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LICEUL TEORETIC  
NICOLAE TITULESCU



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# A MULTICULTURAL TOUCH

A MAGAZINE IN FOUR LANGUAGES: ROMANIAN,  
ENGLISH, MALTESE AND GREEK



LICEUL TEORETIC "NICOLAE TITULESCU", SLATINA

PROIECT ERASMUS+ K210

THE INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH FEW OPPORTUNITIES  
INTO

THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION – T.I.O.S.W.F.O.I.T.E.D.

## **Introducere**

Această revistă reprezintă rezultatul celei de-a treia activități de învățare pentru elevi și profesori din cadrul proiectului Erasmus+ K210, THE INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH FEW OPPORTUNITIES INTO THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION – T.I.O.S.W.F.O.I.T.E.D., nr. de referință: 2022-2-RO01-KA210-SCH-000095715, activitate intitulată ”Clubul de Jurnalism”. Toți elevii din grupul țintă au avut șansa să participe la această activitate, care a avut drept obiective: comunicarea într-o limbă străină, interacțiunea, socializarea și de asemenea, creșterea motivației elevilor din medii defavorizate de a se implica în procesul activ de învățare, conectat la o dimensiune multiculturală.

## **Introduction**

This magazine is the result of the third learning activity for students and teachers within the Erasmus+ project K210, THE INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH FEW OPPORTUNITIES INTO THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION – T.I.O.S.W.F.O.I.T.E.D., no. reference number: 2022-2-RO01-KA210-SCH-000095715, activity entitled "The Journalism Club". All students from the target group had the chance to participate in this activity, which had as its objectives: communication in a foreign language, interaction, socialization and also increasing the motivation of students from disadvantaged backgrounds to get involved in the active learning process, connected to a multicultural dimension.

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# ROMANIA

## Liceul Teoretic "Nicolae Titulescu"

### O poveste de incluziune

*Autor: Cotelin Alexandra*

Liceul Teoretic "Nicolae Titulescu" aflat în inima orașului nostru este mai mult decât o simplă instituție de învățământ. Este o comunitate vibrantă și diversă, unde fiecare elev are șansa de a-și descoperi potențialul și de a se dezvolta într-un mediu incluziv și primitor. Această poveste începe într-o dimineață de septembrie, când toți elevii se adunau în curtea liceului pentru a-și începe noul an școlar.

Ana, o fată cu părul bălai și ochi de un albastru cristalin, venea timid pe poarta liceului. Venise dintr-un oraș mic și nu cunoștea pe nimeni în această școală. Cu toate acestea, teama de necunoscut era umbrită de entuziasmul pentru noile începuturi. Ana avea o dizabilitate motorie, care o făcea să folosească un scaun cu roțile, dar liceul nostru era cunoscut pentru infrastructura sa adaptată și pentru deschiderea față de toți elevii, indiferent de particularitățile lor.

Când Ana a intrat în sala de clasă, a fost întâmpinată de atmosfera primitoare și de zâmbetele calde ale colegilor, cât și de cele ale profesorilor. Clasa era deja plină de elevi care discutau entuziasmați despre vacanțele lor de vară. Ana s-a așezat la un birou special adaptat pentru ea și imediat colegii săi au început să se prezinte. Maria, o fată zurlie și vorbăreț, s-a așezat lângă Ana și a început să-i povestească despre activitățile extracurriculare disponibile în liceu.

La Liceul Teoretic "Nicolae Titulescu", fiecare elev era încurajat să se implice în activități care să le dezvolte talentele și interesele. Ana a descoperit atelierul de arte, un loc plin de culoare și creativitate, unde elevii puteau să-și exprime gândurile și emoțiile prin pictură, sculptură și alte forme de artă.

Ana s-a înscris în acest atelier, unde a întâlnit-o pe doamna Maria, profesoara de arte, care era cunoscută pentru capacitatea sa de a încuraja fiecare elev să-și exploreze creativitatea. Ana a început să picteze și să creeze lucrări care reflectau nu doar lumea din jurul ei, ci și lumea ei interioară. În scurt timp a descoperit că arta era un mod minunat de a-și exprima emoțiile și de a-și depăși limitările fizice. În cadrul atelierului, elevii organizau expoziții și evenimente artistice unde își prezentau creațiile. Aceste evenimente erau ocazii speciale care adunau întreaga comunitate și nu numai.

Un alt aspect important în liceu îl constituiau strângerile de fonduri organizate periodic pentru a sprijini copiii cu dizabilități. Aceste evenimente erau o dovadă a solidarității și empatiei care caracterizau comunitatea liceului. Ana și colegii ei s-au implicat în organizarea unui târg caritabil, unde s-au vândut obiecte hand-made, prăjituri, haine croșetate, toate pregătite cu multă dragoste și cu

un devotement extraordinar. Fondurile strânse erau folosite pentru achiziționarea de echipamente și resurse educaționale adaptate nevoilor elevilor cu dizabilități. Ana, deși la început a avut emoții în implicarea sa, a găsit în aceste activități o modalitate de a contribui la bunăstarea colegilor săi și de a întări legăturile cu ceilalți colegi de liceu.

La finalul anului școlar, liceul organiza o "Saptamana verde", o perioadă dedicată activităților legate de natură și sustenabilitate. Elevii, împreună cu profesorii, se adunau pentru a planta flori și copaci în curtea școlii și în zonele înconjurătoare. Această inițiativă nu era doar despre protejarea mediului, ci și despre cultivarea unui spirit de comunitate și responsabilitate socială. Ana și colegii săi au participat cu entuziasm la plantarea florilor în gradina școlii. Activitatea a fost o ocazie minunată de a petrece timp în aer liber, de a învăța despre importanța protejării naturii și de a lucra împreună pentru un scop comun. Doamna Maria a subliniat importanța implicării în astfel de activități: "Plantele pe care le sădim astăzi sunt simboluri ale creșterii și ale speranței. La fel cum îngrijim natura, trebuie să ne îngrijim și unii pe alții."

Ana și-a continuat studiile în liceul nostru, devenind un exemplu pentru toți colegii săi. Proiectele incluzive și colaborative au devenit o parte integrantă a vieții școlare, iar liceul a continuat să fie un model de educație incluzivă în comunitatea locală. Povestea Anei este doar una dintre multele povești de succes ale elevilor de la Liceul Teoretic „Nicolae Titulescu”. În această școală, fiecare elev are ocazia de a-și atinge potențialul maxim, într-un mediu unde diversitatea este celebrată și fiecare elev este pretuit pentru unicitatea sa.

# **"Nicolae Titulescu" Theoretical High School"**

## **A story of inclusion**

"Nicolae Titulescu" Theoretical High School is located in the heart of our city and it is more than just an educational institution. It is a vibrant and diverse community where every student has the chance to discover his/her potential and to develop in an inclusive and welcoming environment. This story begins on a September morning, when all the students gathered in the schoolyard to start the new high school year.

Ana, a girl with flowing hair and crystal blue eyes, entered shyly through the school gate. She came from a small town and she didn't know anyone in the school. However, her fear of the unknown was overshadowed by her enthusiasm for new beginnings. Ana had a motor disability that made her use a wheelchair, but "Nicolae Titulescu" Theoretical High School was known for its adapted infrastructure and for its openness to all students, regardless of their particularities.

When Ana entered the classroom, she was greeted by the welcoming atmosphere and warm smiles of her classmates and teachers. The classroom was already full of students excitedly discussing their summer holidays. Ana sat down at a desk specially adapted for her and immediately her classmates began to introduce themselves. Maria, a talkative and funny girl, sat down next to Ana and began to tell her about the extracurricular activities available at the high school.

At "Nicolae Titulescu" Theoretical High School, the students were encouraged to get involved in activities that would develop their talents and interests. Ana discovered the art studio, a colourful and creative place where students could express their thoughts and emotions through painting, sculpture and other forms of art. Ana enrolled in this workshop, where she met Mrs. Maria, an art teacher who was known for her ability to encourage each student to explore his/her creativity. Ana began to paint and to create works that reflected not only the world around her, but also her inner world. Soon, she discovered that art was a wonderful way to express her emotions and overcome her physical limitations. At the workshop, the students organized exhibitions and art events, where they presented their creations and these events were special occasions that brought together the whole community and beyond.

Another important aspect of the high school was the fundraising events organized periodically to support children with disabilities. These events were a proof of the solidarity and empathy that characterized the high school community. Ana and her classmates were involved in organizing a charity fair, where they sold hand-made items, cakes, knitted clothes, all prepared with love and devotion. The funds raised were used to purchase equipment and educational resources adapted to the needs of students with disabilities.

Ana, although initially nervous about getting involved, found in these activities a way to contribute to the well-being of her peers and to strengthen ties with other high school students. At the end of the school year, the school organizes a "Green Week", a period dedicated to activities related to nature and sustainability. Students, together with teachers, gathered to plant flowers and trees in the schoolyard and surrounding areas. This initiative was not only about protecting the environment, but also about cultivating a spirit of community and social responsibility.

Ana and her classmates enthusiastically participated in planting flowers in the school garden. The activity was a wonderful opportunity to spend time outdoors, learn about the importance of protecting nature and work together for a common goal. Mrs. Maria underlined the importance of getting involved in such activities: "The plants we are planting today are symbols of growth and hope. Just as we care for nature, we must care for each other."

Ana continued her studies our high school, becoming an example for all her colleagues. Inclusive and collaborative projects have become an integral part of school life and the high school has continued to be a model of inclusive education in the local community. Ana's story is just one of the many success stories of the students at "Nicolae Titulescu" Theoretical High School. In this school, every student has the opportunity to reach his/her full potential in an environment where diversity is celebrated and each student is valued for his/her uniqueness.



## Adam's apple

*Autor: Botea Oana*

Într-o lume în care ești judecat pentru că-ți bandajezi sânii și te tunzi scurt, nu ai cum să ai prea multe așteptări. Hai să presupunem că cel despre care o să fie vorba îl cheamă Ayan. Nu vreau să divulg cine e, dar sunt gata ca lumea să arunce cu pietre în mine pentru că o să-i iau apărarea. Chiar dacă îmi tremură mâna pe pix sau vocea, tot am să vorbesc despre asta, deoarece unii oameni chiar nu au nicio vină.

Ayan nu este nevoit să fie cum vreți voi, adică să se dea sexul biologic, cineva cine nu este, ceea ce nu înțelegeți voi este că nimeni nu este nevoit să facă ce doriți pentru că au și ceilalți drepturi și conștiință. Ce nu înțelegeți este că dacă nu vă luați de cineva, nici acea persoana nu are nimic cu voi, dar este în regulă pentru că o să învățați. Este îngrijorător doar faptul că există adulți care au păreri de acest tip, unii oameni nu realizează că alți oameni nu sunt păpușile lor, ca să poată face ce vor cu ei. Nu ai ce așteptări să mai ai într-un univers în care fiii preoților batjocoresc oamenii și încurajează mai departe.

Uneori, chiar nu faceți diferența între glumă și o jignire sau în cele mai multe cazuri, puțin vă pasă. Sunt de părere că ar trebui să avem mai mult grijă de ce facem noi și mai puțină atenție la ce fac ceilalți, deoarece oamenii vor să-și trăiască viața liniștiți, nu să se simtă ca și cum un copac crește în jurul inimii lor, simțind ca și cum s-au spart venele din ea, iar sângele curge prin tot corpul.

De asemenea, Ayan nu este nevoit să vă suporte jignirile și stilul de comportament haotic, de parcă sunteți un butoi de vin, gata să explodeze, care se ia de el, iar când acesta răspunde înapoi cu ceva, voi izbucniți ca butoiul ce se sparge din cauza unei căzături. În aceeași situație sunteți; ca butoiul care cade, dar butoiul cade pe podea, iar voi cădeți într-o groapă ce conține numai dorința de atenție pe care nu ați primit-o și de răutatea și lipsa de empatie de care puteți unii da dovadă.

Toate acestea fiind din experiența mea, o persoană care a auzit multe, nu pe toate, dar cât să-mi fac o idee despre societatea în care trăim și persoanele care o înconjoară. Realizez că mulți sunt împotriva, dar eu nu mai pot asculta vorbele lipsite de respect despre Ayan numai pentru că este diferit, deoarece nimeni nu merită tratamentul pe care îl primește el din partea unor oameni. Menționez că oamenii respectivi sunt majoritatea și creștini, dacă încă îi mai credeți sfinți ar trebui să vă treziți un pic la realitate, adică ei vorbesc despre iubire și acceptarea la biserică și când intră Ayan în cameră se aud numai râsete și cum strigă „Ayana” și chiar am o curiozitate, ce este de râs? La propriu, chiar nu înțeleg ce vă amuză așa de tare. Cel mai probabil, sunteți conștienți că nu e bine, dar dacă o fac ceilalți o să o faceți și voi. Degeaba „*îi acceptați pe toți*” dacă voi agreeți numai persoanele care vă plac.

Iar acum mă gândesc că mai aveți o mare problemă. Spuneți unor oameni că nu au drepturi, când se vede clar că habar nu aveți ce spuneți. Pentru mine sunt toți egali...nu îi suport pe niciunul în mod egal, evident glumesc, dar este adevărat, nu o să încetezi să ai drepturi, pentru că un copil îți spune într-un fel dacă te ții de mână cu cineva de același sex. O să fim toți egali indiferent dacă nenea Marian din Colentina consideră că femeile trebuie să fie în bucătărie și că homosexualii sunt păcătoși sau dacă tanti Lenuța se crede superioară bărbaților pentru că nu știu, probabil efectul unei trauma și crede că homosexualii sunt ipocriți pentru că nu le plac femeile. Dar ce cred nenea Marian și tanti Lenuța nu o să te afecteze niciodată pentru că nu par niște oameni importanți statului din moment ce spun aceste lucruri din frustrări, pe care nu știu să le gestioneze în așa fel încât să nu rănească pe nimeni.

În același timp, nu este în regulă să obligi oamenii să creadă în ce crezi tu sau unui om să îi placă ce îți place ție. Ba chiar să nu judeci pe nimeni, incluzându-te pe tine, nu ai voie să te judeci pentru că ești și tu o persoană cu sentimente și o să contezi pentru toată lumea, chiar dacă ceilalți zic opusul, nu au trăit niciodată aceeași viață înainte să știe cum e fără tine. Ești o persoană foarte importantă, chiar cea mai importantă dacă nu crezi deja. Și dacă crezi, drag cititor, nu este corespunzător să te crezi superior, pentru că nu ești.

Consider că nu te poți numi membru al unei grupări religioase dacă nu poți respecta regulile de bază, este o lipsă de respect din partea unora să își folosească religia ca o scuză după ce au fost lipsiți de conștiință când au spus ceva care nu ar fi de obicei în regulă să spui.

Aducând vorba de Ayan și lăsând chestiile prea serioase, imaginează-ți să îi vorbești la feminin unui Moș Crăciun cu pigment de culoare în păr, mai ales că te faci de râs la cât de patetic și sensibil poți deveni, încât să te deranjeze ceva ce nu te afectează.

*„Mai bine să mă urâți pentru cine sunt decât să mă iubiți pentru cine nu sunt”*

*-Kurt Cobain*

Acest lucru înseamnă că oamenii judecă pe oricine, oricum, când le iese cineva în cale, oamenilor nu le pasă, de asta trebuie să îți pese ție, deoarece tu te cunoști cel mai bine. Și de reamintit că trebuie să fim respectuoși cu toată lumea, nu numai cu cine ne place sau cine ne-ar aduce beneficii. Mai bine stai loial, dar sărac decât să te plimbi de o parte și de cealaltă, doar pentru binele tău și pentru câteva sute de lei. Bani nu au cumpărat educația de acasă, nu o cumpără și nu o vor cumpăra vreodată.

În caz că te simți prost din cauza cuiva, imaginează-ți că oricum acel om are o frustrare, cel mai probabil din cauza ta, pentru că ești mai bun decât el din unele puncte de vedere, adică își dorește ce ai tu și el, însemnând invidie.

Gelozia este, pe de altă parte, frica de a pierde ceva ce ai. *Matei 7:1*

## Adam's apple

In a world where you're judged for bandaging your breasts and cutting your hair short, you can't have too many expectations. Let's assume that the one we're talking about is called Ayan, I don't want to divulge who he is, but I'm ready for the world to throw stones at me because I'm going to defend him. Even if my hand is shaking on the pen or my voice is shaking, I will still talk about it because some people really are not to blame.

Ayan doesn't have to be what you want, his/her biological sex, someone who he/she is not; what you don't understand is that no one has to do what you want because others also have rights and conscience. What you don't understand is that if you don't get along with someone, that person doesn't get along with you either, but that's okay because you're going to learn. It's just worrying that there are adults who have such views, some people don't realize that other people aren't their puppets to do whatever they want with them. You have no expectations left in a universe where sons of priests mock people and encourage them further.

Sometimes you really don't tell the difference between a joke and an insult or in most cases, you really don't care. I think we should be more careful about what we do and less about what others do, because people want to live their lives in peace, not feel like a tree is growing around their heart and it feel as if the veins in it have burst and the blood is flowing through the whole body.

Also, Ayan doesn't have to put up with your insults and chaotic style of behavior as if you're an exploding barrel of wine picking on him and when he hits back with something, you explode like a bursting barrel. You are in the same situation, like the falling barrel, but the barrel falls to the floor, and you fall into a pit that contains only the desire for attention that you did not receive and the meanness and lack of empathy that some of you may show.

All this being from my experience, a person who has heard a lot, not all, but enough to get an idea of the society we live in and the people around. I realize many are against it, but I can no longer listen to the disrespectful talk about Ayan just because he is different, because no one deserves the treatment he is getting from some people. I mention that the majority of these people are also Christians, if you still believe them to be saints you should wake up a little to reality, the way they talk about love and acceptance in the church and when Ayan enters the room only laughter and shouting can be heard or appellatives of the type "Ayana" and I really have a curiosity, what is there to laugh at? Literally, I really don't understand what amuses you so much, honestly. Most likely you are aware that it is not good, but if others do it, you will do it too. In vain you "*accept everyone*", but you only accept the people you like.

And now I think you have another big problem. Tell people they have no rights when it's clear you have no idea what you're talking about. They're all equal to me...I can't stand any of them equally,

obviously I'm joking but it's true, you're not going to stop having rights because a kid calls you in a specific way if you hold hands with someone of the same sex. We will all be equal regardless of whether Uncle Marian from Colentina believes that women should be in the kitchen and that homosexuals are sinners or if Aunt Lenuta thinks she is superior to men because...I don't know, probably the effect of a trauma and she believes that homosexuals are hypocrites because they don't like women. But what Uncle Marian and Aunt Lenuta think will never affect you because they don't seem like important people to the state, since they say these things out of frustrations that they don't know how to manage in such a way as not to hurt anyone.

At the same time, it is not okay to force people to believe what you believe or to like what you like. And don't even judge anyone, including yourself, you are not allowed to judge yourself because you are also a person with feelings and you will matter to everyone even if others say the opposite, they have never lived the same life before to know how it is without you. You are a very important person, even the most important if you don't believe it already. And if you do, dear reader, it's not appropriate to think you're superior, because you're not.

I think you can't call yourself a member of a religious group if you can't follow the basic rules, it's disrespectful of some to use their religion as an excuse after being brainwashed into saying something that shouldn't be usually ok to say.

Speaking of Ayan and leaving the serious stuff aside, imagine talking to a Santa Claus with dye in his hair in the feminine language, especially since you're making fun of how pathetic and sensitive you can get to be bothered by something that doesn't matter.

*"Better to hate me for who I am than to love me for who I am not"*

*-Kurt Cobain*

Meaning people judge anyone anyway when someone comes their way, people don't care, that's what you should care about because you know yourself in the best way. And to remember that we must be respectful to everyone, not only to whom we like or who would benefit us. It's better to stay loyal, but poor than to wander around just for your own good and a few *lei*. Money didn't buy homeschooling, doesn't buy it and never will.

In case you feel bad because of someone, imagine that anyway that person has a frustration, most likely because of you, because you are better than him/her in some aspects, that is, he/she wants what you have and that is the definition of envy. Jealousy, on the other hand, is the fear of losing something you have. *Matthew 7:1*

## Sistemul școlar Maltez

*Autori: Capațină Daria Elena, Rădoescu Ramona Andreea, Jade Xuereb, Martina Galea*

*Aspecte importante despre școala din Malta*

Clasificarea claselor în funcție de vârstă:

Grădiniță: 3-5 ani

Nivel Primar: 5-11 ani

Nivel Secundar: 11-16 ani

Forma a șasea: 16-18 ani

*Viața la Colegiul De La Salle*

- Pe lângă de studiile noastre, există experiențe memorabile carese petrec în școală, inclusiv:

A. *Lasallian Nights*: Acesta este un spectacol care este realizat de Consiliul Elevilor și de elevi și prezintă talentele școlii noastre, cu o piesă care include: comedie, cântece, dans, folosirea instrumentelor.

B. *World Night*: Elevii sunt împărțiți în grupuri și li se oferă o țară pe care trebuie să o reprezinte, realizând o piesă de teatru, dansând pe muzică tradițională din acea țară, realizând un stand care îi prezintă cultura și pregătind deserturi din acea țară.

C. *The Outdoors Programme*: Programul include multe drumeții în jurul Maltei și întâlniri educaționale despre drumeții, citirea hărților și mediul. De asemenea, studenților li se oferă posibilitatea de a merge într-o excursie de drumeție în Alpii italieni.

D. *JAYE*: În această competiție la nivel național, studenții formează o echipă și își creează propriul produs unic, pe care apoi trebuie să îl facă cunoscut publicului larg și să-l vândă.

E. *Sportsfest*: Elevii sunt împărțiți în 4 culori de casă: roșu, galben, albastru și verde. Apoi, ei concurează în multe activități și sporturi distractive, cum ar fi remorcher de razboi, curse, jocuri cu mingea și sărituri în lungime, printre multe altele.

*Educație în limbi străine:*

- Malteza și engleza sunt gândite paralel încă de la începutul educației
- În anul 7 se predau limbi străine: elevii pot alege 1-2 limbi, opțiunile în majoritatea școlilor fiind franceză, germană și italiană.

*Subiecte de bază și opțiuni:*

- Materiile de bază (malteză, engleză și matematică) sunt obligatorii până la clasa a șasea;
- Singura materie obligatorie în forma a șasea este Sistemele de cunoaștere (SOK), care predă o gamă largă de subiecte, inclusiv democrație, artă, știință (în general) și mediu.
- Celelalte 5 materii sunt toate alese de student, cu următoarele restricții:
  - 2 materii trebuie alese la un nivel avansat
  - 3 materii trebuie alese la un nivel intermediar
  - 1 din cele 5 materii trebuie să fie un subiect uman (de ex. psihologie, economie, etc.)
  - 1 din cele 5 materii trebuie să fie o materie de știință (de ex. Chimie, Matematică etc.)
  - 1 din cele 5 materii trebuie să fie o limbă (ex. italiană, malteză, etc.)
  - A cincea materie poate fi din orice categorie sau alt subiect care nu se încadrează în niciuna dintre cele 3 categorii precum Artă, Educație fizică etc.

## **The Maltese School System**

### *Important Points about the school in Malta:*

Classifications of grades by age:

Kindergarten: Ages 3-5

Primary: Ages 5-11

Secondary: Ages 11-16

Sixth Form: Ages 16-18

### *Life at De La Salle College*

- Other than our studies, there are memorable experiences which come out of the school including:

A. Lasallian Nights: This is a show that is all put together by the Student Council and the students, it showcases the talents of our school with a play that includes comedy, singing, dancing, instruments

B. World Night: Students are divided into groups and are given a country that they need to represent by making a play, dancing to traditional music from that country, making a stand that showcases its culture and preparing desserts from that country

C. The Outdoors Programme: The programme includes many hikes around Malta and educational meetings about hiking, map reading, and the environment. Students are also given the opportunity to go on a hiking trip to the Italian Alps.

D. JAYE: In this nation-wide competition, students form a team and create their own unique product, which they must then advertise and sell.

E. Sportsfest: Students are split into 4 house colours: red, yellow, blue and green. Then they compete in many fun activities and sports, such as tug of war, races, ball games and long jump, among many others.

### *Education on Languages:*

- Maltese and English are taught parallelly from the beginning of education
- In Year 7 foreign languages are taught: students can choose 1-2 languages with the options in most schools being French, German and Italian.

### *Core Subjects and Options:*

- The core subjects (Maltese, English and Maths) are mandatory until Sixth Form

- In Sixth Form, the only mandatory subject in Sixth form is Systems of Knowledge (SOK) that teaches wide range of topics including Democracy, Art, Science (In General) and Environment

- The other 5 subjects are all chosen by the student with the following restrictions
- 2 Subjects must be chosen at an Advanced Level
- 3 Subjects must be chosen at an Intermediate Level
- 1 of the 5 Subjects must be a Humanity Subject (ex. Psychology, Economics, etc.)
- 1 of the 5 Subjects must be a Science Subject (ex. Chemistry, Maths etc.)
- 1 of the 5 Subjects must be a Language (ex. Italian, Maltese, etc.)
- The 5th Subject can be of either category or another subject that does not fit into any of the 3 categories such as Art, Physical Education, etc.



## O zi specială

*Autor: Duna Nicoleta*

În acea zi specială, clasa a IV-a avea planificată o activitate deosebită: "Ziua Prieteniei", o inițiativă menită să sărbătorească diversitatea și să învețe copiii cum să fie incluzivi. Activitatea a fost pregătită cu multă grijă și atenție de doamna Ionescu, care era cunoscută pentru pasiunea sa pentru educația incluzivă și pentru dedicarea sa în a crea un mediu școlar primitiv pentru toți elevii, indiferent de abilitățile sau diferențele lor.

În clasă, se afla Andrei, un băiat cu sindrom Down. Deși Andrei era bine integrat în colectiv și foarte iubit de colegii săi, existau momente când se simțea diferit din cauza abilităților sale speciale. Doamna Ionescu a văzut mereu în Andrei un copil talentat și plin de potențial și a lucrat neobosit pentru a-l ajuta să se simtă acceptat și respectat.

Pentru "Ziua Prieteniei", fiecare elev a fost rugat să aducă o poveste sau un obiect care avea o semnificație specială pentru ei. Doamna Ionescu le-a explicat copiilor importanța de a împărtăși lucruri personale și de a fi deschiși unii cu alții. Aceasta nu era doar o simplă activitate, ci o oportunitate de a învăța despre empatie, respect și prietenie.

### *Desfășurarea Activităților*

În ziua activității, sala de clasă a fost decorată cu baloane colorate și afișe care promovau prietenia și înțelegerea reciprocă. Fiecare copil a adus câte un obiect special de acasă. Doamna Ionescu a început activitatea cu o scurtă discuție despre importanța diversității și a incluziunii. Ea le-a explicat copiilor că fiecare dintre noi este unic și că diferențe dintre noi ne fac mai puternici și mai speciali.

Când a venit rândul lui Andrei, el a adus un ursuleț de pluș pe care îl avea încă de când era mic. Cu o voce timidă, dar plină de emoție, Andrei a povestit despre cum acest ursuleț îi oferă confort și curaj în momentele dificile. Colegii lui l-au ascultat cu atenție și cu empatie, iar Andrei a simțit pentru prima dată că povestea lui este importantă și valoroasă. După ce Andrei a terminat de povestit, Maria, una dintre colegele sale, a avut o idee minunată. Ea a propus ca fiecare elev să spună câteva cuvinte despre ce apreciază la Andrei și cum acesta îi face să se simtă. Toți au fost de acord și, pe rând, au început să vorbească despre cum Andrei este întotdeauna zâmbitor, cum îi ajută pe alții să se simtă bine și cum este un prieten adevărat.

### *Reacțiile Elevilor și ale Profesorilor*

Momentul a fost extrem de emoționant. Andrei a zâmbit larg și a început să plângă de fericire, simțindu-se cu adevărat acceptat și valorizat. Învățătoarea noastră, doamna Ionescu, a observat impactul pozitiv pe care acest gest l-a avut asupra tuturor și a decis să facă din această activitate, o

practică regulată. Astfel, în fiecare săptămână, a introdus "Momentul Prieteniei", unde fiecare copil avea ocazia să vorbească despre ceva special pentru ei și să primească feedback pozitiv de la colegi.

Această experiență a fost o lecție valoroasă despre incluziune și empatie pentru toată lumea. Elevii au învățat să aprecieze diferențele dintre ei și să vadă valoarea în diversitate. Educația incluzivă a fost astfel pusă în practică, nu doar teoretic, ci și prin gesturi concrete care au întărit legăturile dintre copii și au construit un mediu școlar în care fiecare se simte acceptat și respectat.

#### *Impactul pe Termen Lung*

Ziua Prieteniei a avut un impact profund asupra întregii comunități școlare. Andrei a devenit mai încrezător și mai implicat în activitățile de la școală. Colegii lui au învățat să fie mai empatici și mai deschiși la diversitate. Doamna Ionescu a continuat să promoveze activități incluzive, integrând în programul zilnic lecții despre respect, empatie și colaborare. Părinții copiilor au observat și ei schimbările pozitive. Mulți dintre ei au povestit cum copiii lor au devenit mai toleranți și mai deschiși în relațiile lor cu ceilalți. Unii părinți au început să se implice mai activ în viața școlii, organizând evenimente și activități care promovau incluziunea și diversitatea.

#### *Perspectivă Diferitelor Grupuri*

*Perspectiva Elevilor:* Copiii din clasa a IV-a au avut parte de o experiență care i-a marcat profund. Prin activitățile incluzive, ei au învățat să aprecieze unicitatea fiecărui coleg și să-și dezvolte abilități sociale valoroase. Ei au devenit mai conștienți de importanța susținerii și respectului reciproc. Unii dintre ei și-au făcut prieteni noi și au descoperit că, deși sunt diferiți, au multe lucruri în comun.

*Perspectiva Profesorilor:* Doamna Ionescu și colegii ei au văzut în "Ziua Prieteniei" un model de bună practică pentru educația incluzivă. Aceștia au înțeles cât de important este să creeze un mediu școlar în care fiecare elev se simte acceptat și valorizat. Profesorii au început să colaboreze mai strâns pentru a dezvolta activități similare și în alte clase, promovând astfel o cultură a incluziunii în întreaga școală.

*Perspectiva Părinților:* Părinții au fost profund impresionați de schimbările pozitive observate la copiii lor. Mulți dintre ei au povestit cum aceste activități i-au ajutat pe copii să devină mai empatici și mai deschiși. Părinții lui Andrei au fost deosebit de recunoscători pentru eforturile doamnei Ionescu și ale colegilor ei, văzând cum fiul lor a devenit mai încrezător și mai implicat.

#### *Continuarea Inițiativelor Incluzive*

Inspirată de succesul "Zilei Prieteniei", doamna Ionescu a decis să continue promovarea educației incluzive. A inițiat un program numit "Clubul Prieteniei", unde elevii puteau să se întâlnească săptămânal pentru a participa la activități de team-building, jocuri cooperative și discuții despre empatie și respect. Clubul a devenit rapid popular, iar elevii din alte clase au dorit să se alăture. Doamna Ionescu a extins programul, colaborând cu alți profesori pentru a organiza evenimente

speciale, precum "Săptămâna Incluziunii" și "Ziua Diversității". Aceste evenimente au inclus activități precum ateliere de artă, jocuri de rol și prezentări despre diferite culturi și abilități.

#### *Impactul Comunității*

Comunitatea locală a început să observe și să aprecieze eforturile școlii de a promova incluziunea. Școala a devenit un model pentru alte instituții de învățământ, care au început să adopte practici similare. Consiliul local a oferit suport financiar pentru a sprijini inițiativele incluzive și a recunoscut oficial eforturile școlii în cadrul unei ceremonii speciale.

#### *Reflecțiile Finale*

Această experiență a rămas una dintre cele mai frumoase amintiri ale mele din acea perioadă, demonstrând cât de importantă este educația.

## A special day

On that special day, the 4th grade had planned a special activity: "The Friendship Day", an initiative designed to celebrate diversity and teach children how to be inclusive. The activity was prepared with great care and attention by Mrs. Ionescu, who was known for her passion for inclusive education and her dedication to creating a welcoming school environment for all students, regardless of their abilities or differences.

In the class, there was Andrei, a boy with Down syndrome. Although Andrei was well integrated into the team and very loved by his colleagues, there were times when he felt different because of his special abilities. Mrs. Ionescu always saw in Andrei a talented and full of potential child and worked tirelessly to help him feel accepted and respected.

For "The Friendship Day", each student was asked to bring a story or object that had special meaning to them. Mrs. Ionescu explained to the children the importance of sharing personal things and being open with each other. This was not just an activity, but an opportunity to learn about empathy, respect and friendship.

### *Conduct of Activities*

On the day of the activity, the classroom was decorated with colorful balloons and posters promoting friendship and mutual understanding. Each child brought a special object from home. Mrs. Ionescu started the activity with a short discussion about the importance of diversity and inclusion. She explained to the children that each of us is unique and that these differences make us stronger and more special. When it was Andrei's turn, he brought a teddy bear that he had since he was little. With a shy but emotional voice, Andrei talked about how this teddy bear gives him comfort and courage in difficult moments. His colleagues listened carefully and empathetically, and Andrei felt for the first time that his story was important and valuable. After Andrei finished telling his story, Maria, one of his colleagues, had a wonderful idea. She suggested that each student say a few words about what they appreciate about Andrei and how he makes them feel. They all agreed and talked about how Andrei is always smiling, how he makes others feel good, and how he is a true friend.

### *Reactions of Students and Teachers*

The moment was extremely emotional. Andrei smiled widely and began to cry with happiness, feeling truly accepted and valued. Our teacher, Mrs. Ionescu, noticed the positive impact this gesture had on everyone and decided to make this a regular practice. Thus, every week, he introduced the "The Friendship Moment", where each child had the opportunity to talk about something special for them and receive positive feedback from their peers.

This experience was a valuable lesson about inclusion and empathy for everyone. Students learned to appreciate their differences and see the value in diversity. Inclusive education was thus put

into practice, not only theoretically, but also through concrete gestures that strengthened the bonds between children and built a school environment where everyone feels accepted and respected.

#### *Long Term Impact*

"The Friendship Day" had a profound impact on the entire school community. Andrei became more confident and involved in school activities. His colleagues learned to be more empathetic and open to diversity. Mrs. Ionescu continued to promote inclusive activities, integrating lessons on respect, empathy and collaboration into the daily program.

The children's parents also noticed the positive changes. Many of them told how their children became more tolerant and open in their relationships with others. Some parents began to become more actively involved in school life, organizing events and activities that promoted inclusion and diversity.

#### *Perspectives of Different Groups*

*Students' perspective:* The students from the 4th grade had an experience that marked them deeply. Through inclusive activities, they learned to appreciate the uniqueness of each colleague and develop valuable social skills. They became more aware of the importance of mutual support and respect. Some of them made new friends and discovered that although they are different, they have many things in common.

*Teachers' perspective:* Mrs. Ionescu and her colleagues saw in "The Friendship Day" a model of good practice for inclusive education. They understood how important it is to create a school environment where every student feels accepted and valued. Teachers began to collaborate more closely to develop similar activities in other classes, thus promoting a culture of inclusion throughout the school.

*Parents' Perspective:* Parents were deeply impressed by the positive changes observed in their children. Many of them told how these activities helped the children to become more empathetic and open. Andrei's parents were especially grateful for the efforts of Mrs. Ionescu and her colleagues, seeing how their son became more confident and involved.

#### *Continuation of Inclusive Initiatives*

Inspired by the success of "The Friendship Day", Mrs. Ionescu decided to continue promoting inclusive education. He initiated a program called "The Friendship Club" where students could meet weekly to participate in team-building activities, cooperative games, and discussions about empathy and respect. The club quickly became popular and students from other classes wanted to join. Mrs. Ionescu expanded the program, collaborating with other teachers to organize special events, such as "The Inclusion Week" and "The Diversity Day". These events included activities such as art workshops, role plays and presentations about different cultures and skills.

#### *Community Impact*

The local community began to notice and appreciate the school's efforts to promote inclusion. The school became a model for other educational institutions, which began to adopt similar practices. The local council provided financial support to support inclusive initiatives and officially recognized the school's efforts in a special ceremony.

### *Final Reflections*

This experience remained one of my fondest memories from that time, proving how important education is.

## Activități în Didymoteicho

*Autor: Mihai Țtefan Vlădescu*

În luna martie am avut ocazia incredibilă de a participa la activitatea de învățare din cadrul proiectului Erasmus+, desfășurată în orașul Didymoteicho, Grecia. A fost o colaborare între trei școli: una din Malta, una din România și una din Grecia. Am călătorit cu colegii mei de școală și profesorii din România cu autobuzul, o călătorie lungă, dar emoționantă. Ca elev la 13 ani, nu mai fusesem niciodată într-o asemenea aventură și abia așteptam să văd ce ne rezervă Grecia.

Am ajuns în sfârșit în Didymoteicho după multe ore de drum. Orașul ne-a întâmpinat cu amestecul său de farmec istoric și viață modernă. Am ajuns în Didymoteicho exact când începea parada de carnaval. Culorile vibrante, muzica plină de viață și atmosfera veselă ne-au primit cu căldură. Oameni în costume elaborate au dansat pe străzi și am simțit o legătură imediată cu cultura și spiritul orașului.

Prima activitate din proiect a avut loc la Muzeul Mătăsii din Soufli, la o scurtă călătorie cu autobuzul de Didymoteicho. Atelierul la care am participat în curtea muzeului a fost foarte distractiv. Am aflat despre istoria producției de mătase din regiune, care datează din epoca bizantină. Privirea procesului complicat de fabricare a mătăsii, de la creșterea viermilor de mătase până la țesutul produsului final, a fost fascinant. Punctul culminant a fost să văd articole de îmbrăcăminte și artefacte tradiționale din mătase, ceea ce m-a făcut să apreciez priceperea și măiestria implicate în acest meșteșug străvechi.

În după-amiaza celei de-a doua zile, elevii greci au susținut prezentări despre alte locuri istorice din regiune. Au vorbit despre băile romane antice, despre frumoasele biserici cu arhitectura lor unică și despre clădirile din epoca otomană care împrăștiu orașul. Fiecare loc avea o poveste și am fost uimit de straturile istoriei pe care le deținea Didymoteicho.

O poveste care s-a remarcat în mod deosebit a fost despre Moscheea sultanului Bayezid II, una dintre cele mai vechi moschei din Europa. A simbolizat istoria culturală și religioasă diversă a orașului. Elevii au explicat cum Didymoteicho a fost întotdeauna o răscruce de civilizații, unde diferite culturi și religii au coexistat și s-au influențat reciproc.

Am aflat și despre Muzeul de Folclor, care prezintă costume tradiționale grecești, obiecte de uz casnic și unelte care descriu viața de zi cu zi a oamenilor din secolele trecute. A fost uimitor să aflu cât de diferită, dar asemănătoare, era viața în comparație cu a noastră. Muzeul are și o secțiune dedicată meșteșugurilor și muzicii locale, care fac pe oricine să realizeze cât de bogată și diversă este cultura greacă.

Apoi am avut o altă activitate la Galeria Municipală, unde am participat la un atelier de pictură. Acest loc a fost o comoară de artă, prezentând lucrări ale artiștilor locali și naționali. Picturile și sculpturile descriu scene din mitologia greacă, viața de zi cu zi și peisajele frumoase ale regiunii. Un tablou care mi-a atras atenția a fost o reprezentare a vechiului castel de pe deal, pe care trebuia să-l vizităm în continuare.

Urcarea la castel a fost o aventură în sine. Poteca era abruptă, dar priveliștea din vârf a meritat fiecare pas. Castelul, construit în perioada bizantină, stătea cu mândrie cu vedere la oraș și la râul Evros. Prietenii noștri greci ne-au spus povești despre istoria castelului, bătăliile purtate și importanța sa strategică de-a lungul secolelor. Mergând prin ruinele antice, aproape că auzeam ciocnirea săbiilor și strigătele războinicilor care își apărau cetatea. Am pregătit o piesă de teatru alături de elevii maltezi și greci, pe care am susținut-o în fața comunității grecești.

Când ziua se încheia, ne-am adunat pentru o cină de rămas bun. Gazdele noastre grecești pregătiseră un festin cu mâncăruri tradiționale. Am gustat ca desert moussaka, souvlaki și baklava. Mâncarea a fost delicioasă, iar ospitalitatea și mai bună. Am împărtășit povești și râsete și mi-am dat seama cât de multe am învățat și am experimentat în doar câteva zile.

În drumul nostru de întoarcere în România, am reflectat asupra tuturor activităților realizate împreună cu elevii greci și maltezi. Văzusem rămășițele civilizațiilor antice, am aflat despre bogata moștenire culturală și am făcut prieteni din diferite părți ale Europei. Acest proiect Erasmus+ mi-a deschis ochii asupra importanței istoriei și asupra modului în care ne modelează prezentul și viitorul. M-am întors acasă cu o apreciere mai profundă pentru istorie și cu o dorință puternică de a explora mai mult din lume.

Această experiență m-a învățat că istoria nu este doar despre date și evenimente din manuale. Este vorba despre oameni, poveștile lor și locurile care ne leagă pe toți. Și cel mai important, mi-a arătat că, chiar și la 13 ani, pot fi parte a ceva mai mare - o comunitate internațională de studenți și exploratori.



## **Activities in Didymoteicho**

In March, I had the incredible opportunity to participate in the learning activity of the Erasmus+ project, held in the city of Didymoteicho, Greece. It was a collaboration between three schools: one from Malta, one from Romania and one from Greece. I traveled with my schoolmates and teachers from Romania by bus, a long but exciting journey. As a 13-year-old student, I had never been on such an adventure before and couldn't wait to see what Greece had in store.

We finally arrived in Didymoteicho after many hours of driving. The city welcomed us with its mix of historic charm and modern life. We arrived in Didymoteicho just as the carnival parade was starting. Vibrant colors, lively music and a cheerful atmosphere warmly welcomed us. People in elaborate costumes danced in the streets and I felt an immediate connection to the culture and spirit of the city.

The first project activity took place at the Silk Museum in Soufli, a short bus ride from Didymoteicho. The workshop I attended in the courtyard of the museum was a lot of fun. We learned about the history of silk production in the region, which dates back to the Byzantine era. Watching the intricate process of silk making, from raising the silkworms to weaving the final product, was fascinating. The highlight was seeing traditional silk garments and artefacts, which made me appreciate the skill and craftsmanship involved in this ancient craft.

In the afternoon of the second day, the Greek students gave presentations about other historical sites in the region. They talked about the ancient Roman baths, the beautiful churches with their unique architecture, and the Ottoman-era buildings that dot the city. Every place had a story and I was amazed at the layers of history that Didymoteicho held.

One story that stood out in particular was about the Sultan Bayezid II Mosque, one of the oldest mosques in Europe. It symbolized the city's diverse cultural and religious history. The students explained how Didymoteicho has always been a crossroads of civilizations, where different cultures and religions coexisted and influenced each other.

We also learned about the Folklore Museum, which displays traditional Greek costumes, household items, and tools depicting the daily life of people in past centuries. It was amazing to learn how different, yet similar, life was compared to our own. The museum also has a section dedicated to local crafts and music, which make anyone realize how rich and diverse Greek culture is.

Then I had another activity at the Municipal Gallery, where I participated in a painting workshop. This place was a treasure trove of art, featuring works by local and national artists. The paintings and sculptures depict scenes from Greek mythology, everyday life and the beautiful landscapes of the region. One painting that caught my eye was a depiction of the old castle on the hill, which we were to visit next.

Climbing up to the castle was an adventure in itself. The trail was steep, but the view at the top was worth every step. The castle, built during the Byzantine period, stood proudly overlooking the city and the river Evros. Our Greek friends told us stories about the history of the castle, the battles fought and its strategic importance over the centuries. Walking through the ancient ruins, I could almost hear the clash of swords and the shouts of warriors defending their fortress. I prepared a play together with the Maltese and Greek students, which I performed in front of the Greek community.

As the day ended, we gathered for a farewell dinner. Our Greek hosts had prepared a feast of traditional dishes. We tasted moussaka, souvlaki and baklava for dessert. The food was delicious and the hospitality even better. We shared stories and laughs and realized how much I had learned and experienced in just a few days.

On our way back to Romania, we reflected on all the activities done together with the Greek and Maltese students. I had seen the remains of ancient civilizations, learned about the rich cultural heritage and made friends from different parts of Europe. This Erasmus+ project opened my eyes to the importance of history and how it shapes our present and future. I returned home with a deeper appreciation for history and a strong desire to explore more of the world.

This experience taught me that history is not just about dates and events in textbooks. It's about the people, their stories and the places that connect us all. And most importantly, it showed me that even at 13 years old, I can be part of something bigger - an international community of students and explorers.

## Ascultă, observă, respiră

*Autor: Năstasie Gabriela*

Era începutul unui nou an școlar; tocmai intrasem în clasa a VII-a. Acest început provocator ne-a pregătit pentru o mare surpriză: alăturarea unui nou elev în clasa noastră. Acel elev era un băiat blond, cu ochi albaștri de înălțime medie, din Marea Britanie. Era tăcut, neobișnuit de tăcut. La început, am crezut că este foarte timid, rezervat și probabil anxios, dar m-am înșelat amarnic.

Din păcate, băiatul acela cu ochi calzi, deși cu tenul rece și o privire care spune o mie de cuvinte, era mut. Aflând această veste, inima mi s-a scufundat în acele oceane care ascund secrete; secrete care au fost îngropate adânc...

Chipul lui nu arăta prea multă emoție, dar ochii lui arătau totul. Ochi în care aș înota toată viața și cu siguranță mi-ar da o vâslă. Colegii mei l-au primit pe Henry cu căldură, la fel și profesorii; au avut grijă să-i facă timpul aici de neuitat, în cel mai bun sens. Probabil că această căldură îl copleșea, dar eram pregătiți să-i dăm un sens bun.

Henry era incredibil de inteligent; nu avea nevoie de cuvinte pentru a o dovedi. Căci, după cum știm sau ar trebui să știm, faptele tăcute vorbesc întotdeauna mai tare decât cuvintele... mai mult decât cele verbale. La început, a trebuit să ne mulțumim cu încuviințarea din cap. Dar a fost mai mult decât suficient. Henry era genul de persoană care asculta, înțelegea, reținea și observa chiar și cele mai mici detalii. Era genul acela de persoană care este pentru toată lumea, dar nimeni pentru el. O persoană care este dispusă să se sacrifice fără ezitare, chiar și pentru cei care nu ar sacrifica nimic pentru el.

Dar lucrurile s-au schimbat și acea căldură a început să se simtă ca acasă. Minte lui era interesantă. Am fost intrigată și asta nu s-a întâmplat des. Eram dispusă să aflu fiecare colț întunecat care are nevoie de o rază de lumină. Cei mai mulți au încercat să-l încurajeze pe Henry cu cuvinte dulci, poate prea dulci pentru gustul lui. Și totuși, era chiar mai dulce decât ei. De cele mai multe ori am tăcut în preajma lui. Nu foloseam cuvinte. Dar nu am ezitat să-i reamintesc „Arăți grozav astăzi!” Și „Nu îți fie frică”.

Frica este ancora care ne trage în jos. Admirăm grația oceanului, frumusețea lui liniștitoare și uităm să ne gândim la cât de adânc este oceanul. Ne bazăm pe ceea ce este la suprafață și uităm să ne punem capul în apă. Oceanul nu este întotdeauna limpede. Această ancoră ne fură libertatea de exprimare și ne închide într-un cufăr uitat de alge.

De-a lungul săptămânilor, pentru a nu folosi tehnologia când distanța nu ne desparte, am scris pe foi în pauze. Totuși, el a fost cel care mi-a explicat ceva, tipul ăsta era un adevărat maestru al matematicii. Și am răspuns la orice alte întrebări care nu erau legate de fizică sau matematică.

Am observat că acei pereți, în spatele cărora se ascundea, s-au prăbușit și în scurt timp am putut vedea ce era la suprafață, pe mal. Lui Henry îi era frică să nu fie judecat pentru cine este cu adevărat. Deși nu a fost cazul în acest loc, au fost o mulțime de critici în afară lui. Veți auzi o mulțime de lucruri neadevărate în viață de la ei. Dar iată un adevăr din partea mea: criticii nu au oglinzi. Henry nu avea niciun motiv să fie îngrijorat de acest fapt. Trebuia să se accepte pe sine, iar oamenii trebuiau să-l respecte.

Dacă nu, ai fost invitat să călătorești într-un alt ocean. Așa că nu fiți orbiți de ceață și nu călătoriți cu inima, pentru că s-ar putea să vă scufundați. Gândiți-vă mereu la ce i-am spus lui Henry, un citat dintr-un film celebru: *„Dar îmi place să spun că normalul este cea mai crudă insultă dintre toate. Și nu mi-au spus asta niciodată.”*

## **Listen, observe, breathe**

It was the beginning of a new school year; I had just entered the 7th grade. This challenging beginning prepared us for a big surprise: the joining of a new student in our class. That student was a blond boy with blue eyes of medium height from the UK. He was quiet, unusually quiet.

At first, I thought he was very shy, reserved and probably anxious, but I was sorely mistaken. Unfortunately, that boy with warm eyes, though with a cold complexion and a look that speaks a thousand words, was mute. On learning this tragic news, my heart sank in those oceans that hide secrets; secrets that were buried deep...

His face didn't show much emotion, but his eyes showed it all. Eyes I'd swim a lifetime in, and he'd surely give me an oar. My classmates gave Henry a warm welcome, and so did the teachers; they made sure to make her time here unforgettable, in the best sense. This heat was probably overwhelming him, but we were prepared to give it a good meaning.

Henry was incredibly smart; he didn't need words to prove it. For as we know, or should know, silent deeds always speak louder than words...more than verbal ones. At first, we had to settle for nods. But it was more than enough. Henry was the kind of person who listened, understood, retained and noticed even the smallest details. He was like that type of person who is for everyone but no one for him. A person who is willing to sacrifice without hesitation, even for those who would not sacrifice anything for him.

But things changed, and that warmth started to feel like home. His mind was interesting. I was intrigued, and that didn't happen often. I was willing to find out every dark corner that needs a ray of light. Most tried to encourage Henry with sweet words, perhaps too sweet for his taste. And yet, he was even sweeter than them. Most of the time I kept quiet around him. I don't use words. But I didn't hesitate to remind him „You look great today!” And „Don't be afraid”.

Fear is the anchor that pulls us down. We admire the grace of the ocean, its calming beauty, and forget to think about how deep the ocean is. We rely on what is on the surface and forget to put our heads in the water. The ocean is not always clear. This anchor steals our freedom of expression and locks us in a chest forgotten in algae.

Over the weeks, in order not to use technology when the distance does not separate us, we wrote on sheets during breaks. However, he was the one who explained something to me, this guy was a real master of mathematics. And I answered any other questions that were not related to physics or mathematics.

I noticed that those walls he was hiding behind came down, and in a short time I could see what was on the surface, on the shore. Henry was afraid of being judged for who he really is. Although

it was not the case in this place, there were a lot of critics besides him. You will hear a lot of untrue things in life from them. But here's a truth from me: critics don't have mirrors. Henry had no reason to be concerned about this fact. He had to accept himself, and people had to respect it. If not, you were invited to travel to another ocean.

So don't get blinded by the fog and don't travel with your heart, because you might sink. Always think about what I said to Henry, a quote from a famous movie: „But I like to say that normal is the cruelest insult of all. And they never told me that.”

# Armonia

**Autor: Mirela Crînguș**

## *Capitolul 1: Sosirea*

În inima văii, unde râul Argintiu își croia drum printre dealurile acoperite de păduri de fagi, se afla Armonia, un orașel cunoscut pentru piața sa colorată și festivalurile anuale care celebrau recolta bogată. Când familia Ionescu a sosit într-o după-amiază de vară, cu carul lor vechi tras de doi cai puternici, locuitorii orașului au privit cu uimire. Familia Ionescu era diferită – vorbeau o limbă melodioasă și purtau haine țesute manual cu modele complexe. Vecinii au venit unul câte unul să-i salute, aducând coșuri cu fructe proaspete și pâine caldă, iar copiii se jucau curioși în jurul carului, admirând jucăriile de lemn și instrumentele muzicale străine.

## *Capitolul 2: Primii pași*

Copiii din Armonia, conduși de neînfricată Ana și istețul Ionel, au fost primii care au depășit bariera limbii și a culturii. Ei au invitat noii veniți la jocurile lor preferate în piața centrală și au fost încântați să învețe jocuri noi de la frații Ionescu – Maria și Alexandru. În curând, râsetele copiilor au umplut aerul, creând o melodie care a unit două culturi într-o armonie perfectă. Jocurile lor – de la leapșa la ascunselea – au devenit rapid favoritele tuturor copiilor din oraș.

## *Capitolul 3: Sărbătoarea Întâlnirii*

Seara sărbătorii a fost una memorabilă. Fiecare familie din Armonia a adus ceva special la masa comunală: de la sarmale și mămăligă până la pâine cu zahar și hummus. Muzica a răsunat pe străzi, iar dansurile tradiționale s-au amestecat într-un carnaval de culoare și bucurie. Poveștile despre vechile patrii și visurile despre viitor s-au împletit sub cerul înstelat. Bunicul Gheorghe a povestit despre zilele sale de tinerețe petrecute pe mare, iar tânărul Ahmed a împărtășit legende din deșert.

## *Capitolul 4: Lecții de viață*

În zilele care au urmat sărbătorii, Armonia a fost un loc de învățare continuă. Adulții au început să participe la ateliere de limbă organizate de familia Ionescu în biblioteca orașului, iar copiii au creat un club al jocurilor internaționale în parcul central. Orașul a înflorit sub noua sa identitate multiculturală, iar fiecare zi aducea noi oportunități de a împărtăși și celebra diversitatea. Profesorul Mihai a introdus lecții despre culturi diferite la școală, iar florareasa Ana a început să creeze aranjamente florale inspirate din întreaga lume.

## *Capitolul 5: Ambasadorii Incluziunii*

Copiii din Armonia, acum cunoscuți ca “Ambasadorii Incluziunii”, au inspirat orașe vecine să îmbrățișeze diversitatea. Ei au organizat festivaluri interculturale și au invitat copiii din orașele vecine să se alăture în joc și descoperire. Prin arta lor, muzica și poveștile, ei au transmis un mesaj

puternic despre frumusețea unității în diversitate. Festivalurile au devenit evenimente anuale, așteptate cu nerăbdare de toți locuitorii regiunii. Copiii au învățat să cânte la instrumente muzicale din diferite colțuri ale lumii și au dansat dansuri tradiționale în costume colorate, împărtășind bucuria lor cu toți cei prezenți.

#### *Capitolul 6: Podul prieteniei*

Într-o zi, copiii din Armonia au avut o idee strălucită: să construiască un “Pod al Prieteniei” peste râul Argintiu, simbolizând legătura dintre diferite culturi și comunități. Cu ajutorul părinților și al bunicilor, ei au adunat materiale și au lucrat împreună pentru a construi podul. La inaugurare, toată lumea a mers pe pod, mână în mână, în timp ce fanfara locală cânta melodii vesele.

#### *Capitolul 7: Grădina diversității*

Inspirați de succesul Podului Prieteniei, locuitorii din Armonia au decis să creeze o grădină comunitară numită “Grădina Diversității”. Fiecare familie a plantat flori și arbuști specifici țării lor de origine, transformând grădina într-un mozaic viu de culori și parfumuri. Grădina a devenit un loc de întâlnire pentru toți cei care doreau să se bucure de frumusețea naturii și să învețe despre plantele din diferite părți ale lumii.

#### *Capitolul 8: Biblioteca poveștilor*

Biblioteca orașului Armonia a fost redenumită “Biblioteca Poveștilor”, devenind un sanctuar al cunoașterii și al culturilor lumii. Cărțile în diferite limbi umpleau rafturile, iar seri de povestiri erau organizate săptămânal, unde bunicile și bunicii împărtășeau basme și legende din tinerețea lor. Copiii ascultau cu ochii larg deschiși, imaginându-și lumi îndepărtate și aventuri fantastice.

#### *Capitolul 9: Melodia unității*

Muzica a jucat întotdeauna un rol important în viața locuitorilor din Armonia. În semn de recunoștință pentru muzica adusă de familia Ionescu, orașul a organizat un concert grandios numit “Melodia Unității”. Muzicieni din toată regiunea s-au adunat pentru a cânta împreună, creând o simfonie care a răsunat peste vârfurile dealurilor și a adus lacrimi de bucurie pe fețele ascultătorilor.

#### *Epilog: Armonia - O Lecție de Umanitate*

Povestea orașelului Armonia a călătorit departe și larg, inspirând comunități din întreaga lume să privească diversitatea ca pe o comoară. Orașul mic cu inima mare a devenit un simbol al speranței și al unității în diversitate. Povestea lor continuă să inspire generații întregi, demonstrând că atunci când inimile sunt deschise, diferențele dintre noi pot fi cele mai mari daruri.



# Armonia

## *Chapter 1: The Arrival*

In the heart of the valley, where The Silver River wound its way through hills covered with beech forests, was Armonia, a small town known for its colorful market and annual festivals celebrating the rich harvest. When the Ionescu family arrived one summer afternoon, with their old carriage pulled by two strong horses, the townspeople looked on in amazement. The Ionescu family was different – they spoke a melodious language and wore hand-woven clothes with intricate patterns. Neighbors came one by one to greet them, bringing baskets of fresh fruit and warm bread, and children curiously played around the chariot, admiring the wooden toys and foreign musical instruments.

## *Chapter 2: First steps*

The children from Armonia, led by the fearless Ana and the clever Ionel, were the first to overcome the barrier of language and culture. They invited the newcomers to their favorite games in the central square and were delighted to learn new games from the Ionescu brothers – Maria and Alexandru. Soon the children's laughter filled the air, creating a song that united two cultures in perfect harmony. Their games – from hide and seek to hide and seek – quickly became the favorites of all the children in town.

## *Chapter 3: Feast of the Encounter*

The evening of the celebration was a memorable one. Each family in Armonia brought something special to the hummus as well. Music rang out in the streets and traditional dances mingled in a carnival of color and joy. Stories about old homelands and dreams about the future intertwined under the starry sky. Grandfather Gheorghe talked about his youthful days spent at sea, and young Ahmed shared legends from the desert.

## *Chapter 4: Life Lessons*

In the days following the celebration, Armonia was a place of continuous learning. Adults started attending language workshops organized by the Ionescu family in the city library, and children created an international games club in the central park. The city flourished under its new multicultural identity, and each day brought new opportunities to share and celebrate diversity. Professor Mihai introduced lessons about different cultures to the school, and florist Ana started creating flower arrangements inspired from around the world.

## *Chapter 5: Ambassadors of Inclusion*

The children of Armonia, now known as the "Ambassadors of Inclusion", have inspired neighboring towns to embrace diversity. They organized intercultural festivals and invited children from neighboring towns to join in play and discovery. Through their art, music and stories, they

delivered a powerful message about the beauty of unity in diversity. The festivals have become annual events, eagerly awaited by all the inhabitants of the region. The children learned to play musical instruments from different corners of the world and danced traditional dances in colorful costumes, sharing their joy with everyone present.

#### *Chapter 6: The Bridge of Friendship*

One day, the children of Armonia had a brilliant idea: to build a "Friendship Bridge" over the Argintiu River, symbolizing the connection between different cultures and communities. With the help of their parents and grandparents, they gathered materials and worked together to build the bridge. At the opening, everyone walked the bridge hand in hand while the local brass band played happy tunes.

#### *Chapter 7: The Garden of Diversity*

Inspired by the success of the Friendship Bridge, the residents of Armonia decided to create a community garden called "Diversity Garden". Each family planted flowers and shrubs specific to their country of origin, transforming the garden into a living mosaic of colors and fragrances. The garden became a meeting place for all those who wanted to enjoy the beauty of nature and learn about plants from different parts of the world.

#### *Chapter 8: The Story Library*

The Armonia city library was renamed the "Library of Stories", becoming a sanctuary of knowledge and world cultures. Books in different languages filled the shelves, and story nights were held weekly, where grandmothers and grandfathers shared fairy tales and legends from their youth. The children listened with wide eyes, imagining distant worlds and fantastic adventures.

#### *Chapter 9: The Song of Unity*

Music has always played an important role in the lives of the people of Armonia. As a sign of gratitude for the music brought by the Ionescu family, the city organized a grandiose concert called "Melody of Unity". Musicians from all over the region gathered to sing together, creating a symphony that echoed over the hilltops and brought tears of joy to the faces of the listeners.

#### *Epilogue: Harmony - A Lesson in Humanity*

The story of the small town of Armonia has traveled far and wide, inspiring communities around the world to view diversity as a treasure. The small town with a big heart has become a symbol of hope and unity in diversity. Their story continues to inspire generations, proving that when hearts are open, our differences can be our greatest gifts.

## Cultura vibrantă a Slatinei, România

**Autori: Andreea Paltin, Irmin Nicușor**

Cuibărit de-a lungul malurilor Oltului, Slatina este un oraș care pulsa cu o bogată moștenire culturală, unde trecutul și prezentul se împletesc pentru a crea o experiență cu adevărat captivantă. De la arhitectura sa istorică la tradițiile sale artizanale înfloritoare, Slatina oferă vizitatorilor o privire în inima culturii românești, prezentând spiritul de durată al țării și căldura oamenilor săi.

### *O istorie bogată împletită în viața de zi cu zi*

Istoria Slatinei poate fi urmărită cu secole în urmă, cu dovezi ale așezării umane datând încă din secolul al IV-lea d.Hr. De-a lungul anilor, orașul a fost modelat de fluxul și refluxul diferitelor civilizații, fiecare lăsând amprenta de neșters asupra culturii locale. De la rădăcinile antice dacice până la influențele imperiilor roman, bizantin și otoman, Slatina a integrat perfect aceste elemente diverse în identitatea sa modernă, creând o tapiserie de tradiții care sunt țesute în țesătura vieții de zi cu zi.

### *Sărbătorind meșteșugul tradițional*

Slatina este renumită pentru comunitatea sa artizanală înfloritoare, unde meșteri pricepuți păstrează în viață tehnicile tradiționale ale orașului. De la broderia complicată a textilelor locale până la sculptura măiestrie în lemn care adornează casele și bisericile orașului, locuitorii din Slatina sunt mândri imens de moștenirea lor artizanală. Vizitatorii se pot scufunda în ateliere și demonstrații, asistând la prima mână a dăruirii și pasiunii care implică fiecare lucrare manuală. creație, asigurându-se că aceste abilități atemporale sunt transmise din generație în generație.

### *Piața plină de viață din Slatina*

În inima vieții culturale a Slatinei se află piața plină de viață, un centru plin de viață unde localnicii și vizitatorii deopotrivă se adună pentru a experimenta energia vibrantă a orașului. Aici, tarabe pline de produse proaspete, delicatose de casă și meșteșuguri artizanale creează un festin senzorial, invitând vizitatorii să exploreze aromele și tradițiile României. Piața nu este doar un loc de cumpărături, ci o întâlnire socială în care se formează prietenii, se împărtășesc povești, iar ritmurile vieții de zi cu zi curg și reflux cu o energie contagioasă.

### *Delicii culinare: Arome ale României*

Scena culinară din Slatina este o mărturie a bogăției bucătăriei românești, care a fost modelată de diversele influențe culturale ale țării. De la tocanele copioase și carnea la grătar care reflectă moștenirea rurală a regiunii până la produsele de patiserie delicate și mirodeniile parfumate care sugerează rădăcinile orașului din Europa de Est, fiecare mușcătură în Slatina este o călătorie a aromelor. Specialitățile locale precum mamăligă (un terci de comeal), sarmale (rulouri de varză) și

papanași (produse de patiserie din aluat prăjit) sunt doar câteva dintre mâncărurile delicioase care prezintă arta culinară a regiunii.

#### *Muzică și dans: Bătăile inimii Slatinei*

##### *Muzică populară tradițională*

Moștenirea muzicală a Slatinei este adânc înrădăcinată în muzica populară tradițională a României, care este celebrată prin spectacole pline de viață și adunări comunitare. Melodiile bântuitoare ale flautului de tiai, zgomotul ritmic al cimbalomului și vocea plină de suflet ale lautari (muzicieni tradiționali) creează un peisaj sonor captivant care transportă ascultătorii în inima culturii românești.

##### *Tradiții de dans vibrante*

Slătinenii sunt cunoscuți pentru dragostea pentru dans, cu un repertoriu bogat de dansuri populare tradiționale care se transmit din generație în generație. De la energica Hora la grațiosul Călusari, aceste forme de dans nu sunt doar un mijloc de distracție, ci o modalitate de conservare și celebrare a moștenirii culturale a orașului. Vizitatorii pot asista adesea la aceste dansuri în timpul festivalurilor și sărbătorilor locale,

##### *Instrumente muzicale expuse*

În tot orașul, vizitatorii pot explora bogata moștenire muzicală a Slatinei vizitând ateliere de instrumente și expoziții. Aici, ei pot fi martori a măiestriei complicate care implică crearea instrumentelor tradiționale românești, de la lemnul sculptat al cimbalomului până la prelucrarea metalică delicată a flautului de tigaie, adâncindu-și și mai mult aprecierea pentru tradițiile muzicale ale orașului.

#### *Spirit comunitar: îmbrățișarea primitoare a Slatinei*

1. Ospitalitate caldă. Locuitorii din Slatina sunt cunoscuți pentru spiritul lor cald și primitor, asigurându-se că vizitatorii se simt ca niște oaspeți de onoare în orașul lor. De la negustorii prietenoși din piață până la familiile locale care își deschid casele pentru a împărtăși rețete și povești tradiționale, slătinenii întruchipează un sentiment profund de comunitate și ospitalitate, care este esențial pentru identitatea culturală a orașului.

2. Festivaluri vibrante pe tot parcursul anului. Slatina găzduiește un calendar vibrant de festivaluri și sărbători care reunesc comunitatea. Din animata Sărbătoarea Soarelui (Sărbătoarea Soare) vara la piețele festive de Crăciun care umplu de bucurie străzile orașului, aceste evenimente servesc drept mărturie a tradițiilor trainice și a valorilor împărtășite care unesc slătinenii.

#### 3. Spiritul civic

Slătinenii sunt profund angajați în bunăstarea și dezvoltarea orașului lor, participând activ la inițiative civice și proiecte comunitare. Acest sentiment puternic de mândrie civică și angajament se

reflectă în spațiile publice bine întreținute ale orașului, în afacerile locale înfloritoare și în sentimentul general de mândrie și apartenență care pătrunde pe străzile din Slatina.

## **The Vibrant Culture of Slatina, Romania**

Nestled along the banks of the Olt River, Slatina is a city that pulses with a rich cultural heritage, where the past and present intertwine to create a truly captivating experience. From its historic architecture to its thriving artisanal traditions, Slatina offers visitors a glimpse into the heart of Romanian culture, showcasing the country's enduring spirit and the warmth of its people.

### *A Rich History Woven into Daily Life*

Slatina's history can be traced back centuries, with evidence of human settlement dating as far as the 4th century AD. Over the years, the city has been shaped by the ebb and flow of various civilizations, each leaving its indelible mark on the local culture. From the ancient Dacian roots to the influences of the Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman empires, Slatina has seamlessly integrated these diverse elements into its modern identity, creating a tapestry of traditions that are woven into the fabric of everyday life.

### *Celebrating Traditional Craftsmanship*

Slatina is renowned for its thriving artisanal community, where skilled craftspeople keep the city's traditional techniques alive. From the intricate embroidery of local textiles to the masterful woodcarving that adorns the city's homes and churches, the residents of Slatina take immense pride in their artisanal heritage. Visitors can immerse themselves in workshops and demonstrations, witnessing firsthand the dedication and passion that goes into each handmade creation, ensuring that these timeless skills are passed down from generation to generation.

### *The Lively Slatina Marketplace*

At the heart of Slatina's cultural life is the lively marketplace, a bustling hub where locals and visitors alike gather to experience the city's vibrant energy. Here, stalls brimming with fresh produce, homemade delicacies, and artisanal crafts create a sensory feast, inviting visitors to explore the flavors and traditions of Romania. The market is not just a place to shop, but a social gathering where friendships are forged, stories are shared, and the rhythms of daily life ebb and flow with a contagious energy.

### *Culinary Delights: Flavours of Romania*

Slatina's culinary scene is a testament to the richness of Romanian cuisine, which has been shaped by the country's diverse cultural influences. From the hearty stews and grilled meats that reflect the region's rural heritage to the delicate pastries and fragrant spices that hint at the city's Eastern European roots, every bite in Slatina is a journey of flavors. Local specialties like mamăligă (a cornmeal porridge), sarmale (stuffed cabbage rolls), and papanăși (fried dough pastries) are just a few of the delectable dishes that showcase the culinary artistry of the region.

### *Music and Dance: The Heartbeat of Slatina*

### *Traditional Folk Music*

Slatina's musical heritage is deeply rooted in the traditional folk music of Romania, which is celebrated through lively performances and community gatherings. The haunting melodies of the pan flute, the rhythmic strumming of the cimbalom, and the soulful vocals of the lautari (traditional musicians) create a captivating soundscape that transports listeners to the heart of Romanian culture.

### *Vibrant Dance Traditions*

The people of Slatina are known for their love of dance, with a rich repertoire of traditional folk dances that are passed down through generations. From the energetic Hora to the graceful Călusari, these dance forms are not just a means of entertainment, but a way of preserving and celebrating the city's cultural heritage. Visitors can often witness these dances during local festivals and celebrations,

### *Musical Instruments on Display*

Throughout the city, visitors can explore the rich musical heritage of Slatina by visiting instrument workshops and displays. Here, they can witness the intricate craftsmanship that goes into the creation of traditional Romanian instruments, from the carved woodwork of the cimbalom to the delicate metalwork of the pan flute, further deepening their appreciation for the city's musical traditions.

### *Community Spirit: Slatina's Welcoming Embrace*

1. Warm Hospitality The residents of Slatina are known for their warm and welcoming spirit, ensuring that visitors feel like honored guests in their city. From the friendly shopkeepers in the marketplace to the local families who open their homes to share traditional recipes and stories, the people of Slatina embody a deep sense of community and hospitality that is central to the city's cultural identity.

2. Vibrant Festivals Throughout the year, Slatina plays host to a vibrant calendar of festivals and celebrations that bring the community together. From the lively Sărbătoarea Soarelui (Feast of the Sun) in summer to the festive Christmas markets that fill the city's streets with cheer, these events serve as a testament to the enduring traditions and shared values that unite the people of Slatina.

### 3. Civic Engagement

The residents of Slatina are deeply invested in the well-being and development of their city, actively participating in civic initiatives and community projects. This strong sense of civic pride and engagement is reflected in the city's well-maintained public spaces, the thriving local businesses, and the overall sense of pride and belonging that permeates through Slatina's streets.

# GREECE

## A girl named Mairy and her story

*Author: Anastasia Nimalakoumaran*

Dear Grandma,

Today, I officially reached the milestone of my 1st month of high school! It's been an overwhelming month overall, as school has basically just started and also because we've been under a lot of pressure with exams, but I've also made a lot of great memories.

I'm writing to tell you about something that has happened a few days ago with a student at my school. Her name is Mairy and she has been in my town ever since I can remember myself. Mairy is the same age as me, which is 14 years old and she has already had a group of friends. Now dear Grandma, you might be wondering what this has to do with what happened at school? Well, although she was born here and her mother is also from this town, her father is from Asia, specifically Sri Lanka. She has never told anyone about this event, but not because she was ashamed of this, simply because no one ever asked her about it. Although one could easily tell that her father was not from that country, as he has a long and unusual surname. Anyway, back on topic, ever since some kids in high school learned about it, she's been bullied and it's really devastating.

But what breaks my heart the most is that this is not the first time she has faced or experienced this kind of behaviour.

Let me give you some information here. She was baptized an Orthodox Christian and anyone could get the memo due to the fact that her first name is Christian and belongs to St. Mary. Also, she is coloured which means she has a different colour from most children there, specifically because she is brown, as they call it in South Asia, she looks somewhat like Muslim children because they have almost the same skin tone. So, they tease her about it and not in a good way. As I mentioned before, it is not the first time this has happened; in fact, the first time this happened was when she was in the first grade of primary school, which is about 5 or 6 years old. YES, I am also surprised that she had to be subjected to this treatment at THAT age! Back on topic, Mairy had many friends when she was younger, but there was also a girl named Panagiota who was her so-called "enemy". Panagiota here, did nothing wrong except for the fact that she told everyone in her class, because both girls were in the same class if you didn't understand, not to be her friend and not to even talk to her, just because she thought Mairy was not a good person and was ruining people's lives. Mairy, despite the daily threats and days that she didn't want to go to school to avoid seeing Panagiota, remained strong and



most of the time did her best to ignore her without a second thought. Anyway, this girl stopped the mental torture when she moved before the fifth grade in elementary school.

In addition, something else I wanted to mention because I told you earlier about her religion, when she was 8 years old just because of her appearance she was not given a RE book by the teacher. What's more, she saw all of her classmates getting books and because she was little and not knowing about how people can judge you by the colour of your skin, she just thought that they didn't give the teacher enough books to hand out although the teacher was getting more than enough. It got to the point where her mother went to the school and asked the principal why her daughter wasn't given a book and why the teacher wouldn't let her participate. The worst part was that not even the school principal was informed of this behaviour.

Now, I'll tell you what happened a few days ago. Mairy was just minding her own business, talking and laughing with her friends, when all of a sudden, some guys started calling her names and telling her that she doesn't belong here just because of the colour of her skin. Of course, she ignored them in the hopes of not making a scene in front of the whole school. But Mairys' prayers were not answered and the couple of teenagers started getting more aggressive with their words and actions that all the kids who went to the same school as her, approached them and started checking them and whispering trying to find out what was going on at that moment. The 14 year old was now scared to death of what was going to happen next. Luckily for her, some teachers came to her rescue and took the teens to the principal's office to apologize for their behaviour. The poor girl walked away and started to cry until the bell rang, which signified that the next lesson was about to begin. Reluctantly, she entered the classroom with a brave face, acting as if nothing had happened before the break. Mairy continued to go to her classes until the end of the day successfully and then she went home.

However, many kids here would have gone straight to their parents and tell them about everything, complaining to them about how the kids treated them. Well, in my case the teenage girl opted not to inform her parents about what had happened between her and the group of boys, and instead keep it to herself until she decides to speak about it to them. Even though I believe this will be continued, Mairy knows what to do and also has a loving friend group that is always there for her when she needs help.

That's all I wanted to tell you about. I hope you read my letter and write back to me. I'm telling you all this because I trust you and you will tell me all sorts of advice so I can help the girl. Also, if there is a possibility you remember how was your first weeks of school?

Hugs and kisses,

Your grandchild Anastasia.

## Ένα κορίτσι που το λένε Μαίρη: Η ιστορία της

Αγαπητή γιαγιά,

Σήμερα, έφτασα και επίσημα στο ορόσημο του 1ου μήνα του Γυμνασίου! Ήταν ένας συγκλονιστικός μήνας συνολικά, καθώς το σχολείο ουσιαστικά μόλις ξεκίνησε και επειδή είχαμε μεγάλη πίεση με τις εξετάσεις. Ωστόσο, έχω δημιουργήσει και πολλές υπέροχες αναμνήσεις.

Γράφω για να σας πω κάτι που έχει συμβεί πριν λίγες μέρες με μία μαθήτριά στο σχολείο μου. Το όνομά της είναι Μαίρη και είναι στην πόλη μου από τότε που θυμάμαι τον εαυτό μου. Η Μαίρη είναι συνομήλικη με εμένα, η οποία είναι 14 ετών και έχει ήδη μια παρέα φίλων. Τώρα, αγαπητή γιαγιά, ίσως αναρωτιέστε τι σχέση έχει αυτό με αυτό που συνέβη στο σχολείο; Λοιπόν, παρόλο που γεννήθηκε εδώ και η μητέρα της είναι επίσης από αυτήν την πόλη, ο πατέρας της είναι από την Ασία και συγκεκριμένα από τη Σρι Λάνκα. Δεν έχει μιλήσει ποτέ σε κανέναν για αυτό το γεγονός, αλλά όχι επειδή ντρεπόταν γι' αυτό, απλά επειδή κανείς δεν τη ρώτησε ποτέ γι' αυτό. Αν και θα μπορούσε κανείς εύκολα να πει ότι ο πατέρας της δεν ήταν από αυτή τη χώρα, καθώς έχει ένα μακρύ και ασυνήθιστο επώνυμο. Τέλος πάντων, επανέρχομαι στο θέμα, από τότε που το έμαθαν κάποια παιδιά στο γυμνάσιο, έχει δεχτεί bullying και είναι πραγματικά καταστροφικό. Αλλά αυτό που με ραγίζει περισσότερο είναι ότι δεν είναι η πρώτη φορά που αντιμετωπίζει ή βιώνει τέτοιου είδους συμπεριφορά.

Επιτρέψτε μου να σας δώσω μερικές πληροφορίες εδώ. Βαπτίστηκε Χριστιανή Ορθόδοξη και ο καθένας μπορούσε να πάρει το αναγνωρίσει λόγω του ότι το μικρό της όνομα είναι Χριστιανικό και ανήκει στην Παναγία. Επίσης είναι έγχρωμη που σημαίνει ότι έχει διαφορετικό χρώμα από τα περισσότερα παιδιά εκεί, συγκεκριμένα επειδή είναι καστανή, όπως τη λένε στη Νότια Ασία, μοιάζει κάπως με μουσουλμάνα καθώς έχουν σχεδόν τον ίδιο τόνο στο χρώμα του δέρματος. Έτσι, την πειράζουν γι' αυτό και όχι με την καλή έννοια. Όπως ανέφερα προηγουμένως, δεν είναι η πρώτη φορά που συμβαίνει αυτό. Στην πραγματικότητα η πρώτη φορά που συνέβη ήταν όταν ήταν στην πρώτη τάξη του δημοτικού σχολείου, που είναι περίπου 5 ή 6 ετών. ΝΑΙ Είμαι επίσης έκπληκτη που έπρεπε να υποβληθεί σε αυτή τη μεταχείριση σε ΑΥΤΗ ΤΗΝ ΗΛΙΚΙΑ!!!. Πίσω στο θέμα, η Μαίρη είχε πολλούς φίλους όταν ήταν μικρότερη, αλλά υπήρχε και μια κοπέλα που την έλεγαν Παναγιώτα που ήταν ο λεγόμενος «εχθρός» της. Η Παναγιώτα εδώ, δεν έκανε τίποτα κακό εκτός από το ότι είπε σε όλους στην τάξη της, γιατί και τα δύο κορίτσια ήταν στην ίδια τάξη αν δεν κατάλαβες, να μην είναι φίλη της και να μην της μιλήσω καν, επειδή νόμιζε ότι, η Μαίρη δεν ήταν καλός άνθρωπος και κατέστρεφε τις ζωές των ανθρώπων. Η Μαίρη, παρά τις καθημερινές απειλές και τις μέρες που δεν ήθελε να πάει σχολείο για να αποφύγει να δει την Παναγιώτα, παρέμεινε δυνατή και τις περισσότερες φορές έκανε ό,τι μπορούσε για να την αγνοήσει χωρίς δεύτερη σκέψη. Τέλος πάντων, αυτό το ψυχικό μαρτύριο σταμάτησε όταν η Παναγιώτα μετακόμισε πριν ξεκινήσει η πέμπτη τάξη στο Δημοτικό Σχολείο.

Επιπλέον, κάτι άλλο ήθελα να αναφέρω, γιατί σας είπα νωρίτερα για τη θρησκεία της, όταν ήταν 8 χρονών μόνο και μόνο λόγω της εμφάνισής της δεν της δόθηκε βιβλίο θρησκευτικών από τη δασκάλα. Είδε όλους τους συμμαθητές της να παίρνουν βιβλία και επειδή ήταν μικρή και δεν ήξερε πώς μπορούν να σε κρίνουν οι άνθρωποι από το χρώμα του δέρματός σου, απλά σκέφτηκε ότι δεν έδωσαν στη δασκάλα αρκετά βιβλία για να τα μοιράσει, παρόλο που η δασκάλα έπαιρνε περισσότερα από όσα χρειαζόταν στην πραγματικότητα. Τότε, η μητέρα της έφτασε στο σημείο να πάει στο σχολείο και να ρωτήσει τον διευθυντή γιατί δεν έδωσαν στην κόρη της ένα βιβλίο Θρησκευτικών και γιατί η δασκάλα δεν την άφησε να συμμετάσχει στο μάθημα. Το χειρότερο ήταν ότι ούτε ο ίδιος ο διευθυντής του σχολείου είχε ενημερωθεί για αυτή τη συμπεριφορά.

Τώρα, θα σας πω τι έγινε πριν από λίγες μέρες. Η Μαίρη είχε μόνο τις δικές της δουλειές, μιλούσε και γελούσε με τις φίλες της, όταν ξαφνικά κάποιοι τύποι άρχισαν να τη λένε με το όνομά της και να της λένε ότι δεν ανήκει εδώ μόνο και μόνο λόγω του χρώματος του δέρματός της. Φυσικά, τους αγνόησε με την ελπίδα να μην δημιουργήσει σκηνή μπροστά σε όλο το σχολείο. Αλλά οι προσευχές της Μαίρη δεν εισακούστηκαν και η παρέα των εφήβων άρχισε να γίνεται πιο επιθετική με τα λόγια και τις πράξεις τους που τα παιδιά που πήγαιναν στο ίδιο σχολείο με εκείνη, τα

πλησίασαν και άρχισαν να τα ελέγχουν και να ψιθυρίζουν προσπαθώντας να μάθουν τι συνέβαινε εκείνη τη στιγμή. Η 14χρονη Μαίρη τώρα φοβόταν μέχρι θανάτου για το τι επρόκειτο να συμβεί στη συνέχεια. Για καλή της τύχη, κάποιοι δάσκαλοι ήρθαν να τη σώσουν και μετέφεραν τους έφηβους στο γραφείο του διευθυντή για να απολογηθούν για τη συμπεριφορά τους. Το φτωχό κορίτσι απομακρύνθηκε και άρχισε να κλαίει μέχρι που χτύπησε το κουδούνι, που σήμαινε ότι το επόμενο μάθημα ήταν έτοιμο να ξεκινήσει. Απρόθυμα, μπήκε στην τάξη με γενναίο πρόσωπο, συμπεριφερόμενη σαν να μην είχε συμβεί τίποτα πριν από το διάλειμμα. Η Μαίρη συνέχισε να πηγαίνει στα μαθήματά της μέχρι το τέλος της ημέρας με επιτυχία και όταν χτύπησε το κουδούνι, πήγε στο σπίτι της.

Ωστόσο, πολλά παιδιά εδώ θα πήγαιναν κατευθείαν στους γονείς τους και θα τους έλεγαν για τα πάντα, παραπονούμενοι για το πώς τους συμπεριφέρθηκαν τα παιδιά. Λοιπόν, στην περίπτωσή μου η έφηβη επέλεξε να μην ενημερώσει τους γονείς της για το τι είχε συμβεί ανάμεσα σε αυτήν και την ομάδα των αγοριών, και αντ' αυτού να το κρατήσει για τον εαυτό της μέχρι να αποφασίσει η ίδια να τους μιλήσει γι' αυτό. Παρόλο που πιστεύω ότι αυτό θα συνεχιστεί, η Μαίρη ξέρει τι να κάνει και έχει επίσης μια στοργική ομάδα φίλων που είναι πάντα δίπλα της όταν χρειάζεται βοήθεια.

Μόνο για αυτό ήθελα να σας πω. Ελπίζω να διαβάσετε το γράμμα μου και να μου γράψετε πίσω. Σας τα λέω όλα αυτά γιατί σας εμπιστεύομαι και θα μου πείτε κάθε είδους συμβουλές για να βοηθήσω το κορίτσι. Επίσης, αν υπάρχει πιθανότητα θυμάστε πώς ήταν οι πρώτες εβδομάδες του σχολείου σας;

Αγκαλιές και φιλία,

Η εγγονή σου Αναστασία.

## **The story of Aphrodite**

*Author: Anna Karanasiou*

During the middle of this school year a new girl came to our class named Aphrodite. The girl seemed antisocial as she sat at the desk by herself and didn't talk to anyone. So, after a while I took the decision to approach and talk to her. I offered to sit together in the classroom if she wanted to, of course.

Day after day we started to talk more and more! A few days later she told me about the problem that had concerned her for a while! She has been bullied because of her weight! This problem was not just this year, but started a long time ago and hasn't stopped yet!

So, she took the opportunity and began to describe her whole story to me. She told me that she had changed schools in the fifth grade because her parents had to move to a new house. At the new school, the kids made fun of her from the first day. Her parents kept asking her every day if something was going on but she kept telling them that everything was fine. She thought that this situation would stop but it got only worse. There was something she told me that made me very sad.... One day her teacher at the previous school wanted to do an experiment! He picked her and a very thin pupil to demonstrate the problems of being overweight! She felt betrayed and mocked by someone who is meant to protect her! She was so ashamed! The action of teacher and her weight obviously distressed her very much and unfortunately it didn't stop there.

Another day, in the evening at their family table, Aphrodite's grandmother made many negative comments about her body and how she should lose weight. Aphrodite, hearing these comments coming from her beloved grandmother closed herself off even more. Her grandmothers' remarks saddened her so much that even a start at a new school with new kids could change her mood. That's why I thought she was antisocial at the beginning!

After we started talking and started to confide in me about her concerns she got better. In the end with all these difficulties she had faced, Aphrodite managed to overcome them, become tougher and more confident and learnt to love her body

A shared problem is half a problem!

## Η ιστορία της Αφροδίτης

Στα μέσα αυτής της σχολικής χρονιάς ένα νέο κορίτσι, η Αφροδίτη, ήρθε στην τάξη μας. Το κορίτσι φαινόταν αντικοινωνικό καθώς καθόταν μόνη της στο θρανίο και δεν μιλούσε σε κανέναν. Έτσι μετά από λίγο πήρα την απόφαση να την πλησιάσω και να της μιλήσω. Προσφέρθηκα να καθίσουμε μαζί στην τάξη, αν το ήθελε, φυσικά.

Μέρα με τη μέρα αρχίσαμε να μιλάμε όλο και περισσότερο! Λίγες μέρες μετά, μου μίλησε για το πρόβλημα που την απασχολούσε. Είχε δεχθεί εκφοβισμό (bullying) λόγω του βάρους της! Αυτό το πρόβλημα δεν συνέβη μόνο φέτος, αλλά ξεκίνησε εδώ και πολύ καιρό και δεν έχει σταματήσει ακόμα!

Βρήκε λοιπόν την ευκαιρία και άρχισε να μου περιγράφει όλη την ιστορία της. Μου είπε ότι είχε αλλάξει σχολείο στην πέμπτη δημοτικού γιατί οι γονείς της έπρεπε να μετακομίσουν σε νέο σπίτι. Στο νέο σχολείο τα παιδιά την κοροΐδευαν από την πρώτη ημέρα. Οι γονείς της τη ρωτούσαν κάθε μέρα, αν συμβαίνει κάτι, αλλά εκείνη τους έλεγε ότι όλα ήταν καλά. Σκέφτηκε ότι αυτή η κατάσταση θα σταματήσει, αλλά χειροτέρεψε. Υπήρχε κάτι που μου είπε και με στεναχώρησε πολύ. Μια μέρα η δασκάλα της στο προηγούμενο σχολείο ήθελε να κάνει ένα πείραμα! Διάλεξε την Αφροδίτη και μια πιο αδύνατη συμμαθήτριά της για να τονίσει τα προβλήματα που προκύπτουν από το υπερβολικό βάρος! Ένιωθε προδομένη και προσβεβλημένη από κάποιον που ήταν εκεί για να την προστατεύσει! Ντρεπόταν τόσο πολύ! Η ενέργεια της δασκάλας για τα κιλά της προφανώς την στενοχώρησαν πολύ και δυστυχώς το πρόβλημα δεν σταμάτησε εκεί.

Μια άλλη μέρα, το βράδυ στο οικογενειακό τους τραπέζι, η γιαγιά της Αφροδίτης έκανε πολλά αρνητικά σχόλια για το σώμα της λέγοντάς της ότι πρέπει να χάσει βάρος. Η Αφροδίτη, στο άκουσμα αυτών των σχολίων από την αγαπημένη της γιαγιά, κλείστηκε στον εαυτό της ακόμα περισσότερο. Οι παρατηρήσεις της γιαγιάς της, την στεναχώρησαν τόσο πολύ που ακόμη και το ξεκίνημα σε ένα νέο σχολείο με νέα παιδιά δεν θα μπορούσε να της αλλάξει τη διάθεση. Γι' αυτό νόμιζα ότι ήταν αντικοινωνική στην αρχή!

Αφού αρχίσαμε να μιλάμε και άρχισε να μου εκμυστηρεύεται τις ανησυχίες της, ένιωσα καλύτερα. Στο τέλος η Αφροδίτη παρά τις δυσκολίες που είχε αντιμετωπίσει, κατάφερε να τις ξεπεράσει, να γίνει πιο σκληρή και με μεγαλύτερη αυτοπεποίθηση και έμαθε να αγαπά το σώμα της. Όταν ένα πρόβλημα το μοιραζόμαστε με κάποιον, λύνεται πιο εύκολα!

## Conflicts

**Author: Oikonomopoulos George**

Hi, I'm George. I'm fourteen and I'm in the second grade of Junior High School. I live out of town in a village; this makes it harder for me to go to school because of my leg mobility difficulties, culminating in breaking my leg in the middle of the school year. Attending school is a daily struggle, from my transition till the end of the school day.

The school provides me with a school assistant to help me and it is the only school in the area which I have access to the building with a ramp so I had to attend classes there, missing my classmates and my friends from primary school who went to another Junior High School. My new classmates were cautious and hesitant with me at first causing me embarrassment and I felt their eyes penetrating me. However, the Principal and later the teachers, explained to them how important it was to accept me and how I gave them the opportunity to meet someone different to realize that I am a child just like them and not an "alien". From then on, they have treated me as an equal; we work together while doing school activities, we play jokes, we tease and help each other and I correct their spelling mistakes because I got it and I no longer feel isolated or excluded. The negative mood has disappeared and my life as a member of society has finally begun.

I can't help but mention the unreserved support and encouragement of my teachers. Apart from my parents, they were the ones who also supported me psychologically, emphasizing the importance of my presence at school not only for me in order to become integrated into society, but for my classmates and for the teachers themselves who had to develop and educate a pupil with special characteristics. By this way they also became more qualified and flexible and they had to modify their teaching methods. So, they carried out rehearsals of theatrical plays, choir and other activities in my classroom to make it easier for me.

But when I broke my leg in the middle of the school year, everything changed, because I had to stay at home and attend classes on line, via webex; This is the point when all the madness began! The computer in the classroom was slow, there were audio problems from time to time, the system was lagging, even the school assistant was not able to help the situation and as a result I couldn't attend the lesson and the syllabus. So, my progress in my courses was affected causing me intense irritation and upset and I was forced to call the school constantly distracting the teachers during the lesson. Sometimes I was fed up and I would give up the effort. Unless my teachers showed so much patience and tolerance and provided me with the school curriculum by all possible means, such as photocopies, email, and even by phone, I would not have made it.

This school year has been a challenge for me, mentally and physically, but I feel it has been an essential part of my integration into society and the development of positive emotions, and it

became possible by the support of the teachers, the acceptance of my classmates and generally all my efforts to be at school.

All these experiences will be indelible and I hope they will give courage, hope and motivate others with different abilities to create a more caring society towards them.

What I really wish for next year is to improve the conditions at school, so that I can overcome the functional problems and focus on learning. I'd like to be able to visit the library upstairs and select the books by myself, but access is impossible. Also, there should be an amphitheater so that I could participate in the performances and the choir. The school building is old and it needs renovation and purchase of school equipment as they are essential for a beautiful and happy learning environment that promotes our emotional wellbeing.

My next step is to continue my studies at Senior High School and I hope there will be conditions suitable for me to focus on my interests. I would like my future job to be computer related, like programmer, computer technician or something like that. I spend most of my free time in front of the computer screen and apart from playing games, I also create websites on the internet and learn more and more about them and that fascinate me. I know there will be many difficulties in the future no matter what I do, but I am determined to try and succeed!

Life is full of conflicts and requires courage to succeed and make your life easier and more interesting. I wish the same to all those who face adversities but they try to overcome them and reach their dreams!

## Συγκρούσεις

Γεια!Είμαι ο Γιώργος, είμαι δεκατεσσάρων ετών και πηγαίνω στην Δευτέρα Γυμνασίου. Μένω εκτός πόλης σε ένα χωριό.Αυτό δυσκολεύει την μετακίνηση μου προς το σχολείο λόγω της κινητικής δυσλειτουργίας των ποδιών μου με αποκορύφωμα το σπάσιμο του ποδιού μου στην μέση τηςσχολικής χρονιάς.

Η φοίτηση μου στο σχολείο είναι ένας καθημερινός αγώνας,απο την μετάβαση μου μέχρι το σχολασμα.Το σχολείο μου παρέχει σχολικό βοηθό για να με διευκολύνει και είναι το μόνο σχολείο με ράμπα για την πρόσβαση στο κτήριο οπότε, αναγκαστικά πήγα σε αυτό χάνοντας τους συμμαθητές και φίλους απο το δημοτικό,οι οποιοι πήγαν σε άλλο.Οι νέοι μου συμμαθητές τον πρώτο καιρό ήταν επιφυλακτικοί και διστακτικοί μαζί μου προκαλώντας μου αμηχανία και ένιωθα τα βλέμματα τους να με διαπερνούν. Η Διευθύντρια και αργότερα οι καθηγητές τους εξήγησαν πόσο σημαντικό είναι να με αποδεκτούν και πως με εμένα τους δίνεται η ευκαιρία να γνωρίσουν κάποιον με ιδιαιτερότητα για να συνειδητοποιήσουνε πως είμαι ένα παιδί σαν αυτά και όχι κάποιος "εξωγήινος".Εκτοτε,με αντιμετωπίζουν ισάξια,συνεργαζόμαστε στις σχολικές δραστηριότητες, κάνουμε αστεία, πειραζόμαστε, βοηθάμε ο ένας τον άλλον και τους διορθώνω την ορθογραφία γιατί το 'χω και δεν νιώθω πια αποκλεισμένος.

Δεν γίνεται να μην αναφερθώ στην αμέριστη συμπαράσταση και υποστήριξη των καθηγητών μου που με στήριξαν και ψυχολογικά τονίζοντας το πόσο σημαντική είναι η παρουσία μου στο σχολείο πρώτον για μένα ώστε να προσπαθώ να ενταχθώ στην κοινωνία και δεύτερον για τους συμμαθητές μου. Αλλά εξίσου σημαντική είναι η παρουσία μου και για τους ίδιους τους καθηγητές που διαμορφώνουν και διαπαιδαγωγούν έναν μαθητή με ιδιαιτερότητες και με αυτόν τον τρόπο εκπαιδεύονται και οι ίδιοι λειτουργικά όπως να γίνονται οι πρόβες των θεατρικών και της χορωδίας και άλλες δραστηριότητες στην αίθουσα μου ώστε να με διευκολύνουν.

Όμως όταν έσπασα το πόδι μου στην μέση της σχολικής χρονιάς όλα άλλαξαν γιατί αναγκάστηκα να μείνω στο σπίτι και να παρακολουθώ τα μαθήματα μέσω webex. Εκεί άρχισε η τρέλα!Ο υπολογιστής του σχολείο θα έλεγα πως ήταν αργός, ο ήχος είχε πρόβλημα, έπεφτε το σύστημα,δεν είχε ίντερνετ όλες τις φορές και η σχολική βοηθός δεν βοηθούσε την κατάσταση με αποτέλεσμα να αδυνατώ να παρακολουθήσω το μάθημα και την ύλη και επηρεάστηκε η απόδοση μου στα μαθήματα προκαλώντας μου έντονο εκνευρισμό και αναστάτωση και αναγκαζόμουν να τηλεφωνώ στο σχολείο συνεχώς απασχολώντας τους καθηγητές εν ώρα μαθήματος. Βέβαια αν δεν είχα και αυτούς να δείχνουν τέτοια τεράστια υπομονή και ανοχή και να μου παρέχουν την σχολική ύλη σε φωτοτυπίες και τηλεφωνικώς δεν θα τα κατάφερνα.

Η χρονιά αυτή αποτέλεσε πρόκληση για μένα ψυχικά και σωματικά, αλλά ήταν σημαντικό κομμάτι για την ένταξη μου στην κοινωνία και για την καλλιέργεια θετικών αισθημάτων που επέτρεψε η συμπαράσταση των καθηγητών, η αποδοχή μου από τους συμμαθητές μου και γενικά όλη



η προσπάθειά μου για να βρίσκομαι στο σχολείο. Όλες αυτές οι εμπειρίες θα μείνουν μαζί μου για πάντα και ελπίζω να χαρίσουν θάρρος, ελπίδα και τόλμη σε άλλους με ιδιαιτερότητες και να δημιουργήσουν μια κοινωνία πιο στοργική προς αυτούς.

Θα ήθελα να βελτιωθούν αρκετά οι συνθήκες για την επόμενη χρονιά ώστε να ξεπεραστούν τα λειτουργικά προβλήματα και να αφοσιωθώ στη εκμάθηση. Θα ήθελα να μπορούσα να πηγαίνω στην δανειστική βιβλιοθήκη στον πάνω όροφο και να επιλέγω τα βιβλία μόνος μου, όμως η πρόσβαση είναι αδύνατη. Επίσης θα ήθελα να υπάρχει ένα αμφιθέατρο ώστε να πραγματοποιούνται οι παραστάσεις και η χορωδίες και να μπορώ να συμμετέχω και εγώ. Το σχολικό κτήριο χρειάζεται ανακαίνιση για να είναι ένα όμορφο και χαρούμενο περιβάλλον , καθώς διαμορφώνει και επηρεάζει την ψυχολογία όλων μας!

Το επομενο μου βήμα είναι να συνεχίσω στο Λύκειο και ελπίζω να υπάρχουν συνθήκες κατάλληλες για μένα ώστε να μπορώ να επικεντρωθώ στα ενδιαφέροντά μου. Το μελλοντικό μου επάγγελμα θα ήθελα να έχει σχέση με τους υπολογιστές, όπως για παράδειγμα προγραμματιστής, τεχνικός υπολογιστών ή κάτι παρόμοιο με αυτό. Περνάω τον περισσότερο ελεύθερο χρόνο μου μπροστά στον υπολογιστή. Εκτός από τα παιχνίδια που παίζω επίσης δημιουργώ ιστοσελίδες στο διαδίκτυο μαθαίνοντας όλο και περισσότερο για αυτούς και αυτό με γοητεύει.

Το ξέρω πως θα υπάρχουν πολλές δυσκολίες στο μέλλον σε ό,τι και αν κάνω , αλλά είμαι έτοιμος να προσπαθήσω και να πετύχω. Αυτό εύχομαι σε όλους όσοι αντιμετωπίζουν δυσκολίες και παρ' όλα αυτά προσπαθούν να τις ξεπεράσουν!

## **Mdina: The Silent city of Malta**

*Author: Deligiannidis Konstantinos*

Mdina, fondly referred to as “The Silent City,” is situated in the heart of the Mediterranean island of Malta. It is an important historical and architectural treasure. Unlike the vibrant life in modern Malta, Mdina is peaceful and timeless. This piece of writing intends to discuss Mdina’s past, culture and contemporary facts with steady focus on its exceptional buildings to illustrate why it has lived up to date till today.

Over 4,000 years ago, Mdina began its history. Archaeological data suggest it started during the Bronze Age. Throughout its development process, several civilizations have influenced it. The Phoenicians named the ancient town “Maleth”. During the Roman period, this administrative center was known as Melite. Mdina is strategically located on top of a hill in the middle of Malta, so it is highly inhabited. Additionally, the height at which it is situated makes it naturally easy to protect the inner city, thus it was an added advantage when other kings built huge walls around it. When Arabs ruled over Malta from 870 to 1090, they called this town “Medina”, an Arabic word for “city”. They also surrounded Medina with massive stone structures which can still be seen today through the streets of the city. Despite the fact that they arrived nearly a millennium ago, the Normans are responsible for much of the city’s medieval character. During the 16th century, Mdina acted as the administrative capital of Malta under the government of the Knights of St. John; however, its status declined with the relocation of their capital city to Valletta. Even so, Mdina continued to be looked upon as a symbol of Maltese nobility and lineage. Right now, in its narrow and winding streets, a lot of stories about Mdina’s yesteryears are hidden behind the walls, hence offering those who visit the place an opportunity for time traveling due to its rich lineages.

Mdina's construction is evidence for different cultures and time periods which have taken part in forming it. Its plan and constructions mirror the mixture of middle-aged style, baroque and Sicilian-Norman architectures. The fortified walls around Mdina are part of what makes it so unmistakable. Mostly built during Arab rule and eventually fortified by the Knights of St. John, these walls remind us how strategically valuable the town was and how greatly it held off unwelcomed guests. The City of Mdina is accessed through its main entrance, the Mdina Gate. This gate, which serves as a remarkable illustration of baroque architectural style was constructed back in 1724 under the supervision of António Manoel de Vilhena, who happened to be the then Portuguese Grand Master, concerning architecture. Thus, with its grandeur, it can be quickly concluded that all kinds of monumental buildings exist inside there. St. Paul's Cathedral is one of the most outstanding structures in Mdina, an emblem of baroque artistry.

Initially established during the twelfth century, it was reconstructed in the late seventeenth century following an earthquake. It was Lorenzo Gafa, a Maltese architect, who designed this cathedral, characterized by its striking frontispiece, magnificent dome, and splendid decorations of finely painted murals on the walls and floors made of marble, as well as gilded embellishments on the interior's walls. After experiencing a shipwreck on the island, St. Paul is claimed to have converted the Roman governor of Malta to Christianity, thus, the cathedral is devoted to him. The palaces and noble residences in Mdina tell the story of wealth and power in Malta. Palazzo Falson, a building which can be traced back to the thirteenth century is amongst few surviving examples that one gets access to. What it feels like to live like a noble Maltese person can be experienced at this historical home museum due to its conserved chambers; old furniture dating from centuries ago along with numerous pieces of art. Ancient Mdina has a lot of religious and architectural heritage and one of these is the Carmelite priory together with the church next to it. The foundation of this priory can be traced back to the seventeenth century and among other features it has an impressive baroque styled church, quiet courtyard and a museum that shows Carmelite's order history with religious artifacts is well preserved here.

The buildings in Mdina differ. They have remained a hub for both religion and arts for many years. This can be observed in the several churches, museums, and cultural institutions in the city. Located in Vilhena Palace, an eighteenth-century building, the national Museum of Natural History provides a broad outline about Malta's natural environment. This museum's collection includes many subjects such as geology, paleontology and zoology, therefore helping you understand different ecosystems in this countryside as well as plants and animals there. In connection with the arts is also a feature that Mdina boasts of. Its ambiance, picturesque streets have inspired many artists, writers and musicians over time. Mdina's Cathedral Museum is situated near St. Paul's Cathedral and accommodates numerous religious artifacts that include paintings from Mattia Preti among others created in Malta. In Malta's ecclesiastical history, sacred vestments, silverware, and illuminated manuscripts are also featured in the museum's collection. Mdina's artistic traditions and heritage are celebrated with a range of events in the city's cultural calendar. A key event each year is the "Mdina Medieval Festival" which revives the city's past through enactment shows, music performances and other old-time practices. Every year in Mdina, thousands of people are attracted by this festival. There, they get a chance to feel, hear and taste the sights of Medieval Mdina. This festival provides a rare opportunity to experience the sights, sounds and smells of the past.

It is common for people to name Mdina as "The Silent City" because there is a quiet and calm environment in all of its corners. Such peace and quiet exists largely due to few people living there and restrictions imposed on cars moving around in town. This peace gives those who go there an opportunity to learn more about its past and enjoy its nice architectural designs without much

interference from contemporary activities. It's similar to going back into the past when you pass through the old town of Mdina. There are narrow streets, built from honey-colored limestone that gives any visitor the sense that time has stopped and something mysterious is happening there. Curiosities will appear at every turn – starting with cozy inner yards hidden within houses' blocks and ending with royal palaces as well as richly adorned cathedrals. Moreover, Mdina sits high up so as to give amazing views over its neighborhood countryside and far-off ocean, which makes it even more charming. It's no wonder that Mdina is a favourite among movie makers due to its tranquility in addition to the charm. The film scenario of many movies and television series has been influenced by the ancient mood and unbroken buildings found in Mdina, undoubtedly placing it in the fantasy epic "Game of Thrones". This attraction serves to promote the city of Mdina, which is what brings those who follow this series to wander along famous streets of this old historic town.

Although Mdina's importance historically and culturally can be traced back easily, it is also a very important aspect even in today's modern life of Malta. Mdina is such an important tourist destination that greatly contributes to the economy and cultural tourism of the island. It is really a place of world interest where people from all over the world come to enjoy a mix of history, architecture as well as peacefulness. Restoring and conserving Mdina are important in retaining its historicity and ensuring its ongoing significance likewise. Mdina's architectural and cultural heritage has received some attention from both Maltese government and various heritage organizations. This has involved renovation of old buildings, retention of archeological places, as well as introducing sustainable tourism activities. The importance of the city as a cultural and historical landmark is emphasized by its status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Mdina's significance is acknowledged and a plan is laid for its protection and promotion all over the world through this designation. Mdina is certainly a living city. In other words, even with a small population, it is still an important community as people like residents and tourists can associate with its rich past and cultural heritage there. Thus, the city's unique character comes from the local artisans, shopkeepers and restaurant owners who, in addition, give an insight into the traditional Maltese way of life.

Mdina is considered a great passed down to all future generations of Maltese people as proof of Malta history long history. The Silent City offers its visitors a one-of-a-kind magical charm, proposing them to wander off through its narrow meandering lanes, wonder in awe about its various architectural marvels and finally soaking themselves into an endless, ageless mood. Mdina has been significant in the history of the island starting from the Bronze Age settlements and then becoming the medieval capital of Malta. By having its walls and buildings being evidence of the many civilizations which have influenced this city, it has thus been able to maintain its unique identity and beauty. Today, Mdina continues to grab our imagination and intrigue, operating as an enduring record of the wealth and variety that are at the roots of Malta. For many reasons, Mdina is still a place where

past meets present; it gives us a brief view of Malta's soul and timelessness. This silent city has such timeless sway on the people who visit it so that, despite the power of the everyday life, its beauty is kept alive.

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## Μντίνα: η Σιωπηλή πόλη της Μάλτας

Η **Μντίνα**, που στοργικά αναφέρεται ως «η σιωπηλή πόλη», βρίσκεται στην καρδιά του μεσογειακού νησιού της **Μάλτας**. Αποτελεί σημαντικό ιστορικό και αρχιτεκτονικό θησαυρό. Σε αντίθεση με τη ζωντανή ζωή στη σύγχρονη Μάλτα, η Μντίνα είναι ειρηνική και διαχρονική. Αυτό το συγγραφικό έργο σκοπεύει να αναφερθεί στο παρελθόν, τον πολιτισμό και τα σύγχρονα γεγονότα της Μντίνα με σταθερή εστίαση στα εξαιρετικά κτήριά της για να απεικονίσει γιατί έζησε μέχρι σήμερα.

Πάνω από 4.000 χρόνια πριν, η Μντίνα ξεκίνησε την ιστορία της. Αρχαιολογικά δεδομένα υποδηλώνουν ότι ξεκίνησε κατά την Εποχή του Χαλκού. Σε όλη τη διαδικασία ανάπτυξής της, αρκετοί πολιτισμοί την έχουν επηρεάσει. Οι Φοίνικες ονόμασαν την αρχαία πόλη «Μαλέθ». Κατά τη Ρωμαϊκή περίοδο, το διοικητικό αυτό κέντρο ήταν γνωστό ως «Μελίτη». Η Μντίνα βρίσκεται σε στρατηγική τοποθεσία στην κορυφή ενός λόφου στη μέση της Μάλτας, επομένως είναι ιδιαίτερα κατοικημένη. Επιπλέον, το ύψος στο οποίο βρίσκεται καθιστά φυσικά εύκολη την προστασία της

εσωτερικής πόλης, επομένως ήταν ένα πρόσθετο πλεονέκτημα όταν άλλοι βασιλιάδες έχτισαν τεράστια τείχη γύρω της. Όταν οι Άραβες κυβέρνησαν τη Μάλτα από το 870 έως το 1090, ονόμασαν αυτή την πόλη «Μεντίνα», μια αραβική λέξη που σημαίνει «πόλη». Περιέβαλαν επίσης τη Μεδίνα με τεράστιες πέτρινες κατασκευές που μπορεί κανείς να δει ακόμα και σήμερα στους δρόμους της πόλης.

Παρά το γεγονός ότι έφτασαν πριν από σχεδόν μια χιλιετία, οι Νορμανδοί είναι υπεύθυνοι για μεγάλο μέρος του μεσαιωνικού χαρακτήρα της πόλης. Κατά τη διάρκεια του 16ου αιώνα, η Mdina ενήργησε ως διοικητική πρωτεύουσα της Μάλτας υπό την κυβέρνηση των Ιπποτών του Αγίου Ιωάννη. Ωστόσο, το καθεστώς του μειώθηκε με τη μετεγκατάσταση της πρωτεύουσάς τους στη Βαλέτα. Ακόμα κι έτσι, η Μντίνα συνέχισε να θεωρείται σύμβολο της μαλτέζικης αριστοκρατίας και γενεαλογίας. Αυτήν τη στιγμή, στα στενά και δαιδαλώδη δρομάκια της, πολλές ιστορίες για τα χρόνια της Μντίνα κρύβονται πίσω από τους τοίχους, προσφέροντας έτσι σε όσους επισκέπτονται το μέρος μια ευκαιρία για ταξίδι στο χρόνο λόγω της πλούσιας γενεαλογίας του.

Η κατασκευή της Μντίνα είναι απόδειξη των διαφορετικών πολιτισμών και των χρονικών περιόδων που συμμετείχαν στη διαμόρφωσή της. Η κάτοψη και οι κατασκευές της αντικατοπτρίζουν το μείγμα μεσαιωνικού στυλ, μπαρόκ και Σικελικής-Νορμανδικής αρχιτεκτονικής. Τα οχυρά τείχη γύρω από τη Μντίνα είναι μέρος αυτού που την κάνει τόσο ανεπανάληπτη. Κυρίως χτισμένα κατά τη διάρκεια της αραβικής κυριαρχίας και τελικά οχυρωμένα από τους Ιππότες του Αγίου Ιωάννη, αυτά τα τείχη μας υπενθυμίζουν πόσο στρατηγικής αξίας ήταν η πόλη και πόσο πολύ απέκλειε τους ανεπιθύμητους επισκέπτες. Η πόλη της Μντίνα είναι προσβάσιμη μέσω της κύριας εισόδου της, της Πύλης της Μντίνα. Αυτή η πύλη, η οποία χρησιμεύει ως μια αξιοσημείωτη απεικόνιση του μπαρόκ αρχιτεκτονικού στυλ, κατασκευάστηκε το 1724 υπό την εποπτεία του Αντόνιο Μανουέλ ντε Βιλένα, ο οποίος ήταν ο τότε Πορτογάλος Μεγάλος Διδάσκαλος, όσον αφορά την αρχιτεκτονική. Έτσι, με το

μεγαλείο της, συνάγεται γρήγορα το συμπέρασμα ότι μέσα στην πόλη υπάρχουν όλα τα είδη μνημειακών κτηρίων. Ο καθεδρικός ναός του Αγίου Παύλου είναι ένα από τα πιο εξέχοντα κτήρια στη Μντίνα, ένα έμβλημα της μπαρόκ τέχνης. Αρχικά ιδρύθηκε κατά τη διάρκεια του δωδέκατου αιώνα και ανακατασκευάστηκε στα τέλη του δέκατου έβδομου αιώνα μετά από σεισμό.

Ήταν ο Λορέντζο Γκάφα, ένας Μαλτέζος αρχιτέκτονας, που σχεδίασε αυτόν τον καθεδρικό ναό, ο οποίος χαρακτηρίζεται από την εντυπωσιακή πρόσοψη, τον μεγαλοπρεπή τρούλο και τις υπέροχες διακοσμήσεις λεπτώς ζωγραφισμένων τοιχογραφιών στους τοίχους και τα δάπεδα από μάρμαρο, καθώς και επιχρυσωμένα στολίδια στους εσωτερικούς τοίχους. Αφού βίωσε ένα ναυάγιο στο νησί, ο Άγιος Παύλος υποστηρίζεται ότι ασπάστηκε τον Ρωμαίο κυβερνήτη της Μάλτας στον Χριστιανισμό, έτσι, ο καθεδρικός ναός είναι αφιερωμένος σε αυτόν. Τα παλάτια και οι κατοικίες ευγενών στη Μντίνα αφηγούνται την ιστορία του πλούτου και της εξουσίας στη Μάλτα. Το Palazzo Falson, ένα κτήριο που χρονολογείται από τον δέκατο τρίτο αιώνα είναι ένα από τα λίγα σωζόμενα παραδείγματα στα οποία κάποιος έχει πρόσβαση. Το πώς είναι να ζεις σαν ευγενής Μαλτέζος μπορεί να βιωθεί σε αυτό το ιστορικό οικιακό μουσείο λόγω των διατηρημένων θαλάμων του. Παλιά έπιπλα χρονολογούνται από αιώνες πριν μαζί με πολυάριθμα έργα τέχνης. Η αρχαία Μντίνα έχει πλούσια θρησκευτική και αρχιτεκτονική κληρονομιά, ένα παράδειγμα είναι το μοναστήρι των Καρμελιτών μαζί με την εκκλησία δίπλα του. Η ίδρυση αυτού του μοναστηριού μπορεί να ανιχνευθεί στον δέκατο έβδομο αιώνα και μεταξύ άλλων χαρακτηριστικών, έχει μια εντυπωσιακή εκκλησία σε στιλ μπαρόκ, ήσυχη αυλή και ένα μουσείο που απεικονίζει την ιστορία του τάγματος των Καρμελιτών, με πολλαπλά θρησκευτικά αντικείμενα να είναι καλά διατηρημένα εδώ.

Τα κτίρια στη Μντίνα διαφέρουν. Έχουν παραμείνει κόμβος τόσο για τη θρησκεία όσο και για τις τέχνες για πολλά χρόνια. Αυτό μπορεί να παρατηρηθεί σε πολλές εκκλησίες, μουσεία και πολιτιστικά ιδρύματα της πόλης. Το Εθνικό Μουσείο Φυσικής Ιστορίας, που βρίσκεται στο παλάτι Βιλένα, ένα κτήριο του δέκατου όγδοου αιώνα, παρέχει μια ευρεία περιγραφή του φυσικού περιβάλλοντος της Μάλτας. Η συλλογή αυτού του μουσείου περιλαμβάνει πολλά θέματα όπως η γεωλογία, η παλαιοντολογία και η ζωολογία, επομένως βοηθά να κατανοηθούν τα διαφορετικά οικοσυστήματα σε αυτήν την ύπαιθρο καθώς και φυτά και ζώα εκεί. Οι τέχνες είναι επίσης ένα χαρακτηριστικό για το οποίο μπορεί να υπερηφανεύεται η Μντίνα. Η ατμόσφαιρα και τα γραφικά δρομάκια του έχουν εμπνεύσει πολλούς καλλιτέχνες, συγγραφείς και μουσικούς με την πάροδο του χρόνου. Το Μουσείο του Καθεδρικού Ναού της Μντίνα βρίσκεται κοντά στον καθεδρικό ναό του Αγίου Παύλου και φιλοξενεί πολυάριθμα θρησκευτικά αντικείμενα που περιλαμβάνουν πίνακες από τον Mattia Preti μεταξύ άλλων που δημιουργήθηκαν στη Μάλτα.

Όσον αφορά την εκκλησιαστική ιστορία της Μάλτας, στη συλλογή του μουσείου παρουσιάζονται επίσης ιερά ενδύματα, ασημικά και φωτισμένα χειρόγραφα. Οι καλλιτεχνικές παραδόσεις και η κληρονομιά της Μντίνα γιορτάζονται με μια σειρά από εκδηλώσεις στο πολιτιστικό

ημερολόγιο της πόλης. Ένα βασικό γεγονός κάθε χρόνο είναι το «Mdina Medieval Festival» που αναβιώνει το παρελθόν της πόλης μέσω θεατρικών και μουσικών παραστάσεων, όπως επίσης και άλλων παλαιών πρακτικών. Κάθε χρόνο στη Μντίνα, χιλιάδες άνθρωποι προσελκύονται από αυτό το φεστιβάλ. Εκεί, έχουν την ευκαιρία να νιώσουν, να ακούσουν και να γευτούν τα αξιοθέατα της Μεσαιωνικής Μντίνα. Αυτό το φεστιβάλ προσφέρει μια σπάνια ευκαιρία να γνωρίσετε τα αξιοθέατα, τους ήχους και τις μυρωδιές του παρελθόντος.

Είναι σύνηθες για τους ανθρώπους να ονομάζουν τη Mdina ως «Η σιωπηλή πόλη» επειδή υπάρχει ένα ήσυχο και ήρεμο περιβάλλον σε όλες τις γωνιές της. Τέτοια γαλήνη και ησυχία επικρατεί σε μεγάλο βαθμό λόγω του ελάχιστου πληθυσμού που ζει εκεί και των περιορισμών που επιβάλλονται στα αυτοκίνητα που κυκλοφορούν στην πόλη. Αυτή η ηρεμία δίνει σε όσους πηγαίνουν εκεί την ευκαιρία να μάθουν περισσότερα για το παρελθόν της και να απολαύσουν τα ωραία αρχιτεκτονικά της σχέδια χωρίς πολλές παρεμβολές από σύγχρονες δραστηριότητες. Είναι παρόμοιο με το να επιστρέψετε στο παρελθόν όταν περνάτε από την παλιά πόλη της Μντίνα. Υπάρχουν στενά δρομάκια, χτισμένα από ασβεστόλιθο σε μελί χρώμα που δίνουν σε κάθε επισκέπτη την αίσθηση ότι ο χρόνος έχει σταματήσει και κάτι μυστηριώδες συμβαίνει εκεί. Απορίες θα εμφανίζονται σε κάθε στροφή – ξεκινώντας από τις άνετες εσωτερικές αυλές κρυμμένες μέσα σε οικιακά τετράγωνα και καταλήγοντας με βασιλικά ανάκτορα καθώς και πλούσια διακοσμημένους καθεδρικούς ναούς. Επιπλέον, η Mdina βρίσκεται ψηλά και προσφέρει εκπληκτική θέα στην γειτονική εξοχή και στον μακρινό ωκεανό, γεγονός που την κάνει ακόμα πιο γοητευτική. Δεν είναι τυχαίο που η Μντίνα είναι αγαπημένη μεταξύ των κινηματογραφιστών λόγω της ηρεμίας της εκτός από τη γοητεία της. Το κινηματογραφικό σενάριο πολλών ταινιών και τηλεοπτικών σειρών έχει επηρεαστεί από την αρχαία διάθεση και τα αδιάσπαστα κτήρια που βρέθηκαν στη Μντίνα, τοποθετώντας την αναμφίβολα στο έπος φαντασίας «Game of Thrones». Αυτό το αξιοθέατο χρησιμεύει για την προβολή της πόλης, κάτι που κάνει όσους ακολουθούν αυτή τη σειρά να περιπλανηθούν στους διάσημους δρόμους αυτής της παλιάς ιστορικής πόλης.

Αν και η ιστορική και πολιτιστική σημασία της Μντίνα μπορεί να εντοπιστεί εύκολα, είναι επίσης μια πολύ σημαντική πτυχή ακόμη και στη σημερινή σύγχρονη ζωή της Μάλτας. Η Μντίνα είναι ένας τόσο σημαντικός τουριστικός προορισμός που συμβάλλει σημαντικά στην οικονομία και τον πολιτιστικό τουρισμό του νησιού. Είναι πραγματικά ένα μέρος παγκόσμιου ενδιαφέροντος, όπου άνθρωποι από όλο τον κόσμο έρχονται για να απολαύσουν ένα μείγμα ιστορίας, αρχιτεκτονικής καθώς και γαλήνης. Η αποκατάσταση και η διατήρηση της Μντίνα είναι σημαντική για τη διατήρηση της ιστορικότητάς της και για τη διασφάλιση της διαρκούς σημασίας της.

Η αρχιτεκτονική και πολιτιστική κληρονομιά της Μντίνα έχει λάβει προσοχή τόσο από την κυβέρνηση της Μάλτας όσο και από διάφορους οργανισμούς πολιτιστικής κληρονομιάς. Αυτό περιλάμβανε την ανακαίνιση παλαιών κτιρίων, τη διατήρηση αρχαιολογικών χώρων, καθώς και την



εισαγωγή βιώσιμων τουριστικών δραστηριοτήτων. Η σημασία της πόλης ως πολιτιστικό και ιστορικό ορόσημο τονίζεται από την ιδιότητά της ως Μνημείο Παγκόσμιας Κληρονομιάς της UNESCO. Η σημασία της Μντίνα αναγνωρίζεται και τίθεται ένα σχέδιο για την προστασία και την προώθησή της σε όλο τον κόσμο μέσω αυτού του χαρακτηρισμού. Η Μντίνα είναι αναμφίβολα μια ζωντανή πόλη. Με άλλα λόγια, ακόμη και με μικρό πληθυσμό, εξακολουθεί να είναι μια σημαντική κοινότητα, καθώς άνθρωποι όπως οι κάτοικοι και οι τουρίστες μπορούν να συνδεθούν με το πλούσιο παρελθόν και την πολιτιστική κληρονομιά της. Έτσι, ο μοναδικός χαρακτήρας της πόλης προέρχεται από τους ντόπιους τεχνίτες, καταστηματάρχες και ιδιοκτήτες εστιατορίων που, επιπλέον, δίνουν μια εικόνα για τον παραδοσιακό τρόπο ζωής της Μάλτας.

Η Μντίνα θεωρείται ένα σπουδαίο μνημείο που μεταβιβάζεται σε όλες τις μελλοντικές γενιές του λαού της Μάλτας ως απόδειξη της μακράς ιστορίας του κράτους. Η Σιωπηλή Πόλη προσφέρει στους επισκέπτες της μια μοναδική μαγική γοητεία, προτείνοντάς τους να περιπλανηθούν στα στενά ελικοειδή σοκάκια της, να θαυμάσουν με δέος τα διάφορα αρχιτεκτονικά της θαύματα και τελικά να βυθιστούν σε μια ατελείωτη, αιώνια διάθεση. Η Μντίνα υπήρξε σημαντική στην ιστορία του νησιού ξεκινώντας από τους οικισμούς της Εποχής του Χαλκού και στη συνέχεια έγινε η μεσαιωνική πρωτεύουσα της Μάλτας. Με τα τείχη και τα κτήριά της να αποτελούν απόδειξη των πολλών πολιτισμών που έχουν επηρεάσει αυτήν την πόλη, κατάφερε να διατηρήσει τη μοναδική της ταυτότητα και ομορφιά. Σήμερα, η Μντίνα συνεχίζει να κεντρίζει τη φαντασία και την έντριγκα μας, λειτουργώντας ως μια διαρκής καταγραφή του πλούτου και της ποικιλίας που βρίσκονται στις ρίζες της Μάλτας. Για πολλούς λόγους, η Μντίνα εξακολουθεί να είναι ένα μέρος όπου το παρελθόν συναντά το παρόν. Μας δίνει μια σύντομη άποψη της ψυχής και της διαχρονικότητας της Μάλτας. Αυτή η σιωπηλή πόλη ασκεί τόσο διαχρονική επιρροή στους ανθρώπους που την επισκέπτονται, ώστε, παρά τη δύναμη της καθημερινότητας, η ομορφιά της διατηρείται ζωντανή.

## Meeting people from around the world

*Author: Kanatsiopoulos Vasilis*

Two months ago, our school hosted students who came from abroad on an Erasmus+ project. But is Erasmus just a programme which brings together students from other countries to participate in projects? Is it just an experience? Well, from my own experience it is definitely not! It's much more than that, so let's take a look at the facts that ensure that.

At first, I did not participate in this project despite the opportunity I was given many times before. I asked myself: Is it really worth it? Will I be able to get something good out of it? I also thought that the students visiting us from abroad would be younger, so this discouraged me even more, as it would be more difficult to communicate. In the end, I turned down the offer.

Things took a different turn when the team from abroad visited our school. Then I realized that the students were the same age as me. I immediately changed my mind and wanted to join the project. But despite all my efforts I could not join the group because I was not in the group in the first place. However, a teacher told me that I could come to one of the activities that took place at my school in the afternoon. It was about telling the history of our town to the group through a presentation.

When I went to my school that afternoon, everyone was gathered in the main hall chatting. I saw my friend talking to some students from Romania and I approached them. Immediately we started talking as if we had known each other for a long time. I was not nervous at all and the conversation had a natural flow. When it was time for the interview, we went to the second floor, as that was where the presentation would take place. After the presentation, we continued to talk about many topics and, in addition, to get to know each other better. The time passed quickly and before we knew it, it was time for our guests to leave, as it was getting dark, and we headed to the hotel. Unfortunately, I didn't get many chances to talk to them again, but I added them to a message app and we've been talking ever since.

After that event I thought that I would never meet them again and that I would not have another chance to take part in that project. As time went by and we were getting close to the end of the school year, I was invited to come down to the main hall during a lesson. And the reason was that the teachers wanted to announce something to me and some other students. When I got there, I saw that the students who had participated in the Erasmus programme were also present. The teacher informed us that some students from our school were going to Romania in September to take part in the third part of the programme and we were invited to participate in it. I was very happy because I had another chance to join the team. I accepted at once and now I am here!

So, to answer the question whether Erasmus+ is just a programme or an experience, the answer is no. It holds memories that will never be forgotten and friendships with strong bonds that will never be lost. It is truly a wonderful experience that you definitely don't want to miss and if you get the chance, don't make the same mistakes I did, take advantage of it and have the experience of a lifetime.

## Γνωρίζοντας ανθρώπους από όλο τον κόσμο: οι φίλοι από τη Ρουμανία

Πριν από δύο μήνες, το σχολείο μας φιλοξένησε μαθητές από το εξωτερικό που συμμετείχαν σε ένα πρόγραμμα Erasmus+. Αλλά είναι το Erasmus+ , απλά ένα πρόγραμμα που φέρνει σε επαφή μαθητές από άλλες χώρες της Ευρώπης για συμμετέχουν σε εκδηλώσεις και προγράμματα; Είναι απλώς μία εμπειρία; Από την δική μου εμπειρία σίγουρα όχι! Είναι πολλά παραπάνω, ας ρίξουμε λοιπόν μια ματιά στα γεγονότα που το διασφαλίζουν.

Στην αρχή, δεν πήρα μέρος στο πρόγραμμα παρόλο που μου δόθηκε η ευκαιρία να το κάνω. Ρώτησα τον εαυτό μου: Αξίζει να συμμετάσχω; Θα βγει κάτι καλό από αυτό; Επίσης, πίστευα πως οι μαθητές ήταν μικρότεροι από εμένα, οπότε αυτό με αποθάρρυνε ακόμα πιο πολύ, καθώς θα ήταν δυσκολότερο να επικοινωνήσουμε μεταξύ μας. Στο τέλος, απέρριψα την προσφορά.

Ωστόσο όλα άλλαξαν όταν οι μαθητές από το εξωτερικό ήρθαν στο σχολείο μας. Τότε κατάλαβα, πως οι μαθητές από το εξωτερικό ήταν στην ίδια ηλικία με εμένα. Κατευθείαν άλλαξα γνώμη και ήθελα να λάβω μέρος κι εγώ! Όμως παρά τις προσπάθειές μου, δεν μπορούσα να συμμετάσχω. Ωστόσο μια κυρία μου είπε πως μπορώ να έρθω σε μία από τις δραστηριότητες που θα διοργανώνονταν στο σχολείο μας το απόγευμα. Στη εκδήλωση αυτή οι μαθητές του σχολείου μου θα παρουσίαζαν την ιστορία της πόλης μας.

Έτσι, όταν πήγα στο σχολείο μου εκείνο το απόγευμα, με το που άνοιξα την πόρτα είδα πως όλοι ήταν μαζεμένοι στον κύριο διάδρομο και συζητούσαν. Είδα τον φίλο μου να μιλάει με κάποιους μαθητές από την Ρουμανία και τους πλησίασα. Κατευθείαν αρχίσαμε να μιλάμε σαν να γνωρίζαμε ο ένας τον άλλο για πολύ καιρό. Δε ήμουν καθόλου αγχωμένος και η συζήτηση είχε κανονική ροή. Όταν ήρθε η ώρα για την παρουσίαση, ανεβήκαμε στον πρώτο όροφο, καθώς εκεί θα γινόταν η παρουσίαση. Όταν ολοκληρώθηκε η παρουσίαση, συνεχίσαμε να μιλάμε για πολλά θέματα για να γνωριστούμε καλύτερα. Η ώρα κύλησε γρήγορα και πριν καλά – καλά το καταλάβουμε ήρθε η ώρα για την ομάδα των μαθητών να αποχωρήσει για το ξενοδοχείο καθώς νύχτωνε και έπρεπε να ξεκουραστούν. Δεν είχα πολλές ευκαιρίες να τους συναντήσω ξανά, αλλά ανταλλάξαμε τηλέφωνα οπότε συνεχίσαμε να επικοινωνούμε από τότε.

Μετά από αυτό το συμβάν νόμιζα πως δεν θα ξανασυναντούσα τους μαθητές από την Ρουμανία και πως δεν θα είχα ακόμα μια ευκαιρία να πάρω μέρος κι εγώ στο πρόγραμμα. Όσο περνούσε ο χρόνος και είμαστε όλο και πιο κοντά στο τέλος της σχολικής χρονιάς, μια μέρα, η καθηγήτριά μου με κάλεσε και μου ζήτησε να τη συναντήσω στον κύριο διάδρομο του σχολείου. “Για ποιο λόγο με καλεί”, αναρωτήθηκα. Ο λόγος ήταν ότι η κυρία ήθελε να ανακοινώσει κάτι σε εμένα και κάποιους άλλους μαθητές. Όταν πήγα εκεί, είδα πως οι μαθητές του σχολείου μας που είχαν ανεβάσει τη θεατρική παράσταση “ Σχολική ζωή” το Μάρτιο σε συνεργασία με το σχολείο της Ρουμανίας και της Μάλτας στα πλαίσια του προγράμματος Erasmus+, βρισκόταν επίσης εκεί. Η

κυρία μας πληροφόρησε πως κάποιοι μαθητές από το σχολείο μας θα επισκέπτονταν τη Ρουμανία για το τρίτο μέρος του προγράμματος και πως εμείς είχαμε επιλεγεί να συμμετάσχουμε. Ήμουν πολύ χαρούμενος γιατί είχα ακόμη μια ευκαιρία να πάρω κι εγώ μέρος στο πρόγραμμα. Χωρίς δεύτερη σκέψη είπα αμέσως ναι και τώρα είμαι εδώ!

Οπότε, για να απαντήσουμε στην αρχική ερώτηση, εάν το Ευρωπαϊκό πρόγραμμα Erasmus+ είναι απλά ένα πρόγραμμα ή μια εμπειρία, η απάντηση είναι όχι. Δημιουργεί αναμνήσεις για μια ζωή, που ποτέ δεν θα ξεχαστούν και φιλίες με ισχυρούς δεσμούς που δεν θα χαθούν. Είναι πραγματικά μία υπέροχη εμπειρία που σίγουρα δεν θέλεις να χάσεις και εάν σου δοθεί η ευκαιρία, μην κάνεις το ίδιο λάθος που έκανα εγώ, πάρε το πλεονέκτημα από αυτήν και ζήσε την εμπειρία μιας ζωής!

## **New school, new friends**

**Author: Terzoudi Chrysi-Anna**

Hello, my name is Jane and I just moved to Didymoteicho from Athens. Today is my first day of junior high school and I'm nervous because I haven't met any friends yet. I have to go to school now. I'm going to be late!

She arrives at school and the principal is dividing the first-grade children into classes. Jane and her classmates walk up to their classroom.

A: Hello, what's your name?

J: Hi, I'm Jane, and you?

A: I'm Anna! Would you like to sit in class with me?

J: Yes, of course!

Jane had made her first friend! The girls sat together in class and started talking.

A: So, you're new, right?

J: It was so obvious, they both laughed.

A: Sort of. Have you made friends or am I your first?

J: You're my first, but who do you hang out with?

A: Do you see these girls?

J: Yeah, what do you think of them?

A: Last year the brunette was spreading rumors about me, so you are my only friend now.

J: Oh. That's sad.

The bell rings for the first break.

A: I'm going to get something to eat, wait for me outside.

J: Okay.

Jane can't find Anna, so she sits on a bench to eat her food. The group of girls from the class approaches her.

M: Because you were hanging out with this weirdo you didn't hear she has autism.

G1: Yes, Anna is really strange.

J: I don't care that she is autistic, I care because you're spreading rumors about her.

M: What are you talking about? She said that? Hahah

G2: She just lied to us that she is not autistic so we told everyone and stopped hanging out with her.

J: Oh okay

The bell rings for the students to go to their classes.

A: Sorry! I couldn't find you, so I came up here.

J: Why did you lie to me about those girls? I thought they were just lying about you for no reason. I don't even care if you are autistic, it doesn't matter.

A: First of all, I'm not autistic, I'm just dyslexic, so they did spread lies about me.

J: Sorry for shouting.

A: Don't worry and there is a huge difference. We were best friends. They were my only friends but when they found out I was dyslexic they told everyone I was autistic. Nobody really cared but they didn't want to be my friends either so I was left on my own.

J: Oh, I'm sorry! I didn't realise. Did you try to talk to them?

A: Yes, they told me I was too stupid to talk to them. However, I still get better grades than them. They've ignored me ever since.

J: You'd like me to talk to them because they don't look so mean. They probably just misunderstood the situation.

A: Yes! Please, I still want to be their friend.

Anna gave Jane the phone number of the dark haired girl, Maria. Jane decided to call Maria in that evening.

J: Maria? Is that you?

M: Yeah, who is it?

J: It's me, Jane. The new girl from school.

M: Who gave you my phone number? Do you need my notes from school?

J: Jane did it and I want to talk to you about her.

M: How she was smart enough to dial my number... haha. Do you want to meet me in the schoolyard in 20 minutes to talk though?

J: Yeah, see you there!

They meet in the schoolyard and greet each other. They sit on the bench where Jane was sitting in the morning.

M: What do you want to talk about now?

J: I talked to Anna at school and she told me that she's not autistic but dyslexic. There is a difference, so you did spread lies.

M: It's true! Then we might have done that. We were just angry that she never told us and kept denying it. I guess we didn't listen to her and got mean about it for no reason.

J: I get it, I was confused too.

M: Well, you can apologise to her from me because she probably doesn't want to talk to us now.

J: She told me she still wants to be your friend. I think you should tell her yourself.

M: Really? Well, I hope she accepts my apology because I'm really sorry! Thanks for telling me, too.

J: Don't worry, she will and please do.

M: I'll also talk to Georgia and Marina about it so we can all apologise together. See you tomorrow, bye.

Maria, Georgia and Marina apologized for being rude and Anna accepted their apology. The five girls became best friends and started hanging out every day. They all accepted Anna's learning difference and helped her to accept it too.



## Καινούριο σχολείο, καινούριοι φίλοι

Γεια, το όνομά μου είναι Τζένη και μόλις μετακόμισα στο Διδυμότειχο από την Αθήνα. Σήμερα είναι η πρώτη μου μέρα στο γυμνάσιο και είμαι αγχωμένη επειδή δε έχω κανέναν φίλο ακόμα. Πρέπει να φύγω τώρα γιατί αλλιώς θα αργήσω για την πρώτη μου μερα στο σχολείο.

Η Τζένη φτάνει στο σχολείο και ο διευθυντής χωρίζει τα παιδιά της πρώτης Γυμνασίου σε τάξεις. Η τάξη της Τζέιν ανεβαίνει τις σκάλες για να πάνε στην αίθουσα του Α2.

**A:** Καλημέρα, πως σε λένε;

**T:** Καλημέρα, είμαι η Τζένη, εσυ;

**A:** Εμένα με λένε Άννα. Θες να κάτσουμε στο ίδιο θρανίο;

**T:** Ναι, φυσικά!

Η Τζένη γνώρισε την πρώτη της φίλη! Τα κορίτσια κάθισαν μαζί και ξεκίνησαν να μιλάνε.

**A:** Οπότε είσαι νέα εδώ να φανταστώ.

**T:** Ήταν τόσο προφανές;

**A:** Λίγο. Έχεις κάνει καμία φίλη ή είμαι η πρώτη σου;

**T:** Είσαι η πρώτη μου αλλά με ποιον κάνεις εσύ παρέα.

**A:** (Δείχνει μια παρεα κοριτσιών) Τις βλέπεις αυτές;

**T:** Ναι, με αυτές κάνεις παρέα;

**A:** Πέρσι η καστανομάλλα έβγαλε φήμες για μένα οπότε είσαι και εσύ ή μόνη μου φίλη.

**T:** Κρίμα.

Χτυπάει το κουδούνι για το πρώτο διάλειμμα.

**A:** Πάω να πάρω κάτι να φάω και θα σε βρω έξω.

**T:** Εντάξει.

Η Τζένη δεν κατάφερε να βρει την Άννα οπότε κάθισε σε ένα παγκάκι για να φάει το φαγητό της. Τότε τα κορίτσια από τη τάξη της, για τα οποία της μίλησε η Άννα, πλησίασαν για να της μιλήσουν.

**M:** Γιατί κάθισες με εκείνη την περίεργη. Δε ξέρεις πως έχει αυτισμό.

**G1:** Η Άννα είναι πολύ περίεργη.

**T:** Δε με νοιάζει αν έχει αυτισμό, εσείς γιατί να βγάλετε φήμες για αυτήν.

**M:** Για ποιο πράγμα μιλας, το είπε όντως αυτό η Άννα;

**G2:** Απλά μας είπε ψέματα πως δεν έχει αυτισμό και εμείς είπαμε σε όλους την αλήθεια και σταματήσαμε να την κάνουμε παρέα.

**T:** Α, εντάξει.

Το κουδούνι χτυπά για να πάνε τα παιδιά στην τάξη τους.

**A:** Δε σε βρήκα στο διάλειμμα! Συγγνώμη.

**T:** Γιατί να μου πεις ψέματα για εκείνα τα κορίτσια. Νόμιζα πως απλά είπαν ψέματα για εσένα χωρίς λόγο. Δε με νοιάζει καν, αν έχεις αυτισμό.

**A:** Πρώτον δεν έχω αυτισμό αλλά δυσλεξία, οπότε όντως είπαν ψέματα για μένα.

**T:** Υπάρχει διαφορά; Συγγνώμη που σου φώναξα.

**A:** Μην ανησυχείς και υπάρχει μεγάλη διαφορά. Παλιά ήμασταν κολλητές μα όταν έμαθαν πως έχω δυσλεξία, με συκοφάντησαν και είπαν σε όλους πως έχω αυτισμό. Κανείς δε νοιάστηκε αλλά δεν ήθελαν να γίνουν και φίλοι μου. Έτσι, έμεινα μόνη μου.

**T:** Δε κατάλαβα συγγνώμη. Έχεις δοκιμάσει να τους μιλήσεις;

**A:** Ναι αλλά μου είπαν πως είμαι πολύ χαζή για να τους μιλήσω αν και παίρνω καλύτερους βαθμούς από αυτές. Έκτοτε, με αγνοούν.

**T:** Θα ήθελες να τους μιλήσω, γιατί δε φαίνονται κακές. Μάλλον δεν κατάλαβαν την κατάσταση.

**A:** Ναι, σε παρακαλώ. Θέλω ακόμα να είμαστε φίλες.

Η Άννα έδωσε στην Τζένη τον αριθμό της κοπέλας με τα καστανά μαλλιά. Η Τζένη αποφάσισε να πάρει τηλέφωνο στη Μαρία το ίδιο απόγευμα.

**T:** Μαρία; Εσύ είσαι;

**A:** Ναι, ποιος είναι;

**T:** Η Τζένη είμαι, το καινούριο κορίτσι από το σχολείο.

**A:** Ποιος σου έδωσε τον αριθμό μου; Χρειάζεσαι τις σημειώσεις από το σχολείο;

**T:** Η Άννα και θα ήθελα να σου μιλήσω για αυτήν.

**A:** Εντάξει, θες να συναντηθούμε στην αυλή του σχολείου σου 20 λεπτά;

**T:** Ναι, τα λέμε εκεί.

Λίγο αργότερα συναντήθηκαν και χαιρέτησα η μία την άλλη. Έκατσαν στο παγκάκι που καθόταν η Τζένη το πρωί.

**M:** Για ποιο πράγμα θες να μιλήσουμε.

**T:** Μίλησα με την Άννα στο σχολείο και μου είπε πως δεν έχει αυτισμό, αλλά δυσλεξία, οπότε είπατε ψέματα για αυτήν. Υπάρχει μεγάλη διαφορά ανάμεσα στα δύο.

**M:** Τότε όντως είπαμε ψέματα. Απλά είμασταν θυμωμένες που δε μας το είπε και που συνέχισε να το αρνείται.

**T:** Σε καταλαβαίνω, ήμουν και γω μπερδεμένη.

**M:** Μπορείς να ζητήσεις συγγνώμη από την Άννα εκ μέρους μας, γιατί δε θα θέλει να μας μιλήσει.

**T:** Εμένα μου είπε, πως ακόμα θέλει να είστε φίλες.

**M:** Όντως; Ελπίζω να αποδεχτεί τη συγγνώμη μας και σε ευχαριστώ που μου μίλησες.

**T:** Μην ανησυχείς, θα το κάνει και δε κάνει τίποτα!

**M:** Θα μιλήσω στη Γεωργία και στη Γιώτα για να καταλάβουν και αυτές

Η Μαρία, η Γεωργία και η Γιώτα ζήτησαν συγγνώμη και η Άννα τις συγχώρεσε. Τα πέντε κορίτσια έγιναν κολλητές και ξεκίνησαν να βγαίνουν κάθε μέρα μαζί. Όλες αποδέχτηκαν την ιδιαιτερότητα της Άννας και με αυτό τον τρόπο την βοήθησαν να το αποδεχτεί και η ίδια.

## Ίδιο σχολείο, διαφορετικές ζωές

Ήταν μια κοπέλα που την έλεγαν Αμέλια. Η Αμέλια είχε την «τέλεια ζωή». Είχε πλούσιους γονείς που την αγαπούσαν και είχε πολλούς φίλους. Ήταν δημοφιλής στο σχολείο της και όλοι τη θαύμαζαν, ήταν το στερεότυπο του λευκού πλουσίου κοριτσιού. Ήταν ευγενική, όμορφη με μπλε μάτια και ξανθά μαλλιά με μοντέρνα ρούχα. Η Αμέλια ήταν στη δεύτερη τάξη του Γυμνασίου και είχε μια συμμαθήτρια που την έλεγαν Τζέιν. Η Τζέιν ήταν ακριβώς το αντίθετο. Ήταν από μια φτωχή οικογένεια που δεν μπορούσε να της αγοράσει καινούργια ρούχα και έτσι έπρεπε να φορέσει τα παλιά ρούχα της ξαδέρφης της και βίωνε την ενδοοικογενειακή βία καθημερινά. Είχε καστανά μάτια και μαύρα μαλλιά και δεν ταίριαζε στα πρότυπα ομορφιάς, έτσι τα περισσότερα παιδιά συνήθιζαν να την κοροϊδεύουν.

Τότε μια μέρα η δασκάλα της Μαίρη ρώτησε την Τζέιν γιατί δεν είχε κάνει την εργασία της, σκεπτόμενη ότι ήταν πάντα η καλύτερη μαθήτρια στην τάξη. Η Τζέιν ξέσπασε σε κλάματα επειδή δεν μπορούσε να μιλήσει και βγήκε τρέχοντας από την τάξη. Η Αμέλια το είδε αυτό και τη λυπήθηκε. Την επόμενη μέρα κάποια παιδιά άρχισαν να κοροϊδεύουν την Τζέιν. Η Αμέλια προσπάθησε να τους σταματήσει και τους είπε να φύγουν και έφυγαν όλοι, καθώς ήταν το δημοφιλές κορίτσι. Μετά αγκάλιασε την Τζέιν και της είπε:

**A:** "Γεια σου Τζέιν, λυπάμαι για αυτό που έγινε. Νιώθεις καλύτερα τώρα;"

**J:** "Ναι, νομίζω ότι ναι, ευχαριστώ που τους είπες να φύγουν."

**A:** "Κανένα πρόβλημα, αναρωτιόμουν για χθες, ξέρεις στην τάξη τότε που άρχισες να κλαις. Τι έγινε;"

Και η Τζέιν της μίλησε για όλα όσα είχαν συμβεί τα τελευταία χρόνια με τη βίαιη οικογένεια της και τον εκφοβισμό από τα παιδιά.

**A:** " Ω Τζέιν, λυπάμαι πολύ που τα ακούω όλα αυτά. Όσο για τους γονείς σου, δεν νομίζω ότι μπορώ να κάνω κάτι γι' αυτούς, αλλά σίγουρα μπορώ να κάνω πολλά για τον εκφοβισμό. Θέλεις να γίνουμε φίλοι; "

Η Τζέιν είχε παγώσει νομίζοντας ότι αυτό ήταν άλλο ένα αστείο, αλλά η Αμέλια τη διαβεβαίωσε ότι ήθελε πραγματικά να είναι φίλη μαζί της.

Την επόμενη κιόλας μέρα κάθονταν στο ίδιο θρανίο και πολλά παιδιά τους κοιτούσαν περιέργεια. Μετά από λίγες μέρες ήθελαν όλοι να γίνουν φίλοι με την Τζέιν. Η Τζέιν και η Αμέλια έκαναν παρέα κάθε μέρα μετά το σχολείο και η Αμέλια καλούσε την Τζέιν σε μερικά πάρτι. Η Τζέιν άρχισε να γίνεται πολύ δημοφιλής και με τη βοήθεια της Αμέλια πήρε νέα ρούχα. Μια μέρα μετά από ένα πάρτι πήγαν στο σπίτι της Αμέλια να κοιμηθούν.

**J:** "Έχω κάτι που θέλω να σε ρωτήσω."

**A:** "Λοιπόν, προχώρα."

**J:** "Γιατί είπες στα παιδιά να φύγουν εκείνη την ημέρα; Δηλαδή, γιατί ένιωσες την ανάγκη να με βοηθήσεις;"

**A:** «Ηλπίζα ότι δεν θα το συζητούσαμε για πολύ καιρό, αλλά νομίζω ότι ήρθε η ώρα να ακούσεις το μυστικό μου».

**J:** "Ποιο μυστικό;"

**A:** "Είμαι υιοθετημένη"

**J:** "Τί πράγμα;"

**A:** "Ήμουν σε ένα ορφανοτροφείο και όσο βρισκόμουν εκεί εκεί, ορισμένα παιδιά με κορόιδευαν και εμένα. Ήμουν το μόνο παιδί που οι βιολογικοί μου γονείς μου με εγκατέλειψαν επειδή ήταν πολύ φτωχοί. Όλοι οι άλλοι γονείς των παιδιών είχαν πεθάνει. Οι ανάδοχοι γονείς μου είδαν πόσο υπέφερα από όλα αυτά (όπως έκανα και εγώ με εσένα) και ήθελαν να με υιοθετήσουν για να με βοηθήσουν».

**J:** "Ωχ, δεν θα φαντάζον ποτέ ότι το μυστικό σου θα μπορούσε να είναι κάτι τέτοιο"

**A:** "Δεν έχω πει ποτέ τίποτα γι 'αυτό σε κανέναν γιατί φοβάμαι ότι θα με κοροϊδέψουν ξανά"

Όταν η Τζέιν ξύπνησε το πρωί, η Αμέλια δεν ήταν στο δωμάτιο και έτσι την κάλεσε στο τηλέφωνό της για να τη ρωτήσει πού βρισκόταν.

Η Αμέλια ήρθε με τους γονείς της στο δωμάτιο όπου φιλοξενούνταν η Τζέιν και της εξήγησε ότι είχαν ήδη καλέσει την αστυνομία για τους κακοποιητικούς γονείς της και ότι είχαν αρχίσει να συμπληρώνουν τα έντυπα για να μπορέσουν να την υιοθετήσουν.

Η Τζέιν ξέσπασε σε κλάματα ανακούφισης.

Αγκάλιασε την Αμέλια και την ευχαρίστησε για όλα όσα έχει κάνει για εκείνη μέχρι τώρα.

Μια νέα ζωή ξεκινούσε και ήταν πρόθυμη να τη ζήσει, αφήνοντας πίσω τις οδυνηρές εμπειρίες που είχε στο παρελθόν.

## **The European Dimension – Not just an experience**

*Author: Deligiannidis Konstantinos*

Erasmus. Just an experience, right? What makes it so likable among students? Is it the enrichment of our knowledge or the unique cultural activities? Have you ever thought precisely about it? Let's take things from a starting point.

Through the participation of my school in such a programme, I was given the opportunity to be one of the few students who got to take part in it. I remember myself thinking deeply about it. "Is it really worth it?" and "How am I going to combine academic needs and devote time to the preparation of certain activities for the programme as well?" were some of my main questions. Another vivid memory I have is hesitating about whether I'll actually enjoy the experience or regret it. And then the day came. We were finally meeting our partners from abroad. For our first activity we had to visit a nearby village by bus. Surprisingly, we didn't get to know each other on the bus since we weren't able to sit close to one another. Our actual first conversation was once our activity was over and we sat near the central square of the village. There, we were continuously talking for hours. I wasn't nervous at all. Our conversation had a completely natural flow as we could complete each other's thoughts despite our age difference and certain language barriers. In just a few hours we were able to convert from complete strangers to friends who seem to have known each other for years. The formation of a really strong bond was clear.

As time went by, our bond became even stronger. Our countless common points were obvious. Nevertheless, the moment of farewell came, as expected. But we couldn't be separated. We just couldn't fit it in our minds that we would have all this distance between us. Our connection however had come to a point, so-called "Low maintenance friendship." To this day, we don't talk everyday, we have other circles and we can get by without socializing with each other on a daily basis. Our relationship is not demanding, but rather easy and comfortable. We catch up once in a blue moon, but when we do, comfort dominates. As long as our relationship stays in the heart, we will never part.

All in all, what is Erasmus? It is certainly not just an experience. Erasmus is a tool to teach us how to be happy. It shows how strangers can become family. It reveals how beautiful people and cultures can be. In fact, I have felt way more things than I could have ever imagined. It now

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appears like I am trapped in an endless experience because everything I have felt will forever live within me. At the end of the day, it's the true friendships created during Erasmus!

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## Η Ευρωπαϊκή Διάσταση – Η εμπειρία μου

**Erasmus+.** Απλά μια εμπειρία, σωστά; Τι το κάνει τόσο δημοφιλές μεταξύ των μαθητών; Είναι ο εμπλουτισμός των γνώσεών μας ή οι μοναδικές πολιτιστικές δραστηριότητες; Το έχετε σκεφτεί ποτέ ακριβώς; Ας πάρουμε τα πράγματα από την αρχή.

Μέσω της συμμετοχής του σχολείου μου σε ένα τέτοιο πρόγραμμα, μου δόθηκε η ευκαιρία να είμαι ένας από τους λίγους μαθητές που πήραν μέρος σε αυτό. Θυμάμαι να το σκέφτομαι βαθιά. «Αξίζει πραγματικά;» και «Πώς θα συνδυάσω τις ακαδημαϊκές μου ανάγκες και θα αφιερώσω χρόνο στην προετοιμασία ορισμένων δραστηριοτήτων για το πρόγραμμα;» ήταν μερικές από τις κύριες ερωτήσεις μου. Μια άλλη ζωντανή ανάμνηση που έχω είναι να διστάζω για το αν θα απολαύσω πραγματικά την εμπειρία ή θα το μετανιώσω. Και μετά ήρθε η μέρα. Επιτέλους θα συναντούσαμε τους εταίρους μας από το εξωτερικό. Για την πρώτη μας δραστηριότητα επισκεφθήκαμε μία κοντινή πόλη με λεωφορείο. Παραδόξως, δεν γνωριστήκαμε στο λεωφορείο, αφού δεν μπορέσαμε να καθίσουμε κοντά ο ένας στον άλλο. Η πραγματική μας πρώτη συζήτηση ήταν όταν τελείωσε η δραστηριότητά μας και καθίσαμε κοντά στην κεντρική πλατεία της πόλης. Εκεί, μιλούσαμε συνεχώς για ώρες. Δεν ήμουν καθόλου νευρικός. Η συνομιλία μας είχε μια εντελώς φυσική ροή καθώς μπορούσαμε να ολοκληρώσουμε ο ένας τις σκέψεις του άλλου, παρά τη διαφορά ηλικίας μας και ορισμένα γλωσσικά εμπόδια. Μέσα σε λίγες μόνο ώρες μπορέσαμε να μετατραπούμε από εντελώς άγνωστοι σε φίλους που φαίνεται να γνωρίζονται χρόνια. Η δημιουργία ενός πραγματικά ισχυρού δεσμού ήταν ξεκάθαρος.

Καθώς περνούσε ο καιρός, ο δεσμός μας γινόταν ακόμα πιο ισχυρός. Τα αμέτρητα κοινά σημεία μας ήταν προφανή. Παρόλα αυτά, ήρθε η στιγμή του αποχαιρετισμού, όπως ήταν αναμενόμενο. Αλλά δεν μπορούσαμε να χωριστούμε. Απλώς δεν μπορούσαμε να το χωρέσουμε στο μυαλό μας ότι θα είχαμε όλη αυτή την απόσταση ανάμεσά μας. Ωστόσο, η σύνδεσή μας είχε φτάσει στο σημείο της λεγόμενης «**Φιλίας χαμηλής συντήρησης**». Μέχρι σήμερα, δεν μιλάμε καθημερινά, έχουμε άλλους κύκλους και μπορούμε να τα βγάλουμε πέρα χωρίς να κοινωνικοποιούμαστε σε καθημερινή βάση. Η φιλία μας δεν είναι απαιτητική, αλλά μάλλον εύκολη και άνετη. Τα λέμε κάθε τόσο, αλλά όταν το κάνουμε, κυριαρχεί η άνεση. Όσο η σχέση μας μένει στην καρδιά, δεν θα χωριστούμε ποτέ.

Τελικά, τι είναι το Εράσμους+ ; Σίγουρα δεν είναι απλώς μια εμπειρία. Το Εράσμους+ είναι ένα εργαλείο που μας διδάσκει πώς να είμαστε ευτυχισμένοι. Δείχνει πώς οι ξένοι μπορούν να

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γίνουν οικογένεια. Αποκαλύπτει πόσο όμορφοι μπορούν να είναι οι άνθρωποι και οι πολιτισμοί. Στην πραγματικότητα, έχω νιώσει πολύ περισσότερα πράγματα από όσα θα μπορούσα ποτέ να φανταστώ. Τώρα φαίνεται σαν να είμαι παγιδευμένος σε μια ατελείωτη εμπειρία γιατί όλα όσα έχω νιώσει θα ζουν για πάντα μέσα μου. Στο τέλος της ημέρας, είναι οι αληθινές φίλιες που δημιουργήθηκαν κατά τη διάρκεια του προγράμματος Εράσμος + !



## Thoughts about Serafin

*Author: Foteini Damkali*

June 14<sup>th</sup>

Dear diary,

Today is the best day of my life! School is finally over! I'm so excited! I can't wait to do all those awesome things I was dreaming of, all the entire school year! Summer is going to be so much fun! Can't wait to go camping with my family and visit my summer friends from Spain, but as much I'm excited for summer, I will surely miss my classmates and teachers. Oh, and I will miss that new friend I made, her name is Serafin, she is so kind!!! She is from Albania she is new in our class. At first, she didn't know very well Greek...but as time went by, she got used to people talking, and now she is an expert! Well, at first, she was getting bullied many times, for her accent and origin. I caught her crying in the girls' bathroom, so I tried to do something about that. One day, a guy started saying making fun of her about her origin, so I tried to explain to him that what he had said wasn't kind at all and Serafin needs our support because she is a newcomer to town and country. He stopped for a while and I think he realized what he did was horrible, and after that, he apologized. My birthday is just one week before I leave for summer holidays. Wow! I have a terrific idea!

I will prepare a birthday party and invite all my friends, including Serafin!!! It will be a great opportunity for all of us to meet each other, get along, have fun and exchange ideas. I long to learn about Albania and Tirana which is Serafin's home city, and I can't wait to visit it. She is a beautiful girl, smart, kind and her knowledge about our country, our history, culture, geography is remarkable. As I've told you I can't wait to learn about Albania, so the last few days I'm trying to learn some words and phrases in Albanian for example "miremenjes" which means "good morning". I've just realized that's a little bit difficult but I like the way it is pronounced. Anyway, the most important of all is the fact that we will spend some time together, we'll be dancing, laughing and having fun, watching movies and eating. When people meet, they get to know each other and overcome their differences. It will be a wonderful experience!!! Can't wait! Anyway, my mum is calling me now; I got to go! Write you soon!!!

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## Σκέψεις για τη Σεραφίν

Αγαπημένο μου ημερολόγιο,

Σήμερα ήταν η καλύτερη μέρα της ζωής μου! Το σχολείο τελείωσε επιτέλους! Είμαι τόσο ενθουσιασμένη! Δεν μπορώ να περιμένω να κάνω όλα αυτά τα υπέροχα πράγματα που ονειρευόμουν όλη τη σχολική χρονιά! Το καλοκαίρι θα είναι τόσο διασκεδαστικό! Ανυπομονώ να πάω κατασκλήνωση με την οικογένειά μου και να συναντήσω τους καλοκαιρινούς μου φίλους από την Ισπανία, αλλά όσο κι αν ανυπομονώ για το καλοκαίρι, σίγουρα θα μου λείψουν οι συμμαθητές και οι δάσκαλοί μου. Α, και θα μου λείπει και η καινούργια μου φίλη που έκανα, η Σεραφίν. Είναι τόσο καλή!!! Είναι από τη Αλβανία και είναι καινούργια στην τάξη μας. Στην αρχή, δεν ήξερε καλά ελληνικά... αλλά με τον καιρό συνήθισε την ομιλία των άλλων, και τώρα; Είναι πλέον εξαιρετική! Βέβαια, στην αρχή την κορόιδευαν πολλές φορές για την προφορά της και την καταγωγή της. Την έπιασα να κλαίει στην τουαλέτα των κοριτσιών, οπότε προσπάθησα να κάνω κάτι γι' αυτό. Μια μέρα, ένα αγόρι άρχισε να λέει ρατσιστικά πράγματα για το χρώμα του δέρματός της, οπότε του εξήγησα ότι αυτό που είπε δεν ήταν καθόλου ευγενικό και ότι η Σεραφίν χρειάζεται τη στήριξή μας, γιατί είναι καινούργια στην πόλη και στη χώρα. Νομίζω πως κατάλαβε πόσο άσχημο ήταν αυτό που έκανε, και μετά ζήτησε συγγνώμη. Τα γενέθλιά μου είναι ακριβώς μια εβδομάδα πριν φύγω για τις καλοκαιρινές διακοπές. Ωω!

Έχω μια φανταστική ιδέα! Θα ετοιμάσω ένα πάρτι γενεθλίων και θα καλέσω όλους τους φίλους μου, συμπεριλαμβανομένης της Σεραφίν!!! Θα είναι μια υπέροχη ευκαιρία για όλους μας να γνωριστούμε καλύτερα, να διασκεδάσουμε και να ανταλλάξουμε ιδέες. Είμαι πολύ περίεργη να μάθω περισσότερα για τη Αλβανία και τα Τίρανα που είναι η ιδιαίτερη πατρίδα της Σεραφίν, και ανυπομονώ να την επισκεφτώ. Είναι ένα πανέμορφο κορίτσι, έξυπνο, ευγενικό, και οι γνώσεις της για τη χώρα μας, την ιστορία μας, τον πολιτισμό μας, τη γεωγραφία μας είναι αξιοσημείωτες. Σου είπα ότι είμαι πολύ περίεργη να μάθω για τη Αλβανία! Τις τελευταίες μέρες προσπάθησα να μάθω κάποιες λέξεις και φράσεις στα αλβανικά για παράδειγμα η λέξη «miremenjes» σημαίνει «καλημέρα». Μόλις συνειδητοποίησα ότι είναι λίγο δύσκολο, αλλά μου αρέσει ο τρόπος που προφέρεται. Τέλος πάντων, το πιο σημαντικό είναι ότι θα περάσουμε χρόνο μαζί, θα χορέψουμε,

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θα διασκεδάσουμε, θα δούμε ταινίες, θα φάμε, θα γελάσουμε. Όταν οι άνθρωποι γνωρίζονται, ξεχνούν τελείως τις διαφορές τους. Θα είναι μια υπέροχη εμπειρία!!! Ανυπομονώ! Τέλος πάντων, η μαμά μου με φωνάζει, πρέπει να φύγω, θα τα πούμε σύντομα!!!

Φωτεινή

## Young geniuses

*Author: Theodoros Voulgaridis*

It was September the 11<sup>th</sup> and, as usual, the first day of the school year. I was totally bored of having to go to school one more year -especially after the fantastic summer vacations I had had, but nobody ever asks me whether I want to go to school or not.

The only good thing about that, was that I would see again my best friend Michael after such a long time. I was looking forward to catching up with him about our summer holidays -and I bet so was he-, but I'd rather do it somewhere away from school.

So, there I go! I wore my new trainers and hit the road.

When I reached school Michael was already there. "That's odd" I thought. Michael comes to school only two minutes before the bell rings.

"Hello Greg" he said.

"Hi Mike" I replied. "What's up?"

"Don't you know? There is a newcomer!"

"Why should I know that?"

"Look at him. He looks so stupid!" he said ignoring my question.

"Have you spoken with him?"

"No!"

"Let's do it now, shall we?"

"What? Are you serious? Of course not!"

"Why not?"

"Seriously Greg? Do you want to talk to that guy?"

"Well, I don't understand the reason why I should..."

Then the bell rang and interrupted our conversation.

I was really confused. I still couldn't understand why Mike had said all that. It was very complicated.

The next morning I was pondering about Mike's words while I walking to school. As I passed by Leo's house I saw him coming out.

"Hey, Leo!" I said.

“Oh, hi Greg!” he responded “How are you?”

“Well, I’m a bit confused. You know... about the newcomer...”

“Oh, yeah! He’s such a moron, isn’t he?”

“Why do you say that too? Have you tried talking with him?”

“Come on bro! You don’t need to talk with somebody to find out whether he’s goofy or not. Haven’t you seen him? Tall, thin, ginger-headed, with a dumb smile on his face... He’s one sandwich short of a picnic!”

“You can’t be sure about that! I’ll speak to him after school. If you, or Mike, or anybody else want to come, you are welcome.

“Of course I won’t come; and neither will Mike. Nobody wants to speak to that freak! Now come on! We’ll be late!”

During the first break I looked for the newcomer. I didn’t want to talk with neither Mike nor Leo. I couldn’t imagine that they would say anything like that about someone. The newcomer was sitting on a bench at the corner of the playground. He was all alone looking at the ground.

“Hey!” I screamed.

He took his eyes off the ground and looked at me.

“Hey, you the newcomer!” I repeated.

“Me?” he asked quietly.

“Yeah! Is there another newcomer here?” I laughed nervously with my joke, but he didn’t seem to find it very funny because he simply shook his head.

“What’s your name?”

“Tom...”

“Well, hello Tom. Nice to meet you. I’m Greg.”

“Hello Greg.”

“Why are you sitting here all by yourself?”

“Nobody wants me around.”

“Oh, come on! That’s untrue. I want you around...”

After school I was walking back home with Leo.

“You know, you were wrong about Tom” I told him.

“Who’s Tom?” he asked.

“The new guy”.

“How d’ ya know?”

“I spoke to him. I told you I would. He’s a really good guy”.

“Being good doesn’t mean not being stupid. Stupid people can’t be bad anyway”.

“Now you’re the bad one!”

“No, I’m not. I’m just tellin’ the truth. Oh, there I go! See ya!”.

The next morning Michael had gone to school earlier than me again. He seemed to be waiting for me next to the entrance of the school cafeteria.

“Hi Mike!” I said.

“Hi Greg. What was all that Leo told me yesterday?”

“What are you talkin’ about?”

“You know, about the newcomer. Did you speak with him?”

“Oh, yeah! He’s a really...”

“Why did you do that Greg? I told you not to speak to that freak!”

“He isn’t a freak, he...”

“Oh, yes! He is! Now don’t speak to him again!”

“Why not?”

“Because I said so! I thought we were mates Greg...”

“We are!”

“...but it seems you prefer that freak instead of me and that you’ve forgotten all the things we did together!”

“Of course I haven’t!”

“Then stop talking to him!”

“He’s a good guy and he hasn’t done anything bad to deserve such treatment!”

“That’s all you have to say to your best friend? Okay then! Good bye Greg! Have fun with the freak!”

Now I was totally troubled. It was impossible for me to understand why they didn’t like Tom. Michael could simply have explained to me. At first I believed that we would make up soon, because I thought that whatever was the reason they didn’t want to talk to him, it wasn’t important enough to destroy our friendship. Well, I was wrong.

Two weeks later Mike and Leo still didn't want to speak with me. After the first week I stopped trying to contact them. I used to hang around with Tom during the break. He was a really funny person and he had a lot of knowledge. He was one of the best students in the class, something that made him, at least, not stupid.

Then, when I arrived at school one day I saw a big crowd around him.

"What's goin' on?" I asked Susan, one of my classmates.

"Don't you know? Tom won the big prize on a TV show!" she said excitedly.

"What TV show?"

"You know... 'Young geniuses', 'The best TV show for teenagers' as they say. It was on last night. He won a fortnight-long trip to Paris with his best friend!"

"Wow! That's great! Where's he?"

"Among the crowd..."

"I must find him!" I said and left. "Hey, Tom! Where are you?" I yelled.

"Here", he said barely loud enough to hear him.

I moved towards him pushing the crowd.

"Congratulations! Why didn't you tell me anything about that?"

"I had forgotten it."

"Come on! You can't forget that! When are you gonna go?"

"Next summer."

"Who are you takin' with?"

"Well, I was thinking about... you."

"Me? Really?"

"Yes..."

"But why? You should take your best friend!"

"You are the only friend I have. So, I thought that you are my best friend."

The next moment two guys were pushing the crowd and making for us. They were Mike and Leo!

"Hello lad... er, what's your name?" said Mike.

"Tom." responded Tom.

“Oh, yes! Of course your name is Tom! What a beautiful name!” Mike continued.

“How are you Tom?” said Leo.

“Fine.” he answered.

“It’s so nice to see you here today. Who could imagine that we’d bump into you extremely unexpectedly.” said Mike.

“It wasn’t unexpectedly! You came here to find him!” I said full of anger.

“Oh, Greg! Are you here too? I didn’t notice you. Now, come with me Tom. The bell rings in a minute.”

After the first class I searched for Mike. I was still furious with him. I found him and Leo at the playground moving towards the crowd that was surrounding Tom once again.

“What are you pretending to be? A friend of Tom’s?”

“I’m not *pretending* to be his friend. *I am!*”

“No, *you are not!*”

“It doesn’t matter whether I’m his friend or not at the moment. I’ll have become by summer.”

“I thought you believed he was stupid.”

“Well, I was wrong. I hadn’t realised that he was a... ‘young genius’”.

“Furthermore, you said he was a freak.”

“Well, I was wrong again. I made two mistakes. You are the real freak! Now let me meet the ‘genius’.”

During the next break I told Tom to follow me and we hid in a corner behind some trash bins.

“Here they won’t be able to find you that easily” I whispered.

“Why did we come here? It stinks!” he said.

“Because I must talk to you and that’s impossible when you’re among the crowd.” I explained.

“Talk to me about what? I like being among the crowd. It’s the first time I am and everybody is so nice with me! They talk to me politely and they suggested that they interview me for the school’s newspaper. They also give me presents! Look what Michael gave me during the last break!” Tom said and took a simple blue pen out of his pocket.



“Look, Michael, Leo and lots of others want to come with you to Paris and they pretend to be your friends to pull it off. That’s why they talk to you politely and give you presents.”

“What? Of course they won’t come with me! I said I want you to come!” he said loudly.

“Shh! Stop shouting! They all know what you said, but they think they can make you change your mind.”

“Well, this will never happen!”

“I know. But *they* don’t! Hey! I have an idea! Why don’t we *let* them think they’ll come to Paris and see what they’ll do? I bet we’ll have loads of fun!” I suggested.

“Well, why not?” he replied.

From that day on Tom daily received presents and compliments from several pupils and everybody invited him to their parties. Everyone tried hard to have the chance of going to Paris, but Michael was surely the one who tried the hardest.

One of the last evenings of May I was at Tom’s house.

“Look! This is all they gave me!” said Tom showing me a big wooden box full of things.

“Even the box was one of their presents!”

“Wow! There are so many of them! I still don’t believe we’re goin’ to Paris next week and they still think they have a chance of coming!”

“Yeah! That’s really hilarious! But I think we should tell them now. Michael himself suggested that I announced who I’ve decided to come with me next Monday.”

“Let’s do it then!”

On Monday, during the first break, almost all the students -as well as some of the teachers- were waiting in the playground for Tom to announce the lucky one who was going to go to Paris.

The reporters of the school newspaper were there too.

“Well,” said Tom a bit nervously “you all know that one of you will come to Paris with me next week. You all were very good with me and...”

“Come on! Tell us who’s coming!” shouted Michael.

“Okay, okay. I know you can’t wait. Well, the one who’s coming with me is...”

“Speak up at last!” Leo yelled.

“He or she is... Gregory Allen!” Tom announced.

Some of the students mumbled.

“What?” Michael shouted. “After all that I did for you, you chose *him*? What an ungrateful person! I was right of calling you stupid and freak!”

“I don’t think he’ll ever forgive us, will he?” I asked Tom.

“Well, nobody can say for sure!” he responded.

“That’s right, but I still don’t think he will!”

Well, I don’t know if Michael will forgive us or not, but what I *do* know now is that you never totally know somebody, as Micheal and Leo proved. I *do* know that you should never judge a book by its cover and I *do* know that you should always speak your mind, no matter what others think. Furthermore, I *do* know that I’m flying to Paris in two hours and I’ll have great fun with my new *best* friend Tom.

*The End*

## Μικρές Ιδιοφυΐες

Ήταν 11 Σεπτεμβρίου και, ως συνήθως, η πρώτη μέρα της σχολικής χρονιάς. Βαριόμουν εντελώς που έπρεπε να πάω στο σχολείο για έναν ακόμη χρόνο ειδικά μετά τις φανταστικές καλοκαιρινές διακοπές που είχα, αλλά κανείς δεν θα με ρωτήσει ποτέ αν θέλω να πάω στο σχολείο ή όχι.

Το μόνο καλό σε αυτό, ήταν ότι θα έβλεπα ξανά τον καλύτερό μου φίλο Μιχάλη μετά από τόσο καιρό. Ανυπομονούσα να τον συναντήσω και να μιλήσουμε για τις καλοκαιρινές μας διακοπές και στοιχηματίζω ότι και αυτός έκανε το ίδιο, αλλά θα προτιμούσα να το κάνω κάπου μακριά από το σχολείο.

Φόρεσα τα καινούρια αθλητικά μου και βγήκα στο δρόμο. Όταν έφτασα στο σχολείο, ο Μιχάλης ήταν ήδη εκεί. «Περίεργο» σκέφτηκα. Ο Μιχάλης έρχεται στο σχολείο δύο λεπτά πριν χτυπήσει το κουδούνι.

«Γεια σου Γρηγόρη» είπε.

«Γεια σου Μιχάλη», απάντησα. «Τι συμβαίνει;»

«Δεν ξέρεις; Ήρθε ένας καινούριος!».

«Γιατί θα ‘πρεπε να το ξέρω αυτό;»

«Κοίτα τον. Φαίνεται τόσο ηλίθιος!» είπε εκείνος αγνοώντας την ερώτησή μου.

«Του έχεις μιλήσει;»

«Όχι!»

«Τι θα έλεγες να το κάνουμε τώρα, λοιπόν;»

«Τι; Σοβαρά μιλάς; Φυσικά και όχι!»

«Γιατί όχι;»

«Σοβαρά Γρηγόρη; Θέλεις να μιλήσεις με αυτόν τον τύπο;»

«Λοιπόν, δεν καταλαβαίνω τον λόγο για τον οποίο θα έπρεπε...»

Τότε χτύπησε το κουδούνι και διέκοψε τη συνομιλία μας.

Ήμουν πραγματικά μπερδεμένος. Δεν μπορούσα να καταλάβω γιατί ο Μιχάλης τα είχε πει όλα αυτά. Ήταν πολύ περίπλοκο.

Το επόμενο πρωί σκεφτόμουν τα χθεσινά λόγια του Μιχάλη ενώ πήγαινα στο σχολείο. Καθώς περνούσα από το σπίτι του Λέο τον είδα να βγαίνει.

«Γεια, Λέο!» είπα.

«Ω, γεια σου Γρηγόρη!» απάντησε «Πώς είσαι;»

«Λοιπόν, είμαι λίγο μπερδεμένος. Ξέρεις... σχετικά με τον καινούριο...»

«Α, ναι! Είναι τόσο ανόητος, έτσι δεν είναι;»

«Γιατί το λες κι εσύ αυτό; Δοκίμασες να μιλήσεις μαζί του;»

«Έλα αδερφέ! Δεν χρειάζεται να μιλήσεις με κάποιον για να καταλάβεις αν είναι ανόητος ή όχι. Δεν τον είδες; Ψηλός, αδύνατος, κοκκινομάλλης, με ένα χαζό χαμόγελο στο πρόσωπό του... Είναι εντελώς βλάκας!»

«Δεν μπορείς να είσαι σίγουρος για αυτό! Θα πάω να του μιλήσω μετά το σχολείο. Εάν εσύ, ή ο Μιχάλης, ή οποιοσδήποτε άλλος θέλετε να έρθετε, είστε ευπρόσδεκτοι.

«Φυσικά δεν θα 'ρθω. Ούτε κι ο Μιχάλης. Κανείς δεν θέλει να μιλήσει σ' αυτό το φρικιό! Βιάσου τώρα! Θα αργήσουμε!»

Στο πρώτο διάλειμμα αναζήτησα τον καινούριο. Δεν ήθελα να μιλήσω ούτε με τον Μιχάλη ούτε με τον Λέο. Δεν θα μπορούσα να φανταστώ ότι θα έλεγαν κάτι τέτοιο για κάποιον. Βρήκα τον καινούριο να κάθεται σ' ένα παγκάκι στην άκρη του προαυλίου. Ήταν ολομόναχος και κοιτούσε το έδαφος.

«Γεια!» ούρλιαξα.

Σήκωσε τα μάτια του από το έδαφος και με κοίταξε, μα δε μίλησε.

«Γεια, εσύ, ο καινούριος!» επανέλαβα.

«Σε μένα μιλάς;» ρώτησε σιγανά.

«Ναι! Υπάρχει κάποιος άλλος καινούριος εδώ;» Γέλασα νευρικά με το αστείο μου, αν και αυτός δεν πρέπει να το βρήκε και πολύ αστείο, αφού απλά κούνησε το κεφάλι του.

«Πώς σε λένε;»

«Θωμά...»

«Λοιπόν, γεια σου Θωμά. Χάρηκα. Είμαι ο Γρηγόρη».

«Γεια σου Γρηγόρη».

«Γιατί κάθεται εδώ μόνος σου;»

«Κανείς δεν θέλει να είμαι κοντά του».

«Ω, έλα τώρα! Αυτό δεν είναι αλήθεια. Εγώ θέλω να είσαι κοντά μου...»

Μετά το σχολείο επέστρεφα σπίτι μαζί με τον Λέο.  
«Ξέρεις, έκανες λάθος για τον Θωμά» του είπα.  
«Ποιος είναι ο Θωμάς;» ρώτησε.  
«Ο καινούριος».  
«Πώς το ξέρεις;»  
«Του μίλησα. Σου είπα ότι θα το κάνω. Είναι πολύ καλό παιδί».  
«Το να είσαι καλός δεν σημαίνει να μην είσαι ηλίθιος. Οι ανόητοι άνθρωποι δεν μπορούν να είναι κακοί ούτως ή άλλως».  
«Τώρα εσύ είσαι ο κακός!»  
«Όχι, δεν είμαι. Απλώς λέω την αλήθεια. Ω, εδώ πρέπει να σ' αφήσω! Τα λέμε!».  
Το επόμενο πρωί ο Μιχάλης είχε ξαναπάει στο σχολείο πριν από μένα. Έμοιαζε να με περιμένει δίπλα στο κυλικείο του σχολείου.  
«Γεια σου Μιχάλη!» είπα.  
«Γεια σου Γρηγόρη. Τι ήταν όλα αυτά που μου είπε ο Λέο χθες;»  
«Για ποιο πράγμα μιλάς;»  
«Ξέρεις, για τον καινούριο. Μίλησες μαζί του;»  
«Ω, ναι! Είναι πραγματικά πολύ...»  
«Γιατί το 'κανες αυτό Γρηγόρη; Σου είπα να μην μιλήσεις σε αυτό το φρικιό!»  
«Δεν είναι φρικιό,...»  
«Ω, ναι! Αυτό είναι! Μην του ξαναμιλήσεις!»  
«Γιατί όχι;»  
«Επειδή σου το είπα εγώ. Νόμιζα ότι ήμασταν φίλοι Γρηγόρη...»  
«Μα είμαστε!»  
«...αλλά φαίνεται ότι προτιμάς αυτό το φρικιό αντί για μένα και ότι έχεις ξεχάσει όλα τα πράγματα που κάναμε μαζί!»  
«Φυσικά και δεν τα 'χω ξεχάσει!»  
«Τότε σταμάτα να του μιλάς!»  
«Είναι καλό παιδί και δεν έχει κάνει τίποτα κακό για να του αξίζει τέτοια μεταχείριση!»  
«Αυτό είναι το μόνο που έχεις να πεις στον καλύτερό σου φίλο; Εντάξει τότε! Αντίο Γρηγόρη! Καλά να περάσεις με το φρικιό!»

Τώρα ήμουν εντελώς προβληματισμένος. Μου ήταν αδύνατο να καταλάβω γιατί δεν συμπαθούσαν τον Θωμά. Ο Μιχάλης θα μπορούσε απλώς να μου το εξηγήσει. Στην αρχή νόμιζα ότι θα τα βρούμε σύντομα, γιατί πίστευα ότι όποιος και αν ήταν ο λόγος που δεν ήθελαν να του μιλήσουν, δεν ήταν αρκετά σημαντικός για να καταστρέψει τη φιλία μας. Λοιπόν, έκανα λάθος.

Δύο εβδομάδες αργότερα, ο Μιχάλης και ο Λέο δεν ήθελαν ακόμη να μιλήσουν μαζί μου. Μετά την πρώτη βδομάδα σταμάτησα να προσπαθώ να επικοινωνήσω μαζί τους. Συνήθως έκανα παρέα με τον Θωμά στα διαλείμματα. Ήταν πραγματικά αστείος και είχε πολλές γνώσεις. Ήταν ένας από τους καλύτερους μαθητές της τάξης, κάτι που τον έκανε, τουλάχιστον, μη ανόητο.

Μια μέρα, όταν έφτασα στο σχολείο είδα πολύ κόσμο να τον περιτριγυρίζει.

«Τι συμβαίνει;» ρώτησα τη Σουζάνα, μια συμμαθήτριά μου.

«Δεν ξέρεις; Ο Θωμάς κέρδισε το μεγάλο βραβείο σε ένα τηλεπαιχνίδι!» είπε εκείνη ενθουσιασμένη.

«Ποιο τηλεπαιχνίδι;»

«Ξέρεις... “Μικρές ιδιοφυΐες”, “Το καλύτερο τηλεπαιχνίδι για εφήβους” όπως λένε. Προβλήθηκε χθες το βράδυ. Κέρδισε ένα δεκαπενθήμερο ταξίδι στο Παρίσι με τον καλύτερό του φίλο!».

«Ουάου! Αυτό είναι υπέροχο! Πού είναι τώρα;»

«Ανάμεσα στο πλήθος...»

«Πρέπει να τον βρω!» είπα και έφυγα. «Ει, Θωμά! Που είσαι;» φώναξα.

«Εδώ» είπε μόλις και μετά βίας αρκετά δυνατά για να τον ακούσω.

Προχώρησα προς το μέρος του σπρώχνοντας το πλήθος.

«Συγχαρητήρια! Γιατί δεν μου είπες τίποτα;»

«Το ‘χα ξεχάσει».

«Έλα τώρα! Δεν μπορείς ξεχάσεις κάτι τέτοιο! Πότε θα πας;»

«Το επόμενο καλοκαίρι».

«Ποιον θα πάρεις μαζί σου;»

«Λοιπόν, σκεφτόμουν... εσένα, Γρηγόρη».

«Εμένα; Αλήθεια;»

«Ναι...»

«Μα γιατί; Πρέπει να πάρεις τον καλύτερό σου φίλο!»

«Είσαι ο μόνος φίλος που έχω. Οπότε νομίζω ότι είσαι ο καλύτερός μου φίλος».

Την επόμενη στιγμή δύο άτομα έσπρωξαν το πλήθος και μας πλησίασαν. Ήταν ο Μιχάλης και ο Λέο!

«Γεια σου παλικάρι... ε, πώς σε λένε;» είπε ο Μιχάλης.

«Θωμά», αποκρίθηκε ο Θωμάς.

«Ω, ναι! Φυσικά και σε λένε Θωμά! Τι ωραίο όνομα!» συνέχισε ο Μιχάλης.

«Πώς είσαι Θωμά;» ρώτησε ο Λέο.

«Καλά.» απάντησε εκείνος.

«Χαίρομαι πολύ που σε βλέπω εδώ σήμερα. Ποιος να το ‘ξερε ότι θα σε συναντούσαμε εδώ τελείως τυχαία;» είπε ο Μιχάλης.

«Δεν ήταν τυχαία! Ήρθες εδώ για να τον βρεις!» είπα γεμάτος θυμό.

«Α, Γρηγόρη! Είσαι κι εσύ εδώ; Δεν σε πρόσεξα. Θωμά, έλα μαζί μου. Το κουδούνι χτυπάει σε ένα λεπτό».

Μετά το πρώτο μάθημα έψαξα τον Μιχάλη. Ήμουν ακόμα έξαλλος μαζί του. Τον βρήκα μαζί με τον Λέο στο προαύλιο να κινούνται προς το πλήθος που περιέβαλλε τον Θωμά για άλλη μια φορά.

«Τι παριστάνεις; Τον φίλο του Θωμά;»

«Δεν παριστάνω ότι είμαι φίλος του. Είμαι φίλος του!»

«Όχι, δεν είσαι!»

«Δεν έχει σημασία αν είμαι φίλος του ή όχι αυτή τη στιγμή. Θα έχω γίνει μέχρι το καλοκαίρι».

«Νόμιζα ότι πίστευες ότι ήταν ηλίθιος».

«Λοιπόν, έκανα λάθος. Δεν είχα συνειδητοποιήσει ότι ήταν μια... «μικρή ιδιοφυΐα».

«Επιπλέον, έλεγες ότι ήταν φρικιό».

«Λοιπόν, πάλι έκανα λάθος. Έκανα δυο λάθη. Είσαι το πραγματικό φρικιό! Τώρα επιτρέψε μου να συναντήσω την «ιδιοφυΐα».

Στο επόμενο διάλειμμα είπα στον Θωμά να με ακολουθήσει και κρυφτήκαμε σε μια γωνία πίσω από μερικούς κάδους σκουπιδιών.

«Εδώ δεν θα μπορέσουν να σε βρουν τόσο εύκολα» ψιθύρισα.

«Γιατί ήρθαμε εδώ; Μυρίζει απαίσια!» είπε.

«Επειδή πρέπει να σου μιλήσω και αυτό είναι αδύνατο όταν είσαι ανάμεσα στο πλήθος».  
εξήγησα.

«Να μου μιλήσεις για τί; Μου αρέσει να βρίσκομαι ανάμεσα στο πλήθος. Είναι η πρώτη φορά που το κάνω και όλοι είναι τόσο καλοί μαζί μου! Μου μιλούν ευγενικά και μου πρότειναν να μου πάρουν συνέντευξη για την εφημερίδα του σχολείου. Μου κάνουν και δώρα! Δες τι μου έδωσε ο Μιχάλης στο προηγούμενο διάλειμμα!» είπε ο Θωμάς και έβγαλε από την τσέπη του ένα απλό μπλε στυλό.

«Κοίτα, ο Μιχάλης, ο Λέο και πολλοί άλλοι θέλουν να έρθουν μαζί σου στο Παρίσι και προσποιούνται ότι είναι φίλοι σου για να το καταφέρουν. Γι' αυτό σου μιλάνε ευγενικά και σου κάνουν δώρα».

«Τι; Φυσικά δεν θα έρθουν μαζί μου! Είπα ότι θέλω να έρθεις εσύ!» είπε δυνατά.

«Σσς! Σταμάτα να φωνάζεις! Όλοι ξέρουν τι είπες, αλλά πιστεύουν ότι μπορούν να σε κάνουν να αλλάξεις γνώμη».

«Λοιπόν, αυτό δεν θα συμβεί ποτέ!»

«Το ξέρω. Αλλά αυτοί όχι! Έι! Έχω μια ιδέα! Γιατί δεν τους αφήνουμε να πιστεύουν ότι θα έρθουν στο Παρίσι για να δούμε τι θα κάνουν; Βάζω στοίχημα ότι θα έχει πολλή πλάκα!» πρότεινα.

«Λοιπόν, γιατί όχι;» απάντησε εκείνος.

Από εκείνη την ημέρα ο Θωμάς λάμβανε καθημερινά δώρα και φιλοφρονήσεις από αρκετούς μαθητές και όλοι τον καλούσαν στα πάρτι τους. Όλοι προσπάθησαν πολύ για να έχουν την ευκαιρία να πάνε στο Παρίσι, αλλά ο Μιχάλης ήταν αναμφίβολα αυτός που προσπάθησε περισσότερο.

Ένα από τα τελευταία βράδια του Μαΐου ήμουν στο σπίτι του Θωμά.

«Κοίτα! Μου έδωσαν όλα αυτά!» είπε ο Θωμάς δείχνοντάς μου ένα μεγάλο ξύλινο κουτί γεμάτο πράγματα. «Ακόμα και το κουτί ήταν ένα από τα δώρα τους!»

«Ουάου! Είναι τόσα πολλά! Ακόμα δεν μπορώ να πιστέψω ότι θα πάμε στο Παρίσι την επόμενη εβδομάδα ενώ εκείνοι εξακολουθούν να νομίζουν ότι έχουν πιθανότητες να έρθουν!».

«Ναι! Αυτό είναι πραγματικά ξεκαρδιστικό! Αλλά νομίζω ότι πρέπει να τους το πούμε τώρα. Ο ίδιος ο Μιχάλης μου πρότεινε να ανακοινώσω ποιος αποφάσισα να έρθει μαζί μου την επόμενη Δευτέρα».



«Ας γίνει έτσι λοιπόν!»

Στο πρώτο διάλειμμα την ερχόμενη Δευτέρα σχεδόν όλοι οι μαθητές -όπως και κάποιοι από τους καθηγητές- περίμεναν στο προαύλιο το Θωμά, να ανακοινώσει ποιος ήταν ο τυχερός που επρόκειτο να πάει στο Παρίσι. Οι ρεπόρτερ της σχολικής εφημερίδας ήταν επίσης εκεί.

«Λοιπόν», είπε ο Θωμάς κάπως νευρικά, «όλοι ξέρετε ότι κάποιος από εσάς θα έρθει στο Παρίσι μαζί μου την επόμενη εβδομάδα. Ήσασταν όλοι πολύ καλοί μαζί μου και...»

«Έλα τώρα! Πες μας ποιος θα 'ρθει!» φώναξε ο Μιχάλης.

«Εντάξει, εντάξει. Ξέρω ότι δεν μπορείτε να περιμένετε. Λοιπόν, αυτός που θα έρθει μαζί μου είναι...»

«Πες το επιτέλους!» φώναξε ο Λέο.

«Αυτός ή αυτή είναι... ο Γρηγόρης Άλλεν!» ανακοίνωσε ο Θωμάς.

Μερικοί από τους μαθητές άρχισαν να μουρμουρίζουν.

«Τι;» φώναξε ο Μιχάλης. «Μετά από όλα αυτά που έκανα για σένα, εσύ επιλέγεις αυτόν; Τι αγάριστος άνθρωπος! Είχα δίκιο που σε είπα ηλίθιο και φρικτό!»

«Δεν νομίζω ότι θα μας συγχωρήσει ποτέ, έτσι δεν είναι;» ρώτησα το Θωμά.

«Λοιπόν, κανείς δεν μπορεί να πει με σιγουριά!» αποκρίθηκε εκείνος.

«Αυτό είναι αλήθεια, αλλά εξακολουθώ να πιστεύω πως θα το κάνει!»

Λοιπόν, δεν ξέρω αν ο Μάικλ θα μας συγχωρήσει ή όχι, αλλά αυτό που ξέρω τώρα είναι ότι ποτέ δεν γνωρίζεις πλήρως κάποιον, όπως απέδειξαν ο Μιχάλης και ο Λέο. Ξέρω ότι δεν πρέπει ποτέ να κρίνεις ένα βιβλίο από το εξώφυλλό του και ξέρω ότι πρέπει να λέμε πάντα τη γνώμη μας, ανεξάρτητα από το τι πιστεύουν οι άλλοι. Επιπλέον, ξέρω ότι πετάω για το Παρίσι σε δύο ώρες και θα περάσω τέλεια με τον νέο μου καλύτερο φίλο Θωμά.

**Τέλος**

# MALTA

## The Experiences at De La Salle College

**Author: Anastashia Belli**

School life is a time filled with significant moments, learning experiences, and personal growth. From the nervous excitement of the first day to the challenges of exams and projects, each experience plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's character and future. This essay delves into the journey through school, highlighting the friendships that have been formed, the lessons that have been learned, and the memories that have been created along the way. This essay demonstrates the profound impact that school life has on personal development, fostering not only academic knowledge but also lifelong values and relationships.

De La Salle is a church school located in Birgu, Malta, this school includes male students in both its primary and senior divisions, while the college accommodates both male and female students. It was established by the De La Salle Brothers, and it was the first school in Malta established by them. Students in the college are required to choose two A Level subjects and three Intermediate subjects including a compulsory subject, Systems of Knowledge, which they would attend lessons for throughout the year. As the students attend these lessons they are accustomed to helpful and genuine educators which guide them throughout their academic journey in the school, ultimately preparing them for their final exams.

The students are prepared for half-yearly exams as well as annual exams. These exams help them in their studies and guide them for the Matsec exams which occur at the end of their two-year course. Apart from the academic aspect of life at De La Salle, there are also various activities which bring the students together and build their relationship with the school and the teachers. One example is Lasallian Nights which happens every year in January. It is an annual production organised by the De La Salle Student Council in collaboration with the Lasallian Nights Committee. Preparations for the show begin from the year before as script writers would need to be selected and certain auditions start to take place. Eventually the show would follow the scripted play and present various items which usually are dances, songs, and sketches.

The rehearsals for Lasallian Nights take up a lot of time and effort, however many relationships are strengthened throughout, and new friends are made. The students start their rehearsals around the end of November and continue throughout December and January. The students work hard and spend a long time at school rehearsing, and even after school hours. Their hard work and dedication are shown in the play brought up by them, which is then usually shown to a huge audience on three consecutive days. Throughout the rehearsals the students bond and form life-long relationships, even with the second-year students who are a year older than the first-year students. Lasallian Nights is an incredibly fun experience because new values are acquired, new friendships are formed, and it is definitely an unforgettable experience which is usually one of the highlights of the students' lives at De La Salle College.

The college also offers numerous opportunities for the students to travel and have experiences in different countries. The Outdoors Group is made up of students who plan, with a teacher, different outdoor activities in Malta. Eventually these students plan their own trip to the Alps, which they travel to with a teacher and gain new experiences, new skills and enhance their relationships with their friends. In addition to that, there are also various Erasmus projects, which sometimes involve travelling to foreign countries. These experiences help students develop diverse skills such as teamwork, while gaining new experiences.

Another thing which the students often look forward to is the annual London Trip. Around fifty second-year students travel to London in December and spend a week visiting various attractions. This is an educational trip in which the students are given the opportunity to visit the Science, Natural History and V&A Museums, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, Madame Tussaud's, the London Dungeons and other sights which London is known for. The students experience London during Christmas time and get to see it decorated for this festive time. Such a trip usually remains imprinted in the students' memory and is one of their highlights of their life at the college.

World Night is another memorable activity which requires the collaboration of the students to produce a performance which represents the country assigned to them. The students join in groups of around fifteen and start planning what they will be presenting for their country. The students' performance is usually made up of a short video introducing their country, a short sketch or scripted play, a dance and occasionally a musical performance. The students also must plan out, and bring to life, a stand on which they will present various desserts from their assigned country.

These desserts are made by the students and brought to the school for visitors to taste during World Night. The stand is decorated according to the country and helps the students to be creative and even sustainable with the materials used.

The performance of each group is assessed by judges, and the groups are awarded trophies for different things such as teamwork, creativity, food and so on. The group which is awarded the most trophies is the winner. Such an activity promotes teamwork, cooperation and hard work as the students meet up during break time, and eventually even after school hours to rehearse. The students create different memories during these rehearsals which bring them closer to each other. They might also become closer friends with people who they had not really spoken to before, resulting in new friendships which may last for an exceptionally long time. The work done by these students means that they go through the struggles together and face challenges together. This experience typically strengthens the bond between the students as they develop a sense of camaraderie and mutual respect. They may form deeper friendships, learn to trust each other more, and develop effective communication skills. Additionally, shared experiences of overcoming obstacles can lead to a greater sense of unity and teamwork among the students.

In summary, navigating school life together with other students, who are now some of my closest friends, has prepared me and other students for challenges ahead. These shared experiences have fostered bonds built on resilience and mutual support, shaping us into individuals ready to embrace the future with confidence and unity.

## **L-Esperjenzi fil-Kulegġ ta' De La Salle**

Il-ħajja tal-iskola hija żmien mimli b'mumentu sinifikanti, esperjenzi ta' tagħlim, u żvilupp personali. Mill-eċċitament nervuż tal-ewwel jum, sa l-isfidi tal-eżamijiet u l-proġetti, kull esperjenza għandha rwol kruċjali fit-tiswir tal-karattru u l-futur tal-individwu. Din il-kitba tiffoka fuq il-vjaġġ tal-iskola, billi tenfasizza l-ħbiberiji li niffurmaw, il-lezzjonijiet li nitgħallmu, u l-memorji li noħolqu tul il-vjaġġ tagħna. Din il-kitba turi l-impatt profond li l-ħajja tal-iskola għandha fuq l-iżvilupp personali, billi trawwem mhux biss għarfien akkademiku iżda wkoll valuri u relazzjonijiet importanti fil-ħajja.

De La Salle hija skola tal-knisja li tinsab fil-Birgu, Malta. Din l-iskola tinkludi studenti maskili biss fid-diviżjonijiet tal-primarja kif ukoll tas-sekondarja, filwaqt li fil-livell terzjarju, dak ta sittax sa tmintax il sena, l-kulleġġ jakkomoda studenti kemm maskili kif ukoll femminili. L-iskola giet stabilixxata mill-Brothers ta' De La Salle, u kienet l-ewwel skola f'Malta li giet stabilixxata minnhom. L-istudenti fil-kulleġġ huma mitluba jagħżlu żewġ suġġetti f'livell avanzat u tliet suġġetti f'livell intermedju, ikkolhom ukoll suġġett obbligatorju, Systems of Knowledge. Waqt li l-istudenti jattendu dawn il-lezzjonijiet, huma jithargu ma' edukaturi ġenwini u ta' għajjnuna kbira, li jiggwidawhom matul il-vjaġġ akkademiku tagħhom fl-iskola, u fl-aħħar mill-aħħar jippreparawhom għall-eżamijiet finali tagħhom.

L-istudenti huma ppreparati għal eżamijiet ta' nofs is-sena kif ukoll għal eżamijiet annwali. Dawn l-eżamijiet jgħinuhom fl-istudji tagħhom u jiggwidawhom għall-eżamijiet lokali msejha MATSEC li jsiru fi tmiem il-kors tagħhom li jdum sentejn. Minbarra l-aspett akkademiku tal-ħajja f'De La Salle, hemm ukoll diversi attivitajiet li jgħibu flimkien l-istudenti biex jibnu r-relazzjoni tagħhom mal-iskola, shabhom u l-għalliema. Eżempju wieħed huwa l-Lasallian Nights li jsiru kull sena f'Jannar. Din hija produzzjoni annwali organizzata mill-Kunsill tal-istudenti ta' De La Salle b'kollaborazzjoni mal-Kumitat ta' Lasallian Nights. It-tnejn jgħall-ispettaklu jibdew mis-sena ta' qabel. Dan howa proġett li jiehu fit tul peress li jkun hemm bżonn li jintgħażlu l-kittieba tal-iskripts u jibdew isiru varji auditions. Eventwalment l-ispettaklu isegwi d-dramm miktub u magħzul, filwaqt li jinkludi żfin, kanzunetti, u skeċċijiet varji.

Il-provi għal Lasallian Nights jieħdu hafna hin u sforz, madankollu hafna relazzjonijiet jissahħu tul dawn ir-rehearsals, u jkun hemm min jagħmel hbieb godda. L-istudenti jibdew ir-rehearsals tagħhom madwar l-aħħar ta' Novembru u jkomplu matul Diċembru u Jannar. L-istudenti jaħdmu hafna u jqattgħu hin twil l-iskola jipprattikaw, anke wara l-hin tal-iskola. Ix-xogħol iebes u d-dedikazzjoni tagħhom jintwerew fid-dramm imtella' minnhom, li mbagħad normalment jintwera lil udjenza kbira magħtul tlett ijiem konsekuttivi. Matul il-provi, l-istudenti jingħaqdu u jiffurmaw hbieberji li jdumu tul hajjithom kollha, anke mal-istudenti tat-tieni sena li huma sena ikbar mill-istudenti tal-ewwel sena. Lasallian Nights hija esperjenza divertenti u siewja ghax fiha jinkisbu valuri godda, jiġu fformati hbiberji godda, u żgur li hija waħda mill-isbaħ esperjenzi fil-hajja tal-istudenti f' De La Salle.

Il-kulleġġ joffri wkoll bosta opportunitajiet għall-istudenti biex jivvjaġġaw u jkollhom esperjenzi fpajjiżi differenti. Il-Grupp tal-'Outdoors' huwa magħmul minn studenti li jippjanaw, ma' għalliem, attivitajiet differenti fl-ambjent naturali ta' Malta. Eventwalment dawn l-istudenti jippjanaw u jippreparaw ruhom għal vjaġġ tagħhom fl-Alpi, fejn huma jivvjaġġaw ma' għalliem u jiksbu esperjenzi godda, hliet godda u jtejbu r-relazzjonijiet li għandhom mal-hbieb tagħhom. Barra minn hekk, hemm ukoll diversi proġetti tal-Erasmus, li normalment jinvolvu vjaġġar lejn pajjiżi barranin. Dawn l-opportunitajiet jgħinu lill-istudenti jżviluppaw hliet diversi bħal hidma f'tim, lingwi, indipendenza; filwaqt li jiksbu esperjenzi godda u jesperjenzaw kulturi differenti.

Haġa oħra li l-istudenti spiss jistennew huwa l-vjaġġ annwali lejn Londra. Madwar hamsin student tat-tieni sena jivvjaġġaw lejn Londra f'Diċembru u jqattgħu ġimgħa jzuru diversi attrazzjonijiet. Dan huwa vjaġġ edukattiv li fih l-istudenti jingħataw l-opportunità li jzuru l-Mużewijiet tax-Xjenza, tal-Istorja Naturali u V&A, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, Madame Tussaud's, il-London Dungeons u attrazzjonijiet oħra li Londra hija magħrufa għalihom. L-istudenti jesperjenzaw Londra fi żmien il-Milied u jarawha mzejna għal dan iż-żmien. Vjaġġ bħal dan normalment jibqa' stampat fil-memorja tal-istudenti meta l'quddiem jiftakru b'nostalgija fis-sentejn li qattgħu f'dan il-kulleġġ.

World Night hija attività oħra memorabbli li teħtieġ il-kollaborazzjoni tal-istudenti biex jipproduċu wirja li tirrappreżenta l-pajjiż assenjat lilhom. L-istudenti jintazgħlu u jingħaqdu fi gruppi ta' madwar hmistax u jibdew jippjanaw dak li se jkunu qed jipprezentaw għal pajjiż li qed jirraprezentaw. Il-wirja tal-istudenti ġeneralment tkun magħmula minn filmat qasir li jintroduċi l-

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pajjiż tagħhom, skeċċ qasir jew drammi miktub, żfin u kultant wirja mużikali. L-istudenti għandhom ukoll jippjanaw, u jagħtu l-ħajja mejda ta' l'ikel li fiha jipprezentaw helu tradizzjonali mill-pajjiż li għe assenjat lilhom. Dan il-helu huwa magħmul mill-istudenti stess li mbagħad jgħibuh l-iskola biex il-viżitaturi jixtru u jduquh. Il-mejda tkun mzejna skont il-pajjiż u tgħin lill-istudenti biex ikunu kreattivi u anke sostenibbli fil-materjal li jużaw.

Il-wirja ta' kull grupp hija evalwata mill-gurija, u l-gruppi jingħataw trofej f'kategoriji differenti bħal: hidma f'tim, kreattività, sfin, kostumi, ikel eċċ. Il-grupp li jingħata l-aktar punti huwa r-rebbieħ. Attività bħal din tipromwovi hidma f'tim, kooperazzjoni u il-possibilita ta' xogħol iebs, hekk kif l-istudenti jiltaqgħu waqt il-hin tal-'break', u eventwalment anke wara l-hin tal-iskola biex jipprattikaw għas-serata. L-istudenti joħolqu memorji differenti li jressquhom eqreb lejn xulxin. Jistgħu wkoll isiru ħbieb aħjar ma' nies li ma kinux verament tkellmu jew thalltu magħhom qabel il-provi, u dan jaf jirriżulta fi ħbiberiji godda li jistgħu jdumu għal żmien twil. Ix-xogħol li jkollhom jagħmlu dawn l-istudenti jfisser li jgħaddu minn bosta decizjonijiet, ostakli u sfidi flimkien. Din l-esperjenza tipikament issaħħaħ ir-rabta bejn l-istudenti hekk kif jiżviluppaw sens ta' għaqda, ħbiberija u rispett reċiproku. Jistgħu jiffurmaw aktar ħbiberiji profondi u sincieri, jitgħallmu biex jafdaw lil xulxin iżjed, u jiżviluppaw ħiliet ta' komunikazzjoni aħjar.

Fil-qosor, in-navigazzjoni tal-ħajja tal-iskola flimkien ma' studenti oħra, li issa huma wħud mill-eqreb ħbieb tiegħi, preparat lili u studenti oħra għall-isfidi li għadhom għejjin. Dawn l-esperjenzi komuni ħolqu rabtiet mibnija fuq ir-reżiljenza u l-appoġġ reċiproku, u ffurmawna f'individwi lesti biex niffaċċjaw l-futur b'aktar kunfidenza u unita.

## **Slatina, Olt County**

*Author: Corinne Vella*

Slatina, a city located in southern Romania, is known for its rich history, traditions and culture. It is located on the banks of the Olt River, hence serving as an important cultural hub in the region – in fact it is the capital of Olt County.

The city has a rich historical background with archaeological evidence, for example ceramics, stone tools, human remains and settlement structures, that suggests Slatina has been inhabited since prehistoric times. Throughout the centuries, various civilizations, such as the Dacians, Romans and Ottomans, have left their mark on its culture. The St. Nicolas Church is one of Slatina's most notable historical landmarks. It was built in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century and showcases an amalgamation of architectural styles, combining elements of Byzantine and Romanian Orthodox design. The walls are also adorned with frescoes that depict scenes from the Bible, for example the lives of saints, as well as an Iconostasis. Another important landmark is The Old Water Tower, also known as Turnul de Apă. It was built in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, marking the city's industrial progress and features Art Nouveau elements.

Slatina is known for its traditional customs and folklore, which includes vibrant festivals and celebrations that showcase traditional Romanian music, dance and clothing. One of the most significant festivals is the Călușari, which is a traditional dance festival that takes place during Pentecost. It involves a cultural dance, that is recognised by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage, that serves as a ritual to ward off evil spirits and bring good fortune. The dancers are normally dressed in white costumes with colourful ribbons and bells while wielding a stick. The Călușari dance is performed to traditional Romanian music which features instruments like the violin, flute and drums. There are also parades which showcase the aforementioned dancers and musician through the city. Another important festival is Slatina Days which marks the city's founding and heritage. It typically takes place during January and includes activities such as historical reenactments, concerts, art exhibitions and stalls serving traditional Romanian dishes. The Olt River festival celebrates the natural beauty and significance of the Olt River and its relationship with the city. A few highlights from the festival include water sports like kayaking, canoeing and fishing contests and music. It also promotes environmental awareness through workshops and activities that emphasise the importance of conserving and protecting the river.

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Apart from festivals, Slatina is known for its rich folklore and oral traditions. Myths and legends are passed down from generation to generation, often featuring themes of heroism, love and the supernatural. An example of a legend from Slatina is the tale of Doamna Bălaşa, which follows a beautiful and kind-hearted noblewoman named Bălaşa who disappears and returns years later from the spirit realm with a promise of prosperity to ensure the well-being of Slatina. Legends like this are not only a source of entertainment but are means of preserving the values of the community while also giving insight on the local history.

Slatina is a dynamic city which seeks to combine the traditional with the modern. The city has a thriving art scene with numerous cultural institutions and events dedicated to diverse artistic tastes and approaches. The main hub for artistic activities in the Slatina Cultural Centre that hosts exhibitions, concerts, theatre performances and literary events. The music scene is equally as diverse, ranging from classical to contemporary and local to international, promoting innovation and a sense of cultural exchange. The large number art museums and galleries, like the Olt County Museum, shows art's importance to the city.

An important part of Slatina's culture is its culinary traditions. The city's cuisine involved a combination of Romanian and regional influences, characterised by flavourful dishes. Normally traditional meals feature ingredients that are locally sourced such as pork, potatoes and cornmeal, and these are usually prepared using traditional methods that were passed down from generation to generation. Some examples of the cuisine include Sarmale (cabbage rolls), Ciorbă de Burtă (tripe soup) and Mămăligă (Polenta). These traditional dishes are usually enjoyed during festivals, family gatherings and other such events, which reinforces the importance of a culture's cuisine as it fosters not only social bonds but also a means of cultural continuity.

Slatina's culture is a blend of historical influences, traditional customs and evolving contemporary artistic expressions. The city's rich heritage, festivals and ever-changing arts scene create a unique identity that honours both the past and the present.

## Slatina, Olt County

Slatina, belt fin-Nofsinhar tar-Rumanija, hija magħrufa għall-istorja rikka, tradizzjonijiet u kultura tagħha. Hi tinstab fuq ix-xtut tax-Xmara Olt, u għalhekk isservi bħala centru kulturali importanti fir-reġjoni – fil-fatt hija l-belt kapitali ta' Olt County.

Il-belt għandha sfond storiku abbondanti b'evidenza arkeoloġika, bħal pereżempju ċeramika, għodda tal-ġebel, fdalijiet umani u strutturi ta' insedjament, li jissuggerixxu li Slatina ilha abitata miż-żminijiet preistoriċi. Matul is-sekli, bosta ċiviltajiet, bħad-'Dacians', ir-Rumani u l-Ottomani, hallew marka fuq il-kultura. Il-knisja ta' San Niklaw hija waħda mill-iktar monumenti storiċi importanti ta' Slatina. Hi nbriet kmieni fis-seklu sittax u turi amalgamazżjoni ta' stili arkitettoniċi, billi tgħaqqad elementi tal-arkitettura Bizantina u Ortodoss Rumani. Il-ħitan huma mzejna b'affreski li juru xeni mill-Bibbja, bħal eżempju il-hajja tas-santi, kif ukoll ikoni. Monument importanti iehor huwa It-Torri tal-Ilma l-Antik, li huwa magħruf ukoll bħala Turnul de Apă. Dan kien inbena kmieni fis-seklu ghoxrin, u jimmarka l-progress industrijali tal-Belt u għandu karatteristiċi tal-Art Nouveau.

Slatina hija magħrufa għat-tradizzjonijiet u l-folklor, li jinkludu festi vibranti u ċelebrazzjonijiet li juru il-mużika tradizzjonali Rumana, żfin u lbies. Waħda mill-iktar festi signifikanti hija l- Căluşari, li hija festa tradizzjonali taż-żfin li ssir matul il-Pentekoste. Hija tinvolvi żifna kulturali, li hija rikonoxxuta mill-UNESCO bħala Wirt Kulturali Intangibbli, li sserve bħala ritwali li tbiegħed l-ispirti ħżiena u ġġib il-fortuna tajba. Iż-żeffiena normalment ikunu libsien kostumi bojod b'żigarelli kkuluriti u qniepen filwaqt li jzommu stikka. Iż-żifna Căluşari issir mal-mużika tradizzjonali Rumana li fiha l-vjolin, il-flawt u t-tnabar. Hemm ukoll il-parati fejn l-istess żeffiena u mużikanti jduru madwar il-Belt. Festa importanti oħra hija s-'Slatina Days' li tikkmarka it-twaqqif u l-wirt tal-belt. Normalment din issir matul Jannar u tinkludi bosta attivitajiet bħal drammi storiċi, kunċerti, wirjiet tal-arti u tilari li jservu platti tradizzjonali Rumani. Il-festa tax-Xmara Olt (The Olt River Festival) tiċċelebra s-sbuħija naturali, l'importanza tal-Olt u r-relazzjoni tiegħu mal-Belt. Ftit punti ewlenin mill-festival jinkludu sports tal-ilma bħal kayaking, canoeing u kompetizzjonijiet tas-sajd u mużika. Il festival jipromwovi wkoll l-għarfien ambjentali permezz ta' 'workshops' u attivitajiet li jenfasizzaw l-importanza tal-konservazzjoni u l-protezzjoni tax-xmara.

Apparti mill-festi, Slatina għandha folklor rikk u hafna tradizzjonijiet. Il-miti u l-leggendi jiġu mgħoddija minn generazzjoni għal oħra, hafna drabi jkollhom temi ta' erojiżmu, imħabba u s-sopranaturali. Eżempju ta' legġenda minn Slatina hija dik tad-Doamna Bălaşa, li hija dwar mara nobbli sabiħa u ta' qalb tajba jisimha Bălaşa li tisparixxi u tirritorna snin wara mid-dinja tal-ispirti b'wegħda ta' prosperità biex tiżgura il-benesseri ta' Slatina. Legġendi bħal din mhumiex biss sors ta' divertiment, żda huma mezz biex jiġu ppreservati l-valuri tal-komunità filwaqt li jagħtu wkoll ħarsa lejn l-istorja lokali.

Slatina hija belt dinamika li tfittex li tgħaqqad dak tradizzjonali mal-modern. Il-belt għandha xena tal-arti b'saħħitha b'bosta istituzzjonijiet kulturali u avvenimenti ddedikati għal gosti u stiel artistiki diversi. Fiċ-ċentru ewlieni għall-attivitajiet artistiki fiċ-Ċentru Kulturali ta' Slatina, jiġu organizzati wirjiet, kunċerti, wirjiet teatrali u avvenimenti letterarji. Ix-xena tal-mużika hija varja, minn klassika għal kontemporanja u lokali għal internazzjonali, u tippromwovi l-innovazzjoni u sens kulturali. In-numru kbir ta' mużewijiet u galleriji tal-arti, bħall-Mużew tal-Kontea ta' Olt, juru l'importanza tal-arti għall-belt.

Parti importanti mill-kultura ta' Slatina huma t-tradizzjonijiet kulinari tagħha. Il-kċina tal-belt tinvolvi taħlita ta' influwenzi Rumeni u reġjonali, ikkaratterizzati minn platti delizjużi. Normalment l-ikel tradizzjonali jinkludu ingredjenti li jinxtrow lokalment bħal majjal, il-patata u l-qamħirrum, u dawn normalment jiġu ppreparati bl-użu ta' metodi tradizzjonali li ġew mgħoddija minn generazzjoni għal oħra. Xi eżempji tal-kċina jinkludu Sarmale (rombli tal-kaboċċi), Ciorbă de Burtă (soppa tat-tripe) u Mămăligă (Polenta). Dawn il-platti tradizzjonali normalment jitgawdew waqt festi, laqgħat tal-familja u avvenimenti oħra bħal dawn, u jsaħħu l-importanza ta l-ikel fil kultura peress li trawwem mhux biss rabtiet soċjali iżda wkoll mezz ta' kontinwità kulturali.

Il-kultura ta' Slatina hija taħlita ta' influwenzi storiċi, drawwiet tradizzjonali u espressjonijiet artistiki kontemporanji li qed jevolvu. Il-wirt tal-belt, il-festi u x-xena tal-arti li dejjem tinbidel, joħolqu identità unika li tonora kemm il-passat kif ukoll il-preżent.

# Sports Day

*Author: Giulia Saliba*

I've had many sports days in my life, however, I find that the one I had at De La Salle surpassed any other sports day I could have ever had. The anticipation for this activity was built up through out the whole week, with many people arguing over which house would win sports day. At De La Salle, we have four houses: La Vallette, De Rohan, Cottoner and Verdala, that have a specific colour allocated to them: La Vallette is red, De Rohan is yellow, Cottoner is blue, and Verdala is green.

The day of Sports Day was a Thursday. We were made to wear our house T-Shirts and were given instructions on what to do so that the day of sports day would move along smoothly. In the morning, the tension and excitement in the air was palpable and many students sported ribbons, pompoms and make up to show their support for their colour. Before we could commence with the activities, we had to go to our lesson, mainly so our teachers could take our attendance and so that any small issues that may have occurred could be resolved in that time. It was only twenty minutes, but it seemed like far longer! Our teachers tried in vain to hammer into our heads a modicum of what they had planned, but the restlessness inside of each and every class made it almost impossible for us to concentrate on anything.

When the clock struck 8.20 we were free to go to our ground. It was fascinating to watch everyone come together in such a competitive yet unified manner, and it reflected the ambitious and familial attitude our school fosters inside each one of us. Our P.E. teacher worked tirelessly to make sure everything went smoothly. He sent us various notices on TEAMS and broke us up into teams from before hand, to reduce confusion. Therefore, the process of getting ourselves ready to start went very smoothly.

The mini games were broken up into stations, and I happened to be on the first station. I was teamed up with many different people from my school, some of which I had never spoken to and which I had the opportunity to speak to and get to know on that day. We also had a few Spanish students with us, and it was extremely fun to get to know them and see how they interacted with us. In our first game, ten people had to take it in turns to run around a set course, and the group which took the least time would give the most points to their colour. Most of the mini games

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included games such activities, and they were mainly there for the purpose of giving points to our colour.

After each activity was completed, the group usually gathered around the teacher that was keeping record of what was going on and the group leader would ask them to divulge who was ahead of whom. It was interesting to watch the way many students became so competitive, and the way many of us, even those who were not particularly inclined towards sports, became invested in ensuring that their team, or colour, came out on top.

Two of the stations were break stations, and during this time many of us went to check on how the other teams of our colour were performing. During this time, many of us also separated to speak with other people from different groups. It is rare to have the whole school in one space like that, since we often spend our breaks with our respective friendgroups in different areas around the school, and it gave us the opportunity to socialise and speak to people we were acquainted with, or to get to know people we knew of far better. There was a sense of solidarity between people of the same house colour, but also between everyone at school. We were all determined to have fun and to make the most of the experience, and that was certainly the case. Despite the intangibility of the nature of solidarity, one could almost imagine seeing the sense of unification in the air. There have been many times when I have felt unified under the banner of De La Salle with my peers, but that was perhaps one of the most memorable moments.

After the mini games were over, we all had a break. My friends and I bought food and caught up with each other. Under the pristine blue skies, the intoxicating nature of youthful happiness over came us all, and laughter, teasing and talking were carried by the breeze. Many people began to discuss the next events, which were the athletic events. There were sprints, long distance running, long jump and shot put, which also gave quite a lot of points to those who performed well. They were open to all those who wished to participate. The most fun to watch was the long distance racing. The hollers and shouts of support for those running filled the air, and many cheered for their friends from different colours as well as those of their own colour. The tension was exhilarating and cheering on our peers also helped to create a sense of unification.

Once these events ended, we were once again given the opportunity to relax and converse. The most highly anticipated event of the day was to start soon - tug of war. After a while of waiting and resting, we were called to the centre of the ground and our P.E. teacher announced the teams

that were to start off, and I happened to be in the first team. It was rather nerve wracking since many people were banking on us. Unfortunately, my group was unsuccessful, but the other groups from my colour won every round. The shouts of support and the atmosphere of excitement and competitiveness were truly unforgettable. It will be forever engraved into my mind the sense of juvenile and teenage carefreeness that many of us felt on that day.

After the tug of war ended, the two most dominating groups, which happened to be two groups of my house colour, went up against each other. The group that won that round went up against a group of teachers, and it was extremely entertaining to see our teachers engage in activities we loved to do. Despite the tiredness of the student's group they still won that round.

We were again given time to rest, which was much needed, since many of us were exhausted from the numerous rounds of tug of war we did. My friends and I bought some drinks from our canteen and spent most of the time speaking with one another and debating who had won. The teachers were counting the points during this time and the sense of anticipation and curiosity grew around us.

When the teachers had counted the points thoroughly, we gathered around and awards were given to those who won different events. Many were almost certain that the competition was between the greens and the blues and we were right. Once third and fourth place were announced, we waited with much anticipation, buzzing with pent up excitement, adrenaline and energy to hear the winners announced. The greens were announced the winners and a round of raucous shouts and screams pierced the air. I would be lying if I said I wasn't slightly disappointed and disbelieved, but in the end, I was happy for the winners.

The day ended on a positive note. We gathered around and sang our school song, and there is no more indescribable feeling than the pride that goes into the singing of that song. The solidarity between us all become something tangible, found inside us all, manifested into a song that shows that we are La Sallian.

## **L-iSports Fest fil-Kulleġġ De La Salle Sixth Form Malta**

Matul haġti pparteċipajt f'haġna granet sportivi, però, naħseb li dik li kelli f' De La Salle kienet l-isbaħ u l-iktar waħda memorabbli li qatt hadt sehem fiha. L-antiċipazzjoni għal din l-attività kienet ilha tikber matul il-ġimgħa ta' qabel. Haġna studenti bdew jikkellmu dwar liema grupp kien ser jirbaħ l-iSports Fest 2024. Fil-kulleġġ De La Salle, għandna erba' gruppi: La Valette, De Rohan, Cottoner u Verdala. Dawn għandhom kulur speċifiku allokat għalihom: La Vallette huwa aħmar, De Rohan huwa isfar, Cottoner huwa blu u Verdala huwa aħdar.

L-iSports Fest kien il-Ħamis 18 t'April. Ilbisna l-flokkijiet li jirrappreżentaw il-kulur tagħna. L-għalliema tawna l-istruzzjonijiet minn qabel, biex hekk kollox seta' jsir mingħajr problemi eċċessivi. Filgħodu, l-eċċitament kien evidenti, u haġna mill-istudenti kienu lebsin xi żigarelli u pompoms jew inkella kellhom wiċċhom miżbugħ biex juru s-sapport għall-kulur tagħhom. Qabel ma bdejna bl-attivitajiet, kellna mmorru fil-klassijiet fejn hadulna l-attenzenza. Kellna nistennew biss għoxrin minuta qabel ninzlu halli nibdew l-attivitajiet sportivi tagħna. Ikolli nammetti li dawk l-għoxrin minuta hassejthom għoxrin siegħa! L-għalliema tagħna ppruvaw jagħmlu dak li kellhom pjanat, iżda l-enerġija ta' ġol-klassi għamlitha kwazi impossibbli biex nikkonċentraw fuq dak li kienu qed jgħidulna.

Meta saru it-8.20, stajna mmorru fil-grawnd. Kienet xi haġa affaxxinanti, li tara lil kulhadd jingħaqad flimkien b'mod kompetittiv iżda maqgħud. Dan kollu rrifletta l-attitudni ambizzjuża iżda fl-istess ħin familjari li kapaċi jrawwem fina l-kulleġġ. L-għalliem tal-Edukazzjoni Fizika hadem bla heda biex jiżgura li kollox imur tajjeb. Baġhatilna diversi avvizi fuq it-TEAMS u qasamna fi gruppi minn qabel, biex hekk seta' jnaqqas il-konfużjoni. B'hekk, stajna nibdew malajr.

Il-logħob tqassam f'bosta stazzjonijiet, u jien inzertajt kont fuq l-ewwel stazzjon. Ngħaqadt ma' haġna studenti differenti li xi wħud minnhom kont għadni qatt ma kellimthom. B'hekk kelli l-opportunità li nsir nafhom f'dik il-ġurnata. Magħna kellna wkoll ftit studenti Spanjoli. Hadt pjaċir haġna nkellimhom u dehru herqana wisq biex jipparteċipaw huma wkoll f'dak li konna qed nagħmlu. Fl-ewwel logħba tagħna, għaxar persuni kellhom jiġru, u l-grupp li ha l-inqas ħin ta l-aktar punti lill-kulur tiegħu. Il-bieċa l-kbira tal-logħob kienu simili għal din, u dawn kienu qegħdin hemm bil-għan li jagħtu l-punti lill-kuluri.

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Wara kull attività, konna ningabru mal-ghalliema li kienu qed iżommu r-rekord ta' dak li kien għaddej u konna nitolbuhom jgħidulna min kien qabel min. Kienet interessanti kif hafna mill-istudenti saru daqshekk kompetittivi. Dakinhar anke dawk li ma mhumiex daqshekk inklinati lejn l-isports, urew heġġa u interess sabiex jiżguraw li t-tim u l-kulur tagħhom joħroġ minn ta' fuq nett.

Kien hemm żewġ stazzjonijiet li fihom stajna nistrieħu f'it, u f'dan il-ħin hafna minna marru jiċċekkjaw dwar kif kienu għaddejjin t-timijiet l-oħrajn. Hija xi haġa rari li jkollna l-iskola kollha fi spazju wieħed bħal dan, peress li hafna drabi nqattgħu l-brejks tagħna mal-gruppi ta' ħbieb rispettivi tagħna f'żoni differenti madwar l-iskola. M'hemmx dubju li din l-Isports Fest tatna l-opportunità li nissoċjalizzaw u nitkellmu ma' nies godda.

Kien hemm sens ta' solidarjetà bejn nies tal-istess kulur, iżda wkoll bejn l-istudenti kollha. Ilkoll konna determinati li nieħdu pjaċir u li nagħmlu l-aħjar mill-esperjenza, u hekk kien il-każ. Wara li spiċċa l-logħob, kellna brejk qasir. Jien u sħabi xtrajna xi ikel u qgħadna nitkellmu. Taħt sema ikħal ċar, in-natura tal-hena żaġħżuġha ħakmitna lkoll, u d-daħk, tgergir u taħdit ferrieħi ingarru mar-riħ. Hafna nies iddiskutew l-avvenimenti li kien imiss, li kienu l-avvenimenti atletici. Kien hemm sprints, ġiri ta' distanza twila, long jump u shot put, li taw hafna punti lil dawk li ġew l-ewwel jew marru tajjeb. Kienet miftuħa għal kull min xtaq jipparteċipa. L-aktar avveniment li ħadt pjaċir nara huwa l-ġiri ta' distanza twila. L-għajjat ta' support għal min kien qed jiġri ma naqasx, u hafna ferħu għal sħabhom minn kuluri differenti kif ukoll għal dawk tal-kulur tagħhom stess.

Wara li spiċċaw dawn l-attivitajiet, għal darb'oħra kellna l-opportunità li nirrilassaw u nitkellmu. L-aktar avveniment mistenni tal-ġurnata kellu jibda dalwaqt...it-tug of war! Wara f'it stennija u mistrieħ, għajtulna fiċ-ċentru tal-grawnd u l-ghalliem tal-Edukazzjoni Fizika ħabbar it-timijiet li kellhom jibdew. Jien inzertajt fl-ewwel tim. Hassejtni nervuża peress li hafna studenti kienu qed jistennew li jmorru tajjeb. Sfortunatament, il-grupp tiegħi ma marx tajjeb, iżda l-gruppi l-oħrajn mill-kulur tiegħi rebħu kontra t-timijiet li ġew kontrihom. L-għajjat ferrieħi u l-atmosfera ta' eċċitament kienu tassew xi haġa li ma ninsa qatt. Jibqgħu dejjem imnaqqxa f'moħħi l-ferħ u l-energija adoloxxenti li kien hemm dakinhar.

Wara li spiċċat it-tug of war, l-aktar żewġ gruppi dominanti, li inzertaw kienu żewġ gruppi tal-kulur tiegħi, telgħu kontra xulxin. Il-grupp li rebah kellu jikkompeti kontra grupp tal-ghalliema.



Kienet esperjenza memorabbli li nara lill-ġhalliema tagħna jagħmlu attivitajiet li nħobbu nagħmlu aħna. Minkejja l-ġheja tal-grupp tal-istudenti, dawn xorta rebħu kontribom.

Ergajna striħajna ftit, u kellna bżonn, ġħax ħafna minna kienu eżawriti wara t-tug of war. Jien u šħabi xtrajna l-ilma u qattajna l-biċċa l-kbira tal-ħin nitkellmu ma' xulxin u niddibattu fuq min kien se jirbaħ. L-ġhalliema kienu qed jġħoddu l-punti. Issa, is-sens ta' antiċipazzjoni u kurżità kibru sew.

Meta l-ġhalliema ġħodded il-punti sewwa, inġbarna fis-sala tal-kulleġġ u ngħataw premjijiet lil dawk li rebħu avvenimenti differenti. Ĥafna kienu kważi ċerti li l-kompetizzjoni kienet bejn il-ħodor u l-blu u kellhom raġun. Ladarba tħabbru t-tielet u r-raba' post, stennejna b'ħafna ħerqa biex nisimġħu min kienu r-rebbieħa. Ir-rebbieħa kienu l-ħodor u wieħed jista' jimmaġina x'ġħajat kien hemm ma' din it-tħabbira! Inkun qed nigdeb jekk ngħid li ma kontx xi ftit iddiżappuntata f'dak il-mument, iżda fl-aħħar mill-aħħar, xorta fraħt ġħar-rebbieħa.

Il-ġurnata spiċċat fuq nota pożittiva. Inġbarna flimkien u kantajna l-kanzunetta tal-kulleġġ. M'hemmx sentiment iktar indeskrivibbli minn meta tkun qed tkanta dik il-kanzunetta ma' šħabek! Is-solidarjetà bejnietna saret xi ħaġa tangibbli, xi ħaġa li stajt issibha f'kull wieħed minna, immanifestata f'kanzunetta li turi li aħna studenti ta' De La Salle, u lifuq kollox kburin li aħna La Salljani!

## **A story of school life in the Maltese school De La Salle Sixth Form**

*Authors: Jade Xuereb, Martina Galea*

Amy had been waiting for this day for months. Finally, World Night had arrived. A night where students had the opportunity to showcase their talents by putting up a performance and setting up a food stand to represent a country's culture. Amy's team had been preparing for this night since November, working hard to display France's culture and in the process she had made great new friends.

As Amy and her friends were setting up the stand, her teammate Daniela let out a horrified gasp, 'The Flag!', she cried out, 'It's gone!''.

'What!?' Amy exclaimed.

'I'm sure I packed it this morning, it must have fallen out of my bag somewhere!'' Daniela explained.

She told Amy that this morning she had taken a short walk all around the school. After a quick discussion with her teammates, Amy decided to go look for the flag.

Amy started by going to the Canteen. As she was looking around, she remembered that this was the place where she first met her new friends. They would always meet up here in break while eating delicious food served fresh from the cafeteria. Seeing that it was a deadend, she climbed up the stairs and started looking through the classes.

She smiled as she recalled all the interesting lessons that happened in these classrooms. Amy sighed in frustration. The classrooms were empty. She made her way to the hall, since they'd had dress rehearsals in the morning. Once she entered, she saw Kurt in the soundbooth, helping with the lights.

'Hey, is everything ok?'' Kurt said. 'You looked worried.' Amy explained that Daniela had lost their flag. Kurt told her that he saw Daniela walking close to the chapel in the morning. Amy thanked him, but before she could leave, Daniela burst in,

'Did you find the flag?'' she asked frantically.

'No, I looked everywhere.'', Amy said in a state of panic.

'Maybe someone found it and took it backstage?'' Kurt suggested.

The girls rushed backstage and nearly barged into Ms. Formosa, the backstage manager.

“Oh Great! You’re here! Call up the rest of your team. The show starts in 15 minutes, you’re up first.”, Ms. Formosa said.

Amy and Daniela looked at each other with horror in their eyes. The rest of their teammates made their way backstage, clearly disappointed that they had not found the flag. There was nothing they could do, they just had to wing it.

Amy was pacing back and forth tensely. She almost tripped over a bag that was left lying in the middle of the floor.

“Whose bag is this?”, she demanded.

It was Daniela’s. She quickly apologised and reached to move it out of the way. The minute she grabbed it, a coloured piece of fabric fell out. It took Amy a second to realise what she was looking at.

“Daniela...is that... that OUR FLAG?”, Amy said incredulously.

“Oh!” Daniela exclaimed, “I guess I missed it. My bad!”

In unison, the entire team gave a long sigh.

Despite all the mishaps, World Night was roaring success. The play went great, and food was instantly devoured. In the end, they won two trophies for teamwork and creativity. Amy knew that she would never forget this night for as long as she lived.

## *Ġrajja ta' studenta fil-Kulleġġ De La Salle, Malta*

Amy kienet ilha x-xhur tistennieha din il-ġurnata. Fl-aħħar, wasal il-World Night. Din hija lejla fejn l-istudenti jkollhom l-opportunità li juru t-talenti tagħhom f'reċta jew żifna tradizzjonali waqt li jarmaw mejda bl-ikel li tirrappreżenta l-kultura ta' pajjiż partikulari. It-tim ta' Amy kien ilu jipprepara għal din il-ġurnata minn Novembru u ħadem ħafna biex jesponi mill-aħjar li jista' l-kultura Franċiża. Matul dan il-proċess Amy ltaqgħet ma' bosta studenti oħra u ftit ftit bdew isiru sħabha.

Kien għadu ftit tal-ħin. Waqt li Amy u sħabha bdew jarmaw il-mejda fejn kellu jkun esebit l-ikel, ħabibtha Daniela inħasdet u għajtet, "Il-bandiera! M'għadhiex hawn!".

"Xiex!?" qabżet Amy.

"Żgur li dahħaltha fil-basket dalgħodu. Naħseb waqgħetli mill-basket" spejgat Daniela.

Hi qalet lil Amy li filgħodu kienet marret mixja qasira madwar l-iskola kollha. Amy iddeċidiet li tmur tfittex din l-imbierka bandiera imma minn fejn taqbad tibda daqskemm hu kbir il-kulleġġ?

Amy bdiet billi marret il-kantin. Waqt li kienet qed tfittex madwar il-kantin, hi ftakret kif dan kien il-post fejn xi xhur qabel iltaqgħet ma' sħabha l-ġodda. Fil-ħin tar-rikreazzjoni huma dejjem kienu jiltaqgħu hawn u jieklu ikel delizzjuż li jixtruh frisk mill-kafetterja. Imma issa dawk il-ħsibijet kellhom itiru mar-riħ. Meta rat li l-bandiera ma kinitx fil-kantin, hi telgħet it-taraġ u bdiet tfittex fil-klassijiet.

Tbissmet meta ftakret fil-lezzjonijiet interessanti li jkollhom f'dawn il-klassijiet imma issa lanqas dak il-ħsieb ma kien ħinu. Kien jidher ċar li l-bandiera lanqas ma kienet fil-klassijiet. Amy bdiet miexja lejn is-sala l-kbira, peress li filgħodu kellhom l-aħħar provi hemmhekk. Meta dahlet, dlonk rat lil Kurt fis-soundbooth, jgħin fl-aħħar provi tal-mikrofoni li kellhom jużaw l-istudenti.

"Kollox sew Amy? Xi ġralek? Vera tidher inkwetata llum!" staqsieha mgħagġeb Kurt.

Amy spjegat li Daniela tilfet il-bandiera tagħhom. Kurt qalilha li filgħodu kien ra lil Daniela miexja hdejn il-kappella tal-kulleġġ. Amy irringrazzjatu għax hekk kien taha hjiel fejn tista' tkompli tfittex. Imma lanqas laqgħet meddet l-ewwel pass li ma ġietx tigris Daniela b'nifisha maqtuġh.

“Sibtha l-bandiera?” staqsiet tilheg lil Amy.

“Le .....jaħasra fittixt kullimkien,” weġbitha Amy fi stat ta’ paniku.

“Forsi xi ħadd sabha u ħadha wara l-palk,” qalilhom Kurt biex jikkalmahom xi ftit.

It-tfajliet ġrew għal wara l-palk, u kważi baqgħu deħlin f’Ms. Formosa, li f’dak il-mument kienet qed thejji xi sigġijiet.

“Eh tajjeb! Wasaltu! Għajtu lill-bqija tal-grupp tagħkom. L-ispettaklu se jibda kwarta oħra, u intom l-ewwel,” qaltilhom Ms. Formosa.

Amy u Daniela ħarsu lejn xulxin b’biża’ kbira f’għajnejhom. Šhabhom waslu wara l-palk, iddiżappuntati li lanqas huma ma kienu sabu l-bandiera. Issa ma kien hemm xejn li setgħu jagħmlu. issa kien se jkollhom jivvintaw xi ħaga dak il-ħin.

Amy bdiet tiġri ‘l hemm u ‘l hawn b’tensjoni kbira fuqha hekk li saqajha tfixklu f’basket li kien qiegħed fin-nofs.

“Ta’ min hu dan il-basket?” staqsiet.

Kien ta’ Daniela. Daniela nbelgħet u skużat ruħha mill-ewwel waqt li ġriet tneħħieh min-nofs. Imma malli qabditu, waqgħet biċċa drapp ikkulurita minn go fih. Amy damet biss sekonda biex tirrealizza lejn xiex kienet qed tħares.....

“Daniela... dik. dik il-bandiera tagħna?” stagħġbet bil-ferħ.

“Illaħwa!” għajtet Daniela, “Naħseb ma rajthiex dalgħodu. Skużawni ħbieb! Għamilt biċċa tinkiteb illum!”

Flimkien, il-membri tal-grupp Franciż ħadu nifs qawwi ‘l ġewwa. Xi wħud ma naqsux li jitfgħu ħarsa kerha fuq Daniela!

Minkejja din il-gažiba, għall-grupp ta’ Franza, World Night żgur li kien suċċess kbir. Ir-reċta u l-ikel li kien hejja l-grupp intgħoġbu sew hekk li fl-aħħar spiċċa biex rebah żewġ tazzi għall-kooperazzjoni u l-kreattività eċċezzjonali. Amy żgur li kienet se tibqa’ tiftakar f’dik il-lejla meta l-bandiera Franciża kienet għebet għal ftit ħin!

## **Erasmus plus Essay: Culture of Slatina**

**Authors : Sarah Zammit, Victoria Carol Austin**

Romania is a country bordered by Ukraine, Hungary, Serbia, Bulgaria, and the Black sea. It is split into 41 counties, which have been grouped into several historical regions. Bucharest, the capital of Romania, and Slatina, capital of the Olt county which borders Bulgaria, form part of the Muntenian region.

Slatina, located in southern Romania is rich in cultural heritage and historical significance, and offers a rich tapestry Of cultural traditions and Leicester practises that reflect its historical heritage and local customs.

In terms of historical and architectural heritage, we can go back to its historical identity during the Roman period. Back then it was known as ‘Municipium Septimium Aurelium Antoninianum’, indicating its important as a Roman settlement. The historical foundation has left its mark on the city's cultural identity. Slatina boasts several historical landmarks that showcase its architectural heritage. The Municipal Museum of Slatina, located in a historic building, houses artefacts and exhibits that chronic the city’s history from ancient times to the present day. The local architecture blends elements of Romanian and Ottoman styles, reflecting the city's diverse cultural influences over the centuries. The Church of the Holy Trinity and the Saint Nicholas church showcase this style, as well as traditional Romanian religious architecture with their intricate frescoes and wooden iconostasis.

Romanian folklore is deeply ingrained in Slatina's cultural fabric. Slatina embraces traditional Romanian folk music, which often includes instruments like the flute, violin and accordion. Traditional dancers such as the Hora (a circle dance) are popular during celebrations and festivals. The city hosts local for music and dance festivals where performers showcase traditional costumes and regional music styles. These events highlight the community’s pride in preserving their cultural identity through music and dance. As in much of Romania, word docs Christianity is the dominant religion in Slatina, influencing many aspects of daily life and cultural practices. Religious holidays and observances are significant events in the community. Easter and Christmas are celebrated font religious fervour, accompanied by traditional foods and rituals.

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Romanian cuisine in Slatina is hearty and flavourful often featuring dishes with influences from Balkan and Eastern European cuisines. Traditional dishes include: Sarmale (cabbage rolls stuffed with meat and rice) and mămăligă (polenta). Local wines, such as Cotești and Sâmburești, are renowned for their quality and are often paired with regional dishes during festive gatherings. Hospitality is a cornerstone of social interactions in Slatina. Guests are warmly welcomed with traditional foods and drinks, and gatherings often revolve around sharing meals and storytelling. Weddings and family celebrations are elaborate affairs, where customs such as dowry traditions and ceremonial dances are observed.

The contemporary cultural scene includes modern influences that lead to new traditions. In terms of culture, Slatina is home to educational institutions that promote cultural awareness and heritage preservation. Schools often incorporate traditional music and dance into their curriculum, ensuring younger generations learn and appreciate local customs. Alongside traditional festivals, Slatina hosts modern events that blend contemporary arts and cultural expressions. Music festivals, art exhibitions and film screenings contribute to the city's vibrant cultural scene. These events attract visitors from across Romania and beyond, fostering cultural exchange and appreciation. In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on environmental sustainability and conservation efforts in Slatina. Community initiatives promote eco-friendly practices and awareness of local biodiversity, reflecting a modern adaptation of traditional values tied to the land.

In conclusion, Slatina, Romania offers a blend of cultural traditions and lifestyle practices deeply rooted in its historical heritage. From traditional music and dance to hearty cuisine and religious customs, the city's cultural landscape is vibrant and evolving. As modern influences intersect with longstanding traditions, Slatina continues to celebrate its cultural identity while embracing new opportunities for community engagement and growth.

## **Il-Belt ta' Slatina fir-Rumanija u l-kultura tagħha**

Ir-Rumanija hi pajjiż li jmiss mal-Ukrajna, l-Ungerija, is-Serbja, il-Bulgarija, u l-Baħar l-Iswed. Il-pajjiż huwa maqsum f'41 pajjiż ieħor, il-koll miġburin f'diversi reġjuni storiċi. Bukarest, li hi l-belt kapitali tar-Rumanija waqt li Slatina hi l-belt kapitali ta' Olt County, li tmiss mal-Bulgarija. Dawn jagħmlu parti mir-reġjun ta' Muntenian.

Slatina, li tinsab fin-Nofsinhar tar-Rumanija, hija rikka fil-wirt kulturali u s-sinifikat storiku tagħha, u toffri xenarju għani ta' tradizzjonijiet kulturali u drawwiet.

Il-bidu tal-istorja tal-pajjiż jmur lura għall-miġja tal-identità u l-arkitettura storika matul il-perjodu Ruman. Dak iż-żmien ir-Rumanija kienet magħrufa bħala l-'Municipium Septimium Aurelium Antoninianum', isem li jindika l-importanza tagħha bħala kolonja tar-Rumani. Il-pedament storiku halla l-marka tiegħu fuq l-identità kulturali tal-belt. Slatina għandha bosta postijiet storiċi bħall-Mużew Muniċipali, li jinsab f'bini antik storiku u li fih esebiti li jagħtu xhieda tal-istorja tal-belt minn żminijiet antiki sal-lum. L-arkitettura fiha taħlita ta' elementi ta' stili lokali ma' dawk Ottomani, li jirriflettu l-influenza kulturali diversa tal-belt matul is-sekli. Il-Knisja tat-Trinità Qaddisa u l-Knisja ta' San Nikola juru dan l-istil imhallat, kif ukoll jikxfu r-religjon tradizzjonali lokali, bl-affreski dettaljati u l-ikoni mnaqqxa fl-injam.

Il-folklor tal-pajjiż huwa sod sew fin-nisga kulturali ta' Slatina. Slatina tħaddan il-mużika folkloristika tagħha, li ħafna drabi tinkludi strumenti bħall-flawt, il-vjolin u l-akkordju. Żfin tradizzjonali bħall-Hora (żfin fil-forma ta' ċirku) hu popolari waqt iċ-ċelebrazzjonijiet, kif ukoll l-użu u l-preparazzjoni ta' kostumi tradizzjonali u stili ta' mużika reġjonali. Dawn l-avvenimenti jenfasizzaw il-kburija tal-komunità li tippreserva l-identità kulturali tagħha permezz tal-mużika u ż-żfin. Il-Kristjaneżmu Ortodoss huwa r-religjon dominanti fi Slatina hekk li jinfluwenza ħafna mill-aspetti tal-ħajja ta' kuljum u l-prattiċi kulturali. Il-vaganzi u d-drawwiet religjużi huma avvenimenti sinifikanti fil-komunità. L-Għid u l-Milied huma ċelebrati b'devozzjoni profonda, akkumpanjati minn ikel u ritwali tradizzjonali.

L-ikel Rumani fi Slatina hu rikk u jinkludi tipi mill-istili Balkani u dawk tal-Lvant tal-Ewropa. L-ikel tradizzjonali jinkludi s-Sarmale (bragjoli bil-weraq tal-kabocci mimlija bil-laħam u r-ross) u mămăligă (polenta). L-inbejjed lokali, fosthom Cotești u Sâmburești, huma magħrufa għall-kwalità tagħhom u frekwentament jakkumpanjaw l-ikel tradizzjonali.

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L-ospitalità hija parti integrali tal-kultura ta' Slatina. Il-mistednin huma milqugħa bil-qalb b'ikel u xorb tradizzjonali, u l-laqgħat ta' spiss iduru madwar il-qsim tal-iklet u l-istejjer tradizzjonali. It-tigijiet u ċ-ċelebrazzjonijiet tal-familja huma okkażjonijiet elaborati, fejn jiġu osservati drawwiet bħat-tradizzjonijiet tad-dota u ż-żfin ċerimonjali.

Il-kultura moderna fil-pajjiz qed idahhal tradizzjonijiet godda wkoll. Mill-aspett kulturali, Slatina hija post mimli istituzzjonijiet edukattivi li jippromwovu il-ħarsien tal-kultura u l-wirt storiku. L-iskejjel ta' sikwit jinkludu mużika u żfin fil-kurrikulu tagħhom, filwaqt li jassiguraw li l-ġenerazzjoni żagħżugħa tkun imħarrġa u tgħożż d-drawwiet lokali. Flimkien mal-festivals tradizzjonali, Slatina tospita attivitajiet moderni li juru taħlita bejn arti kontemporanja u kultura espressiva. Festivals mużikali, wirjiet tal-arti u wirjiet tal-films jikkontribwixxu għax-xena kulturali vibranti tal-belt. Dawn l-avvenimenti jattiraw viżitaturi minn madwar ir-Rumanija u lil hinn, u jrawmu wiri u apprezzament kulturali. F'dawn l-aħħar snin, kien hemm enfasi dejjem tikber fuq is-sostenibbiltà ambjentali u l-isforzi ta' konservazzjoni. Ittiehdu diversi inizjattivi komunitarji li jippromwovu prattiċi ekoloġiċi u għarfien tal-bijodiversità lokali, li jirriflettu adattament modern tal-valuri marbuta mal-art.

Slatina toffri taħlita ta' tradizzjonijiet kulturali u drawwiet ta' stil ta' ħajja li għandhom għeruw fondi fil-wirt storiku tagħha. Minn mużika u żfin tradizzjonali għal kċina u drawwiet reliġjużi u xejn inqas għal pajsagġ kulturali tal-belt li huwa wieħed vibranti hekkli għadu qed jevolvi. Hekk kif l-influenzi moderni jingħaqdu ma' tradizzjonijiet li ilhom jeżistu, Slatina tkompli tiċċelebra l-identità kulturali tagħha filwaqt li tħaddan opportunitajiet godda għall-involvement u t-tkabbir tal-komunità.

## **Valletta: A Historical and Cultural Jewel of Malta**

*Author: Gabriel Pace, Mathias Paul Loshi*

Nestled in the heart of the Mediterranean, Valletta, the capital city of Malta, stands as a testament to the island's rich history and cultural heritage. Founded in 1566 by the Knights of St. John, Valletta was built following the Great Siege of Malta in 1565, which marked a pivotal moment in Maltese history. The city's strategic and symbolic importance was underscored by its rapid development into a fortified bastion of Baroque architecture and military prowess.

Valletta's significance is recognized globally, earning it a place as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The city's layout, with its orderly grid of narrow streets, is adorned with an array of architectural treasures from the Baroque period. One of the most striking examples is St. John's Co-Cathedral. This cathedral is not only a place of worship but also an art masterpiece, renowned for its opulent interior and the famous Caravaggio paintings it houses. The Grandmaster's Palace, another architectural marvel, once served as the residence of the Grand Master of the Knights of

St. John and now accommodates the Office of the President of Malta and the House of Representatives. These buildings are emblematic of the city's historical and political significance.

The cultural vibrancy of Valletta is palpable throughout its numerous festivals and events, which celebrate both its historical legacy and contemporary arts. The Valletta International Baroque Festival, for example, brings to life the city's architectural splendor with performances that resonate with its Baroque origins. Similarly, the Malta Jazz Festival adds a modern twist to Valletta's cultural scene, attracting artists and audiences from around the world. The city's rich cultural calendar ensures that there is always something to captivate residents and visitors alike.

Valletta is also home to Teatru Manoel, one of the oldest working theaters in Europe. This historic venue offers a diverse range of performances, from classical opera to modern plays, further enriching the cultural landscape of the city. The theater itself is a gem, with its beautifully preserved interiors providing a glimpse into the past.

Modern attractions in Valletta blend seamlessly with its historical charm. The MUŻA (Museum of Fine Arts) is a prime example, showcasing Maltese art from the medieval period to contemporary times. The museum provides a comprehensive narrative of Malta's artistic evolution and cultural identity, making it a must-visit for anyone interested in understanding the island's heritage.

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One of Valletta's most popular spots is the Upper Barrakka Gardens, offering breathtaking panoramic views of the Grand Harbour and the Three Cities. These gardens provide a serene escape from the bustling streets and a perfect vantage point to appreciate the city's majestic harbor, historically a focal point of maritime activity and defense.

In conclusion, Valletta is a city where history and modernity coexist harmoniously. Its streets, buildings, and cultural institutions tell the story of Malta's past while engaging with contemporary arts and activities. Whether through its Baroque architecture, vibrant festivals, or scenic vistas, Valletta captures the essence of Maltese culture and continues to be a beacon of the island's rich heritage.

## **Il-Belt Valletta: Gemma Maltija ta' Storja u Kultura**

Imqiegħdha fil-qalba tal-Mediterran, il-Belt Valletta, il-belt kapitali ta' Malta, hija xhieda tal-istorja u l-wirt kulturali tal-gżira. Mwaqqfa fl-1566 mill-Kavallieri ta' San Ġwann, il-Belt Valletta nbriet wara l-Assedju l-Kbir ta' Malta fl-1565, li mmarka mument kruċjali fl-istorja ta' Malta. L-importanza strateġika u simbolika tal-belt ġiet enfasizzata mill-iżvilupp mgħagħgel tagħha f' swar fortifikat ta' arkitettura Barokka u ħila militari.

Is-sinifikat tal-Belt Valletta huwa rikonoxxut madwar id-dinja kollha, u dan wassalha bħala Sit ta' Wirt Dinji tal-UNESCO. It-tqassim tal-belt, bil-gradilja ppjanata tagħha ta' toroq dojoq, hija mzejna b'firxa ta' teżori arkitettoniċi mill-perjodu Barokk. Wieħed mill-aktar eżempji impressjonanti huwa l-Kon-Katidral ta' San Ġwann. Dan il-katidral mhuwiex biss post ta' qima iżda wkoll mużew tal-arti, rinomat għad décor interjuri tiegħu u l-pitturi famużi ta' Caravaggio li fih. Il-Palazz tal-Granmastru, meravilja oħra, darba serva bħala r-residenza tal-Gran Mastru tal-Kavallieri ta' San Ġwann u issa jakkomoda l-Uffiċċju tal-President ta' Malta u l-Kamra tad-Deputati. Dawn il-binjiet huma emblematiċi tas-sinifikat storiku u politiku tal-belt.

Il-vibranza kulturali tal-Belt Valletta tintwera matul il-bosta festi u avvenimenti tagħha, li jiċċelebraw kemm il-wirt storiku kif ukoll l-arti kontemporanja tagħha. Il-Valletta International Baroque Festival, pereżempju, jagħti l-ħajja lill-belt b'wirjiet li jirriflettu mal-oriġini Barokk tagħha. Bl-istess mod, il-Malta Jazz Festival iżid bidla moderna fix-xena kulturali tal-Belt Valletta, u jattira artisti u udjenzi minn madwar id-dinja. Il-kalendarju kulturali tal-belt jiżgura li dejjem ikun hemm xi ħaġa li tiġbed kemm lir-residenti kif ukoll lill-viżitaturi.

Il-Belt Valletta fiha wkoll it-Teatru Manoel, wieħed mill-eqdem teatri li għadu jaħdem fl-Ewropa. Dan il-post storiku joffri firxa varjata ta' wirjiet, minn opra klassika sa drammi moderni, li jkomplu jsaħħu l-pajsaġġ kulturali tal-belt. It-teatru innifsu huwa djamant, bl-interjuri tiegħu ppreservati b'mod sabiħ li jipprovdi ħarsa lejn il-passat.

Attrazzjonijiet moderni fil-Belt Valletta jhalltu mas-seħer storiku tagħha. Il-MUŻA (Museum of Fine Arts) hija eżempju, li turi l-arti Maltija mill-perjodu medjevali sa żminijiet kontemporanji. Il-mużew jipprovdi narrattiva tal-evoluzzjoni artistika u l-identità kulturali ta' Malta, li jagħmilha żjara obbligatorja għal kull min hu interessat li jifhem il-wirt tal-gżira.

Wieħed mill-aktar postijiet popolari tal-Belt Valletta huma l-Ġonna tal-Barrakka ta' Fuq, li joffru veduti panoramiċi mill-isbaħ tal-Port il-Kbir u t-Tliet Ibliet. Dawn il-ġonna jipprovdu ħarba trankwilla mit-toroq bieżla u punt ta' vantaġġ perfett biex wieħed japprezza l-port tal-belt, storikament punt fokali ta' attività u difiża marittima.

Bħala konkluzjoni, il-Belt Valletta hija belt fejn l-istorja u l-modernità jeżistu flimkien b'mod armonjuż. It-toroq, il-binjiet, u l-istituzzjonijiet kulturali tiegħha jirrakkontaw l-istorja tal-passat ta' Malta filwaqt li jimpenjaw ruħhom mal-arti u l-attivitajiet kontemporanji. Kemm permezz tal-arkitettura Barokka tagħha, festi vibranti, jew panorami xeniċi, il-Belt Valletta taqbad l-essenza tal-kultura Maltija u tkompli tkun ta eżempju tal-wirt għani tal-gżira tagħna.