

ESL EXCHANGES

Fall 2011

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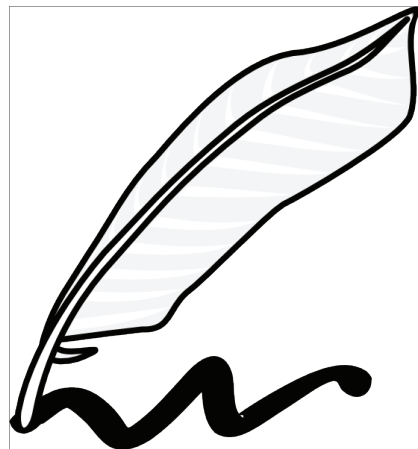
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Alp Aslan Uysal

Being Twenty-Two

Right now at twenty-two, I feel overly responsible to my family as if I were a foot soldier who must account to his commander. I feel like my family does not take my ideas seriously even though they act like they do. On top of family issues, I lack free time because of my academic studies and I have many more things to do. According to my experiences, being twenty-two is not easy because it includes so much responsibility and insufficient free time.

Feeling overly responsible to my family makes me stressed even though it makes me more successful. For example, as my family pays my school fees, I try to get good grades to make them happy instead of trying to get good grades for improving myself. I feel like I am a part of my parents instead of completely independent. I want to be “me”(Croser 4).

For me, twenty-two includes intense studying, a lot of working, and other daily routines which lowers free time for myself. Before I came to study in New Paltz last month, I was studying in my country where I had class every day, I had basketball training every day as I was a professional, and I had a part time job to go to four days a week. All this work, the studies, and the trainings were very helpful for me to have a better life, but they were very hard to accomplish.

Feeling like a child, lacking free time, and having so many responsibilities are the aspects of twenty-two which make life tough for me. In my opinion, being twenty-two is not so simple because it is the time in life where a person starts to own his/her independence, and the transition to a grown-up person from a child is one of the most difficult periods in life.



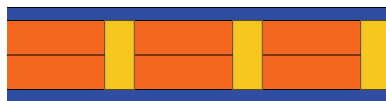
Nafiur Chowdhury

Adventurer's Journey

I agree with William James, who states, "Man alone is architect of his destiny" because I am the only one who can make my own path towards my future. My father and mother have always told me that I am going to have an unknown trip full of mysteries and adversities. I feel that I am an adventurer who likes to explore mystery by overcoming difficulties.

About five years ago, in Bangladesh, I was a senior in my high school and it was mandatory to take the state exam. I studied hard to get really good grades on that exam because the result of this exam would give me the opportunity to go to one of the best colleges. Unfortunately, three days before the exam I felt so sick and I was unable to study. Even though I was sick, I did my best. When I saw my result, an A, I had no words to describe how happy I was at that moment. I was so emotional, and I started to cry because of this huge achievement. I thought my sickness had been an obstacle, but I successfully overcame it by studying hard. This was my first challenge I experienced that made me feel adventurous, because an adventurer always attempts to overcome trouble in order to find his destination and the feeling of achievement.

I already began my mysterious journey five years ago and I will continuously fight against the upcoming challenges. I am sure that the strength I have gained by overcoming adversities will accompany me throughout my studies. I look forward to meeting the challenges as a college student.



Lan Zhao

I Am From

I am from the Zoo,
the dog that slept with me,
and the cat that helps to grab mice.

I am from the flower sea,
the sweet osmanthus tree that can bring a fragrant taste,
and the rose that can make you happy.

I am from the peach tree,
and climbed the tree,
to get sweet fruit.

I am from a story,
all of my cousins and me sitting around grandfather,
and listening to a story.

I am from a warm family,
when I failed the test,
my father said, "If you are stupid, then work harder than others."

I am from the potato,
all of my family liked to grow it,
and we had every meal with it.

I am from the river,
my cousins and I swam in the river every vacation,
and we also went fishing.

I am from a red flag,
there were five stars on it,
and it means passion.



Allen Yusra

The Baseball

Like everything else it starts young.
Right away it is flung.
At first it is clean, but over time it wears down.
It originates from the pitcher's hand.
Tries to stay on its path and avoid that big bang.
Sometimes the journey is broken and it does not get there.
It is hit hard, scarred for life.
It travels in a different direction, in the air or on the ground.
Whichever path it chooses, those stitches get worn down.
This new path is interrupted by yet another obstacle.
It stalls, but eventually comes back to its home.
Once again it is thrown, it is on its own.
It cannot avoid another scar, but this one is a lot worse.
Flying through the wind, just gaining speed.
This time there are no stops. It is a straight route out of the park.
It will not come back to where it came from.
Now it is on its own, has to find a new place to call home.



Lynton Merriwether

Camera

I am a camera a quiet observer,
Patiently watching and waiting.
With the blink of an eye and the sound of a shutter
I convert moments in to memories.
Alone in nature I find peace.
With my eyes and mine alone
I take in the landscape.
Whether blurry or slightly out of focus
My photos are my thoughts
Distinctive and mine alone,
Each possessing its own beauty.



Lauren Sieferman

The Lotus

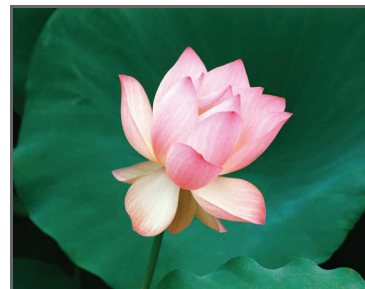
In darkness, aquatic, a tiny seed dwells,
Instinctively piercing its thick hardened shell.
As it acquires awareness of itself, it must grow
Through the thick layer of mud, now settled below.

The faint glow of the surface, seen beyond vast expanse,
Gives rise to a conflicted, slow motion dance.
Though the seedling may idle with clouds overhead,
Its journey resumes, as the sun returns again.

Yet light cannot untangle roots firmly secured,
Though wisdom, unearthed, will always endure.
While clouds may come, now they quickly pass:
A triumphant bud has reached the surface at last.

Beginning to blossom, each petal unfolds,
Revealing the contentment it gratefully holds.
Only now may its beauty arouse and inspire
As it is loved, cherished, and thoughtfully admired.

Forever delicate, its long stem extends
Until it reaches the place where it first began.
With enlightened poise it withstands each rain and shower,
That now only strengthens this sweet, lotus flower.



YingYu Li

Tree

Everyone experiences failure. Although people may feel frustrated and sad when they fail it only makes them become stronger and more powerful. I am just like a short and small tree that is never blown away by a big storm because I believe that I can overcome all the obstacles that I may face.

The new environment intimidated me when I first came here because I had to start my life over in a foreign country. I was isolated from my friends, relatives and the place that I grew up in.



But I know I need to be engaged in my learning; the only way that I can adopt a new culture is to learn a new language and meet new friends in a new environment. I met lots of obstacles while I am learning a new language and making new friends because pronunciation is totally different and the grammar is very complicated for me. Native speakers often tease me because I speak broken English. At first, language blocked me from making new friends since I did not know how to communicate with other people and it made me feel isolated and lonely. The obstacle did not beat me up; it only made me become more committed and more confident in learning. As long as I believe in myself, I can achieve my goal of adapting to a new environment and be successful like a short and persistent small tree.

BoWei Li

Is It That Simple?

In “Theme for English B” by Langston Hughes, the speaker is asked to write a page that “comes out” of him. He argues that it is not that simple because too many things are on his mind that cannot be put down in words. I agree with him because I experienced some situations where I tried to express my thoughts, but failed.

The first time I had the problem was in my senior year in high school. I was lost in what I should decide to major in. My father made me choose accounting, a career I might not like. I did not know how to tell him how important it is for me to have a job I am interested in. The second time was when I had to make a decision between SUNY and CUNY. I asked my teachers, counselors, and friends for advice but was often disappointed. I was unable to explain to them the way I looked for a college. The third time was when I had to break up with my girlfriend. My friends thought it was an easy decision, but I just could not find a way of telling them what bothered me. Too many nice memories made it hard for me to let her go.

All of us might meet the same situation like Hughes’ or mine in their lifetime. We may think it is easy to tell but, really, when we are actually trying to put our ideas into words it is not. Some argue that it is the speaker’s fault for creating misunderstanding; however, I believe some things just cannot be explained.

Works Cited

Hughes, Langston. “Theme for English B.” *Mercury Reader*. ed Neuleib, Janice, Kathleen Shine Cain and Stephen Ruffus. 42-42. Print.

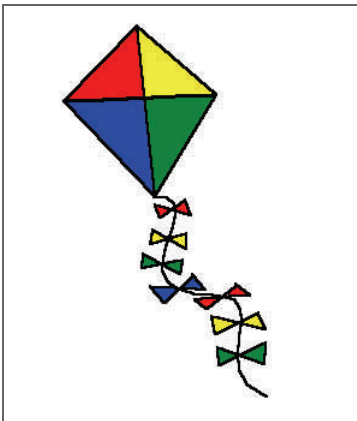
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Jiamin Cai

### I Am a Kite

Flying is always on my mind. I wish I could be a bird, so I could fly in the sky. But I am not. I am just a kite with a heavy kite line wheel that is always controlled by my parents.

“Is it just because I was a little girl that I had to be held in your hands?” “Yes and no doubt,” was my parents’ answer. They said, if a kite does not have a strong structure, it is easy to break; little girls should be quiet and stay at home. I understand that it was your first time raising a child, but sometimes you needed to give me a break. My parents wanted me to apply to colleges that were close to my home, so I could be in their sight all the time. I told them that I cannot stay there and watching other kites fly further away from me. I want to catch up with them or even fly higher than them. So I shouted at my parents to relieve the string, but it seems that they did not hear me.



Mom and Dad, I want to say that I am not a little girl. The wind would not always wait for me. If there is no wind how can a kite fly in the sky? Please set me free. I will not fall down to the ground. I am a kite. My string will never break. I know where I came from, and I know where to go when I fly high in the sky.

The Beast and Beauty

My mind is a rose and my body is its master.  
Shiny blossomed, but fragile.  
A glass cover is guarding the rose  
Allowing nobody to touch it.  
The rose has cast a spell,  
I am waiting for true love  
To release my master from the evil magic.  
The beast is pleased  
When Beauty is seen.  
The rose is worried because  
The master doesn't open her mind,  
Beauty goes away from the master, the beast,  
Because of her prudence and caution.  
My mind is covered by a weak, thin film,  
Bearing a pain of past love.  
A boy comes into my mind through the glass.  
Yet it is hard to know  
Why he tries to be with me,  
Since I barely notice him.  
I am happy that he is always with me,  
He makes my petals bloom and blush.  
But I am afraid  
That he will leave me because  
I won't open my mind.  
But I must open my mind before  
The last petal falls.  
I must free the master  
That is me.



Mayu Tominaga

### My Writing Is a Set of Legos

My writing is a set of Legos. When I write, of course I use language to express my ideas and at this point, there is a similarity between my writing and Legos in two aspects: a limitation of a language and Legos as a functional tool, and an unfamiliarity of English as a foreign language and Legos for me.

In the first aspect, when I have an idea and an image and want to tell someone about them, I should convert my intangible ideas into a form of language. At this point, their meanings are changed and no longer what they used to be when they were in my mind because language is not a perfect tool to show what is in my mind and it is a mere substitution. Legos are similar to language because they are also just tools and they can never be the real one. For example, when I make a castle with Legos, it is not the real castle.

A second aspect is the similarity between English as a foreign language and Legos. Of course, I know what Legos are but I don't know how to use them because I have never played with them. This point is very similar to my writing in English because English is my second language and I cannot use it well.

In conclusion, I can say my writing is a set of Legos because of these two aspects. I can never express my thoughts as they are in the form of language because language is not a perfect tool to show them. In the second aspect, the unfamiliarity to Legos and English is similar. I cannot use English well to express my thoughts but I have just been given an interesting toy and I don't know how to play with it yet. I am in the stage of getting used to the toy and mastering how to play with it. I am excited by this unfamiliar toy; and am trying to play with it, but am learning through trial and error.

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Thankfulness

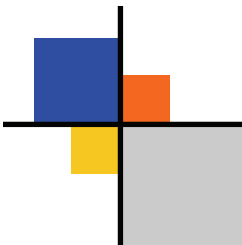
I'm from sumo-wrestling.  
"Daiki, you will never ever win against me."  
"Come on, Dad. I'm gonna beat you up."  
I'm from flying and falling onto mattress.

I'm from tropical trees, grassed park,  
and the sea where I can have fresh sea-urchins.  
I'm from scooping the orange contents with my pinky.

I'm from snow, cold weather, and condominium.  
I played with two tiny dogs wearing sweaters.  
Rugby stuff has surrounded me since then.  
I'm from headaches from snow on the top of my head.

I'm from rugby, sandy ground and tackling bag.  
I'm from three guys' yelling, punching and kicking me.  
It didn't hurt my body. It did move my heart.  
It shaped my character.

I'm from all that have surrounded me.



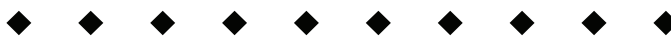
Yuantaο Chen

## My Journey

I have a dream that one day I can fly in the sky. I want to look back at what I already reached and see how far it is away from my goal. In order to reach my destination successfully, I need to be well-protected, be patient and be able to make the right decisions.

I am an airplane, which is well protected before flying. My father protects me anytime and anywhere, especially when I suffer from physical attractions. Under his protection, I am ready to fly. I am patient during this journey. It contains many difficulties. My journey is made up of every school year. Every school year has different challenges, but I still overcome them one by one. I believe one day I will be successful and reach the highest point of my life. It has started when I go to college. I donate most of my time to study courses and prepare for tests. Besides, I need to be able to make the right choices. It is like landing an airplane: important and essential.

I am a well-protected and patient airplane. I need to make a right decision during my college-journey. Many unpredictable challenges are waiting for me, but I am never afraid because suffering always makes me stronger. I believe one day I will fly in the sky.



Xiang Wang

I Am From...

I am from lots of books,  
Beautiful words make a new perfect world,  
But those books always sleep on that old shelf.

I am from the apple tree,  
When the peel's color turns to red,  
I'm waiting for what I want.

I am from the big sofa,  
It should be comfortable if I lay there and take a nap,  
But it is not, for it belongs to my family.

I am from sister Li,  
Even if I cannot remember her name someday,  
We will stay together from the blood relationship.

I am from my hometown's dialect,  
I can speak it freely and say funny things,  
But not everyone can endure the strange tone.

I am from the delicious dumpling,  
Some vegetables and meats are mixed together,  
They make up the deeply missing for my dear family.

I am from the memory of kindergarten,  
The first place I knew too many people,  
Also my school life started there.

I am from the Great Wall,  
Not only does it have a lot of nice stories,  
But also it still stays there strongly,  
As a famous symbol of pride in the world.



Ming Kit Lo

### An Awful Soup

The odor in the food market was awful and disgusting. I stepped into the puddle full of dirty water, and caught up with my mother carrying plastic bags in both of my hands. The fresh squid and fish in the plastic bags had almost melted when we got back home.

It was really easy to make such unpleasant soup. My mother boiled a pot of hot water first. Then, she emptied all the organs of the squids and fishes in the sink with her bare hands. After the water was hot enough, she threw all the materials into the pot and a full bun-length long lotus root in too. Afterwards, she put the stove on high for around half an hour and then she turned it back to low for three to four more hours. Last but not least, she turned it off and waited for another fifteen minutes to let the soup “dry”. Now it was ready for to eat!

When I walked past the kitchen, it smelled like somebody who did not bathe for several weeks. Every time after dinner, my mother poured the soup into four big bowls and forced each one of us to finish it. Inside of the bowl, I could see the residue. When I stared at the spoon, I was amazed how colorless water could turn into a pinkish liquid. When I sniffed it closely, I felt dizzy. It was just like the smell of the flesh of a wild animal, bloody and raw. The special smell of the squids matched up with the fish, and the lotus root further consolidated the taste. I was paralyzed by the smell completely.

My mother finally pushed my head into the bowl, and the taste of it was even worse than traditional Chinese medicine. The bitter and muddy taste made my throat feel sore and tight, and I always imagined that I was going to choke because of the bones. The rare odor stayed in my mouth for many days even though I tried to brush my teeth for a longer time.



Leslie Gil

Sack

Here, I'll take that for you!  
I hold everything up  
And together  
When not everything fits in your own arms.  
I'll try to be as strong and sturdy as I can,  
To not break while you're on your way.

I'll hold your burdens for you.  
At least until you get home  
And put your belongings away for another day.  
When you empty me out,  
I'll sulk with you.  
And the moment you fill me up again,  
I'll have your weight on my shoulders  
That I do my best not to drop.

See, I like holding things  
When people can't hold them alone.  
My job is to relieve the strain on your hands  
Whenever you feel yours aren't enough.



Wolf Pack

I am an average college freshman with an ordinary life, studying in SUNY New Paltz. I grew up in a small family with a loving mother, responsible father and a young brother. I consider my family as a happy family because we stick together during good times and bad. My family is a wolf pack in which my mother is the caregiving mother wolf and I am the pup wolf. She is the mother wolf because she provides warmth and care for the family. She is my role model and her dedication to the family inspires me to become a better person.

In my life my mother is the special person that makes me smile and feel loved. She is the mother wolf that holds us together, with her love. She raised me all by herself in Bangladesh, while my father was in The United States. She fulfilled all my needs and never let me realize my father's absence. My mother is my role model because she is an honest, caring, and a friendly person. She supported me throughout my childhood but as I grew up she also thought me to be independent. Although it is common for sons to have a closer relationship with their mother, I feel that my mother and I have undying love for each other.

A mother wolf wants her pups to be self-dependent. My mother wants me to be independent as well. Coming to SUNY New Paltz was the way for me to get independence. My family is proud of me because I am living on my own and studying in college. I want to make them proud and make their dream come true by becoming successful in life. I will do anything to keep this wolf pack happy and strong.



Yuanyuan Huang

Where I Am from

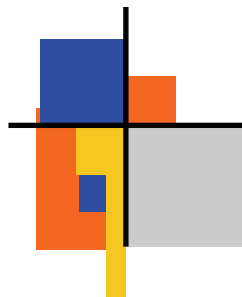
I am from a four number family,  
Kind mother, strict father, and trouble maker brother.  
But they love each other so much.

I am from rainy days,  
Winnie umbrella, pink raincoat, and yellow rain boots.  
They perfectly work together.

I am from the *Grimms' Fairy Tales*,  
The frog king, the goose- girl, and the little Snow-White  
Accompanying me to my sweet dreams every night.

I am from the kingdom of candy,  
Gummy bears, M&M chocolate beans, and popping candy  
Secretly lying in the tiny drawer.

I am from “We don’t have a money maker.”  
Only buy what you really need,  
And leave the unnecessary things in the store.



Mermaid or Whale...

Rather be a mermaid or a whale?  
Rather be thin or rather be thick?

I used to be teased for being thick.  
I wanted to be a mermaid.  
I wanted to be thin.  
Being called a whale really made me think.  
Is this what I want to be?

I am a whale, not a mermaid.  
Friends, dolphins, seals and fish always surround me.  
Like whales I entertain like crazy.  
I dance and sing on my stage, the ocean and the coral reefs.  
Like a whale I'm also very impressive,  
And admired by all who enter my ocean palace.

Rather be a mermaid or a whale?

I used to want to be a mermaid,  
But mermaids do not exist.  
If they existed they would suffer from split personalities,  
Woman or fish?  
I am not confused about who I am and want to be.  
Mermaids are very lovely but lonely.  
I have lots of friends and people who love me.

Rather be thick or be thin?  
Without a doubt I would rather be thick; I'd rather be a whale.



Ayako Okawa

## The Tokyo Tower

The Tokyo Tower has confidence. He has own style which nobody else can match. I want to be like him; I want to be the Tokyo Tower.

When I was a child, I was the Tokyo Tower because I was not afraid of anything; I had confidence. I knew my spot and never lost it. A lot of people want to be like me. I was so proud by myself. My life was shiny like the Tokyo Tower.

However, when I was a junior high school student, I lost my spot and it became smaller. I



always followed rather than lead. I was afraid of being different from other people. This sounds strange or silly, but the Tokyo Tower never changes. He is shiny even in bad weather.

I belonged to a production company as an actress in Japan. It was very hard for me because I did not have my spot. An actor must have her own style to get a good career. I had some special abilities, but I could not show that to everybody because of my shyness. I could not find my spot. I have to be the Tokyo Tower to be an entertainer. I think it will take a lot of time to be the Tokyo Tower again

Yuan Yang

## Being A Sunflower

I am like a sunflower. The first time I saw sunflowers was when I checked my constellation. Mine is a lion and the related flower is a sunflower because they both are light, passionate, and love sunlight. So I gradually noticed the sunflower more and more often, and finally I fell in love with it.

Sunflowers are always facing the sun. Wherever the sun is, sunflowers turn around to follow and smile to the sun. I love the optimistic attitude of the sunflower. Whenever I meet some trouble and kind of fall down, sunflowers always are my spiritual consolation. Those bright and charming flowers remind me of being optimistic even though there is dark behind my back. Instead of thinking how my life is worse, I concentrate on the sunlight and follow the steps toward the sun.



Sunflowers are not only pretty, but also have seeds inside. I do not like to be the one who is pompous and flashy without substance, for the sunflowers are not as pretty as other flowers such as the lily or the peony. On the contrary, an ordinary appearance but beauty in the soul is the person I want to be, like a sunflower. I want to be a book that people want to read since they know there is beauty inside like the seeds of sun-

flowers. I still have so much to learn from sunflowers. I wish I could be a sunflower standing under the sunshine and face everything in my life.

Qingying Chen

I Am From

I am from children's slide  
played on by kids in the park,  
which had a smooth face.

I am from the apple tree,  
the most famous fruit in my hometown.

I am from Forest Park,  
where my family always played together.

I am from dumplings,  
which my parents like to eat  
and we always had for dinner.

I am from a stamp album  
which is my mother's treasure.  
She always tells me what the meaning of these stamps are.

I am from a gold beach,  
the famous place in my hometown,  
which had a lot of golden sand  
and many beautiful shells.

I am from the imperial palace of Qin shi huang  
who is the first emperor of China.  
The imperial palace is a magnificent building.



Eri Yoshida

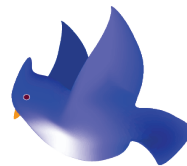
### I Want to Be a Blue Bird

I am a bird. Am I a colorful parrot? Am I a beautiful peacock? Am I a cute little parakeet? Actually, I am a chicken that is dreaming of the day to be a bluebird.

Generally, I like writing. I love expressing my thoughts to other people as the blue bird shows off the beautiful blue to the world. While I write, I love to adventure and explore my feelings just as birds fly around and look at the world. I am flying around in my mind. Also, I like making my own style of writing. I want to create the only writing style that “I” can make. I have never seen a bluebird in my country before. I had been considering myself similar to the bluebird that is “only” seen in North America. I am the original blue bird.

However, I figured out that I wasn’t a bluebird. I am a chicken. I get scared of writing. I am afraid of exploring my mind too much, and end up losing track. I don’t want to make a mistake even though I know that making a mistake is fine.

I am running around the paper like a chicken. I should be flying fast into the paper, and show my beautiful blue. I am challenging myself every moment to be a bluebird that shows the beautiful blue to everybody.





Emirhan Dervisoglu

## Homeland

I am from the homeland of raki, the best alcohol in the world,  
There are lots of paintings on our walls, holding the signature of my mom,  
And the showcase stands in the corner with a history of its own.

The pool is never used for swimming,  
But my dog loves it for drinking,  
And he always uses the berry tree's shadow for sleeping.

The playground is for children for sure,  
I can hear the azan coming from the mosque as usual,  
While I am playing soccer in the field with composure.

I am from Guler's kitchen with lots of food,  
Nazli is coming from work in a bad mood,  
Sefa is yelling at a driver in the neighborhood.

I can hear her voice saying, "Don't be late."  
"Kiss your mother before leaving" and be safe.  
"Don't feed the dog any more," my father says.

I am from high walls with soldiers' protection.



Rikako Nogami

### Being Japanese

Nothing about me will ever say “white”. After I came to the United States I began to feel more Japanese than I ever had at home. I also realized that being Japanese gave me an opportunity to share cultures with other people.

In Japan, I didn’t recognize my own cultural identity, I didn’t have anything to make me feel different from other peoples. After I came to America, I realized that my Japanese culture made me hesitate when approaching other people. I felt isolated from the other students I met. In part this happened because I couldn’t understand what others were saying in English. Language is just one of the things that help identify culture. I thought that I would never be able to assimilate.

Assimilation is important because it means we can move into another culture, interact in social situations, and become part of that culture. It also means we may lose our own culture. It is very important for Japanese people to get along with anything and anyone, it is our way of dealing with people. Most Asian cultures share the idea that we should live in harmony with all that is around us, people and nature. I thought that in order to assimilate into American culture I must put aside my culture and embrace American culture.

However, little by little I realized that sharing my culture with others was pleasurable not only for me but for my suitemates as well. They were given the opportunity to explore my culture and I was given a view into their cultures. It is a true cultural exchange. I am Japanese and found that holding on to my culture while sharing in theirs gives me pleasure. If I had been the same as them I would not have had this opportunity.

My ideas have changed completely. I realized I don’t have to lose my culture and being Japanese has allowed me to experience a great cultural exchange with other international students.

Arber Cuko

### Things I Learned at Twenty Two

It is not always easy to know what is true or not. I am already twenty two years old, and I have made many decisions. I usually did not if I was right or wrong. The most important things I have learned up to now were to never give up and to be true to myself, for that is the best guidance in order to make the right decisions.

Whenever I think if things are truly simple, I think of myself here in the United States. I knew a little about the United States, just by watching television. When I came here, I experienced culture shock, and I became homesick. Moreover, another issue I had to deal with was my English; I could handle a normal conversation, even though in Albania I thought I knew how to speak English. But I still had the courage to go on.

At the age of twenty two we are expected to make our own decisions. I wonder if the ones I make are the best. It is not easy to always know what is true, but I follow my heart.

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Syeda Azad

I am an ice cube
Though I am solid for the time being,
Staying in my own form
 Eventually I adapt to my surroundings.
 Embracing the form of liquid from solid,
 I am flexible.
 Capable of fitting in any container chosen
 When cold, I gather myself together.
 But as heat passes me, I let myself flow,
 Exploring what's out there.





Anchor

The anchor hooks to the seabed,
Just waiting to be lifted.
It makes little movement,
Just sits and waits for the ship to set sail.

The anchor is perfectly visible,
With its long chain and black rusted metal
And yet the fish in the sea swim by ignoring the anchor,
Possibly in fear.

But the anchor is not vicious.
It does not wish to harm,
It does not wish to foul,
It simply sits and waits for a friend to stop and say hello.

The anchor's wish is never granted,
Nor can it do much about it,
For the anchor is hooked to seabed,
Stationary and in solitude.

So the anchor is left alone at the bottom of the sea,
Waiting for the day it will be taken out on deck.

Maria Eugenia Gonzalez

“El Carino” in the Garza Family

There is a traditional meal, and aroma, every Saturday morning at my Grandmother’s house. Every week my mom, my sister Loliz and I would go to my grandmother’s where we would meet my aunts and many cousins to prepare our sinfully delicious “Gorditas de Azucar.” Since my grandmother didn’t trust anybody with preparing the dough she would do it herself. Once the dough was ready she would give it to my cousins and I so that we could divide it up and make many little dough balls that would later be passed on to my aunts to squash flat like a tortilla. Once they were flat they would be passed back to grandmother who would cook them.

When I was growing up I loved the time spent with my cousins as well as the hot “gorditas”. We would sing songs and sneak quick bites of dough or making them into heart shapes. As I became older I came to view this all as a chore, as did my cousins. As teenagers we all wanted to hang out with our friends and not go to Grandma’s house because it was boring. Why go and cook when you can sleep or go to a party?

The smell of dough was no longer attractive to me. It just reminded me that I was being forced to spend time with my family. The heat from the kitchen seemed stuffy instead of homey and making shapes with dough was for little children.

Days turned into weeks, and weeks turned into months. Little by little we began to skip Saturday’s at Grandma’s house. But after a few years, like lost puppies, we found our way back. From the corner of my eye I see my aunts smiling at us, watching us as we make a mess in the kitchen. It turns out that it was not my grandparent’s strong desire for “gorditas” every week that had brought us here.



Antonios Chalyvidis

Gems in a Jar

Had a bad day? Maybe a little melancholic (for any reason)? You know the little blues that occur from time to time in everyone's lives? I think I have the cure. I am not going to treat serious issues, but then again those days when I am a little down are quite unpleasant no matter when they occur or how frequent.

I must admit I am having much more fun now than as a child, mainly because my choices are naturally much more conscious. But what is missing often, is the magic I found in simple things back then, when I was five or six years old. Since my parents were teachers, we had as a family the whole summer off. This meant three months of vacation, most of the times at my grandparents' house in St Andreas village in Pelelloponese. And every time we arrived, my grandmother had a little treasure for me: A vase of quince sweet.

This vase was ENORMOUS! It was a good percentage, maybe seventy percent, of my torso in height. I couldn't lift it, of course. I kept it under my bed. Because the old vintage brass lid would always stick tight, I had to sit and embrace the jar with my legs and my one arm and open it with the other.

The contents were little deep red translucent wedges of the boiled fruit, like little rubies in thick syrup of the same color. I remember I would move the whole thing near the window to admire how the sunlight traveled through the sweet, giving away gem-like color qualities.



Rui Wang

I Am From Green Rattan and Stone Bench

I am from green rattan and stone bench,

Moist fragment brick,

Discarded by workers,

Creative material in my world.

I am from a packman's crunchy candy,

And the tooth sticky with khaki color fragments,

For a taste of sweet.

I am from Sailor Moon,

Who shows power and transformation.

Says, "Wo yao dai biao yue liang xiao mie ni men!"

I am from dumplings and handmade noodles,

Pork fried potato and rice,

I am from the river which is called the Yellow River,

I am from the mountain which is called the Yellow Mountain,

And I am a descendant of the dragon.

