

## **The Resilience of the Written Word**

By Julianna Pitucco

The pen touching the blank paper... the click of my fingers on the keyboard...the release of the thoughts swirling around my head...once again, writing sets me free. Writing is an integral aspect of my identity. Anyone can look at the array of extracurriculars I am a part of and infer that I am interested in writing. They can see that I took Creative Writing and Composition courses throughout high school, that I was a writer for the Somerville High School newspaper, and that I am going to major in journalism. Yet, this does not adequately capture how writing has formed me into the person I am today in more ways than one.

I think back to fourth grade at Vanderveer Elementary School. I am sitting at my desk, fiddling with my pencil, wondering what I should do since I finished my essay early. I walk over to my fourth-grade teacher, Mrs. Gerson, my footsteps filling the void that existed in the classroom. Instead of telling me to sit quietly and wait, she makes her way over to the composition notebook on my desk, flips the page, and tells me to write another opinion piece. The corners of my mouth fold up into a grin. I sit down and dive in. That was the moment I began to find myself through writing.

Many years later in 2020, I felt like I was drowning due to the personal and societal hardships of the pandemic. Police brutality, gun violence, and political unrest transpired daily. I felt powerless and reluctant to speak out, as I thought that people would judge me and become hostile toward my views. Despite this, I knew that I had to write about these issues, or no one in my community would notice the significance of what was occurring. During this time, I broke out of my shell and strived to make a difference in my community. I began to contribute articles about current events to Valkyrie, the Somerville High School newspaper. Those who know me would describe me as outspoken and outgoing, and these traits came into light more than ever in 2020 when I began writing about injustice. My writing felt like my contribution to healing the world around me.

My writing is not only used for social justice, but it is an outlet for me to express my personal emotions. Scattered, unruly thoughts are constantly swimming inside my head at a million miles per hour. As my sophomore year of high school began, I discovered a refuge that guarded me from my own mind: Poetry. In 2021, I was struggling with a complicated breakup in addition to the mental challenges of the pandemic. I felt abandoned, as it seemed like no one, not even those closest to me, understood the extent of what I was going through. So, I dug out an old spiral notebook from my basement storage bin and started a poetry journal. Poetry grabbed my inner thoughts and released them so that I could be at ease with the life in front of me. This changed me as a person; I gained a significant amount of confidence and resilience that I now use to fight life's obstacles. Although my words were only released for my own eyes, it helped me develop into the strongest version of myself. My power slowly started to shine through as I gave my thoughts words.

In life, not many things are consistent. People leave, individuals change, and the phases of life pass by before everyone's eyes. Regardless, writing remains consistent for me in that it is something that always sets me free. It is easy to feel stuck, helplessly trapped in a prison of one's own thoughts and emotions that feels impossible to escape. I break down these shackles by writing for myself and others. Through all of the darkness, all of the hate, writing remains. Despite the attempts to silence the youth and guard them from the world's affairs, the written word remains resilient. No one will ever silence it.

The best part is that my story is just beginning. In college, I will take my love for writing to the next level through extracurriculars, core classes, community service and my major in journalism. I will bring my voice wherever I end up to make a positive impact on the college community. Additionally, I will use my knowledge gained to give back to the beautiful Somerville community. I view Drew McLachlan as an inspiration; like he did, I want to maintain my commitment to the Somerville community and remember the roots of where I come from. Similar to Drew, I ran Cross Country in high school while also pursuing my passion for reading and writing. It is a privilege to be considered for this scholarship in honor of an amazing man, and I thank you sincerely for your time in considering me. My high school career may be coming to an end but I am looking forward to writing a new chapter for myself in the coming years.