Student Spotlight: Javier Santiago Guzman

Javier Santiago Guzman is a seventeen-year-old Colombian student. He has been studying with us at the ELI for three semesters already, but recent events brought his talents to our attention. Many students enjoyed a great night of bowling with friends at Splitsville on Thursday, August 15th, but those that went were also treated with a bit of a surprise as Javier showed off his skills in the alley.

Javier told us that his skills for bowling came from the training he’s received in his hometown of Bogota, Colombia. Before bowling Javier spent time playing tennis with his father, but he told his father that he wanted to try bowling. They found Bolera El Salitre where a bowling trainer told them about summer camps to teach kids how to bowl. He signed up, and Javier instantly fell in love.

“Bowling is not only my hobby; it’s my sport,” Javier said as he recalled these memories, “When I come I forget about my problems and just bowl.” He went on to say that what he really loves about this sport is that you have to be calm. If you are angry, he said, then you can’t focus and your score will suffer. By this explanation it is understandable why Javier is so attached. He describes himself as a little shy, fun, and above all else happy. “I like to be happy every day. It is unusual to see me angry,” said Javier.

Bowling with the ELI was one of many activities Javier has enjoyed while studying here. What he likes about the ELI the most is that it is not just classes. There are countless extra-curricular activities that students can take part in, and it has led Javier to make friends from many different countries. One benefit of making these new friends is learning about various cultures, and even trying new kinds of food. Javier laughed as he told us that some of these foods were delicious, while others were just weird. Still, he is extremely appreciative of his time here. Once he’s finished his language studies he hopes to study business at FIU.

Ice Skating With the ELI

Sources: Livescience.com About.com

The ELI will be hosting another exciting event on Thursday, August 28th at the Kendall Ice Arena. Students will join for a night of fun on the ice with the possibility of Karaoke, too. What you may not know, however, is that ice skating dates back as far as 3000 B.C. making this activity a perfect opportunity to explore the culture and history behind this present-day pastime.

While the origins of ice skating are still under speculation, many scientists agree that the most likely place it began was in Finland. One article by Heather Whipps titled The 5,000-Year-Old Origin of Ice Skating says that Finland’s lakes form a tight network making traveling through them much easier than going around. Of course, winters caused the lakes to freeze over, and, given the harshness Finns faced, a plan needed to be devised. The hunters and weapon makers of that time crafted a
Literary Corner by Alyssa Alayeto

O Captain! My Captain!
By Walt Whitman

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather’d every rack, the prize we sought
is won, The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;

But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribbon’d wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;

Here Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck,
You’ve fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,
The ship is anchor’d safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;

Exult O shores, and ring O bells! But I with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

Source: Leaves of Grass (David McKay, 1891)

Selected Reading: “O Captain! My Captain!” by Walt Whitman

Recently the world lost a great entertainer, an icon of laughter, and a man of unyielding generosity: Robin Williams. This man was always an inspiration to me growing up, and he always will be. Therefore, I’d like to dedicate this article to him and his legacy.

Poetry has always been a widely used form of artistic expression for many human emotions including love, adulation, and, most poignant in this case, grieving. Walt Whitman’s elegy “O Captain! My Captain!” is one of his most memorable pieces. Originally written to mourn Abraham Lincoln’s death, this poem has since transcended the days of Civil War through its connection to the late Robin Williams thanks to his role in the film Dead Poets’ Society. Whether in its original context or with this new layer, this poem’s lines still drip with mourning for the loss of a man fighting for the pure purpose of keeping people united.

While Whitman and Lincoln did not have any real relationship with each other, Whitman had dreamed of a man like Lincoln to be the “Redeemer President of These States” revealed in his political piece The Eighteenth Presidency. Whitman abhorred slavery and wanted an inclusive Union of equality. Lincoln rose to that standard beautifully, fighting his anti-slavery campaign and for the preservation of the Union. Of course, not everyone agreed with this position and a group called Confederacy in the South claimed secession from the United States. The Civil War began as the country fought to bring the Confederate States back under the Union’s government. Unfortunately, Lincoln met his untimely death at the hands of John Wilks Booth on April 14, 1865, just four days before the Confederates surrendered and the Union was restored.

Grief struck Whitman at the pure tragedy of watching his hero fall before realizing the prize of his mission. In the poem “O Captain! My Captain!” we see the gravity of this tremendous loss. This poem is an example of an extended metaphor where the Captain is Lincoln, the fearful trip is the Civil War, the ship is the United States, and the prize is the preservation of the Union and passing of the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery. In the opening lines Whitman depicts the “weather’d” land of the states as the war ends in victory, showing that with this prize came a loss in tainted soil foreshadowing further woe. The consistent rhyme scheme in the first stanza provides the music for this celebration, but the first couplet’s slant rhyme in the second stanza changes the tone to match our new knowledge of the Captain’s, Lincoln’s, death. Whitman implores to his Captain to notice the celebration for his good work claiming that it’s only

“...relentless fighters for love, liberation, justice, and humanity.”

Literary Corner continued on page 3
Ice Skating With the ELI (continued)

...ice skating is an ever transforming activity that provided new cultural aspects and economic growth opportunities.

where this word came, changed the model of the ice skate from bone to wood with bottoms of flat iron. They also added the use of poles to push the skater forward. Later on in approximately the year 1500 the Dutch changed the skates again to a blade where skaters could navigate without the poles in a move called the Dutch Roll- a technique that is still in practice today. Having this advantage, the Dutch took to the ice in the Battle of Ijsselmeer in 1572, surprising their more powerful Spanish rivals in combat. Today the closest thing to combative skating is the widely loved sport of ice hockey.

Despite its origins of pure functionality and ease in navigation, this form of travel soon became a sort of art. A man by the name of Jackson Haines took to the ice with dancing and tricks, and modified his skates to double-plated metal attached directly to his boots to allow for more mobility and leaps. This revolutionized skating, and prompted the commencement of skating clubs throughout the United States, Canada, and some parts of Europe. In 1876, the first indoor ice skating rink was developed in London, making the first of over 1800 indoor rinks existing today. Moreover, the modification of skates created an industry for the production and distribution of ice skating products.

Skating transformed from dancing for leisure to dancing for sport in 1908 when it was first designed as an Olympic sport. This subsequently transitioned into multiple variations of the sport. Today under the ice skating category, both Olympic and otherwise, are the sports of figure skating, speed skating, hockey, and more. Whether you choose to undertake this activity for leisure, art, or sport, one thing is certain: ice skating is an ever transforming activity that provided new cultural aspects and economic growth opportunities. Whatever your reason, know that you’re taking part in a five thousand year old activity that has transformed cultures around the world.

Literary Corner (continued)

a dream his Captain is dead. Realizing in the last stanza that his Captain truly has died he sees the country returning to a state of security, but is unable to walk the land with light spirits.

Similarly, fans of Robin Williams have been unable to find peace in light of his death, or a way to make sense of it. Many fans turned to Whitman’s poem, which was referenced in the movie Dead Poets’ Society as Williams’ character asked his students to call him Captain. His character, Professor Keating, promoted poetry, art, and love as the things we live for, and encouraged his students to seize the day not knowing which would be their last. In the end the students rose against the schools’ overruling and disregard for the benefit of Keating’s teachings by standing on their desks symbolically seeing him from a different perspective, as he had taught them, and calling out, “O Captain! My Captain!” While this was just a character in a movie, the parallels in roles and themes Williams chose throughout his career cannot be ignored. As an artist Williams portrayed relentless fighters for love, liberation, justice, and humanity. As a man Williams promoted love and laughter, and worked behind the scenes to make people smile and notice the wonder of a moment. Despite the loss many people feel we can look back with mournful eyes to the poem that made us believe in a noble leader. There we can find that the fearful trip was his battle with depression, and the battle of discrimination and lack of care or understanding that every person with mental illness faces. The ship is the collective group of supporters and sufferers of mental diseases weathering the storms of hate and internal torture. The prize would be an ideal humanity, and understanding for those suffering; understanding, especially, for the man who dedicated his life to spreading this very love: our Captain, Robin Williams.

Mental illnesses are real and detrimental diseases countless individuals and families endure. Unfortunately, it faces a stigma society has placed on it that those suffering are different, broken, and pathetic. People suffering are not pathetic, just like slaves in Lincoln’s time were not less than human. People suffering are in need of the love our Captains have promoted, and we need to carry their legacy of not just tolerance, but humanity, so that their deaths will not have come without the prize they fought for.
The ELI newsletter is a bi-weekly publication of the English Language Institute that updates students on upcoming events and important dates. It invites students to participate in its publication process. It also includes news, trivia, quotes and reading suggestions. You may email any suggestions to Alyssa Alayeto at: alyalayeto@gmail.com.