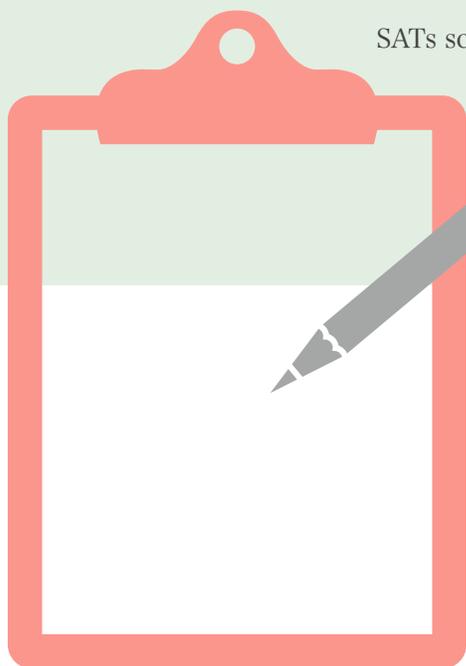


Hello everyone! It's me again, Kelly, from Exploring College. Is there anything specific you want to see in our next edition of the newsletter? Are you interested in writing a column? Feel free to email me at [exploringcollege@vassar.edu](mailto:exploringcollege@vassar.edu) with any comments, suggestions or questions! In the meantime, enjoy our latest edition!

## What's going on with the SATs?

COVID-19 has thrown a lot of plans off-track and created issues that many people were not anticipating. This uncertainty has led to widespread confusion and constant change. For high schoolers, not only is your schooling experience a whole new world, but so are standardized tests. Though it keeps changing every day, here is what we know about plans for SAT and ACT tests in the face of COVID-19.



SATs scheduled for March and May were both cancelled and the April 4th ACT was rescheduled to June 13th. As of now, all June tests are set to go on as normal. If anything changes, the best way to stay updated is to check College Board's SAT webpage and act.org (see links in box to the right).

Students who had signed up for a cancelled or rescheduled test date should receive refunds for their registration fees.

With all these changes, it's also important to know how this has impacted the admission's side of things.

In response to cancelled standardized tests and general instability, some colleges have adjusted their admission policies and decided to waive test scores for 2020-2021. This will most directly impact current juniors. If you already have a college list, look up the schools you are interested in to see if they have moved to a test optional model. That being said, not all colleges will follow suit and it's best to keep your options open. SAT scores are also sometimes used for scholarship opportunities, so don't count standardized tests out entirely. Hopefully colleges and scholarships will become more flexible in regards to standardized tests, but in the meantime it is best to continue studying and imagine you will be able to take a test in the summer or fall.

If you are a sophomore or first-year, your SATs will (hopefully) not be impacted. If you haven't really started studying for the SAT/ACT, this would be a great time to do so! There are lots of free practice tests online, but Khan Academy also offers practice plans that are personalized to your needs along with test-taking tips! The link is below in the box.

### SAT Updates:

<https://pages.collegeboard.org/sat-covid-19-updates>

### ACT Updates:

<https://www.act.org/content/act/en/covid-19.html>

### Free Test Prep:

<https://www.khanacademy.org/sat>

## Book Club!

April is National Poetry Month! For this edition of our Book Club, we included a variety of poetry. The fun thing about poetry is that there is no one way to write it. Check out these examples to see just how different poetry can be! I also included a bit of background about the different poets below.

We couldn't do National Poetry Month without including Emily Dickinson. She holds a special place in my heart because she is from the same town I grew up in: Amherst, Massachusetts! I included one of her most famous poems (that I think is particularly meaningful given what's happening in the world) and a second poem that beautifully describes a sunset.

The next poem is particularly interesting because it wasn't written by a "poet" per se. In fact, it wasn't written by one person either. This poem was written collaboratively, by students just like you! A 9th grade English teacher in Pennsylvania asked his students to write about their experiences with social distancing. Using only their words, he arranged lines and stanzas to capture a shared experience. Pretty cool!

Reading poetry aloud breathes new life into the words. The next two poems are by Sarah Kay (the second one is co-written with Phil Kaye), who is known for spoken word poetry. You can read it off the page, but it is really captivating when you hear her read it. I linked a TedTalk below where she reads the first poem ("B") along with a few others and talks about her own experiences that led her to where she is now.

Here is the link: [https://www.ted.com/talks/sarah\\_kay\\_if\\_i\\_should\\_have\\_a\\_daughter#t-286551](https://www.ted.com/talks/sarah_kay_if_i_should_have_a_daughter#t-286551)

The last poem is by someone you might recognize, but maybe not for his poetry. Lin-Manuel Miranda is best known for his musical, Hamilton. Lyrics are another form of poetry, so it's no wonder he writes so many beautiful verses. He started posting short poems at the beginning and end of each day to his twitter account. People enjoyed these words of inspiration so much that he compiled these tweets into a book titled Gmorning, Gnight! If you like the one included here, you can find lots of others on his twitter and he still posts new ones!

Also, if you read last week's story (The Story of an Hour), check out this podcast! Our director, John Bradley, sent it to me after reading the story because it echos some of the same sentiments, even though it was created almost 130 years later!

<https://www.thisamericanlife.org/692/the-show-of->



## Mentor Spotlight!

### Featuring: Iris!

For our second spotlight, we're featuring one of our mentors, Iris! Iris is a first-year psychology major at Vassar from Las Vegas, Nevada. She is an excellent artist and enjoys drawing, which she has been doing a lot of during quarantine. She's also been using this time to learn to cook more recipes and play Plants vs. Zombies. Her favorite place is the beaches in Los Angeles. A fun fact about her is that she has lived in 21 different houses!

## What are you reading?

Are you reading (or re-reading) something interesting? Share your thoughts and write a short summary for us to add to our newsletter! This new column will be a place to hear about what we've been reading while staying in place. Our first entry is from John Bradley, the director of Vassar College Urban Education Initiative. Check it out!

I was lucky to be able to get to the Vassar Library on the day it closed and take out a few books that I took randomly from the front browsing section. I just finished reading one of them - "Solitary" by Albert Woodfox who spent more than 40 years in solitary confinement in the Angola Prison in Louisiana. The events described in the book - a broken criminal justice system and disregard for basic human rights took place in our country in recent times. Mr Woodfox was released in 2016 and his conviction for the murder of a prison guard was vacated.

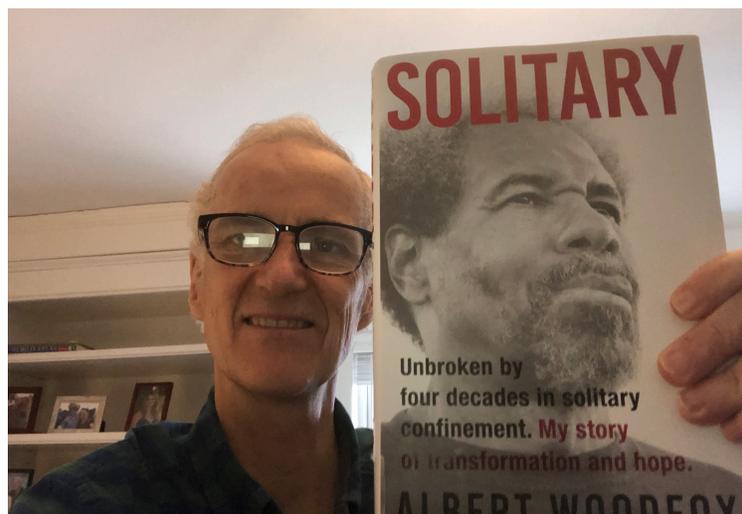
I learned more about solitary confinement and its effect on prisoners and the threats to mental health imposed by such a punishment and I also learned that the US is behind

much of the world in recognizing the severe nature of this punishment with nearly 80,000 prisoners in

solitary confinement on a daily basis in 2014. Mr Woodfox's memoir also brought home the daily struggle of someone who is confined to a cell for 23 hours a day.

Many of the prisoners described in the book were unable to cope with the mental stress of the punishment and suffered severe mental health trauma. How did the author survive the 40 years and live to see freedom and write a book? It's an amazing tale of human determination and hope. The author and two other prisoners found solidarity through the Black Panther Party and dedicated themselves to education of others, solidarity among the prisoners, and activism. The book is a reminder that unique people can rise above extreme circumstances and educate others about the need for change.

—John Bradley



## Writing prompts

April is National Poetry Month! I challenge you to respond to the one of prompts this week by writing a poem! Another cool idea would be to take a piece of writing you did in the past and rewrite it as a poem. Have fun with it, poetry is cool because it's so flexible!

### 1. Opinion:

Is the college admissions process fair?

### 2. Personal:

How is COVID-19 affecting your life? What has it made you realized about yourself?

### 3. Creative

You have wings. Write what you would do with them.

# FAIRY TALES

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O	V	E	N		O	C	E	A	N		O	H	I	O
H	A	R	E		S	T	U	N	G		H	A	N	S

Emily Dickinson

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -  
That perches in the soul -  
And sings the tune without the words -  
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -  
And sore must be the storm -  
That could abash the little Bird  
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chillest land -  
And on the strangest Sea -  
Yet - never - in Extremity,  
It asked a crumb - of me.

--Emily Dickinson

She sweeps with many-colored brooms,  
And leaves the shreds behind;  
Oh, housewife in the evening west,  
Come back, and dust the pond!

You dropped a purple ravelling in,  
You dropped an amber thread;  
And now you've littered all the East  
With duds of emerald!

And still she plies her spotted brooms,  
And still the aprons fly,  
Till brooms fade softly into stars -  
And then I come away.

--Emily Dickinson

Collaborative Poem written and revised by over 100 high school freshmen in Pennsylvania,  
fused and arranged by their teacher, Brett Vogelsinger.

### Distance

It feels as though the world has stopped.

I more time, like a long weekend  
with my family,  
a blizzard without snow,  
but I am hopeful this routine will break  
and give way  
to another one.

School was not that fun, but I miss it,  
wishing for those days  
to come fill up my time.

I'm like a tiger waiting, pacing in its cage.

I want freedom from the loneliness of  
FaceTime,  
the lucid prison of Netflix and Xbox,  
the turquoise trap of this couch,  
the melancholy gaming,  
and restless silence.

I want the semblance of normality.

I sleep more,  
hours as empty as supermarket shelves.  
The virus screams  
through the black screen in my palm  
when I wake.

But then music buds in my ears.  
The sun shines today.

Breathe in.  
Breathe out.  
Head up.  
Shoulders back.

Sometimes it's good  
to take a step back  
to lift your foot off the pedal

to slow down the high-speed life  
you've ridden  
to take the cards  
you've been given  
and be happy.

Every decision we make  
is something new.  
I learn to bear  
the smell of bleach,  
the Earth's cry,  
the interminable confinement.

In my house, I thought I knew silence,  
And yet it was never really with us.

Sarah Kay

**“B” (If I Should Have a Daughter)**

If I should have a daughter, instead of mom, she's going to call me Point B,

because that way she knows that no matter what happens,  
at least she can always find her way to me.

And I am going to paint the Solar Systems on the backs of her hands,  
so she has to learn the entire universe before she can say 'Oh, I know that like the back of my  
hand'

And she's going to learn that this life will hit you,  
hard,  
in the face,  
wait for you to get back up, just so it can kick you in the stomach  
but getting the wind knocked out of you is the only way to remind your lungs how much they  
like the taste of air.

There is hurt, fear that cannot be fixed by band aids or poetry  
so the first time she realizes that Wonder Woman isn't coming  
I'll make sure she knows she does not have to wear the cape all by herself  
because no matter how wide you stretch your fingers,  
your hands will always be too small to catch all the pain you want to heal.

Believe me, I've tried

And baby, I'll tell her, don't keep your nose up in the air like that  
I know that trick, I've done it a million times  
You're just smelling for smoke so you can follow the trail  
back to a burning house so you can find the boy who lost everything in the fire  
to see if you can save him.

Or else find the boy who lit the fire in the first place to see if you can change him  
But I know she will anyway, so instead, I'll always keep an extra supply of chocolate  
and rainboots nearby.

Because there is no heartbreak that chocolate can't fix.  
Ok, there's a few heartbreaks that chocolate can't fix,  
but that's what the rainboots are for because rain will  
wash away everything if you let it.

I want her to look at the world through the underside of a glass bottomed boat  
To look through a microscope at the galaxies that exist on the pinpoint of a human mind  
Because that's the way my mom taught me.

That there'll be days like this  
that there's be days like this my mama said  
When you open your hands to catch, and wind up with only blisters and bruises.  
When you step out of the phone booth and try to fly

And the very people you want to save are the ones standing on your cape  
When your boots will fill with rain and you'll be up to your knees in disappointment  
and those are the very days you have all the more reason to say thank you

because there's nothing more beautiful than the way the ocean refuses to stop  
kissing the shoreline no matter how many times it is sent away.

You will put the win in winsome ... lose some  
You will put the star in starting over and over.

And no matter how many landmines erupt in a minute  
be sure your mind lands on the beauty of this funny place called life.  
And yes, on a scale from one to overtrusting, I am pretty damn naive.

But I want her to know that this world is made out of sugar.  
It can crumble so easily.  
But don't be afraid to stick your tongue out and taste it.  
Baby, I'll tell her, remember your mama is a worrier  
and your papa is a warrior.

And you're the girl with small hands and big eyes who never stops asking for more.  
Remember that good things come in threes and so do bad things and  
always apologize when you've done something wrong

but don't you ever apologize for the way your eyes refuse to stop shining,  
your voice is small but don't ever stop singing.

And when they finally hand you a heartache,  
when they slip war and hatred under your door and offer you handouts on street corners  
of cynicism and defeat, you tell them that  
they  
really ought to meet your mother.

## When Love Arrives

(co-written by Sarah Kay and Phil Kaye)

I knew exactly what Love looked like ... in 7<sup>th</sup> grade.

Even though I hadn't met Love yet, if Love had wandered into my home room I would have recognized him at first glance – Love wore a hemp necklace.

I would have recognized her at first glance – Love wore a tight French braid.

Love played acoustic guitar, and knew all my favorite Beatles' songs.

Love wasn't afraid to ride the bus with me.

And I knew I just must be searching the wrong class room, just must be checking the wrong hallway.

She was there, I was sure of it.

If only I could find him.

But when Love finally showed up – she had a bull cut!

He wore the same clothes everyday for a week.

Love hated the bus.

Love didn't know anything about the Beatles.

Instead, every time I tried to kiss Love, our teeth got in the way!!!

Love became the reason I lied to my parents. I'm going to Ben's house.

Love had terrible rhythm on the dance floor but made sure we never miss a slow song.

Love waited by the phone because she knew if her father picked up that'd be "Hello" ... "Hh.." "Hello?" "Hh..." "I guess I'd hang up."

And Love grew.

Stretched like a trampoline.

Love changed.

Love disappeared, slowly, like baby teeth.

Loosing parts of me I thought I needed.

Love vanished.

Like an amateur magician everyone could see the trapdoor but me.

Like a flat tire – there were other places I had planned on going.

But my plan didn't matter.

Love stayed away for years.

And when Love finally reappeared, I barely recognized him.

Love smells different now, had darker eyes.

A broader back, Love came with freckles that I didn't recognize.

New birth mark – a softer voice.

Now there were new sleeping patterns.  
New favorite books.  
Love had songs that reminded him of someone else.  
Songs Love didn't like to listen to, so did I.

But we found a park bench that fit us perfectly.  
We found jokes that make us laugh.  
And now Love makes me fresh homemade chocolate chip cookies.  
(But Love will probably finish most of them for a midnight snack.)

Love looks great in lingerie but still likes to wear her retainer.  
Love is a terrible driver, but a great navigator.  
Love knows where she's going, it just might take her two hours longer than she planned.  
Love is messier now.  
Love is simple.  
Love uses the word *boobs* in front of my parents!  
Love chews too loud.  
Love leaves the cap off the toothpaste.  
Love uses a smiley face in her text messages.  
And turns out... Love shits.

But Love also cries;  
And Love will tell you "You are beautiful", and mean it.  
Over and over again.

*"You are beautiful."*

When you first wake up, *"You are beautiful."*  
When you've just been crying, *"You are beautiful."*  
When you don't wanna hear it, *"You are beautiful."*  
When you don't believe it, *"You are beautiful."*  
When nobody else will tell you, *"You are beautiful."*  
Love still thinks, *"You are beautiful."*  
But Love is not perfect and will sometimes forget.  
When you need to hear it most, *"You are beautiful."*

Do not forget this.  
Love is not who you were expecting.  
Love is not what you can predict.  
Maybe Love is in New York City already asleep.  
You are in California, Australia, wide awake.  
**Maybe Love is always in the wrong time-zone.**  
**Maybe Love is not ready for you.**  
**Maybe you are not ready for Love.**

Maybe Love just isn't the marrying type.  
Maybe the next time you see Love is 20 years after the divorce.  
Love looks older now but just as beautiful as you remember.  
Maybe Love is only there for a month.  
Maybe Love is there for every firework. Every birthday party. Every hospital visit.  
**Maybe Love stays. Maybe Love can't. Maybe Love shouldn't.**

**Love arrives exactly when Love is supposed to and Love leaves exactly when Love must.**

When Love arrives, say, "*Welcome. Make yourself comfortable.*"

If Love leaves, ask her to leave the door open behind her.

Turn off the music. Listen to the quiet.

Whisper, "*Thank you for stopping by.*"

Lin-Manuel Miranda

Gmorning.

You've got stuff in your head that no one else has got.

And you've got stuff in your head that you think you bear alone, but I PROMISE you share with so many.

Only way to know the difference is to spill it out.

On paper, into a mic, to a shrink, onto a canvas.

Let's go!

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