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American River College

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# The Parrot



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Your ARC newsletter by and for ESL, multicultural, international students, Californians, and, well, anybody really...



## THE MUSIC OF LIFE: KATERYNA KACHALOVA

BY SAYED EDRES SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

"Music is not just a hobby for me; it's my passion and a way to express myself."

*Continued on page 21*

## INEVITABLE CHANGE

BY ANNIE NONNIMUS, ESL 315

There is a controversy about whether or not people can change during their lives. Some argue that people never change and that we are destined to live our lives with our fixed habits and characters, repeating the same mistakes. Others believe not only that it is possible for a person to change, but that we are constantly changing.

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**Got a Funny ESL Story? Pick up ARC Gifts!**  
**See page 2 for details.**

# Got a Funny ESL Story? Pick up ARC Gifts!

*The Parrot* wants to hear from **YOU**—students, staff, faculty, and administrators!

Tell us about a funny or memorable moment you've had while learning or teaching English.

Send your story to [TheParrot@arc.losrios.edu](mailto:TheParrot@arc.losrios.edu)



As a BIG thank-you, the first 10 people will receive a bag full of ARC swag, complete with:

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2. Read all the information, and then scroll to the bottom of the page to choose if you want an in-person or an online ESL Assessment session.
3. After you choose in-person or online, sign up using your student ID number and birth date.



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# BLOODY EYE

BY MARK SHEVCHENKO, ESL 47

NARRATIVE ESSAY



Image created with Gemini

When I was three years old, living in Uzbekistan, we had a tall iron table at home. It was lightweight because it was made of thin metal sheets and stood on high legs, making it easy to tip over. One spring morning on April 17, around 9 a.m., I was sitting near the table, still learning to walk. My mother sat across from me on the sofa, holding my newborn sister, who was just a few months old. Suddenly, I grabbed the table with my tiny hands and pulled it over onto myself. The metal edge struck my eye, cutting the blood vessels and skin around it on both sides. Blood covered my entire face. My mother rushed me to the shower to wash it off and discovered, to her relief, that my eye itself was unharmed. To this day, scars around my eye remind me of that accident.

Fourteen years later, when I was a 17-year-old high school student, my class went on a field trip to a military base outside the city. The trip took place on April 16 during a military training lesson. We toured the base and watched soldiers' demonstrations, and everything seemed normal. The next day, April 17, was supposed to mark the start of spring

break. I had already arrived at camp that evening, but early the next morning, something bizarre happened. Around 6 or 7 a.m., a massive explosion shook the camp buildings, waking everyone in panic. I was sleeping on the top bunk near a window when the glass shattered, cutting me near the same eye—though less severely than in childhood. Once again, my eye remained unharmed.

Later, we learned that the explosion originated from the same military base we had visited the day before. A malfunction had caused stored munitions to detonate, destroying the entire base. The blast wave traveled miles, shattering windows and even walls in nearby towns. My hometown suffered damage, including my school, where most windows were blown out. Even the camp where I was staying, located 30–40 miles away, felt the impact.

This is the story I wanted to share. While not every detail is exact, most of it truly happened to me. Two separate incidents, years apart, both on April 17, left scars near my eye—yet spared my vision. It's a strange coincidence that still amazes me.



## MAGICAL PLACE

*BY NADIYA YURKEVYCH, ESL 350*

## POETRY

There is one wonderful place,  
Fertile and fabulous.  
Historical and beautiful,  
Gives us all happiness.

Covered in legends and myths,  
And not to be forgotten by the Native Gods.  
Symbolic and magical,  
Rich in deposits.

There, in the fields, wheat is golden,  
As if the blond maiden had let her scythe loose,  
And the Cossacks-characters play on their sabers.

Like an old grandpa let his mustache loose, The Powerful Dnipro  
Flows with them further and further to the Black Sea.  
There, in the west, like giants, the Carpathian are visible.

One of them is the largest, the most powerful, covered with grass,  
And surrounded by legends.  
Like a girl who did not wait for her young man,  
Goverla is visible.

There, in the forests, mythical creatures have lived,  
There, Lukash grazes his flocks.  
And by grazing them, on flute he plays,  
The Dryad dances under his enchanted music.  
In this place I was born,  
My roots with an unbreakable spirit grew,  
My native language is the song of the nightingale.  
And this is a magical place.  
It's my country UKRAINE.

# THE FALL OF AFGHANISTAN

BY NILAB AZIZI, ESL 47

## NARRATIVE ESSAY

I never imagined that a normal morning would turn into the scariest day of my life. It was a beautiful and sunny day, and I was getting ready for breakfast. I was in Kabul, Afghanistan, on August 15, 2021. Unfortunately, the day changed into a nightmare. I can't forget that day because everything changed so fast.

First of all, it was early morning, and I was getting ready for work like usual. My husband was watching the news updates. The news reported that the Taliban had taken over nearby provinces and were approaching fast. It was about 7 or 8 o'clock in the morning. My husband stayed calm, but I could tell he was deeply worried. I felt nervous and confused about what was happening to my country. The phone was ringing; it was my mom, and she was worried about us. She said, "Don't go outside." The fear in my mother's voice told me this was serious. I was so scared that I felt like a body without a soul.

That afternoon, the situation became even more frightening as the Taliban entered Kabul. I stayed inside, looking out the window, afraid about the future. By afternoon, around 4 o'clock, I heard gunfire. The Taliban had entered the city. People were scattered and running in all directions. The shops closed, and everyone was trying to find a safe place or get home as quickly as

possible. I was at the 9th floor of an apartment. Unfortunately, I saw everything with my eyes. I was crying and closed the doors and windows. The city, once full of noise and activity, had become like a ghost town. I was talking with my husband and I was worried about food. All the shops wouldn't open for a while.

By the end of the night, everything was unforgettable and I was full of fear and disbelief as we prepared for an uncertain future. I thought I was dreaming. The night was so strange, as if the whole year had changed. I heard the sound of planes all night and felt like the sky had come alive and the earth had died because people couldn't go out anymore. Every place was quiet and you could not see any cars or people on the street, I had to prepare for a long trip. I packed a suitcase with some important items and clothes for my children, and also some food for them. My eldest son asked me, "Mom, what happened? Why are you so scared, and where we are going?" But I had no answer for my son. I will never forget that night.

In conclusion, the terrible situation that happened on August 15, 2021 was a frightening and dangerous day, and it changed my life forever. I can't forget that day. It still feels like a nightmare in my mind.



# THE DAY EVERYTHING CHANGED

BY AHMAD SHEKIB SALAMZAI, ESL 47

NARRATIVE ESSAY

The sun was shining brightly, but something in the air felt wrong that day. In Kabul the day always started with energy, the calls of shopkeepers, the smell of fresh bread, and the busy traffic. But on August 15, 2021, everything changed faster than I could ever imagine. That day was one of the most terrifying days of my life, as I witnessed the collapse of everything we had and feared for my family's safety and our future.

At first, the day seemed just like any other hot summer day in Kabul. The streets were alive with people rushing around, buying fruits, chatting, laughing. I was sitting at my office desk, arranging a meeting, when I started hearing whispers. The Taliban were close, someone said. I felt my heart stop beating. Outside the window, the streets were getting even busier, and the sound of car horns filled the air. Suddenly, news spread like wildfire that the government had fallen. One by one, shops closed their metal doors. Drivers honked and shouted, everyone tried to get home, creating huge traffic jams. My phone was ringing in my pocket; it was my family. After a short, tense call, we all agreed it was safest to stay home and not go outside anymore.

Later that evening, things got much worse. As the sun set, the sound of gunshots echoed through the city like drums of fear. I could smell something burning; black smoke was rising into the sky. My phone wouldn't stop ringing, but the internet was so slow that it was hard to talk to anyone. Suddenly, the electricity went out, and we were left in complete darkness. Feeling our way through the house, we gathered in the basement, the cool floor rough under our hands. The children didn't understand what was happening; they cried softly, their little hands clutching at their parents. Together, we whispered prayers, hoping and praying that we would be safe when morning came.



Image created with Gemini

When morning finally arrived, the city felt like a ghost town. The streets were empty and too quiet. I peeked through the window and saw the Taliban's white flags waving along the roads. A few people were outside, moving slowly, scared to make any noise. Cars were abandoned everywhere, some with doors still open, as if people had run away in a panic. We turned on the TV, and a shaky voice announced what we already feared: Kabul had fallen. Inside our house, it felt like time had frozen. We decided to stay inside, afraid to even step onto our front porch. Every minute was filled with questions and fear about what would happen next.

I will never forget the fear and sadness of that day. I never thought my life could change so quickly in just a few hours. The sounds, the smells, the faces of the people — all of it is burned into my memory. Even now, the memories of that long, fearful night and the scary unknown future still stay with me, reminding me how quickly life can change.

# INVENTIONS IN MY FAMILY'S LIFE

BY NATALIA ZABABURINA, ESL 47

## OPINION ESSAY

Do inventions play an important role in your life? In my family, they play an important role every day. We use different devices to help us to work, study, and have fun. Each of us cannot imagine life without our personal device, such as GoPro for husband, laptop for children, and smartphone for me.

First of all, my husband uses GoPro camera when we go on trips or spend time in nature. He enjoys taking videos of mountains, rivers, and forests, and he says the camera is a small invention but very powerful. He can wear it on his head or attach it to his bike. Moreover, the GoPro is waterproof, so he can use it when we go swimming or driving. Later, he edits the videos and shows them to our friends and family. It helps us keep beautiful memories. For example, he used the camera when he was working on the ship and showed us video of storms, sunset or sunrise on the ocean. He took some videos of different animals, such as swallows, sharks, wolves, and polar bears. Indeed, the GoPro camera is an important invention for his adventures.



by watching YouTube, and my son plays drums using videos tutorials. Moreover, they sometimes watch cartoons or movies when they have free time. I think the laptop helps them learn better and have fun too. Sometimes we watch movies together as a family. In summary, the laptop is a helpful device for both learning and having fun time for my children.

Finally, a smartphone is the best invention for me. I use my smartphone for many things. I study English, do homework, and read books on it. I also use it for work, sending emails and paying bills. Moreover, I enjoy taking photos and sharing them with my parents. I follow my hobbies, like sewing embroidery, or learning English, using different apps. The smartphone helps me manage my calendar and reminders. I call my mom every day, and I also talk to my friends on the phone. I have some apps on my phone for online shopping, and they make my life easy. Therefore, I use my smartphone every day. It saves me time. In my opinion, the smartphone is my most useful device.

Next important invention for my family is a laptop. My children use laptops every day. They need it for school projects, online lessons, and homework. The laptop helps them find information quickly. They also watch educational videos and use learning apps. For example, my daughter learns to draw

In conclusion, inventions play a really important role in my family's life because they help each of us in different ways. In general, new technologies and inventions will make our future easy, better and so interesting.

# WHISPER OF THE SILENT PAGES

BY MUJIBULLAH ESHRAT, ESL 350

## POETRY

In a quiet corner  
An old book on a shelf  
Like an aged woman with thousands of stories  
Waiting for a kind hug  
With every silent breath  
It sighs through its weary pages  
Streams the dreams as a river  
Into the darkness of a night  
Every page is a map of a lost destination  
Every line is the pulse of fate  
The book is not only a single paper or substance  
But a wordless soul that  
Sings a song aloud in silence  
With a faint smile  
The forgotten secrets  
Like golden seeds  
Cultivate it in the heart of the singer  
And hope, as moving lights  
Lightening the world in a starless night  
On a quiet night  
Breathing calmly  
And the forgotten dreams  
Like the lover butterfly  
Let it go with the wind  
Every word is a silent light of love  
Lightning in the darkness of the night  
The book, still with a faint smile  
Sings the immortal stories  
In the ear of the time.

*Editor's Note: If you love books as much as the author of this poem and want to read more about books and authors, please visit [The Parrot Issue 194](#)! It's all about books!*



## OPINION ESSAY

## MY DEEP GRATITUDE

BY OLENA IVANIUK, ESL 47



Most people always feel a deep gratitude for many special things. What are you grateful for? You can change your life, but these favorite things take a place in your heart, and you are grateful for them. In my life, there are significant things that I feel thankful for.

First, my car is an important thing in my life. In my American life, I have a big bonus every day: I have my car. It is the Honda Odyssey, but it is my best friend, my coworker, and my spaceship. In my home country, I did not drive a car because I am a left-handed person. Many times, my husband taught me, but every time it was a failure. Dreaming to drive in the United States was like learning to fly. Here, in the United States, I have my driver's license. I can complete all my daily tasks, and my "pretty girl" helps me with them. I drive my kids to school and back home, I drive to college, I go shopping, and I help my mother-in-law. In addition to this, my car has given me independence and confidence. All these things and many others I can complete daily with my car, and I cannot imagine my life without it.

Second, I am thankful for Highlands Community Charter School for adult people. When my family and I arrived in the USA, we had to take a language school. I was afraid of many new faces and learning English with teachers. But it was only a few days. Now I really love my school because studying there gives me not only knowledge but also my friends. My classmates come from different countries, and we share our dreams together. I feel like I am in a big family. At school, I learn English, the history of America, and government. My goal is a high

school diploma. My teacher has a special place in my heart. His patience and encouragement inspire me every day. All I can say is: "Thank you for your work." Many people think that school is not important in adult life, but I think that a grateful heart can accept help. Indeed, I am that person who feels a deep gratitude for an adult school.

Last of all, I am grateful for my ability to speak with other people in the United States. I know how difficult it is to live in a foreign country. I did not make any plans to change my home country, but life is unpredictable. I started learning English for fun and to relax. Little by little, it became my passion. After time, it became something more, and I spent more time on it. Now, learning English and speaking it is a part of my life. I like to speak. It can be with my friends, my teachers, or even people in a store. When I go shopping and have a dilemma, I can ask someone for advice. My ability to speak in English helps me. It gives me the power to communicate and solve problems. I am grateful for this ability because most immigrants feel shy. But I don't.

I really like and I am thankful for forgiveness from Americans. They know about each mistake that you make, but they will help you and understand you. When I remember how many people were patient with me, my heart fills with gratitude.

In conclusion, my Honda, Highlands Community Charter School, and my ability to speak with other people are really important things in my life. I feel a deep gratitude for everything in my life, and I cannot imagine my "American life" without them.



# I MISS AFGHANISTAN

BY SAMIULLAH SHIRZAD, ESL 47

## OPINION ESSAY

Have you ever thought about moving to another country? Moving to another country can be challenging. Most people decide to move to another by their own choices, while some people have no choices to stay in their own countries. When I decided to move to the U.S., it wasn't my own choice. I had no choices left in my home country. I miss a lot of things from my home country, but what I miss a lot are my family, my classmates, friends, and my culture.

First of all, I miss my family. I moved to the U.S. in 2019. I have been here for almost six years. When I decided to move to the U.S., I wanted to bring my family with me, but unfortunately, I couldn't bring them with me. It was only me. It was very hard to stay away from my family.

The first few years were very difficult for me, but later on, I got used to loneliness. Family was everything to me. I remember these days eating and going out together. I have a super strong bond and connection with my family. I think everyone used to have parties together. I always remember that moment. We should have close relationships with family because living together can lead to a successful life in my opinion. When you want to live with your family, you don't have to worry about paying a lot of bills. Of course, you still have to pay, but not that much compared to when you are alone. If a man or woman is smart enough to handle staying with family, he or she

can get to their goal easier. I know living together with family always involves a lot of problems and issues, but you have to be wise enough to overcome those challenges. In conclusion, living together has its advantages and disadvantages.

Second, I miss my friends and classmates. Leaving all classmates and friends was also a

tough decision I made at that time. Friends and classmates can also give you enough love as you receive from the family, brothers or sisters sometimes. Changes happen all the time while no one can predict either bad or good. I have never thought of that one day in my life. I will end up living far from all my family members, friends, and classmates, but some challenges can shape

your future in a completely different direction you never expected. I know when I remember my childhood friends and classmates, it made me sad and is hard to forget them. I always talk to my classmates and friends. Some of them made it to a few foreign countries, such as Germany, Italy, and Canada. They are happy and enjoy their lives. In my opinion, changes are good to experience in life that can brighten your future.

Finally, I miss my culture. I know every country has their own culture and ways of living. They choose what works best for them. When I got to the U.S., I was shocked when I saw that all wom-



en were driving, working in stores, riding bikes because these activities of women were new to me. I know our country also has a lot of offices where women work, but not as much as I experienced in the U.S. for the first time. I see women make half of the population of a society, so it is always a great idea to let women participate in any movement. I hope we witness one day the full participation of Afghan women in Afghanistan since they are not allowed to participate now. I remember when I started my first job in the U.S, as a cashier at Arco. I didn't want to see the

customers' eyes because in Afghanistan, making eye contact while talking is a disrespectful action. So, it was a whole different skill for me to learn. I finally learned it.

In conclusion, living far away from family, friends, classmates, and cultures. I still enjoy my life a lot in the U.S. even though everything was hard and tough. I am optimistic and hopeful about my future. Every change has its own experience in life.

## A SCARY SURPRISE

BY VIOLIETA CHOBAN, ESL 47

### NARRATIVE ESSAY

I never thought that a peaceful day in the garden could turn into something so scary. It all started like any other summer afternoon. The sun was shining, the birds were singing, and I was helping my mom with her plants. But then something unexpected happened that made my heart race. One summer day, I had a frightening experience when I saw a snake in my mother's garden.

First, everything felt calm and peaceful. The sun was shining brightly in the blue sky. I was helping my mom in the garden by pulling weeds. My mom was planning tomatoes in neat rows. We were talking and laughing together while working. Birds were singing in the trees around us. A soft breeze touched my face, and the air smelled like flowers and fresh soil. Everything felt safe and happy. I enjoyed working with my mom and being outside. It felt like a perfect summer day.

Next, something happened that changed everything. I felt a small movement near my feet, and when I looked down, I saw a big, dark snake moving in the grass. I screamed loudly and jumped back in fear. My heart started racing so fast, I could feel it in

my chest. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw the snake, because it is very rare to see one in our city. I was frozen and didn't know what to do. My mom heard me scream and came running to help. She looked at the snake and tried to stay calm. I was very surprised and really afraid.

After that, my mom quickly took control of the situation. She told me to go inside the house right away. I ran inside and watched her through the window. She found a long stick near the fence. Slowly, she used the stick to move the snake away from the garden. The snake moved toward the fence and disappeared into the bushes. My mom called my dad to tell him what happened. I could tell she was still a little nervous. I was still scared but also amazed by how brave she was. I stayed inside for a long time after that.

In the end, this scary experience taught me an important lesson. Nature can surprise us at any time, and we always need to be careful, even on a peaceful day. I will never forget the feeling I had when I saw that snake. That summer day turned into a memory I will remember forever.

## OPINION ESSAY

## MY FAVORITE HOBBIES

BY ANNA KHAMARDIUK, ESL 47

## HOBBY CORNER

Everyone has hobbies that make their life better and more interesting. Some people enjoy swimming; others like dancing, hiking, or something else. For me, hobbies are a way to express yourself and enjoy what you do. I have several hobbies that I do in my free time. These are playing tennis, baking, and reading books.

First of all, I enjoy playing tennis. I started playing tennis as a child, and to this day this sport brings me joy. One reason I like it is that it helps me to be healthy and active. Tennis is a good activity because it is a good workout, and I also get excitement from the game. Sometimes it helps me to get away from problems and my everyday routine, so I just focus on the game. When I play outdoors in the fresh air, I feel full of energy and free from all worries. Another reason I like it is that I can play with my relatives or friends. Sometimes I play with my husband or friends, and we have fun talking and laughing during the game. I also want to improve my skills in the game. For example, when I feel that I play better than last time, I am so proud of myself. To sum up, tennis is not only fun, but it helps me stay active, confident, and connected with others.

In addition, I also like baking because my mom, grandma, and great-grandma loved to bake, so it was genetics at work. I do baking at home, usually on weekends for fun. I often make cakes or pastries for different holidays. Sometimes my friends ask me to bake cake for their happy events. I love baking cookies with my kids. For example, I make a dough and they roll it out and cut out different shapes. These are very happy moments for me. Baking helps me experiment and be creative. Therefore, I try new recipes, which I will add from myself, so I have many of my own recipes where I add my own touch. When our house smells delicious of baked goods, my family is anticipating what I will surprise them with. Baking

is not only a hobby, it is a way to show my love to my family. When they smile and say the food tastes delicious, it makes me happy. In conclusion, I think baking is both fun and delicious.

Lastly, reading books is another hobby that I really like. I was a member of a book club in Ukraine, and I had to order books every quarter. This prompted me to read more and discover many types of different literature. My favorite writer is Paulo Coelho. I have read almost all of his books because I enjoy his style and the manner of writing. For example, *The Alchemist* taught me about my dreams and to go my own way no matter what. I also enjoy detective stories and classic literature; therefore, I often read famous authors like Agatha Christie and Erich Maria Remarque. Contemporary writers are interesting also because they write about modern life and challenges. Unfortunately, here in America I have practically stopped reading because I don't have time for it. My dream in the future is to read literature in English. Books help me relax and immerse myself in another world. It also improves my vocabulary and imagination.

In conclusion, my hobbies--playing tennis, baking, and reading--give me joy and bring balance to my life. They help me grow as a person and keep my heart full. When I do what I love, I am filled with energy and can give this energy to my loved ones.





## OPINION ESSAY

## BAKING

BY VICTORIA SOBENKO, ESL 47

## HOBBY CORNER



Have you ever thought about why hobbies are important in our life? I think hobbies make our lives more interesting and help us relax. Everyone has different hobbies, like painting or dancing. I like to do something with my hands. My favorite hobby is baking cakes and desserts for several reasons.

The first reason is that I enjoy the process of making cakes and desserts. I really love experiments in the kitchen. I like trying to make something new, but I had never baked cakes before. I started baking cakes around 5 years ago. One day, for one of my husband's birthdays, I decided to try making a cake myself for two reasons. First, all of my family liked cakes with cream made from cream cheese, but they were expensive, so I wanted to save money. The second main reason is that I really wanted to make something with my own hands for my husband. I started preparing three weeks before and

experimented with biscuits and cream until I found what I liked. When I made the cake, my family and friends were impressed and said that it was beautiful and delicious, that I had talent because I made it so well the first time, and that I should keep going. These words inspired me, and I also realized how much I enjoyed the process. After that, I experimented a lot with different recipes and made my second cake for my daughter's birthday just a month later. I really got into baking and decorating cakes, and it became my hobby. I love the smell of cake baking in the oven, and I really enjoy being creative when decorating. I learned to make a variety of desserts like cheesecake, mousse cakes, trifle, zefir and more. Indeed, baking is both enjoyable and a way to express my creativity.





The second reason is that I like seeing how my desserts make people happy. My family enjoys everything I bake and often asks me to make their favorite treats again. I love sharing my cakes and desserts with others and surprising people. I often present a cake to my relatives and friends on their birthdays. I feel happy to see their smiles, especially when they take extra pieces. My daughters always get excited when I bake something new. They decide what their birthday cakes will look like with their favorite characters. They also help me decorate them. It's a wonderful way to spend time together and be creative as a family. In short, good reactions and kind words about my creations always bring me positive emotions and motivate me to bake even more.

In conclusion, baking cakes and desserts is my favorite hobby because I enjoy the process and can share something sweet with my loved ones. Hobbies make us feel better and help us forget about stress and daily problems. But my hobby does even more. It brings joy to others and indulges the taste buds with every sweet bite.



# YOUTUBE

BY ZUBAIDA RASA, ESL 37

## OPINION ESSAY

YouTube is a popular social media site. A lot of people from all over the world use YouTube. I also use YouTube every day.

I like YouTube because I can find real information on YouTube. I watch CNN news every day to have updated information about the world.

I also like YouTube for learning English. I learn English words with American accent and pronunciation on Speak English with Vanessa at Vanessa.com. For example, in one video, she teaches people how to pronounce the letter "T". Sometimes the letter "T" changes to "d", she said. For example, the "T" in a "bottle of water" is pronounced like "d". Vanessa is a very good teacher. She teaches very clearly, so I like the way she is teaching. There are a lot of videos for learning with

Vanessa. The videos are long, about 45 minutes, and short videos about 15 minutes.

I also like YouTube because it is fun. I use YouTube to listen to music and dance. There are some singers whose songs I am interested in. I like songs by Justin Bieber, a Canadian singer, Ibrahim Tatlisises, a Turkish singer, Enrique Iglesias, a Spanish singer, and Ahmad Zahir, an Afghan singer. Listening to music and dance makes me feel happy. I really enjoy dancing to Turkish and English music and songs.

In conclusion, I can say I love a lot of the contents of YouTube. I learn English from YouTube. I also use YouTube for real information like the news. And also, I use YouTube to have fun. I listen to and watch different music, videos, and dance.



**Would you like to  
contribute to *The Parrot*?**

If you want to share your work, art, opinion, or anything else with *The Parrot*, please email us at:

**[TheParrot@arc.losrios.edu](mailto:TheParrot@arc.losrios.edu)**

We would be happy to hear from you and will try to respond ASAP.

The Parrot welcomes all ESL student matters!





**Zoom Hours**  
THU - 10am to 5pm  
FRI - 8am to 2pm

**Scan QR Code to Join the Zoom!**

# **ESL Center FA25** **Open On Campus** **in the LRC!**

**Monday to Thursday**  
**9:00 AM to 5:00 PM**

The ESL Center helps all multilingual students with their classes and questions. We speak Farsi, Dari, Pashto, Russian, Ukranian, Spanish, and more. Come see us!



# INEVITABLE CHANGE

BY ANNIE NONNIMUS, ESL 315

COMPARISON CONTRAST  
ESSAY

*Continued from page 1*

Personally, I think that changing our bad habits and personality traits depends on many factors, efforts and circumstances, but in general, we inevitably change from year to year, often without even realizing it. In fact, I am sure that people often change to the point where the entire foundation on which a person is based, the entire belief system that comprises a person, is subject to change. Of all the examples I can think of to prove my point, I think my personal example can suffice if we compare the differences in open-mindedness, sensitivity to other people's opinions of me, and sense of humor of my teenage personality with my current one.

When I was young, I was quite rigid in some aspects, which now I consider laughable. For example, when I was a teenager, my taste in music was a bit unusual, and I was definitely more insistent and pickier about it, unlike now. I used to like heavy metal, rock and punk rock music, which in itself is a bit controversial. Not only that, but I despised

people a little who liked some pop, rap music and in general, popular culture consumers. However, over time, as I grew older, I learned to understand the expression "to each their own," and that it is silly to judge people by their taste. Moreover, I was shocked at how many excellent songs and pieces of music there were out there that I had not discovered due to my rigidity. As soon as I lessened my blockade on the music genres I could listen to, I discovered many amazing pieces. Now I enjoy listening to all sorts of music, from classical pieces to folk and even pop music. I believe this is a perfect example of how people's narrow-mindedness can limit their perception of the world, and that in my case music style narrow-mindedness changed drastically over time to open-mindedness and acceptance.

My sensitivity to other people's opinion towards me similarly has changed significantly from my youthful days. Specifically, it is most seen in my tolerance in embarrassing situations. When I was young, I was really timid and feared to be in embarrassing situations and avoided them at all cost. Now however, I generally do not really care that much. The reason for that, I believe, is all those cases of embarrassing situations that happened to me over the years. I sometimes think that because there have been countless times when I have made such a ridiculous fool of myself, I have lost the ability to feel humiliated. Or at least it has become much more blunted. This was at the core of my care for other people's opinions. I am not saying that I am completely indifferent to what others think of me now, but I have definitely become much more courageous and confident in my social interactions, which is an unimaginable feat for my former self.

And lastly, my sense of humor has changed since then. I used to joke about every little thing that comes to mind. My humor was carefree, silly



and irresponsible. In contrast, now I joke with more caution and awareness. My taste of humor has also changed. I like irony more and I hate insult jokes and low-level roasting, in other words, jokes when people pretend to joke just to humiliate others. I think if you are trying to track personality change, sense of humor is an important indicator. Looking back, the most obvious change for me is that humor is no longer just an irresponsible fun thing for me. Humor for me is a way of dealing with the harsh realities and difficulties that we all face as adults.

Just analyzing the changes in those three things alone in my personality, I am able to clearly see

how dramatically people can change. This is not surprising; we live in an era where society changes many times during our lifetime, which strangely coincides with the language change that happens in every generation. So yes, I believe that people inevitably change over time, whether they want to or not. I know this because I myself have changed in many ways, even though I did not plan to. I have grown in confidence and acceptance of myself and others, and my sense of humor, which I consider an important indicator, has significantly transformed. Although some might say I have become boring, I believe those are positive changes.

## CYBERSECURITY TIPS: THE GYM TRAINER GUIDE

BY MOHAMMED EL MRANI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

### CYBER WATCH

Staying secure online is just like staying in shape. If you slack off, your digital health suffers. Weak passwords? That's like eating donuts for breakfast! Sure, it feels easy, but your future self won't thank you. Instead, build strong, unique passwords the way you'd build muscle — with effort and consistency. And just like you switch up your workout routine, change your passwords regularly.

Updates are your vitamins. Take them! Skip them, and your system gets sick with viruses. MFA (Multi-Factor Authentication)? Think of it as your gym spotter, always there to catch you when something goes wrong.

Then there are phishing emails, those shady "Click here to win a free iPhone" or "Grow muscles overnight!" scams. They're no different from sketchy supplement ads at the gym. If it looks too good to be true, it probably is. Don't click!

Privacy matters too. You wouldn't shout your weight or your bank PIN across the locker room, right? So don't overshare personal details on-

line. Backups? That's your protein shake. Always keep one ready for recovery when you need it most.



Train smart, surf strong, and flex those cyber muscles every day. The internet is like a giant fitness center: full of opportunities, but also full of risks. Protect your digital body, and you'll stay strong for the long run.



Fall 2025

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- Flu vaccine
- Strep throat testing
- TB risk assessments
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- Fentanyl Test Strip
- Drink Cover
- Drink Spike Test Strip

\*Currently enrolled students



# THE MUSIC OF LIFE: KATERYNA KACHALOVA

BY SAYED EDRES SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

Continued from page 1

## INTERVIEW

**Can you tell us a little about yourself and what you're currently studying at American River College?**

My name is Kateryna Kachalova. I have 3 children, one girl and 2 boys. My family immigrated from Ukraine 3 years ago, because of bombs and the attack from Russia, so we had to leave all our things, for example house, car, friends and relatives. It was so hard for us to leave our lovely place and move somewhere. Now we are here, and we have a lot of struggles in our life which we must overcome; also we have a lot of dreams. I am a student at American River College; I would like to get a bachelor's degree in music and would love to be a music teacher. Next year I am planning to transfer to university. Because I really liked music since my childhood, I played the piano and created my own music and songs.

**How did you decide to come to ARC, and what has your experience been like so far?**

I decided to come to ARC because it's affordable and offers the classes I need to achieve my goals. I have a dream to become a professional in music, and I'm happy that this college has wonderful professors who support that dream.

So far, my experience has been great, the professors are helpful, and there are many resources like tutoring, counseling, and music programs that help me grow. I feel thankful to be here.

**What inspired you to return to school while also being a parent?**

What inspired me to return to school as a parent is my dream of becoming a professional in music and building a better future for my family. I want to be a strong example for my children because they

watch me and learn from what I do. I want them to see that it's never too late to follow your dreams and work hard. Even though it's not always easy to balance school and parenting, job and ministry, I

feel proud that I'm doing something meaningful, for them and for myself.

**What has been the biggest challenge in juggling school, work, parenting, and personal interests?**

The biggest challenge has been finding enough time for everything.

Balancing school, work, parenting, my personal interests, like music, and

my ministry as a choir director at church is not easy. Sometimes I feel tired or overwhelmed, but I remind myself why I started. I try to stay organized, manage my time, and keep going. My children give me



“

I feel proud that I'm doing something meaningful, for them and for myself.

”

motivation, and I know that all this hard work will be worth it in the end.

**With everything you have going on — school, work, and parenting — do you still find time for your personal hobbies or creative outlets? If so, what are your personal hobbies?**

Yes, even though life is very busy with school, work, parenting, and my church ministry, I still try to find time for my personal hobbies, especially music. Music is not just a hobby for me; it's my passion and a way to express myself. I enjoy singing, playing instruments, and leading the choir at my church. It helps me feel refreshed and connected to who I am, even when things get hectic. Last month, when I was by the ocean, I felt really inspired and wrote two songs. Moments like that remind me why I love music so much.

**How did you get into playing piano, and what role does music play in your life right now?**

I started playing piano when I was a child, and right away I fell in love with it. Over the years, music became a big part of my life; it helps me express my feelings, find peace, and it's my way to show my gratitude to God, for all things that He did for me.

Right now, music plays a huge role in my life. I lead the choir at my church, write songs, play and sing with my children and continue to grow as a musician. Even when life gets busy with school, work and parenting, music gives me strength, joy, and a sense of purpose.

**Do you find that music helps you manage stress or find balance in your busy life?**

Yes, music is one of the most important ways I manage stress and find balance in my busy life. When I play piano, sing, or write songs, it helps me

relax and clear my mind. Music gives me energy and peace, especially when I am worried about something.

**As a student, a mother, a student employee, and a piano player, how do you manage to balance all these roles?**

I like one phrase: "If you don't waste time with TV and Internet, if you are doing a lot of things, you can manage your time and do more." I stay organized and manage my time carefully, setting priorities every day. I have a big planning strategy. I try to be present in each role and give my best, whether I'm studying, working, parenting, or making music.



**What have you learned about yourself through this journey of multitasking and growth?**

Through this journey of multitasking and growth, I've learned that I'm stronger and more capable than I thought. I've discovered that I can keep going with faith, determination, and a clear purpose. Most of

all, I've realized how important it is to believe in myself and to keep moving forward, even in small steps.

**What are your goals after graduating from ARC, and what are you most looking forward to in the future?**

After graduating from ARC, my goal is to continue my education in university and grow as a professional musician. I want to keep writing songs, performing, and using music to inspire and help others. I also hope to keep serving in my church and maybe even teach music in the future.

**What advice would you give to other student parents or working students who are trying to manage it all?**



My advice to other student parents or working students is this: Don't give up. Even when it feels impossible, take it one day at a time. Stay organized, ask for help when you need it, and remind yourself why you started. Make time for what brings you joy, and don't forget to take care of yourself too. You are setting an example for others, especially your children, and every small step forward is a big victory.

**Thank you very much, Kateryna, for your time**

**and sharing your outstanding story and experience with *Parrot* readers. I wish you all the very best and hope to see you as a piano teacher here at ARC in future.**

Thank you for the opportunity and giving me the chance to share my story and experience.

Below is a YouTube link to Kateryna Kachalova playing piano:

<https://youtu.be/WINfYe4zVOc?feature=shared>

## A NIGHT TO REMEMBER: SAIYAARA

BY ASILA SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

### MOVIE REVIEW

Some nights leave footprints on the heart, and for me, watching *Saiyaara* was one of them. I was invited by my brother, Sayed Edres, to join him for this late-night adventure in Arden Mall Movie Theater. With a big box of popcorn between us, a cold Coca-Cola in hand, and laughter spilling quietly before the film began, we stepped into a story that unfolded on screen and within our own memories. The show started at 10:00 PM and stretched until 1:00 AM, and the theater, filled mostly with Indian audience members, seemed alive with anticipation and warmth. For me, the film became more than a movie; it became a moment of shared joy, a reminder of the beauty in simply being together.

*Saiyaara* was released in 2025 and is a Hindi-language adaptation of the 2004 Korean film, *A Moment to Remember*. *Saiyaara* itself was a tender storm of romance and emotion. The chemistry of its debut actors brought the characters to life with a freshness that felt raw and real. But what lingered most was the music, songs that carried the weight of longing, hope, and love in every note. They were not just background melodies; they were



living veins of the story, turning moments into memories and silence into poetry. It is no surprise that *Saiyaara* has risen to become the second highest-grossing Hindi and Indian film of 2025, a testament to its resonance across hearts and borders.

For me, *Saiyaara* was more than cinema, it was a love letter written in light and song, stitched with memory and music, and sealed by the presence of someone I love. If you, too, cherish stories where music deepens emotion and love takes center stage, then *Saiyaara* is a film worth experiencing on the big screen.

# SILVER LAKE

BY MANNY, PARROT STAFF WRITER

EXPLORE CALIFORNIA



When it comes to my top five places to photograph in Northern California, Silver Lake (in Kirkwood, CA) is definitely on that list. From its clear, calming waters to the dramatic rocky formations that surround it, this spot never ceases to amaze me.

This summer, I was fortunate enough to drive by Silver Lake at least three times, and each visit delivered incredible scenes and opportunities for photography. Take the photo above, for example. I had just arrived when the sky began putting on a show—the clouds were already flashing with some of the most gorgeous lightning I've ever seen. I quickly grabbed

my camera, framed the composition I wanted, and started shooting, hoping I'd capture one of those lightning bolts. Since the sun had just set, there was still a soft, lingering daylight that balanced the light between the sky and the foreground beautifully.

If you ever find yourself photographing lightning, a little tip: always mount your camera on a tripod to avoid motion blur, and set your shutter speed to at least three seconds. Lightning strikes are wickedly fast, and a longer exposure increases your chances of catching one.

On my next visit, the weather treated



me to something completely different—steady rain and a spectacular display of clouds. I was lucky enough to witness sunlight breaking through behind me, lighting up the rain in front of me. The sunset was brief, but I managed to catch

a glimpse of it with my camera before it faded. That moment ended up being one of the highlights of my summer, a reminder of how unpredictable and rewarding nature photography can be.



## GOLDEN MOMENTS AT THE GOLDEN GATE: A PERSONAL REFLECTION

BY SAYED EDRES SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

### PARROT ON THE FLY



As someone who loves exploring new places and discovering the beauty of different cities, the Golden Gate Bridge has always held a special place in my heart. Over the past eight years, I've visited this iconic landmark multiple times, and yet, every visit feels like the first. The magic of the Golden Gate never fades. It's not just a bridge; it's a blend of nature, engineering, history, and breathtaking views that draw you back again and again.



A couple of weeks ago, I had the chance to visit the Golden Gate Bridge once again, this time with my wife and our two-and-a-half-year-old son. Sharing that experience with my family made it even more meaningful. We explored two spots that I'd highly recommend to anyone planning a visit.

Our first stop was the high hillside viewpoint along Old Conzelman Road in Mill Valley. This spot offers a panoramic view that feels like something

out of a dream. From up there, the bridge stretches across the bay with the city skyline in the distance, and the contrast between the bold orange towers and the natural blues and greens is simply majestic. It's a place where you can just pause, breathe, and take it all in.

Next, we visited the Golden Gate Welcome Center and made our way to a viewpoint right beneath the bridge. This closer perspective offers a whole new appreciation for the scale and beauty of the structure. As we walked around, we were surrounded by a peaceful blend of sea breeze, cityscape, and nature all at once.

What I love most about the Golden Gate Bridge is how it brings everything together, the calm of the ocean, the energy of the city, and the timeless elegance of the bridge itself. Whether you're visiting for the first time or the fiftieth, it has a way of making you stop and feel grateful for the moment.



Spending time there with my wife and son, watching him laugh and run around, reminded me of how special these simple moments can be. We had a great time as a family, taking photos, enjoying the view, and just being present with each other.

If you're ever in the Bay Area, I highly recommend making time for the Golden Gate Bridge. And if you've already been? Go again. You'll be surprised how new it can feel each time.

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# CHEBAKIA: A SWEET TASTE OF MOROCCO

BY MOHAMMED EL MRANI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

## PARROT FODDER



If I had to choose one Moroccan sweet that truly represents my culture and memories, it would be *Chebakia*. This dessert is not just food, it is a tradition, a symbol of togetherness, and a taste of Morocco's love for flavor and hospitality.

*Chebakia* is made from dough flavored with sesame, anise, cinnamon, and sometimes orange blossom water. The dough is cut, twisted into flower shapes, fried until golden brown, and then dipped in warm honey before being sprinkled with sesame seeds. The result is a crunchy, sticky, sweet delight that melts in your mouth.



I've been enjoying *Chebakia* during Ramadan for as long as I can remember, and it has always been a source of comfort. The smell of fried cookies and honey filled the house. After a long day of fasting, taking a bite of *Chebakia* with a glass of mint tea was the most comforting and satisfying moment. The honey gave me energy, while the sesame seeds added a unique earthy taste. Even today, whenever I eat *Chebakia*, it brings me back to those family evenings, sitting around the table, laughing, and sharing stories.

What I appreciate most about *Chebakia* is how it connects me to my roots. It is more than just a dessert; it is part of Moroccan identity. Families often gather to prepare it before Ramadan, making large batches together. For me, helping in the kitchen and then enjoying the reward of that hard work created memories that will last a lifetime.

Whenever I share *Chebakia* with friends from other cultures, they are always amazed by its rich flavor and unique texture. My experience with this sweet is deeply satisfying because it combines taste, memory, and tradition in one bite.

## A SUMMER EVENING AT WOODBIDGE PARK, VIRGINIA

BY ASILA SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

### PARROT ON THE FLY

*The wooden bridge where Washington D.C., Maryland, and Virginia meet, carrying footsteps and memories across borders.*

This past summer gave me a memory I'll always hold close to my heart. After four long years, I finally reunited with my lovely cousin, Wida. To make our day special, we decided to spend an afternoon at Woodbridge Park in Virginia, a place where nature unfolds with grace, and the wooden bridge quietly reminds you of the unique bond between three states: Washington D.C., Maryland, and Virginia. Standing there, one almost feels that the bridge itself carries stories across borders, connecting not just land, but people and memories too. Walking along the bridge, with no cars or noise, we only hear the rhythm of our steps in harmony with nature.

Walking on that wooden bridge was fantastic, the highlight of the park for me. What makes it truly special is that there's no way for any vehicles to go across it; one can only cross the bridge by walking. That simple fact makes the bridge feel like paradise, a space where nature insists you slow down and smell the moment. The park itself is very, very large, so huge that Wida and I could only explore a small part of it during our visit. Still, even that small part, seen during a four-hour walk, was enough to show us just how magical the place is. The magic of a path through the trees, whispering leaves, and various

beautiful animals around, stitched time back together.

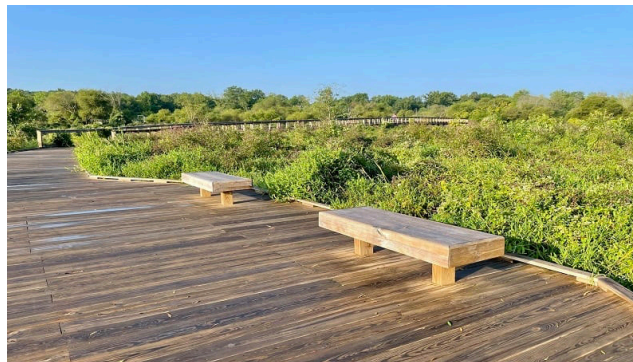
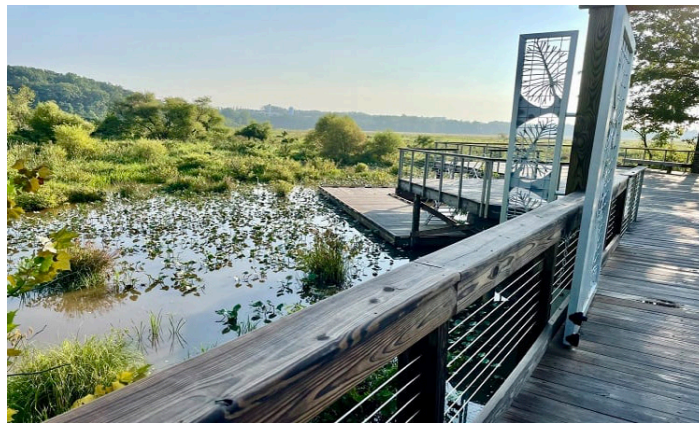
We arrived in the afternoon and stayed until 9 PM, walking beneath the soft light of the setting sun until the sky turned dark. The park was alive with beauty, the gentle breeze, and the trees rustling above us,

the calm energy of nature wrapping around our conversation. Being with Wida made it even more meaningful; after years apart, every laugh and every step felt like a piece of time we had been missing. It was as though the beauty of the place reflected the joy of our reunion.

But nature, as kind as it was, also had its little test for us. Mosquitos! We didn't realize how many there would be until it was too late. By the time we noticed, they had already bitten us endlessly. The next day, I suffered badly with allergies, and even now, I still carry the marks of those bites as reminders of that summer evening. So, here's

my friendly advice to anyone planning a visit to Woodbridge Park: bring a strong mosquito repellent cream with you. Trust me, you'll thank me later!

Even with the bites, I wouldn't trade that day for anything. It was a reminder that beauty often comes with imperfections, but the moments we share with loved ones are what make it unforgettable. Woodbridge Park wasn't just a place I visited; it became a chapter in my story, one written with nature, laughter, and the company of someone dear.







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Groups are led by a trained facilitator. We hope to see you there!

## READING FOR BEGINNERS

## WRITING BY THE WATERFALL

BY SAYED EDRES SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

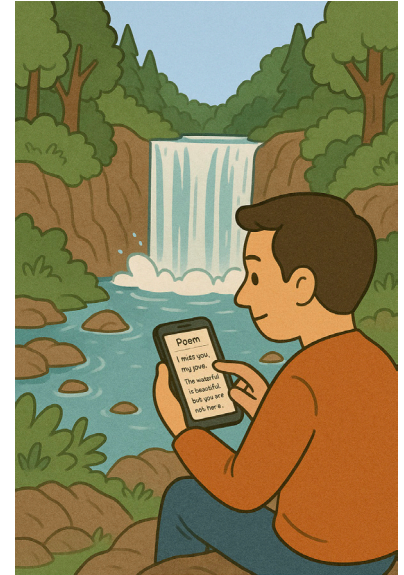
I love exploring nature. Last Saturday, I went to the woods. The air was fresh, and the trees were tall. I walked on a small path and listened to the birds singing. It felt calm, and I enjoyed every step.

After some time, I reached a waterfall. The water was clear and fell with a strong sound. I stood and watched. It was so beautiful.

The sound of the water felt like music to me. I felt peaceful and happy. I wanted to keep this feeling forever.

Then, I took my phone from my pocket. I started to write a poem. I wrote about an imaginary lover and the feeling of missing her at that moment.

Writing in nature was a wonderful experience. I will never forget that day.



## Can you answer these questions?

**1. Where did the writer go last Saturday?**

- a. To the city
- b. To the woods
- c. To the park
- d. To the zoo

**2. What did the writer hear while walking?**

- a. Cars
- b. People talking
- c. Birds singing
- d. Music on the phone

**3. What did the writer see after some time?**

- a. A lake
- b. A mountain
- c. A waterfall
- d. A garden

**4. What did the writer do after feeling peaceful?**

- a. Took a nap
- b. Wrote a poem
- c. Went swimming
- d. Ate lunch

**5. How did the writer feel about the day?**

- a. It was boring.
- b. It was scary.
- c. It was unforgettable.
- d. It was noisy.





# MOROCCO'S MUSICAL DIVERSITY

## CULTURE

BY MOHAMMED EL MRANI, PARROT STAFF WRITER



### *Hassāniya Music – The Desert's Voice*

In southern Morocco, near the Sahara, you can listen to *Hassāniya* music. Musicians play the *tidinit* (a small lute) and drums. The songs are long, calm, and poetic. They speak about desert life, wisdom, and tradition.

During a trip to the south, I had the chance to listen to *Hassāniya* music at a gathering. Sitting outside under the stars, I felt peace and calm while the musicians played the *tidinit* and sang long, poetic songs. It was like the music carried me into the quiet desert night.



### *Al-Mūsīqā al-Ghīwāniyya – The Modern Soul of Morocco*

In the 1970s, a group called Nass El Ghiwane created a new style: *al-mūsīqā al-ghīwāniyya*. Their songs mix Moroccan traditions with modern ideas.

When I was younger, I often heard songs by Nass El Ghiwane, one of the most famous Moroccan music groups. Their music was different from anything else; it carried deep meaning about freedom, hope, and life in society. The way they combined poetry with rhythms made people stop and think about the world around them.



Listening to their songs always gave me hope. They spoke about struggles but also about dreams, about pain but also about strength. For me, *Ghīwāniyya* has never been just music; it is wisdom in song, a way to learn about life and society.

Even today, I still enjoy and listen to their music. Each time I hear their voices, I feel both nostalgia and inspiration. Their words remind me that art can be powerful; it can teach, heal, and guide. *Ghīwāniyya* continues to be a part of my life, a reminder that music can open minds and connect hearts.



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## PEER SUPPORT VS. CLINICAL SUPPORT: A POWERFUL APPROACH IN MENTAL HEALTH CARE

BY ASILA SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

### PARROT STORIES

In the mental health field, both peer support and clinical support play essential roles in helping individuals recover, thrive, and build healthier lives. Clinical support typically involves licensed professionals such as psychiatrists, psychologists, and therapists who provide evidence-based treatment, often including medication, psychotherapy, and structured interventions. Peer support, by contrast, is grounded in lived experience, and trained community members who have faced and overcome mental health challenges use their personal journeys to guide, listen, and support others in similar situations.

While clinical care is vital for many, research and practice have shown that peer support services are equally important and bring unique benefits. One striking fact is that peer support has saved the U.S. government more than \$4.5 million annually in mental health care costs by reducing hospitalization rates, preventing relapses, and offering ongoing support in non-clinical settings. These services not only improve individual well-being but also relieve pressure on the healthcare system, making them both a compassionate and an economically wise investment.

From my own experience working in the mental health field since 2024, I have witnessed the value of peer support firsthand. I am part of an organization, alongside a few others, that trains community members to become certified peer counselors so they

can provide guidance and care to people in their own communities. This approach has had a huge positive impact, both socially and economically. For many individuals who are not in a severe stage of mental illness requiring medication, peer counseling offers the understanding, encouragement, and direction they need. Even for those already on medication, peer support plays an important role, because sometimes what people need most is not just a prescription, but a compassionate listener who understands and can walk with them on their path to recovery.



Yet despite its proven effectiveness, peer support is still not widely known or fully integrated into mainstream mental health systems. Greater recognition and investment in peer counseling could transform community mental health care, providing accessible, affordable, and deeply human services to those in need.

For me personally, being part of this program has been a life-changing experience. I have learned so much since beginning this work, and I feel honored to walk beside individuals in my community as they navigate their healing journeys. Peer support is not just a service, it is a reminder that recovery is possible, that we are not alone, and that sometimes the most powerful healing comes from one human being listening deeply to another.

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**No dental insurance?**

**Here are some resources:**

WellSpace Health: 916-737-5555

One Community Health: 916-443-3299

Refugee Health Clinic: 916-874-9227

Elica Health Centers: 855-354-2242

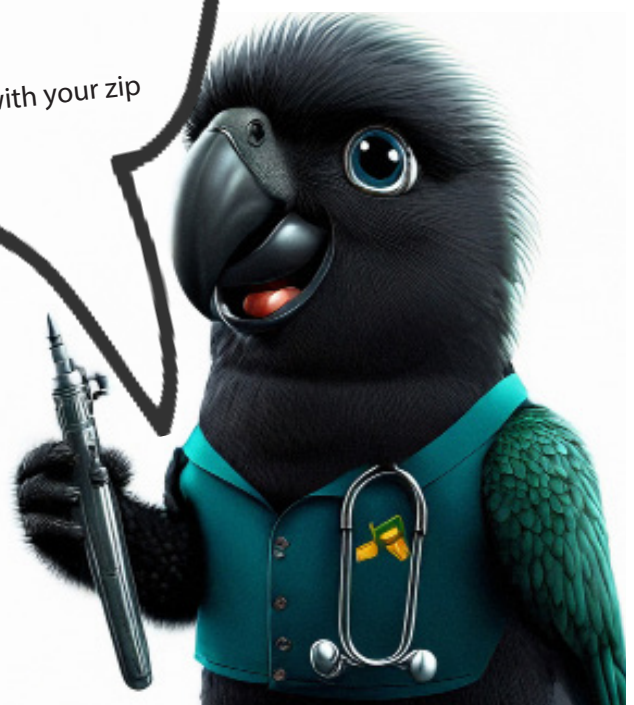
California Northstate University: 916-686-8914 (Dentistry School)

Sacramento District Dental Society: 916-446-1211

Emergency Dental Sacramento: 916-318-0911 (open on week-ends and accepts walk-ins).

*\*Some of these places may require a fee. Call for information about cost.\**

You can also look on <https://cityhub.findhelp.com/> with your zip code.





## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY



### Help for Refugee Children



Starting Point is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting newly arrived refugee children in the greater Sacramento area. The

organization strives to give them a warm welcome by providing basic necessities and programs as they begin their new lives in the U.S. They do things like meet refugee families with children at the airport, give them welcome baskets, and provide basic ESL and computer lessons, and they have even started a very popular soccer team for the kids. Visit the website and click on [REQUEST HELP](#).

Starting Point is directed by Vickee Moy, a professor of English as a Second Language in Sacramento. She launched Starting Point in June 2017 after being deeply touched by her refugee students' stories about their lives in their native countries and about their new lives in the U.S. Starting Point is one way she hopes to honor and remember their incredible stories and beautiful

lessons about perseverance, strength, hope, and humanity.

As a child of immigrants, Vickee feels a connection with new arrivals and is passionate about helping them begin successful lives in their new country. Along with her husband and three sons, she is excited to reach out to this growing community of newcomers.

<https://www.startingpointworld.com>

#### Want to help?

There are several ways that you can help Starting Point to help children. You can put together a welcome basket, assemble a backpack with supplies, help buy shoes, assist with lessons and program development for SPARK (Summer Program for Arts, Recreation and Knowledge), or even coach and support a soccer team!

Donations to Starting Point are tax deductible. Please visit the [Starting Point Volunteer](#) Page for more information.

# BASIC ENGLISH VS. ADVANCED ENGLISH

BY SAYED EDRES SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

## GRAMMAR

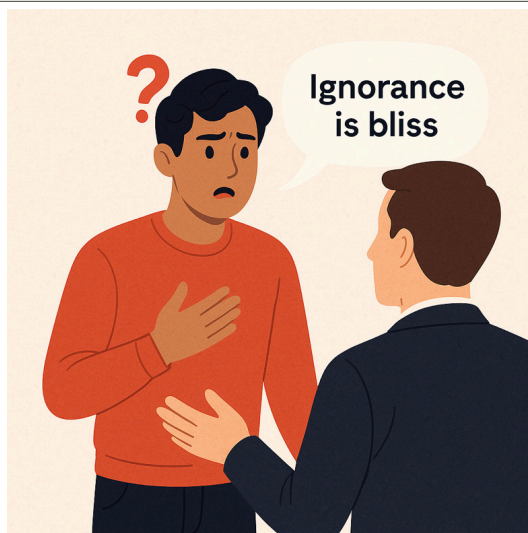


Image created by ChatGPT

Learning a new language is always full of surprising and sometimes humorous moments. What you read in textbooks often doesn't fully match the way

people actually speak in everyday life. That gap between formal learning and real conversation is what makes the journey both exciting and, at times, confusing.

My own story goes back to 2017, just a few months after I immigrated to the United States. At that time, I was working on the Covered California Project. One afternoon, a coworker asked me about the political situation in Afghanistan and what daily life was like there. Since the news was often filled with sadness and unrest during those days, I shared some of those difficult realities with him. After listening carefully, he simply replied, "Ignorance is bliss."

I froze.

In my mind, the word ignorance had always carried a negative meaning, to be rude, careless, or uneducated. How could not knowing possibly equal bliss? At first, I told myself maybe it was just his personal way of thinking, and I should respect his perspective. But then another thought crossed my mind: was he directing this at me? Was he suggesting I was ignorant? That defensive feeling started to rise inside me, all because I was translating the idiom literally, word by word.

That evening, the phrase was still echoing in my head. When I finally looked it up, the meaning came as a surprise. It didn't mean "being foolish is good" or "education doesn't matter." Instead, it meant that sometimes, not knowing about a problem allows you to be happier because you don't have to worry about it. Suddenly, everything clicked.

That moment became a turning point for me. I realized that idioms and expressions carry layers of meaning that go far beyond literal definitions. This small misunderstanding showed me the real difference between basic English and advanced English. Basic English often focuses on direct, literal words. Advanced English, on the other hand, weaves in idioms, metaphors, and cultural references that bring the language to life.

From then on, I made it a point to learn more idioms and figurative expressions, not just for vocabulary, but to better connect with native speakers and understand the culture behind the words.

That one confusing moment with "Ignorance is bliss" taught me a bigger lesson: learning a language is not just about grammar or vocabulary, it's about culture, humor, and figurative expression. The more I leaned into idioms and advanced phrases, the more natural my conversations became, and the closer I felt to truly belonging in English-speaking communities.

So, if you're still in the "basic English" stage, don't be discouraged. Think of it as the foundation. With time, curiosity, and practice, you'll soon step into the world of advanced English, where the words don't just communicate meaning; they carry style, emotion, and connection.

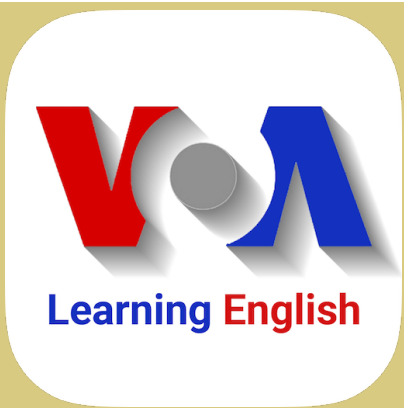
Here are some simple examples that highlight how everyday sentences shift from basic English into more natural, advanced English:

	Basic English	Advanced English
1	I don't know.	I'm not sure.
2	I don't like it.	It's not my cup of tea.
3	I need to decide.	I need to make up my mind.
4	He's very smart.	He's brilliant.
5	I'll try my best.	I'll give it my all.
6	I don't understand.	I can't wrap my head around it.
7	Let's start.	Let's get the ball rolling.
8	I'm very tired.	I'm completely drained / I'm exhausted.
9	I'm happy.	I'm over the moon.
10	I'm worried.	I'm losing sleep over it.
11	It's important.	It's a big deal / It's of great significance.
12	He's unfriendly.	He gave me the cold shoulder.
13	I will help you.	I'll give you a hand.
14	I'm listening carefully.	I'm all ears.

VOA LEARNING ENGLISH

BY MOHAMMED EL MRANI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

ENGLISH IN A MINUTE



The VOA Learning English website is a great resource for ESL learners. It is free, easy to use, and provides clear lessons in English through text, video, and audio. One of my favorite sections is “English in a Minute,” where short one-minute videos explain common American expressions and idioms. For example, I learned phrases like “Hold your horses”, “On the ball,” and “Dish it out but can’t take it.” These lessons are simple, direct, and very helpful for learning real English that people use every day.

What I enjoy most about this section is how quick and practical it is. The videos are short, so I can easily watch one even on a busy day. Each lesson explains the meaning of the expression, gives examples, and shows

me how to use it in real life. I usually pause the video to repeat the expression out loud, then try to make my own sentences. This helps me remember and practice the phrases right away.

Personally, my experience with VOA Learning English has been very satisfying. I feel more confident using English expressions in daily conversations, and I notice my listening and speaking skills improving. Sometimes, after watching *English in a Minute*, I try using the new phrase with my classmates or friends, and it makes me feel proud that I am learning “real” English, not just textbook English.

In conclusion, I highly recommend VOA Learning English to other ESL students, especially the *English in a Minute* section. It is short, fun, and effective. By watching just one video a day, I can keep improving my vocabulary and sound more natural in conversations. For me, it has been both enjoyable and useful, and I plan to keep using it as part of my learning journey.



FREE SERVICES

# FREE Dental & Vision Clinic

Sunday, September 28, 2025 8AM-3PM

Registration starts at 7:00AM until full

Our **FREE** services for uninsured & under-insured include:

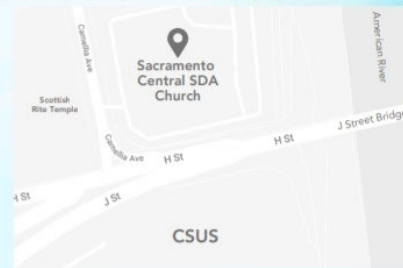
- Fillings
- Extractions
- Cleanings
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- Eye Exams
- Prescriptions
- Free Frames & Lenses

First come, first served:

- Register at the event
- All services are FREE of charge
- No appointment is necessary
- Come early to ensure you get seen



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SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

6045 Camellia Avenue  
Sacramento, CA 95819

Across the street from Sac State

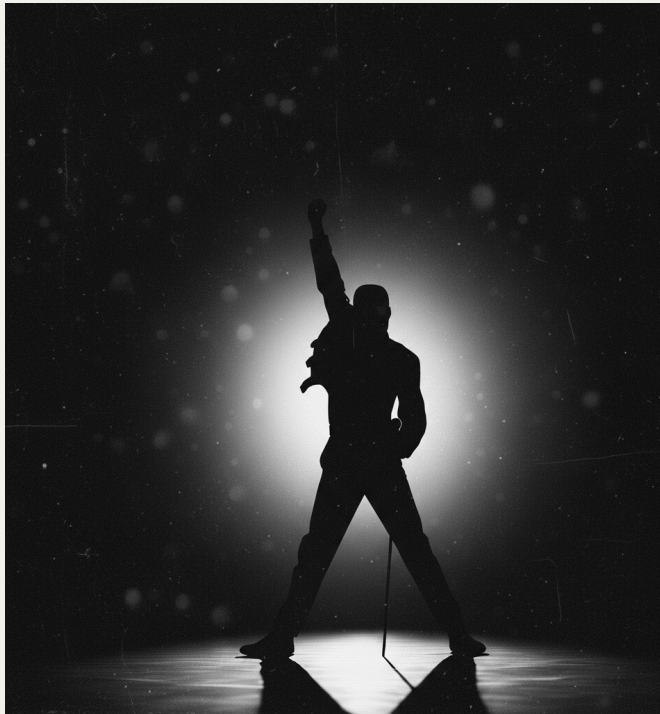
Call 916-457-6511 or email [office@saccentral.org](mailto:office@saccentral.org)



This clinic is **NOT** for emergency care, such as chest pain, bleeding, premature labor, or trauma. For emergencies, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

# DANCING WITH FREDDIE

BY SOFIA KOVALKO, PARROT STAFF WRITER



I have always loved rock music, even though my nature is calm and peaceful. As a child, my old-style headphones – yes, even at a young age, I already knew how to use a CD player – were always playing Linkin Park songs, even if I didn't understand a single word of English. On TV, I would hear Queen's *We Will Rock You* and *We Are the Champions* and couldn't stop repeating those famous lines. My love for rock music has never faded – how could it, with Freddie Mercury's impossible-to-forget energy and charm?

Many young people today might not notice music from 30-40 years ago, but I was lucky to discover Queen through their songs. Picking a single favorite track feels impossible – every song has its own melody and heart. Over time, [Bohemian Rhapsody](#) became part of my playlist. The piano, the structure, and Mercury's powerful vocals

make the song almost feel like an opera. I kept asking myself: how did someone even think of a song like this?

Then I watched the 2018 movie *Bohemian Rhapsody*, where Rami Malek brought Freddie Mercury to life – he even won an Oscar for the role. In one [unforgettable scene](#), long-haired Freddie sits alone at a piano, clapping the rhythm, when the boldest idea hits him – the operatic “Galileo” section. The rest of the band looks shocked. Drummer Roger Taylor tries to hit the high notes, saying, “If I go any higher, only dogs will hear me!” It's a moment of genius, captured perfectly on screen.

No wonder this track hit me so deeply. It's made of different parts that at first seem separate. It starts with the storytelling line “Mama, I just killed a man” and later bursts into the almost unreal operatic section, full of repetitions of “Galileo” and “Magnifico.” And just when you think it can't get any bigger, it explodes into the rock section – a fireworks display of energy and sound. Queen's Performing *Bohemian Rhapsody* at Live Aid in 1985 was a huge risk – Freddie already knew about his illness – but it became both an expression of his pain and a gift to the audience. His honesty, his eccentric dancing, and his control of the stage captured every soul in the crowd. Almost 20 minutes of pure performance are recreated in the movie, movement by movement, and [YouTube comparison](#) shows how Malek's acting mirrors Mercury's original brilliance.

You don't need anything but your ears and your heart to feel Queen. The music hits you, or it doesn't – and when it does, it grabs you by the soul. Freddie Mercury and his band are still the undisputed royalty of rock: overflowing with energy, charisma, and a connection with the audience that nothing can break. Their songs are alive, fearless, and unforgettable – and through every note, Freddie Mercury's spirit still wears the crown.



## OUT OF THE CAGE

# PARENT TO PARENT PROGRAM AT ARC

Being a student and parent brings unique challenges that only another parent truly understands.

At American River College, a special resource called Parent to Parent (P2P), in partnership with the Mentor Collective, enhances students' experience by connecting CalWORKs students with a mentor from within the program. Students are paired with someone invested in their success--a person ready to listen, inspire, help navigate challenges, and recognize opportunities.

Additionally, P2P mentors serve as a critical part of a student's success team by serving as a proxy for your dedicated counselors and the CalWORKs program. Mentor Collective's online platform provides training and resources for students' mentors and makes it easy for mentors and mentees to connect.

To enroll in P2P, scan the QR code or call: **(916) 484-8059**



Mentee Registration



Staff Writers: Tuyet Le, Emmanuel Madrid, Mohammed El mrani, Sayed Edres Sadiqi, Asila Sadiqi, and Sofia Kovalko.

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Please let us know what we can do to improve *The Parrot*. We appreciate any and all feedback you are willing to give us. Contact us at [TheParrot@arc.losrios.edu](mailto:TheParrot@arc.losrios.edu). To see previous issues of *The Parrot*, go to <https://arc.losrios.edu/academics/the-parrot-newsletter>