

VOICE

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For The Students, By The Students.

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The Team!





HUMAN GENIUS

By Safeia Mubarak

While multi billionnaire companies continue to push humanity towards the inevitability of climate change and irreversible consequences. Many new small businesses and individuals have begun their attempt to innovate new ideas to address humanity's waste and the general single-use, fast-paced way of life humanity has grown accustomed to in order to bring us back from the point of no return. Here's a compilation of some of these innovators:

FAB HABITAT (KANAN AND SUCHIN GUPTA)

Kanan and Suchin Gupta owned a mat production business in India. Hoping to bring it to their new home in New Jersey they decided they needed to upgrade their business and so in 2009 Fab Habitat came into existence. Operating with their beliefs in mind "sustainability starts at home." They found a way to turn plastic into a rug. By using Polypropylene which is plastics that are found in food grade plastics and PET which is a type of plastic found in water bottles they are able to make their rugs. The plastics are broken down into a soft cotton-like yarn that is then weaved into a beautiful rug that can be used to style your home. They claim that their rugs are soft, durable, weather resistant and can handle the wear and tear that comes from shoes, children and pets. All materials made by Fab Habitat are either biodegradable or can be upcycled by the end of their lifespan.



<https://goodweave.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Fab-Habitat.jpeg>



<https://unlessbrands.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Felix-2048x1420.jpeg>

CHOPVALUE (FELIX BÖCK)

When looking at the waste humanity puts out each year, rarely do people think of chopsticks, but that is exactly where ChopValue founder Felix Böck decided to put his attention. Böck explains that he hoped to apply his expertise in wood engineering in Canada to address the wood and construction waste there. After speaking at a seminar, he realized that the heads of the industry were not interested in his solutions. Seeking to apply the solutions he knew would work, Böck moved to start his own business and he considered chopsticks as the resource. Realizing that all chopsticks are manufactured to a certain standard, they would be uniform. So Böck took to turning all the single-use chopsticks that are tossed out by the thousands into new and useful items. ChopValue sells various wood products, from cheeseboards, tables, home furniture, and even gaming accessories. They have become a successful business and now they present their methods in different countries hoping to see them implemented everywhere in order to cut down on waste. They move forward with their mission to "redefine the term waste, to resource; one chopstick at a time."





https://miro.medium.com/max/1800/0*6IW9zzWEICqRTlvM.jpg

PELA (JEREMY LANG)

In an attempt to tackle the waste produced by the electronics of our modern world. Pela founder Jeremy Lang focused his attention on phone cases. Realizing that almost everyone with a phone would most likely own a phone case and that that phone case would contain plastics, Lang sought to develop phone cases that lacked plastic. In looking into the current “biodegradable” or “plant based” phone cases he found that many of them only contained a small percentage of plants fibers and therefore did not fully biodegrade. This prompted the creation of Pela phone cases which pride themselves on being the first compostable phone case. Pela has what they call a “big, hairy and audacious goal” which is to create a waste free future. They also are willing to take your old plastic phone cover and breakdown the plastic to avoid it from ending up in a landfill. Pela is carbon neutral as they offset their carbon emissions by 100% as well as also using less water during production and creating less manufacturing waste than the average company. They’ve also begun branching out into more than just phone cases, Pela makes all sorts of electronic accessories from phone grips to screen protectors.



CORAL EYEWEAR (GEORGE & CALVIN BAILEY)

Humanity's impact on the ocean and the creatures that live within it has always been a hot topic among the eco-friendly community. There is a huge level of human waste that is dumped into the ocean each year, this also includes fishing nets that are left behind by fishermen.

George Bailey is the brain behind the operation at Coral Eyewear. At the age of 19 he devised a plan to repurpose the millions of fishing nets that had been abandoned in the ocean. Teaming up with Calvin, the two founders launch their business to gather all the fishing nets they can find, hire an Italian eyewear designer and they launch their business. Coral Eyewear refers to itself as a planet-positive business because not only is their packaging recyclable, their products are actively taking harmful plastics and repurposing them, but they offset the carbon footprint their deliveries bringing the carbon footprint to zero, and their glasses are endlessly recyclable. The company makes glasses of all kinds including ski goggles and has begun expanding its production into clothing as well.



<https://www.mahindraracing.com/wp-content/uploads/UEA.jpg>



Rediscovering Childhood Through Studio Ghibli Movies

By Safeia Mubarak



Studio Ghibli was founded in 1985 by Hayao Miyazaki and Isao Takahata. The Japanese film studio has taken the movie world by storm. The beautiful movies produced by this studio capture an essence of realism while imbuing its stories with magical elements that are reminiscent of childlike wanderlust.

The Art

The animation and art styles applied in Studio Ghibli films are one of a kind. There is clearly a huge amount of effort that goes into crafting one of these movies as is evident in the attention to every little detail. The colors are creatively selected, each frame is masterfully drawn. These are just some of the things that make these films so memorable and special to their audience. Miyazaki explains that an animator is like an actor in that the animator has to become the character in order to draw them "Their emotions will become yours. You will become both an animator and an actor."



The great attention to detail also plays a large role in making these films special. Every scene is clearly given the time and effort it deserves to be crafted into a work of art, including the transitional scenes. Viewers could be looking at a field of grass or flowers, the sky, or even the ocean and they can't help but think how beautiful that scene is as if they were actually looking at these beautiful scenes in real life as opposed to watching an animated film. This is because Myazaki goes to great lengths to incorporate reality into his films. When working on *My Neighbor Totoro* the animation team took several trips out to the forests in Japan in order to get inspired and replicate what they could into the film. Even though most if not all of studio Ghibli's films are magical, a great deal of realism is incorporated into them. This is to help viewers feel familiar with the world and also to make it more realistic.



My thoughts on Studio Ghibli movies:

I believe that these movies are truly works of art as there is a great level of thought that is put into each, and every little detail added into the films. For the longest time I refused to pick a favorite as each movie is unique and different from the others. Although I found myself often sitting down to watch *Ponyo* whenever I was stressed and needed a calming distraction. So, whether I'd like to admit it or not, I guess I do have a favorite Studio Ghibli film.





The Story

While some of the stories pull inspiration from existing tales, each film as a whole has its own unique story. Viewers get to experience an entirely new, strange, and exciting world. Myazaki spends a lot of time on drafting his stories, when asked what his story writing process is he explained "My process is thinking, thinking and thinking - thinking about my stories for a long time." This statement highlights just how much thought is put into the many worlds Myazaki has created. Everything within a story, even the most random of things, are put there for a purpose.

Myazaki has explained his disdain for anime. All the stories have become about good vs evil or love. He personally prefers the simpler things in life and that is exactly why that is mainly what Ghibli movies are all about. There are many simple "slice of life" moments that are given a lot of screentime because this is what Myazaki intends to focus on. An example of this comes from the movie *Ponyo*. There is a scene when Sasuke's mother prepares ramen for the two children to eat. This scene is so simple yet so comforting because the focus at that moment is entirely on that scene. They aren't eating because they are preparing to go on a great mission, or anything tension building of the sort. It is simply, "we need to eat so let's make food." The simplicity and romanticization of the scene is a perfect example of what makes these films so special. This is also why many people find comfort in Studio Ghibli films today. It is the complete opposite of the productivity crazed and fast-paced world we live in today. Making it ideal to serve as a safe haven and a place of comfort.



Have you ever wondered why Studio Ghibli movies focus on children as their main characters?

Hayao Miyazaki believes "we get strength and encouragement from watching children." And this is to say that children are still unaffected by social standards, so they are humanity at its purest form.

They fight for what they believe in like San from Princess Mononoke.

They refuse to let anyone tell them who they are like Ponyo from Ponyo.

They believe in magic like Satsuki and Mei from My Neighbor Totoro, and many more examples.



The Last Fire Lily

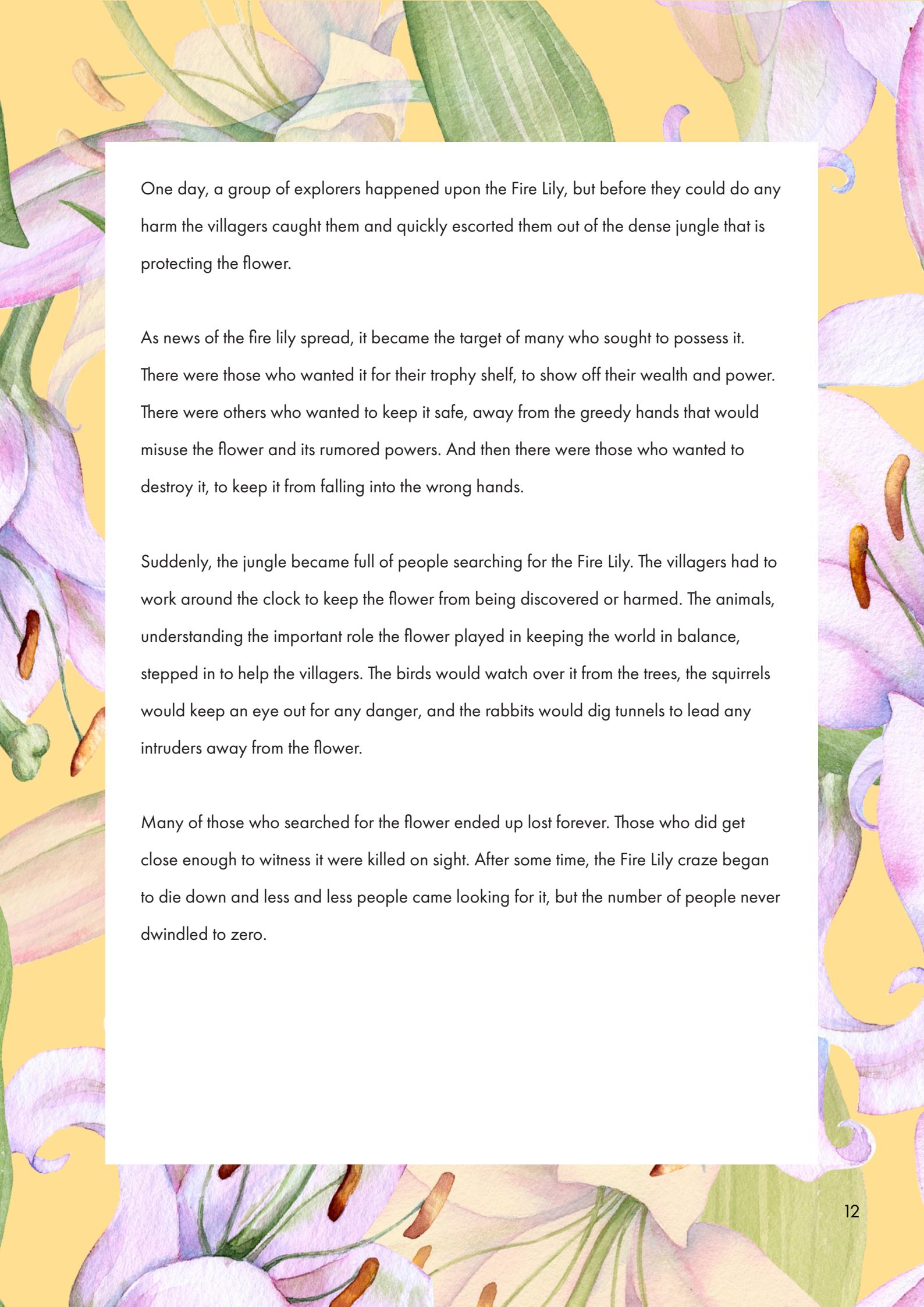
By Safeia Mubarak

As humanity begins hurtling towards its demise, plants have slowly and quietly begun to go extinct, taking with them the beauty and various uses they once provided. The Fire Lily provides medicinal uses as it treats coughs, headaches and it is capable of healing wounds. The Fire Lily also provides protection to the world, keeping the balance between the forces of nature.

In a remote corner of the world, nestled in a dense jungle, bloomed a flower that was said to possess mystical powers. The fire lily, with its bright red petals and golden stem, was the last of its kind. With its rare beauty, it had become a prized possession for many. Some believed that the fire lily had the power to heal the sick and cure any ailment. Others thought that it brought good luck and prosperity. But the most dangerous belief was that the fire lily could make one immortal.

While some of these beliefs are false, the most shared belief is that the flower is a myth or just a fairy tale that was told to children to inspire hope that there is magic in the world. Only one group knew for sure of its existence. The villagers who protected it.

The fire lily was guarded by a group of villagers who had been entrusted with its care. They had been taught by their ancestors to protect the flower at all costs, as it was a symbol of their connection to the earth and proof of their belief in the magical power that lives within nature.

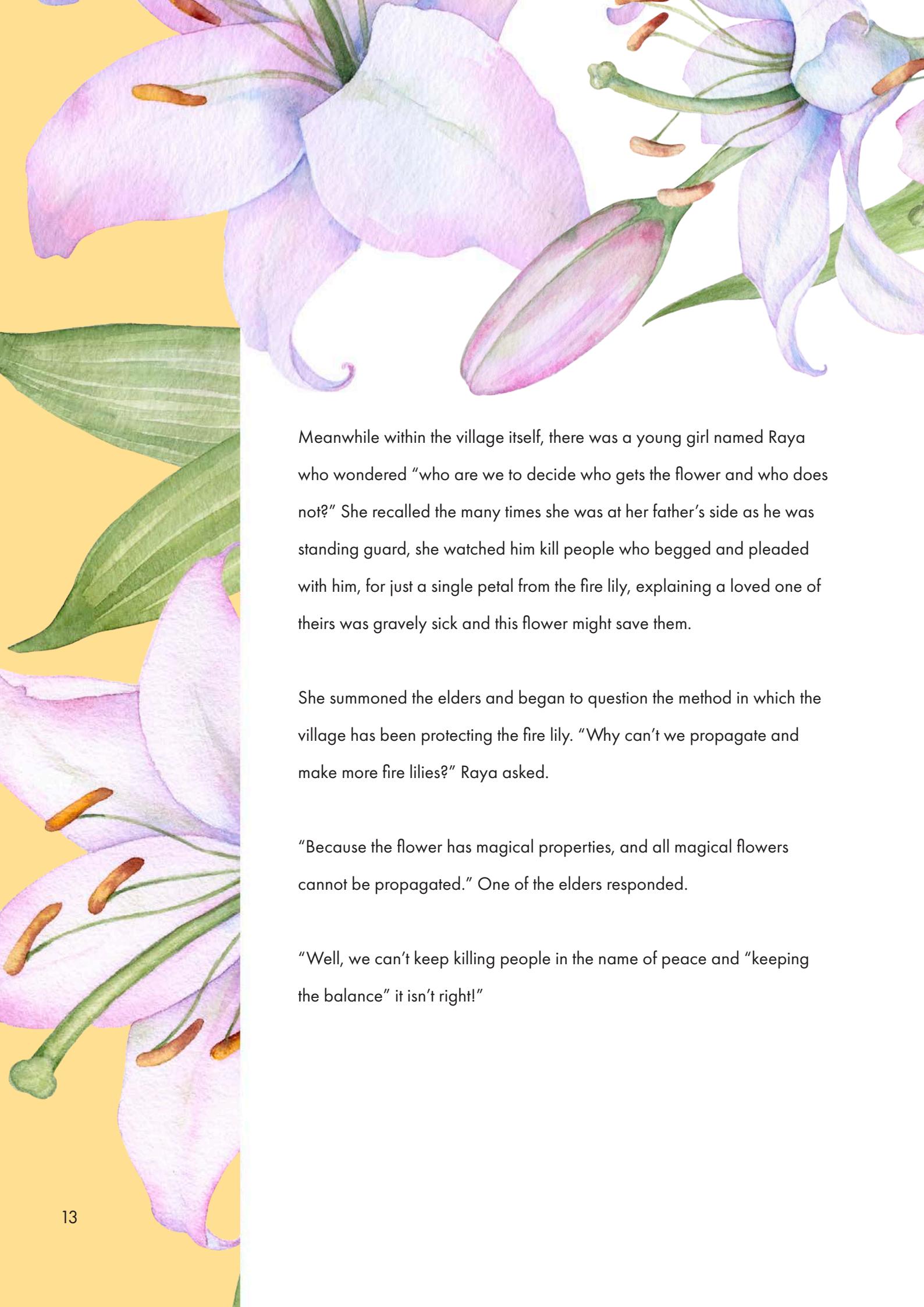


One day, a group of explorers happened upon the Fire Lily, but before they could do any harm the villagers caught them and quickly escorted them out of the dense jungle that is protecting the flower.

As news of the fire lily spread, it became the target of many who sought to possess it. There were those who wanted it for their trophy shelf, to show off their wealth and power. There were others who wanted to keep it safe, away from the greedy hands that would misuse the flower and its rumored powers. And then there were those who wanted to destroy it, to keep it from falling into the wrong hands.

Suddenly, the jungle became full of people searching for the Fire Lily. The villagers had to work around the clock to keep the flower from being discovered or harmed. The animals, understanding the important role the flower played in keeping the world in balance, stepped in to help the villagers. The birds would watch over it from the trees, the squirrels would keep an eye out for any danger, and the rabbits would dig tunnels to lead any intruders away from the flower.

Many of those who searched for the flower ended up lost forever. Those who did get close enough to witness it were killed on sight. After some time, the Fire Lily craze began to die down and less and less people came looking for it, but the number of people never dwindled to zero.



Meanwhile within the village itself, there was a young girl named Raya who wondered "who are we to decide who gets the flower and who does not?" She recalled the many times she was at her father's side as he was standing guard, she watched him kill people who begged and pleaded with him, for just a single petal from the fire lily, explaining a loved one of theirs was gravely sick and this flower might save them.

She summoned the elders and began to question the method in which the village has been protecting the fire lily. "Why can't we propagate and make more fire lilies?" Raya asked.

"Because the flower has magical properties, and all magical flowers cannot be propagated." One of the elders responded.

"Well, we can't keep killing people in the name of peace and "keeping the balance" it isn't right!"

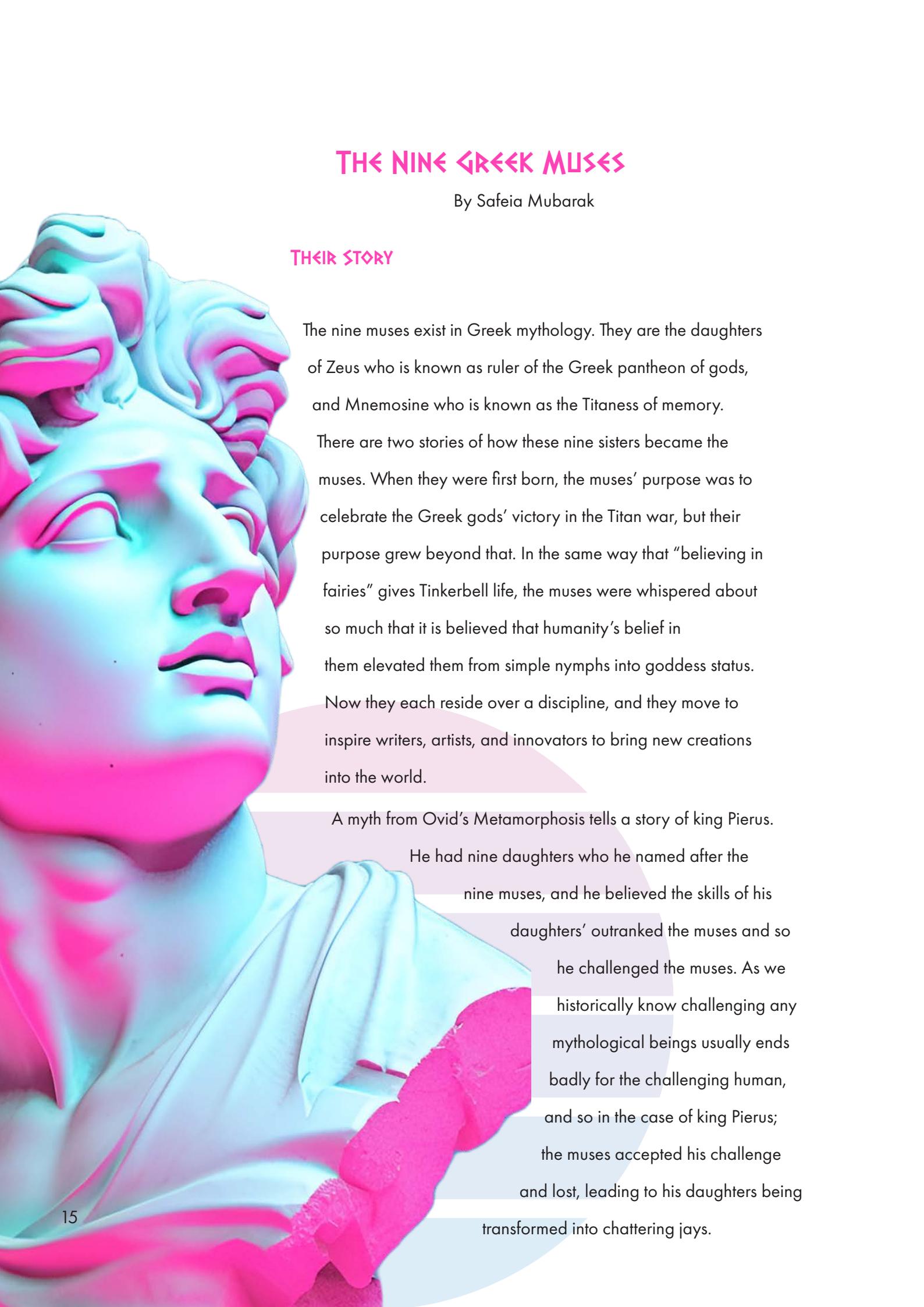


"My dear Raya, we know how passionate you are about this matter. However, you are far too young to understand the past. We were once an open land. All were welcome to come see the fire lily, to make a wish upon it. But the people did not understand the privilege of being in the presence of the flower and it was taken from us for a time. The world descended into chaos until we were able to return the flower and restore the balance. We do what we do now to prevent that from happening once more."

Raya understood that this is how it had to be, but she did not have the strength to be a part of it. She visited the fire lily and made a wish to it, then she headed home. Packing up her bags, she decided to leave the village, in hopes of learning from the best botanists, scientists and magical experts. She was holding on to the wish and possibility of finding a way to propagate the fire lily and share its gifts with the entire world, so that not a single soul would have to die trying to get the flower ever again.

**If you were in
Raya's place, what
would you do?**





THE NINE GREEK MUSES

By Safeia Mubarak

THEIR STORY

The nine muses exist in Greek mythology. They are the daughters of Zeus who is known as ruler of the Greek pantheon of gods, and Mnemosine who is known as the Titaness of memory.

There are two stories of how these nine sisters became the muses. When they were first born, the muses' purpose was to celebrate the Greek gods' victory in the Titan war, but their purpose grew beyond that. In the same way that "believing in fairies" gives Tinkerbell life, the muses were whispered about so much that it is believed that humanity's belief in them elevated them from simple nymphs into goddess status.

Now they each reside over a discipline, and they move to inspire writers, artists, and innovators to bring new creations into the world.

A myth from Ovid's *Metamorphosis* tells a story of king Pierus.

He had nine daughters who he named after the nine muses, and he believed the skills of his daughters' outranked the muses and so he challenged the muses. As we historically know challenging any mythological beings usually ends badly for the challenging human, and so in the case of king Pierus; the muses accepted his challenge and lost, leading to his daughters being transformed into chattering jays.

THE NINE MUSES

CALLIOPE

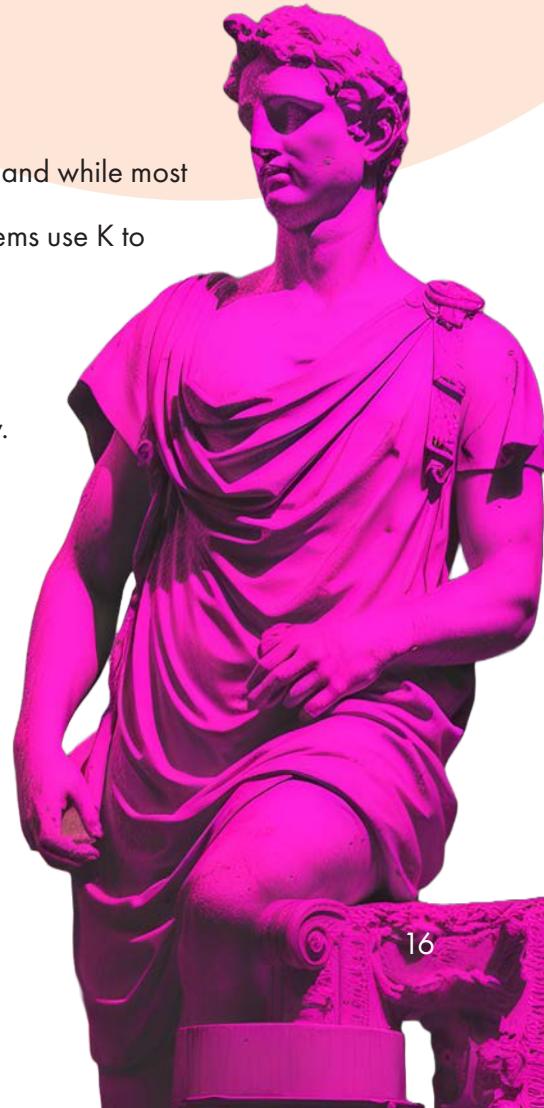
The name Calliope comes from ancient Greek and literally translates to "beautiful voiced."

She is the oldest of the nine muses and her focus is epic poetry and eloquence. According to ancient Greek writers Calliope held the highest status among her sisters. She is the mother of the famous musically gifted Orpheus, some legends state that Calliope had Orpheus from King Oeagrus but other legends cite Apollo as Orpheus's father. Calliope is credited with teaching the legendary Achilles how to sing which is why she is known as "the one with the beautiful voice." She is often depicted in a golden gown, carrying a trumpet in one hand and a scroll in the other.

CLIO

The name Clio comes from Greek and means "to recount" and while most commonly the name is spelled with a C some modern systems use K to represent the Greek letter, Kappa.

The second in line is Clio and she is considered to be the goddess of memory, and the muse of history and creativity. Clio's role was to handle the affairs of political relations between nations and humankind. She was known as "the proclaimer of history." She had a son whose name is Hyacinth. Sources conflict greatly on who fathered Hyacinth, citing four different men. Calliope is depicted with a book in hand.



ERATO

The name Erato means "desired" or "lovely" and is assumed to be derived from the Greek god of love's name Eros.

Erato is the muse of romantic poetry. Since the Renaissance period, she has been depicted wearing a wreath of myrtle and roses on her head, holding a lyre and more times than not there are two little doves at her feet.

EUTERPE

The name Euterpe comes from ancient Greek and means "rejoicing well" or "delight."

She is the muse of music. She has one son named Reso who was a warrior that died at the battle of Troy at the hands of Diomedes. She is

known to use several different musical instruments but the most common one is the flute. She is depicted wearing a crown of flowers and always holding a musical instrument.

MELPOMENE

The name Melpomene comes from a Greek verb that means "to celebrate with dance and song."

Melpomene was originally the muse of chorus, but eventually that was changed now making her the muse of tragedy. It is believed that what caused her to become the muse of tragedy was the fact that she was

never happy. Melpomene was said to have everything, money, beauty, love and yet she was still no happy and so she embodied the very concept of tragedy causing her to become its muse.

THALIA

The name Thalia in Greek mythology means "to flourish."

Thalia is the muse of comedy. She is seen as a young and joyful woman who is lighthearted and always laughing. Thalia is commonly depicted holding the theatrical mask of comedy which was used in Greece by actors while performing plays.

TERPSICHORE

The name Terpsichore means "to delight in dancing" in Greek.

Terpsichore is the muse of dance. She is often depicted sitting down, holding a lyre. She is also dubbed "mother of sirens" referring to the sirens who lure sailors to their death with their song.

POLYHYMNIA

The name Polyhymnia comes from the two Greek words "Poly" meaning many and "Hymnos" meaning praise.

Polyhymnia is mainly the muse of hymns. Although she is also seen as the muse of agriculture, rhetoric, and geometry. She is seen as a serious and meditative woman, usually depicted in a white dress, leaning against a pedestal, and gazing off longingly into the distance.

URANIA

The name Urania comes from ancient Greek and used to be spelled Ourania but modern Greek has shortened it to Rania and it means "heavenly."

Urania is the muse of astronomy and astrology. She is seen as a soft voiced and gentle woman. Urania is depicted wearing a blue dress and a crown of stars on her head. Most paintings of her have Urania looking up at the stars lovingly. In the past, people would sometimes confuse her with the Greek goddess of love Aphrodite.



Brushing Off Stress

By Ahmed Al-Yousef

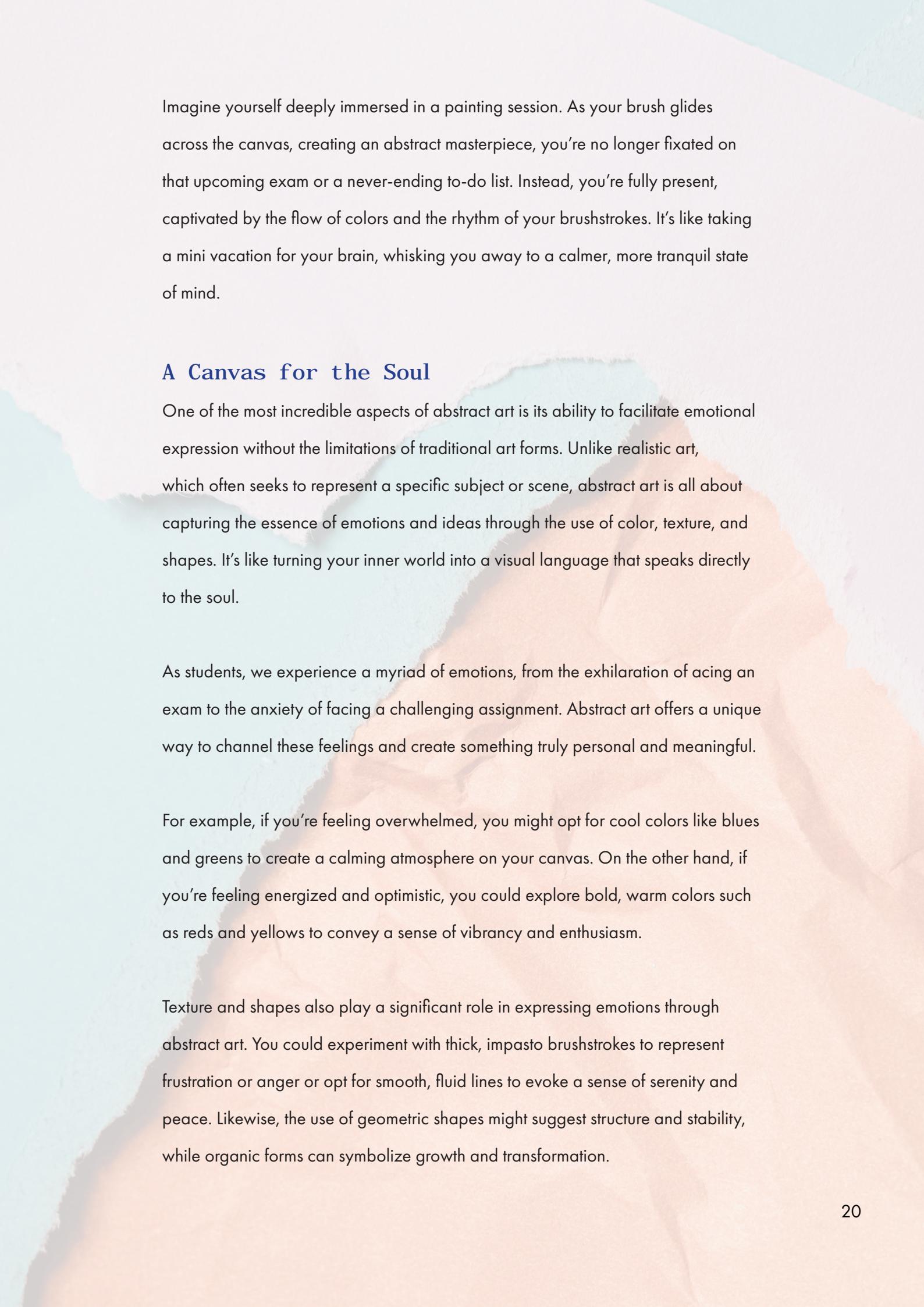
In the whirlwind of university life, it's no secret that stress can quickly pile up, leaving us feeling overwhelmed and burnt out. But what if I told you there's a vibrant, exciting, and therapeutic way to combat those stress demons? Welcome to the world of abstract art—a boundless realm where creativity reigns supreme, and stress relief is just a brushstroke away.

As students, we're constantly juggling assignments, exams, and activities. Amid this chaos, abstract art offers a sanctuary where we can let go of our inhibitions and explore our emotions through color, texture, and form. Whether you're a seasoned artist or a total newbie, abstract art invites you to break free from the constraints of traditional art forms and tap into your inner creative spirit. So, grab your favorite art supplies and let's embark on a journey of self-expression and stress relief through the captivating world of abstract art.

From Chaos to Calm

When we engage in creative activities, our brains release feel-good chemicals like dopamine and serotonin, which help to improve our mood, reduce stress, and promote relaxation. It's like nature's own happy pill!

But wait, there's more! Research has shown that engaging in artistic endeavors can lower cortisol levels (the stress hormone) in our bodies, too. Plus, the very act of concentrating on creating art can have a meditative effect, allowing us to temporarily escape our mental clutter and focus on the present moment.



Imagine yourself deeply immersed in a painting session. As your brush glides across the canvas, creating an abstract masterpiece, you're no longer fixated on that upcoming exam or a never-ending to-do list. Instead, you're fully present, captivated by the flow of colors and the rhythm of your brushstrokes. It's like taking a mini vacation for your brain, whisking you away to a calmer, more tranquil state of mind.

A Canvas for the Soul

One of the most incredible aspects of abstract art is its ability to facilitate emotional expression without the limitations of traditional art forms. Unlike realistic art, which often seeks to represent a specific subject or scene, abstract art is all about capturing the essence of emotions and ideas through the use of color, texture, and shapes. It's like turning your inner world into a visual language that speaks directly to the soul.

As students, we experience a myriad of emotions, from the exhilaration of acing an exam to the anxiety of facing a challenging assignment. Abstract art offers a unique way to channel these feelings and create something truly personal and meaningful.

For example, if you're feeling overwhelmed, you might opt for cool colors like blues and greens to create a calming atmosphere on your canvas. On the other hand, if you're feeling energized and optimistic, you could explore bold, warm colors such as reds and yellows to convey a sense of vibrancy and enthusiasm.

Texture and shapes also play a significant role in expressing emotions through abstract art. You could experiment with thick, impasto brushstrokes to represent frustration or anger or opt for smooth, fluid lines to evoke a sense of serenity and peace. Likewise, the use of geometric shapes might suggest structure and stability, while organic forms can symbolize growth and transformation.

Remember, there are no rules when it comes to abstract art, so don't be afraid to let your emotions guide your creative process. By giving yourself the freedom to explore and express your feelings through color, texture, and shapes, you'll not only create a beautiful work of art but also embark on a therapeutic journey of self-discovery and emotional release.

Mindful Art Sessions

In today's fast-paced world, mindfulness has become increasingly important as a tool for maintaining mental well-being. But did you know that you can combine mindfulness techniques with abstract art to create a truly meditative experience?

Mindful art sessions can help you to not only channel your emotions onto the canvas but also cultivate a deep sense of presence and self-awareness.

 **Set the Scene:** Choose a quiet, comfortable space to create your art. Eliminate distractions and set up your art materials, such as canvas, paints, and brushes. You may want to light a scented candle or play soft, soothing music to enhance the ambiance.

 **Center Yourself:** Before diving into your artwork, take a few moments to ground yourself. Close your eyes, take slow, deep breaths, and bring your attention to the present moment. Let go of any lingering thoughts or worries.

🎨 Connect with Your Emotions: As you begin to create, tune into your emotions and let them guide your artistic choices. Be fully present and aware of each brushstroke, color selection, and movement.

🎨 Focus on the Process: In mindful art sessions, the emphasis is on the process rather than the outcome. Allow yourself to become completely absorbed in the act of creating, without any judgment or expectations. Observe the sensations, thoughts, and emotions that arise during the process and acknowledge them without getting attached.

🎨 Complete the Session: Once you feel that your artwork is complete, take a moment to appreciate your creation and the experience of making it. Express gratitude for the opportunity to connect with your emotions and practice mindfulness through art.

So, fellow students, I encourage you to pick up a paintbrush, unleash your creativity, and dive into the vibrant and therapeutic world of abstract art. Whether you're an experienced artist or just beginning your creative journey, remember that the canvas is a playground for your emotions, and the possibilities are endless.

Happy painting!

Empire of Cultural Conquest

By Ahmed Al-Yousef

We are in an age where we would know a lot more about a different country's politics and trends, styles and different cultural expressions more than our own homestead. I'm sure you have experienced this type of thinking or phenomena 'depending on how you place yourselves in the scales here' with your friends when discussing about a country's politics for example, vs your own country's own political topics or the dominance of Hollywood movies nowadays over local film industries. Now this is called Media Imperialism. 'que the Imperial March theme from Star wars'

As fellow students immersed in the digital age, we've all felt the undeniable pull of social media platforms like TikTok and Twitter. These platforms have changed how we communicate, share ideas, and create content. As those platforms foster creativity and cultural exchange, they have been years on end. They have also raised concerns about the resurgence of media imperialism which in actual terms means ~ The domination of one culture's media over another. Is the digital world unwittingly ushering in a new era of media imperialism, where it was once limited to Hollywood movies and Western television shows? How would it affect our local culture? Is there a hidden tug-of-war happening around us?

Mechanisms Unveiled

What are the hidden gears at work here, shaping our online experiences and steering our cultural compass? I'll try my best to dissect the mechanisms that support digital media imperialism.

- ✍ The digital landscape is ruled by algorithms. These insane coding formulas are designed in a way to prioritize content that is popular or engaging, which means that trends and ideas from dominant cultures often rise at the top. As a result, local voices can struggle to be heard, leading to a digital echo chamber that amplifies the influence of the prevailing culture. 'please go support your local business shops, we all know they are struggling'
- ✍ The platforms are powerhouses. TikTok, YouTube and Twitter are powerhouses, meaning they are primary vehicles for global cultural exchange. If you think about it, they have some outstanding reach and user engagement, so with that in mind that gives them unparalleled power in shaping the public discourse. They shape the influence over the content we consume. Now this does sound scary and very conspiracy like I'm holding a sign saying, "Pigeons are drone cameras". But it's true, often at the expense of local platforms and perspectives.
- ✍ corporate control 'Ok yea now I do sound like a crazy tinfoil hat wearing person.' Basically, multinational businesses that own and operate these social media behemoths lurk behind the gleaming apps on our screens. These firms, being profit-driven entities, have a strong interest in maintaining their platforms' supremacy and extending their user base. This can lead to the prioritization of content that appeals to a large number of people, resulting in the marginalization of alternative viewpoints and the standardization of our digital experience.

Reality Check

To truly grasp the implications of digital media imperialism, it's essential to examine real-world examples that showcase its influence on our daily lives.

TikTok, for instance, has rapidly expanded within our world, creating viral trends and challenges that often stem from its most popular creators, who predominantly hail from the U.S., Europe, and China. Consequently, local cultural expressions can be overshadowed leading to a homogenization of youth culture worldwide. Seeing how TikTok's parent company ByteDance is based in China, lots of people around the globe have expressed some concerns on potential censorship and surveillance practices that favor content over others.

Another example is Twitter which has emerged as a significant player in shaping global discourse. Trends and discussions on the platform often reflect the views and values of regions such as North America, Europe and Asia, potentially marginalizing voices from other parts of the world. This was evident during the Arab Spring, when Twitter played a crucial role in amplifying the voices of protesters but also disproportionately focused on events in certain countries over others, impacting global perceptions of the movement. To add to the point I just made about the Arab Spring, the title "Arab Spring" was first used by American conservative commentators but has since been challenged as an inadequate misnomer. Get my point?

The Ripple Effect

While platforms like TikTok and Twitter enable users to share ideas and content across cultural and geographic boundaries, the algorithms that prioritize certain content can unintentionally contribute to the marginalization of local voices and the homogenization of cultural experiences. This can lead to a loss of cultural diversity, as unique customs and traditions struggle to find an audience amid the global digital noise.

The dominance of global platforms may limit the development of local media industries, where smaller platforms and content creators struggle to compete with the reach and resources of tech giants like TikTok and Twitter. This hinders local talent and creative expression. Digital media imperialism can also reinforce stereotypes and promote a narrow understanding of diverse cultures. As global platforms prioritize popular and easily digestible content, they can accidentally bring about harmful clichés and misrepresentations, distorting our perceptions of different cultures.

But fear not, fellow digital denizens! Recognizing the potential pitfalls of digital media imperialism is the first step towards striking a balance between enjoying the global dance of ideas and preserving the vibrant kaleidoscope of local cultures. Let's continue to engage with our favorite platforms while also being mindful of the need to amplify underrepresented voices and celebrate the unique traditions that make our world so wonderfully diverse. After all, it's the colorful mosaic of cultures that truly enriches our collective human experience.

Inked Emotions

By Ahmed Al-Yousef

You eagerly open your mailbox to find a crisp, elegant envelope addressed to you in beautiful, flowing handwriting. The anticipation builds as you carefully unseal the envelope and unfold the letter, each word penned with warmth, intimacy, and a unique, personal touch. In an era where instantaneous digital communication has taken center stage, the charm and allure of handwritten letters have become a rare gem.

As we zip through emails, texts, and social media messages in the blink of an eye, the thoughtful and timeless practice of penning a handwritten letter has been pushed to the sidelines. However, despite being overshadowed by their electronic counterparts, handwritten letters still possess a magic that is worth cherishing and preserving. So, let us embark on a journey to rediscover the artistry and depth of this endangered form of communication and explore the reasons why the world of ink and paper still holds a special place in our hearts.

From Clay Tablets to Pen and Paper

Long before the advent of smartphones and email, the written word has been a cornerstone of human communication. The history of letter writing can be traced back to ancient civilizations, where the exchange of letters served not only as a means of correspondence but also as a vital tool for documenting history, spreading knowledge, and building relationships.

The ancient Egyptians were among the first to use papyrus for writing letters, while the Mesopotamians inscribed messages on clay tablets. As the art of letter writing spread across cultures, its significance grew in tandem. In ancient Rome, the act of writing letters was deeply ingrained in society, with letters exchanged between friends, family, and even renowned philosophers discussing politics, philosophy, and everyday life. These letters offer a fascinating glimpse into the lives and thoughts of individuals from a bygone era.

Throughout history, letter writing has played a pivotal role in shaping the world as we know it. The exchange of letters between political leaders, scholars, and religious figures has influenced major decisions, propagated new ideas, and fostered international relationships.

For example, the famous letters exchanged between Voltaire and Catherine the Great of Russia are a testament to the power of written correspondence in bridging cultural and intellectual divides.

As time progressed, innovations in postal services and transportation further popularized letter writing, making it an essential part of daily life. The 19th century, often dubbed the “Golden Age of Letter Writing,” saw the written word flourish as a way to share news, express emotions, and convey one’s innermost thoughts to distant loved ones. The charm of receiving a letter penned by a dear friend or family member was an experience that transcended geographical boundaries and brought hearts closer.

Beyond Words

In today's fast-paced world, the simple act of writing and sending a handwritten letter can have a profound impact on both the sender and receiver. Beyond the words themselves, there is an inherent value to the process of putting pen to paper, from the time and effort it takes to the personal touch it brings.

One of the most significant benefits of handwritten letters is their ability to convey a sense of intimacy and authenticity that digital communication often lacks. The thoughtfulness and care that go into crafting a letter can make the recipient feel valued, seen, and appreciated. Handwritten letters are tangible evidence of the writer's love, gratitude, or friendship, and the act of receiving a letter can be a deeply emotional and heartwarming experience.

The process of writing a letter can be therapeutic, allowing the writer to slow down, reflect, and express their thoughts and feelings in a more meaningful way. Writing a letter allows the writer to take a break from the constant distraction of digital devices and engage in a mindful activity that promotes relaxation and introspection.

In addition to the emotional benefits, handwritten letters can also strengthen relationships, whether they be between friends, family members, or romantic partners. By taking the time to write a letter, the writer can convey their affection and appreciation in a way that is both thoughtful and personal. The recipient, in turn, is often touched by the gesture and feels a deeper sense of connection and closeness with the writer.

Delights of Pen and Paper

Handwritten letters are not only a means of communication but also an art form that offers a visually and tactilely pleasing experience. The unique textures of paper, the colors of ink, and the choice of writing instruments all contribute to the overall aesthetic appeal of a handwritten letter.

The choice of stationery can set the tone for the letter, from simple and elegant to bold and playful. The feel of the paper itself, whether it be textured, smooth, or glossy, can enhance the sensory experience of reading the letter. Ink colors can range from classic black and blue to a rainbow of hues, each providing a distinct mood and emotion to the letter.

The writing instrument used can also add to the beauty of the letter. From ballpoint pens to fountain pens, each tool brings its own unique character to the page, allowing the writer to express themselves in a personalized and artistic way. The physical act of writing with a pen or pencil also provides a sense of connection to the writer, as the pressure and stroke of the hand can convey a wealth of emotions that digital text cannot.

Bringing Back the Lost Art

Despite the rise of digital communication, there is a growing movement to revive the art of letter writing and preserve this cherished tradition. Various organizations and initiatives have sprung up to promote letter writing, offering a range of resources, inspiration, and community support.

The Letter Writing Project, for example, encourages people to write and send letters to strangers, spreading joy, empathy, and kindness in the process.

More Love Letters is a platform that connects individuals in need of support with volunteers who write personalized letters of encouragement and inspiration.

InCowriMo (International Correspondence Writing Month) is a yearly event that challenges participants to write a letter a day throughout the month of February.

For those looking to integrate letter writing into their daily routine, checking out these organizations is a good start for those who are interested!



Shower Thoughts: The Great Room Mystery

Picture this: you're standing in the shower, enveloped in a warm cascade of water and a cloud of steam. In this peaceful, contemplative haven, you find yourself pondering some of life's greatest mysteries. We've all been there – those elusive "shower thoughts" that make us feel like amateur philosophers, ready to solve the riddles of the universe one lather at a time.

Welcome to the great room mystery – a phenomenon that, despite all our advances in technology and neuroscience, still leaves us scratching our heads 'and our towels'. We'll be taking a deep dive into this shower thought, attempting to unravel the reasons behind our baffling memory lapses as we transition from one room to another. So, grab your rubber ducky and join us on this journey into the recesses of the human mind!

The Doorway Effect

The Doorway Effect is a fascinating phenomenon that has captured the curiosity of both scientists and casual observers alike. This peculiar occurrence is the mental "reset" that happens when we walk through a doorway, causing us to forget the very thought we were just contemplating. But why does this happen? And what does it reveal about the inner workings of our brains?

This memory reset appears to be linked to how our brains process and store information, and it reveals some fascinating insights into the ways our minds work. When we move from one room to another, our brains naturally compartmentalize the information and experiences we've had in each space. This mental splitting allows us to keep our thoughts organized and focus on the tasks at hand. However, it also means that some of the thoughts we had in the previous room might be momentarily forgotten as we step into a new environment.

Imagine you're in your bedroom, planning to grab a glass of water from the kitchen. As you walk through the doorway, your mind shifts gears, leaving behind the thoughts and experiences you had in your bedroom. While this mental reset can help you stay present and focused on your new surroundings, it can also lead to the sudden disappearance of the very thought that motivated you to enter the room in the first place.

Another interesting aspect of the Doorway Effect is that it might not be limited to physical doorways. The same mental reset can occur when we transition between different activities or tasks, even if we're not physically moving from one space to another. For example, when you switch from studying for an exam to browsing social media, your brain may experience a similar memory reset, causing you to momentarily forget the material you were just reviewing.

Basically, the Doorway Effect illustrates the complex and sometimes unpredictable nature of our memory. While it can be frustrating to lose our train of thought as we pass through a doorway, understanding the underlying reasons for this phenomenon can help us appreciate the intricate workings of our minds. So, the next time you walk into a room and find yourself wondering why you're there, take a moment to marvel at the wonders of the human brain. 'and maybe even laugh at the nature of our fleeting anxiety filled student memory.'

Interesting Science fact:

Some scientists believe that the Doorway Effect might have an evolutionary basis. In the past, our ancestors needed to quickly adapt to new environments and potential threats. The mental "reset" that occurs when we pass through a doorway could have helped them to focus on new challenges and information, giving them a survival advantage. While this might not be as crucial in our modern world, it's intriguing to think that this quirk of memory could be a holdover from our ancient past.

The Goldfish Syndrome

Another aspect of our mind's fascinating complexity is the goldfish syndrome, and it plays a role in our forgetfulness when entering a new room. This phenomenon refers to the struggle to maintain focus on a specific thought when faced with numerous distractions and stimuli, much like a goldfish darting about in its bowl.

As we step into a new room, our brains are bombarded with a variety of sensory input from the sights and sounds around us to the scents and tactile sensations we encounter. These stimuli can easily capture our attention, drawing our focus away from the thoughts we carried with us from the previous room. In a sense, our minds become like a curious goldfish, swimming from one interesting object to another, while our initial thoughts get lost in the shuffle.

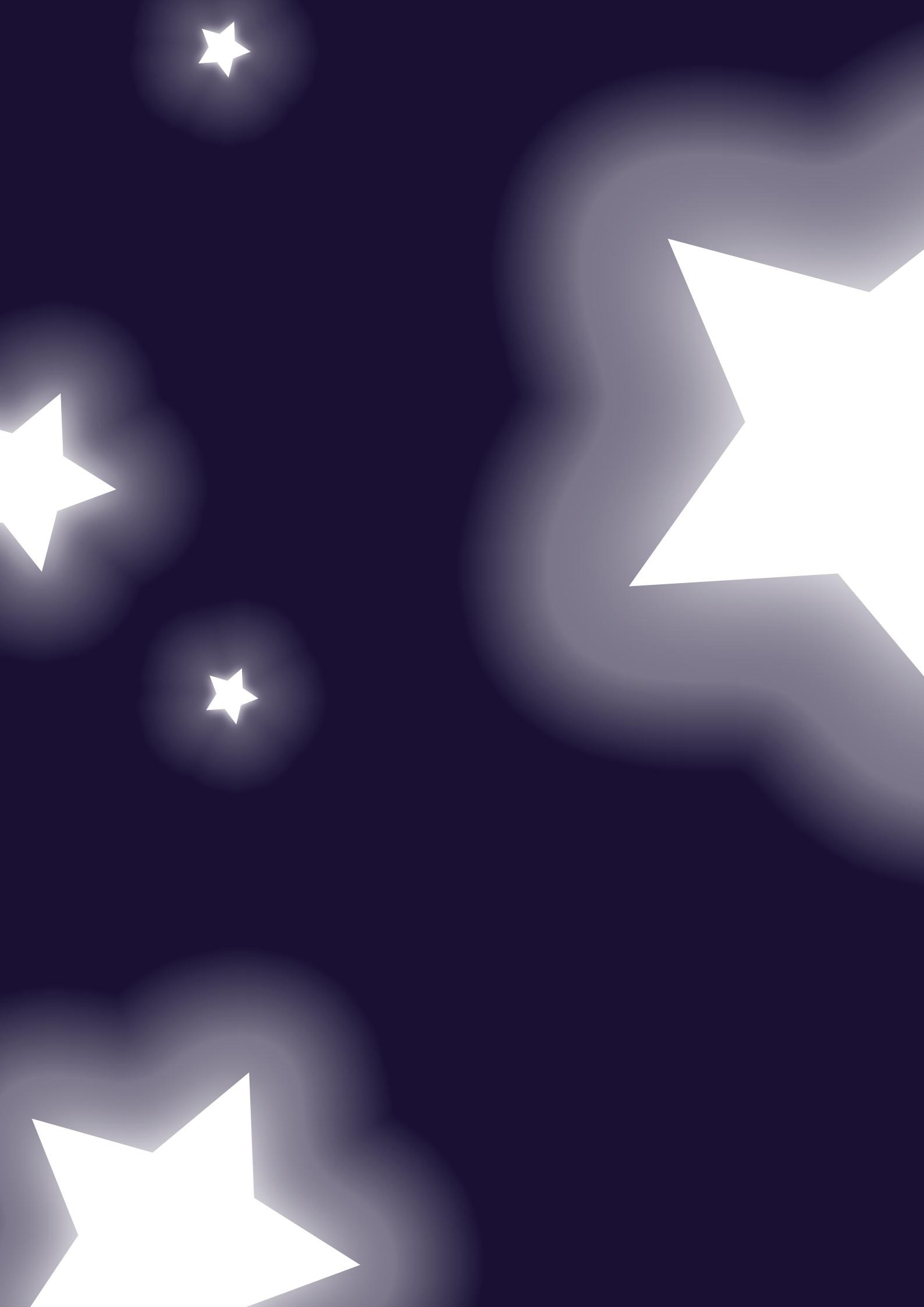
Imagine you're walking into a living room filled with lively conversation, music playing in the background, and the aroma of freshly baked cookies wafting through the air. As you enter the room, your brain is tasked with processing all this new information, and the thought you had just moments ago – the one that felt so important – slips through the cracks amidst the sensory onslaught.

The Goldfish Syndrome highlights the delicate balancing act our brains perform as they juggle different thoughts, sensations, and experiences. As we navigate the world, our minds must constantly prioritize and filter information, determining what deserves our immediate attention and what can be set aside for later. While this mental juggling act is an essential part of our cognitive functioning, it can sometimes lead to the unintended consequence of forgetting our initial thoughts or intentions as we enter a new room.

The Goldfish Syndrome is yet another testament to the intricacies and habits of the human mind. Although it can be frustrating to lose our train of thought in the face of distractions, understanding this aspect of our mental processing can help us approach the situation with a sense of humor and appreciation for the extraordinary inner workings of our brains. 'next time your friends forget something that you remember VERY well, just tell them that they are goldfishing'



Horoscope of the Month



Cancer (June 21st – July 22nd)

Symbol: The Crab

Element: Water

Planet: The Moon

Birthstone: Moonstone

Facts about Cancer:

- ★ Contrary to popular assumption, Cancer does not coincide with its constellation.
 - ★ The name "Cancer" is the Latin word for Crab.
- ★ Cancer's position in the sky was said to be the location of the Mesopotamian sun.
- ★ The Crab, which is the symbol of Cancer, comes from the tale of Hercules. The crab loved the Goddess Hera and since Hercules was a result of Zeus's infidelity to her, it pinched Hercules and was smashed by him as a result.
- ★ Another myth of the Crab of Cancer explains that the god of the sea Poseidon, assigned the great big crab with the role of protecting his sea nymphs.
- ★ Due to the fact that Cancer is ruled by the moon, it gives the sign great importance since the moon holds great significance.

Celebrity Cancer:

Chris Pratt, Meryl Streep, Post Malone,
Sofia Vergara, Kevin Hart, Selena Gomez

Leo (July 23rd – August 22nd)

Symbol: The Lion

Element: Fire

Planet: The Sun

Birthstone: Peridot

Facts about Leo:

- ★ Leo was one of the first constellations to be documented by the Mesopotamians.
- ★ Leo's star is the brightest within its constellation.
- ★ The Babylonians referred to Leo as UR.GU.LA which translates to "the great lion."
- ★ The symbol for Leo is script form of the Greek word "Lambda" which is the first letter for the word "lion" in Greek.
- ★ The ancient Egyptians greatly respected Leo's constellation because the sun shined on the constellation during the annual time the river Nile would flood.
- ★ Leo's myth is similar to the story of Romeo and Juliette. A love affair between Thisbe and Pyramus is forbidden so they meet in secret. Thisbe reaches the meeting place first to find a lioness, she runs away in fear leaving her veil behind and when Pyramus comes and finds her veil and the lioness, he kills himself assuming Thisbe was eaten by the lion. When Thisbe returns, she finds Pyramus along with his sword and she uses it to kill herself too.

Celebrity Leo:

Daniel Radcliff, Maya Rudolph, Terry Crews,
Meghan Markle, Cole and Dylan Sprouse, Chris Hemsworth

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