



Words Abound

Inside the world of Paly Student Authors

You're sitting in the Paly library, studying feverishly for an exam the next day. It's time for a break. As you peruse the contents of the fantasy shelf, you come across a typical-looking novel. Yet, there is more than what meets the eye, for when you look a little closer you recognize the author from your English class. Welcome to the world of Paly authors.

Paly students have written some great material in their journey as authors. Colleen Wang, a senior, wrote the science fiction short story, "Roses Watered by a Robot's Tears," and its sequel "Memories Revived in a Robot's Eyes." The series takes place 100 years in the future, when AI technology improves to a point where it can develop human emotions. The concept of the book was partly influenced by a video she had seen about parents leaving their children in rural China to work in the cities for money.

"The situation was really sad," Wang said. "So I thought, 'What if we let AI learn emotions, and had them parent the

children?'"

Another Paly author, senior Andy Ng, wrote a fantasy novel called "The Everyday Occurrences of a Stranded God," following a powerful mage who is sent to Earth where he loses all his powers. Ng wanted to sway from the fantasy trope of a non-magical person being sent into a magical world and becoming the "chosen one."

"Once I got it published physically, it was pretty wild, and to see all the work I've done actually culminate into a physical book."

Colleen Wang,
Senior and author of "Roses Watered by a Robot's Tears"

"I thought it would be interesting to take an already super strong fantasy individual at the top of their game and then instead whisk them over to earth where they end up having no powers at all and then see how they cope with it," Ng said.

Both Ng and Wang are self-published and have their books available to read in the Paly Library, which has proved to be very rewarding.

"Once I got it published physically, it was pretty wild," Wang said. "And to see all the work I've done actually culminate into a physical book, I had no idea that this was possible before I started."

The self-publication process is a lot easier than many might think, and can be done on the internet relatively quickly.



Text and design by MATHEW SIGNORELLO-KATZ and ISAAC HILLESLAND • Art by Barvart

“Amazon has this thing called KDP, it’s a Kindle publishing site where it lets authors self-publish,” Ng said. “The process is actually really easy.”

Publication, while a lot easier than it has been in the past, can be an expensive process which is still inaccessible to many. This is especially true for high school students who may not have the economic assistance, technology and opportunities.

However, publishing is not necessarily the most important aspect about being a student author. Having the ability to write powerful content, especially during the period of growth which they face in high school as students, is the bigger goal.

The writing process as a student author is one of learning from mistakes and being persistent. Even Ng, who has gone through the publishing process, understands that what is written will never be completely satisfactory.

“Whatever you want to write, just write it because it is never going to be [as] perfect as you want it to be,” Ng said. “If you spend too much time waiting for your skills to develop to a point where you’ll be able to perfectly put your idea on paper and keep procrastinating until then, you’ll never actually have written anything because you’ll never actually become perfect.”

Ng feels grateful to be exposed to writing classes here at Paly. Numerous writing programs such as journalism and classes like Analysis of the Writer’s Craft are offered to all

students.

“[At my old school], we never really got the chance to write, and that’s something that Paly has really offered me the chance to be able to do,” Ng said. “[These opportunities are] really cool.”

Lucy Filppu teaches Analysis of the Writer’s Craft, a class which is not offered at most public high schools. She assists in the process of supporting and teaching Paly students to explore their writing and voice.

“A lot of the kids who come appreciate that we are not writing academic essays about literature,” Filppu said. “We’re studying literature as writers ourselves.”

Filppu believes that the value of students’ voices, especially those who are less heard and may have less opportunities, is more important than publish-

ing books just for the sake of publishing.

“I’m far more interested in kids who may or may not feel their voices heard at Paly and have very compelling life experiences and imaginations,” Filppu said. “Those kids’ stories absolutely knock my socks off almost every year in Writer’s Craft.”

In the transitional period of high school, it is most important for students to find their voice and creative side as they discover themselves, and learn in whatever way or form that may take. Writing has proven to be a great outlet for many students to share these stories, no matter the success of their work.

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