About
The Viking Literary Magazine is an annual student publication of original writing, artwork, and photography, by LJHS students for LJHS students. The Literary Magazine has a long history at La Jolla High; it was previously named “Edda,” “Icarus,” and “Devil's Wine.”

2023-2024 Staff
President:
Audrey Weishaar

Vice President:
Kyra Sharma

Contributors:
Ana Abell, Max Davis, Jonathan Fogel, Marina Garcia, Lily Kingston, Nathan Lam, Nathan Tukuafu, Kyra Sharma, Sophia Soltero, Emma Weibel, Audrey Weishaar

Cover art courtesy of Sophia Soltero
# Table of Contents

A Trip to Japan - Anonymous  
Untitled - Ana Abell  
Favorite - Audrey Weishaar  
Untitled - Sophia Soltero  
An Average Life - Sophia Solter  
Birds - Nathan Lam  
Jellyfish - Audrey Weishaar  
Untitled - Max Davis  
Iceberg - Anonymous  
Big Red Poppies - Emma Weibel  
What is a Flower? - Emma Weibel  
Watching the Sky - Sophia Soltero  
Prologue - Audrey Weishaar  
Star Destroyer - Nathan Tukuafu  
Kanye Half Drawing - Lily Kingston  
Will You Hear a Symphony? - Marina Garcia  
Put Me Where A Star Would Be - Marina Garcia  
aloo pakoras - Kyra Sharma
A Trip to Japan
Anonymous - Grade 12

The summer of seventh grade, my family and I visited Japan for the first time. We arrived past midnight, and took a train to Shinjuku, our first location. However, when we got there, it would be safe to say we were pretty lost. There was basically no one on the streets, and since we had very limited knowledge of the Japanese language, we had trouble finding our hotel. As my Dad was looking around, clearly lost, a stranger came up to us: “Need help?” she said. We all looked at her, and she was smiling, seemingly glad to offer some assistance. My Dad looked relieved. “Yes,” he said, “we need help finding our hotel.” Although she had limited knowledge of the English language, she tried her best to help us. After a couple minutes of looking back and forth between my Dad’s phone and around the street, we finally saw our hotel hidden in between two buildings. We exchanged relieved glances and thanked the stranger. My Dad expressed thanks to the stranger, and he said, “Thank you so much.” Although we hadn’t been in Japan for even one day, we were greeted with warmth and sincerity, which truly reflected the morals of Japan’s society—values we continued to experience while there. The next day was filled with roaming the streets of Japan. There were signs everywhere, making the city vibrant and full of life. The people were more laid back, however, and their clothing was pretty uniform: most people were in work clothes or dressed in all black. This surprised me, as I was more used to everyone dressing in clothes that
matched their personality, and wasn’t used to the more fixed nature of Japanese society. However, the people were very nice and welcoming, although pretty reserved. Whenever we went on a train, it was filled with silence, and most people were either on their phones, sleeping, or reading the newspaper or a book, completely quiet. That being said, I always had to hush my Dad when he was speaking on the train, as everyone could hear what we were talking about and he tended to disrupt the complete silence that filled the air.

In the following days of the trip, we visited Kyoto, where we got to explore the natural side of Japan. We got to hike to the top of a mountain, where we were greeting my monkeys everywhere. I had the chance to feed some of the monkeys, which was a fun and exciting experience. I had never done so before, and was surprised at their friendliness. We further hiked back down the mountain, and decided to go to the bamboo forest. This was a place filled with tall, towering bamboo trees that filled the air. However, there were a lot of people also visiting this forest, which ruined the experience a little for me because of the huge crowds, but nevertheless, I had fun.

Overall, my trip to Japan was a great experience. My family and I got the chance to visit various temples, see Japan’s countryside, as well as their bustling cities, and go on bullet trains. From experiencing this different societal culture to eating traditional Japanese food, it is safe to say that this trip is one I’ll never forget.

Untitled
Ana Abell
Favorite

Audrey Weishaar

My world exist in shades
Of orange and yellow Stretching
for infinity

I live in fields
Of sunflowers and tulips
Their petals are soft Between my fingers

I could read
About history
For eons

Because those things Are my favorite

But truthfully
They were not my favorite
Until they were hers.

Untitled

Ana Abell

Untitled

Sophia Soltero
An Average Life
Sophia Soltero

The white coat whips around as he runs through the grass.
He slows down to walk without a care in the world.
He lays down to bathe in the sun.
When he gets home, he dreams about all the wonders that he
saw today, happy that he’ll get to experience it tomorrow.
He wakes up the next day, right beside his favorite person.
He has to stay home today because today is a weekday.
He isn’t like the rest of the residents of the house.
He stays home while everyone goes out to work.
An everyday struggle is finding something to do.
He lives rent free without a care.
He hears a knock at the door, wondering who.
The only thing he sees is the creature’s hair.
He knows that his only job is to protect the house,
so he does his best to ward off the guest.
After the guest is gone, he slinks back to his spot on the couch.
He takes a nap, dreaming about a bear chasing him.
He’s running away as fast as he can like the gingerbread man.
Then just as soon as the dream came, the dream fades away.
After everyone gets home,
he is happy once again.

Birds
Nathan Lam
Jellyfish
Audrey Weishaar

your beauty scares me
for i yearn to touch you and embrace you

all of your different parts work together in this kaleidoscope of cool colors

i reach out to you yet pull away before Connecting.

because I know how much you will hurt me

i do not blame you it is your nature it is how you survive

but just once i want for you to
Iceberg

Anonymous

Beneath the rolling ripples, secrets unfold
Where whispers wash up upon the sand,
And a sunset across the horizon shines like paint on a
canvas. Onlookers come and go like the dropping tide,
All are enjoying the place where so many animals reside.
Like a heartbeat, in rhythm, the waves sway
Birds squawk and trace patterns in the sky
As their feathers brush the cold deep surface,
They fly so fast like they’re in a circus.
Under the water a realm of shadows dance,
The deep deep blue will leave you in a trance.
When footprints dug into the sandy expanse
Salt-kissed air weaves through your hair like a dance.

In the distance, a sailor's gaze lost in the horizon.
He looks out on the vastness,
As the schools swim beneath, they will only survive if
they’re the fastest.
when i was 10, i ate a poppy seed --
now my life is run by big red poppies

i often wonder if the poppies were
always there
waiting for me to notice them
or if it truly was the seed that planted
them inside me

regardless, the conditions were just
right;
why me? (why not me?)

mouth: sometimes i try to speak but
only poppies come out
they get lodged in my throat
i choke
i cry
i think about the words I couldn’t say;
all night

brain: smooth, the poppies need dirt; it
gets in all the crevices
i’m smart, i think?
i know a lot about history but
why can’t i ask people for help?
why can’t i think when i need to the
most?

stomach: these poppies are the
angriest, they fight for attention
when it’s bad -- life -- they bang
against the walls, always a reminder

when it’s good, their roots still
through the surface
they say: it’s not forever

heart: i tried to open its ornate oak
doors
i feel the pressure of the poppies
against the wood
(threatening to crush me)
i close it again
will i ever have a love like the novels?
that’s up to me (the poppies)

lungs: poppies get stuck here a lot, its
narrower
sometimes i can’t breathe

i think the poppies are nocturnal
its always worse at night

the doctors say its common
but i don’t see anyone else struggling
i think i’m the only one

they told me one pill in the morning
would help
but the poppies are still there
everywhere
always
i want to burn the flowers
but i think that would kill me too

i don’t want to die

i guess i’ll live
the poppies are kind of pretty anyway
What is a flower?

A flower

takes about a month to grow
despite all odds, the stem shoots high
the petals throw themselves out
roots bury in the dirt

What is a flower?

When she graduated high school
she was given a lei
the flowers sat around her neck
in every picture.

What is a flower?

They abhorred violence,
they stood against an
institution that would kill
them all
they slipped a daisy in the
gun
please don’t
shoot!

What is a flower?

It was the happiest day of her life;
as she launched the bouquet,
she caught sight of her sister’s smile;
they all grasped for the bundle of
white roses
she hoped it would bring happiness
to them all.

He took his last breath on a night like any other
the next day he was laid to rest
in the earth
sunflowers lay by the grave.

After it spreads its seeds
the flower wilts.

What is a flower?

everything
nothing
rive"

Watching the Sky
Sophia Soltero
I stood on the rocky surface of Estara, watching the dark forms of Columba Regime ships lower. We had known this was coming. The Elders had warned us of the expansion of the Columba. It was logical, of course. The last planet in the Kavarii system, we were just another cog in the machine. What I hadn’t expected was for how ominous it all seemed.

The large black ships crept ever closer, slowly blotting out more and more light from the stars behind them. Like an ink stain creeping across fabric. Small children ran across my path, laughing and smiling without a care in the world. Unknowing of the danger looming above them. I smiled, watching the girls with braids and simple dresses skip about. They wore only socks, no shoes. Rubber was an expensive commodity this far into the star system.

I turned my eyes back to the stars, watching the ships get closer. They were maybe only five minutes from landing.

The crowd was already starting to form around the stage that had been set up. Some people chatted with friends around them, most just stared at the sky. Some with awe, some with anxiety, and some with terror.
“Young Ones!” The tallest Elder emerged from the small cluster atop the stage. All eyes turned to them. “Please, be calm. The events that transpire today will have little effect on us.” A few people scoffed. “This will be peaceful. Do not show fear, for that shows only our flaws.” I bit the nail of my index finger, contemplating. My trust in the Elders, and the Gods, was strong, but this was a new threat. Rumors and stories had reached us of the Columba Regime’s cruelty. Yet, I had faith. If the Elders said this was to be peaceful, who was I to question them?

The black, box shaped ships touched down quietly. Bells rung throughout the town, signifying to everyone to come outside and witness the transfer of power. Small children clung to parents, wives to husbands, friends to friends.

The Elders stood at the edge of the large stage set up in the center of town. The four of them looked... tired. The worn, black cloaks that dragged along behind them were not worn with the typical dignified air. They had become simply another piece of clothing. Their original purpose—to blend in with the ground below, as if the Elders simply sprung from the rocks themselves—was rendered obsolete on the pure white stage.

The ship directly across from the stage, which landed in the salt fields, opened a large door. Soldiers poured out, clad in white uniforms, all marching in perfect unison. The appearance was certainly an awesome one.

Lily Kingston
The crowd around me seemed to have a similar idea, and they quickly fell silent.

Finally from the ship exited a group of five men, dressed in vibrant red. One on each side of the cluster held weapons: sleek, black rifles. We all watched quietly as they climbed the stage.

I stood in the crowd, near the farthest edge of the stage from the Elders. The newcomers turned their backs to me, now facing the Elders. The four of them bowed rigidly, their black cloaks falling around them.

The man in the center stood tall, clad in red with a black cape none of the others possessed. He held nothing except his bearing. This was a man who was not questioned. One who was destined to be in charge.

When the Elders finally stood straight, they all seemed to be dwarfed by this powerful man, despite two being as tall or taller than him. He offered no more than a nod of notice.

The shortest Elder, round in the middle, produced a scroll of parchment from within his cloak. A red ribbon was wrapped neatly around it, sealed with wax. Nearly five thousand pairs of eyes tracked the roll of paper as it left the knarled, knotted hand for a younger, firmer one.

One man shouted in protest. With an unbothered hand, the man in the black cloak waved his hand toward another in his entourage. The bullet was fired within seconds of the interaction, and the protestor dropped in a spray of blood.
Those around him screamed in horror. One began to sob.

“Sir, I don’t think-” the tallest of the Elders began. His voice was cut off as another bullet cut his protest short. Their blood was just like anyone else’s: ruby red. The crowd erupted into chaos, a cacophony of screams and bullet fire.

I was dragged away by the stampede of frenzied people. I managed to break apart and crawl into a small building. It was no more than a wooden shack. It was empty inside, save for a few harvesting tools.

I pulled my knees into my chest and rested my forehead on them. I pressed my palms to my ears, trying to drown out the screaming outside. Even so, the sounds echoed in my ears. When I shut my eyes, the falling Elder carved itself into my eyelids, his blood, vibrant and bright, splashed against the darkness.

I slipped out of the shack once everything had quieted. It was now dark out, yet clouds obscured the stars above. To my surprise, there were no soldiers patrolling the area. I slipped on the asphalt, the stones slick with blood. I stumbled into the center of town, and the sight there nearly destroyed me. I fell to my knees, the stink of death overwhelming my senses, forcing me to breathe through my mouth. I could taste the iron on the back of my tongue anyways. Before me was a child’s sock, the once white fabric now soaked through with blood. Reverently, I picked it up, cradling the small garment in my hands. It was dense and heavy in my palms; it stained my skin a dark, ugly red. Tears flowed down my face and I curled into myself. I couldn’t hear anything except for my own sobs.

And in that moment, surrounded by the death of the only home I knew, I came to a conclusion.

The Columba Regime had to fall.
Will You Hear A Symphony?
*Marina Garcia*

Sudden in the sandbanks whom the wind lifts to and from
The sea, then down the earth
Letting to become
Sudden in the weeds that coat the shore with fur
Sudden in the thunder
Sudden in the stir
Sudden will the sound of the timpani drums brush
Sudden I’m the rhythm of the rain-song in the piece
Kindly, she lets you know with such of gentle hush
She lets you lead your way before the winds she holds release
Sudden will you realize
How long shall you decide?
Will you hear the music or find somewhere to hide?
Will you take the company
Or do what you’ve been told?
Will you hear the symphony
Or do you fear the cold?

Put Me Where A Star Would Be
*Marina Garcia*

If most the stars that I see nightly in the sky
Are gone and have been long before
Then let me burn after I die
If they can stay to shine for me
To never fail to catch my eye
Put me where a star would be
And tell the world that I’m alive

*Untitled*
*Max Davis*
I’ve dozed off on her bed when I hear the stove begin to tick quietly. I grin, half asleep, covertly listening as she hums the tune of “Ek Chidiya, Anek Chidiya”—the way all dadis¹ do while they cook. She’s wary as she opens the fridge so as to not awaken me, but a long, agonizing squeak escapes inevitably. I chuckle as she mutters about her need for home repairs, as she’s been doing for the past four years.

When she abandons her efforts to cook silently, the sound of four perfectly ripe aloos² being cut echoes across the apartment, and I can only imagine she's using the largest knife in the kitchen, per her idiosyncratic habits. I can almost see her furrow her brow as she grows quiet, cautiously dipping aloo slices into the batter she prepared last night—thinking I hadn’t recognized her secretive demeanor. Then, effortlessly and unafraid, she slides each slice into the hot oil, and they sizzle and squeal before turning a beautiful beige; the color of an incipient autumn. Soon, I hear a ceramic plate clattering, a contented sigh, and a euphonious voice calling my name, and I picture her eagerly anticipating the unsuspecting awe I’ll embody at the sight of her ‘surprise,’ just to see her candescent smile again, like always.

But when I glimpse through the slightly open door, the kitchen is dim and bleak, as it has been since she left. The scent of sandalwood incense still lingers faintly, and I cling to it as I do my memories of her.