



WHITLAM INSTITUTE'S ANNUAL WRITING COMPETITION

The English faculty is delighted to announce that one of our brilliant-minded Year 11 English students, Mikayla C, has been short listed for the Whitlam Institute's annual writing competition, 'What Matters?'.

The competition, run out of Western Sydney University receives thousands of entries each year across Years 7-12. Mikayla's beautiful essay was a well-crafted and thoughtful reflection on following your dreams – a most deserving piece.

We are so thrilled for Mikayla and hope you enjoy reading her entry below.

Conscious Dreaming

Instruments of an antique apothecary, lined with crimson velvet. Small vials containing homeopathic antidotes no longer in use bordered the glass cabinets causing light to reflect into a kaleidoscope. Awe-inspired by a world of medical possibilities, my eyes observing the precision tools with curiosity and my hands leaving fingerprints as they pressed up against the glass. Though the uniform press of the light-warmed surface left my touch suspended at a distance, in it I could almost feel the stranger angles of cold metal tools.

A young mind pondered a world where she possessed the power to heal, the museum exhibition around her birthing an inner voice of passionate dreams and cold science.

Motivated by innocent childhood passion and the prospect of a future in a world unhindered by

worldly ambitions, children are encouraged to pursue their big dreams. The pop culture in which we have become submersed reminds us to follow our dreams, representing Disney's Moana, the individual who follows her heart against contrary societal pressure - a village turning its back on who they are as voyagers - and thereby healing the society of the darkness threatening it.

Such Romantic individualism is the source of the "follow your dreams" imperative - the worship of the true self. Moana was called by the sea and discovers "the call wasn't out there at all" but inside her.

However, classical literature, which we are taught alongside the message of the electronic babysitter, also proposes Romeo and Juliet, falling to their demise as a result of succumbing to their dreams. As the Friar advises the young lover Romeo, "these violent delights have violent ends", essentially serving as a warning for the tragedy associated with passionate pursuits.

If pop culture demonstrates juxtaposed outcomes of following our dreams, how do we determine which cultural message is ultimately right? We have absorbed mixed perceptions of these cultural messages, combining an inner voice that whispers both trust yourself... and don't.

I stared at the bare walls decorated with coloured impressions of tiny hands and feet, scanning the gentle smiles of faces that passed me as they swaddled tiny babies to their chests. I tilted my head upwards, gaining sight of the shuttered window. Through the horizontal slits of the shutter, I noticed the rays of fluorescent bili lights beaming through, putting my squinting eye to the glass window for greater vision. I sighted doll-like bodies wearing eye masks as I rested my hands against the perspex incubators which housed them.

But, what if I'm just a child envisioning a future through rose-coloured glasses? From the minute we enter the world, we are instilled with the phrase coined by Shakespeare, the world's our oyster and we are the pearl - clichè?

How can one know what to expect of the future as a child with an intangible dream? The inner voice born of our culture encourages us to be like Walt Disney, where "if you can dream it, you can do it". My inner voices whisper jump at the dream, but don't jump at shadows. Am I rationally irrational?

We are exposed to the shallow edge of the waters, happily wading along, encompassed in the waters of a bright future of our dreams. That is until, of course, we are exposed to the reality of our expectations... the real waters, where the sky meets the sea and completely departs from land.

My fingers streaked the glass as I traced the delicate outlines of the intricate tools, taking small steps towards the evolution exhibit. Mannequins of progressive development into rational humanity surrounded me, and yet, the traces of the passionate beast remain.

Here is a link to her entry <https://www.whitlam.org/what-matters-2021-shortlisted-entries/2021/8/5/conscious-dreaming>

Mrs Refalo and the English team.
