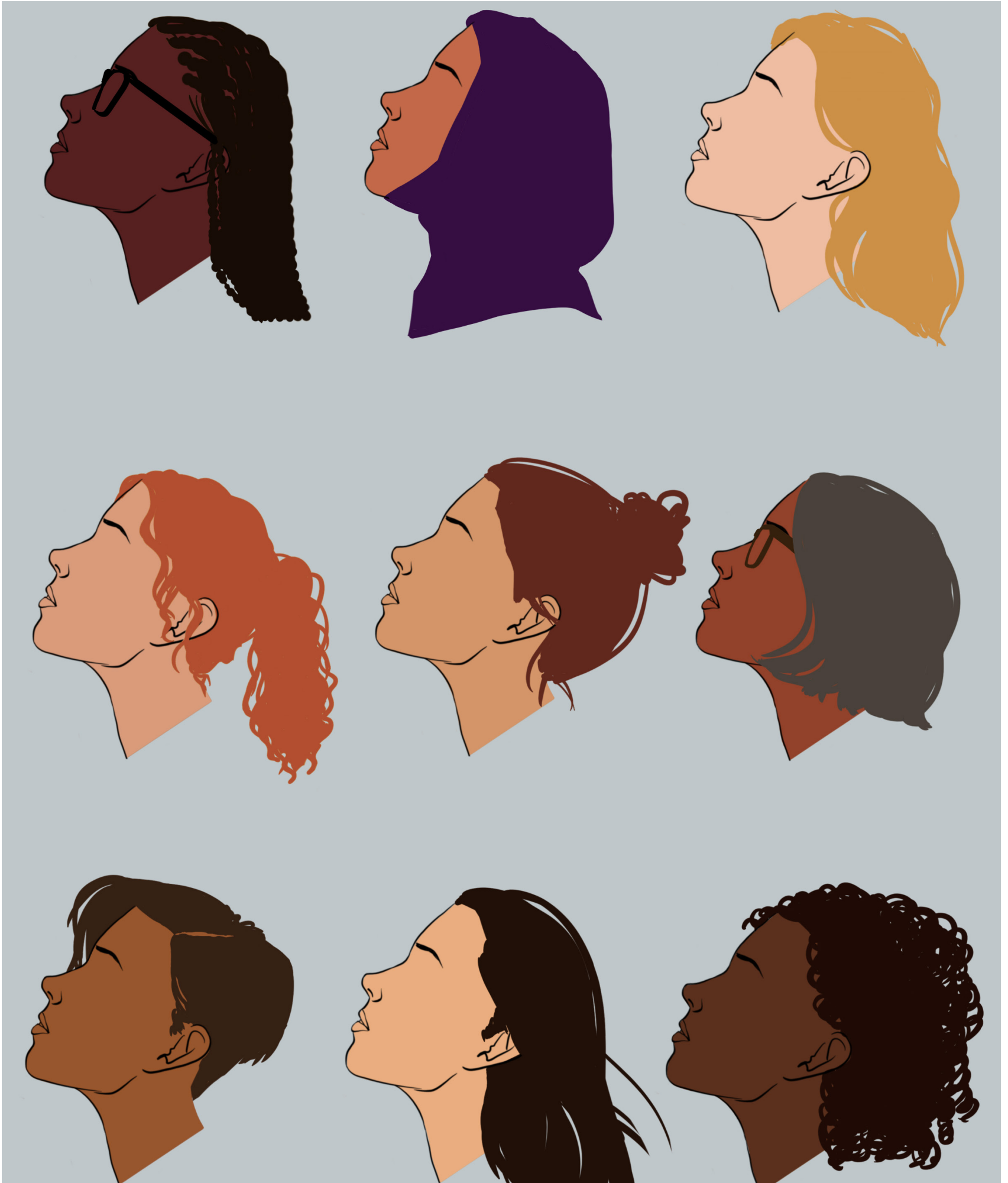


iWRITER

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BY KIDS FOR KIDS MAGAZINE



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a note from the editor



Women are wonderful.

We come from women, we are nurtured by women, and we are constantly awed by women.

A few decades years ago, Women's History Month was established; with this, it is essential and of utmost significance that we recognize the women that have made the world what it is today- and the women who have made us who we are.

Historically, women have been silenced, and it has only been since the midst of the last century that women were seen with renewed eyes. Trailblazers have led the way for our voices to be heard today, and we stand tall and say that empowering women is vital. We must recognize and honor their pioneering work and continue to empower their voices while speaking upon ours.

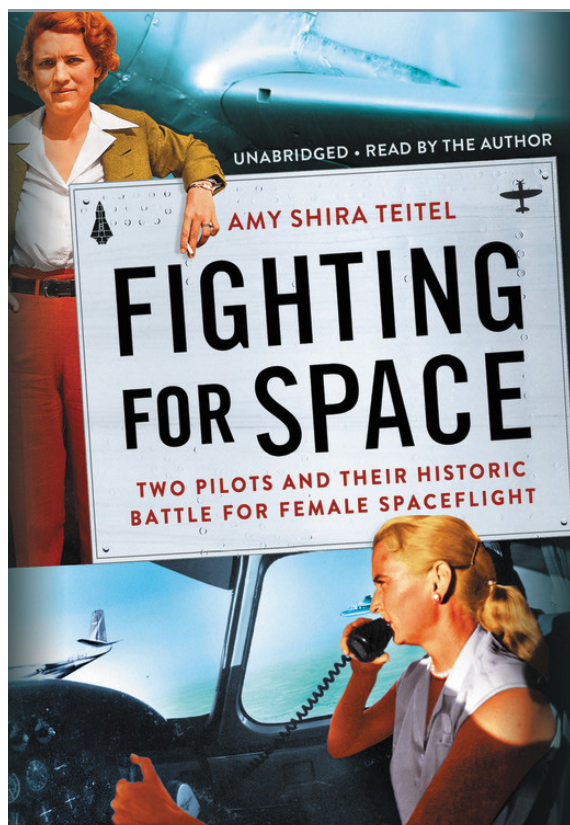
Some of the most prominent figures in our lives are the shes and hers. My immense gratitude extends to my mother, friends, mentor, and many more. Without the women in my life, I am certain I would not be who I am today.

The iWRITER is honored to share our fourth issue, in observation of and homage to the prominent figures in our society and our personal lives. Young writers share their words of empowerment, acknowledgment, gratitude, and with this, we hope to commemorate and celebrate the women in our lives and history.

Thank you,

Kate Yeonjae-Jeong

I WRITE to inspire, educate, and storytell through the power of words. I believe it is a beautiful, moving experience to voice the minds of our generation into publicity.



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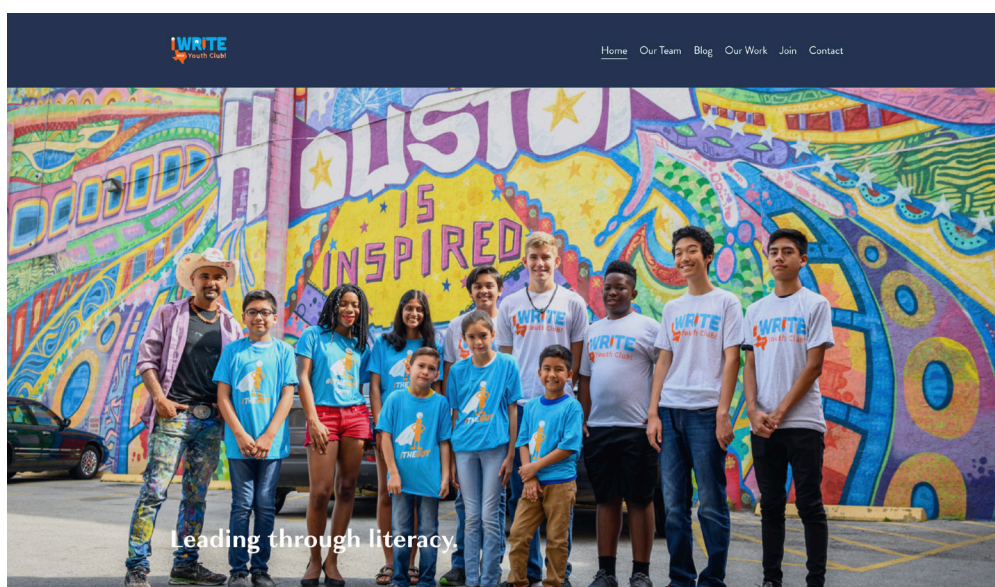
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Also, check out the new [iWRITE Youth Club website](https://www.iwriteyouthclub.com)!



Women in My Life

Perspectives and Pondering

As a young female navigating her way through life's twists and turns in the 21st century, I've found it especially beneficial to observe those around me. It's natural to feel unsure about a situation or want to know more about the world, and that's why turning towards those who have lived longer than I offers insight into how they view their life and the evolution of those feelings. The following five women have played and continue to play a major role in shaping my personality, interests, and outlook. Their strength, compassion, and intelligence inspire me to do my best every day; the epitome of "women empowerment," they not only know their self-worth and ability to make their own choices but promote that to girls and boys from all walks of life. I am very grateful for what I learned from their experiences, which I can now spread to readers.

Vijay Pandit



Vijay Pandit at her eldest grandchild's surprise birthday party

My grandmother emigrated from India to the United States in 1974 with two young children ready to meet their father, who had already moved a year earlier. Since then, she has raised her sons, run a household, worked many jobs – sometimes double-shift, earned a postgraduate degree later in life, and studied music in her leisure time. All that she has accomplished demonstrates her never-ending energy for achieving her goals and being there for her family members. Her love wraps around all those she cherishes with warmth and safety, truly a special quality of hers.

When speaking on the topic of women's roles in society and how that's changed, Pandit provided a useful perspective through the lens of an immigrant. She has seen significant changes, most notably in work. "More women are working these days. In many countries, now women are the head of the state. Women are no longer dependent on men to lead their lives. Business laws have changed to allow more women in the workplace and give them a comfortable environment." She said an effect of working women is that children are no longer under the care of their mothers to the extent they were before. In many cases, a grandmother like herself becomes the second mother of the child.

Pandit's dedication lies in the wellbeing of her family, and her daily prayers always reach those she loves. When asked about an ideal Mother's Day gift, Pandit simply responded, "To know...that my kids are healthy, happy, and enjoying their lives. I consider their achievements and accomplishments as my most ideal Mother's Day gift."

While on the subject of mothers, Pandit fondly recalled the story about a hungry fox who tried in vain to reach high-hanging grapes; he gave up at last and walked away, muttering that the grapes were probably sour anyway. This well-known fable contains many morals that Pandit's mother taught her: never despise what we can't have, for nothing comes easy; think before you speak; be caring and helpful; don't expect others to change for you, but rather make a change in yourself. I see these lessons shining brightly through my grandmother, and I hope to emulate them for the rest of my life.



Source: Gretchen Rubin

Anjaly Thakkar

An upper school mathematics teacher at The Kinkaid School, Mrs. Anjaly Thakkar is the person I see three days a week when walking in for geometry class; she always looks genuinely excited for the topics and her students' progress. Also, our families have known each other long before we became affiliated through school.

Thakkar feels successful when she knows she is helping others achieve their dreams. This makes sense because as an educator, her paramount duty lies in helping others see their full potential. "As a young woman in high school, I would have said that success means working hard so I can get into a good college and make my parents proud. I still believe in working hard, and I certainly value making my loved ones proud; however, I now understand that success has more to do with how I see myself."

Thakkar is proud of her cultural heritage and is a co-sponsor of Kinkaid's South Asian Heritage Club. Beginning at a young age, she felt a responsibility to be a role model for South Asian American girls. She wanted her community to know that "anything we want to accomplish is possible, and there is not one mold that we have to fit into." One way Thakkar fulfills her goal of inspiring younger generations is through her three daughters. As they grow into aspirational women, one lesson their mother hopes they keep close in their heart is "leading with kindness and authenticity, [which] helps drive our passions and motivations and allows everything else to fall into place." To end on a quote from Toni Morrison in Thakkar's classroom: "Definitions belong to the definers, not the defined."



Thakkar and her three daughters:
Laxmi, Vaishali, and Sahasra (L to R)

Barbara and Margaret Trautner

Dr. Trautner is a leading physician-scientist and award-winning educator at Baylor College of Medicine (BCM); she mentored numerous physicians and trainees in their careers' early stages. The success of Dr. Trautner's trainees is a testament to her amazing abilities as an educator, mentor, and healer. Admired by her team, colleagues, and collaborators for her multitasking abilities, she can conduct a national COVID trial with the same enthusiasm that she brings to celebrating a valued team member's birthday. Perhaps the most inspirational thing about Dr. Trautner is that she does all these roles with humility and a great sense of humor!

Dr. Barbara Trautner (top) and Margaret Trautner (bottom)



Margaret Trautner attended St. John's School for thirteen years before attending Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where she majored in mathematics and minored in computer science and mechanical engineering. Margaret ran competitively on the MIT varsity track team and became a two-time All-American. She also won the NCAA Elite 90 award, given to the athlete competing at the national championship with the highest GPA. After graduating college, she began her PhD studies at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) in Computing and Mathematical Sciences supported by the Department of Energy.

Dr. Trautner was recently named a "Woman of Excellence" at BCM. Upon reflection, she says, "I think that all of my colleagues in academic medicine are excellent. Some are gifted clinicians, [while] others put their heart and soul into teaching. Some colleagues bring joy to everyone in the workplace and help us keep going. Others remind us through example of the need to serve others and our community."

When in high school, Margaret's focus went towards achieving excellent grades, but now as a PhD student, they hardly concern her. "Especially this past year, as my PhD studies so far have been entirely remote, "success" means putting in an honest amount of time and mental energy towards greater understanding of a subject. Relative to that, "excellence" is a step beyond, asking the extra question or making the additional connection between ideas." In Dr. Trautner's case, people always told her that she could do anything she wanted as long as she worked hard. "The process of becoming an adult, then a doctor, then a working mother has shown me that I cannot have it all at once. However, I can have everything in my life that is important to me if I stagger my focus and responsibilities." An example is when Dr. Trautner did not travel for work besides once a year when her children were under ten years old; this meant she lost the opportunity to take on committee activities and leadership roles in national scientific organizations. Dr. Trautner admits that her academic career slowed, but what she got in return made it worthwhile. To put it in her words, "I'm on the slow train, while some of my colleagues are on the rocket ship. However, my train will eventually pull into the station."

At the start of Margaret's sophomore year at MIT, she wanted to take Real Analysis and Abstract Algebra, two rigorous math courses. Her advisor, whom she said she "met exactly once for about twenty seconds," told her that she did not have the "mathematical maturity" needed for those classes. "I remember being surprised...I didn't see how he had any reason to think I wasn't capable." Margaret went against her advisor's recommendation and signed up for the courses, both of which she made A's in. "It's easy to look back and say I was capable, but at the time there was a lot of uncertainty. Despite the uncertainty, I rarely regret setting a lofty goal even if I don't achieve it; after all, if I achieve all my goals, then I'm probably not setting them high enough."

Rita Widener

One of the foundations of my childhood lay in music, which I cherished through playing the piano. Rita Coore-Widener

took me under her wing when I was seven, and from there began a long but wondrous journey of mastering piano pieces, improving skills, and developing a newfound interest in the instrument's structure. Widener means a lot to me as a teacher, and I have her to thank for nurturing my piano career throughout the years.



Rita Widener at her piano with her new kitten

Widener was educated at Texas Christian University from 1994-1998 and founded Widener Music Studio, which gives kids and adults piano lessons in their home. Lessons are customized according to an individual's goals and abilities, and the ultimate goal is to create a love for music; as a proud member of Widener Music Studio, I say that they accomplished that mission for me!

When Widener moved from Jamaica to the United States, she was filling out college applications, and when coming across a question asking for her race, she did not understand. She began writing 100m or 4x100 relays as her preferred race. Her uncle, who worked as a doctor and college professor in California, guided her through the applications; he responded to her question about what to put for her race by saying that despite her mixed heritage and being predominantly of Asian descent, she should put "Black" because it might be an advantage. "He explained that colleges had to meet diversity requirements... If I put that I was Black, I would probably stand out more in my field of music."

Widener was confused by this; nevertheless, she took her uncle's advice. Coming from an immigrant perspective, she observed that America put significant emphasis on skin color, as if that's the only thing defining people. Widener says she felt isolated when people expected her to talk and act a certain way because she was consid-

ered black. “Sometimes it was hard to fit in with others. Because I know the feeling of isolation, I strive to see people for who they are with no expectations of how they should behave based on ethnicity. I prefer to let people tell me who they are without my assumptions getting in the way.” Widener gladly tells people that she has two Chinese, two Indian, two half Black and half White, and one Jewish orphan as her great-grandparents. All in all, Widener values individuals because of their uniqueness, whether that be their heritage, ethnicity, or gender. For her, there’s beauty in all.

In addition, Widener spoke highly of her mother. “She’s fierce and courageous and a force to be reckoned with. She kept us alive when it was hard to do that.” The infant mortality rate was high at the time of Widener’s birth in Ethiopia, so her mother kept her and her brother safe. “My mother brought us back to Jamaica when it was no longer safe to live in Ethiopia” and “[had] to travel by herself with a four-year-old and one-year-old while seven months pregnant.”

Widener’s mother worked endlessly to provide for her children, along with enforcing discipline in the household. She also had her own business and created new designs when she worked in fashion; while in her 50’s, she went through a master’s program and then completed an interior design certification program.

“[My mother] taught me to be generous. She would share our food with beggars even when we didn’t have very much in our pantry. Once she gave away a pair of my shoes because she said someone was in need. I owned four pairs at the time so she was right that I had much more than I needed at that time.”

Circling back to Widener’s job, she, similar to Mrs. Thakkar, believes in inspiring her students and helping to unlock their full potential. “I try to impart to my students that they only need to strive to be the best version of themselves, avoid negative comparison, celebrate progress, and feel great about their personal victories; I try to make it clear to all my students that they are valued and appreciated for who they are regardless of performance or ability.”

Despite the fact that not all of these women’s professions are teaching, they all have shown me that they are providers of knowledge. They come from different backgrounds, but their stories had resounding similarities. As a curious young woman searching for impactful people, I feel extremely fortunate that these amazing women opened their life experiences for my generation. In times of uncertainty and sadness, it’s refreshing to know that these people exist in the world, touching the hearts of all they work with. Inspirations, indeed.



BY *Sanjna Pandit*

I WRITE because writing cultivates my ability to be eloquent and express my feelings and ideas in my special way. Whether writing an extensive article about the latest events in human history or fiction poetry, my mind forces me to break the boundaries and enter a whole new realm of imagination and discoveries that I never knew I could reach.

A Sneak Peek!

[read Nia’s full post on the iWRITE Youth Club Blog](#)

I feel like being a young woman/girl today, in the privileged society that I live in, there are still tiny everyday struggles. Small comments directed at us like “Girls just being girls.” I’ve heard this countless times, and when I think about it, I realize that there is no need to resent the phrase. Girls are persistent and creative and it’s a compliment: make it uplift you. There are many women who are inspirations in this world, like Madam Vice President Kamala Harris and Dr. Swati Mohan, the Guidance, Navigation and Controls Operations Lead (the ‘eyes and ears’) on the NASA Mars Perseverance landing. They’ve all had to deal with the same hurdles, and they have been able to soar past the gender discrimination barriers to get to where they are now.

Trailblazers

To celebrate Women's History Month, iWRITER is focusing on women authors and poets who have inspired and empowered others to follow their passion and pursue writing. Here are three such women.



Houston-based author **Liara Tamani** is best known for her two award-winning novels, *Calling My Name*, a 2018 PEN America Literary Award Finalist and SCBWI Golden Kite Finalist as well as, *All the Things We Never Knew*, a 2020 Kirkus Best YA Book of the Year. Originally, Tamani hadn't even considered being an author and instead was dead set on attending Harvard Law School and becoming a lawyer. However, after she was accepted, she realized she needed to be true to herself, and despite her worries and fears for what her uncertain future would hold, she became what she called, "a proud Harvard Law School dropout." The next few years were a whirlwind of trying out different career paths from interior design to marketing coordinator for the Houston Rockets. Finally, one day, Tamani sat down, picked up a pen, and started writing. From there, she fell in love and began to pen daring original characters who grew to find their own unique voice as they learned to love who they are. Tamani's book *Calling My Name* focuses on Taja Brown, an African American teen living in Texas who finds herself and where she belongs as she struggles with her relationship with her family and what it means to be a woman of color in today's society. One of the biggest pieces of advice Tamani hopes teens can take away from her writing is that the ability "to recognize their own power and take charge of creating their own destinies."

Image Credit: Vermont College of Fine Arts



Amanda Gorman is one of the most notable breakout figures of this year. Already, the 22-year-old poet and Harvard graduate has performed her now-famous "The Hill We Climb" poem at the 2021 inauguration of President Biden and has countless awards and accomplishments under her belt, ranging from being the first-ever National Youth Poet Laureate in 2017 to performing at the Library of Congress and Lincoln Center. Most recently, Amanda Gorman spoke at Super Bowl LV, honoring healthcare professionals and frontline workers for their hard work and the sacrifices they made during the COVID-19 pandemic. Now a nationally recognized poet, she describes herself as a "wordsmith" and "change-maker." Gorman has used poetry to empower and unite in a variety of ways such as writing the 2021 Nike Black History Month manifesto to unite Black athletes, as well as starting her own nonprofit in 2017 called One Pen One Page which provides free creative programs for underserved children in Los Angeles. Amanda Gorman uses her words to inspire hope, saying that "there is always light, if only we are brave enough to see it. If only we are brave enough to be it."

Image Credit: AP News



Melissa Williams Murphy is a Houston-based children's author, public speaker, and founder of the iWRITE Organization that promotes children's literacy and encourages kids to write. After graduate school, Murphy wrote her first book which later became a series called *Iggy the Iguana*, in 2009 to inspire confidence and creativity for the next generation. Since then, Murphy has published twelve books, promoting leadership qualities through her main characters and encouraging her readers to appreciate different cultures. She has spoken across the world, including in Hawaii and Australia about her books, and has visited over 200 schools and 50 different school districts. After hearing her speak, students continued to ask her if they could become published authors too, inspiring her to create the I Write Short Stories by Kids for Kids publishing contest at the iWRITE Organization. In addition to running a nonprofit benefiting children across Texas for the past twelve years, she is currently the director at the Bryan Museum. Murphy shared "I hope to inspire my sons and all students to become confident learners and find something to love, through the world of literacy."

Image Credit: iWRITE

BY *Madison Burba*

I WRITE because when I put pen to paper, I can create entire worlds. One where anything is possible. I love to inspire people to feel the same when they write too.

Girls in Sports

Supriya Chang



Source: Supriya Chang

Supriya Chang is a junior at Choate Rosemary Hall, who has played squash since the sixth grade.

What do you see yourself accomplishing in five to ten years?

I plan on going to college, seeing that I am a junior right now. I'm interested in clinical psychology, and plan on pushing that in college. I'm also going to play on my college squash team. One of the things I like about squash is that I'll be able to play the sport when I'm older.

What inspired you to start playing?

I had already started tennis when I was about four or five, but it didn't spark my interest. Years later, my mom saw an ad that allowed you to play squash for a good deal. I decided to try it out, and got more into the sport later on.

How do you manage your athletic responsibilities and other outside activities?

At first it was definitely an adjustment for me. You have to make sure you are on top of your work. Usually I would have to stay up late to do it, but that's a definite risk you have to take when you are an athlete and student.

How has your team made you a better player?

Playing with my team has improved my

game by making it more interactive. They changed my mindset, encouraged me to stay focused and take each point step by step. I also believe that you become close with lots of people, since there are so many people at Choate.

Is there someone you look up to as a role model and why?

I look up to one of my former teammates. She was two years older than I was. I admired that she always approached each match with such focus and confidence, which was definitely something I struggled with. She was never afraid to approach challenges, and her example made me a better squash player.

Which strengths do you believe you have that make you a great athlete?

My dad taught me that when you lose, it should come as a lesson to you, which is more about mindset once again. You shouldn't think about losing, though when you do, you should use that energy to become a better player.

What's the best piece of advice you've gained from your coaches?

I touched on mentality and confidence earlier, though my coach had two pieces of advice which improved my game. You have to realize that you've hit a squash ball a thousand times, and you have experience.

You shouldn't undermine yourself after seeing an opponent. She would always use a phrase which really helped me: "This is the match." This goes back on focusing on each point at a time, and getting the most out of each game.

Describe your major highlights and achievements in sports in the past.

Most of my achievements weren't based on numbers or ranking. One highlight was in my freshman year at Choate, when I earned the 'most improved player' award. Coming to Choate, I hadn't had much experience playing with other people, and I think I worked hard to be a good addition to the team. I'm glad that other people recognized how much effort I was putting into squash, and was proud of how much I had progressed. Another highlight was a match I had in freshman year. I was really intimidated by her, and she had already won two games. In the third game, something clicked, and I ended up coming back and winning the last three games. I learned that a match isn't truly over until a person has won, and there's always a way to come back.

BY Prisha Shivani

I WRITE because it is a creative way of expressing your thoughts and ideas through words. You can make your reader visualize any scene or setting. There are also no limits to writing, meaning you can be yourself and create absolutely whatever you want.

The Steps to STORYCRAFTING

The first step to my writing process is inspiration. This is often the hardest part of the process for me because, though it doesn't involve much, if any, writing. I have to keep an eye out for anything that piques my interest. It's purely random. I latch onto the idea while leaving room for it to adapt. My inspiration is the heart and soul of my piece that drives the rest of it forward to its final product. Without a unique and exciting inspiration, the story that springs from it will never be engaging. The source of inspiration can be anything from songs to movies to little factoids, or even simply conversations. Anything can inspire someone, but I get the most inspiration from the writing that I read. Finding inspiration, despite its difficulty, is my favorite part of the process as my writing puts emphasis on world-building and the abstract ideas. Although, considering its sporadic nature, it can take me anywhere from a week to a year or more.

The next step in my writing process is the outline, which I've recently come to understand is a crucial component of writing. My outline can be as granular as chapter-by-chapter for novels, or it can be as loose as a general synopsis for short stories. But regardless, the outline contains an increased level of focus and detail so that I can keep the piece fairly concentrated. Without it, as I've discovered, the story can wander from your original purpose and become very sloppy. As a writer I have to balance strict control of my story with giving it a certain amount of leeway to let it breathe; that's the main purpose of the outline stage. This step is typically the fastest and relatively simple, but its importance can't be overstated in the creation of a piece of writing.

After the outline, I move on to the rough draft which, of course, is where I finally put pen to paper, or rather fingers to keyboard. Ernest Hemmingway once said, "There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed." And although the instruments we use to write may have changed, his words are still as true as ever. The rough draft is where you pour your beautiful thoughts onto the page while you desperately struggle not to butcher your story. The rough draft is where you fill in the gaps and try to leave yourself as little editing as possible. This step is very long and very difficult, only

being overshadowed in length and difficulty by the next step, editing.

And the final step to my writing process is editing. This, along with the rough draft process, take the most time. Editing is where you sit down in front of your piece, pore over it, and admit and fix the mountain of flaws in your masterpiece. In editing, you have to read over the piece you've put so much work into, and tear it apart piece by piece cutting, reviewing the grammar, changing the tone, shifting some themes, fixing plot holes, and many other revisions. I've heard a handful of writers say that they love editing, but I always despised it. Either you end up with a piece that is unpolished and sloppy, or you never stop editing. As author Gene Fowler said, "A book is never finished; it's abandoned." You could spend generations upon generations perfecting one poem, even one tiny haiku if you wanted, but there comes a point when you have to say "enough is enough." This varies greatly on the writer and the piece, but for me, editing typically takes twice as long as the rough draft process.



BY *Austin Lopez*

I WRITE because I have words to say and a passion with which to say them. I love the old Star Wars, Percy Jackson, and AJR. I'm also a firm believer that everything isn't always as it seems.

Youth Club Corner

What's your favorite work of theater?

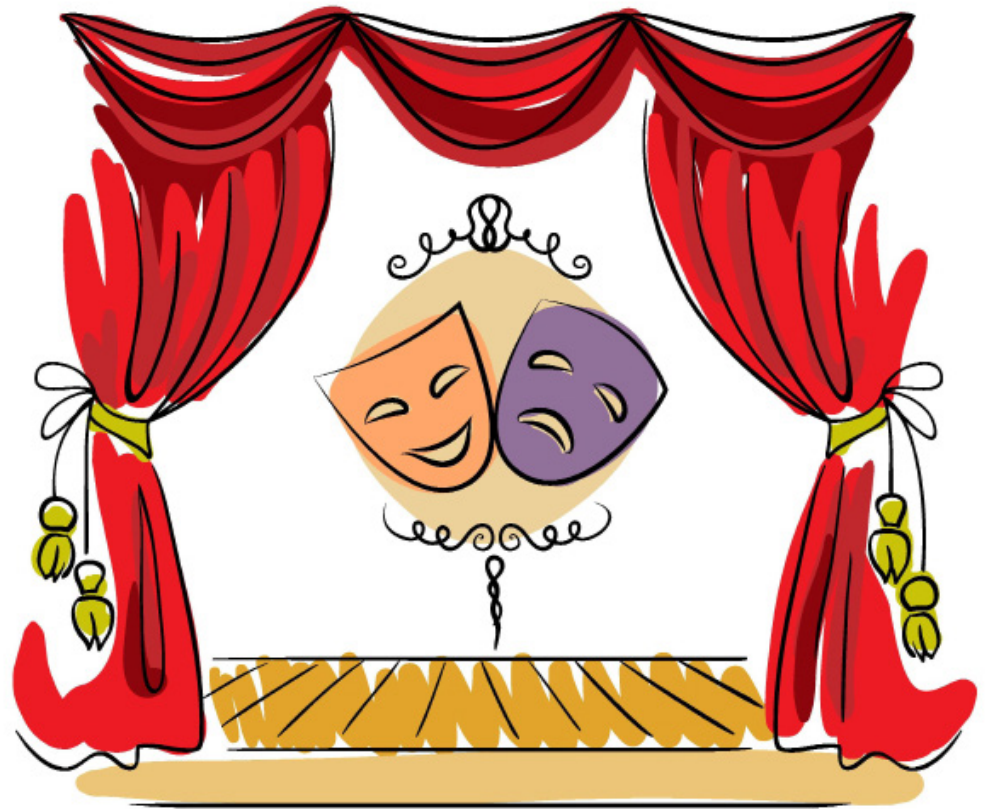
Austin: My favorite theatrical production would have to be *The Wizard of Oz*, because of how much I loved seeing it on stage as a kid.

Mahika: I haven't read many works of theatre, but I like *The Odyssey*.

What is your inspiration for your piece this year?

Austin: My inspiration for this year's piece is Marquis de Lafayette, a French military officer who fought in the American Revolution, and I hope to do his story justice.

Mahika: Recently I've been reading a lot of books about World War II and I wanted to write something set in that time period. I also wanted to write something hopeful to show that even in tough times, there are small moments of happiness that you should cling to. I think that's a very important message to remember especially right now because of COVID-19 and how it's impacted us. We need to live for the small moments of happiness.



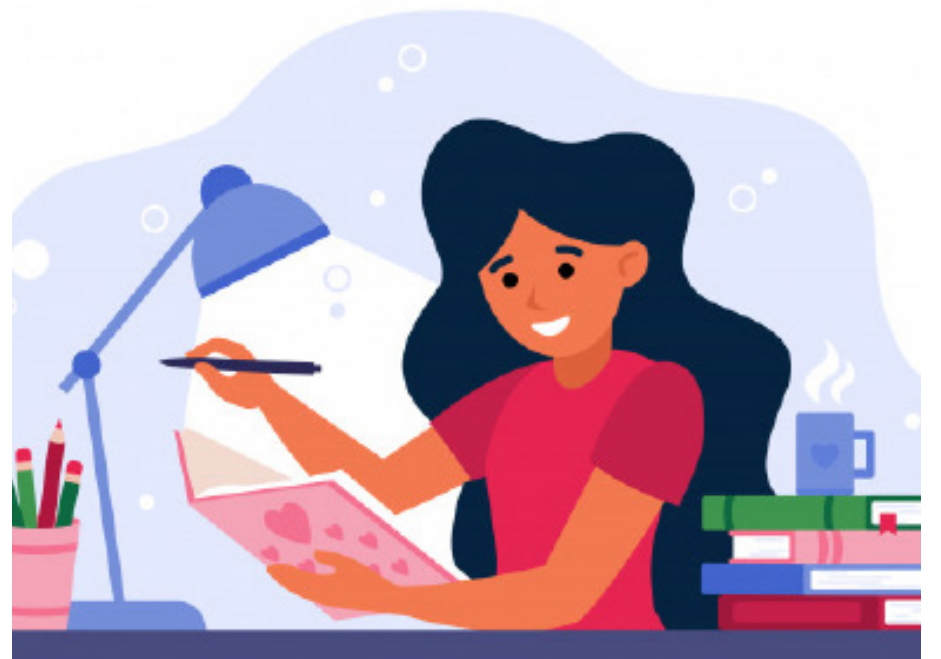
What's your general process for writing?

Austin: I have three steps to my writing process, them being inspiration, drafting, and editing. You can read more about my writing process in my article, "The Steps of Storycrafting."

Mahika: I usually start out with an idea of what to write about and a very basic plotline. Then, I just start writing, without filtering my thoughts. If I get stuck on a particular part, I skip it and write a different part of the story. Then, I connect them all and read through the entire story. I do some major editing, flesh out more details, and add and delete a few scenes. When I'm done I leave the piece alone and reread it about a week later. I catch more mistakes and edit it a little more. And I have a final draft!

BY Katie Givemon

I WRITE because I believe that words can transform lives, share ideas, and let people know that they're not alone. I love that iWrite gives a voice to children and encourages them to express themselves.



A PLACE FOR poetry

WAVING GLASS FIELDS

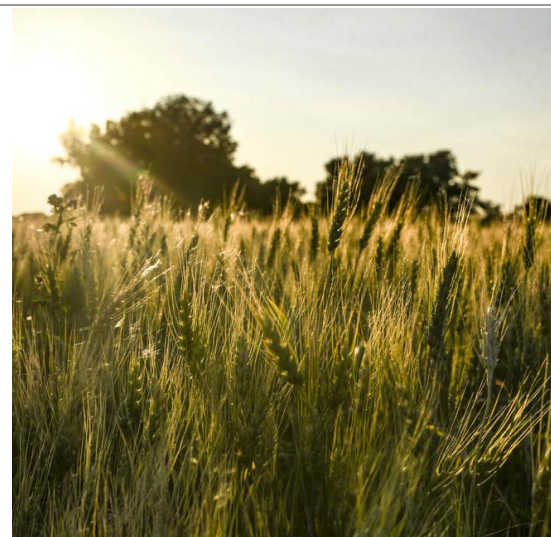
The clear fields sprawl far and wide
A farmer wipes her brow
Sweet fruits of labor, soured by pride
No fault of seed or plough

A shimmering horizon looms on high
Which fields of glass stretch up to meet
The nighttime stars begin to fly
Sitting above the filmy sheet

Tales told of shining cities on a hill
As summer falls with grace
The farmer groans, begins to mill
And autumn shows its face

But as the harvest came to pass
The stars above began to laugh
Behold, her crops were shimmering,
shifting glass,
Tiny windows for the other half

Though windows may depict the strange
Mirrors are required for change



BY Alex Zhang

I WRITE because it is a way to bring my wildest dreams to life and share them with others. I love iWRITE because of the family that I've found within the organization.

WILLOW

from the moment i first breathed air
love has cocooned me and the women
of my life have raised me into
who I am now,
from a chartreuse sapling to swooping
willow

thank you.

to my mother, my closest, for never
letting go even if thunder shook the trunk
and lightning struck through the core

to my grandmother, my aunt, our hearts
are connected in web-like sepia roots,
an understanding through generations

my teachers, my mentors, my muses
women so astounding full of wonder,
capable, full of lush green of meadows
they are my influence and with them,
inspiration is bountiful. how beautiful it is
to grow with the women in my life and
flourish, a wise willow with fruits of sage



BY Kate Jeong

I WRITE to inspire, educate, and storytell through the power of words. I believe it is a beautiful, moving experience to voice the minds of our generation.



WOMEN'S ROOTS

If you ever doubt yourself, remember your backstory
You're a woman and your blood flows with rich history.

Your responsibility comes from the blood of queens,
ready to give to their country instead of their own needs.

Your brains come from the blood of scientists and scholars,
paving the way with their discoveries.

Your strength and fierceness comes from the blood of warriors,
trading their lives for a legacy.

Your bravery comes from the blood of pioneers,
who are not afraid to make waves

Most importantly, your blood is your own:
Shaped by the workings of your parents,
who have given you time, love, and patience
So whenever in doubt, just remember
You are the light.

You do you.

BY *Nia Shetty*

I WRITE because of the joy I feel, when I put a new idea down on paper. To be able to bring feelings and emotions to the reader, through ideas that I get to express.

SHE

The painted lady sits in a gallery,
Her arms stretched outwards elegantly on
the wall
As she is looked upon like a porcelain doll in
a children's store.

Her poised conviction keeps her still,
Keeps her lips from shouting the words that
she longs to say,
Keeps her hands from breaking the steel
chains around her limp wrists.

But it is when she takes the heavy coat of stig-
ma off of her tired shoulders,
When she realizes that her history does

not mold her but enriches her as it courses
through her veins.

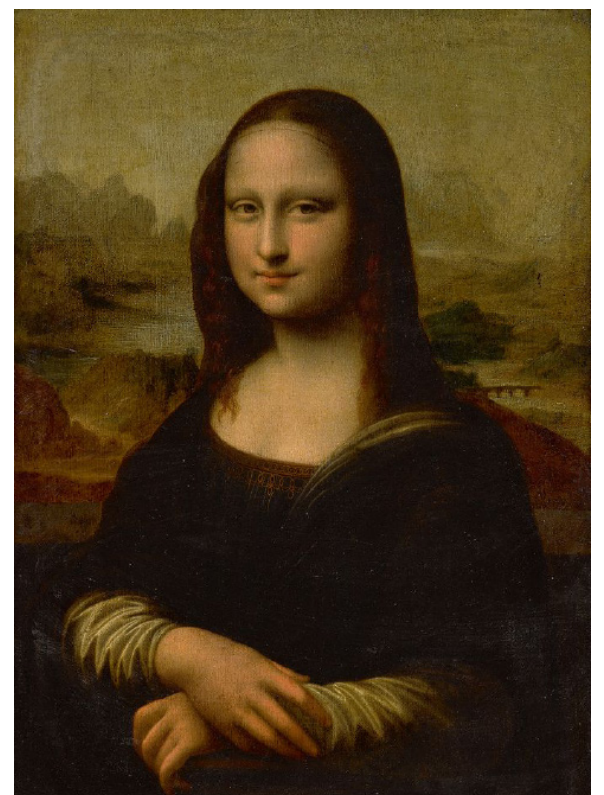
When she breaks free from the need to per-
form her femininity like a play,

When she accepts that the word "women" is
not derived from "men", but a word with a
unique

meaning and story of its own.

And that her identity can be as ambiguous as
she wants it to be.

She is whatever she defines herself as.



BY *Audrey Piczak*

I WRITE because it's one of the few spaces in which I can process my thoughts and feelings. It's how I can bring myself peace by putting my feelings onto paper. Writing is like art. You paint people with words.



BOOKTalk

Amy Shira Teitel and *Fighting for Space*

When we think about achievements in the field of aeronautics, names like Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, Alan Shepard, and even Yuri Gagarin come to mind: men whose accomplishments are undeniably stellar, or rather, lunar. But they're all men. It's rarer to see Sally Ride, Kalpana Chawla, Mae Jemison, or Sunita Williams mentioned, though their accomplishments are equally laudable. This trend continues in fields like mathematics and other sciences; the prevalence of men over women, at least in the popular perception of these subjects, is apparent.

This is why space historian, author, and former journalist Amy Shira Teitel's new dual-biography *Fighting for Space: Two Pilots and Their Historic Battle for Female Spaceflight* is crucial for all of us to read.

As I just mentioned, Amy Shira Teitel is a space historian; it's a bit of an invented profession, as she explains. "I studied the history of science as an undergrad[uate], and I have a Master's degree in science technology studies. But what I love doing is researching and sharing my findings because they're genuinely cool! And that's how I combined my interests of history and spaceflight to create my little niche."

Her novel is a nonfiction piece, but it's penned like an enchanting, enthralling story. When asked about the intersection of fiction and nonfiction, Teitel said that "it's all in how you represent the story: either academic and formal, or like an engaging story." She was quick to establish that "nonfiction is easier for [her] because you always know your punchline. The facts are clear, and all that's left to do – the most challenging part – is piecing the facts together and finding a way to make the story come to life the way you want it to." The drama and fun of fiction stories, she says, doesn't need to be thought up in nonfiction; it is already in the facts and just needs to be drawn out. She compares writing nonfiction to "archaeology with words," an intriguing comparison that holds great truth.

Fighting for Space: Two Pilots and Their Historic Battle for Female Spaceflight follows the stories of two JCs: Jerrie Cobb and Jackie Cochran. These two women were locked in a race to become the first female astronauts ever in the mid-20th century. Jackie Cochran was a world-class pilot, 25 years older than Jerrie, who held more titles and records than any of her peers, gender no bar. She led the WASPs (Women's Air Force Service Pilots) during World War II. Cochran was the first woman to break the sound barrier, ran her own luxury cosmetics company,



and was personal friends with multiple presidents. In other words, she was a big deal. Jerrie was also a talented pilot with a comparable number of accolades and tantamount drive, who ended up taking the same medical examinations as the crew of the Mercury mission, launching in response to Russia's Sputnik satellite.

Both Cobb and Cochran were central figures in the media rush of a time when the concept of a female astronaut was in equal parts enamoring and fantastic. They both had to fight great battles to get there, though. Teitel goes into great detail about the struggles they faced along the way to success: reinventing their identities, promoting their brands (including a cosmetics line), shaping themselves for the media (and disregarding practices considered conventional for women in equal measure), and proving the disapproving figures in their lives wrong.

Teitel's goal in writing *Fighting for Space* is to create a nonfiction book with the pull and allure and, more importantly, the readability associated with fiction books. She began her writing process by going beyond the story of the Mercury 13, about whom many authors have written books. She explains that she wanted to delve into the story of Jackie, who is often cast as the "villain because she testifies against women in space at a congressional subcommittee hearing." She was always interested in Cochran's story and wondered why the space community looked over her outstanding achievements. After digging into Jackie's story, she saw that Jerrie was an integral part of her world, so she decided to feature Cobb.

The book takes you through a full spectrum of emotions: exhilaration, secondhand outrage, joy, and empowerment. After reading the book, as a member of the opposite gender, I truly felt like I had stepped into these women's shoes for a bit and glimpsed the injustices and prejudices they had to face, reliving the watershed moments of their career (and the small parts in between) with them. It's a lovely piece, and the level of detail to which Amy Shira Teitel went to research the two women is remarkable.

Teitel returned from the Eisenhower Presidential Library with 6,000 pages of sheer content and with comparable amounts from other archives. She has over 1,300 footnotes in her copy of the book, which was originally over 600 pages. The manuscript for sale currently has been shaved down by about 200 of those pages, a significant reduction that she said was painstaking. Her advice to all writers looking to cut from their writing would be to “go with what’s vital over what’s interesting, and maintain the pacing in your writing,” both of which can take time to achieve but, she assures, are worthwhile. Also, Teitel had so much research that she needed a way to catalog all of it and ensure that it was easy for referencing during the writing and editing processes: “I organized all of the letters, all of the papers into groups by topic, and then chronologically by date, and I filed all that away in these Target file boxes.”

Fighting For Space is a book that tells everyone, especially girls, that they can do whatever they want; breaking through the glass ceiling is tough but not impossible. Teitel hopes that “readers take inspiration from how much these women went through and recognize that these women, these people are amazing.” It’s a positive message that is much-needed during

the times we live when gender inequalities have found their way into several everyday societal elements.

As you can likely tell by now, a lot of heart, thought, and hard work went into writing this book. I give *Fighting For Space* 5 out of 5 stars and recommend it for ages 13 and up. Check out *Fighting For Space* wherever you get your books, and watch my interview with Teitel on the Youth Club YouTube channel!

BY *Eshaan Mani*

I WRITE for the rush of adrenaline I feel when my pen touches the paper. It is that exhilarating experience and the opportunity to not only get my voice out to the public but also be able to be the voice of inspiring people and organizations that inspires me to write.



L to R: Jackie Cochran and Jerrie Cobb at work.
Image Credit: ABQ Journal and DigitalTrends

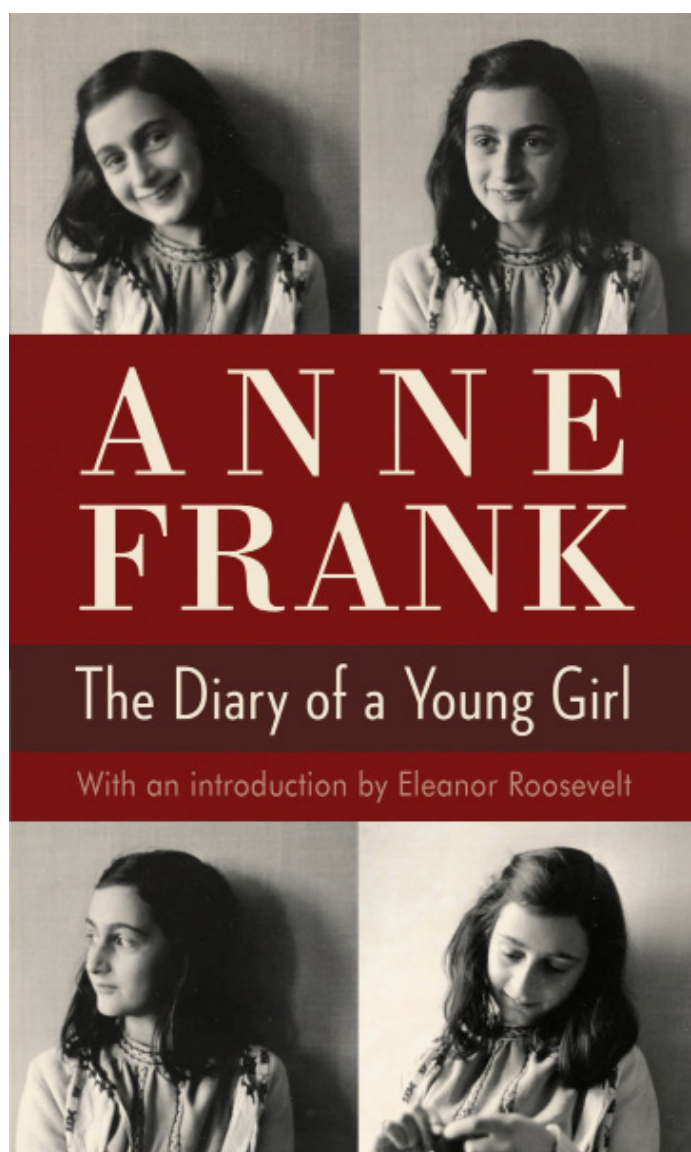
The Diary of a Young Girl

by Anne Frank

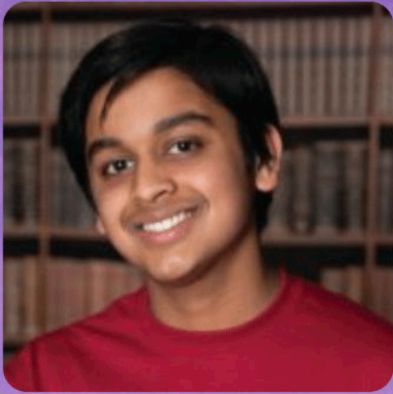
The Diary of a Young Girl is an amazing book about the life of Anne Frank, a Jewish girl living in the 1900s. Anne Frank went into hiding with her family, living in a cramped tiny room in the “secret annex,” a part of her father’s (Otto Frank’s) office. She wrote about the lack of privacy in the space and even wrote about her frustrations. She and her family hid in the “secret annex” for 761 days! Anne is positive and believes that people are inherently good, although the Nazis are trying to kill her family. In the book, you get to hear from her perspective as well as learn what kind of person Anne Frank is. I would definitely recommend this book to someone who loves to learn about people’s lives and loves a good autobiography. You get to see the perspective of a girl in hiding during World War II. It’s also really informative of what life was like then, and it’s an amazing book in general.

BY *Sophie Yu*

I WRITE to let my thoughts, feelings, and ideas spread across the paper. To form and create a story that can be told in any perspective, described with any words. Writing can create a whole new world.



IWRITER STAFF!



Eshaan Mani



Kate-Yeonjae
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Sanjna Pandit



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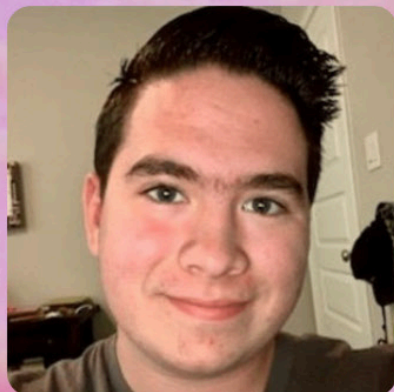
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HAPPY GRADUATION TO STAFF MEMBERS
KATIE, HALLIDAY, AND MARIAH!