



Whalley Range 11-18 High School

**Celebration:**  
*An Anthology of Student  
Writing*

June 2020

## **Imaan – Year 7 (Miss Cannan’s Class)**

### **A Golden Meal**

We were all sat at the table, the steamy smell of the food had called us. Around the table was a delicious splash of colour and flavour! I could hear some of the mouth-watering food still sizzling and popping from being fresh out of the kitchen. I joined the chatter and laughter on the table as more food kept coming. Finally, when everyone was seated at the table, it was time to eat. Everyone was piling their plates with the luscious food, chomping on the food.

It was finally time for my first bite; immediately I felt a rainbow of taste dancing on my tongue. The warm crispy pastries and the exquisite soup sent an amazing feeling through me. My elation was an unbearable gurgle in my stomach- I had never tasted anything like this!

I let out a squeal of delight. I immediately went to the creamy chestnut soup, crusty hot bread, and greens dressed in apples and pine nuts. Then came chicken pie, honeyed lamb, buttered carrots sprinkled with white beans. It was like a magical painting, with the delectable gold in front of us. We immediately started complimenting the chef (my mother) and finished the rest of our food. We ate like royalty until we were full. It was truly a golden meal!

## **Juliette – Year 8 (Miss Vickers' Class)**

### ***One for sorrow***

The day of my mother's funeral was a melancholy one. We all stood in black, as the priest droned on and on. A few people gave their touching tributes, and we laid flowers by her coffin. My six-year-old self didn't understand the need for such dreariness, so I asked my father about the point of such a ritual. "*A celebration of her life,*", he said.

### ***Two for mirth***

I remember my tenth birthday clearly. My five-year-old brother had snuck into the kitchen to eat my cake beforehand, and we'd caught him red handed with chocolate smears all over his face. We laughed for ages, eventually deciding to try our own hand at baking a birthday cake. Needless to say, it didn't go well. As my father tucked us into bed, I asked him why we had birthdays, and why they weren't just like any other day of the year. "*A celebration of passing time,*", he said.

### ***Three for a wedding***

My father's second wedding was beautiful. Me and my brother helped with the decorations, and we greeted the guests as they arrived. It was a beach venue, and the weather remained perfect for the whole ceremony, almost like a sign of the happy marriage. Before he got in his car to leave for his honeymoon, I asked him why we had weddings. "*A celebration of love,*", he said.

### ***Four for a birth***

No one was happier than I was the day my half-sister was born. I'd always wanted a little sister anyway. I remember holding her, a small, fragile thing, yet a whole life in my arms. We decided to name her Lily, after my mother's favourite flower. When we were allowed to bring her home, we threw a small party, and as per tradition, I asked my father why. He smiled. The first, genuine smile I'd seen in a long time. "*A celebration,*" he said, "*of a beginning, and an end*".

## **Maria – Year 8 (Miss Hollingworth’s Class)**

The sun kissed their sleeping faces, trying to wake them up for the day that they love. One awoke, from the beautiful sunlight with a smile appearing on his lips, remembering that today is the day. So, he straight away, ran to his parents’ bedroom, where they were peacefully sleeping away. He was so excited, that he could not wait any longer. So, without a second thought, he went and started jumping on his parents’ bed trying to wake them up, thinking to himself that it was the best way. They opened their eyes to see what was going on, but their eyes could not take it any longer and they went back to sleep. Their son was not giving up at all, as he wanted the victory of waking up his parents for this day. He had to continue jumping. This time they had to wake up, as even the alarm clock was on their son's side by going off.

When they finally all got ready for this special occasion, they set off to his Grandma and Grandpa's house. They all have not seen each other for a long time, and on this day they all get together with all their friends and family. As it was a pleasant day outside, the trees were dancing in the breeze and the skies were baby-blue. Everyone spent their time in the garden, catching up with each other and the children playing together. It was a nice day full of warmth and laughter. As few hours passed, a bouncy castle was filled with air by the grandparents. All this was a surprise to everyone there, the children were jumping in delight!

## **Amna – Year 8 (Miss Vickers' Class)**

Celebration.

What is it?

Is it being happy for something?

Or is it not wanting it to end?

Is it preservation?

Or is it desperation?

Is it the beauty of the sun rising?

Or is it the ache of the set?

Are you happy because it happened,

Or are you clinging to a thread?

Is it the day one was born,

Or a year closer to death?

So, I ask you, friends,

What are you celebrating?

Why are you living in a moment, when there are more to be had?

## Zainab – Year 9 (Miss English's Class)

Woken by an indignant ray of sunlight pleading for me to wake up as the most blessed day has finally come upon us. A day where we can spend time with our loved ones paying tribute to each other for accomplishing a great deed. But most importantly thanking the most gracious, the most merciful for helping us through this immense time and forever lead us to path of success and prosperity.

A huge smile plastered on my face knowing it's time to celebrate but within a second it dropped down to my heart knowing that a nefarious creature destroyed this world apart.

A tear uncontrollably drops like the world is constantly giving up lives. It is heart-breaking knowing that many cannot enjoy and cherish this day that is supposed to be full of joy and happiness, nor you nor I would have seen this coming, but I kept a smile up knowing that they are in very good hands. I pray that everyone who has sacrificed their lives for us, will rest forever peacefully. I wipe the remaining tear replacing it with an uplifting ray of positivity not knowing what was about to come my way.

My eyes begin to slowly close as I feel a slight sensational breeze of sweet and savoury dishes. This aromatic smell of delicious food being cooked drifted across the room to me allowing a sense of joy grow upon the darkness that appeared to me, yet satisfaction is all that came to mind at this point. It swiftly travelled from downstairs plunging its way through the house becoming more and more pungent as time goes by. We put on our best suits covering every colour of the rainbow.

But more importantly, the colours represent each and every one who cannot celebrate this special here with us ...

## Alaa – Year 9 (Mr Stoker’s Class)

From cleaning and decorating the house, cooking all the food, and buying new clothes. All preparations for the lunar new year are finally complete! Its tradition to write rhyming couplets (春莲 “Chūn lián”) here’s the one that I wrote, I translated it so you can treasure this message too.

「冬去山川齐秀丽、春来桃李共芬芳」

「Winter ends with a beautiful mountain and river landscape,

Spring starts with the fragrance of peaches and plums」

I usually write different rhyming couplets every year. However, I really liked this, because it hints that after a cold and dead winter, there will be a beautiful spring, like a new start. But I do think that winter holds a beauty of its own, it may be cold and lifeless, but it's also pure. It lets us make mistakes to learn from, and therefore have a new start and improve. Right now, winter has passed, and spring is about to start. In a few hours the new year will start, and the celebration will begin!

While we were preparing for the new year, I never really took time to look around. I was so busy; it felt like it was never going to come. But now that everything is ready, my mind is racing and remembering all the forgotten memories of previous years. When we were younger, we used to sit around and tell stories on Chinese mythology. The most famous story that you probably know of, is the Chinese zodiac. Where the Jade emperor, who is said to be the ruler of heaven, decides to give the animals a year of their own. There are a few different versions of the story of how the animals got into the order they are now. As a child, I was really sad to know that in almost every story, the cat was betrayed by the rat, and never made it in the zodiac... *almost...* In the Vietnamese zodiac, the rabbit is replaced by the cat. Because the word for ‘rabbit’ in Chinese, sounds like the word for ‘cat’ in Vietnamese. So, in other words, there was a mistake in translation.

There are so many lights outside, mostly red and yellow ones. When they are far away, they almost look like fireflies. And there's a strong scent of food on the streets too. On the main street, people are selling food, candy, toys and zodiac figures in little stalls that look like tents. Little children running around, playing with each other, with wide innocent smiles. The sounds of laughter, music and even the sizzling sound of frying, your scenes become sharper, and your able to pick these sounds up. Even when you look around, the colours around you become richer and more vibrant. There's an old woman selling books in one of those tent stalls. The books were stories about Chinese and Japanese mythology. (China really influenced Japanese writing, culture, religion and philosophy. Japan also took over a fraction of China in the 19 hundreds) One of the books that she sold was titled 招き猫 “maneki neko” “beckoning cat” (I started learning Japanese a few months ago, now I can read both hiragana and katakana script).

The story of the lucky cat is that there was a samurai seeking shelter from the storm. He decided to sit underneath a tree, and wait for the storm to pass. He then saw a cat waving to him, as if it wanted the him to follow it, so the samurai decided to go into the storm to follow it. Moments later, lightning struck the tree, causing it to crash down. After that the cat was thought to bring good fortune and cast away evil, received the name lucky cat, and made its way to Japanese mythology. After I was told about this story, I always thought that the beckoning cat was the very same cat in the zodiac. The twelve animals in the zodiac only bring good luck to the people on their year, however, the cat brings great fortune all the time... of course, both of the stories are based on two different mythologies, so it's very unlikely that they are both the same cat. I can only hope they are, and that the cat lived the rest of its life in happiness.

I ended up not buying the book. I was walking around, and it was so busy, I couldn't find the old lady again.

Having a meal with your family inside is really important. It's a contrast from the loud and busy outside, yet you still feel the same amount of nostalgia. The people you've been with for so long, are sitting with you sharing memories, and spending the new beginning each other. The colours are also different; you have a single white light above, instead of warm coloured ones all around you. The surroundings are all in gentle colours, rather than saturated ones. The scent of food is still strong, but it's more comforting and familiar to you. None of my family are interested Japanese mythology and language like I am, so I had a very hard time to continue learning it when I was very. There were times when I just wanted to give up because I knew I'd never get to the end of it. But then I remember just how far I've come, even if I started to learn at a slower rate, I'm still learning! I've learnt this new kanji, and I wanted to share it with you. 感謝 'Kansha' means to be thankful. 感 'kan' means feeling, 謝 'sha' means thank.

Since it's a new year, maybe I should start teaching them a few things I already know, and who knows, someone might also be interested in Japanese language.

As much as you want to make time stop, it can only go forward. And what's left of the joyful experience, is just memories that will soon fade, like the cruel winter has just begun. But then again, the fact that the forgotten memories will flow back in next year, makes it much more exciting. The celebration still hasn't ended yet, we still have an hour left, but I couldn't help but think about what I would be left with once spring begins.

Right now, I'm setting up my lantern. We usually write wishes on our lanterns, but I decided to right a message instead. I know it's a bit childish, but you only get this opportunity once a year.

I let my lantern fly, and now I'm watching all the other lanterns from my window. In a few minutes, the day will end, and a new year will begin.

When I went to my room to see the rest of the lanterns, I was pretty surprised to see a figure of the maneki neko and the story book on the windowsill. I'm sure my friend's the one who bought it, she, too, knows about my absurd hypothesis. I'll be sure to thank her



Letting the lantern go, almost felt like your letting go of all your troubles and worries of the previous year.

...I may not know much about you, but I want you to feel what I'm feeling right now, a feeling that only comes once a year, your scenes become sharper, and you feel like you're in a dream, but once that feeling is over, you become calm and everything around you becomes quiet. When you wake up, your life is back to the way it was, all the memories of that day almost fade into nothing. ...Almost...

I took the picture below, maybe you can find a message to treasure within it.



「お元気、招き猫？」

「貴方お信頼しています」

[Are you doing well, lucky cat?

I believe in you]

## **Rabia – Year 10 (Miss Melvin’s Class)**

### **Eid Mubarak**

The hustle and Bustle of Eid Morning began as the aroma of sweet treats filled the air, and a warm feeling of comfort and joy spread through the city, everything seemed just right. The sky had an enchanting display of warm tones that danced and intertwined together effortlessly, leaving the sunrise to add the finishing touches of a glorious breath-taking gold.

The boys were either dressed in stunning suits or traditional Kurtas, looking their very best. Leaving them was a strong scent of Oud, Musk and Jasmine as they walked by. Smirks covered their faces, as all of them were eager to start some pranks, as they hid water balloons in their cars!

The girls were rushing to look their very best on this day too, each helping one another with hair and makeup; glitters and sparkles covered the floor and so were hair straighteners and curling irons. Red lipstick would be dabbed on the youngest’s cheeks to enhance their natural rosy colour, and so symbolise good health, enhancing their natural blush. Their dresses were handmade and were all vibrant and beautifully embroidered, made from the finest of silks. They looked elegant and radiant. From the country they came from the colours they wore symbolised something unique for each of them: green, red, pink, blue- royalty, joy, celebration and confidence. Eid was a day of great celebration and spreading of Joy. Everyone looked as if they were royals, all dressed to their finest and wearing beaming smiles, illuminating from them was excitement and delight.

As the men came back from Eid prayer, words of kindness were shared between the neighbours "Eid Mubarak!" "Have a wonderful day!" giving off a sense of acceptance and appreciation. As they walked in the little ones would rush to the door and start running and screaming around their legs demanding their Edie (Eid money) and their presents "Edie!" "Edie!" their little voices would say, once satisfied they would sit down together in a corner and leaving little giggles of excitement as they would play with their new gifts and nibble on some sweets. This made the uncles and Dads happy and at peace leaving comforting smiles and sharing small comments of gratitude with one another.

The older women had been cooking all morning and had displayed a grand feast for all the family, exotic, flavoursome and exquisite dishes covered the table as everyone gathered round and took a seat, the intense aroma made everyone’s mouth water and were eager to taste the delicious display in front of them. But before they ate everyone bowed their heads and made a prayer of peace, hope and blessings and showed gratitude for the ladies who spent so much time preparing the meals. As soon as the prayer was over everyone started tucking in. They loved the food, the spices and flavours were complimenting one another, as they worked perfectly together creating a ravishing taste making their taste buds content and pleasantly surprised. Soon enough everyone was satisfied and full. The remaining food was handed out to the less fortunate and other friends and family members, in hope of spreading the message of Eid.

The rest of the day was filled with everyone sitting together and singing songs as well as applying and trying out different henna designs. The elders would discuss how Ramadan went, and everyone would exchange gifts and hugs and would also try out an array of marvellous sweets and pastries. Everything was just as it should be. The day ended with final hugs and goodbyes, as the sun slowly started setting, leaving an illustrious and calming amber sunset. Everyone was in awe of how perfect the day went. Eid was always a pleasure and every time it came around, it would leave an aura of unconditional kindness, love and peace.

Eid Mubarak.

## Hafswa – Year 10 (Mr Parker’s Class)

Hues of amethyst glaze the walls of the capacious and rather opulent dining room. Silk curtains frame the bay window proudly. The sun sneaks in, bathing the floor in a warm honey-like glow. The modern mahogany furniture lays harmonious with the light atmosphere of the room. Above the room's centre hangs a cloud of intricate, iridescent and ornate crystals (bought in advance for this year's Eid celebration). The warm glow emitted from the chandelier soaks the room, illuminating the dining table where the feast is just about to begin.

The air is laced with smells that speak of grandma's kitchen, igniting fond memories of the past. Huge platters of mouth-watering food plaster the seemingly large table. This attracts a small crowd of young children, some of whom are drooling in anticipation. Several families gather around the table, their voices overlapping as they mingle with each other. Small flimsy hands begin to loom over the large array of food as the children incessantly point and loudly inform their parents of what they would like to eat. The voices begin to simmer down as the lunch begins, with small bursts of chatter here and there.

The table is soon cleared of its contents and replaced by several decadent desserts. Cake crumbs and smears of milk chocolate icing are all that's left of the chocolate fudge cake after being devoured in mere minutes. After the celebratory feast, everyone retires to the similarly elegant living room to gift the unsuspecting children with much-loved presents. As the sun begins to set the younger children excitedly play with their new toys and shrieks of joy and delight mingle with the music whilst the adults rest and reminisce with their friends.

## **Eryn – Year 11 (Miss Walker’s Class)**

There is a certain feeling of contentment when you enjoy even a simple meal with the ones you love. A satisfaction that you hold on to in the of worst times, reminding you that there is light in your life.

There is a buzz of sound in the room as if all the greetings are creating a melody. Each acting with each other in harmonies to write a piece of music: a rhythm is established as people bestow their love to everyone, a beat of handshakes and hugs longed for since the last meeting and the rise and fall of laughter, reflecting the fondness you share. The chatter of love wishing fades to silence as you once again become known with one and other and take your seats at the table.

Each bowl is different. Mismatched yet beautifully painting a scene of celebration across the table. You see the scratches and stains, many times scrubbed but they are palimpsest and remind you of the many meals you have shared with each other. Small paintings of flowers and spices decorate the edges of the food, framing it and allowing all to see the dishes as art, which have been passed down and now grace your meal.

As copious amounts of food are piled on plates you smell the fruits of their labour. The spices of each dish that perfectly compliment that of the others, coming together and making bursts of energetic flavours that dance on your taste buds and fall down your throat before settling in your stomach as you sigh with happiness. You can taste the hours spent and love that was put into what you devour, yet your plate seems ever full. Only sounds of happiness interrupt the soft silence that encapsulates you.

Eyes strain themselves to stay open as the food hits you like a blanket, taunting you with sleep. Children begin to fade and rest their small heads on relatives, offering their love in return for a shoulder. Adults lower their voices allowing them to sleep as they discuss and dispute their latest interests, being careful not to allow debates to develop into heated arguments.

You just sit. Soaking up the love that has filled room, taking time to give thanks that you have your family and that you are lucky enough to see them every now and then. Then with full stomachs and hearts, each person departs with enough happiness, and food, to last until the next gathering, when you will be blessed with being able to endure this again.

## **Fatimah – Year 11 (Miss Nilu’s Class)**

### **Celebration**

Today has finally arrived; the day that may take out the chaos that has been riding our lives since the start of this world pandemic.

Streaks of sunlight penetrated the floral curtain hanging elegantly and stroked the plain bedroom walls, the birds whistled in harmony- their voices soft against the summer breeze. Excitement pulled open my eyes, I stretched my arms as far as I possibly could to rid of all the tiredness that still lay within me from the lengthy night’s sleep and hauled myself out of bed.

Steadily pulling open the curtains made me appreciate the world of nature that stretched itself behind the glass; the flowers lay flamboyant, each taking their individual spaces along the trees and across the grass, trees of various heights and shades of green stood tall and anchored themselves along the edges of the wooden fence. Swaying grass disseminated through the soil while the insects hovered around it peacefully, confident no one will be there to crush their miniscule bodies accidentally as they’re traipsing through. As the twilight transforms into a stunning sunrise, the golden ball high in the sky shines whilst the soft, white clouds stretched out sporadically.

To my left, my new Eid clothes waited for me- they had been ordered online and were delivered swiftly by courageous Amazon workers, who risked their lives to deliver felicity at everyone’s doorsteps. Without wasting any more time, I put the new Eid clothes on and twirled in them in front of the mirror. Gazing into my reflection, I was able to anticipate the beginning of an amazing day ahead.

Filled with dynamism, I rushed downstairs to see the living room utterly transformed: everything was spotless. Hoping to find the missing puzzle piece to the most mysterious thing that has ever happened during this lockdown, I sauntered into the kitchen- a lovely face as tender as the flush of a rose leaf and as ethereal as the light of a solitary star glanced back at me. My mum was baking delectable sweets and pastries for the event later on in the day; I didn’t hesitate to help her. Like a speech, her smile softly filled the silence while I reflected on how considerate my mum had been for all my life.


As soon as the batter was securely placed into the oven, the tantalizing fragrance of the food began to circulate in the kitchen, then, made its way to the rest of the house- it was very effective in waking everybody else up. After a few short moments, everyone was on their feet; we all assisted each other in arranging the house, ready for the afternoon and evening events.

Primarily, we began by reflecting on our feelings of gratitude for this day- the fact that we have finished fasting the month of Ramadan; this gave us an exceptional sense of accomplishment. Not only have we learnt self- discipline by only eating at certain times, albeit it has also helped us to comprehend the ways that the less privileged live in. during this time, it’s especially crucial that everyone feels more united in light of this situation.

Being driven by this powerful predilection to succour others; I grabbed the iPad. My fingers carried out a diminutive dance, whilst hovering over the surface of the screen, in order to find their phone numbers.

Halfway across the world, my grandparents picked up their phones- I assembled the iPad at the centre of the table, they did the same. When my dad began to ask how they were, I witnessed the smile that grew on their faces- I felt accomplished. While my grandad was replying, we were enjoying our favourite food; a great sense of satisfaction filled me that I was able to share this experience with them despite the oceans and continents that separated us physically. Throughout the rest of the phone call, we conversed about all the time we spent carrying out our favourite hobbies, the appetising food we were consuming and the way we are going to spend the time left of today. Then, we ended the call by sending our love and waving them goodbye- I watched the map of wrinkles on their faces, which told the most incredible journeys, fade back into the device.

Music poured into my ears as my brother blasted it on full volume; we celebrated with our neighbours for the rest of the evening. In spite of the friendly atmosphere in the house, this Eid was certainly not the same. Nonetheless I was appreciative that we were still able to celebrate and meet up with the people we loved. Whether it's a lockdown or an exam, Eid will always go on.



*Thank you to everyone who participated  
for your wonderful contributions.*

*Special thanks and congratulations must  
go to Imaan, Juliette, Maria, Amna,  
Zainab, Alaa, Rabia, Hafswa, Eryn and  
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