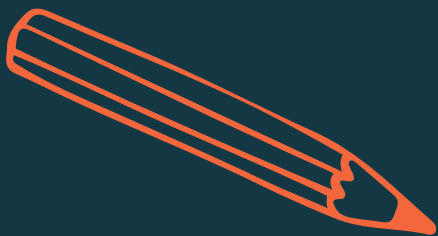




THIS MAKES ME THINK...

The World Needs to Hear Your Story
Top 10 Stories from Ukrainian Teenagers



Student



OPEN CALL WINNER

SOFIIA LEVKO

16 years

Sofiivska Borshchahivka,
Kyiv region

Teacher



Maryna Bondarenko

BIO AND MOTIVATION

I'm Sofia Levko. I was born in 2008 in Ukraine and I am currently studying at Sofiivsko-Borshchahivskiy lyceum. I often volunteer and want to share some experience I gained while visiting new places and people. I present a story of humanity's empathy during hard times, centered on an American soldier's courageous service in Ukraine. This narrative celebrates the solidarity and resilience across borders, urging us to embrace our shared humanity amidst adversity. Through this story, I aim to inspire reflection and ignite a collective commitment to justice and compassion. Through my participation in this contest, I aim not only to share a story, but also to honor the inherent dignity and worth of every human being, capable of supporting and empathizing with others.

STORY

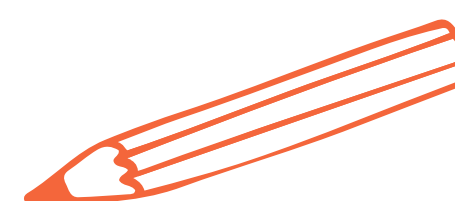
I stood outside the imposing structure of the military hospital. My heart was pounding with a mix of nervousness and excitement. I had signed up as a volunteer to offer support and companionship to the brave men and women who had sacrificed so much in service to Ukraine. Particularly for foreigners defending my country. There were two Americans at the hospital and there weren't a lot of people who could talk to them or express gratitude.

Taking a deep breath to steady myself, I stepped through the doors into the bustling foyer with few small boxes in my hands. In the boxes, there was Easter bread because Easter was coming. Volunteers wanted to give presents to those whose family couldn't visit. We also prepared some snacks.

I made my way to the stairs. My excitement grew with each passing moment. 'What am I going to see?'. 'What should I say?'. The receptionist accompanied me to the rehabilitation center. The center was divided into different areas, each tailored to meet the unique needs of the soldiers in various stages of recovery. I met quite a lot of soldiers there. I and other volunteers wished them a happy Easter. Then it seems I heard some English words coming from a nearby chamber. Upon entering the room, I was greeted by a warm smile from the patient, whose face bore traces of weariness but also resilience.

As we conversed, I listened intently to his story, learning about his homeland, family, and the circumstances that had brought him to an unfamiliar country far from home. His name is Chris and he comes from Florida. His life was one of bravery and sacrifice, of leaving behind the familiar to serve. Chris was really happy to have a conversation with someone as he had limited communication with his companions due to their low proficiency in English. I was thankful and overjoyed to talk to him too.

Leaving the patient's room, I carried with me a newfound appreciation for the power of human connection to empathize in spite of language and culture. In that hospital room, we had not only shared stories but also forged a bond that transcended borders, reminding us of our shared humanity and the universal desire for companionship and understanding. He was here in Ukraine because of a thing every person deserves to have. Freedom. Regardless of who and where.



Student



OPEN CALL WINNER

SOFIIA STESHAKOVA

16 years
Kropyvnytskyi

Teacher



Iryna Kharchenko

BIO AND MOTIVATION

I was born in Gola Pristan, Kherson region. First idea to write came up to me when I was eight. When the war started I had to move to a Kropivnitski, where I'm living now. There I wrote and published small book with my poems, and few stories on Internet. Now I keep writing, attending a literature evenings, and working on bigger novel.

This project for me is not only possibility to show my works to world and get them read, but also to attract attention to actual problem, witness of which I became.

STORY

Would you mind about some experiments? Realism is extremely boring, but I don't want to throw your mind into this creation without any warnings. The main one: story is absolutely real, all poetry is fictional.

Look. Look closer. Are you seeing it? It's Fire. Look on its flames. How magnificent are they, isn't it? Step back. It is growing. Look inside. Are you seeing your heart? What metal have it created by? I don't know is temperature in this fire enough to melt mine, but to change – absolutely.

The Fire came to my town in the morning. It came with only two words. The rudest and the most terrifying words: "War started". I remember smoke. It was black, heavy and strange. I saw smoke before. The bulrush burns every summer. But it was February.

Do you know how clear the sky is in the morning? Imagine white paper. Take that big brush and blue watercolor. Ad as much water as can it hold and few splashes of blue. And now find the darkest ink and splash on it. That's how it was.

It was predictable. The Chornobaivka was only ten kilometers from our house then.

And then was a road without way back. Long-long road. Dead trees looked in our backs. Dead trees saw a lot that day. Crack.

There always was time. Tomorrows... Later... Next month, year...

But it is a lie. My time was stolen. I've started to write. I did it before too, but it was... Not in priority. There were other things to do, after all. But nobody else can write my story as I do. So I will write it. I've started to tell about my poems, attending literature evenings, published a book. Because there wouldn't better time for that.

The fire didn't melt urgently. The most valuable changes didn't have exactly time of start and time of end. So I don't know when, but in these two years I started to live. Live, without waiting for a right time for it. Sky is changing every second. Every second is fading. And I want to have a good story for harpies.



Student



IHOR SADOVYAK

16 years
Lviv

Teacher



Iryna Yatsyk

BIO AND MOTIVATION

My name is Ihor Sadovyak, in my early years, I got to experience difficulties through my life, and I want to share my story with you, hoping it will make a difference in someone's life.

STORY

"All of us come from childhood..." (Antoine de Saint Exupery)

Really...we all come from childhood, the interval of time of complete innocence, carefreeness, independence from all world's worries and dark secrets that are hidden from us, but sooner or later, they always reveal their power, crashing into our life, ruining the light line of our best days, making us rethink all our existence...

Such a «black swan» came into my life at its most frightening form when I was just 14...

At that time, I lost the most precious person in my life, the person that brought me up to the individual I am nowadays – my dearest mother... Her death was unexpected for all of us in family...no one even could think that such a tragedy could just swallow on our peaceful lives, out of blue, in one day...

I couldn't talk to people... I couldn't think properly... I couldn't visit her grave as my face instantly was covering in tears... I couldn't normally pray to God as I lost any hope in his existence... I couldn't sleep anymore as most dreams were about her... My world was shattering into pieces just with thoughts about her... I wanted nothing with my life anymore, everything seemed useless... I had only one question in my head: «WHY?» During the present age, I have found the answer to this uncertainty...

My reality has changed completely...

After restless days and nights, lonely evenings without her, sobs into the pillow and broken mental health, I began to notice, that life has started to create some moments of...happiness?

My family became the only place in the universe where I could feel better, because only they could understand me, which led all of us to being as close with one another as we could. School became the place where I, at least, could have broken away from all the thoughts and even smile from time to time. Swimming classes became much more exhausting, but at the same time – helpful. Books were like a portal to another dimension, where I could have stuck sometimes for hours and live through each emotion of a positive character. Some new people started to appear in my life who gave me the right attitude to life... I can not describe what has happened in my life completely out of a sudden... Mysticism? Magic? Universal gift? God's forgiveness? Metaphysics? I really do not know...but my life showed me, that despite all the grief – maybe, there is a ray of light in the darkness that has surrounded me? Maybe, it is a trial for me to get through and and come out as a new, better version of myself?

Such questions have really developed my inner world, much more questions has arose inside me... Without a doubt, I became a person that knows a value of each passing day, and this time, sitting on a bench next to mom on cemetery, I, alone, look into her beautiful features on the monument and silently pray for her to heavens...

Today, people do not know the value of life...

Always be grateful for what you have today, because no one knows what might happen tomorrow. All of us think that death – it is something distant that will happen to us in the far future, but it is not true... It can come in our life anytime, that is why – never take each day as a routine... and never forget to express your appreciation to God, family, friends, whoever you feel like to thank...



Student

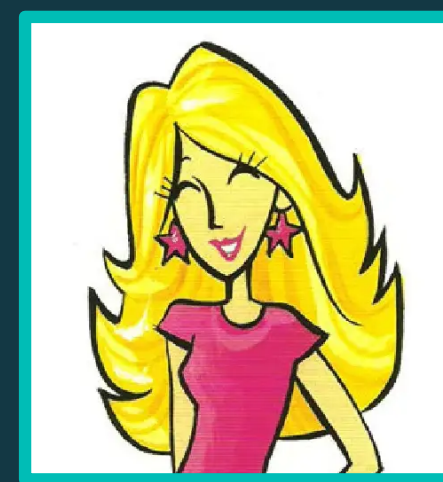


OPEN CALL WINNER

DARIA SHULHINA

12 years
Nova Sitch,
Sumy region

Teacher



Yuliia Zozulia

BIO AND MOTIVATION

My name is Dasha. I was born on 24th of August, in the village of Kyianytcia. At the age of 6 I started our local school. Now I am in the year 7. I like studying. But my favourite subject is Ukrainian and English language. I am interested in cooking. My hobby is weaving with beads. I am sociable person, I enjoy communicating with friends. I am hard working.

I got interested of this competition because I like trying something new.

STORY

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War? War! War...

One rainy day I sat in my room and thought about past, and how war changed my life. I reminded happy moments of my life before war, how I went to school every day, how me and my family had a picnic in the forest and then slept in tent, how me and my friends played and forgot about everything. Then we lived carefree life. And our values were money, brand stuff, big house, cars, etc. So, it made me think how we spent our time in the past and how we do it now?

What threatened us before and what now?

In the past my biggest dream was travelling to Paris, but now I want only one thing – PAECE IN UKRAINE. When 2 years of war have gone, we have learned to live in a new way. And now I know most of the sounds of shells. It's really sad when kids hear this. But what I was afraid of the most, has happened. We had to leave our home and move to Sumy. Because other unstoppable explosions I don't remember how I packed my clothes and so on, I remember only one thing that i wanted- go away from this place. Even when I am not at home and nothing threatens me when I hear loud sounds (they were normal for me before) I'm very afraid of this.

Of course, I really miss my home. We also had to leave our cats. We have 3 cats, my cat Musya we have taken with us, because she's very old and she can live in flat only. But Semyon and Tigric stayed there, and our neighbor feeds them every day. I hope that the war will stop very soon and we will turn home.

But I understand even if the war stops nothing will be like before. It won't return people who died and our normal psychological state. War left big wound on Ukraine. My life has really changed a different outlook fo life, another values, less trust to people.

Thus, by this story i want to say that life is short and we don't know when it will finish and we have to appreciate what we have and rejoice every little thing.



Student



OPEN CALL WINNER

DOMINIKA CHERNUSHENKO

13 years
Kyiv

Teacher



Bohdana Khymych

BIO AND MOTIVATION

My name is Dominika, and I'm 13 years old. I am a student of the French International School. I'm passionate about travelling and discovering new things. Moreover, I find myself in reading, I love diving into another reality and solving some mysteries,

STORY

Probably what really makes you think, realize and feel how a sudden chill sharply and ruthlessly pierces you from the inside, is when life puts you a footstep, and you look into her eyes from the bottom up, and her eyes are all in tears, but she will not show them to you, only an insensitive look in which you will be reflected.

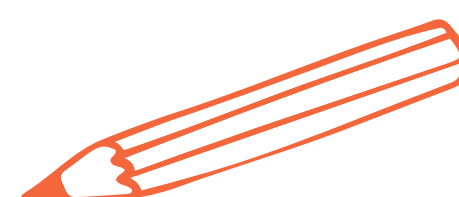
What became my large-scale footstep is war which did a great job in increasing the value of things that used to seem ordinary. We decided, during the occupation, to move to Khmelnytsky (the city to which I will be grateful forever for sheltering us).

What I didn't even notice was that I compared everything to my past life. Starting in the morning, when I was just waking up and the sharp realization that I'm not lying in my home bed and while I think about it, I'm not staring at my ceiling. It made me feel like a small black dot on a white canvas, which turned out to be there wrong.

Children's laughter when you go outside, but it's not the same anymore. And it's not the same; I don't understand anything. I want to wake up like it's all a nightmare, but feels like you can't run away from it.

And you think... and you still think, and tears take their toll, there is only one need, one word "war", can change the fate of people, or maybe even destroy it at all... and that painfully familiar taste of freedom. Instead of all, you will be in a house where there is nowhere to hide from death, and then you will scroll in your head only one thought "this flew by", and then the unknown... no one knows if you will stay alive in the next couple of seconds, minutes, hours. And the most unpredictably terrible thing is when it becomes quiet, then your thoughts are mixed and the only "thing that will make you think" is you're nearest and dearest, who are now in the same situation like you, and you will have a desire for which you are ready to give any money of the world, life and yourself, it is to take your loved ones under your wing, to console them, to do everything in your power at that moment to protect and protect, there is a feeling that everything is in your hands, and if you do not act, we will all go crazy with panic here together. All this has to be rethought in a couple of seconds, otherwise you will not have time.

Nevertheless, deep in the middle of yourself you feel guilty that your words, with which you are trying to somehow influence the mood, cannot be true, so fear eats you up from the inside, but you cannot cry; you must be an example and be strong. Once it's all over, and then you'll be looking at the sky and then another "thing that makes you think" will be that you're alive.



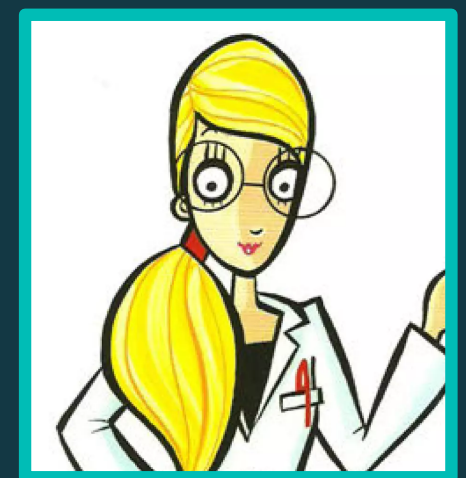
Student



ARTEM BOLIBRUKH

11 years
Ternopil

Teacher



Tetiana Rohalia

BIO AND MOTIVATION

My name is Artem and my surname is Bolibrukh. I am 11 years old. I like English language and I like to study it. I like to take part in different competitions and to be the winner.



STORY



I think that many students from Ukraine today will tell about the most important event that happened to them.

This is the beginning of the war, the event took place on February 24, 2022. I went to bed at night knowing that I had to go to school the other day. I usually wake up at seven o'clock but that morning I woke up earlier. My dad was talking to my mom and I heard that the war had started. We turned on the TV. All the news was about the shelling of my country. My dad went to work and I stayed at home with my mom and sister. I didn't really understand what was going on. My mother explained that it was a very bad situation in our country.

We started folding clothes, documents and food. All day we listened to the news on TV and read on the Internet. In the evening my whole family went to bed but my mom heard an unfamiliar sound from outside. My mom woke us all up and we got dressed quickly. We took all the folded things and went out into the yard. A lot of people gathered near the house and everyone was excited and scared. That night I heard this terrible sound for the first time it was the sound of siren. I was scared very much and didn't know what else could happen to us. All people started going down to the basement, that was our shelter. We stood there at first but then an old sofa was brought from somewhere. Children began to fall asleep.

In the morning we woke up and went home. My parents said that we would go to the village. It was calm there and there were no sirens. I didn't worry that day any more. We listened to the news the whole day.

One day we went for a walk to the river and heard an unknown noise. I raised my head and saw three military planes were flying in the sky above the village. At that moment I became scared again. My mom told us that they were Ukrainian planes.

A month later school started. It was online. I was delighted to see my teachers and classmates. We all chatted online.

Time flies but the war still continues...

My classmates and I returned to school. We are no longer afraid of sirens but we need to go down to the shelter. We also learned how to help people who suffered from the war. We became volunteers. We always try to help the military. My classmates write letters, draw postcards, send food and medicine.

Over time, we have all become accustomed to military planes in the sky, the sounds of sirens, the sounds of rockets and "shaheds" flying overhead. These are terrible events that bring pain and horror to our country. We are waiting for the victory and returning of the peaceful life!

This makes me think about my future and enjoy every day. At the moment it has become important to me to spend more time with my relatives. I am glad that I can study at school, go to the swimming pool, go for a walk with my friends. This war has changed the outlook of all Ukrainian people.

Student



OPEN CALL WINNER

MYKYTA BROVA

17 years
Bilozrske,
Donetsk region

Teacher



Yuliia Mykhailenko

BIO AND MOTIVATION

I'm Mykyta Brova. I was born in 2007 in Ukraine. At this moment I'm studying in the II form and I have one story that is interesting enough. It's about my dear friend. I think it may impress the readers. But I just want to tell another side of life and how much the person may be strong regardless of the situation. I hope that my friend's experience will inspire people to stay strong and loyal to themselves.

STORY

That's a story about one person who has appeared relatively recently in my life and has become a huge brainstorming due to her uncommon story.

Her name is Lily. She is few years older than me and she has one interesting but terrible feature. I talk about her hereditary and chronic diseases. Her life will continue up to 40-50 years in the best case. Every day is a challenge due to foregoing and tiring work. Despite this Lily has always lived a vibrant life. Also, she is kind and a very patient person who likes sharing her wisdom, giving some advice and support. I've never seen her angry with me or somebody else even when we hurt her.

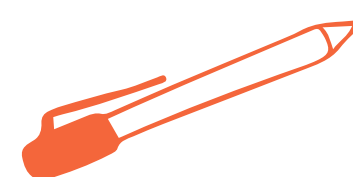
She didn't have an easy childhood. Lily's family consist of her parents and her older sister. But, to tell the truth, in general everyone hates each other and there is no trust between them. The reason is her parents who have the similar diseases but harder and deadlier. They can't move, their speech isn't clear and this picture is very traumatic. But there is one thing which makes them also devious and selfish people. Both of them require constant attention and care from their daughters.

They don't care the fact that Lily and her elder sister have already had their own families and lives. The older daughter refused to accept such conditions in contrast to Lily who can't resist them. Her nature doesn't allow her to leave her parents alone as well as anybody who has a problem. Endless scandals and quarrels haunt her every time she arrives to her mother even in the situation when Lily sent them her last money which was very important for her.

In spite of this Lily has another feature which is more valuable and powerful – it's her thirst to life. Over years of her life she could travel to many countries and could try absolutely everything. The person who was doomed to suffering and short life was able to make and try as many things and actions as a human could make during the lifetime. She doesn't stop doing dangerous but interesting and unusual activities which make her lifestyle brighter.

All this makes me think about two things. The first one is that our life is too short to waste it on useless things. In result, they are too valuable, but at the same time so much vulnerable. And the second thing is that people are sometimes illogical creatures who will always follow their principles even when they make them worse.

Since then I've been trying to diversify my life with different activities. I'm not scared of trying something new – after all we have only one life.



Student



ALIM GASANOV

11 years
Kryvyi Rih,
Dnipro region

Teacher



Lyudmyla Izbash

BIO AND MOTIVATION

Alim Hasanov is a 5th grade student. He is interested in the English language and is a participant in many competitions and Olympiads.

STORY

This story happened to me when I was 7 years old. My mother and I went to the supermarket, my mother chose vegetables, and I began to choose candies. Near the confectionery department was a display case with different types of oil, a man was standing there, he reached for a bottle of expensive olive oil and accidentally dropped it. The guard of the supermarket immediately approached him, and the man, instead of admitting his guilt, said that it was not him who broke the bottle and pointed his hand at me. I was confused, immediately called my mother. My mother came, she listened carefully to me, calmed me down and asked the security guard to show the video from the surveillance camera to make sure that I really did it.

After watching the video, the security guard apologized to me, and the man who broke the bottle had to pay a fine.

This makes me THINK that sometimes it is very difficult to tell the truth. Sometimes's easier for people to lie. And I also realized that my mother is my best friend who will always support me.



Student



OPEN CALL WINNER

VALERIIA MAKARENKO

15 years
Kharkiv

Teacher



Tetiana Povaliaieva

BIO AND MOTIVATION

My name is Valeriia Makarenko and I'm a 15-year-old enthusiast from Kharkiv, Ukraine. Currently, I am living with my lovely family and two cats. I love reading, playing sports for fun, and dancing. Alongside these hobbies, I've been passionate about learning English. As a competitor, I'm excited to show off my language skills and share my thoughts on interesting topics. I appreciate the chance to explore important themes and tell cool stories through this contest. I'm eager to join in and let others know that language learners indeed have something valuable to say.

STORY

Once upon a time, there was a young girl. She was only 13 when everything started. What started? The war. Did she know how it was to live during those times? This little girl, I am sure, no. But everything changed when the war hit on February 24th, and Ukraine was suddenly on everyone's radar.

The concept of war was indeed foreign to her, far from her reality until it crashed upon her doorstep. She had been like any other child, dreaming of the future without the upcoming potential tragedy. She thought, as many adults of the 21st century did too, that war is something... something she wasn't basically busy thinking about it. The date of the 24th of February made Ukraine known worldwide.

Long story short, her life hasn't stopped. Dreams of the future were pushed aside, replaced by just trying to make it through each day and stay alive.

Some people still argue that it is not a piece of cake for youth to continue developing their skills, and she, as no one, could say tell it. Even when everything was crazy, she found a strength she didn't know she had. It was hard, but she kept believing things would get better. She was fortunate to have the support of her family, and she was able to provide it for them as well. The fact that they were surrounded by people who truly cared for one another helped her family stay together and feel less lonely.

She figured out that even though war can hurt you, it doesn't have to change who you really are.

What happened next, her readers might wonder? Being a teenager, she used to think of it as something charming. But those stereotypes about growing up and maturity? She was tired of them. Yet, war doesn't care about who you are, how old you are, or what's happening in your life. It's indifferent, has always been.

So, if you want some change, you have to make it happen. She dug up this idea in the locked corner of her mind. And that's how her new era began. Studying to be the best - for someone else? No, that wasn't it. It was about being the best for yourself.

To tell the truth, our girl was in the book-haters club. But then something changed her mind. It's funny how something as simple as a piece of paper can lead to new discoveries. Her first thriller by Tess Gerritsen became her obsession, her future source of work for months. Books helped her to build the corners of her own life, teaching her not only about stories but also about time management.

All summer, she couldn't stop thinking about starting 9th grade.

She was really looking forward to the new school year, hoping to learn some cool new study tricks and grow as a person. Then the highly-anticipated challenge she'd been looking forward to since the 5th grade came: a project with the Minor Academy of Sciences. Lovely expectations vs. a harsh reality. She eagerly started searching for the topic to discover, but did she know how hard it actually was to come up with something great in just a month? Eventually, she and her supervisor decided to focus on literature, specifically a book she loved called 'The Surgeon' by Tess Gerritsen. She spent every day working on the project, from morning until night. It was all she could think about. And when they finally finished, she felt proud of what they'd accomplished.



Student



OPEN CALL WINNER

VALERIIA MAKARENKO

15 years
Kharkiv

Teacher



Tetiana Povaliaieva

STORY



She and her supervisor ended up with a piece of work they were pleased. But once the busy routine was over, she realized something was missing.

Then the presentation day came, the moment she had been waiting for. As each participant presented their work, she willingly awaited her turn. The poster part has been told, following with the apple of her eye, a presentation. She enjoyed talking about her literal 'child', but was she ready not to get any of the feedback other participants could have provided her with? The ending of the conference, those results she was counting down the days for.

She was so nervous waiting to hear it. When they said she got 70 out of 100, she felt like she hadn't done well enough. She felt extremely devastated and almost depressed. But then she started thinking about it and said to herself, "It's my fault."

After some considering, she and her supervisor made a decision to ask the people, who had organized the event, for the explanation about the number of points. Turned out, they absurdly made a 'technical' mistake in counting. She actually got 80 points, which meant she came second! She felt happy, but couldn't get rid of sadness because the joy was completely spoiled due to the harsh process of disputes a young child had to be involved into.

However, she was taught a lesson about some important truth of life from all of this. She got the understanding that real success isn't about getting praise from other people. It's about fighting for what you've created and sure about. It's about believing in yourself and not giving up, even when things don't go the way you want them to. And with that gained experience, she felt ready to face whatever came her way next.

As an author of this story, it's noteworthy that this girl teaches me to face my fears, to accept myself, and to reach my sincere goals. She's more than just a character - she's like a friend, showing me how to be brave and carry on going ahead.

Because she's not just a character in a story, she's a reflection of me - a reminder that even in tough times, we can find courage, hope and the power to keep moving forward. She's me.

This makes me THiNK about how strong we can be inside. Success isn't just about what others say; it's about believing in ourselves and not giving up. It reminds me how circumstances can shape us too. Just like this girl, we've faced challenges that changed all of us. But through it all, importantly, I've learned to adapt, grow, and stay true to myself.



February 24th 2022, war's arrival.



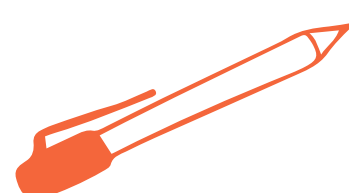
The girl enjoys doing her project, loves reading books, and feels better because her family is always there for her.



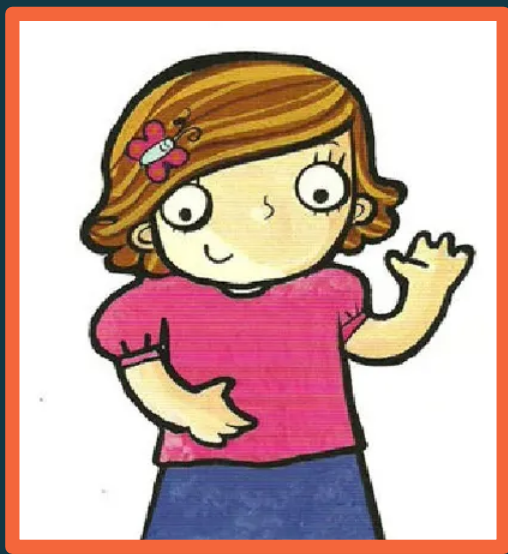
Character's life is the reflection of the author's life.



Maturing. The realisation that only you can open the door to your future, no matter what kind of path it takes.



Student



KSENIA TYDASH

12 years
Drohobych,
Lviv region

Teacher



Iryna Metsan

BIO AND MOTIVATION

My name is Ksenia. My surname is Tydash. I'm 12. I am from Ukraine.

In 2011 I was born in Boryslav. Since 2013 I lived in Drohobych in Lviv region. In 2013 I went to the nursery. I hated going there. In 2017 I went to school. I liked it. I have many friends because I'm friendly and sociable. Now I study at Bohdan Lepkyi Scientific Lyceum. My favourite subject is English and Art. My mother is a teacher and my father is a jurist (a security). I have a little sister. She is 3 years old. I like playing with her.

In 2017 I began to go in the sport club WUSHU. I like sport. My hobby is dancing. I also go to dance school. I am fond of reading books too.

My dream is to become a Ukrainian-English translator. I would like to enter the British University.

My life motto is never give up. Life is not over. It's just different. It really helps me in any situation when everything seems impossible.

STORY

How I hate waking up early in the morning. The alarm-clock has already rung. I have to get up.

But I want to sleep.

- It's time to go to school! my mum whispered patting my head with her hand gently.

- OK. Only 5 minutes, please.

I went to the bathroom like an alien, I washed my face with cold water and at least I woke up.

-Good morning! said my dad with a smile on his lips. What a nice day!

-Good morning! greeted my little sister. Today it's pajama party in our kindergarden.

Look! I'll take my favourite pajama.

- Cool. Oh! I've forgotten. Our class is planning to go to Kyiv at the end of the week.

- May I go? I asked my parents.

- Yes. But now hurry! Let's have breakfast. You are late for school, we are late for work, said my mum.

When I went out, I petted my dog.

At school I met all my friends. We were talking about our excursion on Friday. We had many plans. Our teacher came in and we began to study. Our lessons were interesting. When the bell rang I came back. My friends and I were walking slowly. We are talking and laughing.

When I came home, I had lunch and went for a walk with sister and my pet. Then I did my homework and helped my mum to prepare dinner. The whole day was very cheerful.

Next day had changed my life into before and after. I could never imagine that it happened. It's very difficult to tell. In the morning my mum didn't wake me up. I heard a noise. I looked out of the window and saw planes flying over my house. What happened?

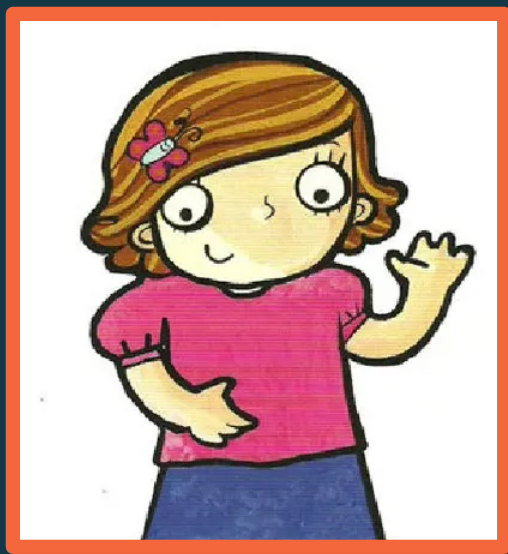
The walls were shaking. My mum's phone rang. It was her sister from Kyiv. She shouted "The War began! War... Be careful!"

We couldn't believe in the war in the XXI century. We couldn't speak. We couldn't do anything. We stood and looked at each other. My dad worried about us so he decided to send my family abroad. When he went to his work he said:

- Pack the most necessary clothes and documents in the suitcase. You are going abroad. I stay here.



Student



KSENIA TYDASH

12 years
Drohobych,
Lviv region

Teacher



Iryna Metsan

STORY



Then I heard some buzzing. I was very frightened. This sound was unknown to me. Mum took my sister in her arms and she said "It's an alarm, an alarm". Her hands were shaking and her face was pale. My mum said:

- Let's go to the basement quickly. Take a bottle of water and our bag.

I was afraid. My eyes were full of tears. I began to cry. My mum held my sister, gave me her hand and we went down silently.

There were my neighbours. People didn't know what to do. We felt anxiety. It was cold and scary. We began to pray after that we'd read news.

During the day the alarm sounded several times a day. We went to the basement. I opened a chat and read that many friends were abroad without their fathers.

When my father came back, we went to the village to our relatives tonight. We thought that it was safe there. Nobody was walking in that evening. There were empty streets. There were no products in the shop. Some of them were closed. Next day we came home and we went to the basement when an alarm became. We didn't know what would be next. We were stressed all the time. Our hearts were arching for our native country, for our people, for cities and villages. We were no more dreaming about our vocation for summer, travelling, nice clothes, etc. We have the only one dream- Peace. My family decided to stay in Ukraine. We must protect our Motherland. My Homeland is the best place for us and we want to spend all our life here.

The war changed my life. It has changed me completely. I will never forget this date. My memories of February 24, 2022 reveal shock, confusion, uncertainty, unpreparedness.

This makes me THINK not only about myself. I understand that sitting and crying was not good. I must help where I am. My rooms of my lyceum became "Home" for people whose houses were destroyed. My family and I supported volunteers and refugees. We gathered organizations and accounts that collect financial assistance to support the Ukrainian Army.

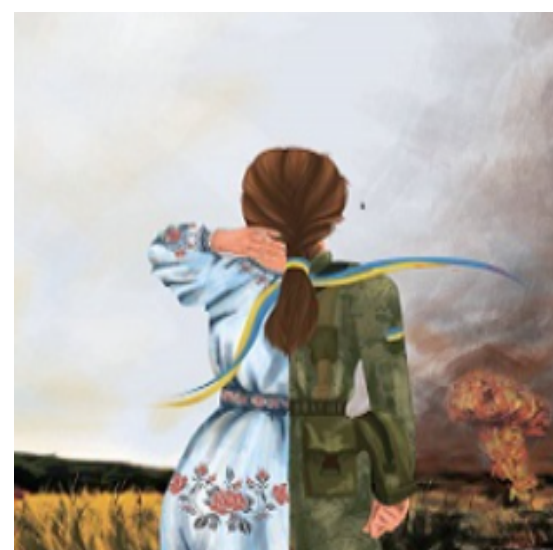
I believe that Ukrainian cannot be afraid. Refugees have to make something new and live. It's difficult, but they need. In my opinion, the Ukrainians are very talented, strong and they can do everything what they want. Life is not over. It's just different. Life will win over death, and light will win over darkness.



My school life and my dreams.



Russian attack.



Ukrainian life during the war.







How the war changed me and the country.



THANK YOU FOR SHARING YOUR STORY!



 linguist.ua
 info@linguist.ua

 (067) 487-31-41
 (050) 407-63-83
 (093) 170-26-04
 (044) 599-32-28