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American River College  
4700 College Oak Drive  
Sacramento, CA 95841  
(916) 484-8011

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Your ARC newsletter by and for ESL, multi-cultural, international students, Californians, and, well, anybody really...

# The Parrot



## Special Issue: Ukraine

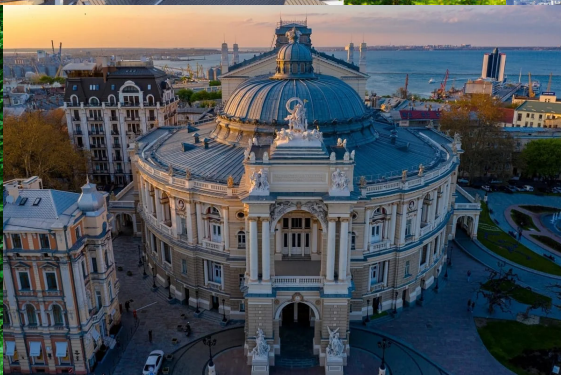
Lviv, Western Ukraine



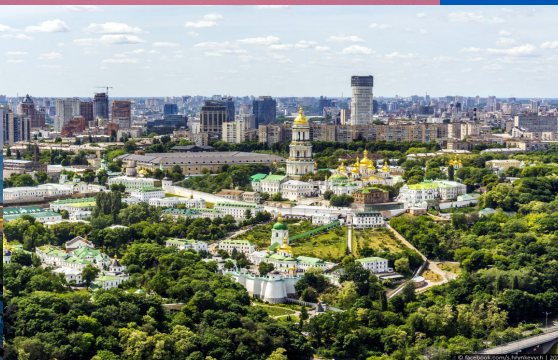
Lake Lemuria, Kherson, Southern Ukraine



Tunnel of Love, Rivne,  
Western Ukraine



Odesa, Southern Ukraine



Kyiv, Capital of Ukraine

### Learn More about Ukraine!

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[Watch](#) video **What Is Ukraine?**

made by DOROSH in 2020-2021

## Literature That Lives In Me

My feet were dangling under a desk in the bustle of the classroom, my hair tied in two cute childish ponytails. Behind me hung a portrait of an old man with a mustache and very strict eyes – Taras Shevchenko, the greatest writer in Ukrainian literature. From that very first memory of what literature is, I began getting acquainted with the figures of Ukrainian literature. It started with learning their straightforward works in elementary school – simple words about patriotism, freedom, and love. For example, through Shevchenko's legendary poem *Зановим* (*Testament*) and the eternity of his lines:



Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861)

*Як умру, то поховайте  
Мене на могилі  
Серед степу широкого,  
На Вкраїні милій*

*(When I die, bury me  
On a mound  
Amid the wide steppe  
In my beloved Ukraine)*

Gradually, I approached the harsh descriptions of the reality of Ukrainian writers – a world where almost every representative of literature was suppressed by the government for writing in Ukrainian, especially about independence.

We, and I myself, consider Shevchenko the cornerstone of classic Ukrainian literature. His poems are deep yet beautifully simple, with perfect rhyme. Through his poems, he described his childhood without a mother, his teenage years in slavery, and his long imprisonment. I still remember memorizing the innocence of his lines:

*Мені тринадцятий минало.  
Я пас ягнята за селом.  
Чи то так сонечко сяло,  
Чи так мені чого було?*

*(I was thirteen, just a child,  
Tending lambs beyond the village.  
Was it the sun shining so bright,  
Or was it something within me?)*

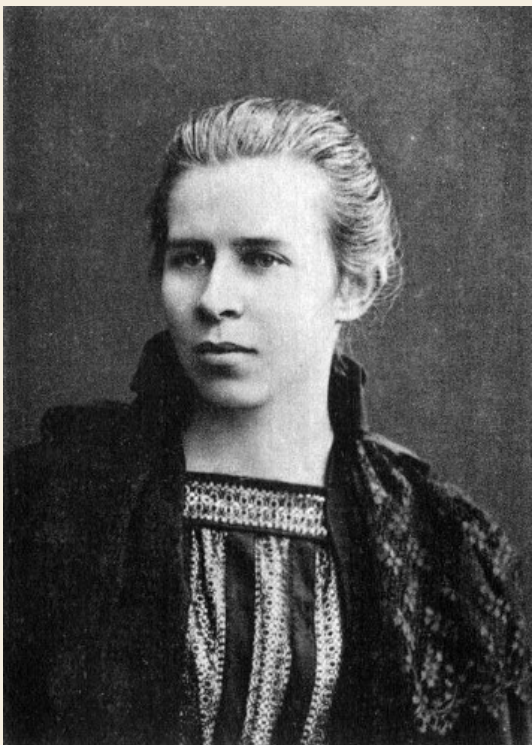
From the soulful depth in his [Kateryna](#) (a long poem about the tragic love of a Ukrainian woman), to the powerful call to action in his poem *Кавказ* ([The Caucasus](#)): *Борітеся – поборете! Вам Бог помагає!* (*Fight on, and you will prevail! God helps you!*), where he urged Ukrainians to love their homeland, Shevchenko's words resonated deeply. Each year at school was dedicated to studying his works, and each time, I perceived them differently, more consciously. Just recently, I discovered the famous American writer Booker T. Washington and

read his *Up from Slavery* – one of the best stories I've read, and it deeply touched me. I found a striking similarity between these two men from different continents – both used the power of words to document what it meant to be enslaved.

Shevchenko's works still live, and he is our remembrance of what Ukraine actually is. We honor him through his collection of works, *Kobzar* – the most important text in Ukrainian literature, a collection of his poetry that has shaped the cultural and national identity of Ukraine. His *Думи мої, думи мої* (*My Thoughts, My Thoughts*) wandered into a [beautiful song](#), adapted in 2022 by Artem Pivovarov – a Ukrainian singer who is reviving Ukrainian literature through his musical project "Your Poems, My Notes" created a few years ago.

From the strictness of Shevchenko, I continued sitting in the classroom, learning about the gentle-

ness and persistence of Lesya Ukrainka – a female writer whose real name was Larysa Kosach – who actually came from a very cultural family. Her



Lesya Ukrainka (1871-1913)

mother, Olena Pchilka, was also a famous Ukrainian writer, and her uncle, Mykhailo Drahomanov, was an important figure in Ukrainian history. Lesya Ukrainka spent much of her life "imprisoned" in

bed due to tuberculosis. Her poems, like *Contra Spem Spero* (*Against Hope, I Hope*), taught me how important it is to value the freedom of life. Her words are a lesson in how to live with strength, even when you feel trapped. I've come to understand her works differently over time, just like I recently learned about Emily Dickinson, the American poet. Both women wrote about life and death, about isolation, but while Ukrainka was forced into it, Dickinson chose this path by her own will.

From the works written by Lesya Ukrainka in the silence and comfort of her room, where she wrote her poetic play *Forest Song*, surrounded by

the Volyn forests in the western region of Ukraine, I "traveled" to Lviv to Ivan Franko, also one of the most famous Ukrainian writers. I can describe Fran-



Ivan Franko (1856-1916)

ko's poems as melancholic odes to everything he loved. He wrote a lot about love. For instance, he wrote about love to his wife, Olha Khorunzhynska, in *Чого Являється Мені у Сні* (*Why Do You Appear in My Dreams*). I remember clearly how my Ukrainian language and literature teacher told us how Franko appreciated her so much and how he considered her as a best friend. He wrote about his love for his homeland and about Ukrainian desire to be independent in his long poem *Моїсеї* (*Moses*):

*Народе мій, замучений, розбитий,  
Мов паралітик той на роздорозжжю...  
(My people, tortured and broken,  
Like the paralytic at the crossroads...)*

My favorite poem of his is *Човен (Boat)*, which was turned into a [song by Odyn v Kanoe](#). I love it because it's not as straightforward and calls for a desire to reread it again and again to grasp what Franko was trying to convey in his first lines:

*Хвиля радісно плюскоче та леститься до човна,  
Мов диття, цікава, шепче і розпитує вона:  
"Хто ти, човне? Що шукаєш? Відки і куди плывеш?  
І за чим туди шукаєш? Що пробув? Чого ще  
ждеш?"*

*(The wave joyfully splashes and caresses the boat,  
Like a child, curious, whispers and asks:  
"Who are you, boat? What are you looking for? Where  
are you from and where are you going?  
And what are you searching for there? What have you  
experienced? What are you waiting for?)*

*Світ ловив мене, та не спіймав (The world was catching me, but it didn't catch)* – this line of Hryhorii Skovoroda, the Ukrainian philosopher and writer, whose aphorisms and fables, shaped by his travels across the world, left a deep impression on my teenage mind with their intricate philosophical phrases. When it comes to philosophy, however, we were taught something incredibly important by Vasyl Symonenko – *Ти знаєш, що ти людина (You know that you are human)*. His words continue to teach all generations what it means to truly be human. Then there's Volodymyr Sosiura, whom I discovered around in 7th or 8th grade of school (or maybe even earlier with his other poems). My classmates and I were required to memorize and recite his poem *Любіть Україну (Love Ukraine)*,

which is forever carved into the DNA of Ukrainians.

In high school, I was introduced to the more complex world of Ukrainian writers, such as *Eneida (1798)* by Kotliarevsky – the first work written in



Olha Kobylanska (1863-1942)

modern Ukrainian language, where *Еней був парубок моторний (Enei was a lively young man)*. During the summer of 2017, I immersed myself in the *Kaidasheva Family* by Ivan Nechuy-Levytsky, which filled me with a mix of joy, worry, and connection. I also remember the *Земля (Earth)* by Olha Kobylanska,

an important figure who fought for feminism and paved her way despite the male-dominated literary world.

My heart stopped in 10th-11th grades, a lump in my throat, when I learned about the [Executed Renaissance](#) – the tragic moment in Ukrainian literature in the early 20th century, when more than 200 representatives of Ukrainian art and culture were persecuted, arrested, and killed as victims of terror. They were sentenced to death for one reason: they wrote in Ukrainian and fought for the independence of Ukraine. They lost their lives, but their works are still alive. One of the most vibrant representatives of this move-



Mykola Khvylovy (1893-1933)

ment was Mykola Khvylovy, who took his own life to protest against the Soviet government and the arrest of his friend, writer Mykhailo Yalovy. His work, *Я (Романтика)* ([I am \(Romance\)](#)), is one of the key literary pieces that reflect his struggle.

I feel a deep sadness when I think about how I wasn't more engaged with literature during my school years, especially since I struggled with

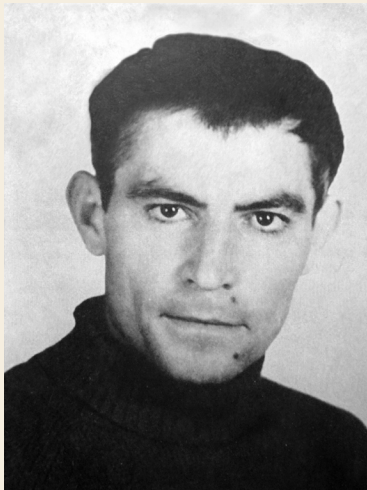


Pavlo Tychyna (1891-1967)

patience while reading. I did feel a connection, but I was immature in how much time and energy I devoted to it (though I was good at analyzing these readings). I didn't spend enough time truly reading and reflecting. Some of these works I read only once or twice, but now I realize I should have read

them more.

I regret not engaging more deeply with authors like Vasyl Stus, Oles Honchar, Mykola Kulish, Panteleimon Kulish (author of *Чорна Рада* (*Black Council*)), and Panas Myrnyy and his novel *Хіба ревуть воли, як ясла повні* (*Do Oxen Bellow, When Their Mangers are Full*). These writers, along with works such as Volodymyr Vynnychenko and the urban novel *Місто* (*City*) by Valerian Pidmohyl'nyy. I also wish I had delved into Pavlo Tychyna's poetry, Ostap Vyshnia's humor. And how I could forget about Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky and his novel *The Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors!* "He and his novel *Intermezzo* is the most vivid repre-



Vasyl Stus (1938-1985)

sentation of impressionism in Ukraine", I remember these words that were said by my teacher. Lina Kostenko, who is still alive today, has written poems that have stayed with me, like one of my favorites, *Мабуть, ще людство дуже молоде* (*Perhaps humanity is still very young*). This poem became a [beautiful song](#), composed by Ukrainian singer Jamala, who was inspired by this poem.

*Perhaps humanity is still very young.*

*No matter how much we bend our fingers, –  
The 20th century! – and still, here and there,  
Neanderthals still appear.*

*You look at them: what is this?*

*Not even a double-convex lens can help.*

*It seems they are people, everything about them  
human,*

*But their soul hasn't yet climbed down from the tree.*

Now that I am an adult, I have grown up, and I'm no longer sitting at that desk in school with my feet dangling. But I feel a bit of nostalgia for those times and wish I had spent more time

reading all of these incredible works. I am running out of words right now to describe the hundreds of Ukrainian writers and poets (I hope *The Parrot* readers love reading long articles) – yes, we had them, and we have modern authors today as well, but abroad, no one knows about them. All the movements, all the poems, all the novels, all the writers who lived at least some kind of happy life, and those who lost their lives just for writing about Ukraine in Ukrainian. But isn't this the right time to talk about them today?

**Parrot Staff Writer: Sofia Kovalko**

## My Language - My Identity

From the very first word “*mama*” to the realization of what language truly means, language is the shape of every nation in the world. It defines identity, answering the questions: *Where are you from? Where do you belong?* Every language – English, French, Spanish, and countless others – carries the voices of ancestors, whispering stories of history and traditions.

I speak Ukrainian, a language that has suffered centuries of struggle, always being on the edge of annihilation. Yet, its history is also one of resilience, of how language shaped a nation with its incredibly beautiful melody, where words and sentences became more than tools of communication. They became intricate ornaments, woven into millions of perfectly crafted phrases and many dialects across every region of Ukraine. Together, they form a coherent, absolute tapestry with one name – *українська мова* (Ukrainian language).

Ukrainian is not a common language; it is primarily spoken by one nation in one country. But that is exactly what makes it so unique and special to all Ukrainians. It evolved from the Slavic language family, shaped over centuries by the daily conversations of our ancestors. And through the lost poets and writers with their immortal novels and poems – Ukrainian was beautifully refined into the modern language we speak today.

Despite being the only Ukrainian language, its diversity is astonishing. Ukraine has 24 regions and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, and each one has its own dialect. Within those regions, towns speak in their own variations, and even villages have their own distinct usages. I know many Americans can relate to this. In my classes, I have learned how English in California differs from other states, shaped by different ethnic groups and cultural influences. Across the U.S., every state has its own

dialects and unique ways of speaking. I bring this up because it highlights just how powerful language is – it shapes a nation, and when you speak, people can immediately recognize where you are from. Language is a DNA.

The DNA of the Ukrainian language has been studied atom by atom – but also targeted, with the intent to destroy it, atom by atom. Two dates I will always remember: 1863 and 1876 – the [Valuev Circular](#) and the [Ems Ukaz](#). Both were issued by the Russian Empire, and their impact was devastating. These documents declared that the Ukrainian language was banned. The ideology behind them haunted Ukrainians for generations, following like a shadow until 1991, when Ukraine voted for independence. Haunted, because the Ukrainian language has always been a threat to the Empire (and still is today), to be recognized by other nations that Ukrainian is an independent, unique, and distinct language, unlike any other. And yet, today, millions of Ukrainians speak their language freely, proving that no document, no *ukaz* issued by your neighbor, has the power to erase a language. Because language itself is a *power*.

I always remind myself how lucky I am to speak Ukrainian, and how proud I am to do so. I always tell how important it is to protect and cherish what we have now – something that was once “forbidden.” I put that word in quotation marks because, despite every attempt to erase it, Ukrainian never truly disappeared. It traveled, generation to generation, until it reached us today.

Language is carved into you from the very second you are born. And as long as there are voices to speak it, as long as there are people who love it, Ukrainian will never be silenced.

**Parrot Staff Writer: Sofia Kovalko**

## Ukrainian Cuisine

### **Varenyky**

I come from Ukraine, and one of my favorite dishes from there is *varenyky*. This dish is very important in Ukraine because it represents a rich gastronomic Ukrainian tradition. *Varenyky* is a small piece of dough filled with different ingredients, for example, cheese, potatoes or cherries. Some people make *varenyky* with unusual fillings, such as mushrooms or sauerkraut. *Varenyky* can also be made in different colors by adding natural beet, carrot, or spinach juice to the dough. They look like dough triangles, and are topped with fried onions, mushrooms and sour cream. *Varenyky* are soft, and have delicious fillings that can be salty or sweet. They taste like a soft and fluffy cloud in your mouth. We often make them on holidays. For example, *varenyky* with cabbage and potatoes are traditionally prepared on the Holy Evening before Christmas. Many families get together and make *varenyky*, so it is very interesting and fun. Once, when I was a little girl, my mother taught me how to make *varenyky*. We talked about everything in the world, and I remember those times with warmth in my heart. We usually eat *varenyky* for lunch or dinner. That dish includes simple ingredients that are easy to find and good for the price, so it is not expensive. I also make *varenyky* in America, and the taste brings me back to my native home in Ukraine. Indeed, *varenyky* for me are not just a food, it is a kind of ritual that can improve the mood and warm the soul.



**Anna Khamardiuk - ESL 47**

### **Borscht**

Red *borscht* is one of my favorite foods from my home country, Ukraine. It is a symbol of unity and preservation of Ukrainian traditions. Cooking *borscht* takes a lot of time. I usually cook it twice a month because it is tasty and cheap. The main ingredients are red beets, potatoes, cabbage, carrots, onions, and meat. Thanks to the red beets, *borscht* has a beautiful red color, which increases appetite. In addition,



fresh vegetables make our dish more delicious and rich. *Borscht* is a dietary and healthy food for our body, which is easier and faster to digest. I like to add chicken meatballs and garlic to *borscht*. This makes the *borscht* even more delicious and aromatic. My family usually enjoys *borscht* for lunch. This dish is special to me. Tasting red *borscht*, my thoughts plunge into my childhood. I fondly remember my mother, who cooked this dish in a peasant oven. Then for dinner, she would take this fresh, aromatic *borscht* out of the oven, pour it into plates, and call all the children to the table. In my opinion, this dish cooked in a peasant oven was even tastier. When we eat hot *borscht*, especially in winter, we feel the comfort of home and family warmth. Indeed, I really like this aromatic and healthy dish of Ukrainian cuisine.

**Antonina Hlushniuk - ESL 47**

### **Potato Pancakes**

I like many foods from my country, Ukraine, but I think potato pancakes are exceptionally good, so it's my favorite. My grandmother used to cook this dish. Grandma cooked it in a special way because she cooked it in a wood-fired oven. To make this dish you need potatoes, sour cream, eggs and spices, and flour. You need to grate the potatoes, mix the ingredients and fry it in a frying pan. They are about half an inch thick. They are round and light brown in color. I like to eat them hot from the pan. Sometimes after frying they are placed in a saucepan filled with broth and meat and stewed in the oven. Usually this dish is prepared for holidays, birthdays, or Christmas. It is an inexpensive dish, so sometimes my mother cooked it once a week. Often it was like a surprise. I remember when I was a little boy, my mom would make them out of the blue. Indeed, this is one of the most delicious dishes in Ukraine. I recommend everyone to try it.



**Vitalii Dunai - ESL 47**





## Dumplings

I like many foods from my country, Ukraine, but I think dumplings are exceptionally good, so they are my favorite. Dumplings are very popular in my country. It is not just a tasty dish, it is traditional. When I was little, our whole family made them. We lived in a big house and we had our own garden. Before making dumplings, my brother and I went to the garden and picked cherries. I remember those summer moments from my childhood so much. This dish can be made with different fillings. Potatoes, meat, cottage cheese, cherries, cabbage can be used as fillings for dumplings. As for me, I like dumplings with cottage cheese and cherries. This essay inspired me to make dumplings for my family on the weekend. They are very tasty. Many Ukrainians love this dish. My family is no exception. Indeed, dumplings are my favorite traditional Ukrainian dish, and I love them.

**Yana Yakutina - ESL 47**

## Borscht

I come from Ukraine and one of my favorite dishes from there is red *borscht*. It is called red because the main ingredient is beet root. Red *borscht* includes such ingredients as meat, potatoes, onions, carrots, beets, and usually bell peppers. When I was a child, I tried this dish for the first time at home when my mother cooked it. I remember how much I liked the dish that I wanted more. Red *borscht* is often eaten with *salo* (a type of cured pork fat) and sour cream, but I don't like *salo*. This dish is usually eaten for lunch. Every Ukrainian family cooks red *borscht* and loves it. The first time I learned how to cook this dish was when I got married. I was looking for a recipe on Google so as not to call my mother because I was ashamed that I did not know how to cook it. My family loves red *borscht*, but I only cook it three to five times a month because it takes about one hour to cook it. I think this dish is healthy for everyone because it contains a lot of healthy vegetables and meat. This paragraph inspired me to cook this dish for my family on the weekend. Indeed, red *borscht* is one of the healthiest and most delicious traditional dishes, and it reminds me of my Ukrainian home.



**Violieta Choban - ESL 47**

## “Your Poems, My Notes”



“Your Poems, My Notes” is a special musical project by Ukrainian singer and songwriter Artem Pivovarov. He launched it in 2021 with the idea of reviving the poems of Ukrainian poets through music. Pivovarov writes music for these poems, collaborating with other Ukrainian singers to bring them to life.

I find it fascinating how one written poem can take on a completely different message when set to music. I perceive each poem differently in its original form and as a song. Also, the music videos created for these songs are captivating. I love how all of them are in black and white, emphasizing the authenticity of the poems. At the same time, it represents eternity, showcasing the black-and-white-gray reality in Ukraine, but giving light through the notes that linger in the poems.

Here is a list of my favorite songs of this incredibly unique project:

1. Artem Pivovarov & Team Voice of the Country-13 – [Валторна](#) (*Valtorna*), on the poem *Відмикаю світанок скрипковим ключем... (I un-*

*lock the dawn with a violin key...)* by Lina Kostenko.

2. Artem Pivovarov & Quest Pistols – [Очі](#) (*Eyes*), on the poem by Hryhorii Chuprynka.

3. Artem Pivovarov – [Ти знаєш, що ти людина](#) (*You Know That You Are Human*), on poem by Vasyl Symonenko.

4. Artem Pivovarov & NK – [Там У Тополі](#) (*There in the Poplar*), on the poem by Pavlo Tychna.

5. Artem Pivovarov & Kalush – [Майбутність](#) (*The Future*), on the poem by Hryhorii Chuprynka.

6. Artem Pivovarov & Max Barskih – [Так ніхто не кохав](#) (*No One Has Loved Like This*), on poem by Volodymyr Sosiura.

Also, it’s impossible not to mention my favorite song from his new poetry project, *VIRSH-INSHI (Poems Are Different)*, launched last year. In this project, Pivovarov continues to popularize Ukrainian poetry through a fresh lens. The song [Сьогодні](#) (*Today*) by Pivovarov & Onuka is absolutely wonderful – I always listen to it while driving. It’s based on a poem by



Mykhailo Semenko. The videoclip is so progressive that I could never have imagined this poem could be interpreted this way – brutal yet disoriented (in a good sense), and at the same time, gentle under Onuka’s voice.

## Ukraine or The Ukraine?

By Patrick S. Hoggan, Professor of ESL

He wore black-rimmed glasses. His head maybe reached a little above my chin. He was one of the better students in my ESL class that semester. He was intent and at times very intense. He was a good critical thinker, but I was a little surprised when he wanted to talk to me about a mistake I had marked in his essay. Because he spoke Russian, a language that doesn't use articles like English uses "a" and "the," he made mistakes with articles in his writing. Even Russians who have lived for years in America and speak otherwise impeccable English make mistakes with English articles, so when he tried to explain to me that my correction about an error by telling him to insert a "the," I was quite confident that I was right and he was wrong. After a few years of teaching ESL at ARC, I decided that the only thing more difficult than learning articles was teaching articles! (That's probably not true, but it is my way of trying to empathize with my students who struggle with those infuriating little words that can hold so much meaning. However, the fact that Slavic languages like Russian can exist without "a" and "the" makes me wonder just how necessary or meaningful "a" and "the" can be if they seem to be totally optional).

His name was Ilya, and he wanted to tell me—not ask me—about a mistake I had made by

adding a "the" into one of his sentences. He had written, "Ukraine," and with my geographical knowledge born of the American elementary school system in the 1970s, and with high school and some of college in the 1980s, I had written "the" in red ink before "Ukraine." I had always heard, always read, and thus always said and always written "the Ukraine." Ilya insisted that my addition of "the" was wrong. When he explained that I shouldn't use "the" before Ukraine,



I'm not sure I really grasped the significance of his explanation. I'm sure I insisted, "No, everyone in America says "the" Ukraine." After all, English was MY native language, and I was an English teacher, and we were in America, so I should know how to use "the" correctly. But he patiently

persisted and tried to explain his point again. I listened again more to be polite, not because I thought he was going to successfully show me that I was wrong. But somewhere between my pride and my ignorance, I started to understand. He was giving me a political argument, not a grammatical argument, and I suddenly realized how very powerfully, dangerously "the" was very political; it was grammar worth fighting for.

In the political climate of the late 1990s and early 2000s, when you said "the Ukraine," you were using the term given to the Ukraine by the Soviet regime. When Americans praised "the

Ukraine” for being “the breadbasket of Europe,” we did so without realizing that our use of “the” acknowledged Soviet domination of a once free Ukraine. “The population of Ukraine voted overwhelmingly for independence in the referendum of December 1, 1991. (About 84 percent of eligible voters turned out for the referendum, and about 90 percent of them endorsed independence.)” ([Britannica: Independent Ukraine](#)). Ukraine became independent. It was no longer “a region” controlled by the Soviet Union. It was no longer “the” Ukraine. It was free. And that’s what Ilya explained to me, “Ukraine is independent, so it should not be referred to as the Ukraine.”



Finally, I understood. I used my red pen to cross out the “the” that I had written on Ilya’s paper. Later that semester he gave me another political lesson; this one had to do with spelling. He had “misspelled” the name of Ukraine’s capital city. He had written “Kyiv.” I was confident that he was simply transliterating rather than fully translating the name, which “everyone” in America knew was “Kiev” in English. While it is true that for decades, Americans used “Kiev,” Ukraine had officially adopted “Kyiv” as the English spelling in 1995. And the reason Americans used “Kiev” was arguably because of the Soviet influence. (For a thorough analysis of the use of Kyiv versus Kiev see [‘Kyiv’ or ‘Kiev’ — Here’s why the difference is political](#) by the Canadian Broad-

casting Corporation).

“Kiev” was an exonym. An exonym is a word used by outsiders to identify a group like “Eskimo” for the Inuit people, “Bombay” for Mumbai, “Gypsies” for the Roma, or “Peking” for Beijing. Some exonyms are intentionally offensive; some are ignorantly offensive. Either way, when a country or people chooses an official English version of their name, we should use it. That’s what Ukraine did with the name of their capital, and Ilya wanted to make sure I understood that, too. He wanted me to use the endonym: a self-designated term of reference for a people or place.

I hope by this point, you may have recognized the error I made in my first paragraph. I said Ilya spoke Russian. More likely than not, he did speak Russian, but that would not be entirely true if you were to interpret that to mean he only spoke Russian or that Russian was his native language. Although Ukrainian is the only official language of Ukraine, the “Ukrainian constitution guarantees the free development, use, and protection of Russian and other languages of national minorities” ([Wikipedia: Russian Language in Ukraine](#)). Ilya was probably among those many Ukrainians who spoke both languages fluently. He probably spoke Russian when he had to. But like 88% of Ukrainians, he probably chose Ukrainian at home or work, or maybe he was among the 30% of Ukrainians who speak both Ukrainian and Russian at home, meaning he may have two native languages. I write “probably” and “may” with some embarrassment because I don’t remember clearly, and back in 2001, I’m afraid I didn’t even think that much about the difference. Forgive me, Ilya. I recognized the difference between Russian and Ukrainian for sure, and so I often used the broader term “Slavic” to refer to my students. It is a serviceable and diplomatic term. But I wish I had asked him more about his language background. It was clearly very important to him, but maybe it was enough for him to have given me my two sociopolitical grammar lessons.

Ilya took two more courses with me, ESLL 2 (ESLL 320 today), and ESLR 5 (ESLR 340). In the Listening and Speaking class, I had the students re-tell a classic fairytale from their culture. Ilya's interpretation of a Slavic fairytale (was it Russian or Ukrainian or claimed by both?) was hilarious, and the class roared with laughter when, in order to bring to life the use of magic, he flung drops of perfume out across the audience. It was a blue bottle of perfume that all of the Slavic students recognized.

Ilya was with me on September 11, 2001, minutes after I had heard about the attacks on the World Trade Center. It was 8:00 AM. We were all in shock.

I did the math on the chalkboard. If there were approximately 100 floors in the World Trade Center, and there were two towers, and if each floor had 50-100 people on it, then it was possible that 10,000 to 20,000 people had just been killed. Ilya had an earpiece in his right ear. He was listening to a portable radio. For the first time in my career as a teacher, and the only time in the 23 years since then, I asked a student to listen to news updates during class and to interrupt me with reports.

On September 11, 2016, the [Embassy of Ukraine in the United States published this note](#):

*15 years passed since a terrible tragedy in the U.S. - the terrorist attacks on 9/11. Thousands of innocent people lost their lives on that day. Ambassador of Ukraine to*

*the U.S. Valeriy Chaly with his wife Liudmyla Mazuka commemorated the victims of the September 11 attacks in the [sic] New York City today. We strongly condemn terrorism and share the pain of those who lost their loved ones in terrorists' attacks. Ukraine stands with you.*

I don't know where Ilya is today. Is he in the Ukraine? Is he educating more English teachers about the Ukraine? As I type this, I'm delighted that the Google Doc grammar correct function has underlined "about the Ukraine" in blue. It is prompting me to change "about the Ukraine" into



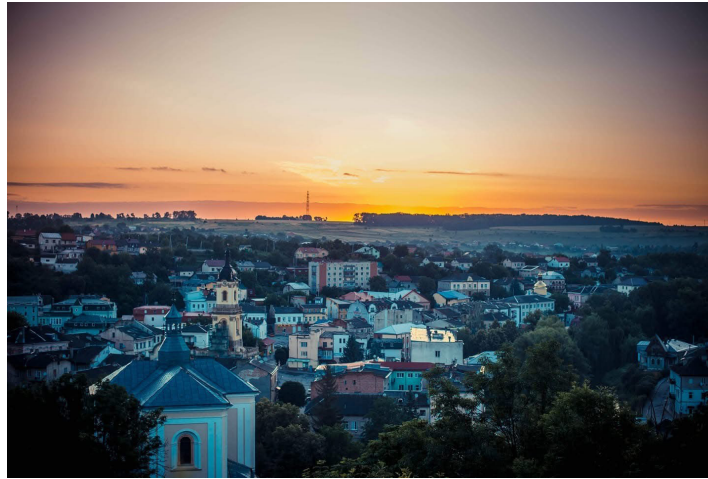
"about Ukraine." This is a sign that Ilya's message has reached beyond me, beyond Davies Hall, beyond ARC. If Google, the global superpower, has gotten the message, then it's easy to assume that the whole world has gotten the message: Ukraine is free, free of the "the," free of the tyranny of the definite article. "The" is a determiner. In Ukraine's case, it's a sign that someone else is trying to determine their destiny and identity. There should be no determiner for the Ukraine. The Ukraine should be free to determine their own course, their own future, and the Ukraine deserves our support. The United States has more or less stood by Ukraine since February 24, 2022. Ukraine stood by us on 9/11 and has stood by us since then. May we continue to stand with the Ukraine.

## Through the Shadows of My Town

It may seem untrue, but my first memories of childhood were of dreaming about being inside the tall buildings of New York City and walking on the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. Simultaneously, I was fostering my love for the intimate style of cities in Ukraine.

I was born in Buchach, a very small town, hidden underneath the hills – or, as we love to call it, “in a hollow” – because when you drive to the town through any of the entrances, you need to go down. It’s located in the Ternopil region in western Ukraine. At the age of 14 or 15, when I began to appreciate art and the authenticity of Ukrainian cities, I discovered my native town from a completely different side. I began to see Buchach with its history, especially a rich cultural history.

Buchach has many very old buildings (which remind me of the great streets in European countries) and a variety of colors in the Baroque style (Buchach was founded in 1260). The streets are so narrow that we often have issues with traffic, especially when all the cars are parked on the sidewalks. It’s always a challenge to drive through the very center of town, where the heart of Buchach stands – the Town Hall (or *Ratusha*) – the iconic feature of Buchach. An amazing piece of architecture, it stands proud-



ly on the square, with its gently yellow-colored walls (after many years of reconstruction). Inside, there are bells with a clock that wake the town

every hour with their sound, or sometimes a melody of the Ukrainian national anthem. When I was kindergarten age (a memory that is deeply carved in my mind because of its ridiculous nature), I could swear I saw a tall man in a black coat and black hat at the very top of the Town Hall,

ringing the bell. All my life, I’ve been curious about what is inside the Town Hall, how it looks, and why it was closed. But in 2021, my biggest dream came true – I was able to walk inside the Town Hall after it was reopened following reconstruction. My feelings were indescribable then. I was shocked, climbing the narrow stairs and wandering on the balconies outside, amazed at how gorgeous it looked – it felt like I was entering a Renaissance castle. I could have imagined anything, but not what I saw then.

And, of course, those [whimsical statues by Pinsel](#). Johann Georg Pinsel – Buchach’s greatest honor, a famous Galician sculptor, an “undocumented” (because his date and place of birth are unknown) “Galician Michelangelo” (as he is often called due to how his works were inspired by the style of Michelangelo). His origin



*The Sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham (1760), Pinsel*

and story are very mysterious, but we know that he married in Buchach, lived, and worked here. Initially, fourteen of his statues adorned the Town Hall at that time, but many of them were destroyed and lost. His works are so dramatic, with vivid expressions, where light and shadows dance together on the carvings, creating different shapes depending on which side you are looking at the statue. We honor him, and every two years we hold the Days of Pinsel (the first one was held in 2016, and the last was in 2021) – an art festival in Buchach that lasts for three days. It brings many art representatives, scholars researching everything about Pinsel, musicians playing orchestras between the intervals of conferences, exhibitions of paintings in museums, and in the Town Hall as well – the first time the doors were opened to the public in 2021. How I loved those days and how deeply absorbed I was in the beauty of local art.

From the Town Hall, I could see, on the hills, the ruins of Buchach Castle. A little to the left, the Buchach Monastery, and a bit lower, the Strypa River and

parks. But to the right of the *Ratusha*, just a little farther from our art museum, there's my favorite place – Art Dvir. It's an extremely small space in a tiny open-sky yard, nestled among the apartments where artists live. The walls have a dark tunnel-like feel, decorated with paintings and photographs of old Buchach, but the grey, shattered walls are left to preserve their authenticity. This place was created to support and host performances by any kind of artist – local musicians, literary readings, book presentations, and concerts. On the other side of the wall, there's a very small coffee shop, which used to be an old apartment. But nothing has changed – even the old furniture is still there.

Do I miss these places? Yes, I miss the spirit of Pinsel, who may still wander somewhere in the corners of the town, longing for his damaged sculptures. I miss the sound of the bells from the Town Hall (and who knows, maybe that mysterious man is still there). I miss the cozy coffee shops and overhearing carefree conversations that used to happen before 2022, about art and culture, or perhaps about planning the next Days of Pinsel. Your home shapes who you are, and for all my years, I was influenced by the power of local art and the authenticity of the architecture of this small town, my Buchach, where I hope to be again someday.



**Parrot Staff Writer: Sofia Kovalko**

## *Ukrainian Poetry*

### *A Poem by Mykhailo Semenko*

**Я ("Я — жертва погасаючого світу...")**

Я — жертва погасаючого світу.  
 Я — поранений звір.  
 Можливо, що прибув на аероліті  
 І кинув довкола зневажливий зір.

Дух мій  
 в захопленні можливостей футурних,  
 І в крові — безліч архаїчних атаків.  
 Я — в пестінні хмарок пурпурних,  
 Я — скрізь.

Я ховаю в собі всі горіння й інстинкти,  
 Я — синтеза поетів і мрій.  
 Я пережив усі конфлікти,  
 І дивний на мені стрій.

І коли встануть всі звірі й люди,  
 І коли кинуться всі предки й вороги,-  
 Я розстебну свою закривавлені груди  
 І покажу, скільки в мене снаги!

І побачать міць синтетичну й могутню,  
 І попрохають крові на плями й сліди,-  
 Я віддам всю свою силу  
 за хвилю незабутню —  
 Я — вічний, сміливий і молодий!

І так скінчиться боротьба стосила,  
 І ледве потушать мої хвилі віки.  
 І я припаду до ніг жінщини  
 і скажу їй: — Мила,  
 Дай мені відкусити шматочок  
 твоєї заголеної руки!

**I ("I am a victim of a fading world...")**

I am a victim of a fading world.  
 I am a wounded beast.  
 Perhaps I arrived on an aerolite  
 And cast a scornful gaze around.

My spirit  
 is captivated by futuristic possibilities,  
 Yet in my blood—countless archaic atavisms.  
 I am in the caress of purple clouds,  
 I am everywhere.

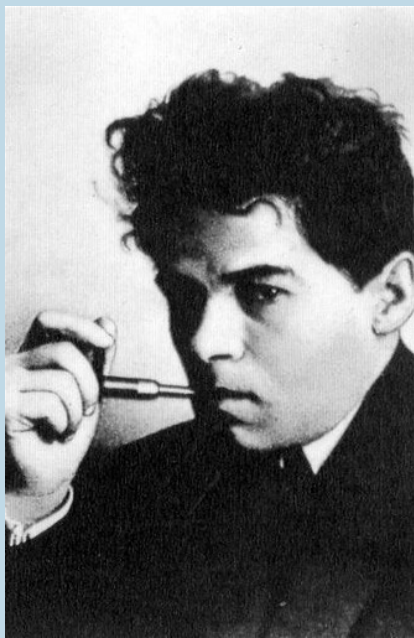
I conceal within me all burnings and instincts,  
 I am the synthesis of poets and dreams.  
 I have lived through all conflicts,  
 And my attire is strange.

And when all beasts and people rise,  
 And when all ancestors and enemies attack—  
 I will unbutton my bloodied chest  
 And reveal how much strength I have!

And they will see my synthetic, mighty power,  
 And they will beg for my blood to leave marks and  
 traces—  
 I will give away all my strength  
 For one unforgettable moment—  
 I am eternal, bold, and young!

And thus, the relentless struggle will end,  
 And centuries will barely extinguish my waves.  
 And I will kneel at a woman's feet  
 And say: — My dear,  
 Let me take a bite  
 Of your bare hand!





I chose a poem by Mykhailo Semenko (1892-1937) because I want to show how diverse Ukrainian poetry can be. Semenko was a poet of the [Executed Renaissance](#) – a generation of Ukrainian poets, writers, and artists of the 1920s-1930s who created in

Ukrainian language and lived in the [Slovo Building](#) in Kharkiv, eastern Ukraine. That building became cursed, as around 200 blossoming

figures of Ukrainian literature and art were pressured, persecuted, arrested, and executed by the Stalinist regime, most of them shot on November 3, 1937. Semenko is also a vivid representative of the [Futurist](#) movement – he broke rules of tradition, offering originality and innovation. I love how Semenko experimented with language; he was a master of the avant-garde, using words that might have been bold at the time of the 20th century. Some of his poems are extremely progressive, and I love them because they challenge my understanding. “Synthetic, mighty power” – the word “synthetic” chosen to describe power is like a sharp, unexpected twist that bewilders my mind. Did he want to associate power with something artificial?

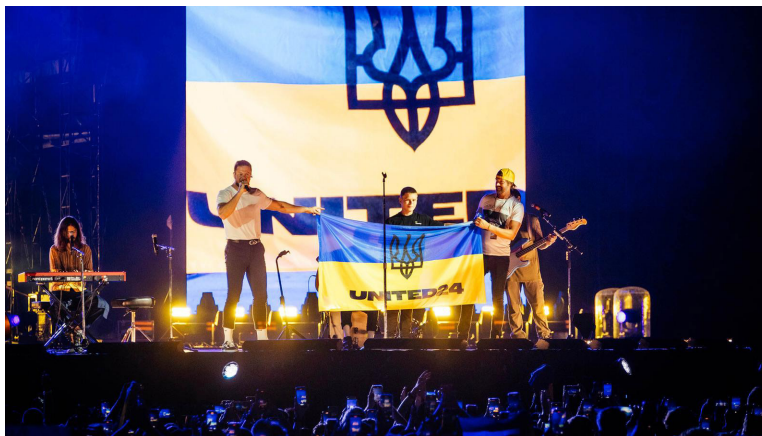
**Parrot Staff Writer: Zosya Moreau**

## United Through Music: USA & Ukraine

### Imagine Dragons

I’ve admired the American band Imagine Dragons for many years because their music is amazing! But what fascinates me even more is how they have supported Ukraine from the very beginning of the war. During their [concerts](#) around the world, the lead singer, Dan Reynolds, passionately [speaks](#) about Ukraine, raises the Ukrainian flag, and dedicates songs to the Ukrainian people.

Moreover, Imagine Dragons became official ambassadors for [United 24](#). In 2023, they released a song [Crushed](#), with a music video



telling the true story of a 14-year-old boy named Sasha, whose home was completely destroyed after a Russian attack.

This song reflects the sad reality of the daily struggles in Ukraine, where every moment brings pain and desperation. Yet, at the same time, these songs are like birds of hope, flying and reminding us that Ukrainians are not alone, and that music is a power that can help hold nations together.

**Parrot Staff Writer: S. Lastivka**

## Vibrant Beasts



"I bow down before the artistic miracle of this brilliant Ukrainian," [Pablo Picasso once said about the painter Maria Prymachenko](#) when he first saw her work at an exhibition in Paris in 1937.

Maria Prymachenko (1909-1997) is not only an incredible painter in Ukrainian art history but also an amazing woman who was able to bring vibrant colors to life during dark times, being born at the beginning of the 20th century. She was born in the village of Bolotnia in the Kyiv region, where she spent most of her life, also because of her illness – polio. But always surrounded by the nature of her home, and the beauty of it, she became a representative of naïve art – a style

where painters are self-taught and lack the financial resources to receive formal education in the field. She created paintings in the style of folk art, which is deeply connected to local, native traditions.

Her paintings, at first sight, seem to be a combination of the brightest colors in the world, meant to bring happiness and evoke a sense of innocent childhood. But her love for drawing animals and flowers, which seem to come from dreams, also creates images of frightening beasts surrounded by terrifying plants, as if devouring each other. This reflects the pain and trauma she experienced, having lived through both World Wars and survived the [Holodomor](#) – a man-made famine in Ukraine (1932–1933) that killed millions. She expressed not only her own suffering but also the pain of the Ukrainian people. That's why today the Ukrainian nation sees themes of resilience and resistance in her paintings.

Her works are strange, whimsical, scary, and provocative, yet those amazing colors draw us into Prymachenko's hidden imagination. Honestly, sometimes, when looking at her paintings, I can feel a sense of dread in my veins too. But on the other hand, her paintings have a kind of magic that captivates me to look at every single one of them. Here are some of her paintings that I find less frightening, but if you want to dive deeper into the horror, here is a [link](#) to explore the works of Maria Prymachenko – an artist who released all the beasts out of a cage.



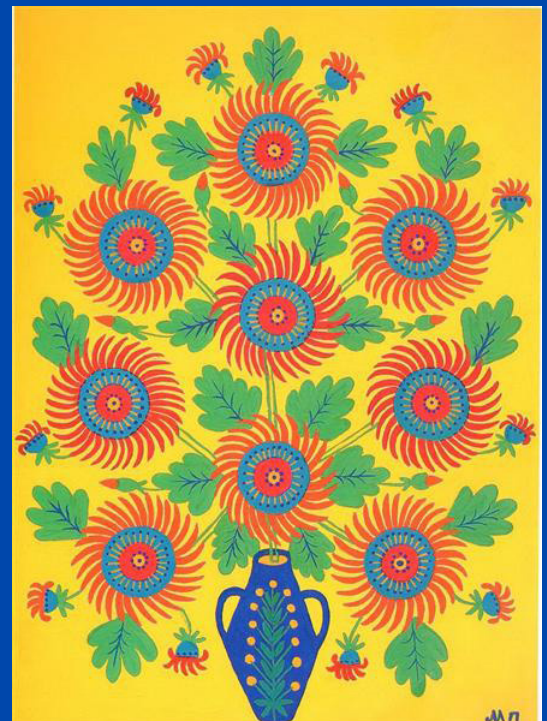
1. *Black Beast* (1936)



3. *May That Nuclear War Be Cursed!* (1978)



2. *Pigeon and Dove* (1982)



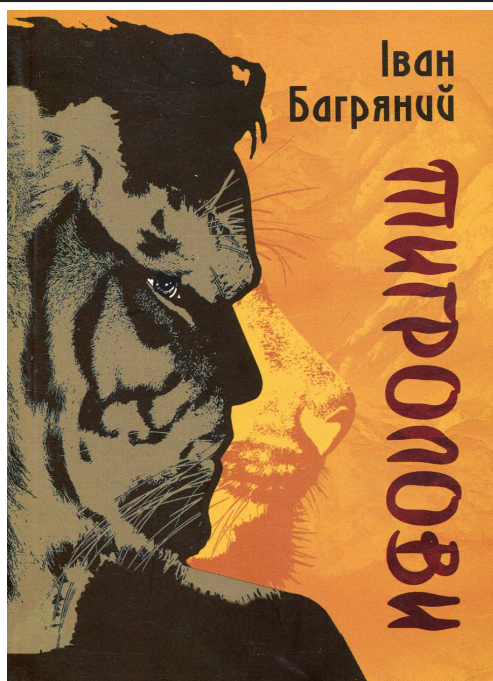
5. *My Bouquet to Grain Growers* (1983)



4. *A Dove Has Spread Her Wings and Asks for Peace* (1982)

## "The Brave Ones Always Have Luck"

Ivan Bahriany's Novel: *Tyholovy*



I was immediately engaged in the story when I started reading *Tyholovy* (under the title in English *Tiger Trappers*) by Ivan Bahriany – my favorite novel in Ukrainian literature. It was first written in

1944, but an interesting fact is that after Bahriany emigrated from Ukraine to Germany, his work was left in the Soviet Union, and he had to rewrite his amazing novel from memory and publish it again in 1946. *Tyholovy* is considered one of the most talented and best works in Bahriany's literary heritage, and this novel (at a time when I almost hated reading) captured my interest from the very first lines of this masterpiece:

*With fiery eyes wide open, breathing flames and smoke, shaking the desert and wilderness with its roar, and sweeping away its trail with a blazing tail, the dragon flew.*

*DRAGON* is the name of the very first chapter of *Tyholovy*, but it also serves as a perfect metaphor to compare the terror of the train, described in the quote, with the *dragon*, the deadliest beast – an *echelon of death*. In that train, is the main character of the story, Hryhoryy Mnohohrishnyy, a young man sentenced to 25 years in prison, who is considered the most dangerous threat to

Stalin's terror regime. Among the dozens of other exhausted prisoners, it is Mnohohrishnyy who is watched the most.

But he makes a desperate decision to jump from the train, with a big chance of death. But he makes it, and he – tortured, but unbroken – manages to survive and runs into the boundless forests of cold Siberia. On the way, near the danger of death, he sees a young girl struggling under the attack of a bear, and he saves her. This is how he ends up with the Sirkos, a Ukrainian family, who settled in a village in far Siberia, where Ukrainians, longing for their homeland, managed to preserve their traditions and culture. Hryhoryy immediately becomes a member of the family – a family of masters in catching and hunting tigers (yes, real tigers!), and they teach Hryhoryy to do the same.



Ivan Bahriany (1906-1963)

of Mnohohrishnyy, who grits his teeth at him, hunting Hryhoryy like a tiger. This is the main plot development – the battle between two enemies, who are both on the lookout to destroy each other.

I love action, which is why I loved this novel from the first glance for its dynamic plot. It perfectly blends adventure in the wilderness, the love story between Nataalka and Hryhoryy, family love, and preserving Ukrainian identity even far from home. An interesting fact is that the novel con-

But the most dangerous tiger in this story is Major Medvyn from the NKVS (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs in the Soviet Union) – a sworn enemy

tains some autobiographical details of Ivan Bahriany, as he was also imprisoned in Soviet Union labor camps for fighting for Ukrainian nationality.

I love Bahriany's amazing writing style, with sophisticated descriptions and lots of metaphors, which kept me deeply engaged with the story.

*Fantastic and real, amazing accessories of the undecoded tragic legend – the mysterious legend of the disappearance of souls.*

This is the first novel that actually caused real emotion in me from reading. When I had finished reading it, I could barely hold back my tears, as Bahriany managed to convey the strength of

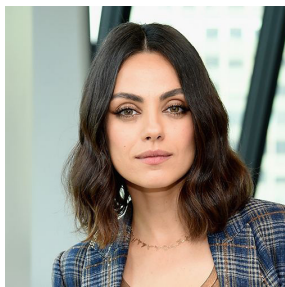
the connections between the characters in such a way that I felt myself addicted to them. In this novel, everything for me is perfect – the non-fiction within the fiction, where the magnetic character of Mnohohrishnyy makes me want to read about him again and again.

Author's Note: Although the original book was written in Ukrainian, English readers can refer to *The Hunters and the Hunted* (however, I recommend to remember that the more precise title is *Tiger Trappers*), published in New York by *St. Martin's Press* in 1957, which is available on [Goodreads](#).

**Parrot Staff Writer: Sofia Kovalko**

## Americans with Ukrainian Souls

Have you ever noticed how Ukrainians seem to be everywhere? From Hollywood to the music industry, their influence stretches far and wide – even in the United States! You might be surprised to learn that some of your favorite celebrities have Ukrainian heritage.



The famous American actress [Mila Kunis](#) wasn't born in Hollywood – she was born in Chernivtsi, a city in western Ukraine. At just seven years old, she and her family moved to the U.S.

And what about the man behind some of the most iconic films of all time? [Steven Spielberg](#), one of the greatest filmmakers in the U.S., has Ukrainian roots as well. His grandparents, Shmuel and Rebecca Spielberg, were Jewish immigrants from Ukraine. His grandfather was from Kamianets-Podilskyi, while his grandmother came from Sudykiv in the Khmelnytskyi region of western Ukraine.



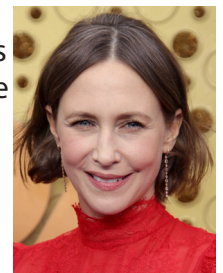
[Milla Jovovich](#),

whom we all know for her role in *The Fifth Element*, was born in Kyiv, Ukraine. Her family moved to the U.S. when she was a child.



Music legend [Bob Dylan](#) also has deep Ukrainian ancestry. His paternal grandparents, Zigman and Anna Zimmerman, were Jewish immigrants from Odesa, southern Ukraine, who made their way to the U.S. in the early 1900s.

And let's not forget actress [Vera Farmiga](#). She was born in the U.S., in New Jersey, but grew up in a Ukrainian-speaking family – her parents had emigrated from Ukraine. She attended Ukrainian school, was deeply involved in the culture, and is even fluent in Ukrainian.



**Parrot Staff Writer: Olivia Falquois**

## Behind Me Are the Carpathian Mountains

Sometimes, music can tell a story better than words. So before we begin, let's first listen to and watch an amazing song – [ZENIT](#) by the Ukrainian band Onuka – about the mystery of the Carpathian Mountains.

I have always preferred mountains over the sea. My love for high hills was carved deep into me when I was just a child – 8 or 9 years old – driving with my parents on a steep, serpentine road surrounded by dark green mountains. There were tall trees, called *smereka*, their long branches reaching for the sky. I was mesmerized, even as my ears suffered from the rapid change in altitude. We were on our way to visit my godfather in Uzhhorod, a city in Western Ukraine, bordering Slovakia. A special town, at the heart of the Carpathians – sacred not only to me but to all Ukrainians. A place you never want to leave.



The Carpathian Mountains – or *Karpaty*, as we call them in Ukrainian – stretch across several countries (Slovakia, Romania, and others), with a significant part of the range located in Ukraine – in Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Zakarpattia regions. But these mountains are more than just a landscape; they are the source of Ukraine's richest ethnic heritage. The *Hutsuls*, an ethnic group, have preserved their traditions for generations – charming music, mystical tales and legends, authentic cuisine, intricate wood carvings, shepherding high in the mountains, and weaving stunning carpets and clothing from wool and linen, and then embroidering them.

What I love most about the Carpathians is their isolation. It has protected their traditions, keeping them apart from the rush of the modern

world. This untouched beauty has a magnetism that words fail to capture. There is something captivating about the gently sloping mountains, where dozens of sheep roam under the watchful eye of a shepherd – or, to be more precise, a *Hutsul*. When I visited Slovakia, I noticed its Carpathian peaks were sharper and more deserted, resembling the images of the Himalayas I had seen in pictures and movies. But in Ukraine, the mountains breathe life.

Standing on a hill, I could stay for hours, enjoying the eternity of these landscapes. And then, there is a sound like no other – the soulful echo of the *trembita*. This wooden horn, the longest in Ukraine, can reach between 6 and 13 feet in length. Playing it is not easy, but the *Hutsuls* are masters of their craft. A single note can carry through the valleys for miles, filling the silence with an ancient, unbroken voice. After listening to the *trembita*, I would put on my headphones and play [Hory](#) (*Mountains*) by KALUSH and Alyona Alyona, catching every note as I savored my favorite



Carpathian dishes – *chenahy* and *bohrach*. These

two dishes, made of meat and a lot of vegetables, are too difficult to make, and I long for them now, being so far away in the U.S. Afterward, I would wander through local fairs, where hundreds of handcrafted treasures are sold – traditional embroidered clothing, woven carpets, intricate wood carvings, and toys. Listening to the local people, whose intricate and unique dialect are hard to understand to me. But my favorite part? The sheep cheese. A trip to the Carpathians would feel incomplete without it.

And then, silence.

This is what I love most about the Carpath-



ians. They are the heart of Ukraine – where everything is real, untouched. A place where, even now, Ukrainians escape – if only for a day or two – to forget the painful reality of war. Far away in the mountains, there are no explosions. Only the wind, only the *trembita*, only dark forests wrapped in waves of fog. A place where myths come alive, where creatures from old tales might still roam unseen. A place of quiet mystery and calmness.

A place that will always call me home.

**Parrot Staff Writer: Sofia Kovalko**

## United Through Music: USA & Ukraine

### A Song by Diane Warren

The United States has stood with Ukraine from the very first days of the war because both countries share a love for freedom. This bond is not only political but also cultural, especially with the strong musical support from American artists. In 2023, on Ukraine's Independence Day, a special song was released that deeply touched me with its powerful message, and which I listen to again and again. Legendary American composer Diane Warren [wrote](#) the song *One Nation Under Love* to support Ukraine, collaborating with Ukrainian singer Tina Karol, who performed it.

The [music video](#) is truly amazing – Diane Warren plays the piano in New York near the Statue of Liberty, with an empty microphone beside her, while Tina Karol sings in Kyiv near the Moth-

erland Monument, with an empty piano beside her. This juxtaposition is incredibly heartfelt, as it shows that thousands of miles are no obstacle to being together and sharing the same values.



**Parrot Staff Writer: S. Lastivka**

## Ukrainian Poetry

### The Work of Lina Kostenko

#### *Страшні слова, коли вони мовчать* (1977)

Страшні слова, коли вони мовчать,  
коли вони зненацька причаїлись,  
коли не знаєш, з чого їх почать,  
бо всі слова були уже чіїмись.

Хтось ними плакав, мучивсь, болів,  
із них почав і ними ж і завершив.  
Людей мільярди і мільярди слів,  
а ти їх маєш вимовити вперше!

Все повторялось: і краса, й потворність.  
Усе було: асфальти й спориші.  
Поезія — це завжди неповторність,  
якийсь безсмертний дотик до душі.

#### *Words Terrify When They Remain Not Spoken* (translated by Ivan Doan in 2023)

Words terrify when they remain not spoken,  
When suddenly, they tuck themselves away,  
When you don't know how silence can be broken,  
For someone else has said all you might say.

These words were once pronounced in tears or pain,  
They were the dawn yet also the cessation,  
Billions of men, and words, like drops of rain,  
For the first time now, they are your creation.

Both beauty and ill will have had their fame,  
There have been weeds and roads beneath our sole,  
But poetry will never be the same,  
It will forever touch the human soul.



Lina Kostenko is one of the greatest poets in Ukrainian literature. This poem is one of her most iconic works, and I remember how I had to memorize it for recitation at school in 11th grade. The poem is short, but I love how Kostenko always conveys profound societal issues through beautifully written metaphors that reflect modern world problems.

I am fascinated by Lina Kostenko because she is confident in her poetry – progressive and straightforward in expressing her views, blending them with the delicacy and precision of her chosen words. In some of her poems, she can even be harsh, which I love because certain issues need to be spoken out loud. And Lina Kostenko does this so well, using all the sophistication of the Ukrainian language.

**Parrot Staff Writer: Zlata Lisovska**



## Special Places for Me

*This essay was originally published in issue 167.*

What does a special place mean to you? Most people have a special place where they like to go. Where you feel at home. A place where you feel free. Sometimes it's a place that helps you learn, or a place filled with happy memories. For some, it's a place to be alone. I also have places where I like to go. There are a few really special places for me.

The first special place for me is the coffee shop Cabinet. This coffee shop is located in Lviv, Ukraine. I really like to have breakfast there, and they also have a very tasty variety of desserts. But most of all, I like the way tea is served there. It is served in teapots, like in the Middle Ages. The entire décor of the café is retro style. The Cabinet is located in a building where a newspaper's publishing house and editorial office used to be, so that's why the atmosphere of the coffee shop is filled with the smell of coffee, baked goods and books. The bookshelves along the walls are filled



with a wide variety of literature from old editions to the latest. Near the very entrance to the restaurant stands a Koch & Korselt grand piano from the beginning of the 20th century. The first time I went there was with my friend Vlad. When we walked around Lviv, I told him that I would really like to visit this café. He grabbed my hand, and we ran to the café. It was the evening, so the coffee shop was full of people. When we entered, he sat down at the piano and played for me. All people looked at us. I stood all red because I was terribly embarrassed. He came up to a random

table of people and asked for their table. He made an excuse that he wanted it for his date with his girlfriend. Then he treated me to fruit tea and a piece of cake. It was a beautiful evening and I felt like a princess. Usually when I go to Cabinet, I read books, think about the future, or meet friends. In this café, I find peace for my soul.



The next special place for me is the forest. I grew up near a forest in Ukraine. When I was a child, my father and I often walked in the forest. It was my dad who taught me to love the forest, he said that the forest is relaxing. As a child, I often ran into the woods when I was fighting with someone, and because it was quiet there, I could collect my thoughts. When I went to school, my class and I often went to the lesson of labor and nature lessons in the forest, looked at different trees, and saw foxes, squirrels, and other animals. For the labor lesson, we made birdhouses and hung them on trees. As a child, I even worked in the forest. My friends and I collected acorns, and we were paid money. Of course, it was very little money, but it was enough for ice cream. We also picked mushrooms and strawberries in the forest and gave them to my mother to cook dinner with. We often went to the forest for a picnic, sometimes with the family, sometimes with the youth from the church. It was a great time. For me, the forest is a special place. It relieves stress, so I would go to the forest alone usually when I felt bad or needed to think. It is in the forest that I have many good memories, and also there I can think alone. Perhaps that is why, having been

there, I feel better.

The last and most important special place for me is my parents' house. My parents' house is located in Ukraine in a small village near Vinnitsa. They have a large two story house. My parents' laughter is always heard there. I don't know why, maybe because they have many children, or maybe because there are always guests there. My parents are very fond of guests. There were always friends in our house. I have many memories in my parents' house. For example, I remember how we spent evenings by the fireplace. We played games, laughed, drank tea, prayed, and read the Bible. Our favorite games were Twister and a word guessing game. I also really liked the way they greeted me after my trips. Every time I came home, they decorated the whole house with balloons and baked sweets. One of my favor-

ite places in our house is the terrace overlooking our garden. There we usually have breakfast in the summer, drink tea and chat. The terrace is also my favorite place to read books. On summer evenings, friends from the church came there and we had a home group, we read the Bible, prayed, and sang. In sum, for me, my parents' house is a place where happiness, love and good memories are.

In conclusion the coffee shop Cabinet, the forest, and my parents' house are places filled with memories, happiness, and thoughts, so I love these places. I hope that everyone has a place with happy memories where they can just enjoy life.

**Liliya Vasilenko - ESL 47**

**Opinion Essay**

## ***A Home Is Where Your Heart Lives: Ukraine***

*This essay was originally published in issue 162.*

Life is a big and long journey. I like to travel and discover new countries. I have visited more than twenty countries. My home country is Ukraine. Now I live with my family in America, I miss so much my home country. There are several reasons that I miss my country.

First, I miss my family and friends. All my native people stayed in Ukraine, my mum, dad, sister, and all my friends. It is really hard not to be able to see my family every day. Nothing can replace communication with your own native people. Also, I miss my friends. One old friend is better than a hundred new ones. Therefore, the most I miss are my family and friends.

Second, I miss my job. In Ukraine, I had a women's clothing store. I liked my job very much. I like to communicate with people. I like helping other people to create their own style. I



loved my friendly team. That's why I really miss this every day. It's really good to have a favorite job. I miss my job.

Third, I miss Ukraine and Ukrainians. Some things we can't describe in words. We can only feel. There are a lot of beautiful countries in the world, but Ukraine is the best country for me. It's an incredible and amazing feeling when the plane lands and you step on your native land. Also, I miss Ukrainians and my native language, my native nature, my hometown.

In conclusion, in my opinion, life is a journey through yourself. A home is where your heart lives. It is really cool to try something new but eventually return home.

**Yuliia Tsybulska - ESL 47**

**Opinion Essay**

## Mavka: The Forest Song



Deep in the forests of Volyn, a forest spirit named Mavka roamed. She fell in love with a human, and in doing so, paid a heavy price. There was no happy ending in her tale, but in the world of animation, stories often take on new life. After all, who says a story needs a tragic ending?

*Mavka: The Forest Song* is a Ukrainian animated movie inspired by the play *Forest Song* by Ukrainian writer Lesya Ukrainka. It became one of the most successful films in Ukrainian cinema. The movie was in production for several years and was originally scheduled to premiere before the war, but it was only released worldwide in 2023. I had been waiting for this movie for

years, and I was worried I might not be able to watch it in the USA. However, its success grew so quickly that *Mavka: The Forest Song* was translated into other languages and premiered worldwide, including in the USA. I was lucky enough to see it at a theater in Sacramento over a year ago, and my impression reached to the sky, as the spirit of the Ukrainian forest traveled across the ocean and found its destination in the U.S.

*Mavka: The Forest Song* tells the story of the main character Mavka, with her magical dark green hair and light markings on her skin that breathe life into the entire forest. The story also tells about many other fantastic forest creatures, which give it a comedic and lighthearted touch – my favorite is Shumnyk Hush, who is always irritated and makes a lot of noise. The plot is focused on the conflict between the peaceful creatures of the forest, who just want to live in harmony, and humans, who fear them and see them as a threat. This conflict intensifies when a woman named Kylyna arrives in the village, intending to steal a special leaf from the tree that grants eternal youth.

Awakening from a long winter's sleep, Mavka is enchanted by the sound of Lukash, a young man playing a *sopilka* (a Ukrainian



woodwind instrument). Lukash accidentally discovers the magic of the forest and falls under Kylyna's control. Mavka falls in love with him, and the story goes around a battle between good and evil. However, the movie differs from Lesya Ukrainka's original play. The directors, Oleh Malamuzh and Oleksandra Ruban, focused more on the fantastical creatures and gave the story a more positive tone, moving away from the tragic side of Ukrainka's version. What's particularly great is that *Mavka: The Forest Song* has an English voiceover and is available to watch on Apple TV in both [Ukrainian](#) and [English](#).

This animated movie is about sincerity; it speaks to the heart. I love how it blends the real cultural heritage of the Volyn region with myths and legends of dark forests. It's a beautiful mix of tradition and fantasy, where every detail – from the vibrant visuals and clothing to the wonderful music – feels alive. It tells us that magic isn't just in fairy tales but in the culture, nature, and spirit of a place.

**Parrot Staff Writer: Zlata Lisovska**

## First Oscar

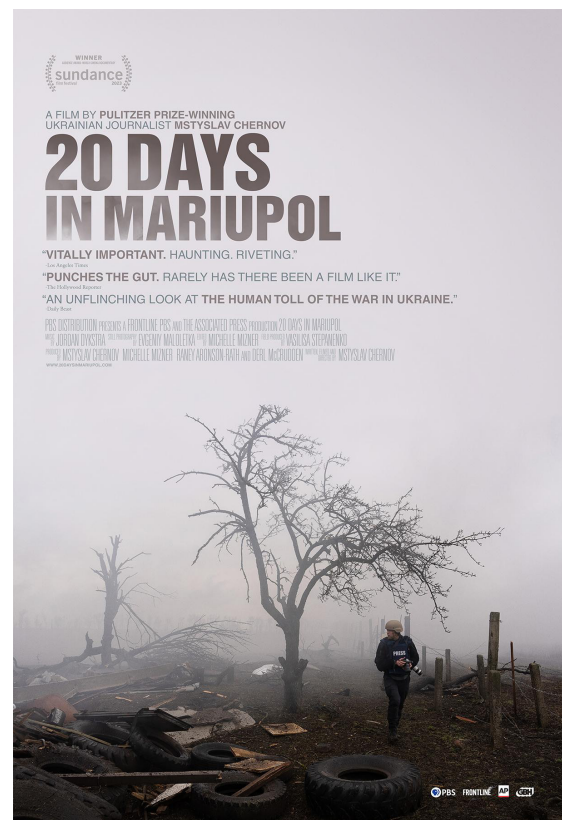


"Cinema forms memories, and memories form history," Ukrainian director and journalist Mstyslav Chernov said when his [documentary](#) *20 Days in Mariupol* [won an Oscar](#) at the 96th Academy Awards in 2024.

Chernov was in Mariupol during the first days of the full-scale invasion. For 20 days, he filmed the destruction the city suffered, showing both its suffering and strength. His documentary tells the story of a place and its people struggling to survive, facing great loss but continuing to fight.

Winning the Oscar was a historic moment for Ukraine. It was the country's

first Oscar in cinema, a recognition of the strength and courage in the face of war.



**Parrot Staff Writer: Olivia Falquois**

## Vacation in Ukraine

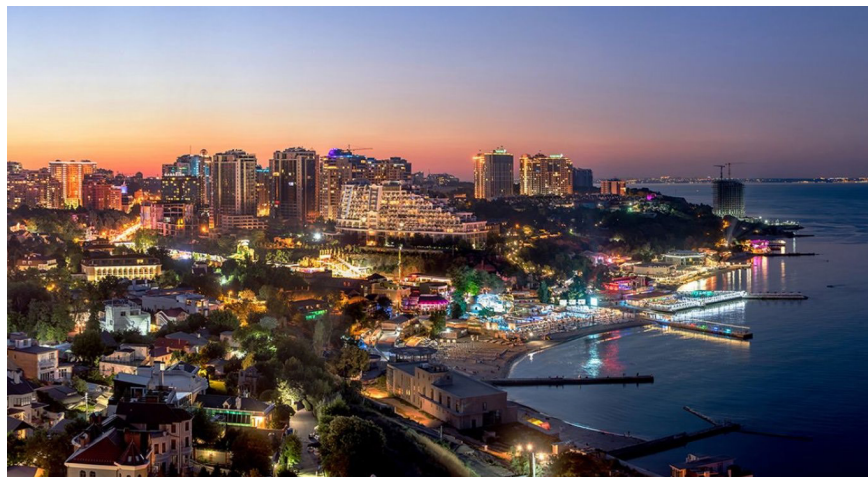
*This essay was originally published in issue 147.*



Ukraine is a beautiful country in the east of Europe where everybody can find a vacation of his choice. I can say without exaggeration that no matter what types of recreation you prefer, exploring Ukraine you would have a vacation of your dreams. There are three types of vacation people take in Ukraine: vacation in villages, vacation in the mountains, and vacation on the sea.

The first type of vacation people take in Ukraine is vacation in villages. At first sight, it doesn't look tempting, but exploring Ukrainian villages people can enjoy several advantages. When I was a child, my

parents sent me for a vacation in the village of Chernyavka, which is near my hometown Zhytomyr. As a little girl, I was completely satisfied spending my vacation in this place and seeing domestic animals, playing with



my friends in our backyard, and living close to the wild nature. Ukrainian parents prefer that children spend their vacation in villages rather than in other places because it is not expensive, their children live with the relatives, and kids can eat true organic food every day during vacation. My good Ukrainian friend, Boris, sent his wife with children every year for two months on vacation to a village. During vacation in a village, they were always in fresh air, they drank fresh cow milk, and they poured themselves a cold water every morning. As a result, his kids and wife returned from vacation healthy, full of strength, and happy.

The second type of vacation people take in Ukraine is vacation in the mountains. Our country has the gorgeous Carpathian Mountains, which are in the west of Ukraine. These mountains are a favorite vacation spot for thousands of Ukrainians and foreigners from around the world. My friend, Yuliya, never missed the opportunity to go on vacation in the Carpathian Mountains during winter time because it is the peak season in the ski

resort Bukovel, which is the best ski resort in Ukraine. The Bukovel is the perfect place for those that love skiing, hiking, and hot springs. In contrast, my friend, Yuri, goes to the Carpathian Mountains in summer

because he loves hiking in the mountains when all around is green. A few years ago, he climbed to the highest point of Ukraine, the Hoverla Mountain. Yuri shared with me that he really enjoys going on vacation in the

mountains, and for him it is even better than vacation at the sea. A vacation in the Carpathian Mountains is always an unforgettable experience for those who love extreme sports as well as for those who like a relaxing holiday.

The third type of vacation people take in Ukraine is a vacation on the sea. Ukrainian banks are washed by the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. People that love warm water, an inexpensive vacation, and healing mud, prefer going to the Sea of Azov. My aunt, Valentina, likes going on vacation to this sea because the water in it is not deep, so the water temperature is very warm. Other people prefer going on vacation to the Black Sea, especially to the city of Odesa. This city is known as a port city, but, also, as a resort town. Going

on vacation to Odesa, people combine a rest on the beach with visiting the city. My good friend, Anna, always went on vacation to Odesa because after a day on the beach, she liked to go to one of the restaurants to spend time with friends.

In conclusion, people that live in Ukraine have a wide choice of where to go on vacation. They make their choice based on the cost of travel, the individual preferences, and the things that they want to do during vacation. Types of vacation people take in Ukraine are vacation in villages, vacation in the mountains, and vacation on the sea.

**Kateryna Maksymenko - ESL W50**

**Descriptive Essay**

## Discussion: George Washington and War in Ukraine

*This essay was originally published in issue 170.*

### **The Biggest Surprise or an Interesting Moment in Revolutionary War**



"A dangerous mission lies before you all," the man shouted above the wind. "But I want you to have courage." (p.29) George Washington said these words to his men. After these words, a big battle was ahead.

The men were very tired and these words motivated them to finish their mission. These words gave his men courage. This was a dangerous mission because the weather was terrible and they were losing the war.

I think this is an interesting moment to me because the country that I came from, Ukraine, is at war today also. The weather is also very cold and a lot of soldiers, kids, and women are cold and tired from this war. It is snowing and cold and there is still an important mission that lies ahead of Ukraine. They also have to show courage to win this mission for them and their people. Lastly, I like this saying because life in general can be hard and dangerous, but with courage, we can accomplish many of our goals.

**Inna Pshehorlinskyy, ESL 37**

## I Miss Ukraine

*This essay was originally published in issue 162.*

Everyone has a country in which they were born. This country is called the homeland. My homeland is Ukraine, a picturesque corner of the region where I spent my childhood and youth. Where I took my first steps, said my first word, went to my first school and did my first achievements. All of these come to mind with fond memories. These memories will always bring me back to the country of my birth. That is why I miss my country: friends and relatives, memories that inspire warmth, and weather.

The first reason I miss my country is my friends and family. I have a large family of aunts, uncles, sisters, and brothers. I miss them. Especially my grandparents, who have supported and helped me since childhood. My grandmother cooked deliciously, and I often stayed for a few days because my grandfather told funny stories that I wanted to listen to. I also miss my friends very much. We studied with them and went through the first failures and the first victories. We had fun although there were difficulties, we still remained friends. I believe that having a good loving family and loyal friends is a treasure, and I miss them so much.

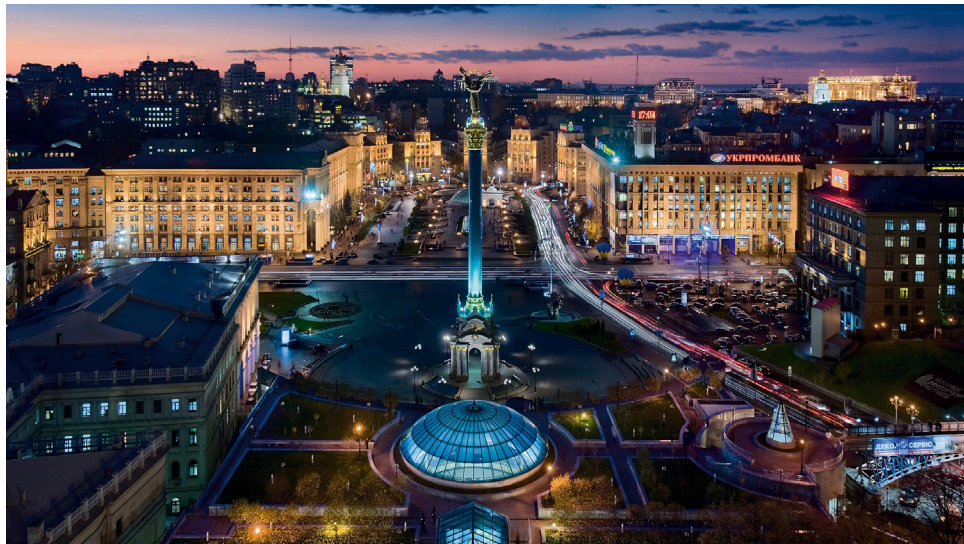
The second reason is fond memories. When I was a child, I rarely thought about problems or troubles. I had carefree childhood in which there was eternal, true friend-

ship, letters written by hand. Also, I spent my childhood without the internet when we walked on the street all day. And we were happy, having fun and interesting times in the company of friends, brothers, and sisters. Warm memories often relate to childhood. Only in childhood can you just live and enjoy the simplest things. When I think about Ukraine, my homeland, such memories bring warmth and joy.

The third reason that I miss Ukraine is the weather. Ukraine has balanced weather. There are three months of spring, three months of summer, three months of autumn, and three months of winter. When I went to the lake to swim, I liked that I

could play snowballs in three to four months. And as a child it brought joy. Another advantage of the weather in childhood was spring, summer, and winter vacation. Moreover, the easy transition from heat to cold was comfortable for health. This weather is loved by both adults and children.

I miss the transition of the season. I miss my country very much. Although I am thankful for the country in which I live.



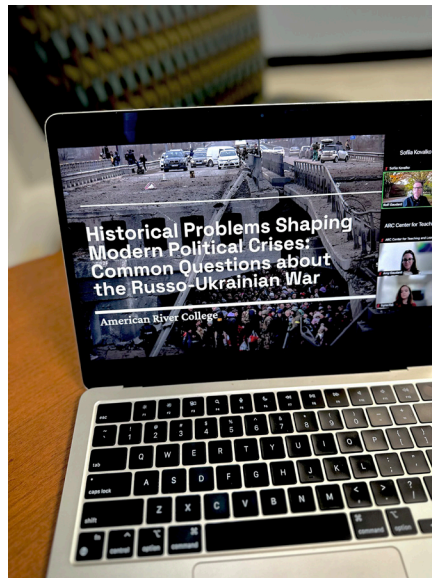
**Iryna R. - ESL 47**

**Opinion Essay**

## Does Ukraine Belong to Russia?

"I wanted to give that talk years ago," said Rolf Gaudard, a History Professor at ARC, as he began his event, *Historical Problems Shaping Modern Political Crises: Common Questions about the Russo-Ukrainian War*. The event was held online by the ARC Center for Teaching & Learning (CTL) on February 27, just three days after the three-year anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Professor Gaudard focused on the central question: "Does Ukraine really belong to Russia?" The discussion he led was powerful and deeply engaging. Professor Gaudard covered key events and reasons behind Russia's focus on Eastern Ukraine and Crimea. He highlighted that even Russian-speaking Ukrainians do not share the same mentality as Russians. He provided statistics that Russian-speaking Ukrainians do not want to be part of Russia; they want to remain in Ukraine. There was also a discussion about Ukraine's desire to join the European Union and NATO, as well as the negative consequences of the Budapest Memorandum signed in 1994, which led to Ukraine's denuclearization. The lingering influence of the Soviet regime in Ukraine has shaped Russian perceptions, leading them to believe that Ukraine is theirs.



Professor Gaudard concluded that Ukraine does not belong to Russia; Ukraine has its own language, identity, and culture. The problem is that Russia still cannot accept this, because, as the Professor pointed out, "they see Ukraine as their artificial creation."

This event was incredibly important because history – factual history – grounds the understanding that everything happening now is not just a coincidence. The war is ongoing. It has not lasted just three years, nor even 11 years since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014, when they occupied Crimea and Eastern Ukraine. This is a war that has been going on for centuries, but for all Ukrainians, it feels like our land is constantly, eternally, being invaded by Russia. Ukraine hears that the world is exhausted from this war, but even as Ukraine is truly exhausted, Ukrainians still stand and will always stand – at least for the love of their homeland, for the love of freedom, and for what is truly theirs, as history has shown.

**Parrot Staff Writer: Sofiia Kovalko**

### QUESTIONS/COMMENTS?

Student Editors: **Tuyet Le, Emmanuel Madrid, Mohammed El mrani, Sayed Edres Sadiqi, Asila Sadiqi, and Sofiia Kovalko.**

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