No price to pay, no gem instead.

A tapestry woven, hearts intertwined,
Here, my spirit truly finds its kind.

Though names may fade, the feeling stays,
This haven formed in countless days.

A silent chorus, voices all as one,
This place, my heart, forever calls it home.

Syed Muhammad Hashim Zaman

C2-G

18898

Greeks Can Be Freaks

Can't believe me? Just look at Giannis Antetokounmpo. Can you match his speed? His strength? His ball-handling skills? Can you do it, against the most valuable player in the NBA?

Giannis Antetokounmpo was born and raised in Athens to Nigerian immigrants. The "Greek Freak" started playing for the youth teams of Filathlitikos in Athens. He then joined the club's senior team before entering the 2013 NBA Draft. The Milwaukee Bucks, based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, selected Giannis as the 15th overall pick, making him the 15th player chosen out of 60.

In the 2015-2016 NBA season, he led Milwaukee in all five major statistical categories. As a result, he won the Most Improved Player award in 2017. Other achievements include winning the NBA Most Valuable Player (MVP) award twice before turning 26, joining legends like Kareem Abdul-Jabbar in the 1960s and LeBron James. In 2020, he was also named Defensive Player of the Year, becoming only the third player to win both MVP and Defensive Player of the Year in the same season, after Michael Jordan (1988) and Hakeem Olajuwon (1994). The "Greek Freak" further cemented his legacy by leading the Bucks to their first championship since 1971, earning the NBA Finals MVP title.

His dominance isn't just limited to the NBA. He also represents Greece in the European Championship, showcasing his skills for his home country. His rivalry with Nikola Jokić, who plays for Serbia, has made European basketball even more intense.

Beyond his athleticism, fans admire Giannis for his laid-back nature and easygoing personality. He connects effortlessly with his supporters and remains humble and grateful despite his success. His relentless work ethic serves as an inspiration to young athletes, his teammates, and even the coaches he has worked with. His humility has also earned him respect from basketball legends like Michael Jordan, Charles Barkley, and Shaquille O'Neal.

The fact is, Giannis is a Greek Freak, both figuratively and literally. From his explosive playing style to his humble temperament, his reign is only beginning. Other superstars might need to watch out, because the Greek Freak is coming for them, whether they see it or not.



M.Aarij Malik
C2-E
20546

Echoes of a Drowned World

It was 2055. What was once ocean water is now mounds of waste. What used to be the ocean, vast, deep, and brimming with life, was now a graveyard of waste. Mountains of plastic, rusted metal, and thick, sticky sludge stretched endlessly across the horizon. The air carried a bitter, acrid scent, making it difficult to breathe. This was the world humans had created, a land where the ocean had been swallowed by trash.

Lila stood at the edge of a crumbling cliff, staring down at the wreckage below. At her feet lay tiny fragments of coral, broken seashells, and faded scraps of plastic. She bent down, picking up a brittle piece of packaging, its faded letters still readable, "Crispy Bites." A relic from a time when people consumed without a second thought, blind to the destruction they left behind. She sighed and slipped it into her bag, another addition to her growing collection.

Lila was the keeper of the Archive of the Forgotten, a small, rusting shipping container hidden deep within the settlement. Inside, its walls were lined with shelves, crammed with remnants of the past, crushed soda cans, tangled fishing nets, water-stained photographs of creatures that had once roamed the seas. Each object was a reminder, a whisper from a lost world.

She kept these things so they would not be forgotten. The children in her settlement, born long after the oceans had disappeared, could not comprehend a world of endless blue. To them, stories of whales, dolphins, and coral reefs were as fantastical as flying creatures or talking trees.

Lila tried her best to describe it, the way the waves danced under the sun, how the sea smelled fresh and salty, how it felt to have water embrace you as you swam. But even she struggled to hold onto those memories, their edges fraying like an old photograph left too long in the sun.

The oceans had not vanished overnight. They had boiled, blackened, and choked on plastic until, by 2040, they had simply ceased to be. Now, only this wasteland remained, a lifeless, sprawling desert of debris.

Lila turned back towards the settlement, her bag heavier than before. Behind her, in the distance, she heard the familiar groan of trash shifting, collapsing in on itself. The land was unstable, dangerous, but she did not stop.

Because even in this broken world, Lila carried a spark of hope.

Perhaps, if she gathered enough fragments of the past, someone in the future would finally learn to do better.

Saad Ahsan

C2G

18703

A Life Changing Encounter

Oh grandfather, you have left me in this entire world,
With its brutal stabbing, my heart is burnt.

Reality hurts so I closed my eyes
Until I saw your shadow and realized,
You were like a summer wind that came by
A breeze full of warmth that made my heart fly.

The memories and laughs we used to have
Are nothing but blown away like particles of dust.

Dust that flew away like your breeze
That turned me cold and made me nothing but freeze,
I tried to put my mind at ease
But hitching breaths, day and night was all I could seize.

It made me suffer through shackles of pain,
But it was the best heartbreak making my life
nothing more than mundane
I'll miss you still cause forever's not a choice,
Thank you for teaching me what is now my will and not just
a faded voice.

Rasikh Tarar

C2-H

18856

Edhi: The Legend of Pakistan

The clock struck 3. It was that special time of the week when my grandchildren came to me for yet another bedtime story I had planned for them.

"Children, today I will tell you the story of The Richest Poor Man, Abdul Sattar Edhi, whose kindness is remembered even after his death. He was born in 1926 in the small village of Gujrat, India, before partition. Edhi dedicated his life to helping the poor. Over the next sixty years, he single-handedly changed the face of welfare in Pakistan."

"Grandpa, did people benefit from the foundation?" Ali asked.

"Yes, my dear," I replied. "By 2016, the Edhi Foundation had grown to become the largest health organization in Pakistan. It is no less than a miracle that the foundation has rescued over 20,000 abandoned infants and cared for over 50,000 orphans. Edhi had a great love for every abandoned child he adopted, giving them a simple but meaningful life."

"He was indeed the Angel of Mercy," Hamza smiled radiantly.

Being a generous and modest man, Edhi never took a salary from his organization. Instead, he stood on the footpath, where even the poorest men gave him money, which he then spent on the well-being of the children.

"Children, you fight all the time over the smallest things. Learn from Edhi that a selfless man like him never sought revenge and had complete faith in God."

There was a knock on the door.

"Have you three not slept yet?" their father entered, lifting the curtains to check if it was still nighttime.

"Do you all want the sun to join you?" he laughed.

"Grandpa is telling us a very inspirational story about Edhi," responded Ali.

"Come, join us," Sara added.

"No, you guys enjoy the story. I have a meeting tomorrow."

"Okay, so where was I? Ah! Yes! So, I was saying that Edhi received many awards for his social work. He became well-known and recognized as a true hero due to his loyalty to his mission. He and his wife, Bilquis Edhi, faced many hardships in their journey and worked tirelessly to serve others.

His work and ideology remain alive to this day. Though he passed away on July 8, 2016, his dream and the message of humanity he spread continue to inspire many. His determination and love for humanity were such that even on his deathbed, he requested that his organs be donated to those in need.

This man is a legend, an idol for many in Pakistan, and a role model for people worldwide when it comes to humanity. His legacy lives on, as Edhi ambulances still run through the cities of Pakistan, helping and saving lives each day."

Ayan Sarfraz
C2-B
20547

The Shack in the Mist

The fog closed in around me like a shroud, swallowing the world whole, leaving only the rhythmic sound of my breath and the distant hum of my heartbeat. The shape ahead, growing more distinct with every step, felt like both a promise and a threat. As the mist parted, I could see it more clearly, a small, dilapidated structure rising from the void, half-hidden in the mist's embrace.

It was a shack, crumbling, forsaken, its timbers warped and weathered by years of neglect. A rusty sign hung crookedly above the door, its letters barely legible, as though it, too, had given up on being read. The windows were dark and blank, devoid of life, as if they had never been meant to reflect anything more than the empty expanse of land stretching beyond them.

I hesitated. Something about it felt wrong, the unnatural stillness, the way it seemed to absorb the silence around it, like an unspoken secret. But as the wind howled and the rain battered down harder, I realized I had no choice. The tracks had led me here, and there was no going back to the desolate land from which I had come.

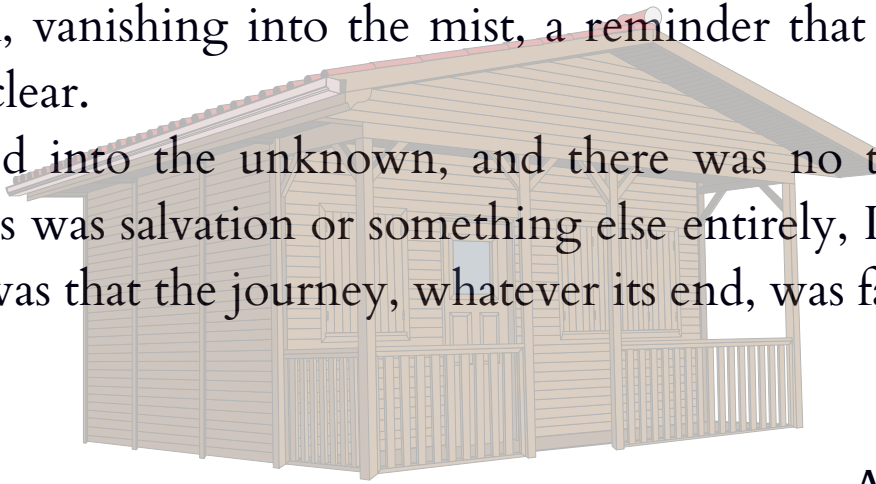
I stepped toward the shack, my feet dragging in the wet earth. Each movement felt heavier than the last, exhaustion pressing down on me with relentless force. My fingers trembled as they brushed against the cold, rusted handle.

The door creaked open, protesting the intrusion. Inside, the air was stale, thick with the scent of mildew and decay. The dim light from outside barely penetrated the shadows, casting long, twisted shapes along the walls. It was empty, save for the dust that clung to every surface, the remnants of something long forgotten.

I took a deep breath, steeling myself against the fear gnawing at my insides. Was this what I had been walking toward? A refuge, or a trap? The silence was suffocating, heavy with the weight of things left unsaid. And yet, in that moment, the quiet was the only thing that offered any semblance of comfort.

I sank down, my body sagging under the weariness that had overtaken me. My mind raced with questions, with doubts, but the answers, if they existed, were buried somewhere deep in the fog, out of reach. As I stared out into the void beyond the shack, the tracks stretched on, vanishing into the mist, a reminder that the path was never truly clear.

I had crossed into the unknown, and there was no turning back. Whether this was salvation or something else entirely, I couldn't say. All I knew was that the journey, whatever its end, was far from over.



Asmad Bin Ali
C2-I
20560

Quiet Resilience of the Autumn Tree

Golden leaves upon the bough,
Rustling softly, whisper how
In the face of cold winds near,
Autumn trees stand firm, no fear.

Branches bare, yet full of grace,
Sunlight's glow their only trace.
Though the chill may strip them bare,
Roots hold strong, a silent prayer.

Beneath a sky of amber light,
They stand unyielding through the night.
A silent strength, no words to say,
Steadfast through the fading day.

Frost may bite and winds may call,
Still, they do not break nor fall.
Quiet in their steadfast ways,
Weathering the autumn haze.
Leaves descend, a golden rain,
Yet the trees do not complain.
In their quiet stance, they show
Strength in letting go to grow.
Beneath their bark, a secret song,
Whispers that they've known so long.

Invisible People

As the clocks struck six and the city slowly awakened, the infamous Mall Road traffic signal came alive once again. At its center stood a lone traffic police officer, tall and attentive. His uniform, once a bright navy blue, bore the marks of many years of service. The fabric had faded to a dull gray, its edges frayed, and dirt stains scattered across it. His boots, though polished, were worn from the soles, evidence of long hours spent standing on the rough asphalt. His once-white gloves had darkened over time, their fabric thinning, patched over in places.

Despite the worn condition of his attire, the officer carried out his duties with unwavering precision. His whistle hung from an old cord around his neck, and in his left hand, he held a small stick to guide the relentless flow of traffic. Cars inched forward impatiently, eager to gain even the smallest advantage. Motorcycles darted through the gaps, defying the raised hand and sharp whistle commands meant to restore order. Drivers leaned on their horns, as if noise alone could bend the signal to their will. Yet, through the chaos, the officer remained steadfast, his hand and stick moving with sharp, practiced motions. Though he had left his home and family early in the morning, he stood firm, committed to his duty.

Nearby, an old pickup truck idled at the traffic signal, its diesel engine rumbling, causing the entire vehicle to vibrate. Behind the wheel sat a weary man, his calloused hands gripping the worn steering wheel, a testament to years of hard labor. His body ached from endless hours on the road. He had just dropped off a shipment at a warehouse and was now racing back to his home in Quetta, a city he had left nearly a week ago. The thought of reuniting with his young children filled his mind, offering him brief solace from the exhaustion.

The cacophony of blaring horns, revving engines, and weaving motorcycles did not faze him. He had grown used to it. His only true companion on these long, lonely drives was the hum of the engine beneath him. His shirt clung to his back, damp with sweat, as he gazed at the sea of impatient vehicles around him, each driver preoccupied with their own journey, each car chasing its own destination. With a sigh, he steeled himself for the grueling, day-long drive home.

As the traffic light flickered green, the familiar symphony of engines and horns erupted. Amidst the rush of vehicles, a father maneuvered his motorbike through the narrow spaces between cars and buses. Seated behind him were his four sons, clinging tightly to one another as they swayed with each bump in the road. The eldest held a book, his eyes scanning its pages, perhaps cramming for a test later that day. The younger ones huddled together, their small hands gripping their father's shirt for balance. Despite the relentless traffic, the father delivered his children safely to school before merging back into the flow, rushing toward his own obligations.

In the rush of our own lives, we rarely notice these people. They blur into the background, mere figures in the daily grind. Yet, each of them carries a story, a purpose, a life as rich and complex as our own. And though they may go unnoticed, their struggles, their resilience, and their quiet perseverance shape the pulse of the city.

Talha Sumair Tarar
C2-J
18966

Lovely Winds

Though the world around them fades,
Their resolve, a sturdy blade.
As seasons turn and skies grow grey,
Autumn trees just bend and sway.

With patience born from years untold,
They endure the coming cold.
The wind may howl, the skies may weep,
Yet their roots run strong and deep.

In stillness, they withstand the fray,
Silent guardians of the day.
Winter's breath may steal their leaves,
But not the hope that each tree weaves.

For beneath the earth and snow,
Lies the strength they always know.
When spring returns to warm the air,
The trees will bloom without a care.

For all the storms they did endure,
Quiet resilience made them pure.

Ahmad Shuja
C2-A
18888

LOST

Empty room,
Cast about for a familiar object,
Because my body needs coordinates to move.

In the dark,
Range of motion shrivels all around me,
All my nightmares, I am slowly being cocooned,
A single calf in the hecatomb.

Crescent moon,
Hollowed out of all my fabled insides,
Occam, shave me down to primal truth,
Return me to the womb.

The spirit held a magic flask,
Said, "Drink it to forget the past.
But careful, it's a poison batch.
Each drop is more painful than the last.
If you fail, you'll wish for death.
If you finish, you'll be free at last."

In times dark and glib,
Little baby in a crib, hands reaching up,
Before the blinding light is split through the prism of your
organs into colors.
All that being and nothingness, on the same Mobius strip,
Sleep and waking up.

On the first day,
Wipe the blank slate,
And you join the banquet,
Served up helpless on a plate.

But you find your land legs,
And you learn to imitate,
You'll wear any feather and hope that your efforts attract a mate.

One day your children find you,
Locked in the bathroom,
Staring in horror at the reflection of your face.
And you say you're sorry to the guests at your party,
But you can't help wonder, who is this person you celebrate?
And so the light fades,
It's still your birthday,
So blow out your past lives like they're candles on the cake

Wasiq Shahzad
C2-I
19703

Lahore's Winter Veil: A Season of Smog

As winter descends upon Lahore, the city is enveloped in a thick, heavy layer of smog, a haze that lingers low, stretching horizontally across the skyline rather than rising into the vastness above. The crisp, clear, and bright winter mornings are nothing but a distant memory, now replaced by an oppressive murkiness that chokes the atmosphere. Streets, buildings, and people alike are smothered under this ghostly shroud, an invisible weight pressing down on the surroundings.

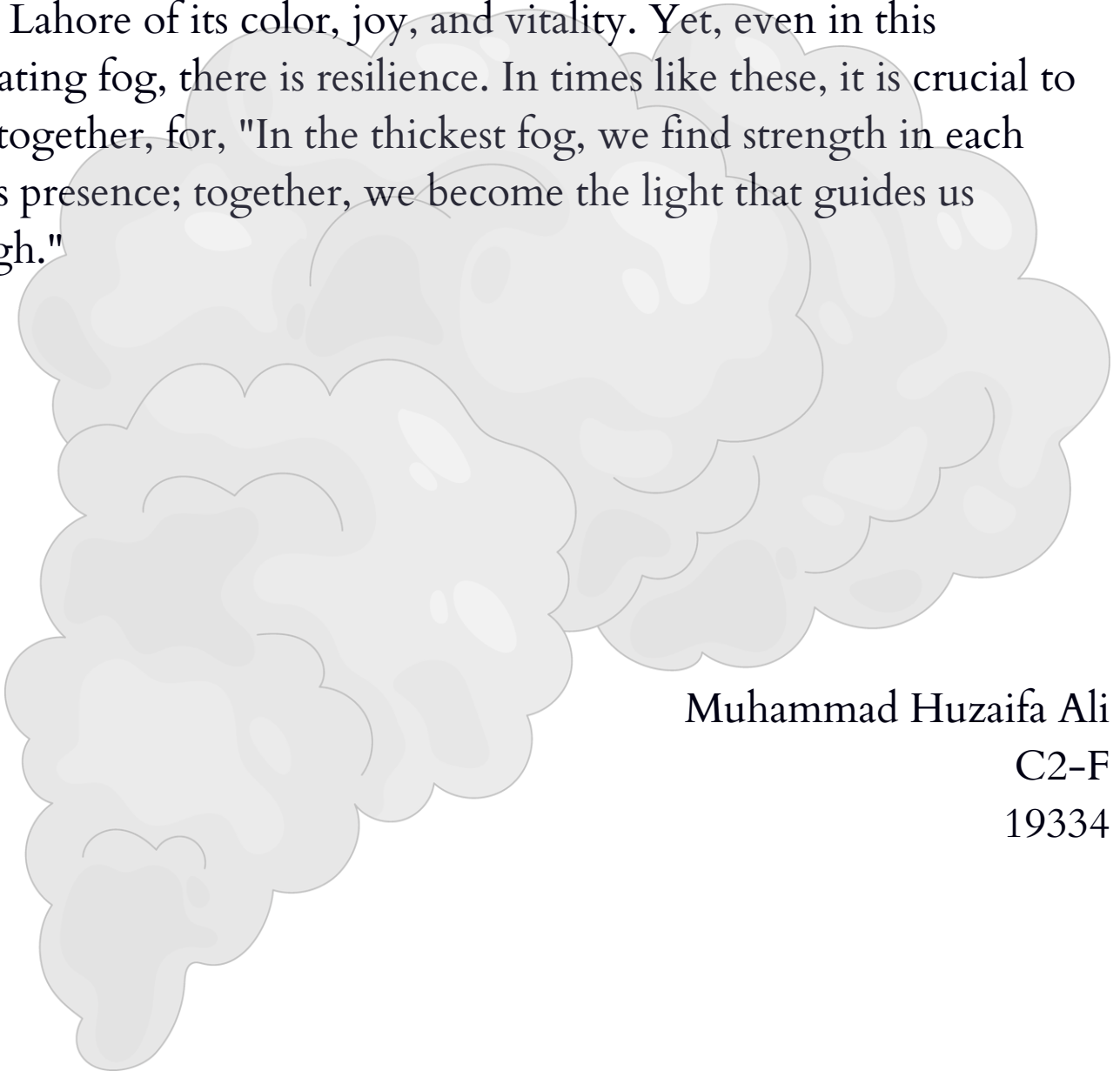
The sun struggles overhead, desperately searching for a way to pierce through the suffocating gloom. Yet, its efforts are in vain, every inch of the 360-degree skyline is trapped under a dense, polluted cloud cover. This sinister blend of smoke, dust, and fog settles thickly in the air, a daily reminder of Lahore's growing environmental crisis.

The pollutants fueling this seasonal smog are numerous: vehicular emissions, factory smoke, and the burning of crop stubble in nearby fields all contribute to the poisonous cocktail. Visibility is reduced to a mere few feet, turning familiar streets into eerie, disorienting landscapes. Roads become impassable, flights are delayed, and daily life grinds into slow motion, as if caught in an endless haze.

Inside homes, residents struggle against the invasion of impure air seeping through windows. The acrid stench of burning chemicals lingers, making it difficult to breathe. Housewives, elders, and children find the air thick with unseen threats, forcing many to remain indoors. On the streets, people cover their mouths and noses with masks, not just for warmth, but as a desperate measure against the toxins swirling around them.

Hospitals overflow with patients suffering from respiratory distress, eye irritation, and allergic reactions. Smog season turns even the simplest pleasures, like an evening walk, into a health hazard. For the elderly and children, a mere minute of exposure can trigger breathlessness or severe attacks.

This smog is more than a seasonal inconvenience, it is a plague that drains Lahore of its color, joy, and vitality. Yet, even in this suffocating fog, there is resilience. In times like these, it is crucial to stand together, for, "In the thickest fog, we find strength in each other's presence; together, we become the light that guides us through."



Muhammad Huzaifa Ali
C2-F
19334

The ACMUN Society: A C1's Perspective

The ACMUN Society is one of Aitchison College's largest and oldest societies, far surpassing its brethren, i.e., the Science and Entrepreneurial Society. The society has been labeled as the best society by many. It was started some 14+ years ago by our very own HMSS, Ma'am Amina, who helped it blossom and nurtured it during the early years of its establishment. Soon after, we had our own MUN, i.e., ACMUN. These days, ACMUN is labeled as the largest MUN, second only to LUMUN.

The ACMUN Society is the society I've chosen to adopt as my major society due to my fond and peculiar interest in public speaking, which many find astonishing due to my quiet demeanor. It had all started on a particularly sunny day when my friend added me to a Messenger group for Pre-C2s wishing to do ACMUN. I was nervous, but gentle and kind seniors explained the whole ordeal to us core boys. They explained how we would get to partake and have a chance to win MUNs, which greatly fascinated us. This imparted knowledge left us with one problem, we had absolutely no clue about how to actually do a MUN. That's when we were told that there would be camps hosted to help us learn MUNs, which would be hosted by our seniors. Personally, I also saw this as an opportunity to bond and develop a connection with my seniors.

I still remember my first ACMUN camp. The auditorium was brimming with energetic kids hustling about, the whites of their shirts serving as a contrast to the deep, eccentric blue theme of the auditorium. As we were hushed and shushed, our introductions and reasons for joining the society were taken.

There were four H1s that day up on the stage, and all of them were interactive and were nice to each Pre-C1. They patiently helped us learn and corrected us at each step. One moment that really stood out to me was when one of the H1s said, “Never use a point of order.” I would later go on to use a point of order at a particular MUN. In terms of my experience, I would never give up my memories with ACMUN. I always remember seniors trying to push C2s to give speeches.

I am able to perfectly recall my first MUN. It was The Lahore Alma MUN, and my friend and I carpooled to get there. The excitement upon entering the walls of the school can never be relived. I, along with my fellow C2s, was in Team B and worked tirelessly through the waters of SOCHUM to help my Team A, as well as win an HM for myself, highlighting myself as a capable C2.

Overall, the society, my society, is not just a clan of people; it's a place where Aitchisonians get to unite and bond. It doesn't matter if you are a C2 or H2; this society can make you look forward to something. It can leave you elated after its camps. Most importantly, it cares for you because when you are in this society, you will have people who stick up for you.

Sultan Ali Chatha
C2H
18839

Football, the Most Popular Game

Football, also known as soccer, is the most popular sport in the world. It is a game that demands dedication, hard work, and rigorous training. To excel in football, a player must master ball control, quick decision-making, and intense dribbling on the field. Many renowned footballers begin their journey at a young age, honing their skills over years of practice.

A standard football match requires 22 players, 11 on each side. The game consists of two halves, each lasting 45 minutes. Players take on various positions, such as forward, striker, right winger, and defender. Each team has one goalkeeper, whose primary role is to prevent the opposing team from scoring by using their hands to stop the ball.

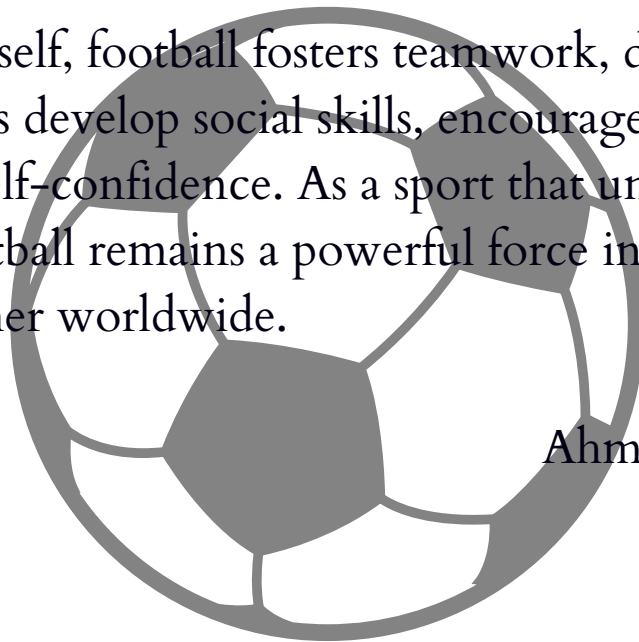
Football originated in England and has since grown into a global phenomenon. The most prestigious international football event, the FIFA World Cup, is held every four years and captivates millions of fans worldwide. Another highly anticipated tournament is the UEFA Champions League, where the best European clubs compete for supremacy.

Some of the most famous football players include Lionel Messi from Argentina, Cristiano Ronaldo from Portugal, and Neymar Jr. from Brazil. Additionally, clubs such as Manchester United, Barcelona, Real Madrid, and Paris Saint-Germain are among the most well-known football teams globally.

Football is the world's most widely played sport, with over 250 million participants across the globe. It is particularly popular in Europe, South America, and Africa, while also gaining increasing recognition in North America and Asia.

In Pakistan, football is one of the most popular team sports alongside cricket and field hockey. The city of Sialkot is known for manufacturing high-quality footballs used in professional tournaments. Shahzad Anwar currently serves as the head coach of the Pakistani national football team.

Beyond the game itself, football fosters teamwork, discipline, and cooperation. It helps develop social skills, encourages respect for others, and builds self-confidence. As a sport that unites people from all walks of life, football remains a powerful force in bringing communities together worldwide.



Ahmad Naveed Aamir
C2-A
18923

The Ravi's Lament

I once was a river, a bearer of dreams,
A lifeline of whispers, a thread through the streams.
From glaciers I surged, through valleys I danced,
A cradle of life, a timeless expanse.

The Mughals revered me, their jewel, their muse,
Adorned by their gardens, their poetry's hues.
I carried their tales on my shimmering crest,
Through battles and empires, I never did rest.

But now I am fading, my song grows dim,
My banks are eroding, my future is grim.
Factories bleed poison; my waters run thin,
The life once within me is wearing so thin.

The children still gather, though quieter they play,
Their dreams of tomorrow feel further away.
The farmers who thrived on my nourishing gift,
Now gaze at dry fields as their hopes slowly drift.

Oh, people of Lahore, can you not see,
The life I once offered was never just free?
To save me, to heal me, is to honor your land,
To grasp the last thread of my weakening strand.

Bring back the swallows, the lush, verdant green,
Restore to your river the life once serene.
For I am not merely a stream you behold,
I am Lahore's story, its heart and its soul.

Act now, not with words, but with purpose and care,
Revive my lost spirit, let me once again bear
The dreams of your city, its laughter, its strife,
A river reborn, a symbol of life.

Muhammad Moez Imran
C2-G
20544

The Battle of Tradition

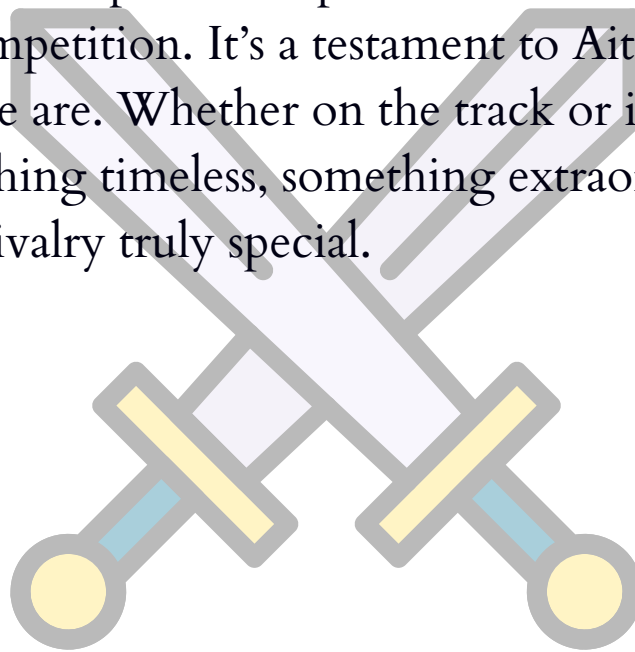
As I sit on the bleachers at Aitchison's sprawling grounds, the rush of excitement ripples through the crowd. The rivalry between Aitchison College and Sadiq Public School is unmatched. This year, Aitchison is hosting, and the energy is electric. The air hums with anticipation, the chants of Aitchisonians echoing across the field as the athletes prepare for the 400-meter dash. Even from the stands, it feels like you're part of the race, caught up in the collective buzz of school spirit.

The crowd isn't just cheering for a race; they're cheering for tradition. Every event in this historic rivalry carries the weight of countless memories, thrilling victories, heartbreaking defeats, and the unyielding pride of generations. Alumni fill the stands, reliving their glory days and cheering on the next wave of athletes. This isn't just a competition; it's a celebration of legacy and unity, a reminder of what it means to be part of something greater than yourself.

Athletics, unlike other sports, strips everything down to raw determination. It's not about strategy or technique; it's about grit and passion. As the runners line up, their faces are set with focus, their muscles taut with anticipation. The gun fires, and they're off. The pounding of sneakers on the track mirrors the thundering hearts in the stands. The tension builds with every stride, and when the runner in Aitchison's colors crosses the finish line first, the crowd erupts in a deafening roar. In that moment, it's not just the athlete who wins, it's the entire school.

But the true magic lies in what happens after the race. Win or lose, there's a handshake, a pat on the back, a nod of respect. The rivalry is intense, but it's rooted in mutual admiration²⁹. Every year, this event brings us together, not just to compete, but to honor the values we share. It's not about defeating Sadiq; it's about embodying perseverance, respect, and pride. This tradition reminds us that while victory is sweet, the journey and camaraderie matter far more.

As I watch the athletes, some catching their breath, others basking in their triumph, I feel a deep sense of pride. This rivalry, this event, is more than just a competition. It's a testament to Aitchison's spirit, a reflection of who we are. Whether on the track or in the stands, we are all part of something timeless, something extraordinary. And that is what makes this rivalry truly special.



Muhammad Moez Imran
C2-G
20544

CLUE

The light pierced the inky darkness of the damp alleyway. Strolling house to house was tedious. My footsteps echoed against the red brick walls. The incessant tapping noise coming from the sewage pipes was getting on my nerves.

We had narrowed down a single briefcase of the infamous mafia leader, De Bruyne, somewhere here in this little town in London. The head of the police department, Mr. Doyle, would visit us today and scrutinize the ongoing investigation.

The police vest weighed down on me, and even though we had been trained for moments like these, it was still exhausting. Just then, an obscure image of a car came into focus, and I immediately knew it was Mr. Doyle. He had joined the force a year ago, but I had met him only once at the welcome ceremony. He was known for his eccentric behavior and was socially awkward. I turned around to meet him, extending my hand, but he completely ignored it and moved past me toward the towering houses.

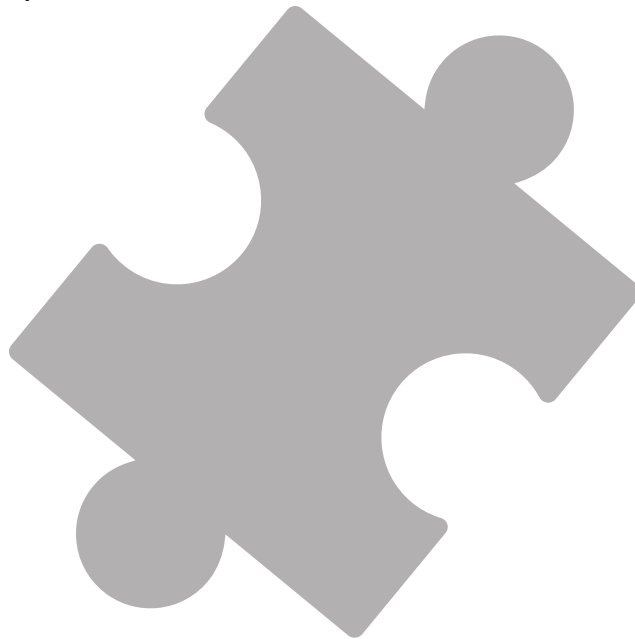
I was quite baffled and didn't know if I should follow him or not. His cold demeanor had ticked me off. Shaking this feeling off, I started walking toward the house.

At the doorstep, right outside the house Mr. Doyle had walked into, a sudden flicker of color caught my eye. A photograph lay on the step, obscure and faded, with yellow patches. I stared at the image of a man with bold features.

I had solved the puzzle.

It was his eyes that gave him away, a pair of hazel, mysterious orbs I had seen before. I knew exactly who the man was. Age and probably countless surgeries had disguised him, but his eyes became the golden clue.

With a pounding heart, I closed in on Mr. Doyle as my fingers reached for the cuffs on my belt, ready to arrest the most wanted criminal in the city.



Rasikh Tarar
C2-H
18856

DAWN

“The darkest hour is just before the dawn.” The words echoed in my mind like an ancient chant, their weight heavier than the silence that surrounded me. I could feel the truth of it in the air, thick with the uncertainty that clung to every breath. I stood there, the night pressing in from every side, as though the darkness itself was a living thing, hungry for what little hope remained. The world was still, too still, and I could hear nothing but the beating of my heart, a hollow rhythm against the void.

At first, the words felt like a cruel joke, something spoken to comfort those who weren't truly lost, who hadn't wandered into the endless blackness I now found myself in. How could there be light when the night seemed eternal? How could there be hope when the shadows were suffocating, crawling over the ground like hungry creatures? The very idea of dawn felt distant, something out of reach, impossible.

But then, in the midst of that oppressive silence, I began to notice something. A flicker. At first, it was barely noticeable, a subtle shift in the dark, the faintest touch of light on the horizon. I stood frozen, unsure of whether my mind had simply created it, desperate for something to grasp onto. But as the seconds passed, the glow grew stronger, not in a sudden burst, but slowly, almost reluctantly, as if the world itself was waking from a long slumber. The darkness, I realized, wasn't endless. It was just the waiting, the stillness before something inevitable.

I could feel the warmth of that first light now, creeping over the land, pushing away the shadows that had seemed so powerful moments ago. The night had to give way to the dawn, as it always did. There was no fight, no struggle, only the quiet certainty that the dark could not last forever. And with that thought, I stepped forward, my feet still uncertain, but my heart lighter than it had been since I'd arrived in this place of shadow.

“The darkest hour is just before the dawn.” I had heard the words before, but now they carried weight. Now, they made sense. For it was in the darkest moments, when we thought there was no way out, that the first light of change was quietly gathering strength. It wasn't something to fear. It was something to trust. And so, with the night finally beginning to lift, I walked toward the light, not knowing what awaited me, but certain that I had reached the moment before everything changed.

Haroon Yasir
C2-F
20539

The Innocent Ones

Rises from the graves and haunts you,
Pierces our hearts, kills us inside.
Sounds of gunshots, bombs, and rubble
Echo in the ears of those who sit,

Sit there quietly, on the top.
"I condemn, I condemn,"
They all say,
But do they really understand
What they've done!!!

Oppressed are those kids,
Their cries in our hearts
Pierce, but then we sit,
Peacefully and relaxed.

What did they do
To deserve all this?
Who gave them the right
To kill the kids?

Held them in their hands,
Cold, dry, and dead,
Shrouded in white cloth
To shield their pain.

Killing, eating, and smothering,
What did they do to deserve all this?
Existed? Well, they're dead now.

Please stop! It's not too late!
Oh, why? Oh, why? Can't this stop?
Why did you do this? Who told you to?
Did these kids not have a name?

Did they not have a mom?
A dad, a cousin, a friend, or a brother?

Ashnab Farid
C2-F
19701

A Crisp morning in Aitchison

The dawn breaks gently over the sprawling campus of Aitchison College, Lahore. Nestled in the heart of the bustling city, the historic institution feels like an oasis of serenity as the first light of day filters through the tall eucalyptus and banyan trees. The air is cool and sharp, carrying the faint aroma of dew-soaked grass and freshly watered flowerbeds. The early November chill whispers through the branches, causing leaves to flutter softly to the ground, creating a natural carpet of gold and green on the pathways.

As the sun inches higher, its golden rays touch the majestic colonial-style buildings, illuminating the intricate brickwork and arched verandas. The iconic Main Building, with its domed towers, stands as a timeless sentinel against the pale blue sky. The college grounds, expansive and immaculately maintained, are a symphony of colors, with manicured lawns stretching endlessly and flowerbeds bursting with marigolds, petunias, and chrysanthemums.

The air is alive with the hum of morning activities. The rhythmic patter of joggers' feet echoes along the tree-lined avenues as students in crisp white uniforms gather in small groups, their breath visible in the crisp morning air. The occasional burst of laughter punctuates the stillness, mingling with the chirping of sparrows and the cooing of doves perched atop the college's ancient trees.

The iconic Oval, the heart of Aitchison College, lies resplendent in the morning light. Its emerald-green grass sparkles with dew, inviting young athletes to practice. Cricket players warm up at one end, the gentle thwack of the ball meeting willow adding to the morning's melody. On the far side, a horse gallops across the polo ground.

From the chapel, the faint chime of bells signals the start of the day's proceedings. A sense of purpose fills the air as students begin to head toward their classrooms, their polished shoes clicking against the cobblestone paths. Teachers, clad in elegant shalwar kameez or Western attire, stroll purposefully, their presence commanding respect yet exuding warmth.

The morning mist begins to lift, revealing the full splendor of Aitchison's timeless beauty. Every corner of the campus seems to whisper stories of generations that have walked these paths, imbibing knowledge and values that last a lifetime. As the day progresses, the crisp morning transforms into a warm, golden afternoon, but its fleeting charm lingers in the hearts of those who are fortunate enough to experience it.

Saad Ahsan
C2G
18703

Lost, But never Forgotten

Time is the unseen inevitable entity which has clutched the entire universe in its inescapable hands, firmly gripping everything in place. Nothing is, or will ever be free from it, and that was truly evident with the neighborhood street I was gazing at in awe. It had only been 10 years, yet it felt like I was standing in the very place I wished it didn't turn into, yet there I was.

As I looked around, I found myself in a bustling dystopia, where the loud revving of stylish supercars all screaming at the top of their voices, rushed against the other passersby, who were also trying to race against this very entity, thinking they could beat it, all while cautiously scurrying around a sinkhole large enough to fit a small brown elephant, which opened the possibilities to many unexpected disasters. All the smoke emitted from these vehicles had caused the entire area to be covered with a forest of smoke, which hugged the entire area with its perilous embrace, while everyone resiliently battled against it.

The once vibrant yellow paint on the streets had become nearly non-existent, instead with large, defined cracks which had been formed. The traffic lights, that acted like a guardian, a symbol of patience and discipline, had not been repaired, hence causing unforsaken chaos. The place had been transformed into a busy marketplace, where now, nothing but fraud and inflation reign supreme, turning it into a haunted nightmare. Towards my right, I noticed a wooden bench, holding on for its dear life. With patches of black mold, advertisement stickers slapped on it, and a chipped leg it reflected how humans have started to change their appearances as society has modernized.

As I carefully sat on it, while it let out a creak, a large wave of nostalgia flooded into my mind. It wasn't always like this. Recalling those timeless memories shows a place not of gloom and constant revolution, but of earthy, vibrant, and cozy ambiance. The innocent laughter and gleeful noises of children echoed in my ears, as I looked upon the grandeur blue sky, and the artful songbirds singing their cheerful melodies, while the rustling leaves of the majestic trees flew across with the cool breeze. The place was a hazard free zone, with the small tuck shops in front selling cheap, quality goods, and the enriched personalities of people gave the place a much more welcoming, and safe feeling, but unfortunately, now, none of that remains.

They say every step leaves a print, no matter how small, and those billions of steps have accumulated and transformed the way everyone looks at this place. The once lush, peaceful street has now become just a shell of its former self. Trees have been cut down or are left bald. Hazard creeps around in the once fresh air, and the strong, safe roads. People now walk, bending their necks down like ostriches, looking at their smart gadgets, while their appearances and care for their own culture has worsened. This very street I just mentioned, is a reflection of how life progresses. It represents an old person, road cracks like wrinkles on his aging face, faded paint like pale skin, broken traffic light and dim streetlights, like losing the ability to think brighter like you used to. But one thing, which will always prevail, that nothing can take away, even after dying, are the countless memories that it holds, and which it passes on to so many people. It may not be well physically, but inside, it is still the same charming place it once took its pride in being.

Muhammad Murad Baig
C2-L

Whispers Of The Wounded Land

"The land whispers, but not to be heard, to be forgotten."

I didn't know it then, but those whispers would echo in my mind long after I crossed the border. It wasn't a line drawn on maps, it was a fracture, jagged and raw, carved deep into the soul of the land. The moment I stepped across, it felt as though I had crossed into another world entirely, one where time moved differently, weighed down by everything that had been left behind.

The air carried the kind of stillness that wasn't quiet at all. It was heavy, like it was holding its breath, waiting for something. In the distance, the sun bled into the horizon, its light spilling over a broken landscape. Shadows stretched longer than they should have, creeping along fractured walls and scorched earth. I could feel it, something lingering in the silence, watching, waiting.

The town I entered was hollow, stripped of life yet full of its absence. Buildings leaned like weary old men, worn thin by time and tragedy. The ground beneath my boots felt brittle, as if the weight of the past could shatter it at any moment. The air smelled of ash and something else I couldn't quite name, something older, something that clung to the edges of memory.

And then I saw the child.

They stood alone in the middle of the wreckage, their small figure impossibly still against the chaos around them. Their face was pale, their eyes dark and unblinking, staring not at me, but beyond me, at something only they could see. My heart hammered in my chest as I moved closer.

I tried to speak, but the words caught in my throat. The child didn't flinch, didn't acknowledge me. They were rooted there, like a monument to something forgotten.

When I stepped closer, the air shifted. A low hum seemed to vibrate through the ground, faint but unmistakable, like the murmur of voices buried deep beneath the soil. I knelt down, trying to meet the child's gaze, and for the first time, their eyes locked onto mine.

In that instant, it felt as though the entire world fell away.

The child wasn't just standing there, they were the tether, the connection between the present and everything that had been buried beneath it. They weren't waiting for help. They were waiting for someone to see. To understand.

And I did.

The land beneath my feet wasn't just scarred, it was alive with pain, grief, and memory. Every stone, every shadow, every echo was a testament to all that had been lost. This was no longer a war zone, no longer a ruin. It was a graveyard of forgotten stories, and the child was its guardian, silent and unmoving, waiting for someone to bear witness.

I stood there, the weight of centuries pressing down on me, and I understood what the whispers had been trying to say. The land hadn't forgotten its history, even if we had.

It wasn't the rubble that haunted this place.

It was the memory.

Muhammad Moez Imran
C2-G

Adventure of a Lifetime

Aitchison College's trekking expedition through northern Pakistan was an unforgettable journey, immersing us in the region's raw beauty and rich culture. Starting with the challenging Nanga Parbat Base Camp trek, we enjoyed a lunch stop in Balakot, then headed through Naran, where we played in the snow at Babusar Top before reaching Astore. After a night at Wazir Mahal Hotel, we set off on a thrilling jeep ride to Rama Lake, where we bonded with locals through cricket matches and traditional dances. Camping under the stars in Tarishing, we shared stories around a crackling bonfire.

The next leg led us to the historic Herligkoffer Base Camp and across the Bazhin Glacier to Latobo Meadows, where we were greeted by snowfall over the shimmering Latobo Lake. Returning to Tarishing, we visited a local school, fostering a memorable connection with the community. The adventure continued to Chillum Chowki and Burzil Top, where we played in the snow and honored the Kargil War Memorial, before reaching Minmarg near the Indo-Pak border.

On our final night, we were warmly hosted by our local guide's family, deepening our connection to the land and its people. To our surprise, we spotted three brilliant rainbows over a lake near Nanga Parbat, painting a perfect ending to our journey. With memories of the majestic Gilgit Baltistan landscapes and its warm-hearted people, we returned home, forever touched by this incredible expedition.

Hadi Kazmi

H1

18673

Aitchison College's History

Aitchison College, located in Lahore, Pakistan, has a rich history that spans over a century. Founded in 1886 by Sir Charles Umpherston Aitchison, the then-Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab province under British colonial rule, the institution was established with the goal of providing high-quality education to the sons of the elite.

Throughout its history, Aitchison College has maintained a strong commitment to academic excellence, character development, and the promotion of holistic education. The college's iconic Gothic-style buildings and picturesque campus have become emblems of the institution.

During the colonial era, the college primarily catered to British and Indian students. However, following Pakistan's independence in 1947, Aitchison College transitioned into an institution that embraced the diversity of the new nation. It became a symbol of the country's cultural heritage, values, and traditions.

Aitchison College's alumni, often referred to as 'Old Boys,' have achieved prominence in various fields, including politics, business, sports, and the arts. The institution's strong academic foundation and emphasis on character development have played a pivotal role in shaping the leaders and visionaries of Pakistan.

The college maintains a rigorous academic curriculum, complemented by a wide range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities, including sports, arts, and community service. This well-rounded approach has contributed to the holistic development of its students.

Over the years, Aitchison College has evolved and adapted to changing educational trends and needs. It continues to be a respected educational institution in Pakistan, fostering academic excellence, leadership, and character development in the new generations of students who pass through its hallowed halls. Aitchison College's history is a testament to its enduring legacy and its significant contribution to the educational landscape of Pakistan.

Ibrahim Sarfraz Munj

H1

Enchanted Library

Once, in a quaint little town nestled between rolling hills and whispering woods, there stood a peculiar library. It wasn't an ordinary library; it was enchanted. The books on its shelves were alive, and every night, they would whisper stories to each other. But, there was one book, a leather-bound tome with golden letters, that was the oldest and wisest of them all, the Guardian of Stories.

One day, a young girl named Eliza, with curious eyes and a heart full of wonder, discovered the library. Intrigued by the tales of its enchantment, she ventured inside. The moment she stepped through the creaky door, the Guardian of Stories sensed her thirst for knowledge and decided to reveal its most extraordinary tale.

The Guardian opened its pages, and the words danced in the air, weaving a magical story of a forgotten kingdom. Eliza found herself transported to a land of mythical creatures and ancient castles. There, she met a talking owl named Oliver, a wise sage who had been waiting for a brave soul to help save their realm from a terrible curse.

To break the curse, Eliza and Oliver embarked on a quest, traveling through the enchanted forests and across shimmering lakes. Along the way, they encountered challenges that tested their courage and friendship. They met a mischievous pixie who taught them the importance of laughter, a gentle giant who showed them the power of kindness, and a mermaid who shared the beauty of empathy.

As they ventured deeper into the heart of the kingdom, Eliza discovered her own inner strength. She realized that the power to overcome obstacles lay not just in magic, but in believing in oneself and in the goodness of others.

Finally, after facing trials and tribulations, Eliza and Oliver reached the source of the curse, a wicked sorceress who had lost her way and become consumed by darkness. Instead of fighting her, Eliza extended a hand of compassion. With tears in her eyes, the sorceress confessed her loneliness and regret.

Touched by Eliza's kindness, the sorceress used her magic for good, breaking the curse that had plagued the kingdom. Flowers bloomed, birds sang, and the once-forgotten kingdom was restored to its former glory.

Liza's journey in the enchanted library came to an end, but the lessons she learned and the friends she made stayed with her forever. She left the library, her heart brimming with gratitude and a newfound understanding that the most enchanting stories were not just in books, but in the kindness shared between beings. And so, the enchanted library continued to stand, its shelves brimming with stories waiting to be discovered, reminding the world that the magic of stories was not just in the reading, but in the living.

Rayan Sajid
C2-I
20524

Humanity Is One Species

Asking people to take sides in war is demanding that people accept and support that war is a worthy endeavor and that the price is worth paying counting bodies on each side, then adding them up since generations which is in millions. Land has become rubble; where there were once olive groves, there are now ashen trees. Clear rivers are flowing with blood. This is the price.

Look at our majestic planet, the magical elements and the wondrous creations of God. We are so blessed and this is what we do with it? We should give a thought to what we have been given in the form of unconditional nourishment from nature. We received it all for free. We inherited it. We must all be willing to pass on Earth as better than we found it. We must do our part to heal the pain for the ones who will come next.

Recognizing that contempt, finger pointing and justifying violence because the "other" started it, is a tool used to dehumanize a group of people, as if saying this person deserves to be protected and that this one is worthless.

Recognizing that 'victimhood' is also a tactic used to justify violence, we paint ourselves as victims, we become blind to our own violence. We justify it, make it righteous even. These are the tools and tactics of war.

Albert Einstein said, "You cannot solve a problem with the same mind that created it." We have done the violence thing. The Holocaust, the apartheid, slavery, genocide, the manifestation is different but it is the same thing at the core of it: fear, violence, domination, control and exploitation. We know how this goes and we know how it ends. At this time in human history, we are more aware of the past and human conduct than ever before. It is time to make a different choice so that we may dodge the ignorant and selfish mistakes of our predecessors. We need to elevate our consciousness to a higher value, a better vision for the future than the memories of a brutal past.

We can all be intentional about what we put into the world. There are always helpers I won't tell which side to choose. All I can say is words are powerful, use them in peace and for peace. Let there be peace in our hearts and our world.

M.Aarij Malik
C2-E
20546

Whispers of First Light

The morning was just waking as I walked down the familiar road, black Oxfords meeting the asphalt with soft, rhythmic clicks. A gentle breeze stirred, carrying with it the faint scent of dew on grass and earth, mingling with the pleasant fragrances of flowers that carpeted the spaces between the towering trees that lined the path.

The light of dawn painted the scene in hues of gentle gold; casting long, subtle shadows that danced across the historic brick facades of the boarding houses to my left. Their architecture, steeped in history, bore the dignified elegance of an era long past, with tall, arched windows and intricate brickwork whispering stories of decades of tradition. The trees swayed slightly, brushing together in the breeze, adding their own delicate chorus to the early morning, a gentle rustling that harmonized with the steady sound of my footsteps.

Yellow-billed kites started to rouse, filling the air with drawn-out whistles, their sounds growing in volume as the morning light made the vast grounds a realm of its own. In the gardens in front of the boarding houses, plants of all types flourished, their vibrant colours gleaming in the golden glow, each adding a subtle layer to the tranquility of the environment. The glistening sun rays streamed through breaks in the dense tree cover, casting light onto the road and enveloping the air in a warm, soothing embrace.

The Old Building, just visible in the distance, seemed eerily illuminated, its domes – brimming with tales of culture, heritage and history – kissed by the morning sun. There was a timeless serenity that belonged solely to Aitchison in the early hours, as if the very essence of innumerable peaceful mornings had seeped into the bricks of its buildings. Every minute detail, from the mellow light to the lush green fields and the classic architecture, culminated in a harmonious ambience that enveloped the picturesque scene.

With each step, I gained a sense of energising calm. In a few hours, the world would shift, the halls and pathways would buzz with resonant voices and bustling footsteps. But for now, in the cool morning light, all was still, as if time had paused just for me. I knew that one day, I would eventually walk a different path, in a different place, but mornings like this would live forever in my memory, tucked away in a corner of my mind dedicated to safeguarding the subtle treasures of life.

Muhammad Shaheer Inam

H1

19223

The Psychology of Happiness

People everywhere want happiness, and scientists have long sought to identify the psychology of what makes us happy. New investigations have uncovered how big a role words influence our happiness. Word choice has the potential to bolster or damage our well-being, in turn affecting emotions, thoughts, and actions. As Dr. Barbara Fredrickson, an acclaimed positive psychologist, notes: "Positive words can help us cloud our attention, increase our creativity, and build resilience."

Positive words can rewire our brain, making it more optimistic and increasing happiness. When we hear or read positive words, our brain's reward centers are activated, releasing feel-good neurotransmitters like dopamine and endorphins. Dr. Kosslyn and Dr. Koenig (1992) refer to this reaction as the "positive feedback loop." The cognitive neuroscience also reveals that positive language shifts our focus from the negative to a solution-oriented mindset. It is due to the increased activity in the prefrontal cortex, an area responsible for executive function and decision-making.

Gratitude is one aspect of positive language that has been researched heavily in its relation to happiness. Dr. Robert Emmons, an expert on gratitude, states that people who practice it feel greater happiness and life satisfaction as well as better social connections (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Another word that has a lot of influence on happiness is "love," releasing the hormone oxytocin that can help strengthen social bonds and create feelings of warmth, often referred to as a "cuddle hormone." On the other hand, negative words can affect happiness negatively. When we use anxiety-causing words, a stress response results, and cortisol is released (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

Bad language can make us pessimistic and ruminate, which decreases happiness. Negative language can also hurt relationships and lead to social isolation, as people may become less responsive to those who rely on negative words in their spoken language.

Adding happy words to everyday life can be a powerful change. By practicing being grateful for the things you have in your life every day and writing them down (gratitude journal), it can change negativity into positivity, which is proven to increase happiness (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Positive affirmations, a gratitude journal, or choosing the right words can all contribute to greater happiness. Mindfulness practices, such as meditation and deep breathing, can also increase awareness of our language and thoughts, enabling us to make more positive choices.

The psychology of happiness words is deeply rooted in neuroplasticity, a process through which the brain rewires itself to help one adapt and grow throughout life. Applying this same positive language structure strengthens the neural pathways, increasing happiness because your mind stays aligned with positive thoughts rather than alternating (Draganski et al.). Rather than thought alone, the device bumps into neurotrophic factors, which include brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), helping neurons grow.

The psychology of happiness words shows the profound effect that language can have on our emotional health. Using positive words in daily life, we can build happiness, resilience, and strengthen our relationships. On the other hand, using negative language over and over again can lead to anxiety, stress, and social withdrawal. If we watch and choose carefully, words unlock this powerful language to help lead a happier life.

Nael Iqbal
C2-H
18942

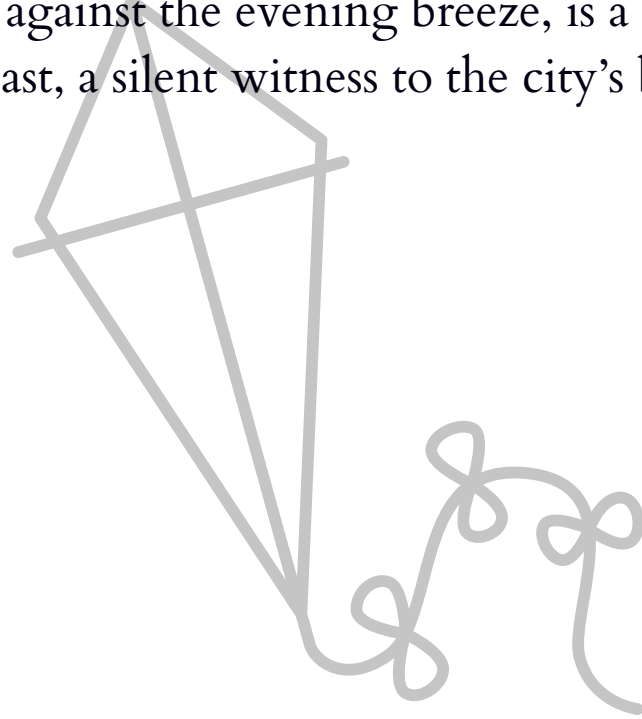
The Last Kite in the Sky

Once, Lahore's skyline would erupt into a symphony of color every spring as the Basant festival brought life to the city. Rooftops transformed into arenas of celebration, where families and friends gathered to engage in the electrifying contest of kite flying. The air rang with shouts of "Bo kata!" as kites clashed in a lively battle of skill and strategy, the ultimate prize being the lone kite reigning supreme against the painted sky. Basant wasn't just a festival; it was a tradition that united the city, an emblem of joy, togetherness, and Lahore's vibrant spirit.

But today, that kaleidoscope of kites and the bustling rooftops are mere memories. Over the years, the festival has faded into a shadow of its former self. The same strings that once fueled friendly competition, coated with abrasive materials to cut rival kites, led to tragic accidents. Glass-coated manja injured countless people and animals, sparking widespread concern. The government's subsequent ban on kite flying silenced the once-thriving festival, draining the life from Lahore's springtime skies.

Now, when a kite rises above the city, it does so alone, without the echoes of jubilant voices or the thrill of competition. That solitary kite, floating high and untethered, is no longer a victor in an aerial contest but a nostalgic reminder of a lost tradition. The vibrant cheers have been replaced by silence, and the kite, once a symbol of unity and celebration, has become an emblem of longing for a culture that has slipped away.

The last kite in the sky now carries a bittersweet weight. It no longer signifies triumph but serves as a quiet reflection of what Lahore has lost, a season defined by camaraderie, energy, and shared joy. As modernization, regulations, and safety concerns dimmed the festival's glow, Basant's spirit lingers only in memories and wistful stories. That lone kite, drifting against the evening breeze, is a poignant ghost of Lahore's vibrant past, a silent witness to the city's bygone days of revelry and unity.



Dayyan Kashif
C2-F
18861

Did Hitler Escape to Argentina?

Few events in history have evoked more speculation and questioning than the fate of Adolf Hitler the Fuhrer of Nazi Germany. Official history records that he died by suicide in his Berlin bunker in 1945 where his body was also found by the Soviets burnt to ashes marking the end of the war. Some researchers as well as a few pieces of evidence from here and there in addition to eyewitness accounts hint that the matter might not be so straightforward. Could the trickster who plunged the world into some of the darkest days it's ever seen by singlehandedly starting the bloodiest war of all time, which also changed the course of modern warfare, have managed to flee to Argentina where he would live out the rest of his days under a brand-new innocent name?

Although most people consider this conspiracy to be moot, examination of the evidence from after the war and the political chaos at the time shows that the theory though unlikely, cannot be entirely ruled out. A Convenient Mystery: The Soviet Union which captured Berlin in 1945 was the first to announce the death of the Fuhrer, which was celebrated worldwide. However, for years the Soviets refused to share evidence with the Western Allies, could this have been because they didn't have any? Stalin himself told US President Truman at the Potsdam Conference that Hitler might have escaped. The result of all these if, buts and maybes was a whole lot of speculation and conspiracy. If the world's most powerful intelligence agencies such as the FBI and CIA couldn't agree whether Hitler was dead how could the public without any resources be sure? The lack of photographic proof supporting this claim as well as the all too convenient burning of the bodies and the Soviet control of all supposed evidence only created further suspicion that this might have been staged or mistaken.

Argentina: Following the bloodiest war the world had ever seen it was Argentina that became home to thousands of fleeing Nazis and Italians facing punishment for the atrocities committed. Under President Juan

Perón, who was a vocal admirer of European fascism Argentine become the country that actively welcomed former Storm trooper officers as well as scientists and collaborators to the Nazi Regime. Men such as Adolf Eichmann the engine behind the Holocaust managed to escape to Argentina, where they survived and thrived for several years before their detection. Given the well-developed ratline system featuring safe houses, forged documents and sympathetic officials it is not beyond the realm of possibility that a high-profile fugitive like Hitler would employ the same route.

The infrastructure for his escape undeniably existed.

Eyewitness Accounts and FBI Files Declassified FBI documents give surprising but credible corroboration to this theory. Reports from 1945 to 1947 show the alleged sightings of Hitler in Argentina usually in rural or mountainous areas. This would make sense as in Hitler's autobiography Mein Kampf he himself stated if one day he retired, he would like to do so in a peaceful area away from the cities. One FBI informant even claimed that a German submarine landed on the Argentine coast shortly before Germany's surrender delivering a mysterious "Nazi official" and several crates of goodies.

Locals later described a tall, mustached man living in seclusion at a mansion. Without hard evidence, these testimonies do little more than persistently raise questions that historians can't quite dismiss.

Darim Hasan

C1H

19053

The Importance of Co-Curricular Activities

Co-curricular activities are an important part of education. These activities, such as sports, arts, drama, debates, and school clubs, go beyond regular classroom learning. They help students develop skills, discover interests, and gain experiences that are valuable for their growth. One key benefit of co-curricular activities is that they support overall development. While classroom lessons focus on academics, activities like sports or music help students grow physically, emotionally, and creatively. Playing team sports teaches teamwork, leadership, and time management. Similarly, activities like drama or public speaking build confidence and improve communication skills. These activities also help students discover their talents. A student who may not excel in academics might shine in football, art, or debate. Co-curricular activities give students a chance to explore their passions and find out what they are good at, which can influence their future careers and hobbies. In addition, these activities teach important life skills. Through co-curricular participation, students learn discipline, time management, teamwork, and how to deal with success and failure. Co-curricular activities also promote social interaction and inclusion. By joining teams or clubs, students meet new people, make friends, and build a sense of community. They learn to work with others and develop understanding and respect for different backgrounds and ideas. In conclusion, co-curricular activities are not just extra programs but an essential part of education. Schools should encourage students to participate in a variety of activities to help them become well-rounded and confident individuals ready for the future.

Saad Ahsan

C2G

18703

Smoggy Morning on Mall Road

As winter arrives in Lahore, smog once again engulfs Mall Road. The usual hustle and bustle of the streets softens, and the vibrant roadside flowers appear muted, as if their colors have been stolen by the heavy haze.

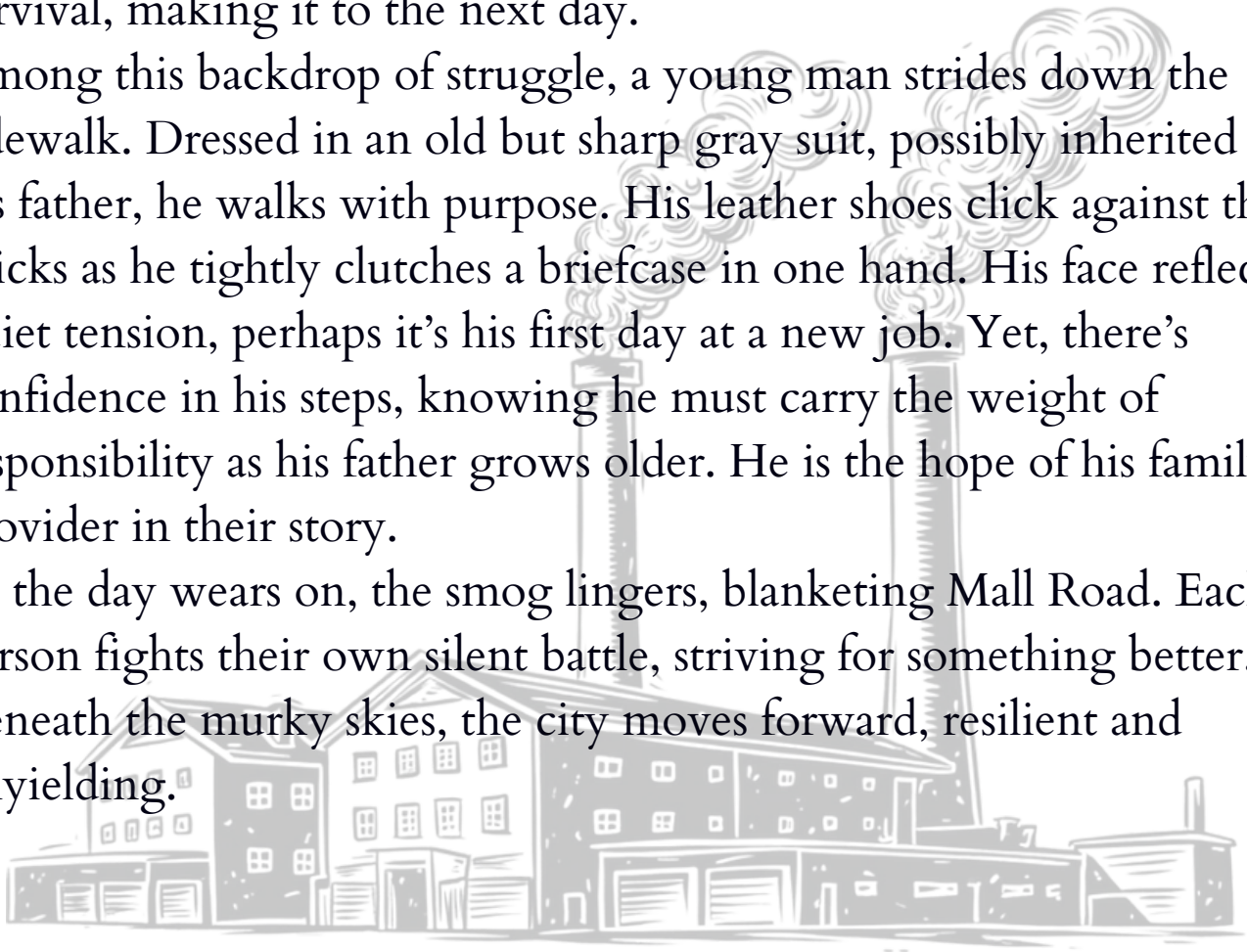
Amid the morning traffic, where vehicles race to beat the signal, cars swerve impatiently to overtake one another. Trapped in this chaotic flow is an old man on a motorbike, carefully weaving through the sea of cars. His scarf is tied tightly around his face to shield him from the pollution, and his breath forms small clouds in the cold air. Weathered gloves cover his stiff fingers as he grips the handlebars. To the drivers around him, the students heading to school, and the wardens stationed nearby, he is invisible, just another ordinary man. Yet, despite the traffic, the smog, and his own fatigue, his eyes remain fixed on his destination. He perseveres daily for the welfare of his family, a father and a son, a husband and a brother, determined to keep going, no matter the hardships, until his final breath.

On the sidewalk, a beggar sits with eyes reddened from constant exposure to the smog. Her frail fingers tremble as she grips an old can. Leaning against a boundary wall, her tired eyes twitch, craving sleep. But rest is a luxury she cannot afford. Beside her, two children huddle under her worn shawl. The older child stretches out his hands, silently pleading for kindness from passersby. Yet the pedestrians rush past, their heads bowed, jackets zipped up to shield themselves from the cold, ignoring the family on the curb. The beggar knows this routine, her hope wavering yet persistent. Perhaps a kind stranger will stop and drop a note, enough to secure a meal for her children. Her strength has dwindled over time, but she cannot stop. For her, this is survival.

Nearby, under the Aitchison College bus stop, a homeless man takes refuge. He coughs violently, dragging himself closer to the faint embers of a recently extinguished fire. He doesn't dream of grand ambitions or imagine what the future holds. His only thought is survival, making it to the next day.

Among this backdrop of struggle, a young man strides down the sidewalk. Dressed in an old but sharp gray suit, possibly inherited from his father, he walks with purpose. His leather shoes click against the bricks as he tightly clutches a briefcase in one hand. His face reflects quiet tension, perhaps it's his first day at a new job. Yet, there's confidence in his steps, knowing he must carry the weight of responsibility as his father grows older. He is the hope of his family, the provider in their story.

As the day wears on, the smog lingers, blanketing Mall Road. Each person fights their own silent battle, striving for something better. Beneath the murky skies, the city moves forward, resilient and unyielding.



Talha Sumair Tarar
C2-J
18966

Midsommar

Ari Aster's *Midsommar* (2019) redefines the horror genre, delving into themes of grief, cultural dislocation, and human vulnerability. Set in an idyllic Swedish commune bathed in perpetual daylight, the film uses unconventional techniques to unsettle its audience, subverting traditional horror tropes.

The characters in *Midsommar* serve as dynamic representations of isolation, cultural disconnection, and the search for belonging. Dani's emotional arc is central to the film, portraying her journey from a grief-stricken and dependent individual to someone who finds solace and acceptance within the Hårga commune. Her transformation into the May Queen symbolizes rebirth and a newfound sense of identity. In stark contrast, Christian embodies detachment and selfishness, his disinterest in their relationship underscoring Dani's initial alienation. Supporting characters, such as Pelle, act as catalysts for this shift, with his empathy drawing Dani closer to the commune, while others like Mark and Josh represent cultural arrogance and exploitation, leading to their respective downfalls. The commune itself functions as a collective character, embodying tradition and unity, while eerily mirroring Dani's emotional states through shared expressions of grief and joy. Together, these dynamics weave a complex narrative about the human need for connection and the devastating consequences of disconnection.

The script of *Midsommar* balances restrained dialogue with layered subtext, exploring themes like cultural relativism and the human need for connection. By allowing space for interpretation, it encourages viewers to think about the moral complexities of tradition and belonging. The narrative's slow build adds to its impact, drawing audiences into its exploration of unity and control.

The film's visual design uses symmetry, repetition, and contrast to shape its unique tone. The commune's symmetrical spaces reflect its structured traditions, while repetitive patterns in costumes and rituals emphasize the cyclical nature of its beliefs. This sense of order is contrasted by moments of violence, creating an unsettling tension without relying on darkness or typical horror imagery. The bright daylight and calm surroundings heighten this contrast. Together, these elements create a film that feels both thought-provoking and visually memorable.

Midsommar has garnered acclaim for its originality, Florence Pugh's compelling performance, and its subversion of horror tropes. Pugh's portrayal of Dani, a grieving woman entangled in a Swedish cult, has been particularly lauded for its emotional depth. Reflecting on the role, Pugh acknowledged the intense personal toll it took, describing the experience as self-abusive due to the dark places she had to explore emotionally. *Midsommar* stands as a testament to the collaborative artistry of its cast and crew, offering a haunting exploration of grief and belonging that continues to resonate with audiences and critics alike.

Zain Ferhan

C2-K

Monument to the Last Billionaire

They found it buried
beneath the ash-glass plains
where oceans used to breathe.

A monument.
Not of bronze, nor marble,
but of carbon-fiber composite
and ambition calcified.

Its face- polished blank
as if sculpted by a memory
already ashamed of itself.

No name,
only coordinates etched into its pedestal,
flickering under dust
like the last stock ticker still trying to rise.

Around it:
no temples, no mourners,
only the soft skeletons of drones
half-swallowed by sediment,
their wings folded like prayers
no god remembered to hear.

On the plinth,
a plaque,
burned but legible.
Engraved in a font
too clean to trust:

“Here stood the architect of Exit.”
And beneath it,
a vault of artifacts:

a wallet with seventeen dead coins,
a passport to nowhere,
a deed to a satellite that no longer orbits.

And finally,
a video-
looped and unblinking,
the billionaire addressing no one:

“I did not hoard.
I curated the future.

I did not flee.
I diversified risk.

If I left the Earth,
it was only because
I believed in survival as innovation.”

But there were no survivors
to marvel at his foresight.
No inheritors to hate him properly.

Nadir Shirazi
C1

Tyrant of Time

Beyond the ticking hands, the tyranny of Time,

Its march was eternal, yet its mercy sparse.
From the first breath drawn to the final chime,

It claimed each life, yet left its scars,
An architect of endings, bleak or sublime.

Time arose unbidden, the sovereign unseen,
With no beginning to mark, no end to seek.

It built the world, unhurried yet keen,
And rendered all equal: the mighty, the meek,

Shaping ages with a hand so serene. Time gave us the gift of a
fleeting now,

Yet Memory returned to the graves of then.
Each moment was lived, though none knew how

Until it was swallowed
The living forgot; the past took its vow.

Time's tyranny led to the dread of the end,
A ceaseless river that wore stone to sand.
Its waters, unyielding, refused to bend.

Nadir Shirazi

C1

Does Wealth Affect Justice?

We're all taught that justice is blind that in the courtroom the class system is abolished and everyone must stand equal before the law. That is of course the oldest legal principle, the Magna Carta. However, unfortunately we do not live in a perfect world and so if you look closely you may notice that Justice's blindfold seems a little loose on one side. Because in the real world it tends to peek not just at your moral compass but also at your bank account.

The scales of justice remain balanced only in theory. In the real world those scales often tilt toward whoever can afford to make the heavier argument. It's an uncomfortable truth, the richer you are, the "fairer" the system seems to become.

The Lawyer Gap: At its core law is simply a test of who's more persuasive. The better your lawyer, the stronger your story sounds. A billionaire walks into court with a team of the best attorneys money can buy. Who bill more in a day than most people earn in a month. Their job isn't just to prove innocence or to prove guilt, it's to bend the interpretation of the law or find loopholes in the law until it fits their client. Meanwhile, the average defendant might get an overworked public lawyer juggling dozens of other cases. In a fair world, both would have equal footing. In the

real one, one walks out with a settlement and the other with a sentence. As cynical as it sounds, courtrooms often run on cash, not ethics. Time Is Money: You may have heard the term "Justice delayed is justice denied" that rings true unless you

can afford the delay. Wealthy defendants can stretch cases for years, filing appeals and motions until the prosecution's energy, evidence or most often budget runs dry. Poorer defendants never get the same luxury.

They can't afford bail, can't afford to miss work and can't afford to wait for a "fair" trial. So they take plea deals that aren't always fair, even when they might be innocent, simply because the system moves too slowly for those without never ending pockets. In court, time isn't just money it's often the difference between freedom and prison.

In most cases the battle is fought on two fronts. Firstly, inside the courtroom and secondly in the court of public opinion. Wealth buys not only legal defense but also control of public opinion. With the right PR team, a wealthy defendant can turn a scandal into a redemption arc, painting themselves as misunderstood innovators or victims of jealousy. Ordinary defendants don't get that privilege. Their stories are filtered through social media and their reputations are crushed before they even get the chance for a fair trial.

Is Money a Shield? There's a saying many lawyers use "It's cheaper to settle." Corporations accused of crimes such as environmental damage, fraud, or human rights violations often just write a cheque and move on. For billion dollar firms, fines are merely operating pennies on the dollar. It's a system that rewards wealth with ignorance. The richer you are, the less the law can actually affect you. Punishment becomes negotiable and accountability becomes optional. The Price of Fairness: To say justice favors the rich isn't to say it abandons the poor completely. It's just that the rich get to play by less harsh rules. They can hire experts as well as shape narratives and turn penalties into tiny expenses.

Darim Hasan
19053
C1H

The Israel Iran Conflict

In recent times, we have witnessed the emergence of the 12 day war; a direct confrontation between two major superpowers of the Middle East: Iran and Israel. However, it is important to note that this conflict is not just a random occurrence, but the result of tensions that have been brewing over the past half-decade. Although it may appear that the conflict began solely due to Iran's nuclear developments, it actually stems from a complex mix of factors including religion, ideology, and the pursuit of regional dominance.

In the past, these two nations maintained diplomatic and military ties with one another. However, this changed in 1979 when Ayatollah Khomeini, the Supreme Leader of Iran, led the Islamic Revolution and established the Islamic Republic of Iran. Khomeini viewed Israel as an illegitimate, Western-imposed state and labeled it the “Little Satan.” His regime reportedly sends around 800 million dollars annually to groups like Hamas and Hezbollah, which openly seek Israel’s destruction. Since 1979, Iran has refused to recognize Israel, and hostility has been embedded in its foreign policy, with Iranian leaders repeatedly calling for Israel’s elimination over the decades.

Israel in turn has seen Iran not just as a threat to its security, but a threat to the stability of the middle east as a whole. Benjamin Netanyahu (the current prime minister of Israel) has spent majority of his time as prime minister warning the world of the dangers of a nuclear Iran; stating that a nuclear Iran would empower Iranian proxies like Hezbollah,

completely disrupt the balance of power in the middle east and cause surrounding Sunni states like Saudi Arabia to also push for the development of nuclear warheads. Its policy of nuclear ambiguity is meant to deter attacks without provoking escalation. The fear in Tel Aviv is that if Iran acquires similar capabilities, it would upend the regional balance of power and embolden Iranian proxies like Hezbollah.

The 12-Day War erupted after the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) confirmed that Iran had enriched uranium to 60% purity at several sites, raising alarms about a potential breakout toward weapons-grade material. This level of enrichment, while still short of the 90% required for a bomb, brought Iran significantly closer to nuclear weapon capability and triggered an immediate response from Israel. Citing the principles of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to which Iran is a signatory Israel launched a series of limited airstrikes and cyber operations targeting enrichment facilities, missile sites, and command infrastructure. Iran retaliated with drone and missile attacks on Israeli military positions, escalating tensions rapidly. However, neither side crossed the nuclear threshold, and the conflict was resolved through an emergency diplomatic intervention led by the European Union and Qatar, with support from the IAEA.

A temporary de-escalation agreement was reached, under which Iran agreed to reduce enrichment to below 20%, restore access for IAEA inspectors, and re-engage in stalled nuclear talks. While the war was brief, it highlighted the fragility of the current non proliferation framework and underscored the urgent need for stronger international enforcement mechanisms to prevent future nuclear crises.

It is important to note that Israel is not a signatory of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Although this conflict is centered in the middle east, shockwaves have been sent throughout the entire world. Furthermore, a direct confrontation could trigger a nuclear arms race all throughout the middle east.

Moreover, instability in the middle east could lead to a disruption of global energy markets particularly the global oil market leading to economic consequences for countries thousands of kilometers away from the middle east. In addition to this, the breakdown of trust in international treaties like the NPT weakens global institutions that are meant to keep peace and security. The Israel-Iran conflict, therefore, is not just a regional issue, it is a global warning of what happens when diplomacy fails and nuclear threats become tools of state policy.



Hamza Hasan Sandhu
19050
C1-A

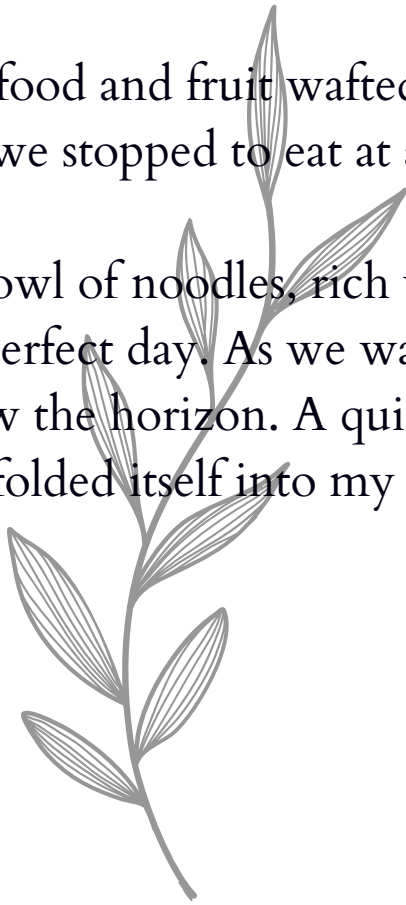
A Beautiful Experience

As we stepped out of the airport doors, instantly a wave of warm air smacked me in the face. It was thick with the smell of sea salt and roasted chestnuts, and the low sun painted the whole scene a vivid orange. My mother gripped my hand tightly, scared to let her child wander, and led us to our cab. As the cabbie sped through the streets, I pressed my face to the window, eyes wide, completely mesmerized. Here it was, Thailand. The yellow car screeched to a stop, and we stepped out into our hotel. The humidity was present, but not overbearing, unlike home. Maybe it was because of the gentle, relaxing breeze, or the vast, blue, sea, so strangely close by.

Nonetheless, my father checked us into our hotel, and we lugged up the stairs to our room. I slept watching the calm, ocean waves from a distance, enthralled in their serenity. Morning arrived with the quiet cries of gulls outside my window. Sunlight spilled through the pane, a stray ray of light forcing my eye open. I groggily rose from my deep slumber, and through a half-lidded eye, looked outside. The whole beach was alive. An endless strip of sand, spotted with shining seashells and umbrellas standing tall. It was quite early in the morning, yet the beach buzzed with life. Children building sandcastles, and paddling in the waves, supervised by their parents, who were enjoying the gentle breeze from a comfy chair. I tugged at the sheets until my sister woke up. After me and her excitedly awakened our parents, we hastily changed out of our comfy pajamas to experience it for ourselves. The soft sand scorched beneath my feet, and the air glistened with heat. As I got closer to the shore, waves sprayed a cool mist on my legs, refreshing my skin. I slowly went into the sea, not too far from shore, just enough to where I could still stand.

The water cooled me down, contrastingly soothing compared to the yellow devil in the sky. I distinctly remember my sister and I playing in the sea, enjoying the rejuvenating waves. Every sound, the crash of surf, distant chatter, the subtle swaying of the palm trees, blended together into the beach's living rhythm. Later that evening, we walked along the pier, changed into proper clothes. Vendors lined the boardwalk, their stalls glowing under strings of yellow light.

The delectable scent of seafood and fruit wafted through the air. It made all our stomachs grumble, so we stopped to eat at a small wooden shack. My mother ordered me a piping hot bowl of noodles, rich with lemongrass and chilli. It was a perfect ending to a perfect day. As we walked back to our hotel, I watched the sun sink below the horizon. A quiet happiness settled inside me, as if the day itself had folded itself into my chest, and decided to stay awhile.



M. Hasan Afzal
C1-J
19054

Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens, born on February 7, 1812, in Portsmouth, England, was a prolific and influential Victorian-era writer. His life's journey was marked by both personal challenges and literary triumphs, making him one of the most celebrated novelists in the English language. Dickens' early years were shaped by financial struggles, as his father faced debts and imprisonment.

At the age of 12, young Charles found himself working in a shoe polish factory, an experience that left an indelible mark on his later works, particularly evident in the vivid depictions of social injustices. His literary career began as a reporter, and he later gained recognition for his serialized sketches and stories published under the pseudonym "Boz."

The Pickwick Papers, his first novel, was a sensation, catapulting him to literary fame in 1836. Dickens continued to produce serialized novels, releasing works such as Oliver Twist, Nicholas Nickleby, and The Old Curiosity Shop in the following years. One of Dickens' enduring strengths lay in his ability to create memorable characters. From the lovable orphan Oliver Twist to the miserly Ebenezer Scrooge in A Christmas Carol, his characters captured the complexities of human nature and the societal issues of his time. Dickens used his narratives to advocate for social reform and shed light on the struggles of the impoverished.

A Christmas Carol, published in 1843, remains one of Dickens' most cherished works. The novella, centered around the redemption of Ebenezer Scrooge, reflects Dickens' concern for societal compassion and the Christmas spirit.

Its enduring popularity is evident in the numerous adaptations and theatrical productions that continue to captivate audiences. Despite his literary success, Dickens faced personal challenges, including a strained marriage and public scrutiny of his private life. However, his boundless energy and commitment to his craft fueled a remarkable output. Notable works like *David Copperfield*, *Bleak House*, and *Great Expectations* solidified his reputation as a literary giant.

Charles Dickens' commitment to social justice extended beyond his writing. He engaged in philanthropy, advocating for better working conditions and education. Dickens' readings of his own works drew large crowds, showcasing his talent as a performer and providing him with a platform to address social issues directly.

Dickens' prolific writing career spanned over three decades, and his impact on literature and social consciousness endures. His final, unfinished novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, reflects the mystery surrounding Dickens' own life as he passed away on June 9, 1870. Despite his departure, Charles Dickens' legacy lives on through his timeless stories, unforgettable characters, and his enduring influence on literature and social reform.

Ali Nawaz

H1

The Revolutionaries

The revolutionaries advanced, a wave that had lost its way back out. No nobility in their battle. Only need. Only pain. The scythe did not sing. It screamed. The blade did not shine. It stumbled. It caught on. It stuck in flesh that fell not like an enemy but like a neighbor. One girl, little more than skeleton, cut through a line of soldiers with a butcher's stroke. Her eyes were blank, her mouth set in a mixture of a grimace and a prayer. A boy, still round-faced with innocence, plunged a piece of glass into a chest and stood, wide-eyed, waiting for someone to tell him what to do next.

No one did.

They declared this a revolution. But it was a confession instead. Each splash of blood was a secret finally told. Each scream was a guilt revealed. They battled, yes, but not for tomorrow. They battled to punish yesterday. Not for freedom, but because no one had shown them how to mourn.

The city burned. Of course it did. That is how all myths are fed, on flame, on flesh, on the backs of those who never had the luxury of choosing anything else.

A man stumbled over the shattered cobblestones, his body already disintegrating. He grasped a flag, dirty and frayed, its emblem smeared. With a howl that was almost a bellow, he thrust it into the earth. He died, as they would all die, with the delusion of victory gripped to his breast like a child's final picture. The rest crowded around. They yelled to the skies, but they would not hear them. They said it was victory, for to say it was loss would shatter them.

The machine had broken down. Not because it was defective, but because it was tired. The system had no soul, but no hunger either. The revolutionaries, however, were starving, and hunger is an unforgiving mistress. But among the applause, between the bloody boots and trembling hands, there came silence. A question that they could not yet permit themselves to ask. What now? What when the screaming ceases?

Morning came as softly as guilt.

The city smoldered. Its remains steamed under a too-gentle sky for what had occurred. Bodies clogged the streets, limbs twisted into question marks, mouths locked into mid-syllable on the pronunciation of long-forgotten names. The rain fell in whispers, as if it too were ashamed. The revolutionaries remained like specters trapped between worlds. They had won, they were told. But they were not. They felt empty.

This was the Crimson Dawn. Not a beginning, but a warning. A hymn to a god who had long, long since ceased to listen, sung by broken lips. They would rebuild, yes. But the thing that was growing inside them now, this tenuous thing that survived on blood and silence, was not peace. It was a memory. And memory, they would learn, is a more brutal tyrant than any regime. They had fought monsters. And, ultimately, everything they had become was just reflections.

Syed Nadir Ali Sherazi
21125

Aitchison College's entwinement with tradition

Aitchison College, established in 1886, is defined not just by its academic standards, but by a tradition that runs deep through its culture. These traditions are not outdated habits; they are purposeful practices that have shaped generations of students into disciplined, thoughtful individuals.

From morning assemblies and house competitions to Founders' Day and the school uniform, Aitchison's traditions offer more than ceremony. They provide structure, identity, and a shared sense of belonging. The familiar rhythm of the school day, the expectations of decorum, and the emphasis on respect aren't incidental; they are values embedded into the very fabric of the institution.

Tradition at Aitchison also fosters unity. Students from different backgrounds are brought together under a common culture –one that emphasizes honour, responsibility, and perseverance. These aren't just ideals spoken of in classrooms. Instead they're lived out daily through systems that have stood the test of time.

Many alumni look back on their years at Aitchison with pride, recalling not only academic growth, but the formative power of its environment. The College's traditions helped build confidence, discipline, and a strong moral compass, qualities that often extend far beyond school life.

There is a quieter side to tradition too, small but lasting moments that stay with students long after they graduate. A first match played on the Main Field, a house trophy lifted, a quiet walk under the colonnades, these experiences accumulate into a sense of belonging that is hard to replicate.

In an age where rapid change can sometimes lead to uncertainty, Aitchison's traditions offer continuity.

They remind students of the values that matter, grounding them in a sense of purpose and identity. The goal isn't to resist progress, but to carry forward a legacy that still holds meaning.

Tradition at Aitchison is not about preserving the past for its own sake, it's about honouring a culture that continues to shape lives. It stands not as a barrier to growth, but as its foundation.

M. Hasan Afzal
C1-J



The Godfather: a cinematic masterpiece

1972's The Godfather remains a timeless classic and an icon in modern pop culture, with some considering it as the greatest movie ever made. The main plot follows Michael Coreleone a reserved and quite war veteran who slowly devolves into a cold and ruthless strategist who succeeds his father, a powerful crime boss Don Vitor Corleone.

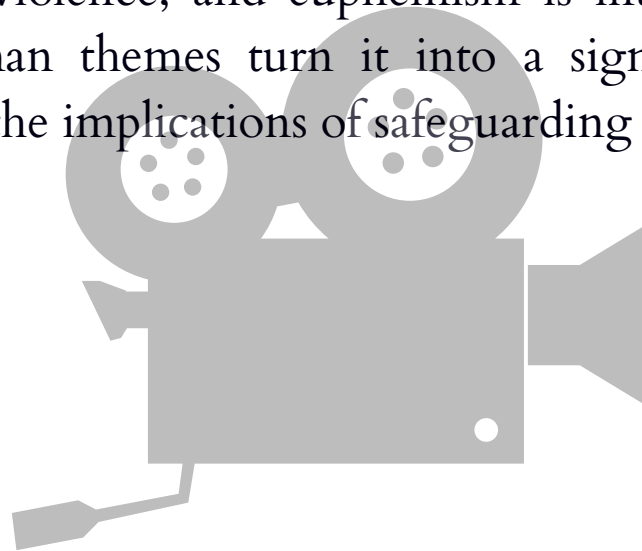
The movie excels in character growth and building the narrative. The portrayal of Marlon Brando as Don Vitor Corleone is legendary providing the character with a subtle yet powerful aura. Al Pacino presents an outstanding depiction of Michael, illustrating his slow transformation from outsider to calculating strategist with understated, eerie precision.

One of the greatest parts of The Godfather is its use of violence. Each scene that portrays violence helps in propelling the story forward, building the world or developing the characters. Each act of violence carries significance and intent. No extravagant or superficial scenes exist.

The movie is also an excellent use of the English language. Characters frequently communicate in calculated tones, suggesting threats or power plays without explicitly mentioning them. The movie also does a great job employing the use of euphemisms particularly when referencing crime or killings. "Take care of him" instead of "kill him" is a perfect example of how the use of establish a detachment from the harshness of the mafia realm, while simultaneously infusing sophistication and authenticity into the conversation.

Although centered on organized crime, the film retains a profoundly human aspect. At its essence, *The Godfather* transcends violence and power, focusing instead on family, legacy, loss, and identity. The individuals contend with affection, duty, and the consequences of their decisions. This emotional richness is what renders the narrative timeless and relatable beyond the realm of crime.

In summary, *The Godfather* is a film masterpiece that merges strong performances, clever writing, and deliberate storytelling. The way it employs language, violence, and euphemism is intentional and impactful, and its deeply human themes turn it into a significant investigation of power, loyalty, and the implications of safeguarding those you cherish.



Hamza Sandhu
C1A
19050

The Banyan Tree

The banyan tree holds a special place in the cultural and natural landscape of South Asia. Known for its vast canopy and unique growth pattern, it is one of the few trees that seems to grow both upward and outward simultaneously. Its aerial roots descend from branches and take root in the soil, creating new trunks that support the sprawling structure. This remarkable growth symbolizes strength, resilience, and continuity, traits that have made the banyan a powerful symbol in folklore, religion, and art.

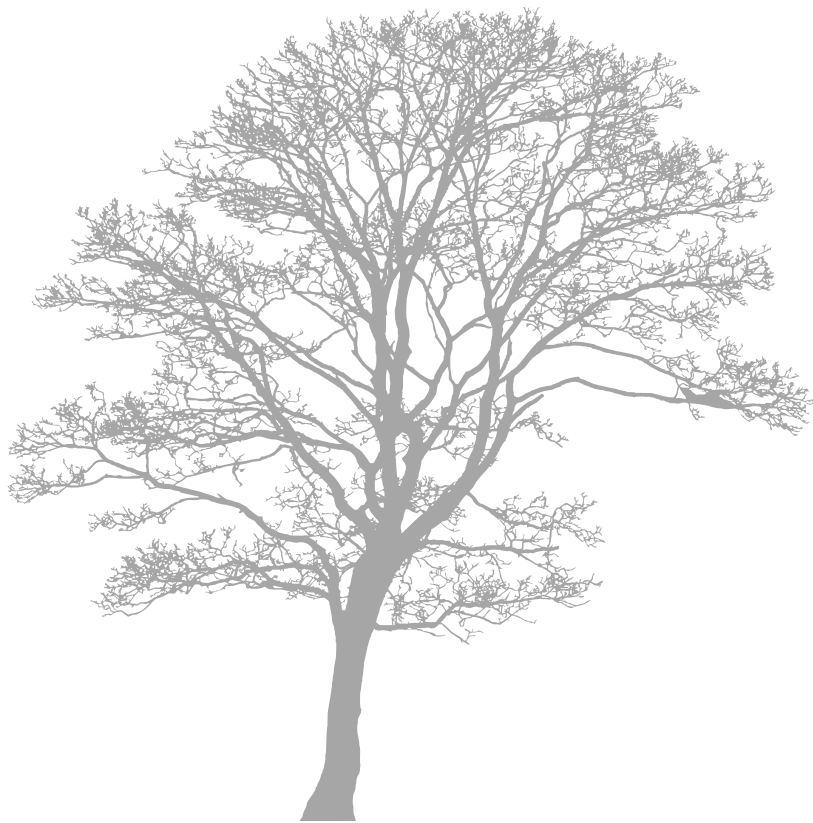
Often referred to as the “tree of life,” the banyan provides shelter and sustenance to countless species, while also serving as a gathering place for communities throughout history. Its long lifespan and ability to regenerate have made it a symbol of immortality and protection in many cultures. Beneath its shade, stories are shared, lessons are taught, and generations find rest.

At Aitchison College, the famous Old Tree is a proud representative of this remarkable species. Standing for decades, the Old Tree has become a living monument on campus. Its wide, leafy branches spread over a large area, offering shade and a quiet refuge amid the College’s busy grounds. Like the banyan itself, the Old Tree is a symbol of endurance, quietly witnessing the passage of time and generations of students who have come to find comfort beneath its boughs.

The Old Tree is more than just a tree. It is part of Aitchison’s history and identity, a natural landmark that connects past, present, and future. As it continues to grow and spread, it reminds the College community of the strength that comes from deep roots and far-reaching support, qualities that define both the tree and the spirit of Aitchison.

In a world that often moves too fast, the banyan trees encourage us to slow down, to grow patiently, and to stand firm through changing seasons. They are living reminders that true strength is found in resilience, stability, and the quiet power of steady growth.

M. Hasan Afzal
C1J



King Sacrifice

Ralph King was gifted, not just in chess, as some might think out of ignorance. He couldn't speak Spanish (yet), but when he was seven, he impressed all his Mexican friends' parents by reciting Spanish poetry about family and war, in an accent as rich as the natives. He was great in math, probably the best amongst all school children in the state who were in the same grade as him, but he never indulged in the nitty-gritty things of math. Now, yes, I may have mentioned to a few people that Ralph once told me about the time he first saw his sister's calculus book, and everything made perfect sense to him already. But I doubt he even attempted a single question until they started teaching calculus in school, because he had a point to prove.

"Yeah, I can see myself as a great politician, but am I President material? Not really, right? Then why should I spend my life doing politics?"

He had the same response to questions that people asked when they saw him playing puzzle games at speeds that made them think that he would break whatever puzzle he was working on. Or when he occasionally won all the shooting games at a carnival. And when he completed an entire walkathon at HIS running speed, that was also the first time I saw him in person. Even sharing the same city as him didn't reduce the shock I received when I shook his hand that day, while he was fulfilling his regular, twice-a-day round of handshakes from random crowds. "Hey chess kid, weren't you in the chess competition yesterday? I was there as a special guest." He asked whilst shaking my hand. "Oh yeah, didn't see you there," I told him. "Understandable, apparently the grandmaster they invited changed his mind and no longer wanted to compete against me, which meant that I got free and spent around 20 minutes in the tournament area, trying to figure out who could win.

I saw your game too; you played a terrible opening, ha-ha. If you want to get better at chess, you can come over to my house tomorrow,” he said. I thought famous people didn’t make these offers, but why wouldn’t I agree? The next day, I found myself playing chess with him.

“Now, yes, your opening was painful to watch but here’s the thing. ” he said, “After looking at your game, I peeked at the game between the people to the left of you for some 10 seconds and then I was going to check on the game of those on your back when the corner of my eye caught something. You had your opponent in check. And after I had analyzed the game of the entire row, and was going back, I saw your game once again. Then I saw it: a draw, but you HAD won if you had played just one more move.” “Yeah, I’m pretty good at ch-” I couldn’t complete my sentence. “You’re amazing! Whatever your name is, but you are,” Ralph continued. “Did you not realize that you took half the time on the clock as your opponent, and then you led him to a draw without even opening with E4 or D4, the Chesser’s jewels? Do you even know who your opponent was? Your opponent has an ELO rating of around 2400. “Oh wow, I had no clue of that up un-” I tried to add on, but I was interrupted again. “Do you seriously not know about him? He was the grandmaster who refused to play against me.

Listen, do you want to be my teammate for all my dual competitions?” He asked me as if we weren’t strangers. And I agreed, as if I didn’t just randomly get offered team membership to the best chess player in my state. Fast-forward to today, when I am writing this as a tribute to him, it’s Ralph’s son’s birthday. Ralph himself would’ve been 46 years old today, but cancer finally brought the King down last year, on this very day. Now let’s go back a bit...

This was it. Ralph had made his way to the World Chess Championship and was playing the semi-final against a Russian grandmaster, the best in Europe. And then that was it, a checkmate. After the match, I jokingly asked him, “How’s your preparation for the World Chess Championship?” because I knew that he never prepares for his tournaments. “Yeah, man, I get it. But the new grandmaster from Ethiopia is something,” he said. I think I would’ve said the same thing next had he not said it. Just 5 years ago, nobody knew about him. Solomon Ahmed had to spend his life doing labor in a factory until the day the factory owner was surveying the living quarters and found a chessboard on a tabletop. Being an avid chess player himself, the owner invited the workers to play against him. Friendly matches were all they were. Then he played with Solomon and got checkmated in 7 moves. He asked Solomon how long he had been playing chess. Solomon told him that he had actually never played chess before, and had only watched a few matches on TV.

He didn’t want to play chess even in the factory’s living quarters because he wanted to spend his free time learning English from books so he could become a tour guide one day and earn more. “Chess doesn’t pay,” Solomon said. The factory owner told him that there are all sorts of tournaments happening in Ethiopia, in which you can win a handsome amount, sometimes in millions. So the next week, Solomon went to a chess event. He participated and performed brilliantly, beating everyone except a grandmaster.

That match ended in a stalemate. After this, Solomon read a chess book for the first time and dozens afterward during these five years. Now he is the undisputed 2nd best in the world at chess. Now, the Championship day finally arrived, and when the clock hit 2:00, the duel started.

The first move was by Solomon: e4. So Ralph played the brilliant Silician defence, as cliché as it may be. While Solomon was making his next move, that is when he first saw them: the children of Ethiopia, who were all peering through the windows of the hall in which the game was being played. Then, Solomon moved his knight, and I saw Ralph snap back. He responded by developing his knight, too. I saw him looking back at the window, so I looked too and saw kids dressed poorly, many of whom we would consider starving, back in America. A few seconds later, Solomon moved his other knight into the game. When Ralph heard the piece being placed, instead of looking over the chessboard, he just stared at the ground for a good while before finally picking up a pawn and moving it. But to my horror, it was the G3 pawn.

This was a terrible move, and I thought that he wanted to move a pawn next to it, but he blundered after being distracted; this assumption was soon to be shattered. Ralph's next 12 moves left the TV hosts and the audience speechless, and some even went "immobile" as they didn't want to miss the move that would finally bring the King down.

He played so horribly that now he was in check. Now, his next move was pivotal. Either he moves his king or gets checkmated. The crowd went silent, and everyone looked at the board with eyes wide open. I saw him lift his king, and then he grasped the piece as if he didn't want to let go of it. 3 seconds, 5 seconds, 7 seconds passed, and he was still in this catatonic-type stage, and then he finally moved the king to safety.

I gasped a breath of relief and looked down. I was getting all my wits together and trying to get what in the world happened to Ralph today, but when I looked up, I saw Solomon shaking hands with Ralph. I got upset for the first time with Ralph because I thought that Ralph had finally resigned instead of playing on after saving his king.

I was still intrigued by how much time he took for that one simple move. I would later find out that he was fighting the biggest internal conflict of his life while playing that game. When their handshake ended (which took a while because Ralph was instructing Solomon on something simultaneously).

I got up from my chair to see the board better, and only then did I realize how well balanced all the pieces on the board were. It felt as if you pushed one piece; every piece would fall in a domino fashion. I went near the chessboard after they both stood up to meet the hosts, and then re-imagined how the entire game played out. Then everything clicked, and it almost made me scream. I realized how every move after his G3 move left half his pieces in a weak position and half safe, so he could always turn back on his choice to ruin his game on purpose, but still pose a gimmick.

For example, his second-to-last move to the knight (that caused his king to be nearly pinned in the next move), if it had been played to the correct block, would have resulted in a major sacrifice of the pieces for Solomon. One of Solomon's rooks would have been taken first, and then his other rook would have been locked in.

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For example, his second-to-last move to the knight (that caused his king to be nearly pinned in the next move), if it had been played to the correct block, would have resulted in a major sacrifice of the pieces for Solomon. One of Solomon's rooks would have been taken first, and then his other rook would have been locked in position one of Ralph's pawns. Even Solomon's queen would have been left hanging in the next move, because this move would get Solomon in check, so he would have to use his next move to move the king to safety. That day, Ralph played the best and worst game of his life. When I got outside, I saw a great crowd of reporters that surrounded Ralph. He told them something in Oromo, the most widely spoken first language in Ethiopia.

When he finally got free and sat in our escort vehicle, I demanded that he tell me why he had made himself lose. "Didn't you want to be the champion of the world?" I yelled. "Listen. I did this for them, for all of them," he replied, "But specifically for that child in the red t-shirt. You see, whenever I hovered my piece to a wrong block, I saw him sighing, and when I moved my piece to the right square, he got happy.

He knew it: The game that I thought I was only good enough to know this well. So I made myself lose so that Solomon could motivate these kids by showing that winning is for everyone, regardless of our nationality or race. And also so that he can spend money on the chess equipment and coaches required for these kids, including the obvious chess prodigy. Now coming to your question, I think this championship still made me the Champion of the World: The Champion of Their World”.



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