

Phoenix



Written by students for students

April 2022



A famous author once wrote that there are people in this world who start fires and people who put them out. The scenes currently unfolding on our television screens, news outlets and across the print media involving events in Ukraine should serve as a stark reminder to us of what we take for granted, what we would sacrifice, and ultimately what is worth fighting for. With upwards of 4 million refugees and families currently being displaced across much of Europe by the conflict, this generation will be defined by how events unfold over the coming days and months – especially as fires continue to burn on such an unimaginable scale.

All of the pieces of work in this issue have been inspired by themes of sacrifice, bravery and tolerance associated with conflict. Many thanks to all of the students who have contributed to this edition - if you would like to be part of the next one then email your article to j.bishop@cwlc.email.

Thanks for reading and we hope you enjoy the issue.

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Cover illustration by Molly Fenner (Year 11)

They Are Taking Us to Our Deaths

Awoken by vigorous shaking, my mother had tears streaming down her face while holding my sister close to her. “They’re here! They’re here!” She sobbed holding my hand close, I knew exactly who she was talking about. The Nazis. My mind went blank, was this really happening? I looked outside the already broken window, glass shards on the ground, pushed into a corner, the entire village were being taken. But to where?

Still holding my mother’s hand, I followed her out with my sister; there was a soldier, multiple in fact, grabbing my people by their limbs and throwing them into trains. Our screams could be heard from miles away, hopefully giving the village over enough time to escape this, this whatever this is. They were commanding us to go to different vehicles. Men one, women and children the other. We were in lines, my mother, sister, and I were shoved into one – no one complained about us cutting in, but they were more than happy to let us in front. Soon, we were nearing the trains, my mother turned to me and my sister looking us in the face and telling us;

“I want you to know, **they are taking us to our deaths.**”

My mother was grabbed by her hair and forcefully thrown into the back of the carriage of the train which was covered in dirt from the road – the pollution engulfing us. My sister was then thrown into my mother’s arms. I tried to run after them, but I held back by the soldiers, and the first one into the next carriage. I screamed out for my mother like an injured chick who had just fallen out of the nest, grabbing out for them, as their carriage was driven away from the village. I sobbed and sobbed and sobbed and sobbed...

“Oh dear, you’re crying.” My carer in the elderly home told me, as I looked at the television seeing the destruction in Ukraine. It’s happening again. History is repeating.

By Caitlin Prosser

The Hell We Live In

When biased leaders come into power,
War is always in the back of our minds,
But when it becomes a reality,
It feels like the worst thing in humankind.

In a world of horror and conflict,
Our hearts are filled with dread,
Because what will happen next,
Is impossible to be said.

With fear lingering in the air,
The mood is far from bright,
And when the future looks just as grim,
I only hope we'll be alright.

To try and escape this living hell,
People flee from near and far,
Mothers, fathers, wailing children,
By bus, by train, and even car.

I try to put on a brave face,
But on the inside, I am distressed,
Because if I give my humble opinion,
I could be facing arrest.

By Daisy Green

Dear diary,

Today has been another emotional, devastating and tiring experience. I can't describe the pain and hunger I and the other soldiers have to withstand. When will this end? When can all the political conflict just stop? Each day feels like a repeat of the previous. The awful conditions of the trenches like the squelchy mud hovering on the surface below your feet after a gloomy, rainy night and the constant burst of bullets dispersing into the enemies bases become a real struggle to adapt to. I spend most of my time writing letters to my family so that I let them know how I'm coping (even though I'm not always completely honest as I don't want them worrying about me). My lieutenant is a leader who is respected and has much knowledge in his strategies of the battlefield but he seems to emit quite a forlorn and miserable state of mind. Each day feels like a lifetime in the trenches and if you ask me all this politics nonsense is unnecessary and I find it outrageous it escalated to all this trauma. Anyways I better get on to completing my duties for today.....

By George McNamee

I've been stuck for what seems like weeks. A life without seeing civilization is one that no one should ever live through. The only people I see are the ones that I cautiously step over to make my way through the many fields that lay before me that have all witnessed the same tragedy that I have been pained to experience with them. The only thing that motivates me to stride onwards is the hope of finding someone else out there that can help me stop this dreadful and eventual demise. My stomach is continually empty having not eaten for days straight, my last ration being an unfortunate chicken that I ruthlessly murdered and ate raw to slightly satisfy the hunger of my stomach. My tongue is dry, and I have given up hope of the clouds above me sharing their contents which would surely quench my thirst and give me a better chance of survival. Many a bullet was fired the day I saw civilization and the chances of me writing this diary was low, but now, I feel regret as opposed to thankfulness as the pain that I am going through right now would hardly be worth the joy of life if I make it out alive. I have experienced many tragedies in my time, but nothing could ever come close to this. I lost friends who I had known for years in that struggle for survival that was forced upon all of us, and I now know how traumatic an experience can be when you lose a friend that you have shared many joyful memories with that would stay with you forever. I will never forget those who I have lost due to the reckless behaviour of human beings. Nothing I have ever experienced could ever prepare me for what I experienced that day. Nevertheless, I will keep walking and keep struggling in remembrance of those that I have witnessed the demise of, and I will go through all this for them. If I make it to tomorrow, I will try and write although the events that follow the dawn

will not be all that promising unless I finally get to my goal. I hope that it does come eventually and that I will live to see that blessed day.

By Aimee Lufkin

Dear diary,

I need to do this, not only for my country but for me. It's always been my dream and now it's real life I'm having second thoughts. I need to make my family proud, but I also want to be able to go back to them at the end of this and I just don't know if it will be possible. I don't want to run that risk; I want to make them all proud of me as they know this is something I have wanted to do since I was little.

I want to make myself proud. I want to be able to tell my family all about my experiences and what happened, even though I know not everything is going to be good, I want to be able to know that I put my all in for my country and did what I can for them and didn't back out of anything. Even if we do lose (I hope we don't) I know that I did what I could and that's all that I've ever wanted.

I think I need some time to think and convince myself this is the right decision for me as I'm here now and I don't want to back out. I'll be back tomorrow and hopefully I will be 100% that this is the right choice.

By Abbie Lane

Dear diary

It's a Month after the war, God knows how I've survived this life changing catastrophe. I've lost my home my belongings and myself. Its 2022, this shouldn't be happening. Today has been a long day; after 16 hours of travelling I've finally crossed the border to Poland. I have friends and family that have died and there's just me left - I'm worried sick I've never felt so alone in a country I don't know. This afternoon after being taken to a safe location, I entered a large cold room, all you can hear is coughs and crying, I have never felt so scared. I am taken to a bed and next to me is an elderly lady. Eventually she introduces herself to me, her name is Mary. She opens up to me straight away and we find comfort in each. We carry on chatting to what seems like hours almost trying to ignore everything which is happening around us. I hope I can get to sleep ok tonight and I don't hear planes flying over low, I hope I don't hear loud noises which sound like bombs dropping, I hope I don't hear screaming from other people, I hope I can sleep well enough to face tomorrow. I'd like to say good night for now and hopefully tomorrow is a better day.

Edith Parker

By Farrah Humphries

Dear diary,

I can't quite comprehend how long I have been inside hiding for my life. Darkness fills my mind when I hear screaming of suffering children and gunshots. I feel so alone. It's like nobody even cares when a bomb hits, they don't even flinch. I haven't eaten in days, throwing up whenever I do; I just want everything to go back to how it was last year. Playing hopscotch whilst the sun beams down on your face, laughing with friends, having a normal day down the streets.

Things are deteriorating for me, the Williams family are moving in tomorrow which leaves me cramped in a room with someone I hate. She has picked on me since I can even remember: pulling my pigtails, standing on the back of my shoe, laughing if I got a question wrong in class. It's never ending, like an ongoing cycle that just keeps repeating itself.

I have to go now, I am beside myself with sadness and sorrow. All the innocent lives being taken away, it's horrid!

Write again tomorrow, Thea.

By Thea Woodyatt

Blaring... it's another ear-piercing screech. Again, the sound of fatality had come back. It was time. Time for a chapter of blood, fighting and death. Watching your comrades fall like heavy rain, plummeting as they reach to grasp their last breath. The shed of a tear from a single comrade's family falling from someone's face can be how quickly another soldier will come to their end. I was armed with a gun, sweat trickling down my head, my arms numb from all the pain it caused me. Reluctantly, I shook my head. 'Forget about it' I thought. It's not easy. We stand then we fall. It was my time to defend my people and do something memorable to protect them. My heart skipped a beat, pulsating as I felt the blood rush through my veins at speeds of light. Fear bruised my brain and a sick feeling expanded in my throat. I must do something. My brother accompanied me firing the most accurate shots I have ever seen in my whole career. He was the best soldier in this field, very valiant and skilful. I could tell he needed assistance as he gave me an agitated side eye with a determined scowl.

This is it. Tears engulfed my eyes as I peeked from the unhygienic foul smell of the trench. I was ready to sacrifice myself for the comrades. It would give them the chance to shoot. I clambered out of the steep trench sprinting towards the opposite side, meandering as I go. I shot my bullets hitting about ten enemies, determination splayed across my face as I heard my fellow soldiers beckon my name behind me. Then a thought grew in my head. I couldn't turn back; it was too late. Suddenly, I sensed my stamina slowly decrease, my legs gradually cramping up the muscles tensing, generating mass amounts of pain as I staggered. I was the mouse to their mousetrap. I turn my head to face my comrades, they were staring, scowling as I resumed to run. They looked disappointed. Why? I turned my head to see a grenade, triggered, ready to blow lay at my feet. I paused then looked up to see the enemies, smug, pointing their guns at me like I'm their target training. I tried running but the cramp was getting extreme and worsening. I could only jog.

Then it hit me. The bullet piercing through my lower legs exposing a bloody mess and flesh hanging on. Is this how it ends? I collapsed crawling away from the grenade. Then he came sprinting. My brother, dived headfirst covering the grenade. GO! That's the last words I heard from him. I scrambled away as fast as I could. Then it blew. A bloody mess. My own brother. He died protecting his family and his country. What a legend he is, or should I say was. His flesh ripped exposing his organs, his arms and legs dissected from his body. I sprinted over. Salty tears drowned my face as I held the remains of what was meant to be his head. Sorrow overwhelmed me. Is this how a family feels if a comrade falls? My blood sweat and tears dropped onto his now deformed face. His duty here was done. He fulfilled his purpose to protect. Revenge filled my soul, but I couldn't do anything. I stood up; my arms open wide. We always stick together. No matter the circumstance. I just couldn't cope. I bellowed, "KILL ME THEN YOU FOUL MURDERERS, DO IT!" Their guns pointing at my head,

the sharp pierce of a bullet hit me in the forehead. I was dead. I didn't succeed my purpose, but I can live knowing my brother did and he will be remembered, and I will greet him with admiration in another life.

By Amelia Upfield

Dear diary,

It's 1939, the start of World War Two. I'm currently thirteen, I'm in an air road shelter as I'm writing this. I'm petrified for my life; this note is to show people in later generations what my life was like in a world war. The ear-piercing air raid sirens echoed in my head then the whistling of a bomb falling over took it. Everyone went silent waiting for the explosion of the bomb. Suddenly, a loud BOOM came from a few roads down, the bombs were getting closer and closer by the minute. No one dared to speak as we sat in silence waiting for more bombs to drop. We were all so hungry in our shelter but dared to go outside to gather more vegetables from the garden. But our stomachs rumbling was the least of our worries. Out of nowhere more whistling noises came from above, we all glued our eyes shut waiting for the drop of the bomb. BOOM, there it was, it was closer now only one road away from our shelter. A louder, most piecing noise startled us all. We all held hands until our fingers were purple. It hit next door and rattled our shelter. We were next...

By Emmie Happs

Chaos Central

W- When the bombs rained down,

A- Anyone and everyone ducked and dived.

R- Run faster they all screamed,

A- As the children began to cry.

N- Nobody was safe as the bombs fell from the sky.

D- Don't look back, just leave.

C- Chaos ensued, while fear began to set in.

O- One! One bomb was all it took, to take the life of many.

N- Now the war was over,

F- Fear no longer.

L- Loved ones taken by war,

C- Children, innocent children killed.

T- Today we remember their honourable fates.

By Hannah Baker

Dear Hyacinth,

I hate myself because I've lost you. We were so close yet so easily ripped apart from each other's arms. I will never forget your screams. They seem to haunt me. Those deafening alarms rip through my dreams and I wake with cold sweats, thinking of you. I dream of when we were separated, my arms like branches reaching out for you. The wind blew your hair and the current of people pulled you away from me. We were so close. Panicked screams of the people around us enveloped my shouts for you, I worry that you didn't hear me, I worry that I didn't scream loud enough, I worry about you. I'm now in a safe place, a refugee camp. What about you? It saddens me to think that you might still be there waiting for me, caught in the middle of a war; nowhere to go; no one to talk to; and afraid every time.

I made a friend. They're called Macy and they've just turned 8. We had no cake, or birthday presents but I made a promise- to keep them safe until they found their family. She is just as sweet as sugar and has the purest heart. Remember when we talked about having our own family and that you wished we could have a girl? I imagine that everytime I look at Macy, her smile just like yours. We're all the same where I am alone, sacred, hurt, tired. Painful, bruises and scratches decorate my body and I keep myself busy looking for you, seeing if we made it together. We fight away the night cold with warm tea and woolly blankets. It's selfish to think that even after I was in safe hands I still rather be with you than alone - even if we were stuck in the middle of the war. At least we would die together, knowing we still had each other in our arms. The wind whistles through the gaps of my tent and the cold seems to caress my face like how you would every night. A cold but warm hearted touch.

I wish to see you soon. I won't stop looking ever. Our refugee camp grows larger everyday and the new faces are never familiar. I often think that I should have spent more time with you than buried in the sea of work. I regret that everyday and I feel I've neglected you too much. I barely sleep now. I wonder if you can't sleep either. Do you think of me as much as I think of you?

I hope you're safe and I love you.

Yours forever,

Jeffery O'Brian

By Herveneil Ku Year

To My Dearest Family

Being out here is totally different to what it is like at home but I am still slowly getting used to it. Not having you all with me makes me feel alone and low spirited - the only thing I have left is a photograph of you all which I have tried to keep very safe. I have never put it down yet and I never will, it's always with me. I have made some friends who came in with me at the same time, so they take my mind off things back home and what I miss the most. I am out here to make you all proud and fight for our country, to prove that I am a brave person. I hope you're all doing well back at home and can keep up with all the work I left you to do. It's not the same waking up here to loads of sirens and having to quickly get up to go and fight but if that's what it takes to make people proud of me, I will do it. Waking up on the farm was peaceful and relaxing but there isn't any of that here. I hope I can come home soon and see you all but for now I will never know what the future will hold for me. I will continue to write to you when I receive letters from you all. I am always thinking about each and every single one of you. For now, it's goodbyes. I hope you're all keeping safe and continuing with your lives. I miss you all very much but nothing will change the situation we're in.

All my love,

Billy

By Jasmine Townsend

An anonymous Journalist in Syria

Dear diary,

Today has truly been the most depressing day of my life. I saw the true horrors of war whilst trudging through the ruins of the city I had seen looking so beautiful a few years ago in peacetime.

Dilapidated buildings surrounded me. The smell of burning lingered over the city. Clouds of smoke hovered above the rubble. Everywhere I looked, I saw terrified, melancholy people trying to find their precious possessions. How can people do this to what used to be such a beautiful city? As I stood there, tears had threatened to fall down my face like a waterfall.

Seeing this today has made me see that war has no benefits, only horrible consequences.

By William Atkins

Dear diary,

Its November 1923. It has been a few years since Jereld was gone, but I miss him every day. No matter how much I tried I could not get over it, I could not forget. The memories stuck to me, always looking over my shoulder.

Back when the Great War started, we were deployed together in battle in France. We were young at the time, early twenties yet so excited to face some action, together. I thought it would not last long, and it would be over for Christmas. When it ended, it took me a month to recover, having to face his family at Christmas, to tell them the news. That their son wasn't here, and never would be again. His empty stocking hung up on the fireplace, never to be filled with gifts.

I could tell he was nervous. While we waited in the trenches, for any sign of the enemies.

"Don't worry, I'll be there to make sure neither of us get injured." I reassured him, promising to keep him safe. I should've tried harder, done better. I could've been quicker. I promised him. I promised I would keep him safe, for his family, for his friends. For me.

"The battle will be over before Christmas!" I nudged his shoulder, chuckling. How clueless I was at the time. It wasn't until 6 months later. It was January. We were losing hope, it was our first Christmas without our family, yet his last Christmas altogether. It came unexpected, we were waiting in the trenches, a few soldiers were waiting with guns aimed to the outside.

"WATCH..." The words trailed off from the soldier. Soon all we heard was gunfire, they were attacking. Now. The sounds echoed in my head; I hear them every day. Every little noise brings me back to that day. We stood up, shooting back with our rifles, everything was going ok, the noises soon quieted down from across the no-mans-land. We were winning. We were winning, weren't we? Bang. I saw in the corner of my eye, the blood splatted on my shoulder. His blank eyes, staring at me, fear spread across his face as the blood trickled down from the bullet in his head, his mouth open as if he tried to scream, yet the only thing leaving his body was his soul. He dropped to the ground as soon as the bullets stopped... I never told anyone the story. No therapists or doctors could help me, they wouldn't know. They haven't seen what I've seen, the horrors I've experienced. So, these are my last words. Jereld was my best friend, like a brother to me. I never imagined a life without him, but now. Now I would be by his side again.

By Keavy Clare

A Soldiers Eyes

Sweat was dripping. Dripping ever so slowly, it was dripping down my back. I could feel my itchy clothes against my damp back. The anxiety of being here swarmed my mind, I couldn't see my target or the enemy lines. My hands shook rapidly. I wiped them aggressively on my cotton trousers. Trying my best to stop shaking. I breathed in through my nose raggedly and out through my mouth for 3 seconds.

I put my hands back on my rifle. Hands still shaky. But I couldn't ignore the angry barks from the officer any longer. I pulled the cold metal of the trigger and sighed with relief. It was done. But tomorrow I would have to do this again and the next day and the next day. This day would repeat itself again and again until none of us were left. The same anxiety, the same shaky hands, the same blurred vision, the same sweaty back. Over and over again. That was what my normal had become.

By Neve Bufton

I believe that no one can ever fully understand the horrors of war until they see it for themselves... from my experience anyway. Despite editing reports of war and filtering through war photos to decide which one would gain the most attention from viewers, nothing could have ever prepared me for what I saw that day. Nothing could ever compare to the destruction I saw, and the embarrassment I felt of the human race that dreadful day.

It was 15th April 2015. My management team had sent me off on a short flight into Scotland, where I would then catch a train to an area near the war. I remember approaching Dundee and hearing the gunfire from 2 miles away. I think that's when it hit me. This isn't some inhumane event that I was writing a story about; this was life and death, a report on horrific events happening in today's society. The ground began to get muddier the closer I got to the action, and my feet were reluctantly plodding along the path. Eerie gunshots filled the air, the smoke gradually filling my lungs too.

Finally, I reached the top of the hill I was climbing. It was higher up than the soldiers were, so it provided me with some safety, but was close enough for me to make a report on the conditions and events going on. I sat down on the rocks, and watched. I watched as bombs exploded and sent massive clouds of smoke and devastation drifting through the air; as a soldier watched his best mate pass away in the worst way imaginable, the pain trying to overcome him but failing as the barriers of war blocked the feelings of loss and tossed them away as irrelevant, for now. I watched as precious letters got ripped to shreds, torn apart by the horrible realities of war and as men gradually lost sight of the person they really are, becoming imprisoned to the duty they had been persuaded that they owed their country; their families turning to distant figments of the past - a happy memory just fading out of their minds. The constant noise of artillery guns going off provided some form of rhythm to an irregular situation. I hated watching the devastation occurring out of control.

As I was observing what went on in the frontline trenches, I saw a young boy, around the age of 16/17, shooting with a rifle at the approaching enemies. I heard a gruff voice echo around the trench walls shouting,

“Over the top, men. Let's kill them once and for all. “

This young boy scrambled up and set about shooting in all directions, attacking yet defending his young, innocent, helpless life, defending what he could have been, what he still could be, who his family knew and loved and the young man his fiancée had fallen in love with. Like all of the soldiers, he had become outwardly immune to the abominations of war, but I knew inside he was a terrified man as he bravely stepped out to fight for his country and his life. Within minutes, he was struck like lightning. He dropped to the floor to merge with mere dirt. All that he was, to so many people, had suddenly gone. All of his potential had just vanished in that split second as a bullet pierced through his head and through the young man he once was. That is the reality of war, what really happens at war and how terrible it is.

On coming home, I still could not fully comprehend what I had just experienced. Neither I, nor anyone who had not experienced that, could ever understand what really goes on in the battlefields of war. Despite understanding it better since my trip, I would never be able to fully understand the horrors of war. I've never had the experience of my friends suffering from PTSD, or dying tragically in front of me and having to just brush it off and get on with it.

When sorting through my photos of the trip, I found it incredibly hard to look at them again. I could see the pain in the soldiers' eyes, through their brave disguise. I decided I would not write a common article about what I saw in Dundee, because common would not do, and does not do war any favours. War shouldn't be common. War tears people apart, destroys homes and devastates everything in its path. Instead, when writing about my experience, I wanted to convey the reality of people and their families, because then more people can begin to comprehend how terrible war is and do everything in their power to prevent evil from thriving through war.

By Carla Shearman

The Lebanese Civil War, 13 Apr 1975 – 13 Oct 1990.

The sunlight highlighted the dust floating leisurely across the room. The signs of morning came in streaks of light coming from the windows above. I sat up in my bed, staring up at my family, none of them awake yet. The floorboards creaked as I shifted slightly on my mattress. Our country was war torn and the lives of the civilians across the nation would never be the same. It was not always like this. Our city, Beirut, had been a lovely place once, filled with sunny beaches and the sounds of the Mediterranean Sea rolling onto golden sands and, in the winter, our mountains were topped with a slight dust of snow. The once tourist-filled city, packed with bustling crowds, was now a wasteland ever since our country Lebanon was invaded. I looked across the dusty wooden room and my younger sister was slowly beginning to wake up. She was only 4 and had little understanding of what was going on.

Although it was hot, I could still feel a slight draft on me from a nearby window which had been blasted out by previous shells and left gaping holes in the side of the wall and the windows. We had little food left and my parents looked worn and beaten; my little sister began to cry. Abruptly, we smelt smoke and a faint smell burning tarmac. We knew the danger was nearby. We had not really prepared for an evacuation again; we had already fled the horrors of our old neighbourhood and tried to move to safety. I started trying to pack my things in a rucksack as my mother hurried me along. She handed me a bag and handed my sister a smaller bag. Then we rushed down the stairs towards the door. We heard sounds of people fleeing down the fractured pavement to get away from the gunmen.

“Quickly.” My mother shouted as she knew the shelling might start soon. We were desperate to get away. I tried swallowing my fear, but my heart drummed relentlessly with terror and my lungs were ready to burst as I ran. An old stand of fruit was turned over and it spilled apples and oranges all over the street. People were selecting ripe oranges and unbruised apples from the floor, in a desperate attempt to get free food.

Then the shells hit. I remember the road being torn apart by the falling shells and our house being destroyed. Splinters and fragments of wood, tarmac and gravel were thrown in the air. Fortunately, we were far enough down the street to not suffer any major injuries or die in this tragic accident. My father picked up my little sister, who was now crying again. Everything we had was lost. Steaks of tears glistened down me and my mother's cheeks. We knew that our safe place was gone and that it would be extremely difficult to seek another place of refuge.

By Charlotte Ciancio

I head down to the tornado shelter. As I slowly limp through the streets. Dried blood stains cover my half torn clothes. I am surrounded by innocent men barely clinging into their lives: missing limbs, bullets blown right through them. Men without the top halves of their body. And I can't do a thing to help otherwise I'll probably end up in the same state as them. I reach the entrance to the shelter. The only safe hidden place I can think of to hide. As I battle with the heavy door to open it I hear bangs and claps coming from nearby. I head into panic mode. Unable to lift the door with my possibly broken arm I scream at the door to get the attention of anyone down there. If anyone's down there. I can now hear planes overhead. The roar of the jet engines simulates the screams of death. Then I hear a car alarm go off in the distance as there is a short break of silence. Bang. A bomb had landed only a few blocks away. I am sent forward about a meter from the shockwave. About 2 minutes later I see the door of the hideout open and then 3 people come piling out to help me. They carry me down the stairs of the shaft and close the door, as we all hope to outwit the raging war in this small city.

By Aaron Cresswell



Thank you for reading – next issue out Summer 2022.

Have a great Easter.