

A Collection of Writings
by
Learners of Core Skills



Bord Oideachais & Ollúna
LUIMNIGH & AN CHLÁIR
LIMERICK & CLARE
Education & Training Board

**COLLEGE OF FURTHER
EDUCATION & TRAINING**

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Foreword

Welcome to the 34th edition of *Simply Said*, the annual collection of writings by learners taking part in programmes with Core Skills, which is part of Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board. This issue marks 34 years of published writings, which is a wonderful achievement for our learners.

The writers of *Simply Said* attend classes across our centres in County Clare, north, south, east, west and Ennis. This year we also have stories from our learners from Ukraine. The stories are remarkably poignant, personal and uplifting. They serve as a record of this past year. There are a variety of stories, poems and recipes included. Topics cover farming, travelling, tips about life, hobbies, sports, living in Ireland, the outcomes of returning to education as well as the very moving stories about the impact of the war in Ukraine and settling into life in Ireland.

The picture on this year's front cover is of a textile art work made by learner Olha Burlaka. It is sewn using applique, embroidery and patchwork from cotton and recycled fabrics. It is a view of a small town, perhaps in Italy. The piece was facilitated by tutor Nicola Barnes. The picture on this year's back cover is of a 3D art piece called 'Belonging'. This was a Family Learning group art project and it expresses the relationship between Ireland and Ukraine. The girl feels that she belongs to the new land of Ireland and the 3D clay pieces on her scarf represent different stories left behind in Ukraine. The piece was facilitated by tutor Mary Khalil.

Thank you to all the tutors, who encourage learners to value the knowledge and life experience that they have and support them on their learning journeys. Thanks to everyone for the planning and production of this year's publication which is bigger than ever before.

Congratulations to everyone who has contributed to *Simply Said* in 2023 and we hope you enjoy this publication.

The Core Skills Team

June 2023

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The love bird

The love bird sings so sweet and true,
The love bird sings and flaps his wings,
A song that's made for you.
As I look out, the sky so dark
And when I think of you,
I always think when I'm in bed,
That I was meant for you.

By Rachel

The book I want to read again

The book's name is *This Morning I Met a Whale* by Michael Morpurgo (published in 2008). I like to read books which are based on real stories and this book is one of those.

Characters:

1. Michael - a boy, who lives in London, near Battersea Bridge. He gets up early, because he likes to go birdwatching. It's his favourite hobby. He usually goes just before first light. It's the best time. He can see the sunrise and the whole world waking up around him. One morning, the most extraordinary thing happened. He met a whale.
2. Whale - a bottlenose whale (a real whale), which brings an important message.
3. Michael's mother - in the beginning she didn't believe her son, but later she changed her opinion.
4. Mrs. Fergusson - his teacher, who showed great understanding and kindness.

Main story:

One morning at sunrise young Michael spots a whale on the shores of the Thames. He thinks that he must be dreaming, but the creature is real. Michael starts talking with the whale. He was sure that the whale had

something to say to him. Then it happened, the whale spoke! His voice was like an echoing whisper inside Michael's head, like a talking thought. The whale brought a message. It all began with the whale's grandfather. He promised his grandfather that he would come and find a child to whom he could pass an important message from the whale's grandfather.

The whale said: 'We get tired. We get old too, and we get sick, just like people do. We have a lot more in common with people that you know. I have come to help you to save yourselves before it's too late, because if you save yourselves, then you'll be saving us too.'

The grandfather said: 'When you get there, find a child because children are kind. They'll help you; they'll listen to you; they'll believe you.'

The grandfather told his story when some children saved his own life, and he never forgot it.

The whale said: 'We whales, all know and people refuse to understand.'

The whale's grandfather explained that he (whale) must make sure it's a child, to whom to tell. 'The old ones are greedy. They would not have done what they have done. They're too old to listen, too old to change. The young ones will listen and understand. Just like they (some children) saved me, they can save the world. If they know, they will want to put it right - I know they will. They just need telling. All you have to do is tell them.'

So, that's why a whale found young Michael and what's why he had come.

The whale told Michael: 'My grandfather said that there's a lot of rubbish in the water and everywhere and all the killings have to stop. People are killing the sea we live in! People are killing the air we breathe! People are killing the world! Only the children will put it right!'

Michael promised the whale that he would tell everyone they have to change the way they live! He knew that he would keep this promise for the rest of his life!

In school Michael's teacher, Mrs. Fergusson, asked the children to write a story about something that really happened. Michael wrote more than he had ever written before. When the teacher read Michael's story, they didn't believe him and laughed at him.

At this time, Mr. Jenner, the headteacher, came into the classroom, and told the class to get ready to go down to the river because a whale was beached there. Everyone was shocked (classmates and teachers).

Then Michael's teacher showed a great understanding and great kindness.

Michael ran on ahead and the rest of the story tells of the whale's desperate struggle to swim back to his family.

Unfortunately, this story has a sad ending...the whale stopped breathing and died.

P.S. I cried at the end of this story.

I think everyone, not only children, should read this book, because of its important message.

By Mila

The longest trip I have ever had

I thought for a long time about what to write about. I concluded that the most important topic for every Ukrainian now is the war in our native country. There is not a single family that has not been affected by this terrible, senseless war. In almost every family someone is fighting or has already died in the war. People who are lucky to go to other countries are happy and unhappy in their own way. Happy because they are safe and unhappy because everyone in Ukraine has relatives, friends, who could not leave for various reasons. Among them are many patriots, elderly people who would never leave their home country. Those who have left have a certain sense of guilt towards those who are in potential danger. We do not know if we will ever be able to return

home, whether our house will be intact, what awaits us. The future looks very hazy.

People have abandoned their homes, favourite jobs, businesses, their usual lives. And we get it that no one will ever understand our pain, except for those who have already been in such a situation and survived the war. It is simply unrealistic to understand from the outside what a person feels while living in a military country with constant air-raid warnings or one who left and does not imagine whether he will ever return. It is safe to say that only now we have learned to appreciate what we had before: our loved ones, our home, our work, education, medicine, our Ukraine.

We are very grateful to Ireland for hosting us. There are wonderful, kind people here. But we believe that this forced and longest trip in our lives will soon end with the victory of Ukraine and returning home. I miss you, my homeland.

By Viktória

Our winter trip to the Burren

On a cold and foggy winter morning, on the 9th December 2022, our English class set off on an adventure. We met in the cafeteria at Ennis college, got on the bus and started our journey.

First, we drove through the town of Ennis, then Corofin heading towards the Burren. We stopped at a farm outside Corofin to meet our guide, Marie. She invited us to see her farm, introduced us to her lovely bunch of ponies (Snowflake, Ginger, Oreo and others) and her friendly dog Bella. We walked around a frosty white field looking at the beautiful wintry nature. We fed the ponies with apples and carrots. Afterwards, Marie invited us to her house for a nice hot cup of tea and scones she had baked for us earlier that morning.

After a warm Irish welcome, we got on the bus again and after several minutes we arrived at the Burren National Park. Marie was telling us

about the Burren, its flora and fauna, her family history and their relationship with the land and much more.

We were walking, listening, asking questions, talking and admiring a truly magical Burren landscape. It was a very chilly and foggy day, which made the magical stories of fairies, stone giants, clints and grikes very believable. We continued hiking, taking photos, stopping and admiring everything around us. When we got back to Marie's farm, she presented everyone with her book *Stones and Stories*, which was really nice. With thank yous and goodbyes we finished our adventure.

We came back to Ennis very pleased and happy with hearts full of beautiful memories.

By Antonina, Maryna, Olha, Abdelazeim, Haitham, Jawdat, Sadou

Frump and Lump

One day a brother and sister are walking through the forest. It was a nice day and the sun was bursting out of the clouds. This brother and sister were young teenagers and decided to have a stroll in the woods.

As the children walked further into the forest, they noticed the sun was starting to set. They had no clue of the time. Harry and Elena, the two kids, started to panic.

'Hold on a minute, Elena, you didn't expect me to come into the forest unprepared, did you now?' said Harry, laughing contentedly. Elena looked surprised, and just gave a flicker of her eyelids, and a calm smile, and said 'Where are we headed, my brother?' Harry winked and said 'Wherever the wind takes us, Dear. Looks like a storm's brewing.'

Harry pulled out his shiny torch and colourful umbrella and gave one to Elena. They continued walking into the misty evening. Suddenly, the sky was starting to fill with what looked like birds, soaring in the night air. Elena panicked.

'Alright Elena, I have my torch; I will sort this out.' Harry pointed to the sky with his torch to suss out the strange happening. 'What is it?' Elena cried, 'What is it?' Harry looked closely with his powerful torch and said, 'Birds flying, it's a sign of bad weather. We'd better head off home.' Elena yelled, 'Look, Harry, look!'

Suddenly, the birds were gone, and the rain and wind started. 'You were right Harry, let's find a place to go, quickly.' They both put up their umbrellas and struggled forward to what seemed to be a distant house or cottage of some sort, deep in the forest. 'Come on', shouted Harry, 'we've got shelter.' As they approached the strange mansion, it seemed quiet. Suddenly, thunder and lightning started. They ran for the door. On the outside they spotted a message on a wooden notice board. It read;

'Dare who enter
He or she
Who this mansion meant for me
In the darkness all the night
No escape till morning light
A surprise you may see
Two strange people let it be.'

The teenagers were startled. What could it mean? They entered in suspense. 'The door locked itself', Elena cried. 'Harry is my name, escaping is my game', replied Harry. The door handle was locked solid. The two approached what seemed to be a long winding staircase. It was dark and dreary, they were taking their time. They could hear what sounded like a jittering, chattering and weird noise upstairs. Elena stayed close to Harry. They walked up the stairs slowly. Approaching the top, the noise became nearer. It seemed to be coming from behind them. They walked faster and faster until they came to a room. It said on a notice on the door;

'Frump and Lump
Thump, thump, thurrip
That's the sound that makes you jump
Frump and Lump
your time has come'

Elena and Harry didn't know what to do at this point. Elena pushed open the door. The noises then became stronger and louder. They barred the door down shut. The noises stopped. They were both scrunched up tense by the door. Then, all of a sudden, the doors started shaking and the ground started to move. Elena and Harry noticed the door on the ground. Harry went to open it to see what it was. What appeared to be strange small men, descending from the ceiling. Two small voices said;

'Hi, I'm Frump.'

'Hi, I'm Lump.'

Thanks for letting go my hump.

Without a releaser where'd we be?

In the ceiling now, forever free.'

Elena and Harry started to freak. 'Calm down. Our names are Frump and Lump. We come in peace. We are gremlins from the other world.'

Elena and Harry said, 'You come in peace?'

Then, poof! Guess what? The gremlins disappeared!

'We are going back to our world now, Gremlinsville, goodnight.'

Bang! Just like that, screams were heard all over the house. Aaah, aaah, aaah!

'Hey, are you kids alright?', said Mum.

'Yes', said Elena. 'Yes', said Harry. 'We're in bed', cried the two shook teenagers.

'You must have awakened from a dream.' said Mum.

'Yes', they cried. The strangest dream you could ever imagine!

By Rachel

My course

I am attending a course at the moment in the FET Centre Ennis Campus. The course is local history, folklore and fairies. I attend every Tuesday from 11am to 1 pm. I am really enjoying the course especially learning about our local history.

There are many more people on the course with me and it will run until May. I have made friends on the course. I hope to participate in more courses like this in the future.

Thanks to FET Centre Ennis for the opportunity to do this.

By Gerard

Why lifelong learning is important

I've been learning all my life. Indeed, life itself forced me to do this; not to improve self-esteem, but to survive. Unfortunately, a lot of really dramatic events happened in my beloved Ukraine and have brought so many terrible sufferings to common Ukrainians.

In 1986, when I was at school, our Chernobyl was the site of the world's worst nuclear disaster. The Soviet authorities had hidden information about the accident for a long time and people were taken out under red flags to the May Day parade, although the norm of radiation was exceeded 100 times!

In 1991, when I graduated from school with honours and went to university, the Soviet Union had collapsed and Ukraine declared independence. From chaos and crime to freedom and opportunity - this period in Ukrainian history was sort of a rollercoaster ride - one we commonly refer to as the 'wild 90s'. A period of extreme currency inflation, a declining economy and standard of living brought great hardship to most of the population. Daily life in Ukraine became a struggle. After graduating from university with honours, in 1997 I started working as a bank economist. At the same time, I continued postgraduate studying in order to get a PhD and to improve my job prospects in the future.

My long, hard, personal journey, from an economist position to the Bank treasurer-board member, took place against the backdrop of successive political and economic crises in Ukraine for the next twenty years. One of the biggest political crisis, 'Orange Revolution' erupted in 2004 after people started massive street protests in Kyiv and other cities, because they looked towards improved relations with the European Union.

The phrase 'a point of no return' is often used in relation to the 'Revolution of Dignity' that happened in 2014 and became one of the most important events of the Ukrainian state-building process. The revolution achieved the ousting of a dictator-president and the resignation of his government. Ukraine chose the European vector for development and became an associated member of the EU. However, after the revolution's conclusion Russia launched an attack on Ukraine's sovereignty and territory by occupying Crimea and commencing the war in Donbas.

Political upheavals and military conflict weakened the national currency hryvnia, the Ukrainian economy shrank again. As a result, the National Bank of Ukraine declared over 100 banks insolvent. The banking crash, which has been called the 'bank collapse', hit me hard personally – my bank failed. The time came when my PhD became really useful and I got a job at the university in 2015. It was a completely new and unfamiliar activity for me, so I had to return to study again. As an associate professor I needed to develop my pedagogical skills for teaching.

Without any doubt, 2022 will remain in my memory as the most horrible period of our history, since it was the year of the greatest losses for our nation. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths and instigated Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War II. About 8 million Ukrainians have fled the country. My family were among them.

I am deeply grateful to the Irish people for their amazing support. Their kindness and generosity is overwhelming and inspiring. I really would like

to work and be more helpful to Ireland for enhancing my sense of meaning and life satisfaction. This is why I need to learn further again.

By Oleg

Summer holiday 2021

It was wonderful to be on a holiday with my family in July 2021, especially after the lockdown. I was sure I would never move outside the County Clare again with all the Covid 19 travel restrictions. We travelled to Belmullet in County Mayo for a week at the sea. The town was close by on The Wild Atlantic coast and it had a tidal pool which was safe. Many families enjoyed swimming in it, without worrying about rough seas or currents, and it had lifeguards. The pool filled up when the tide came in.

I like local history, so I explored the local Lighthouse, Blacksod's history. In the history of mankind, this lighthouse weather forecasts played a very important role in the D-Day landings. The weather report came from Blacksod Lighthouse in World War II.

The Irish coast guardsman and lighthouse keeper, Ted Sweeney, and the local postmistress, Maureen Sweeney, had no idea that the lives of more than 150,000 Allied troops would hang on their words.

It was a fateful call, as they watched the barometer fall rapidly, that indicated a major storm was due. Mary Sweeney passed on the information to Ballina, who sent the readings to Dublin, before the information was secretly transmitted to the British. The Sweeney's report from the Coast Guard station convinced General Dwight D Eisenhower to delay the D-Day invasion for 24 hours. This decision averted a military catastrophe and changed the course of the Second World War.

75 years ago, on June 6th the invasion of Normandy, which had a code-named 'Operation Overlord'. This assault on Hitler's 'Fortress Europe' signalled the beginning of the end of the Nazi regime in Europe and the German's surrender less than a year later. Some 5,000 ships and over

11,000 aircraft carrying approximately 156,000 Allied troops into battle on D-Day

Now, after a meticulous examination of the 70-year-old weather records conducted by Irish Met Eireann forecasters, details have now emerged of how the Blacksod Lighthouse forecast changed the course of history.

Years of planning for the Allied invasion came down to one crucial but uncontrollable factor in the days before D-Day – the weather.

Separate observations were taken at various locations by Royal Air Force, Royal Navy, and United States Army Air Force meteorologists, but an accurate forecast from the Irish Meteorological Service, based on the observations from Blacksod Lighthouse on the Mullet peninsula, was the most vital.

Blacksod Lighthouse's importance was because it was the first land-based observation station in Europe where weather readings could be professionally taken on the prevailing European Atlantic westerly weather systems.

Maureen Sweeney, the Irish post mistress, played an extraordinary role in the timing of the D-Day landings 75 years ago – saving the lives of thousands of Allied troops in the process.

My visit to Blacksod Lighthouse made my holiday most enjoyable and educational.

By Mary

A farm visit

Every Monday I visit a farm outside Ennis. I put on my wellies and I go for a walk around the farm. We see the cows and the baby lambs out in the fields. Bea, the owner, and Lily, the dog, and I, all go for a walk up the hills. There are lots of wild flowers growing in the fields and we make daisy chains and dandelion chains.

If the day is nice we eat our lunch out on the hill. Sometimes I take photos of the cows and the lambs.

At 3 o'clock we get ready to go home on the bus. I am usually tired from all the lovely fresh air. I really enjoy my weekly visit to the farm.

By Annmarie

About me

My country is China. There are many mountains and drives, also now there are many cities.

We came here to Ireland 19 years ago. We like it very much. It is quiet and friendly. I have lived in Ireland for a long time. I have travelled a lot and once when it was raining I drove into a river. There was no mobile phone reception but someone passing by in a car helped me.

I thank people here. I am satisfied living in Ireland.

By Hong

Labasheeda

Labasheeda is a village on the west coast of Clare down by the Shannon Estuary. The name comes from the Irish words Leaba Síoda which means 'Bed of Silk'. From here you can see two counties across the Shannon, County Limerick and County Kerry. The ferry that crosses from Killimer to Tarbert several times a day can also be seen from Labasheeda.

In the village there is a community centre, a church, a post office, a school, a shop, a bar, and a café.

Every Thursday from Christmas until Easter, bingo is held in the community centre from 11am to 1pm. It is a lovely get together each week. We also have a Christmas party every December.

Every August we have a music festival called the Dan Furey Weekend. We have dancing in the community centre followed by music and singing every evening. We have a parade on the Sunday and I lead out the parade from the village to the community centre.

Labasheeda is a lovely place to live.

By Tony

Me, my cat and Ireland

About a year ago I came to live in Ireland. The trip was planned by me for a long time and I took my cat with me. His name is Carrot.

I couldn't imagine how I could go somewhere without him, so we flew together. My cat is not completely domesticated, he walks with me but on a leash, since most of the time he is still at home.

When I arrived in Ireland, I saw how much of an incredibly beautiful and green country it is. I decided that I would definitely visit a lot of places here and on some trips, I took my cat with me. It was amazing to show him the ocean and it's fun to watch how he is afraid of the sound of the waves and at the same time he wants to eat seagulls that fly above the waves. Walks with him turned out to be much more fun than usual and funnier than I could have imagined. We went with him to Lahinch beach, also Inch beach, County Kerry and walked in a huge number of parks.

Now I am making an application for him for an international passport. After Ireland I think we will visit some new countries, but Ireland will always be the first country I visited with my cat.

By Iryne

My country

My country is Ukraine. It is a big country, the second largest European country. The nation's capital and largest city is Kyiv, a big, beautiful modern city. Ukraine's state language is Ukrainian.

Ukraine gained independence in 1991. A new constitution was adopted in 1996 but Russia then annexed Ukraine's Crimea, and then began a war in Donbas between Russian backed separatists and government forces. In February 2022 Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Since the outbreak of the war with Russia, Ukraine has continued to look for closer ties with the EU, USA and many other countries.

Kyiv is the motherland of the Orthodox Church. Kyiv founded the first university in Eastern Europe. It has always been a significant cultural centre and we hope after the war it will become even more beautiful.

We are very grateful to the people of Ireland for their support at this difficult time.

By Slav

Me

My name is Anastasiia. I'm 29 years old. I was born in Ukraine in the beautiful city of Odessa. There I had a great childhood, on the black sea, but from the age of 7 I lived in the city of Melitopol. I loved this city very much. It is very green, bright, kind and friendly. I graduated from secondary school and university, found a good job and enjoyed life.

I have a wonderful family, my mom Liudmila, my dad Andrii, my brother Andrii and my favourite pet cats – Vanika and Confetka. I also have a loved one. I don't have children yet, but I really want to.

I love travelling very much. I've seen countries like Egypt, Georgia, Turkey and it so happened in life that we had to leave our country and we came to Ireland.

I'm incredibly grateful to Ireland for welcoming me and my family very warmly. People are so friendly. The country is very beautiful, fabulous, amazing and emerald green. I have already visited some sights here, such as the Cliffs of Moher, Atlantic Ocean beaches, forests, lakes, castles and mountains. I am inspired by nature.

I have a lot of hobbies. In Ukraine, I loved going to karaoke clubs with friends, exercising in the gym with a coach, going to the sea of Azov and driving my car. In Ireland my life has changed a little. It has become calmer, more measured. We go on picnics and have barbecues. I went to a bar-people drink a lot of beer here. I also play sports and go jogging. I'm learning the language to communicate more with the inhabitants of this beautiful country. Recently, I had a little trip, my boyfriend and I drove 5,000kms to Europe by car, and I saw the Eiffel Tower, it was magical. I really like to travel, whether it is by car, ferry, plane or bus.

I want to wish the people of Ireland to remain as kind, sincere and cool people.

By Anastasiia

About me

My name is Teresa and my country is Spain. I'm in Ennis because my daughter wanted her two boys to learn English. This language is necessary to travel or live anywhere.

She thought about a lot of countries but she decided on Ireland because both Spain and Ireland are part of the EU. She asked me to come with them and I was delighted with the idea and I said, 'Yes'.

My daughter and I flew to Ireland first and my grandsons will fly in 12 days, to start school at the end of August. We would like to live in Dublin or Cork because these cities have airports. What we didn't know was that renting a house here in Ireland is almost impossible! Our children are coming soon and we need a house!

This time was very exciting for us as we had to buy a house. We did it but the process of purchasing was so long and difficult. That was another surprise for us.

Finally, we were very lucky. We found some kind people who helped us to get our dream. We are very grateful to them.

By Teresa

My first trip in Ireland

Hello, my name is Vitaliy and I'm from Ukraine. I really like mountains, so I decided to climb the highest mountain in Ireland 'Carrauntoohil'.

I looked at the weather forecast and chose the day when there was sunny weather. I got two buses to Killarney, then I took a taxi to get to the beginning of the route to climb the mountain. Also, I rented a room there to spend the night.

It was so beautiful and very difficult to climb on the side called 'Devil's Ladder' but it was worth it.

On the second day I decided to climb another mountain – 'Purple Mountain'. Before the start of the climb I went 16kms. I didn't know where the climb began, but on the way, I met a woman who showed me the route. We talked and I started to climb because I had little time left.

I returned to the place where I could call a taxi to get to the bus stop which was still 10kms away. There was very little time left but all taxis were busy and I was desperate because I didn't know what to do. Suddenly, a woman came to me and asked if I remembered her and asked why was I so sad. I told her I didn't have enough time to get my bus and she said she would take me to the stop.

I was very grateful to her, it was just incredible, she was a real angel for me. Thanks to her I managed to get my bus and was able to get home.

By Vitaliy

Morocco

Morocco or 'Kingdom of Morocco' is very rich culturally. It has many dialects and traditions which differ from one region to another. The more we move to the centre, the north, the south, the west or east things start to change. Clothes, food, language, people, everything is different. This difference is what makes our country attractive and a destination for millions of tourists every year.

Morocco offers many delicious dishes and comfortable hotels everywhere. Many people visit the mountains, beaches and deserts during their holiday.

Another advantage is the suitable weather that appeals to foreign visitors from everywhere.

The Moroccan people are tolerant, generous and always ready to give help to anyone. They are welcoming to their visitors and try their best to make their stay as enjoyable as possible.

The religion in Morocco is Islam but its relationship with other religions is excellent. You can find churches in every city dedicated to foreigners who live in Morocco or visitors.

By Ayoub

Coming to Ireland

It was unexpected for my family because we had decided to stay in Vienna. My daughter went to school in Vienna. All of these were comfortable and perfect but one thing was difficult for us. It was the German language. I could not help my daughter with homework. My mum was with us as well. I know English but not so well but I can help her. Also, I understand people when they ask me about something. It's so great when you can speak with people, when you can talk about your situation, and when people can give you advice.

We decided to move to Ireland. It was a great idea. I said to my mum I wish to learn English and it was so great for my children to be with nice people. It was real, we moved to a kind country, around kind and friendly people. I'm really so happy with my choice. I am happy with the people and to get new skills from them. My family are happy as well.

By Anastasiia

Ukraine

What did I know about Ireland one year ago? Ireland is an emerald island somewhere far away on the edge of Earth. Where civilisation meets the unbridled elements of ocean, motherland Celts, and Halloween! What do I know about Ireland now? Ireland is the land of great people. They are so noble and friendly and I'm sincerely grateful for their invaluable support to us during our darkest times. Thanks Ireland!

By Tatiana

Hip-hop

I'd like to write about hip-hop culture in Ukraine. Everyone knows that hip-hop dance comes from the USA. Now, it's a very popular dance in all of the world, especially in big cities.

In Ukraine most dancers are young people, but many hip-hop teachers are not young now. This is good, because they have a lot of experience. Actually, you can start to dance hip-hop at any age. I started at 30, it wasn't too hard. Among the dancers I had many good teachers and friends all the time. Dance culture really unites people. Hip-hop culture supports people, we respect the individual and welcome development and improvement.

It's a hobby for me, sometimes I taught dance to children in the studio. To start dancing, you have to really love hip-hop music, it is part of hip-hop culture. At first, it can be difficult to learn the basics, but over time the dancer gets more and more pleasure. It can really make a person happy.

By Natalia

Our travels

With the beginning of the war in my country my two children and I travelled the world.

In the beginning, we lived in Poland, in Wroclaw city. Our Ukrainian friend took us in but, he was very afraid for us because he was a single IT developer who could not get used to the fact that a woman and children lived with him. I remember how his hands were always shaking and he kept saying that he didn't know anything.

Then we lived in Katowice city with a nice Polish family and they cried when we decided to move to our relatives in Krakow city. Where we also didn't stay long because we decided to move to Ireland in April 2022.

In Ireland, first of all, I liked the music because I am a professional musician and now it's my hobby. My favourite Irish song is 'Liscannor Bay'. I like to listen and sing it when I walk in the rain on cosy Irish streets, admiring the beauty of Irish nature and the charming atmosphere of the city.

By Yuliia

My story

I am Anastasiia. I am from Ukraine and from a small town, Krivoy Rog. At the age of seventeen, I moved with my family to the big city of Odessa. We lived near the sea. It was my childhood dream.

My mum gave me a puppy, his name Domenik. Now he is nine years old. I miss him very much because he now lives with my mum in Ukraine. My dream is to bring him to live in Ireland.

I like to travel. I was in Italy, Thailand, Budapest, Greece, Egypt, and now I often travel around the cities of Ireland. In Ireland I like the beautiful nature, people, oceans and animals. I study English to find a good job in Ireland and learn web design online.

Sometimes I have orders for a Ukraine company for the production of advertising banners. It's good practice for me.

My hobbies are yoga and meditation. I like to read a lot of books on the topic of psychology and business. Sometimes I try to read in English, but it's difficult. My dream is to learn English, to speak and read English fluently. I have many dreams and I believe that they will come true.

By Anastasiia

Story of my survival on a school trip

In order to start, I must say that I was studying philosophy in a German school, called Waldorf. There are specific things for each class to do in these schools. Each eleventh class has to raft down the river, so, my class rafted down the River South Bug. This river is in a south-west part of Ukraine. We had a very large group of people, five tutors, two guides, five parents and almost thirty students.

We travelled on catamarans, they have a strange design of two inflatable boats connected by iron bars. My catamaran, with five members on it, lost its way on the first day of this trip. We started to raft

down at eleven o'clock and by seven o'clock we hadn't seen anyone. Before that we rafted in a line. So, for two hours we were alone and at nine o'clock sunset started. At this moment my team saw another catamaran. We were very happy because it was scary alone and we didn't have food. We had one tent for three people, but our team had five members.

There were three tutors and my best friend, with his friend in the other catamaran. Only tutors had phones, so one of the tutors started calling to the rest of our group but no one picked up the phone.

We decided that we would make a camp right there but there were steep cliffs around us. Each person carried a hiking backpack of fifteen kilos and some other things.

When we had raised almost all the things that we had, suddenly our guide appeared, who was with the rest of our big group. He said that a big group made camp but that place was very far away.

It was ten o'clock. For the whole day our small group of eleven people had only eaten one pack of crisps. We swam for ten hours and were now dragging hiking backpacks and things from catamarans. We were all burnt out and it was already dark. We started walking. There were tall grasses around us but suddenly we saw a wild horse. We walked quietly but, right in front of me and my friend, he reared up. It was very, very scary but our guide said that it was okay. We continued on our way and we were walking for thirty minutes when we saw the other children. Yahoo!, I thought.

We were close to the camp and I don't know why but our guide decided, that it was a great idea to make the camp at the top of the hill. We had two choices, first to go up the steep slope path and shorten the path or go around the long way and spend thirty minutes. We were very tired and chose the first. When we finally got to the camp, we were very glad that we had survived.

By Oleksandra

Poem

Beautiful eyes I see
In 'Hotel Sometimes'
Shining like stars in the sky
But I feel excited at all times.

By Vadym

Poem

Shevchenko kicks the ball
The stadium lets out a squall
The ball flies into the goal
Our people shine like radium.

By Maskym

Poem

The door was open
A neighbour came to me
I was really hopin'
He's not angry at me.

By Mariúa

Poem

Good morning the birds sing
It blows on the wind's wings
The world welcomes us
With the first rays of the sun.

By Víctoriúa

Vacation picture

I see a beach, palm trees and a woman. She is sitting under an umbrella. Ahead is the ocean or sea. I feel that the girl is enjoying her vacation.

By Natalia

Positive vibes

I see a moonlit night. An owl is sitting on a branch. A fox walks under the tree. I like the picture of the beautiful bird and the wonderful fox. I get a positive vibe from this picture.

By Milla

The captain of the ship

I look at the older man. His face is wrinkled, his eyes look into the heart. He was the captain of a ship and fought the raging ocean many times. On land he lived a quiet and happy life.

By Olga

The Burren

The wind of history dispels the legends
but the eternal memory
preserves the feeling
of ancient megaliths.

By Viktoria

A dream

My family and I have always dreamed of seeing the ocean. Our dream came true. We first saw the ocean when we arrived in Ireland. But this dream came at a high price, because of the terrible war in my country Ukraine.

By Serhii

The country of rainbows

Ireland has wonderful nature. I especially like the sky which changes all the time. I joke that the Irish factory what makes clouds works very well. Also, Ireland is country of rainbows. I've never seen rainbows so often! They are double, they appear and disappear all the time. It surprises me! It inspires me, allows me pick my head up and to look at the future after very terrible events in my life, which is the war in Ukraine.

I often see the beginning and end of rainbow, the place where leprechauns hide their coins. I think they are coins of kindness. That's why Irish people are very rich in their souls. They are always friendly and ready to help others. It is amazing, I'm very grateful for their support. I sometimes I go out in a bad mood, and then I meet Irish people, who smile and ask, 'How are you?' And I feel happy after that. It helps me to have a good day. I hope my life in Ireland will be colourful like a rainbow.

By Olena

Fabulous ocean

When I came to Ireland I was very sad. I didn't want to do anything. One day my friends took me to the Atlantic Ocean. It was love at first sight! I forgot who I am and where I came from. The ocean took away all my

sadness and all my fears. By looking at the ocean I turn into a happy little girl.

In the evening the ocean is very peaceful and calm.

After this, I don't want to leave this place. I want to stay here and live forever near the majestic Atlantic Ocean. Irish people are very lucky to live in such a fabulous place.

By Viktoriia

Ennis - the good town

I arrived to Ennis in April 2022 from Ukraine. I like the people in Ennis, they are friendly. I like the town centre and the shops. I like to go to the English class. I live in Ennis. It's a very good town. I have many friends in the hostel. I visited Lahinch, it's very nice place.

By Mykhailo

New life

My name is Iryna. I live in Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine. However, due to the war in my country, I currently live and work in Ennis, Ireland. Being here has given me the opportunity to meet wonderful people and learn a lot about the history of this country. These new experiences have been truly inspiring. I wish everyone a peaceful and a happy life.

By Iryna

Listen

Listen to the fathers, the innocent fathers. The fathers who love, the fathers who cherish and the fathers who care so much it hurts. The fathers who love their kids more than life. The fathers who want what is fair and right. The fathers who're denied daily. The fathers whose hearts break and ache every minute of every single day. The fathers whose rights are nothing but dust. The fathers who have to fight. The fathers who fight a painful, hopeless battle. The fathers who fight for weeks. The fathers who fight for months and years. The fathers who have to fight to see their own children. The fathers who are led to stress and illness. The fathers who are led to depression, anger and even their end. The fathers who want nothing more than their rights.

By B.C.S

A father's unfair pain

I see him suffer. I see him cry. I see his heart break every time. Every time he thinks of him and every time he wakes. He thinks of his baby boy with love and pride and pain. His baby boy was taken, with no reason at all, no justice done no fairness got, no punishment at all. Still he suffers daily for weeks, months and years, for nothing he has done, but yet here he is in chains. Chains that keep him far away, away from his baby boy, away for no good reason, just 'cos Mommy decided to say so.

By B.C.S

Poem about Keel Beach, Achill

I see young men in an old fjord
by a sparkling new car from the sixties
this technicolour poster
throws me back through the time machine of art,
new and sparkling,
to my vibrant past.

By Anonymous

Poem of idyllic beach

I see blue sky and yellow sand
A man who sits and laughs
These colours are close to our heart
This war for us is too much

By Yana

Cliffs of Moher

When I see this ocean
I feel powerful emotions
the Cliffs of Moher, this beautiful place,
a majestic, deep blue
Queen of Grace

By Valentyna

Moon

When I dream in the night
I fly with dragons on my mind
Clouds, sky and the stars
Full moon madness from the dark side.

By Vadim

Sea is my life

I am always fascinated by the sea. It can be calm and stormy. When you are sad or want to think, you can come at night, in the afternoon or in the morning. You can come to the sea, look to the distance at the moonlight path that is reflected in it. You always find peace. Especially if it's night and in the sky, hundreds of stars shine on you. Sea is love. If

you love adventure, wind, calm or storms. That you can overcome in your life path, it is worth visiting the sea and seeing its beauty.

Sea is life, love and mystery
The stars are shining in the sky
The sea is calling you
And love lives inside you

By Tatiana

Peace is all that I want

My name is Svitlana. I am from Ukraine. I have always lived in Ukraine. I have never wanted to live in another country. When Russia started a big war in my country we were shocked, because we never thought that it was possible. Ukrainian people are peaceful and friendly. When war started in 2014 our soldiers could not shoot and kill Russian soldiers. Probably the Russians thought that we were weak and they could quickly and easily occupy our country. But so many brave men and women have taken up weapons and defended our country. They said 'Stop' to the Russian invaders although the forces were unequal. Many people in the world began to help Ukrainians defending their country. Many people in the world do not realize that they will be next. Helping Ukraine is necessary for peace in the world. Many people from our country got protection in Ireland, but many people die every day. I'm so happy that my daughters and I live here, but I worry about Ukraine.

By Svitlana

I miss Ukraine

I'm Inna. I'm originally from Ukraine. I like my country, it's very beautiful. One of the biggest rivers in Europe is in Ukraine. It's the Dnipro River. It's a very wide and beautiful river. My hometown is near the Dnipro River. I like to swim in this river.

I like nature, I often travel to the forest. I like to pick mushrooms and berries from the forest. Ukrainian forests are ecologically clean, so we can eat mushrooms and berries.

In summer I often travel to the Black Sea on vacation. I like to rest in the Carpaty mountains. It's the one of the biggest mountain ranges in Europe. The Carpaty mountains have a lot of trees, so they have clean air.

Ukraine has many historical places and national parks. I would like to visit all those places, but there's a war in country now. I believe that Ukrainians will win and we'll live in a happy and peaceful country.

By Inna

Who I am

My name is Roman and I am from Ukraine. I was born in Western Ukraine, in the city of Monastyriska in Ternopil region. There, I finished school and graduated from Borshchiv Technical School. After that I did two years of service in the army of the former USSR.

When my military service was over, I moved to Vinnytsia and worked at a jewellery factory as a diamond cutter. While living in Vinnytsia, I met my other half and we lived together for forty six years. Her name was Lyudmila.

In 1976, we moved from Vinnytsia to the city of Kryvyi Rih in the southern region, where I live now. Sadly, Lyudmila died in 2022 at the age of 65.

We have two children. Our son, Serhiy, is 46 and he's an engineer. Our daughter, Tatyana is 42. She worked as a producer on *Inter*, one of Ukraine's most popular television channels.

We have three grandsons and a granddaughter. Serhiy and Viktoria's children are Margarita, who is twenty and graduating from the University of Transport in Kyiv. Her brother, Kyryll is sixteen.

Tanya and Alexander have two sons, Misha, 12 and Svyatoslav, 10. They have been living in Ennis since March 2022. My daughter invited me to come to live with them in Ennis in November last year.

I like this country. Its people are good and friendly. There is beautiful nature, somewhat reminiscent of Ukraine.

I am a pensioner and I am nearly seventy years old. I will celebrate my seventieth birthday here in Ireland in a circle of family.

I like lyrical, soulful music. I like to cook and I like technology. I enjoy working in the countryside where I spend all my time from early spring to late autumn.

I miss Ukraine. I miss my family and close friends. I hope that the war will end soon.

By Roman

Home from home

I am Ukrainian Svitlana and I am proud of it. I am very grateful that God chose this country for me. I am proud to live with such a people. I believe that the day will come when a bright blue sky will shine over Ukraine again. I believe in victory and I believe in the beautiful and wonderful freedom of our country. I know that we will definitely be happy in our native land. War is terrible, ugly and an absolute evil. I hate war and the people who came to our land to fight, kill and destroy. Now each of us need to keep going forward and not stop. To stop is a step into depression.

If not for the war, I would never have come to Ireland. Now I live here and realise that Ireland is Ukraine's sister. We have a similar history and a similar faith, but different weather. Ukraine is colder than Ireland, but the difference is not only the warm weather, it's the warm people too. I never knew how many good people there are in the world.

At the moment I live in Ennis. It's beautiful and calm. It's my hometown now. Here in Ennis, I met many Ukrainians. All of them are friendly people from different regions. They told me their war and life stories.

Now I live in a hotel and I was lucky enough to get a job there. I never thought I would go to college and study English, but now I aim to learn the language and improve my level. In our class we have a very good group of students of all ages and we are very friendly with each other. In addition, our teacher Alan is a very kind, calm and friendly person. Thank you for your endurance and patience.

I am very interested to hear stories about Ireland. I don't know what will happen in the future, but I know that we will have a wonderful life with love, happiness and everything. I promise you this. I thank God for this opportunity to be in a safe place and to meet so many good people.

I love life, the world and people. I want peace and love to rule the world. I want to thank the Irish on behalf of every Ukrainian, and we feel your country is our second home. I invite all of you to visit Ukraine after the war. Thank God. Glory to Ukraine! Glory to Ireland!

By Svitlana

My Shannon story

My name is Mary. I live in Ennis in County Clare in a house providing by Brothers of Charity. I have three brothers and one sister, they are all very good to me. I was 18 years old when I have started in Retos Ltd. Pottery in Shannon. I was working in the factory and a canteen. We used to start at 8:00am and finish at 4:30pm. I was very happy there. We used to have good fun. We got on very well with everyone.

The factory was closed down in 2008 which meant I had worked there for 34 years.

I moved to RehabCare in December 2008. I am very happy to come here because I can meet my friends and do my baking, computers, word searches and sewing.

I am looking forward to going to Dublin to see *Fair City* studio. I like going to Kilkenny to see my sister and do some shopping. I have been to New York a few times to see my brother. I like it a lot but I would not live there. I prefer quite places

By Mary

I love my school

I love school and I like my teacher Agnieszka very much as well. I am fulfilling my dreams here and preparing myself for a better future. Really, I am grateful to everyone. Thank you.

By Asia

My favourite travels

My name is Vilna. I'm 65 years old. I'm from Italy. I'm married to Raffaele. We love to travel a lot. We have seen many beautiful places.

These places are: Los Angeles, San Diego, New York, France, London, Ireland, Spain, Austria, Portugal, Alsace, Belgium, Germany and many Italian cities.

Travelling is really beautiful.

By Vilna

My journey to Ireland from Ukraine

My name is Olha. I'm from Ukraine. I came to Ireland a year ago, after the Russian invasion of my country. I live in the second biggest city of Ukraine, Kharkiv. The city is situated near the border with Russia so it was not safe to stay there.

In Ireland I lived in the seaside resort of Kilkee. It's a very beautiful place. I'm living in Ennis now. I've met a lot of new friends in Ireland. Irish people are very kind and helpful.

I'm working in Ennis and learning English in the FET college now. Thanks a lot for everyone's help. Ennis is a very beautiful and cosy town. There are many interesting and beautiful places in this town.

By Olha

Gratitude

I am Aleksandra, I came from Ukraine and for the first time in my life I saw such a wonderful emerald island in the middle of the ocean.

Many thanks to all the people of Ireland for their hospitality, responsiveness, and help at a difficult time for us. Thank you very much.

By Aleksandra

I love Ireland

I'm very happy to live in Ireland. Irish people are friendly. I thank God for my lovely Irish friends and neighbours.

Ireland has a beautiful nature. I love walking and watching the beautiful green nature every week. Ireland has a great variety of beautiful birds, plants and flowers.

I love to attend my English and art classes every week. I learned new skills and techniques. God bless Ireland

By Nawal

Gratitude

I am grateful to God for the fact that I came to Ireland to the beautiful town of Ennis. I am grateful to God for making new friends and for the wonderful teachers that I have met here.

My country is at war but I feel safe here.

Thank you, Ireland

By Halyne

Georgian food - Khinkali

My good friend was coming from Georgia and I asked him to bring Georgian spice. So, we prepared Khinkali together.

To prepare Khinkali:

You will need flour, salt, cold water, meat, onion, green coriander, garlic, a glass of broth and spices.

Add flour, a little bit of salt and mix it with cold water.

Then you add bullion, green coriander and finely chopped onion to the minced meat and mix them together.

Roll the dough, cut out a round shape with a glass, put the prepared mince inside, wrap it well and cook for 7 minutes.

Bon appetite!

By Eka

War is always bad

I am Anano from Georgia, I lived in Mykolaiv in Ukraine for the last 15 years. On February 24th 2022, our lives changed. We had to leave the country and everything. We had to rebuild our lives in another country.

After Georgia, Ukraine was the second homeland for me and my family. What is happening in Ukraine hurts me a lot. The same thing happened in Georgia in 2008 as Georgian cities were bombed by Russians and about 20% occupied territories. We the Georgian and Ukrainian people will definitely win, I believe that.

We thank the Irish people for such a warm welcome and support. My family and I really appreciate the support of the Irish people. Thank you again.

By Anano

My favourite Georgian poem

I would like to share with you this translation of a poem by the Georgian poet Galaktioni. This is my favourite poem.

What time is it?

Now, no doubt, the hour must be late
Despair has settled for the night in my heart,
Tortured once more by bitter regret—
What time is it? What time is it?

Beyond the window where I stand, implacable night.
Only autumn has dawned for me.
Maybe it's three o'clock, could it really be three?
What time is it? What time is it?

Maybe somehow one-third of this
But a glance outside shows black.
From the station the bell screams thirteen-
What time is it? What time is it?

This dark corridor shrouded in thought
Cannot resist the night coachman
The telephone rings, rings again, nervously
What time is it? What time is it?

God, this sudden early-morning rain
Attacks like an endless torrent of pitch.
Does this hateful night know any bounds?!
What time is it? What time is it?

But listen to Charles Baudelaire: 'Bitter and precious hour,
Time for ecstasy, it's wine o'clock!'
That's how he'd answer the question
What time is it?

By (Galaktioni) & Levan

First time achievement

On the 30th of April 2023 I walked the Great Limerick Run. I walked with my brother and his partner. It was my first time doing it. I felt very proud when I crossed the finishing line. I walked in 1 hour 34 minutes and 22 seconds. It started at 12:30pm and I was back in the afternoon. It was a lovely sunny day for this special event. I was doing it as a memory for my sister as she used to do it.

There were thousands of people, some were walking and more were running. There were many local people supporting all the participants by giving water and encouraging everyone. I was happy to have my brother and his partner with me that day.

I was over the moon to win my medal. I received a lot of compliments about how beautiful the medal is. The medal has a unique design, including King John's Castle and some other landmarks in Limerick. My brother and his partner had a surprise for me when we ran to the finish line, I was happy about that.

After we finished, we went for lunch and it was an unforgettable day.

By Dermot

From the piano teacher

My name is Susan. I'm a service user here. I enjoy music and have been teaching the keyboard for a while. I taught myself to play piano and try to make it simple to help the staff and service users to play.

The staff are so easy to get on with, RehabCare is fun to come to. We do a lot of activities. We are going to visit the set of *Fair City* at RTE studios. I am looking forward to it.

By Susan

Hope

Life is up and down. When I am down I will sing and get up again. Hope can give you strength. I am a jolly person and outgoing.

When you are feeling down, there is help, go and talk to someone. Some people might attend counselling. Life is wonderful when you are happy.

I always support Darkness into Light which is on May 6th. The money goes to the facilities to support Pieta House.

By Breda

Things I like to do

I like shopping. I like helping out. I have five brothers and three sisters. Some of my brothers are away and my sisters are away in different places.

I like going to the RehabCare and doing a lot of things. I like singing, art, painting, colouring and reading.

I used to work in the factory years ago. I love walking around the house.

By Nora

My new home and other adventures

I was very excited to move into my new house in April 2023. I had to say goodbye to my brother Michael, who I lived with for a long time. I was a little bit sad, but I know I will see him often. All the neighbours said goodbye to me. I will invite them over for tea in my new house when I am fully settled.

Other nice things I did in the last year, include going to the Matchmaker Festival in Lisdoonvarna. I didn't find my match this year, but maybe next year! I went to the Fleadh in Mullingar and we saw Niall Horan there with his friend Lewis Capaldi. Everyone was singing their songs in the street. The weather was very nice.

I went to the Brothers Of Charity advocacy conference in Athlone, Co. Roscommon. We stayed at the Hudson Bay Hotel and I met all of my friends there. We danced all night long, but not on the tables! I went for lovely swim and Jacuzzi the next day, and then a big shopping trip in Athlone. I shopped until I dropped.

Last week I picked out two bikes for the advocacy group in Ennis. One of them has adult stabilisers so anyone can ride it. I got up on it myself and tried it out. I did well on it, I just need some more practice. It won't be long before I'm in the Tour de France!

By Teresa

This is my story

My name is Marian. I live in Shannon with my sister and my friend. I have a sister in Tipperary and her name is Catherine. I have a nephew called David, who has a daughter and a son. I have another nephew who has a daughter and a son too.

I love colouring and I am very happy with it. I love spending time with my family. I love to watch *Emmerdale Farm*. My favourite character on *Emmerdale* is Mary.

Also, I enjoy watching *Heartbeat*. I enjoy *Home and Away* and *Fair City*.
I like when the weather is nice outside.

By Marian

A trip to Kilrush

I got the bus in Ennis to Kilrush at 9:00am, I arrived in Kilrush at 10:20am. I went to the town hall in Kilrush to see the slides about Scattery Island. You have to take a boat to go to Scattery Island. You can have a tour around Scattery Island to see the tower where the saints lived and the church. Scattery Island is a beautiful place to visit.

I met my friend there and he brought me around in a boat from Cappa to Scattery Island. I had a meal in a restaurant at Frances Street in Kilrush. The weather was good and dry. It was a lovely time to remember.

By John

My story

I work for a cleaning company. I work for 4 hours each day.

I have two cats called Brownie and Fluffy. I worked in a pottery factory for over 30 years. It was great fun and I made good friends there.

I still meet some of my friends at RehabCare. I live with two lovely ladies in Shannon. I have four sisters and two brothers. I am from Doonbeg. Donald Trump is coming to Doonbeg today.

I love to bake and make something different every week. I like to eat in cafes with friends. I am going to two weddings this year, one is in England and one in Killarney. I am going to a Holy Communion this week. Family is very important for me.

There's a good guy who plays music, his name is Don, he comes every second week. I love his music.

By Phil

Indian culture

My name is Neelima, I came in Ireland from India in 2020 and that was in Covid time. It took us time to adjust. I am here with my family. I am proud to be an Indian.

India is very rich in culture. Indian culture is a heritage of social norms. We belong to the Hindu religion. Indian culture and traditions are renowned all over because they are unique and diverse. India is divided into many states. Different states have different languages, festivals and cuisine. People wear different clothes in different parts of the country. Diwali, Durga Puja and Holi are the names of some festivals. People celebrate them with their families and friends.

Indians wear very colourful clothes. During festivals and wedding ceremonies people wear bright colours and traditional clothes. Our traditional clothes change slightly according to the fashion. Saris, lehengas, sharara and gharara are the names for female outfits. Kurta-pajamas, dhoti-kurta and sherwani are the men's outfits. All of them are very attractive.

Indian weddings are very grand. People dress up well for weddings. We have arranged marriages in India. There are many rituals and ceremonies at weddings. Everyone seems to be very happy and joyful.

Indian cuisine is very famous. There are many dishes such as samosa, cutlets, pakoras, and spring rolls. Curries of lentils and vegetables are very delicious.

Indian culture is very rich in art, music and dance. Folk music and dance are very important. Despite the differences in language, food, clothes, and religion there is unity in diversity.

By Neelima

Spicy Indian snack: Vada pav

India is a very big country. We have a variety of dishes throughout India. In Maharashtra (A state in India) the famous snacks are vada pav, samosa, kachori and pani puri.

Mumbai is the capital of Maharashtra and vada pav is the most famous snack in Mumbai.

I will share Vada Pav's recipe with you here.

Ingredients:

Potato, chilli, ginger, garlic, curry leaves, edible oil, cumin seeds, salt, turmeric, gram flour, water and pav (white bread).

Method:

1. First, boil the potatoes and then mash them.
2. Heat the pan and add oil. Then when the oil is hot, add cumin seeds, curry leaves, ginger, garlic and chilli paste. Next, add salt, turmeric and mashed potatoes. Mix well until it is ready.
3. In a bowl, add gram flour, salt and water. Mix well. The batter should be ready.
4. Shape the potato into small balls and add the filling inside. Dip in batter and deep fry in hot oil. Vada is ready.
5. Cut pav, add vada, and enjoy with fried chillies.

This snack is usually eaten in the morning and evening.

I love it a lot. Vada pav is one of Maharashtra's favourite snacks. This is the most iconic street food. You can enjoy with your family and friends.

By Amruta

One of my favourite books

Reading is a perfect opportunity to learn something new. Books help you get to any part of the planet, into space and fictional worlds. You can pretend to be a princess or a maid, a small child or a wise old man, a brave adventurer or a detective. You can even be in the form of a plant or animal. All this without getting up from your favourite armchair with a cup of tea in your hand.

I would like to tell you about one book. It's called *Black Beauty* by Anna Sewell. It can be interesting for children and adults. This is a very touching story about a life of a horse in the human world, about friendship, kindness and compassion. Sometimes it is sad but it has a happy ending.

The main character of the book is a horse named Black Beauty. The author describes Beauty's life from birth to old age. Narration is in first person and from the horse's point of view. This book teaches us to take care of animals.

By Kseniia

Ukraine

I am from Ukraine. I want to tell you about my country. My country is big and beautiful. You should visit the capital city Kyiv. Kyiv is an old and historical city.

There are many historical places, old churches and other interesting places. You should go to the opera and ballet theatre to see wonderful ballets. I recommend going to the Ukrainian restaurants and tasting Ukrainian food. You should try borsch, vareniki, meat, fruits, and other food. After that you should go to the old streets in the city centre. You should see the Dnipro River. When you stand near the Volodymyr Monument on the Volodymyr Hill, you will see the beautiful Dnipro River. You should go to the south country and swim in the Black Sea.

I want you to see the old city Odesa. Odesa is a laughter city. Every year we have the laughter festival.

You should go to the Carpathian Mountains. The Carpathians are very impressive mountains. There are a lot of trees in the mountains. If you go in winter, you can go skiing. I think you will be happy when you visit my country. Ukraine is waiting for you.

By Olena

Mountain story

A father and son are walking in the mountains. Suddenly, the boy falls and hurts himself. He screams, 'Aaah!' To his surprise, he hears a voice repeating from somewhere in the mountains, 'Aaah!'

Curious, he yells, 'Who are you?' He receives the answer, 'Who are you?'

He shouts back to the mountains, 'I admire you!' and the voice replies, 'I admire you!'

Angered by the response, he screams, 'Coward!' and receives the answer, 'Coward!'

He turns to his father and asks, 'What's going on?' His father smiles and says, 'Son, pay attention.'

The older man shouts, 'You are a champion!' to which the voice answers, 'You are a champion!' The boy is surprised but does not understand. Then, his father explains: 'People call this an echo, Son, but really, it is life. It gives you back everything you say or do. Our life is simply a reflection of our actions.'

'If you want more love in the world, create more love in your heart. If you want more competence in your team, improve your own 'competence.'

This relationship applies to everything, in all aspects of life. Life will give you back everything you give to it.' 'Your life is not a coincidence. It is a reflection of you!'

By Ebi

Returning to education, following my dream

Last September, I started a course in animal care in Croom College of Further Education. There were 19 women and 1 man on the course. On two mornings every week I got up at 6:30am, I took the train to Limerick and from there I travelled on the LCETB bus to Croom.

We studied animal care, veterinary skills and dog grooming. My favourite was the veterinary skills where we learned all about the health and care of dogs. We did exams and some practical skills tests at the end of the course. I will return next September to do more courses such as dog training.

I have always wanted to learn more about animal care as all my life I loved animals. I would advise anyone to follow their dream just like I did.

By Carmel

How I learned the verb 'to fall'

When I started my job my English was very basic. One day, after lunch we walked back to work and I saw 'Big Andy'. He's an engineer, 82 years old. He's more than 6 feet tall. He was walking in front of me when all of a sudden he fell face first into a puddle. At that moment we ran to remove him from the water and his face was covered in blood. We helped him to sit up and I ran to call for help. When I arrived at the security office my English disappeared. I shouted 'old guy broke-a his face on the floor'. After what seemed like an eternity they called for help and Big Andy was rescued. After that I learned the verb to fall!

By Debora

My dog

I have a dog and his name is Popcorn. He's a small brown dog with a short tail. He loves to eat carrots. He's at home in Brazil and I miss him. He's a very good dog.

By Debora

Ennis

I live in Ennis but I'm from Brazil. I am Brazilian. My home town is called Rondonia and it is very big compared to Ennis. I like living in Ennis. I think it is a very friendly town.

By Juliana

Climbing the mountain

I come from Ukraine. I am Ukrainian. I lived in Mykolaiv. This is in the south of Ukraine. I used to work as an accountant. My company sells and services Mazda and Suzuki cars.

I have 2 children. My oldest daughter, Maria, is 18 years old. My youngest daughter, Sofia, is 8 years old. I used to do pilates and I really liked it. I love travelling also. We used to go on holiday to the Crimea and afterwards to the Carpathians. Once when we were in the mountains, my husband, my daughter and I went camping. We had to go up the mountain. The mountain had a beautiful view of Lake Nesamovite. It was difficult for adults and even more so for children to climb this mountain but my daughter went the distance even though she was only 6 years old at the time.

By Tetiana

Mother

My mother's name was Tatiana. Mother's love is the greatest miracle in my life. Our mother had three children. I am Nadiia, the eldest, the middle child is my sister Valentina and Mykhailos is our younger brother.

Our mother was a tall, beautiful woman. She had beautiful facial features and long, blonde hair, which she plaited into a long braid, then she tied it up like a crown on her head. Her eyes glowed warmly like the lakes of Ukraine. Her lips were always smiling.

Mum's warm, tired hands were always there. The house always smelled of baked bread and pies. Cherry pies with blueberries and poppy seeds. She was a very wise and bright woman. Everyone loved her and she knew how to love people's lives. She saw beauty in everything. She also sang well. She sang in the forest, sang in the field, sang at home. Our home was always hospitable and full of singing. Mum made the house happy for us.

By Nadiia

My two dogs and highlights of the soaps I watch

I have two dogs. They are called Scooby Doo and Bear. They are loveable and the loves of my life. They love to dance to the music of the soaps and dance all the time at home. Scooby Doo and Bear love flowers especially yellow ones. They love trains and buses and are crazy at times. They have changed my life for the better and they are very special to me.

I watch the soaps like *Coronation Street*, *Fair City*, *Home and Away* and *EastEnders*. *Coronation Street* is about the life of the residents of Weatherfield. There is always drama on the cobbles, like with Tracey and Steve. Amy is an interesting character. It is very funny and the story lines are brilliant. I have taken the tours of *Coronation Street* and *Emmerdale* sets which was my life-long dream. I will be taking a tour of the *Fair City* studio on Monday, May 8th. *Home and Away* is quite

exciting. There are good things happening like Ziggy, Dean and baby are moving to Queensland.

In *EastEnders*, the characters really come alive. In the Christmas episode someone got killed. Some of the people were in The Queen Vic, we will have to wait and see who the killer is! I wonder if it is Denise, Zack's ex?

I am watching *Heartland* on Netflix. It's about a family on a Canadian Ranch. The cast include Amy and Ty who are married, Georgie and their grandad and parents. Georgie and Katie ride horses and do horse riding classes. Amy's baby is due anytime now! Ty is away at the moment looking after animals as he is a very good vet. He cured a polar bear. The family are busy running the ranch which is quite big. *Heartland* is like *Dallas*. They are a close family and they have big family meals. The girls work in a restaurant they own with their parents. There is constant talk of horses. A good-looking guy called Mitch has started working on the ranch now. Katie is almost five and has just started school.

I enjoy this series very much and hope that they continue it.

By Mary

Ivan Kupala – the holiday of the solstice

Ivana Kupala is a folk holiday of the Eastern Slavs, dedicated to the summer solstice and the best flowering time of nature. This is a pagan holiday, which gradually merged with Christian celebrations over time. It is celebrated on the seventh of July. What matters is not so much the day, as the night before the holiday.

On the night of Ivana Kupala, people perform various rituals, gather in large groups, and drive away the spirits. Boys and girls wear simple, rustic outfits decorated with wreaths, flowers and berry beads. Villagers gather around the fire. Young people holding hands jump over the fire. If the hands are not separated, then this union will be strong and long. Mothers throw the clothes of sick children into the fire. It is believed that the disease goes away with smoke from the fire.

Girls who are not married weave wreaths of flowers and lower them into the river. If the wreath floats far, the girl will get married soon. The young men can fish out the wreath and exchange it for a kiss from the girl who wove it.

Also, on the night of Ivan Kupala people go looking for ferns. It is believed that they bloom and open only once a year on this magical night. Whoever finds this flower will acquire incredible abilities – a person will begin to understand the language of animals and birds, and will be able to control land and water. On this night, you cannot swim in the reservoirs. It is said that mermaids can drag you into the swamp. No one has ever been able to find a flowering fern. The secret is simple: this plant never blooms!

The night of Ivan Kupala is the time when all the evil spirits come to life. This is the night of witches, werewolves, sorcerers. You need to beware of mermaids, goblins and brownies.

This holiday is over 2,000 years old. Ethnographers believe that the Eastern Slavic rites are best preserved among Ukrainians and Belarusians.

Many years ago, Ivan Kupala was one of the most important holidays of the year. The whole population took part in it. Everyone took part in all the rituals and observed the rules, prohibitions and customs. In the twentieth century, Ivan Kupala lost its religious and magical significance and became a traditional summer holiday with entertainment for young people.

By Yevgeniia

The bridge that our imagination builds

From the very beginning of my arrival in Ireland, I noticed a lot of similarities between Ukraine and Ireland. In my mind, I was building a bridge between the two countries—a bridge that linked people, plants, natural phenomena, history, music and dance. I found a lot in common, from the bold glint in the eyes of the Irish people to their incredible

voices, and their love of music. Ukrainian and Irish people indeed have many talented singers and musicians with traditional and unique voices full of energy and passion. There are also a similarities between the dances of our two countries-it is a huge set of skills, filigree, flexibility, and incredible complexity of movements and performance elements.

I began to look back and remembered the year 2004, when Ukraine took first place at Eurovision. Singer, Ruslana, performing the song *Wild Dances* and at the same time dancing wildly passionately with her dancers, looked like warlike Vikings. This was the first time Ukraine attracted the attention of the whole world; it came out of the shadows and was noticed.

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, extremely patriotic songs have been created. All of them are from the Ukrainian subconscious, from our DNA. they indicate strength, power and confidence in our victory. The animation clip by Yarmak, featuring Alisa on YouTube is a mirror of our mood, the pride in our soldiers and the depth of our history.

But mystical forces are also on the side of our struggle-this is the power of women in Ukraine. We know the energetics of energies, understand the properties of healing herbs, heal and know how to do a little magic. A huge number of women use enhanced intuition. The modern clip of Angy Kreyda Vrazhe on YouTube is an excellent example and it shows a completely unexpected side of the Ukrainian woman.

By Olena

Just a dream

I dreamt that something was wrong with him. That he was in hospital, mortally ill. Calls, verdicts, numbers, everything is wrong. Perhaps there is some chance? It is not a fact. Please forgive me for the last time.

Opening my eyes in a silent chill,
And trembling in the bones.
A moment, exhale in relief
After all, this is fiction, only a dream.
But suddenly a dull pain pierced my throat
And tears welled up from my eyes.
He long ago left the earth humbly
And ascended to heaven.

By Kateryna

About Mom

I live in the usual hustle and bustle
Work makes me so bored,
Tired with a sad face,
I walk the path, exhausted.
In the hope of comfort in warmth,
I'm flying home like a doe.
Sitting, she, with milk tea
Tired, beaten, but still my dear and beloved.
Through all obstacles and misfortunes, she will always find the answer.
'Everything will be fine, dear,' she will say with a smile on her face.

By Kateryna

Advice inside

Having seen the collapse and pain of loss, she would like to know when peace will come and the pain will recede again.

Experiencing this emptiness, on a daily relay race, you realize that all the pain will remain with you forever.

Perhaps life and the wheel of movement will dull the pain and sorrow of in consolation.

But you understand! Forgive yourself! Do not beat your soul till it bleeds, otherwise you will break his peace.

And then the whole load hanging by oppression will fly off. You will breathe freely, without disturbing tears and fuss. Go through life nobly and be grateful for everything and all your dreams!

By Kateryna

My naivety

Please forgive me!
Maybe I'm stupid about something.
My thoughts are like the wind,
But I'm like in a fairy-tale,
I believe in dreams,
I mentally build bridges.
I believe in the sincerity of the soul
I will jump if you say.
I just truly love, but I will not find a reflection.

By Kateryna

Remember

All you really need is your mom.
She has been with you all your life.
Hospitals, schools, teenage dilemmas,
Work, love, family, problems...
Perhaps somewhat cold, but almost always right.
She's a woman like you
Needs support and love.
And when the time comes and she is left alone, do not leave then.
Return support, give advice, leave at the right time.

By Kateryna

Advice

When you try to help someone, tearing your claws and feeling fear, ask yourself the question 'Is it necessary?' Maybe it's only important to you.

'Thank you', they may not say. Or maybe bestowing a swear word, all the nerves and experiences will not be restored to you. Don't torment yourself. Live easily, live freely, regardless of all the people. Live honestly and proudly, you live for yourself.

By Kateryna

People who listen to propaganda

The Russian world has come for us
The Russian world will save us from scum
The Russian world will come for you!!!
I take it from my family.

What's wrong? These faces are empty
Stupid and blind in an instant
They are sure of greatness and poison the soul of everyone.
But why hate the innocent and children?

Have they suffered for eight years?
Eight years of malnutrition?
Eight years of rot in the basement?
Eight years, that's how long it takes to lose your mind!

The war has burned us to the bone.
Not strong enough to forgive
Not enough time to recover
Not enough memory to forget.

By Kateryna

Homesick

You went abroad to make your dream come true. You struggle to find a place to live, to earn some money, to learn a new language. You do a lot to be like people who are living there but you always have this feeling that you are different. Anyway, you keep trying to catch up. However, you so often feel this deep homesickness.

Years pass, you have enough money, knowledge, experience to go back to your country, enough to go back to your home. Nevertheless, it is not a good time to make the final decision. In your old country you feel even stranger than here. Where do you belong, foreigner?

By Dorota

Beautiful creatures

Once upon a time, my wife and I found ourselves in the beautiful country of Ireland, by a twist of fate we ended up in the town of Ennis. Our love was and still is for nature. We noticed the similarity between our own nature and that of Ireland, and so we spent a lot of time by the River Fergus. One day, we met a beautiful creature of nature, a swan. This graceful being captured our hearts from the first second. We became friends, and eventually the swan introduced us to its mate, a female swan. She was just as graceful as the male, but was somewhat suspicious and cautious of us. Nevertheless, after a few months, the couple began spending time with us. How happy we were when we saw three little bundles, three signets on the mother's back for the first time. They were tiny and squeaked like ducklings. Soon, we all began spending time together on the meadow. The swan family completely trusted us, and they could even sleep at our feet together.

Months passed, and the signets gradually grew up, becoming practically the same size as their parents, gradually changing their feathers from dark grey to lighter shades. One day, we were very worried because the mother swan and the chicks disappeared. We even bought an inflatable boat and organized a search. The search

mission ended well, and we began to spend time with our friends on the water. Time passed, and we became part of their family, earning their love and trust. This long work of establishing this bond bore fruit. This winter, we were able to observe how the parents taught their chicks to fly, an indescribable feeling. But as sad as it is, our signets and their mother disappeared in an instant, leaving only our faithful friend, the male swan. And one day, a new female swan appeared by his side. It was incredible, as in the wild, this is very rare. But that's another story...

By Serhiu

Let it go

Our whole life is a time when we are constantly learning something new. Every day we face difficulties and it is very important not only to overcome them, but also to draw the right lessons.

I am already 26 years old now and it seems to me that during this time I managed to learn at least one important lesson. The most valuable skill for me right now is the ability to let go. Of course, it will take me a little more time to fully master this skill, but nevertheless, you will be surprised how useful it is in life. Only now I understand how much time I spent in regrets and longing for what I didn't do, either for people or opportunities that have passed. But no! Clearly this is definitely not something that will make me happy.

After all, the path is made by walking, and all that you cannot let go of will never let you move forward. Moreover, I am ready to reveal to you the main secret of this skill. Every time you let go of the past, a new world of opportunity and experience opens up before you. Believe me, it is almost always better to do this, because what is yours will never leave you.

In the end, there is still so much to learn in life and this is the most exciting thing in my opinion. Don't waste this minute regretting the past.

By Anastasiia

My favourite colour

Purple is a beautiful healing colour but yet has a calming effect and connection to our energy. It's also a very spiritual and intuitive colour and is associated with creativity.

By Michelle

My favourite colour

My favourite colour is green because it signifies new life, new beginnings, and gives hope and comfort.

By Mary

My favourite colour

My favourite colour is grey because I can wear it any time of day and any time of year.

By Siham

My favourite colour

My favourite colour is light blue because it's a nice colour. It's not dark and it's like a lovely sky.

By Sayeda

My favourite colour

My favourite colour is yellow because it reminds me of daffodils, which remind me of the birth of my first child.

By Elizabeth

My favourite colour

My favourite colour is blue because I find it uplifting.

By Trish

Happiness is in simple things

My daughter Kateryna and I arrived in Ireland from Ukraine four months ago. Time flies very quickly and the pleasant taste of memories in this beautiful country will forever be in my memory.

For the first three months, we lived in the Gap of Dunloe in Killarney, Co. Kerry. This is a powerful mountain range, with snow on the hills. There are crystal clear mountain lakes, like the eyes of the mountains. They have the cleanest air and huge pastures of ewes and rams. In appearance, they look like the cartoon character 'Shaun the Sheep' in person.

We often recall our morning journeys, when it was still night in the yard. Dark forests, a road without lights, mountain lowlands and constant rain with gusty winds. Now, I can hardly believe that we had this experience and that we were able to get through it. It was hard physically since I was also working and I walked 10-12 km day in hurricane winds and rain.

Yes, it was physically hard, but in this you find the philosophy of life. You notice that happiness is not in the comfort created by us – apartments, cars or prestigious work. Happiness is being healthy, to be pure in thought. Happiness is to hear the rustle of foliage, the sound of birds, how a stream or a waterfall flow, how it rains, and how many rainbows I have seen here. I have never seen so many rainbows in my life as in Ireland. Ireland is the mother of the rainbow.

It is important to be strong in spirit and never give up. I thank my colleagues at the restaurant, Kate Kearney's, and my favourite accountant Mary for a good and pleasant time. Love and respect to everybody.

Today is February 28th, 2023. I am with my daughter exactly one month in the picturesque town of Kilkee. This is a small paradise on Earth. You

can also call it a white pearl by the Atlantic Ocean. This sunny town is not only beautiful for its sights but also for its kind, helpful and cheerful Irish people.

I wish you to love life in all its manifestations and appreciate every month. Happiness is in simple things; it is always there.

By Roza

Thanks Ireland

My name is Liubov. I am from Ukraine. The war forced me like millions of Ukrainians to leave my home and look for a safe place to live. We found a warm shelter in Ireland. My daughter and grand-daughter are here with me. I used to hear about the beauty of the Emerald Isle but I was struck not only by the beauty of the nature of this county, but also by its ancient history. And more importantly the kindness, and responsiveness of the Irish people. They are people with big hearts who opened the doors of their homes to us, offered their help and sincere sympathy for our misfortune. It is so important to us who survived the bombing and the horrors of the occupation. Thanks Ireland!

By Liubov

The Script

The Script is my favourite band. They are an Irish band formed in 2001. The band members are Danny O'Donoghue, Mark Sheehan and Glen Power. The Script tour the world playing concerts in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sydney and Melbourne. My favourite songs are 'The Man Who Can't Be Moved', 'The Hall of Fame', 'If You Could See Me Now' and 'Superheroes'. I hope to see them play in Ireland soon.

Since writing my story, guitarist Mark Sheehan has passed away. This is very sad, but I hope the band will continue to play.

By Ann Marie

My life in Ireland

At first glance it seems that we are very similar, I mean our nationalities. We come from big cities and here in Kilkee there was a feeling that everything has slowed down. But we need this, to stop being nervous and to relax. Unfortunately, it is not customary in our country to greet and smile to everyone you meet, but here we learned to do this. Our food is also very different but we found an alternative. If we want some Ukrainian food, we go to the Polish or Moldova shop. I really like tuna with onion and toast for breakfast in Ireland. Ireland is wonderful.

By Tetyana

Ireland

1. Ireland is an island in the North Atlantic Ocean the second largest island after Great Britain (in Europe).
2. There are over 5 million people living in Ireland today and the Irish people love to sing, dance, tell stories and enjoy a Guinness outside.
3. A quarter of the Irish population lives in the country's capital, Dublin.
4. Other cities in Ireland are Galway, Cork, Waterford and Limerick.
5. The country has two official languages, Irish and English.
6. The Irish currency is the euro.
7. Ireland joined the European Union in 1972.
8. Saint Patrick's Day is an official national holiday, celebrated on the 17th March.
9. The shamrock (a kind of clover) is the national symbol of Ireland.
10. Known as the Emerald Isle, Ireland is famous for its green countryside.

11. Most of the island gained independence in the 1920s.
12. Ireland's most famous foods are the potatoes and carrots, also wheat.
13. Most commonly eaten meats include pork, beef and lamb.
14. About 10% of the country is covered by forests.
15. Ireland has the largest number of red-haired people of any country in the world.
16. Halloween was invented in Ireland.
17. Ireland is the only country in the world to have a musical instrument as its national symbol.

by Halyna

My first St. Patrick's Day

On St. Patrick's Day, we took balloons, banners and holiday accessories made by ourselves and went to the parade. Even the bad weather didn't spoil our mood. It was raining. We walked with local residents and their children. We walked down the main street twice, and all applauded us. It was unforgettable.

By Olga

Sewing class

My favourite colour is white because, it's the colour of ocean waves.

By Oksana

Sewing class

My favourite colour is deep pink because, it's like roses.

By Svetlana

Sewing class

My favourite colour is red and also white, because they are light and beautiful.

By Olha

Sewing class

My favourite colour is beige, because it reminds me of a nice cup of coffee.

By Inna

Sewing class

My favourite colour is pink, because it's vibrant and uplifting.

By Mary

Sewing class

My favourite colour is blue, because it's fresh.

By Anna

Sewing class

My favourite colour is turquoise, because it's so rich and warming.

By Dolores

Sewing class

My favourite colour is lilac, because it's bright, cheerful and brings you out.

By Elizabeth

Sewing class

My favourite colour is violet because it's a rich colour.

By Geraldine

Sewing class

My favourite colour is red because it's warm and cheerful.

By Caroline

Ennistymon Boy

Ennistymon Boy, you did so well, and did not fall in vain
Your cause was for 'The plight of Ukraine'
Your crusade was to conquer fear
Why others chose their path is unclear
And when you reach the pearly gate
They are bound to say 'Hey! This is Tom our mate'

You walked the streets alone
You thread many a long road
You left Ennistymon a long time ago
In England's London you did grow

You conquered life's trials and woes
Your aim was to foster what glows
You did your best for those in need
With the cash you got, you did a good deed

You helped your fellow man in every way
Why was this your fate today
That your life was taken away
At the hands of some senseless fray

Such acts are hard to fathom out
In a world that now has crazy louts
Is this where we are destined to go
With knives, lies and missiles from our foe

Tom tried hard to counteract this bad year
Tom travelled in his moped, with love without fear
Others travel in their minds with human hatred
Tom's good has to overcome for us to be elated

At the moment we walk in the shadow of darkness
A darkness badly in need of light's brightness
Tom's torch needs to be carried, to light
This may become the first step, alright

Tom, you stand for friend not foe
Let your spirit forever glow
Today you are gone but your life lives on
All heroes somewhere fall, you are now a paragon

In Perivale they felled you down
While you were wearing a glowing crown
God will reward you for your glorious deeds
And many men will reap your seeds

Ennistymon Boy, you did so well, and did not fall in vain
Your cause was for 'The plight of Ukraine'
Your crusade was to conquer fear
Why others chose their path is unclear
And when you reach the pearly gate
They are bound to say 'Hey! This is Tom our mate'

By Jim

Cancer, cancer. Wow! I've beaten cancer

This poem and mime show my experience of surviving cancer. It is not about me, but about recovery, and to give hope to others who may be suffering from some illness.

Cancer cancer wow I've beaten cancer.

Put it in a bag, took it to the bog

And buried it, buried it, in the blinding fog

It's only a dis-ease just like getting fleas

Shake it off; shake it off, now I'm really free

Why it had such a hold and was very, very bold

Clinging on,

Taking my control

It had never ever bargained on a person such as me

But I'm a tiger in the ring, who can make my body sing

Twelve years of cancer played havoc with my body

Operations, pains and drips made me feel so very broken

Battle on, battle on, I told myself I'll beat this thing

Good cells, bad cells, battling with each other

Blood is pumping fine, as my heart it gives a chime

Cancer, cancer. Wow! I've beaten cancer.

Put it in a bag, took it to the bog

And buried it, buried it, in the blinding fog.

P.S. After five operations and a course of chemotherapy, I feel so grateful and lucky to have survived cancer. Being creative through art and writing helps me to stay positive and passionate in my everyday life.

I really hope that you, the reader, will also find something positive to take from my much cherished poem, 'Cancer, cancer. Wow! I've beaten cancer.' also helps me deal with depression.

By Marian

Our favourite colours

My favourite colour is ochre because, it's earthy and warm.

By Níamh

My favourite colour is orange because, it's warm and it brightens me up.

By Bernie

My favourite colour is green because, it encompasses a lot of different shades and it's warm and natural.

By Maggie

My favourite colour is yellow because, it reminds me of spring and it's bright and cheerful.

By Shelía

My favourite colour is burgundy because, it's warm and I'm happy when I see it in the natural world.

By Martina

My favourite colour is indigo, a bluey purple, because, it suits me and I'm drawn to it.

By Éileen

My favourite colour is blue because, it reminds me of the sky and the sea and when I see it, I feel I can breathe.

By Peig

The age of innocence

My twin sister and I started school in the early 1950s. We lived up a boreen and we weren't used to the main road, so our parents were reluctant to let us walk the two and a half miles to school. They both

brought us on their bikes every morning and home every evening for the first year of school.

From then on, we had to walk all the way to school. Our grandparents lived with us, and our grandmother, being very devout, told us not to pass the church any evening without going in to say a prayer. This we duly did. We spent ages there looking around at everything and watching the lighting candles. There was no collection box for lighting a candle in those days and all donations were left on the table – visible for everyone to see. One day, we decided to take a half penny each and we went to the little local shop beside the church and bought two aniseed balls (gobstoppers as they were known). We did this for a few weeks – not realising that there was anything wrong with taking the money. Eventually the shopkeeper told our mother that we were coming into the shop everyday with money.

I remember vividly, the evening that she asked us, ‘Where did ye get the money? and of course, we told her – still not realising any implications from our innocent actions. I will never forget my grandmother’s reaction. She roared out crying and told us sternly that we had committed a sin. We hadn’t a clue what she meant.

Later, our parents explained to us that this was stealing and it was wrong. Our grandmother gave us money to put back on the candle stand, which we did the following day.

That was the end of our ‘gobstoppers’. What a sudden realisation in our innocent minds that there was such a thing as sin.

By Geraldine

Catching up is never-ending

For the last forty years or so, my brain has been taxed by technology. My first encounter with our changing world was with currency – pounds to punts to euros.

Our humble phone at home with a rotating dial system, changed over time to portable phones – then mobile phones – and now smart phones. Imagine a phone that would fit in your pocket – unbelievable!

The modest typewriter became a computer and then changed to a portable laptop. The metric system came along where pounds (lbs) changed to kilos; feet to metres and pints to litres. Even our 12-hour clock became a 24-hour clock.

Cars are now changing from filling petrol and diesel to charging batteries for electric, and the lovely scooter that I pushed along as a child – also electric.

Each day, there is a new invention. I feel I'm playing catch up every day. My brain can only cope with so much. Thank God, the birds and the bees have not changed their lifestyle. What a pleasure it is to go for a walk or sit in the garden and listen to nature. Peace – glorious peace!

By Aileen

The original hole in the wall

This is a true story. It is from my village back in the day, where a husband and wife ran a small grocery shop. The husband liked a few drinks, but his wife would never give him much money from the takings. Every now and then, he would sneak a few shillings without her knowing and he would hide it in a hole in the wall beside the shop. Later, he would sneak off to the pub and enjoy his few drinks.

That memory, for me, was the first 'hole in the wall' in my village. Nowadays, instead of calling it 'hole in the wall', people call it the 'drink link machine', especially during festivals.

By Betty

Once upon a time

Once upon a time, long, long ago, a group of women of a certain age decided to join the 21st century and learn about computers. We joined a class and slowly, very slowly, we learned how to turn on a computer, progressing to googling, Face-Time and emailing. We even got our own email addresses. Along the way we learned how to design and fold our own leaflets, how to work out statistics and even how to use the dreaded spreadsheet program.

Just when we thought our befuddled brains couldn't take anymore, along came maths – something we all thought we'd said goodbye to decades earlier. Our heads were spinning! What on earth were natural numbers, integers, and real numbers? With our wonderful and very patient teacher's help and encouragement, we ploughed on.

How much of all that do we remember? Probably not a lot, but some things we'll always remember – the weekly Zoom classes during Covid and lockdowns. Though the broadband coverage wasn't always good during those Zoom classes, they were a real lifeline and kept us all in touch.

We'll remember the joy when we could finally meet again in person - masks and all. We'll definitely remember all the coffees, teas, biscuits but especially all the fun and laughs we have had along the way. So, though we may be forgetting our keys, our appointments etc., we will never forget the wonderful friends we have all become and definitely hope to continue as such.

By Mary

Sweet revenge

Whilst living in Spain, I worked for a wealthy American family. The lady of the house always did her weekly grocery shopping in a small corner store. Each week, instead of getting change from her purchases, she was given the equivalent in sweets.

Not wanting to upset the little Spanish lady, she decided to try and solve the problem. So, after a few weeks, and having completed her usual weekly shop, she decided not to pay with money. Instead, she gave the astonished Spanish lady all the sweets she had received as payment. Nothing was said, but needless to say, her proper change was always given thereafter.

By Patsy

Blue

Blue symbolises the sky, peace, relaxation and eternity. It is a synonym of unity, close connection, constancy and loyalty.

The colour blue attracts people who need a calm environment, harmony and trust. It is often liked by kind, gentle people.

By Mariía

Blue like the ocean

Blue you are calm, confident in yourself and you deserve the trust of people. Like the ocean, you seem strong and reliable. But at heart, you are a little vulnerable, prone to excitement and confusion. You strive for harmony and peace, as well as taking care of people and helping them.

By Olena

The sincerity of loving eyes

I would like to tell you about the place where I have lived for more than a year in Ireland. This is the Cliffs of Moher Hotel in the small village of Liscannor. The owner of the hotel is very fond of art, namely painting and literature. Therefore, in our hotel there are a lot of different paintings, each of which carries its own story and experiences.

Passing by the corridor, I always pay attention to a picture which arouses my curiosity. This is a picture of a man and a woman dancing together. I assume that these are spouses who have been together all their lives. I wonder what they are thinking now? A man holds his wife tightly by the hand. They are tired, but at the same time happy that they can spend care-free time together.

Let's try to imagine what the spouses are thinking during the dance. A man has worked hard all his life to support his family and now he can spend time as he wishes, he is free. At the same time, the wife has devoted her life to her husband and children and now she can do what she could not do before. How good they are together! They recall their youth, how they met, what feelings they had for each other. How quickly time flies. They have been together for over 40 years, but their relationship is still strong and trusting. Yes, their appearance is changing, their strength is leaving, but the eyes, the eyes, they are still the same, with a bit of fatigue, but so sparkling. They 'burn' when they see the person they have loved all their lives.

Looking at this dancing couple, I subconsciously move forward to the time when my children will be grown up and my husband and I will also remember our youth and everything that happened to us. That is why I paid attention to this picture. There is no loneliness. There are deep feelings of respect, recognition and love.

By Yulia

Araby

Araby is a short story by the Irish writer, James Joyce. The story is a part of Joyce's renowned *Dubliners* collection first published in 1914, which portrays daily life in the Irish city of Dublin in the early 20th century. In *Araby* a young boy falls in love with his friend's sister and attempts to purchase a gift for her from the Araby Bazaar.

A boy is the narrator. One evening he rushes out of his house with a coin in his hand. He rides the train to Araby Bazaar and arrives 10 minutes

before it closes. He sees two men flirting with a young female shopkeeper. When the young woman asks the narrator whether he wants to buy something, he knows that she is simply being polite to him. He declines her offer. As the market closes, the narrator realizes that his entire trip has been a pursuit in vain. He stands in the dark and reflects on his actions, feeling anguished and angry at what he has allowed himself to become.

I didn't like the ending, so I have written an alternative one.

I knew my stay was useless, so I turned slowly and walked away. I was out of the bazaar and stood staring into the darkness. Suddenly, I felt very angry. Angry because of that young woman who ignored me, angry because the bazaar was closed, and of course because of my own weakness. I quickly went back and noticed the young woman carrying a vase of flowers. I slowly approached her, dropped a coin into her pocket, grabbed the vase and ran away. She stood there with her mouth wide open. She didn't make a sound, and after I turned around the corner I shouted joyfully.

By Yevhen

My best journey

I think one of the best journeys I ever had was our family's first visit to the sea. It was in 2012 when my daughter was only three. We went to the Crimean Peninsula. It was a beautiful place in a small village not very far from the sea shore. We rented a house from an old woman. She had many tame animals like chickens, ducks, and even a cow. Also, she had two dogs and a cat. My daughter was very excited about that.

The beach was very clean, with white sand. The sea was very warm. My daughter was afraid at first to enter the sea because she had never seen such an amount of water before. We had a great time and returned home after two weeks of holidays. We travelled by car and it took 10 hours for us to get back home. We were all tired, but very happy.

By Yevhen

About my accident

Once I had an accident. I broke my arm. How did it happen? Very easily. There is no sport more traumatic than football with boys, but, when I was 13 years old I didn't know that.

I'm a team player since my childhood and I decided to confirm it. When I was running through the pitch, I wanted to win so much. I was not a bad out-field player and I thought I was a perfect goalkeeper. Was I really? Possibly. But one wonderful day someone pushed me. I fell back and injured my arm. It was my right arm. After that, I knew that I had broken it. I got a cast for my whole arm and three weeks of vacation. My football career was over.

By Lília

My heart is with my country, but my soul will always be in Ireland

Any incident in the life of any person leaves a mark forever. The war also changed us all. We all had a lot of negative moments but we will not talk about bad feelings, we will talk about good feelings. I love my country very much, my heart is always with my country but my soul will always be here in Ireland. Today I want to talk about both countries at once. Ireland and Ukraine have a lot in common.

In Ukraine there is the biggest number of IT workers and in Ireland there are the largest companies in the world in the field of IT: Microsoft, Apple and Dell.

Tourism is developed in Ukraine and also in Ireland. Both Ukraine and Ireland have many beautiful places: mountains, lakes, forests, but of course the climate is different and the landscape is different. In Ukraine the land is very fertile, but in Ireland the harvests are not as good.

The most interesting thing in Ukraine and Ireland is the people. I read a lot about the history of Ireland and found an interesting fact the Ukrainian historian Doroshenko wrote about the Irish people: 'The example of the national revival of the Irish shows that there is no such

abyss from which the nation would not be saved by the efforts of its spirit.' I think he means to say; there is nothing that could defeat the spirit of the Irish.

Ukrainians and Irish have fought for independence for many ages. For centuries Ireland was constantly humiliated by the British. They forced the Irish people to speak only English, to wear only English-style clothing, violated voting rights, confiscated land from Irish villagers and did not allow Catholicism. In the middle of the 19th century there were terrible potato crop failures. It was the staple food of the Irish people. Mass famine began, then migration and sickness. A lot of people died. The population after the famine has not recovered to this day. The English took away the harvest from the Irish people. Potatoes were all that people had, they were cheap food. Potatoes got sick in the fields and rotted. The British made food canteens but there was not enough food. There was also a famine in Ukraine, Russia took all the harvest and sold it. It was an artificial famine and many people died. We also fought for language freedom for many centuries from a neighbour who does not want to recognize the existence of the Ukrainian people.

By the way, another interesting fact is that when there was a revolution in Ukraine in 1648, the Poles wanted to take the Irish to fight the uprisings, but they were afraid that the Irish would become friends with the Cossacks in Ukraine, so they did not hire them. Cossacks were men from the village who wanted freedom. They fled from villages, built fortresses and defended the rights of the Ukrainians.

By Vítoria

Velykden

Easter in Ukraine is called Velykden. This is my favourite holiday, because the whole family gathers. Its celebration has many traditions and rituals. Preparation for the holiday begins in advance, when some people observe 'Great Lent' for more than 40 days. The last week is the most important. Every day has its own meaning and traditions.

On Friday night we start preparing festive 'Paska' - fragrant sweet cakes made of flour with the addition of raisins. In my family, the recipe for cooking Paska has been passed down from generation to generation. My mother uses my great grandmother's recipe. The whole family takes part in cooking. The cooking time is more than 12 hours. The most enjoyable part is decorating Paska with glaze and marmalade, from which we cut out various figures or ornaments. This takes hours and hours. The whole family competes to see whose Paska is the prettiest.

Another symbol of Easter is 'Krashanka' - boiled hen eggs, which we colour with paint or decorate with ornaments. After the preparations are over, we gather as a whole family and go to church, bringing a festive basket. We must put an embroidered towel, our Paska cake and the Krashanka eggs into the basket.

The holiday service begins on Saturday night and ends on Sunday morning before sunrise. We stand for six hours in the church. At the end of the service the priest consecrates the Easter baskets. After the service, we greet each other with the words 'Christ is Risen' and hear 'Truly Risen' in response.

On Easter, the whole family gathers at the festive table. We cook a lot of meat and fish dishes. The holiday lasts for several days. During Velykden we exchange Paska and Krashanka with our relatives, friends, and neighbours.

By Maryna

My favourite day

My favourite day is Saturday because I can sleep until about 9:00am and I can stay in bed until around 10:00am. Then I go to the bathroom before cooking breakfast. I have a shower and brush my teeth. I like cooking pancakes with my daughter every Saturday morning.

After breakfast we do homework exercises. Then we go to the cinema playroom or park. We meet my friends while walking in the park. All my

friends have children. Then we all (women and children) go to a cafe, drink coffee and have lunch in the cafe. After lunch my daughter and I go back home. I cook dinner and my Evelina plays with our cat and parrot. Then we make crafts and play board games or watch cartoons together. Often we invite my best friend over. She has a son, he is best friends with my Evelina and all together with the children we play board games and watch cartoons.

When it's winter and there is snow we go outside and go on a sleigh ride or make a snow woman. In the evening I go to bed with my daughter early because we wake up early in the morning. Evelina goes to school and I go to work. Before we go to sleep we definitely have a conversation, we talk about what my daughter and I did in our day. I teach my child every day we must learn something. Time is the most expensive thing in life because we can not waste time.

This of course is about my Saturdays before I left my home in Ukraine. My days are different now.

By Victoriia

Karina

Modern, tidy, strong, happy
Mother of Sofia
who loves animals, music and trips
who is afraid of driving, elephants and snakes
who wants to see Paris, Venice and friends in Ireland
who lives in Germany
My friend.

By Maryna

A limerick

There was a young person named Bobby
Who had a terrible hobby-
By bus when he goes
He takes off his clothes,
That's why he was taken by Bobbies.

By Yevhen

A limerick

A very fat man from Manhattan
Was thinking he truly was Batman,
His girl wanted proof
So he jumped off the roof,
And then he was taken by Satan.

By Yevhen

A limerick

Family waits for transport at the station
But the driver gives wise explanation:
'You should choose the new way
Otherwise I must say
You won't reach desired destination'.

By Yulia

Winter Haiku

Broken pair of socks
It reminds me you and me
can't be separate

by Liuba

Haiku

Sasha's messy hair
Bird is singing happily
It has found a nest

By Liuba

Haiku

Sandwich on the plate
Bored, it cannot sleep tonight
It's waiting for you

By Oleksandr

Haiku

Only spring will show
After the winter white snow,
Where is the big poop

By Oleksandr

Haiku

I can smell a scent
fragrant tea from the kitchen
Go away disease

By Yevhen

Haiku

I just saw a deer
Thought it's hallucination
Christmas is coming

By Yevhen

Ukrainian idioms

Frogs:

The expression, 'The frog strangles you', means to be stingy. Not wanting to spend too much money.

Hedgehog:

The expression, 'A teachable hedgehog', means a no-brainer, obvious information, there's no need to discuss it.

Bites:

The expression, 'Prices bite you', means the prices are very high.

By Yevhen

Ukrainian proverbs

'If your barn burns, let your house burn too'.
This means, let your troubles go.

'Grandma didn't have any troubles and then she got a pig'.
This means, to get into unexpected trouble.

'I don't know anything, my house is on the edge'.
This means, decline all troubles.

By Yevhen

Ukrainian proverb

'In the house full of love, rich people live'.

This means, the most important thing in the family is love and the relationships between each other. The person who has a loving family is already rich.

By Liuba

Ukrainian proverb

'Like in God's pocket'

This means, to feel comfortable and to live well in total security.

By Maryna

I love my daughter

I have a daughter. She has blue eyes. My daughter's a teacher. Her name's Alina. She is 25 years old. I love my daughter.

By Svitlana

My great friend

My friend Liubov is from Ukraine. She is 36 years old and works in the kitchen. She has dark hair and brown eyes. She has three children. She is a great friend. She is my wife. She is a very good mother for our children.

By Nazar

Veronika

My daughter Veronika is 14 years old. She has brown hair and brown eyes. She is tall. She likes making earrings, keyrings and rings. She makes them with resin. She can dance and she can speak English very well.

By Olha

Extraordinary journey

February 24th 2022, is a date that no Ukrainian will ever forget, as it is the start date of Russia's war against Ukraine. My children and I left our apartment and city at 5:00am with two packages and never returned there. After a month of staying with our parents who lived in a small village, it was also subjected to rocket attacks. I decided that my children and I should leave the country, as life is more precious than anything in the world.

We moved to Ireland, but my husband stayed in Ukraine. Of course, we missed him very much, and decided to go back to Ukraine nine months after the beginning of the war. I would like to share with you a story that I will remember as the nightmare journey of my life.

It was the end of November 2022, when my children and I returned to Ireland from Ukraine. The trip began in the morning at 6:00am, when we left from the city of Chernivtsi, which is located near the border of Ukraine and Romania. Our flight was at 1:00pm. We arrived on time in the city of Suceava, where the airport was located but to our great disappointment, our flight was postponed due to heavy fog.

The airport was very small, there were not enough seats. I was sitting on the floor with the children until 10:00pm, as our flight was constantly delayed. We spent the whole day with a limited amount of food for the children, since of course no one had planned for such a long wait. My children began to play with paper boxes, and also made toys out of them in order to somehow pass the time waiting. The airline decided to take us to a hotel, where we spent the night. Early the next morning,

again, we went to the airport but our flight was again postponed. People began to worry and panic. Employees of the airport company even called the police to calm everyone and explain the reason for what was happening. Everyone was tired. I can't explain our feelings at that time, but at seven in the evening our plane was finally able to take off and our happiness was simply indescribable. We still had to spend about 10 hours on the road, but we all survived and eventually reached Liscannor successfully.

Here is only a brief summary of our journey. I had thought this kind of story could only happen in movies, and not in real life.

By Yulia

Some information about Ukraine

Ukraine is a country of Eastern and Central Europe, with a population of over 40 million people. The total area is more than 603,500 square kilometres. The capital and biggest city is Kyiv, 3.5 million people live there.

There are 24 regions and 1 autonomous Republic of Crimea in the country. The country borders with Belarus, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Moldova and Russia. On the territory of Ukraine, there are the Black and Azov Seas.

There are many rivers on the territory of the Ukraine, the largest is the Dnieper.

In the west are the Carpathian Mountains and, in the south, the Crimean Mountains

There are many old castles and fortresses in Ukraine. Ukraine is a very large and beautiful country, so it is interesting to travel around its territory.

By Iryna

My name is Polina

My name is Polina. I'm 20 years old. I'm from Kypiansk, in Ukraine. Now, I live in Lahinch.

I like the people in Ireland. Anyway, Ireland is wonderful. I like to go to the library, ride my bike. I love walking in nature and enjoying time with my family. I am learning English every day.

By Polina

Svitlana's story

I love the sea very much. I like to swim, to sunbathe – water is my element. I feel like a fish in the water.

I've never seen the ocean. When I arrived in Lahinch, I saw the ocean. It is very beautiful in a storm and when it's calm, there is some magic in it. But it's also really cold, dangerous and strong.

I can't be friends with him. I swam in the ocean twice last summer. Maybe the ocean doesn't like strangers? Now, I like the pool better.

By Svitlana

My impressions of Ireland

My daughter and I, with our cat, came to Ireland in the summer of 2022. It was a long road across Ukraine and Poland. When we arrived and got off the plane, it was raining. Then we realized that the weather in Ireland is very changeable, if it is raining now, then after half an hour the sun can shine. This is so characteristic of Ireland.

I was struck by how green the nature is, grass, trees, bushes etc. almost all year round. Nature in Ireland is very beautiful. I was in a beautiful place, the Cliffs of Moher. The greatness of nature in this place struck me. I also noticed that in Ireland there are a lot of beautiful cows and

sheep. They just walk around the fields everywhere and it is very beautiful.

When we arrived, we were met by Irish volunteers. They were very kind and responsive people. From then, we only met good Irish people on our way. We are very grateful to Ireland and the Irish people for helping us. This is very important for us. For me, Ireland is a beautiful country where good, responsive, cheerful, sociable people live. And I can only say many thanks for the help Ireland!

By Kateryna

365 days of saying 'Thank you'

March 17th, 2023, 365 days starting with 'Thank you, Ireland'.

I say 'Thank you' waking up in silence, not to the sounds of artillery shells, rockets and bombs, or alarm sirens.

I say 'Thank you' when I'm just walking down the street, and not sitting in a basement or in a dirty bomb shelter with mice, every second fearing for my life and the lives of my family.

I say 'Thank you' when I see ordinary, smiling people, and not people in uniform and with weapons.

I say 'Thank you' when I can just buy food at the store, and not stand in a line of 500 people in freezing weather for basic food, with minimal hope of getting it.

I'm here, I'm alive and I'm safe! I keep saying 'Thank you' every day. I am grateful to Ireland and to such wonderful, bright, kind, helpful people - the Irish. Thank you for the help, support, care and compassion that I constantly feel. It is very difficult to leave your country, running away from horror, but at the same time, I consider myself lucky to have met so many good people in Ireland.

I am from Kharkiv, in the north-east of Ukraine in the district of North Saltivka, in which more than 300,000 inhabitants lived until February 23rd,

2022. Now it is almost completely destroyed. Kharkiv is the most wonderful city on the planet, believe me! My soul lives there. Unbearably, I want to go home because home is where the soul lives! Someday this horror will end and I will return home. I invite all my Irish friends to visit my beloved Kharkiv!

I want to always say, and I will never stop repeating 'Thank you for everything, Ireland!'

By Iryna

A trip to the city of Odessa

My name is Andrii. My wife Vera and I love to visit the city of Odessa. Odessa is a Ukrainian resort city located on the Black Sea. It's a very beautiful city that loves its guests. When we visit Odessa, we walk around and take pictures of architectural places. There is a place in the city where you can sunbathe and swim in the Black Sea.

Every year we wait for summer and go to Odessa. I wish everyone could see the city of Odessa and enjoy all the beauty of the city.

By Andrii

Beautiful Ireland

I heard a lot about Ireland, which is washed by the warm current of the Gulf Stream and famous for Irish step dance. When I touched down on this country I saw nature. There are beautiful mountains, green meadows, fast rivers, very beautiful towns and castles steeped in history and beautiful singing birds that wake me up in the morning. Most important are the wonderful, kind people of Ireland who I really, really love.

By Lavrenti

Bograch

My name is Dimitry. I would like to share a recipe for a dish called Bograch, which comes from Western Ukraine namely Transcarpathia and Zakarpattia. This dish is very tasty and I hope, when you prepare and taste it you will like it very much.

Ingredients:

50g lard
800g of beef (shoulder or rear part)
500 grams of potatoes
2 tomatoes
2 sweet bell peppers
2 medium onions
10g of chilli pepper
1 teaspoon paprika
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
Salt and pepper to taste

Method:

1. Cut lard into slices and cubes and fry over low heat until the fat melts
2. Cut beef into medium portions and fry together with fried lard until golden brown and stir
3. While the meat is cooking, prepare the vegetables. Cut potatoes into large pieces. Cut tomatoes into large cubes. Cut bell peppers (without seeds) into medium pieces. Cut onions into four parts. Cut chilli pepper into small rings.
4. Put the meat in Kazan (cooking dish) and then the vegetables.
5. Pour in water so that it is the same level as the vegetables, but no more, and put the lid on.
6. Cook in the oven for 1.5 hours at a temperature of 180 degrees.

Bon appetite!

By Dímítry

Crimea is the pearl of Ukraine

Each person has his own corner on Earth. This is the place where they were born. I was born in the Crimea in the city of Kerch.

Our Crimea is a magical, unusually rich region, located in the South of Ukraine. It is a peninsula connected to the mainland by a narrow isthmus. The Crimean peninsula is washed by two seas, the Black and Azov seas. The seas are connected by the Kerch Strait.

Beautiful mountains, waterfalls, caves, palaces and parks attracts people here. The mild climate allows many types of plants to grow in the Crimea. There are many orchards and vineyards. The wineries of the Crimea produce wines known all over the world. Salt and therapeutic mud are extracted from the salt lakes. Limestone is mined in the mountains and used to build houses. The reserves and forests of Crimea protect rare species of animals and plants.

Now Crimea is occupied by the Russian Federation. My family and I had to leave Crimea. I believe and expect that soon the war will end and there will be a victory for Ukraine. Then we can go home. Living in your native land is happiness.

By Yuliia

How fast children grow

Now Nina is already eighteen. She is a student of the University of Crete and is studying to be an architect. My son joined the cadets and left our house, which became very empty.

One day my daughter called and asked me what I was doing. I replied that I had baked a cake and was going to my mother's. 'I also want to bake pies and come to you at weekends', said Nina. Since then my dream is gathering at the table with the children and my mum at weekends

By Yullia

How it all began

An eyewitness account: I lived in the picturesque village of Grany in Ukraine. My house is located seven hundred metres from the border with Russia. I was woken up at 5:00am on 24th February 2022 with the vibration of the front doors. I went out onto the porch and saw a red glow over the border.

At 6:45am, when I was walking my two-year old German Shepherd named Bozmann, military equipment with the letter Z began to enter the village. I was the first citizen of Ukraine who was seen by the Russian soldiers on the territory of Ukraine. Ukrainian border guards left the border the night before and even took their families out of the village. The two hundred day occupation of the village began.

By Vladimír

Irish people with big hearts

I flew to Ireland with my wife and son. Volunteers met us at the airport and took us to the refugee reception centre. The staff were very kind and polite to us and they offered us hot food and drinks.

After completing the paperwork, we were assigned to County Clare and taken there. On the way, we enjoyed the beauty of Ireland. When we arrived, we were given room keys and we were delighted. I repeat that at every stage the Irish treated us with understanding. They have big hearts. They are very friendly people. We also have the best English teacher. Her name is Lena. I have never had such a good teacher.

During our stay in Ireland, we have visited the ocean in different cities of this country. We really like Ireland and its people. However, no matter how good it is in Ireland, we really miss home, our family and friends. As soon as the war is over, we will return home and never forget Ireland's help to us. Thanks to Ireland for everything it does for Ukrainians.

By Marlen

Cormac

Once my wife and I went to the town of Scariff for food and accidentally met an Irishman. His name is Cormac. He offered to help us learn English. We gladly agreed.

Cormac works as a teacher at the school. He teaches history and geography. He comes to visit us once a week and gives us small tasks. Then he corrects errors. It helps us in learning English. We are grateful to him for this. Little by little, our studies are moving forward.

By Oleh

Kyiv, my favourite city

My name is Viktoriia. I am from Ukraine. My favourite city is Kyiv. It is one of the oldest cities in Europe.

Kyiv has many different places of culture and architecture. The main areas of interest in Kyiv are; Sophia of Kyiv, Golden Gate, Kyiv Pechersk Lavra and St. Andrew's church. From many Ukrainians you can hear the phrase, 'How not to love you, my Kyiv?'

By Viktoriia

Learning to write in English

I am from Ukraine, the city of Bakhmut. I came with my husband to Ireland in November. There are very kind and friendly people here, beautiful nature and good weather. Flowers bloom even in winter. I love flowers. My hobby is making thread flowers and paper figurines.

We have English class and I really like our teacher. I would like to write this piece with few mistakes.

By Svitlana

Melitopol

My name is Natalya. I am fifty-eight years old. I'm from Ukraine. I live in Melitopol. I really love my small and beautiful town.

Melitopol is located in the south of Ukraine. In summer, it has many green trees and beautiful flowers. In the summer, there are lots of fruit and vegetables. I really miss my city.

By Natalya

My little experience in Ireland

My name is Mariana. I have been living in Bodyke for three months. I really like it here. I am in awe of nature. I found several peculiarities in Ireland, the weather changes very often. It can rain several times a day and it's fun because you never know whether to take an umbrella or not.

In Ireland, very good and friendly people are always happy to help if there is a problem. I met a wonderful person named Lena. She is my English teacher. We meet her once a week, but I would like more. Thank you very much to Ireland for the warm welcome. I love Ireland.

By Mariana

New Year is my favourite holiday

My name is Vera. I am twenty-nine years old. I'm from Ukraine.

New Year is my favourite holiday. I always look forward to the New Year. I know the beginning of the New Year will bring me many gifts, a lot of joy and a lot of fun. For me, the most touching moment in preparation is the purchase of a 'forest beauty'. We try to choose the fluffiest Christmas tree. We dress up the main symbol of the New Year with the whole family. We always celebrate the New Year with the family and make wishes under the chiming clock.

New Year means new desires, new opportunities, new plans for the whole year and new dreams. My favourite holiday is New Year.

By Vera

Now my children are safe

My name is Eugenia. I am thirty-five years old and have two children, thirteen years and eight years old. We live in Ukraine in the city of Kyiv. Due to the war in our country, we had to go. Now my children are safe.

We are very grateful to Ireland and the people for welcoming us and providing us with a home. Your people do a lot for our people. Thank you very much for this.

By Eugenia

Odessa Mama

I'm Olena and I'm from Ukraine. My city is Odessa. I was born in this city and lived there all my life.

A lot of people in Europe know about Odessa. The city is located along the coast of the Black Sea and has many beaches and resorts. Its mixed architecture styles include nineteenth century buildings from the soviet period and modern buildings with glass on the façade. There are many parks, places for relaxation and entertainment, stadiums and fitness clubs in this city. At the same time, Odessa has a large commercial port, a huge commercial hub and many business centres. Odessa is an education centre too with about twenty institutes and universities.

One of the unofficial names of Odessa is the 'Pearl near the Sea'. This name reflects the diversity of my city but I think the main pearl of Odessa are its people. They are very friendly, responsive people who like to work, rest and to joke. The second unofficial name of Odessa is the 'Capital of Humour'. Odesa's third unofficial name is 'Odessa-mom' (Mama in

Ukrainian) or just Mom. Some say the name comes from the criminal world.

Odessa is a very multicultural city. Until Ukraine became part of U.S.S.R., Ukrainians, Russians, Italians, Greeks, Germans, Moldovans, Bulgarians and other nationalities lived there. After the Bolsheviks came to power and Stalin's oppression, Odessa lost some of its multiculturalism. By the end of the twentieth century Odessa began to accept people from Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Chechnya, Syria, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey, Belarus and Russia. Some people may have a business in Ukraine but many found shelter from wars and political repression in Odessa. I don't know how real the criminal origin of the name 'Mom' is for Odessa, but I know Odessa is mom for many people over the years. I never once thought that I also would leave my home but it happened. I'm in Ireland now and I'm grateful that Ireland accepted me and other Ukrainians.

I want to learn the English language. I think language is not only a means of communication but also a way to express yourself. I want to speak English freely and write stories without using a dictionary. I hope this day will come soon!

P.S. Writing this essay was hard for me but I feel great joy having finished it.

By Olena

Ukrainian children in Ireland

My name is Tamara. I was born and raised in the capital of Ukraine, Kyiv. I am thirty-six years old. I have two daughters, ten and three years old.

I hadn't been to Europe but one day war came to my door. For nine months, my family lived in great fear. There was constant explosions and many rocket attacks. In the end, we no longer had the strength to endure and we fled to Ireland.

We were met at the airport by very friendly people. We settled in a very beautiful place where it is quiet and peaceful. It took two weeks for us to get used to airplanes and stop being afraid of the wind. Now we live a calm, quiet and peaceful life.

The girls have gone to school. The eldest daughter plays football and hurling with great pleasure and rejoices on receiving homework. The youngest daughter is beginning to understand English and plays with other children. I go to English classes, to the very good and cool teacher Lena. She is unsurpassed and very interesting. We are very grateful to amazing Ireland for the refuge, peace and care for us.

By Tamara

We chose Ireland

I come from Ukraine. I never thought of living in Ireland but my decision was changed by the terrible war at home. We needed to find a place to start a new life. That's why we chose Ireland, a place of calm and stable life, interesting nature, sincere people from whom you can learn a lot. They value life and do not pay attention to small problems. They understand human happiness as the most important part of life.

I don't know what the future holds for us, but I am very grateful to the Irish for helping me and showing me a new perspective on life. Rethinking the way we live and starting a new life here is my dream.

By Ruslana

We had to leave

My name is Tetiana. I come from the banks of the beautiful River Dnieper and my city is called Dnipro. There are eight factories in our city and many churches, parks and squares. It is a very green city.

I have a house in the country where I like to relax. At weekends, I go to concerts and meet friends. I cook dishes for them, potatoes with meat dumplings.

I have a daughter, son-in-law and two grandchildren. I love spending time with them. Unfortunately, our life was disrupted by the war. We were forced to leave Ukraine for Ireland.

Thanks to Ireland and thanks to the Irish people for accepting us and giving us the opportunity to live in peace in Ireland. We really appreciate it.

We are very pleased that we were met by the kind and cordial people of Ireland. Thanks for your support. I wish all the Irish people happiness and prosperity.

By Tetiana

We ran away

I have eight grandchildren and two great grandchildren. Three grandchildren are here in Ireland with me.

Russia wanted us to fight against Ukraine and my grandson was called into the army so we ran away. When the war ends, we will return to our native Crimea.

By Elma

There is no evil without good

My son Artem, who is 4 years old, and I came to Ireland because of the incredible events in our country, Ukraine. I'm pleasantly surprised by the warm attitude of all the people I have been lucky enough to meet here. Now, I like to greet and smile at strangers.

In one instance, Artem and I were walking along the road to the river and a car drove by. Then the driver returned, rolled down the window

and treated the child to a chocolate bar. 'Mom, was that St. Nicholas?' Artem asked me. 'Yes, did you recognise him too?', I answered.

We are very different, Ukrainians and Irish, and I like it. In Ukraine, it is not customary to look into windows, but in Ireland, you can look through windows and immediately find yourself in a fairy tale. We build high fences, and here there are beautiful hedges with open gates.

I also like that in Ireland everyone knows how to dance. We were in Feakle for a tea party and had homemade cookies, listened to music, talked with the locals and now I can dance an Irish dance too.

We have a proverb that there is no evil without good. We didn't end up here by chance. Perhaps this is the next step, the evolution of our souls. Let's be kinder and learn to extend our hands to one another.

By Olga

Healing my spirit

My name is Zerina. I'm 22 and this is a little story about me, and how my experiences have shown me that you can always turn things around.

Growing up, I had a very typical childhood. I was lucky enough to have both of my parents, and good friends. Everything took a turn when my dad passed away 5 years ago. I knew things wouldn't be the same, and I slowly lost my spirit. The only way to appropriately describe it is by using a metaphor about our back garden.

Dad kept it so well, he always had a green thumb. Full of flowers and herbs and grass that looked like it had been measured with a ruler. With each day that passed, the grass slowly rose so high until it started to fall, and I don't think there has been a sighting of a flower since. He was everything to me, and him being gone meant I looked after myself.

My school graduation felt like any other day, with no parent there for support. Not long after graduating, Covid-19 hit, and not long after that, I had to leave my home down to some scary situations. I have moved

10 times in the past 2 years, and was even homeless when I started my graphic design course.

Going to grief therapy in this time was so hard, but it slowly made me realise that everything that had happened didn't make me weak; it made me resilient and strong. I started becoming more at peace with losing my dad. I began to live life in a way that would make him proud, so it didn't feel like he was gone anymore, just watching from a distance.

I took that feeling and mindset, and with the help of an aunt and uncle that saved me, I went into beauty therapy, and got a job in an esteemed hotel. I went out on my own for the first time, and learned how to live by myself. Fast-forward to today, I'm almost half-way through my second course, in a warm and safe home, and this time next month I'll be sitting in the airport with a backpack ready to go on my first solo-trip to Europe, 5 years to the day that I lost my dad. Five years to the worst day of my life, now will be the day of one of my biggest milestones.

The contrast was something I thought about recently, and it made me realise that things actually do get better, even when you are absolutely convinced that they never, ever will. I have learned to always have hope and to believe in everything you are. Without it, I wouldn't be here today.

By Zerina

My favourite season is spring

I like spring very much. It's a beautiful time of year. Spring is a symbol of the rebirth of life, the victory of light over darkness, good over evil. In spring, nature blooms in different colours. It rejoices in the warmth and sun, the birds sing and the air is filled with the aroma of flowers.

Spring did not come to me last year. The war in my country stole my spring. The war brought fear and tears and crippled lives. In one of the moments of silence, I decided to take a photo of a blossoming apricot that was not able to be broken by a tank that passed through our yard.

The photo, taken on a clear day, turned out to be black and white. It was awful.

My mother and I left our native home last spring to escape the war. We met spring this year in Ireland. Ireland is a beautiful and interesting country. Kind, cheerful and talented people live here. We are grateful to Ireland for its help and care.

But I believe that next spring will come to us in our native and peaceful Ukraine. It will be the best, sunniest, warmest and blossoming spring ever and we will inhale the heady aroma of our lilacs.

By Yana

Nature

The delicate frog on the lake
Eaten by yesterday's fox
When the moon was yellow
The fox stays on the mountain
Flowers lose their leaves

By Andriú

A haiku

Yesterday's bird
Flying in tomorrow's sky
A day which never comes

By Volodymyr

Follow me

Follow me, follow me, follow me
It's really the best content you'll ever see
West coast Ireland presents from Ukraine with love

I make my vibe
I beat my drum
And show just starting
It's never gone
Just live for the future
Don't look at the past
You see the shooting stars in the sky?
It's lucky for you and me today
We become stronger every day
We must enjoy this moment
And we recommend you do the same
Do you feel your soul?
Do you see the way?
You can
You must
Starting today
Trust me if you're sure
Let's become who we want to be
I didn't finish
The next verse is yours
Come to visit
Greetings from Ukraine!

By Yevhen

My history

My name is Oleksandr. I'm from Ukraine. I'm 36 years old. I have a wife and two children. We came to Ireland in July 2022. My wife is Ukrainian too. Her name is Anastasiia. My son is 13 years old. His name is Daniil. My daughter Olha is 9 years old. We left Ukraine because of the war. Our city is under occupation. We like it in Ireland. It's very nice here. Irish people are very kind and friendly.

By Oleksander

My story

My name is Svitlana. I'm from Ukraine. I came to Ireland with my family. We fled the war in our country. For us this is an interesting life experience as we see Ireland as a place of horizonless green lands, mysterious folk tales, culture and traditions, museums, architecture and ancient castles.

The people are kind and friendly here. They have helped us a lot. Our favourite place here is a walk near the ocean in Galway.

We will always remember the war in our country and the kindness, help and responsiveness of Ireland. We are very grateful for the help of all the people of Ireland and other people who have accommodated us during this difficult war time for our country.

By Svitlana

The day I arrived

I came to Ireland in 2006. When I arrived, I was confused because I didn't know any English at all. My first impression was good. I saw a lot of smiling people. I was greeted by my friend. It was a beautiful day when we got to Ennis. After a week we drove around Ireland. There are a lot of mountains and greenery and a lot of different places to see. Latvia has a lot in common with Ireland. I like it here!

By Dana

My impression of Ireland

My name is Anastasiia. My family and I moved to Ireland because our country is at war. When we arrived in Ireland, we were delighted. It's very beautiful here. After what we experienced at home, we feel safe here.

My children go to school and my husband and I go to English classes. Ireland is very different from Ukraine but the wonderful impressions of the time I've spent here will remain in my heart.

By Anastasiia

Changes in life

Restarting life in another country is a big opportunity but it's not easy. Simple things like making an order at a restaurant make me anxious because I need to speak in English. But it is very nice when the waiter understands what I say and I feel I can do it.

By Ana

My story

My name is Sviatoslav. I am from Ukraine. There is a war in my country and I had to leave. Before the war, I had a perfect job. I worked as an architect and I specialised in designing buildings and structures.

By Sviatoslav

Welcome to Kharkiv

My name is Nadiia. I want to introduce you a little bit to my native and beloved city. Its name is Kharkiv. Founded in 1654, my Kharkiv is the first capital of Ukraine. Kharkiv is a cultural centre and a city full of students and good people. It surprisingly intertwines old and glorious antiquity with the enthusiasm of youth. It has modern buildings and huge masterpieces of architecture from the past. It is a cheerful, noisy and business filled city. We have many beautiful parks, wonderful landscapes and many flowers and fountains.

Most of all, I like it in the spring when there is the flowering of chestnuts and apple trees. It is full of the aroma of beautiful lilacs and many flower beds. It proudly bears its glory day after day from generation to generation for the last three and a half centuries.

The war brought a lot of pain and destruction to my city. But I believe that the city will endure and will be beautiful and happy again.

By Nadiia

My history

I'll start, my dear reader, with the fact that my name is Olha. I am from Ukraine. I lived in the beautiful old city of Chernihiv, located in the north of Ukraine. My city was famous for the fact that it was always clean, beautiful and green. But the war came and it made its own changes in the life of every person living on the territory of Ukraine. Then I understood the value of life, the value of time, and what hope and faith are to the fullest.

We were in occupation for a month. The hope that we would get out became less and less. Food was running out every day. There were no supplies and there was nowhere to wait for help. The entire territory where we were was occupied and mined. Every day I prayed that we would be able to get out, that the Lord would help us, I thanked him for the fact that we all remained intact and were able to eventually get out of the occupation. Then I realized the power of prayer and faith. A little more than a month later, my journey began, or rather, my flight away from the war. Having travelled to a couple of countries, I arrived in the beautiful, emerald country of Ireland.

She always attracted me with her fabulousness, her extraordinary beauty, which I could only admire from the TV screen, dreaming that one day I would be there too. My dream came true and it is a pity that it was at such a price. I was forced to leave my country in search of asylum. Ireland has become my second home. She accepted me and all who needed her into her arms, as a mother to her daughter. I was struck by the kindness of the local people and their willingness to help. For this I will be grateful to these people until the end of my days.

By Olha

Peace

Peace is the highest value of mankind. War is such a short word, but it takes so long to describe the pain, suffering, hatred and grief. The war irrevocably changed each and every one of us, individually crossed out

the dreams and plans of many people. Fear came along with the unknown. What will tomorrow be and will it ever come? I learn to live in a new way, I feel the pressure of war.

Every day, reviewing the news, my heart is torn with pain and longing because of the people killed and of the crippled destinies.

War is an evil that I hope and believe we will be able to eradicate very soon, when everyone realizes and understands that a person has only one life and it will never happen again.

No one has the right to take the life of another, because there is no greater value in the world than human life. The support, help and love of the entire civilized world gives hope for a happy future. We realise that everything depends on us, everything is in our hands. I want to be sure to know and always remember at what cost the Ukrainians won their independence. The task of each of us is to prevent the re-occurrence of war. Everything will be OK Ukraine.

By Nadia

My incredible dream

This winter my daughter and I were in Amsterdam. All of our journey was amazing. We had a really interesting boat trip through Amsterdam's canals where we could see some different colourful buildings. Of course, we went sightseeing. We went walking in the streets of the city and enjoyed it.

My daughter is a creative person and she likes art so we visited the Van Gogh Museum. We spent a wonderful time there and discovered many beautiful paintings by Van Gogh which we hadn't known before.

Three months after our trip, I had a dream that we lived in a small town and Van Gogh came to visit there. We were surprised and wanted to see him, so we decided to walk along the main street of the town and hoped to meet the famous painter.

While we were walking I bought a book from a street vendor. It seemed like a normal book but when I opened it all of the letters on the page began to move, disappearing and re-appearing. When I looked I saw the phrase 'Say hi to your husband for me, Van Gogh'. I was a bit afraid, but exclaimed: 'Say hi to my daughter!' The letters in the book rearranged very quickly again, but I didn't get to read what was written because I woke up.

By Viktoriia

The beginning of my story in Ireland

My name is Yuliia. I am 29 years old. By profession, I am a software tester. I came from the Ukraine to Ireland because a war broke out in my country. Russia attacked us.

I have been living in the city of Ennis for half a year already, with Martin and his lovely Irish family. We have a wonderful dog Murphy who is now my best friend, with whom I play and walk every day. I study English at FET College and practice with local people who are very friendly and joyful in any conversation.

Ireland struck me with its amazing nature and very kind and friendly people. I had the good fortune to visit the Cliffs of Moher and the Aillwee caves. These places fascinated me and left an unforgettable impression. Every time I am touched by the sights of the flocks of sheep and their lambs that graze on the green paradise meadows, and the small towns from Ennis on the way to Lahinch show a real non-tourist Ireland with local colourful houses and pubs. I also visited Bunratty Castle which has a very interesting story about kings and government in centuries gone by. It is fascinating.

People should not forget that happiness is around us and in simple things. I don't know how my fate will turn out, but Ireland, its local people, and its culture will forever remain in my heart.

By Yuliia

My beloved family

In my opinion it is very important for a person to have a family. Not having a family for a person, means he remains alone with himself. He has no one to tell about his past day and the events in it. He has no one to share his most intimate thoughts with. For me, my family are the closest people I have. In difficult times they will always help out and they will come to the rescue without hesitation.

They will sincerely rejoice at your victories and sympathise with your defeats. For me the most important is a flourishing relationship between all my family members; my wife Alena, daughter Alina and two sons Alexander and Alexei.

Sadly, trouble came to our Earth and we all ended up in different countries. We firmly believe that the war will end soon and we will all be together again. Our family want to say to the people of Ireland, 'thank you so much for giving us shelter in your country'. God is with us, victory will be ours.

By Oleksandr

From Dubai to Ireland

I am Nadeera from Sri Lanka. On the 5th of August, 2022, I arrived in Ireland from Dubai. When I arrived after my long flight, seeing my husband waiting for me at the airport, I felt great joy despite all my tiredness. I noticed the difference between Dubai and Ireland on my first day here. Dubai is a very busy and hot city, but here is very different.

I have been living in this country for almost a year now and I have experienced the beauty and freedom here. There is one thing that cannot be trusted, it is the weather and the climate.

Currently, I live with my husband in Kilkee. I'm very happy and thankful for the opportunity to have come to this country. Finally, I thought of writing down some good attitudes from my life for you:

- Never lie to loved ones.

- Don't cheat those that you trust.
- Don't be too busy for your own people.
- Don't forget those who helped you.

By Nadeera

Kindness always makes a difference

Generosity, compassion and kindness ripple through our lives, homes, communities and the world. People just need to remember their presence and power. From the generosity of strangers in my kindness diary, my story will inspire you to demand the uplifting strength of kindness in your own life. As Martin Kornfeld so inspiringly stated: 'if we do one random act of kindness daily, we just might set the world in the right direction'. Are you ready to delve into amazing acts of kindness that move the collective in the right direction? Keep reading and prepare for its 'kind-effects'.

I looked after an old woman called Lily who suffered from Parkinson's disease. I was still trying to get used to the family when this awful incident happened. Mandy, Lily's husband, was going to re-park his car when he slipped on black ice and fell. Mandy and Lily's daughter, Winny, said, 'I figured my father had fallen for nearly half an hour before my arrival. I met him stone cold and noticed blood gushing out of his head.' She immediately called the emergency services and he was rushed to the hospital. Unfortunately, Mandy was partly brain dead and on life-support for ten days before he eventually passed away.

I usually called in to look after Lily in the mornings and evenings. On a particular Tuesday morning, I met her alone in the house. I asked about Winny's whereabouts and she was told she got a call from the hospital to come and see Mandy, not knowing that Mandy was in his last hours. Having finished my tasks, and realising Lily was going to be lonely at home, I promised her that I would come back after my morning calls to keep her company until her daughter returned. This I did in my little way to give a little support and to be there for the family at a distressing time and not to get any reward for it. Alas, Winny came back home after lunch and broke the bad news of Mandy's demise. I made up my mind

to go and spend extra hours with Lily just to keep her company while Winny was busy with the burial arrangements. In the end, she appreciated my support and wanted to pay me but I declined and told her that is what I had to offer the family during this challenging time.

A couple of months later, on a Sunday morning I was going to work and I realised I was running late and I needed to get some petrol for my car. I pulled into the nearest gas station but, unfortunately, I filled my car with diesel instead of petrol because I was in a rush. Barely a kilometre away, my car stopped working. I didn't know what went wrong, in my devastating mood, I realised I couldn't even call the garage to check the car since it was on a Sunday morning. All I did was call the office to explain my predicament to my line manager and cancelled all my calls for the day. As I was going back and forth, pacing up and down, a fairly old looking man called Liam just pulled up beside me, walked up to me and said, 'How may I help you, young lady?'. Immediately I said to myself, this man must be an angel. I told him my story and he suspected that I had filled my tank with wrong fuel.

He promised to help and he rang his son who happened to be a mechanic. In the meantime, Liam was chatting away wanting to know more about African culture and to reassure me that all would be well.

Kenny arrived on the scene twenty minutes later. He Kenny checked my car and confirmed that I had filled my tank with wrong fuel. The question now was, 'What next?' Liam said, 'Don't worry, you will be sorted.' Liam and Kenny looked at each other, whispered a few words and Kenny excused himself to get one or two tools from his shed. Kenny drained the diesel, changed the fuel filter and went in his car to get 20 litres of petrol for my car. After, the car was fixed and I was very delighted to get the timely help.

I asked for my bill, Kenny said, 'Talk to my father,' and so I walked up to Liam to ask for my bill. The most amazing thing happened and to my great surprise, he handed me my car key and said, 'I am happy the car is fixed, that is our small way of helping you, so enjoy a blissful day'.

I was lost for words and I broke into tears because I knew if I had to tow the car to the garage on Monday morning it would have cost me a

fortune. By the time I opened my eyes, Liam and Kenny had driven off. I sat in my car for a while to reflect on the whole scene and a thought just dropped in my heart 'one good turn deserves another' meaning that I had shown kindness to Lily and her family at the time she lost her husband and God had sent an angel to show me not only kindness but generosity as well. Then, I realised it was easy to get caught up in your own routine and everyday worries, and that sometimes we just don't remember to tune into those around us.

It feels great to be kind, so it's a win-win. It costs nothing to be kind. Moreover, kindness is a gift everyone can afford to give. How beautiful a day can be when kindness touches it. Liam and Kenny turned my awful day to a beautiful day with the touch of their kindness and generosity.

Thank you for sparing your precious time to read my story.

By Abiola

Creativity will always be inside you

From the time I was a little girl, I was drawn to sewing, art, and design. I spent countless hours experimenting with different fabrics and materials, dreaming up new designs, and creating handmade garments for myself and my dolls. I knew from a young age that I wanted to become a fashion designer.

However, when I reached high school, I realized that pursuing this dream would be difficult. The fashion industry was not well-established in my country, and the education system was not well-suited to support such aspirations. My parents advised me to choose a 'more serious' profession, and I ended up studying social psychology at university.

After graduation, I started working in a HR department, but I soon realized that the corporate world was not fulfilling my creative side. I felt stuck and unfulfilled, yearning for something more. That's when I stumbled upon an opportunity to participate in a big fashion show that

was planned in my city. It was a chance for me to showcase my talents and create something beautiful.

I poured my heart and soul into the project, creating ten hand-painted silk dresses that were both unique and beautiful. The response was overwhelming, and I felt a renewed sense of purpose and passion.

Then, fate intervened. My husband got a job offer in Ireland, and we decided to move there. I couldn't work as an HR manager in Ireland due to my lack of English, so I decided to try my hand at dressmaking again. I found a job in an alterations shop. The work was routine and did not require creativity. I felt like I was wasting my time, and my passion for sewing began to fade. It was a difficult time, and I didn't know what to do next.

After experiencing burnout from this work, I decided to look for another job. This led me to a small online brand specializing in Irish linen clothing, where creativity was encouraged, and we were given the freedom to create. Working for this brand was a dream come true. I enjoyed creating garments from scratch and seeing the final product come to life. However, Covid-19 and quarantine soon arrived, and our product lost its appeal for the consumer. The only orders we had were for napkins, tablecloths, and face masks. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, the brand could not exist for long under these challenging conditions. Eventually the business closed down.

I started to feel burnt out and lost my passion for sewing altogether. I didn't touch my sewing machine for almost three years. I felt like I had lost a part of myself and didn't know how to get it back. Then, I decided to challenge myself and find a way out of my creativity crisis. I took a break and went back home for three months. During that time, I recharged my 'batteries' and spent time with friends and family. I added physical activity to my life and changed my eating habits, which gave me more energy. I also started to draw, which was like a breath of fresh air.

I took the time to understand my feelings about sewing and my creative aspirations. After a while, I started sewing again, but this time, I took small steps. I began by creating something familiar but in a different way. And

then, suddenly, it hit me. Since 2005, I had only created female clothing - from skirts to coats. But how could I start small? The answer was in the palm of my hand - children's clothes! This was my chance to start over and rediscover my love for sewing.

In conclusion, my journey has been one of ups and downs, challenges, and breakthroughs. I've learned that creativity is a powerful force that can drive us to express ourselves and explore our passions. Even when we feel stuck or lost, there is always a way. And so, with every stitch I take, I am reminded that creativity will always be a part of me, guiding me towards new horizons and endless opportunities for self-expression.

By Kamila

Quality time with my family

Summer months are the best months of the year for me. Although I don't like the very hot weather, I still love this season. I feel happy, maybe because I have beautiful memories from my childhood. Every summer we went to the beach with my family. We spent lovely times there but now I don't live in my home country, Algeria, anymore.

I live in Ireland with my husband and my children, but I still travel with my small family. I feel excited when the summer comes to see my mom and dad, siblings and my home country of course.

When I look at the happiness in the eyes of my parents when they see me I feel very pleased. My children are happy too when they see them. They love the beach like me so we spend most of our holiday on the beach with my family. I spend every moment with them. I take advantage of these lovely days. I know they memorised all these beautiful moments together. That's my goal for every holiday. It's very important to spend quality time with your parents and family, it's precious.

By Nadjat

Love at first sight

My name is Dejana and I am from Albania. I came to Ireland in 2019 with my 9 month old daughter and I fell in love with Ireland on the first day. Here people are nice and friendly and I feel like I'm still in my hometown. One of the things I don't like about Ireland is the weather because in Albania we have more sunny days. With time I am starting to get used to the weather here.

I have been living in Ennis for 3 years now and I'm happy here. I like Ireland's food so much. I'm currently studying English in the College of Further Education and Training Ennis Campus. School has played also a good part in socialising for me and getting to know new people. I love this and it makes me feel that I'm not alone.

By Dejana

Morocco

Morocco is located in the north west corner of Africa and is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. It is known for its uniquely rich culture centred on religion and tradition, and the abundance of beaches, mountain ranges and deserts. Morocco is special with its warm weather, stunning natural landscapes, great cuisine and tourist friendly cities. Fun facts about Morocco are: there is a Blue City, there is a Red City. Tourism is a huge industry, 99% of Moroccans are Muslim. There are several languages spoken in Morocco. The weather in Morocco is warm all year round and the summer months often exceed 37 degrees.

By Khadija

Ukrainian Greeks

Ukraine is a large multicultural country. More than 130 nationalities and peoples coexist in the country.

The Greek community moved to the region of the Sea of Azor about 240 years ago. Traditionally, our ancestors were engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry.

I was born and grew up in one of the Greek villages in Ukraine, Sartana, which is located near the city of Mariupol. The Greek community has preserved its traditions and rituals, national cuisine and culture to this day.

After the victory, we'll invite everyone to visit us. You will have the opportunity to experience the Greek hospitality and sincerity.

By Ryta

My favourite day

My favourite day is Monday. In the morning I do a big shop in Dunnes Stores and Tesco. On Mondays I fast. This is my tradition from Sudan. I like to do this healthy fast. I feel healthy and happy. After prayer I read the Qu'ran for two hours. I like reading the Qu'ran. After this I always phone my mom in Sudan. I like talking to my mom.

By Amal

My favourite day

My favourite day is Sunday because I go to church. After the service I come home to cook and relax my brain and my body. I go to bed for a siesta (a nap). Sometimes I call my family and talk with them. I watch television. I enjoy Sunday because it's a free day for me.

By Nancy

My favourite day

My favourite day is Friday. In the morning I always read the Qu'ran and pray. After, I cook for my family, then I clean up.

At 6 o'clock I go to visit my friend. I like Fridays because for Muslims in my country it is a day for prayer and rest.

Wednesday is a good day for me aswell because I meet my teacher and the other students in my class. I like this day.

By Mayssa

Moroccan Tagine

Everyone on this planet needs food and water to survive. Over the years people have different ways to cook their own meals. Bought food is a bad habit and it isn't good for your health. As we know the most famous programs on TV and social media all over the world are cooking programs. Some people like spicy food and some don't. Each country has its own traditional meals to serve. I am happy to tell you about how to make a traditional tagine.

Tagine is the main dish in my country to feed a lot of people. We can make it with any type of meat, chicken, fish or vegetables. If you don't have a clay tagine you can use a pot. To make a tagine you start by putting the meat and chopped onion into the oil on a medium heat. We stir for 5 to 10 minutes, then we add the spices; salt, white or black pepper, smoked paprika, ground turmeric and ground ginger. Next, add tomatoes and chopped parsley and coriander. Stir again for 10 minutes. Then add a mix of vegetables on top with a glass of water and cover the pot. Let it cook for 40 minutes. If you use the clay tagine, make sure you watch it and check it every 10 minutes in case you need to add more water. Don't let it burn!

By Siham

My mother

My mother is a very kind wonderful woman because she cared for me and my siblings. We are a happy family. I am the last daughter of my mummy. We are very close friends. She showed me how to be a responsible woman to my husband and his family. I am very happy for that. I love her and miss her so much. May God bless her wherever my mummy will be. We love you.

By Nancy

My story

My name is Zamzam. I'm from Ethiopia. I came to Ireland in 2015. I have 3 children. My children are in Ethiopia.

On Tuesdays, I go to English class. I am happy in English class. I like English class. I like to study and meet my friends. We like speaking English.

I live in Ennis. I go shopping in Aldi, Tesco and Penneys. I go shopping in the Baraka shop too.

By Zamzam

My story

I am from Egypt. I came to Ireland in 2014. I have 3 children. I am pregnant. My baby will come in June, insha'Allah. Now I have 2 girls and 1 boy.

I live in Kildysart. Kildysart is a very small village in Co. Clare. I live with my husband and children.

On Tuesdays, I go to English class in Ennis. I like English class.

I go shopping in Ennis. I go to Aldi, Dunnes, Tesco, Penneys and the Baraka shop.

By Wafaa

My story

My name is Batol. I am from Sudan. I came to Ireland in 2018. I live in Ennis with my sister and her family. My sister's name is Amina.

In December, I'm going to Sudan on holiday, insha'Allah. In Sudan I'll visit my husband, children and my mother. I will go shopping in the market.

I don't like tuna. I like chicken, fish and meat. I like to make cakes for my family.

By Batol

My story

My name is Sanaa. I'm from Syria. I came to Ireland in 2016. I am married to Moharrab. We have 5 children, 2 boys and 3 girls.

We lived in Ennistymon for around 5 years. Now, I live in Ennis. I like Ennis because it has good shops. My children are happy because they live beside the playground in the Fair Green.

I like shopping. I go to Dunnes, Tesco, Penneys, Aldi, Lidl and the Baraka shop. I like to cook every day. At the weekend I like to make a cake for the family. I make chocolate cake or lemon and orange cake. My husband likes the fruit cake, the children like the chocolate cake and I like all the cakes.

By Sanaa

My story

My name is Fehima and I'm from Ethiopia. I speak Oromo. I came to Ireland in 2020. I have 6 children, 5 boys and 1 girl. They live in Ethiopia. I live in Ennis with my sister and her 4 children. I am 'Aunty Fehima'.

On Tuesdays, I go to town. First, I go to English class and after I go shopping. I go shopping in Aldi, Penneys, Dunnes Stores, Tesco and the Baraka shop.

I am always very happy on Tuesdays and Fridays because I get out of the house and meet my friends. I am free.

By Fehima

How to be thrice a refugee

Empire, what is it in the 21st century? Hearing this word, the Roman, Persian, British or some other empire from history will immediately come to everyone's mind, but today in the 21st century there is still an anachronism of the old time, a relic of the middle ages in its essence inside it seems to be modern but from the outside, it is terrible-it's Russia.

Ireland will probably understand better than anyone what it means to be the neighbour of a huge empire. This is something that the rest of Europe doesn't really understand.

I'm from Georgia, a small country the same size and population as Ireland on the eastern edge of Europe. We are not lucky because we are neighbours of Russia. After the collapse of the USSR in 1991, 15 republics finally gained independence including Georgia and Ukraine. Although Russia has not ceased to be an empire, dozens of enslaved, occupied people live inside the country and imperial ambitions have not gone away. Immediately it began to create conflicts and wars within our countries in order to control us in the form of peacekeepers. From these 15 republics, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were accepted into the EU and NATO but Ukraine and Georgia were denied. This was the decisive tragic moment.

Here is my story, the life of one family which experienced all the hardships and cruelties of the policy of imperial Russia which will best show war and Russia. Russia in 1991-1993 provoked conflicts in the regions of Georgia, Abkhazia and Tskhinvali, where it staged a genocide of the Georgian people. After that in 2008 Russia invaded on

a full scale and occupied 20 percent of the Georgian territory-the world was silent! We became refugees for the first time. We were then sheltered by Ukraine. In 2011 Russia decided to go against Ukraine with the help of a hybrid war and under invented reasons occupied 20 percent of Ukraine and annexed Crimea. The world was silent again. Our city Luhansk was among the occupied cities. I had to leave everything and become a refugee for the second time.

On 24th February 2022 Russia started a war with the whole of Ukraine and staged a genocide of the Ukrainian people. This was the biggest war in the world since World War Two. This time the world did not become silent as a real threat loomed over Europe. They also came to our city and we had to leave everything and become refugees for the third time.

We are now sheltered by Ireland, a country that appreciates and understands freedom. We feel that warmth of support and care. Thank you Ireland for this.

Therefore, I want to say loudly, the last empire must disappear! It should not exist. This is just not understood in Europe, in countries like Germany, France and Hungary, but I believe this understanding will come soon. Ukraine and its heroic people, with the help of Europe and the USA, will do it.

Glory to freedom! Glory to Ukraine! Glory to Georgia! Glory to Ireland and glory to Europe!

By Levan

A history of our lives in Irish lands

My name is Rosângela and my husband is called Félix Júnior.

My husband came to live in Ireland in 2003 and I joined him in 2004. My children stayed in Brazil at the time. My husband worked as a mechanic at a construction company in Ennis, Co. Clare. I was a teacher in Brazil. I am here with great pride and like many women warriors I work as a 'cleaner/housekeeper'.

During the years 2004 – 2008, Félix Júnior and I got our drivers' licences and we lived in a single house. In short, we organized ourselves to bring our children to live with us, because we decided not to live in Brazil anymore. Félix Júnior's bosses tried to help us. They researched and talked to lawyers to legalize my husband, and bring our children safely to live here.

Félix's bosses soon realized that it would be difficult to legalize it, as at the time the work permit for the construction area was not being released. During this time, I got sick because I really missed my children. I lost a lot of weight and depression made my hair fall out. I visited a doctor in Galway and the diagnosis was that I should pull myself together and slow down as depression and anxiety were affecting my health.

We decided to bring our children and my mother-in-law to visit as tourists to Ireland, but we didn't count on the worst that could happen. The owner of the agency where my mother-in-law bought the tickets came with her and my children to Ireland. He asked us to pay for his trip. He was not an honest man and my mother-in-law and our children ended up being deported to Portugal for 20 days.

My world ended. I had to find out where my children were. I got sick. I couldn't get out of bed anymore. I found myself on the floor, actually floating, without a floor, without a roof.

On 4th April 2008 my husband decided to take me to Brazil. My children were still in Portugal. Eventually they came back to Brazil and we met there. I spent 5 years trying to recover from the trauma. I went back to studying and working, and today I have a master's degree in science and mathematics and teaching.

In June 2022, my husband and I returned to Ireland. We are working and paying taxes and we continue to dream of legalization here in Ireland. We were unable to avail of the amnesty released to Brazilians until 31st July 2022.

Here in Ireland, I'm a cleaner. I clean family homes, a bar and a school. I work every day from 6 am to 6 pm on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and

Saturdays, from 6 am to 8 pm on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. On Sunday, from 8 am to 10 am. I need to fulfil the dream of legalization and be able to go to Brazil and return to Ireland.

By Rosangela

Kind mothers

My name is Justina. I come from Nigeria. I live in Ennis, Co Clare.

I want to speak about kind mothers. To me a very good mother must take care of her children. She has to do the work of a good mother. She is happy to do this because the children are the joy of the family. They are blessings from God. I think it is right for mothers to take care of their children because when the time comes the children will take care of her. If you are good to your mother, your mother will be so proud of you.

By Justina.

Easy stir-fried chicken in turmeric (Malaysian recipe)

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

Serves 2

Ingredients:

300g chicken breast

4 pcs yardlong/french beans (cut into 4-inch long)

1 carrot (4 inch long sticks)

1 teaspoon turmeric powder

1 yellow onion, sliced

1 shallot, sliced

1 garlic, sliced

1 red chilli, sliced

Salt

3 – 4 tablespoon cooking oil

Method:

1. Cut the chicken breast into small cubes.
2. Add the turmeric powder and a bit of salt and marinate for at least 5 minutes.
3. Heat the cooking oil in a pan/wok and fry the chicken on a high heat.
4. Keep stirring to avoid it burning or the meat becoming hard.
5. Add in the sliced garlic and shallot.
6. Stir again until the chicken is almost cooked.
7. Add in the carrot, beans, sliced chilli and onion. Stir for a minute or two. Remove it from the pan and it's ready to serve.
8. It is best eaten with rice while it is still hot. Enjoy!

By Shal

The importance of English

This essay is preparation for English class. That's why I decided to choose the topic about how important it is to be careful with English. I want to tell you about a very funny case that happened to me just a week ago. This is a story about paying attention to details during English class, as well as the importance of paying attention in general.

I came to Ireland in February 2023 with my children and mother. We were fascinated by the beauty of this island and walked a lot. Then we began to get acquainted with life in the village of Lisdoonvarna and we found a lot of interesting activities for children. The next stage was understanding that in Ireland children go to school at the age of five, or even four. After that, our search for a school began. I mean a school place. The process of searching took a long time. We found a school, but soon were unhappy, when we discovered that they had no places and very little hope that places would appear. Despite the different

classes, my child wanted to go to the class and study with their peers. Therefore, we began the search again from the beginning.

Finally, we found a school in a neighbouring village where there were places. The problem was that these places would be available only for the following year. But we were happy with this decision. What a surprise it was when the school principal called us. It was a Friday. He said they were able to arrange an extra seat on the school bus and my son could come to school next Tuesday. We were happy. All weekend we prepared. We repeated letters and numbers. We bought pens and pencils. My son could not wait for the first day of school. It finally came on a Tuesday. My child went to school very happy. And then the director called me. He asked me to come in and fill out some documents and then added that they were certainly very happy that we came, but that our agreement was relevant for the 'next Tuesday'. After that I realized my mistake. Even on Friday, Tuesday of the next week would be 'this Tuesday'.

Besides 'next Tuesday' will come in a week after. I really wasn't paying attention to this detail.

We were lucky that this mistake did not have bad consequences. And the school had the possibility to take the newcomer even despite this situation. But for myself, I realized how careful I needed to be when learning the language.

By Yulya

All that we need

What would I write about now? What are we all thinking about? Of course, we're thinking about peace? How to live on? How to plan for the future when your country is at war? It so happened in my life, that I was born and raised in one country, then lived and worked in another country for a long time. After this, I got married and moved to live in a third country. All these countries are different, but for me they are dear to me. All these countries were once part of one huge country and we

all lived together. How did it happen that we became enemies? By whose evil intention? Why can't mankind live without wars?

Why do people not understand, that all a person needs are the simple things – health, peace on the Earth and living amongst people close and dear to them.

By Svetlana

Marchuk - a funny story about marriage

It happened many years ago, when I was 18 years old, shortly after I graduated from technical school. At that time I was living in a small town and working in a music store. My boss was a young pleasant woman.

One day, she told me about her cousin, who had retired from the army and was going to visit her. In a small town, everyone knows everyone, right? Therefore, I immediately knew that it was him, when an unfamiliar young man entered the store. I didn't like him at first because he was very derisive, but I could not refuse my boss and agreed to show her cousin the town.

He turned out to be a very funny guy. We were laughing constantly while walking the streets. That same evening, he asked me to marry him. I thought he was joking, so I jokingly agreed. The next day he left for Lviv. Imagine my surprise, when he came back, two weeks later, to ask my mother for my hand.

We have been married for 38 years. We have a son and a daughter as well as a granddaughter. We never get bored together.

By Larysa

Aril in the lush cave

In a mystical unknown land, there was a young girl named Aril, who loved to explore the surroundings of her home. This girl lived in a peaceful little village in a magical forest. One dull day, she went out to

explore and venture down a path she had never been on before. She went through the forest, across a beautiful field of lilacs, and came to a beautiful cliff with a radiant tree, with beautiful purple flowers that emanated magic. While admiring this beautiful scenery she came across an unusual glow coming from a small crystal near an unusual bush. Giving in to curiosity and the beautiful glow of the stone, Aril reached out to try to pick it up, and as she tried to pull it out of the earth, the ground opened up under her feet and she fell, in a long but gentle fall.

After spending a few hours unconscious, she began to wake up and found herself in a dark place. As soon as she regained consciousness she tried to return through the same hole she fell through, but without success. Then, with no way to return home, she decided to explore this unknown place. From inside that dark place, she saw a small crack in the wall and went through it. Once through, she found herself in front of a magnificent lush cave, which she was very eager to explore. As she walked, she saw beautiful huge red mushrooms, clusters of radiant crystals of different colours, beautiful azalea trees, a river, and a beautiful waterfall of magical waters.

While admiring this beautiful place, she noticed something that she initially thought were animals. When she got closer she realised they were three fairies. They had been hiding and watching her and decided to reveal themselves. They were scared, as they had never seen anyone from the surface before. They were excited too. Then the fairies led Aril through another rift with the rest of her people, who welcomed her very well.

Without a way to return to her village, she learned to live by following the fairy lifestyle and growing fond of her new people. As time passed, the girl began to feel at home in what had once been an accidental prison for her. Now and then, Aril caught herself wondering how the people of her village would react to her disappearance and whether they would miss her. Then, even with the reluctance of some fairies, a fairy decided to help her and led her to a hidden path back to the surface. When she arrived in her village, she saw that no one cared about her disappearance. It was as if nothing had changed. Then she

realized that that village was not her home. Her true home was with the fairies, where she truly felt at peace.

By Pamela

I want to say thank you

My life has changed completely. Due to the situation in our country, my daughter and I had to leave. We have been living in Ireland for a year now. This is a beautiful country.

Wonderful and kind people live here. Thanks to everyone who teaches us English, provides us with housing and gives us work. And thank you so much for your kindness and smiles!

By Olha

A year ago

A year ago, I never thought my life would turn upside down like this, but fate decided to make a change. I am glad that I ended up in this country and especially in this town. I made many new friends in Ennis.

It was here that I had the opportunity to acquire a new specialty as a hairdresser and seamstress. I am sure that if I return to Ukraine, Ireland will forever remain in my memories and in my heart. It is an amazing country with wonderful people.

By Olena

My pet

I want to talk about my pet. This animal is a small fluffy lump with a long bald tail, beautiful ears and smart, kind, beady eyes. He is very sweet, kind and friendly. His name is Max.

When I come home and open the cage, he happily meets me, and immediately climbs into my arms. He is very affectionate and loves to be stroked and tickled. And when children come, he is especially happy to see them. He loves children the most. He plays with them and they give him food out of their hands. And he, in gratitude for this, kisses and licks their hands. It's lovely!

In general, Max is a great traveller. He was born in the Crimea. Then we brought him to Kyiv. We travelled a very long way to get to Ireland. We went by car through four countries; Poland, Germany, Belgium, and France. And then we sailed on the ferry. It was a wonderful fun trip. But it was probably a lot of stress for Max.

Now my friend is sick. He has already visited the clinic several times. The doctors tried very hard to help him. They loved him too. Unfortunately, he has a bad diagnosis. And this is the pain in my heart now. I really hope that he recovers and continues to entertain every one.

Can you guess which type of animal I'm talking about?

By Lyubov

Someone to be with

I have had this phrase on my mind for the last several years, maybe for longer than I ever wanted. This phrase is chasing me since my childhood, from that day when my father decided to share it with me. He was always a person who believed that family is the only thing you've got permanently in this life, and he always said, 'You need someone to be with you'.

To be honest, I couldn't find anything interesting or truthful in this phrase. As long as I remember I have asked myself if a person really means so much and why we always need someone to be by our side. I hated this. I hated that they told me I need someone.

I assume that everyone has had this feeling of wanting to be alone at least once in their lives. I've had it. Needing someone meant being weak to me.

Time has flown by, unnoticed. The world around me is changing. Too fast not to notice. Everything is changing, so my thoughts haven't stayed the same. I cannot tell the exact day, month or year when it occurred to me, but there was a day when the realization hit me: I have shut myself off from my friends, from my family for God knows how long.

It was a day when this period started. The period of opening up. It is still ongoing, but the process is getting better. Only a few months ago I remembered this phrase my father had been telling me almost all of my childhood. 'A person needs a person', and now it seems to be true. This is when I began to understand this phrase with my heart.

You need someone to share your life with. Otherwise, it might eat you alive. Someone to save you, show your emotions to, show your love to, or even anger. Take care of someone. To be loved. People need it. They cannot make it far without each other whatever they are saying. They may be strong enough on their own, but they are stronger and happier with loved ones. There are days when you can get a sense of yourself and right now I am sensing this, we are not good all alone.

By Liza

Bucket list

You have 5 years until you die. What will you do? If I have 5 years left to live, I will probably try to spend more time with my family. Maybe I wouldn't tell anyone.

I'd do everything like in the movie 'P.S. I love you'. I would spend all my savings on travelling with my whole family on a cruise.

But I'm not going to die, for at least 25 years. As they say in Odessa 'Only after you'.

By Ivan

Trip to Germany

I would like to tell you about a trip with my family to Germany. I went to Speyer, Germany, two weeks ago with my family. We drove to Dublin in the car. From there we flew to Frankfurt and were picked up by friends. We visited from April 5th until the 9th, staying in their big and cosy house.

During these days we walked around the historical part of the city where we saw Speyer Cathedral, the Old Gate and the embankment of the River Rhine. We also visited the amusement park, Technic Museum and of course a traditional German brewery, Domhof. In the evenings, we gathered at a large table and ate traditional Ukrainian and German dishes, drank Irish whiskey and tasted many different German beers.

We had a wonderful time. Speyer turned out to be a very beautiful tourist city with its sights and all of this time I was surrounded by loved ones. The only problems I had were stomach problems after overeating and drinking too much beer. I recommend everyone to visit this beautiful city.

By Denis

Dream holidays

I have always dreamt about spending holidays in Bali. I can imagine myself lying on a hammock, drinking colourful drinks and thinking about nothing. Blue sky, perfect weather and the finest luxury - that all make it the perfect holiday destination. Bali is an Indonesian island located at the end of the Lesser Sunda Islands, between Java and Lombok. Bali is surrounded by coral reefs, turquoise water and sandy beaches.

It is famous for untouched nature, vivid culture, diversity and exotic luxury. There are numerous spa resorts and expensive hotels which provide the highest standard of services and accommodation. They offer traditional massages, aromatherapy and even more alternative treatments. It seems to be a real paradise for those who want to switch off and just relax.

I would, however, choose one of the more secluded resorts and indulge myself with nature and peaceful surroundings. I would like to get a decent rest, try delicious local food, swim around the coral reef, meet the local people and learn about the Indonesian culture.

By Edyta

A story about a cute little frog

The frog wakes up every day at 6 o'clock in the morning. Froggy thinks that morning flies taste more delicious than regular ones. After her breakfast she begins preparing for the day. Morning exercises help her to wake up. After exercises she has lovely conversations about everything with her cute little friends. They discuss the weather, gossip about other frogs, tell secrets and just hang out.

Discovering new rivers and puddles is also included in her usual day. After doing that, Froggy has lunch. But today the weather is quite bad. It's windy and cold, so this cute frog has decided to take a nap until the weather calms down. She wakes up and understands that it's night outside but the weather is perfect, warm and calm, so she decides stay up all night and observe the night sky. The stars are so bright and beautiful that she decides to call her friends and do it together.

This story was about a cute little frog and her calm frog life.

By Caroline

A little bit about myself

My name is Camilla I'm from Brazil. I have been living with my family in Ennis since 2018. The College of Further Education & Training have wonderful courses. The people who work here are very friendly. The teachers are dedicated and committed to education.

I started the English course in 2021. We have class twice a week for 90 minutes. We carry out activities such as writing, reading, speaking and listening.

During the course I met people from different countries, Ukraine, Poland, India and others. It has been very interesting to learn about other cultures. If you want to improve your English or do another type of course I really recommend it.

By Camilla

The legend of Ireland and Ukraine

Once upon a time, when the world was new and Gods were real, there were two great lands called Ireland and Ukraine. They were far apart and didn't know much about each other.

One day, the God of the sea decided to connect the two lands. He sent a big storm that lasted for days, and after it was over, a narrow strip of land appeared in the sea. The people of Ireland and Ukraine were amazed at this new land and sent messengers to each other to learn more. The Irish found out that the people of Ukraine were great fighters, loved music, and cared deeply about their land. The Ukrainians learned that the Irish were skilled workers, smart learners, and loved to tell stories.

As time went by, the people of Ireland and Ukraine got to know each other better. They traded things and stories, and they learned to like and respect each other's land. When the Sea-God saw how much they loved and respected each other, he was happy and blessed their friendship.

The strip of land that had once divided Ireland and Ukraine became a sign of their friendship and unity. It still is today.

By Anna

A little bit about me

I would like to tell you a little bit about myself, about learning English and about my impression of Ireland. I'm a bit short on vocabulary but I want to improve my English even though I am a couch potato. So, let's go!

Last year, in November, I had a vacation. It was one of those opportunities which comes once in a blue moon. I was going to move to Ireland, so I started learning the language. To be honest, I watched YouTube, learned the phrases that native speakers use a lot, and wrote down information in a notebook. It was really fantastic.

I spent the whole of last year in Kazakhstan, in a big beautiful city. It has a lot of big buildings, offices and people. In that part of the country there is a lot of oil and gas, but few trees and flowers, and the landscape is flat and barren. This region is like a desert. It didn't take long to realize that this place was not my cup of tea.

This year, at the end of March, I flew to Ireland. I was over the moon to see trees, rivers and mountains again. It was the first time that I saw the Atlantic Ocean. Never before have I seen anything so incredible.

Here I have met wonderful, friendly people, both Irish and Ukrainian. At the airport in Dublin I met a girl and her mother. As it turned out, we lived next door in Ukraine. Our houses were 100 metres apart and yet we met here.

I visited the east and west coasts of this fabulous island. I have been to Dublin, Galway, Lahinch, Doolin and Ennis. I want to visit Ballina, Waterford, Cork and Limerick. You can probably admire the ocean for an infinitely long time, and enjoy all the other parts of this country that are new to me. There are many things to talk about.

Learning a language is a really amazing opportunity. It's not a piece of cake for me.

I am in high spirits today. I am absolutely sure that I will make it big. In a year my level of English will be much higher than today. I won't cut any corners. Step by step I will achieve my goal. As they say - no pain no

gain. I believe it. I want to progress. Never before have I waited for it so impatiently. I hope that the best is yet to come.

By Aleksandr

From the Ukraine to Ireland

Ireland is my dream. I could not even think that I would live in this beautiful country. There is a war in my country, Ukraine, and I had to evacuate with my family to another country.

Ireland is a very hospitable country. We live in a hotel near the airport and I already have a job and I like this job. I love to travel and I am very interested in learning about the culture and traditions of Ireland.

Irish people are very careful about their historical values. There are many old castles in Ireland. We went to Tralee and visited the city park. We saw the castle in Bunratty. I would really like that in my country they would treat nature and cultural heritage with such care.

By Nelia

My life before and after

Each of us has only one homeland. This is where we were born and grew up. I was born and raised in Ukraine

This is my home country, with its rivers, its vast fields, its noisy waterfalls. The immensity of the beautiful and limitless expanses. You go out into the fields and you can't take your eyes off ears of wheat.

The indescribable beauty of native nature, delights and mesmerizes the soul.

I love my country very much. I love the melodic language, beautiful nature, cosy villages or noisy metropolitan areas. My childhood took place in Ukraine. This is where I graduated from high school, got married and raised my son. I had a happy family, but war separated us. Fleeing

the war, I went to Ireland. This fabulously beautiful country. My son and his husband stayed in Ukraine. Ireland welcomed me with open arms. The soulful, kind, beautiful green island has become my second home. Kind, calm, polite, responsive people, always smiling and ready to help you at any time.

I now live in the town of Shannon. The town is small, cosy, quiet and green. There is a beautiful bay here. In the evenings I like to go there to watch the sunsets. I dream of mastering the Irish language and daring to communicate with its beautiful people.

By Lúdmíla

My life until February 24th 2022 and after

I live in the capital of Ukraine in the city of Kyiv. I love my city. I have many friends, I love my job. Kyiv is a very beautiful city, many parks and cathedrals, historical monuments, museums. I was happy in my hometown but on February 24th 2022 trouble came to my country.

Early in the morning we woke up to the roar of explosions, rockets flew, houses exploded, people died. The war had begun, Russia attacked Ukraine.

Fleeing from the war, I ended up in Ireland. This wonderful country has given us so much. I am grateful to all the Irish for their warm welcome and for their kind attitude towards us. I really like Ireland. Very kind, smiling, beautiful people live here.

I believe Ukraine will win, I will return home and remember Ireland with gratitude. I invite all Irish people to visit Ukraine when the war is over. Glory to Ukraine!

By Leila

Never back down

There was a man at last year's Munster Hurling Final. He stuck me to the wall outside of Semple Stadium and I punched him because he was laughing into my face. My mate pulled them off me.

That didn't stop me from going back to the hurling match in Croke Park. I came out of Croke Park and I was walking on footpath. A 'Just Eat' company worker knocked me down with his scooter. 'I get knocked down, but I get up again. You're never going to keep me down', I hear that song in my head.

Life is incredible, like my brother trying to buy a house to make a family home in Co. Clare, Ireland. Family and friends mean the world to me. Like the people you meet along the way in adult education, 'I get back up again'.

By Colm

Elegy in a country graveyard

We buried you on a cold bright day
a cold sunny blue day in autumn
in a strange though somehow familiar
corner of a graveyard
in Templemaley.

The tall trees sheltered you
as the wind blew through the leaves
brown and russet
whispering as they shed their leaves
while they lowered you
into the brown earth
and the dragonfly circled
flashes of colour
amidst the black of mourning.

And as the haunting words -
'fornocht do chonac thu'
a áille na háille'
ring out in the stillness

I am transported to another graveyard
a graveyard by the river
in West Clare.
No trees grow in Burrane graveyard
No shelter from the soft April rain
Only the dead
watching over the wide River Shannon
Hundreds of years of history buried here
My people buried here
The famine buried here
The Colleen Bawn buried here.

As they strike up the music
the concertina and the tin whistle
and Seán on his guitar
I hear instead the notes of the Plain Set
at your grave Mother in Burrane graveyard
I watch them, the fiddlers and the accordion players
the melodeons and the concertinas
facing east towards the rising sun.
Tears in their eyes mirroring mine
as the music flows out encircling us
and the robin lands on a headstone nearby
The messenger
And you, Mother, the dancer
You become the dance.

By Bríd

My story

My name is Igor and I will tell you who I am. I hope you'll find it interesting to read the story of a guy you don't know, and that you won't turn the page in the blink of an eye.

I arrived in Ireland in August. Ireland greeted me with two weeks of scorching sunshine and a warm Atlantic Ocean. I'm very comfortable with the climate here, although I'm not at all a fan of rain laden clouds. The Irish are very polite and open to newcomers. When I decided to move to Ireland I started to get interested in the country. I read

interesting and comical articles; the funniest was the one about beer. It said that a real Irishman always has three taps in the house, one for cold water, one for hot water, and one for beer!

If you, my dear reader, have stayed to this point, you're probably waiting for me to begin my story. This is where my story begins.

I am an artist in the genre of dance. My main style is krump and you will learn in this story how I stayed with this style and realized that it was my main style. I also dance in other styles, such as, popping, hip-hop choreography and break-dance. I started with the style of waving, this is a sub-style of popping.

It all started in 2008, after watching the movie, *Step Up 2: The Streets*. I really liked the hard, strong and powerful moves. I liked the street atmosphere, the fact that you can prove with your dance that you are cool, rather than having a gun or using your fists. If you come to the dance battle, then be ready to give it out to the maximum. Otherwise you'll be out!

I liked this philosophy, and I began to follow it. From that moment my dance life began. From that moment I realized who I am. I realized that creativity and dance is my thing. That's where my true self is. Through dance, everything that you don't try to say is expressed. Time passed, friends changed, places changed, girls changed, but one thing was always with me, dance. Dance can't betray you. It can't change or hurt you. If you are honest with yourself, if you believe in yourself and invest in yourself, your body and your spirit will be indestructible.

I trained an average of six hours a day. There were times when I could stay up all night in the dance hall just to train and improve myself. Overtime I made friends in the dance community. I am still friends with them today and they have become my closest friends. We danced everywhere, in gymnasiums, nightclubs, but the coolest place we could feel the best was on the street! On the streets, we all opened up and were who we were. On the streets, you prove who you really are. We travelled a lot, we found out a lot of things about ourselves. Some of us became more confident as we travelled, some of us pumped up our level, some of us found love.

In addition to the streets, I took part in the Ukrainian championships. I won the championship three times in a row. It's an unforgettable emotion and feeling to be called a champion and a winner.

When I look back at the way I've come to dance, I have no regrets, only that I will not be able to do it all a second time.

I'm glad that my destiny turned out this way. I am happy that I am a creator of creation. I am proud that I can call myself a dancer.

P.S. So, my dear reader, you just got to know a small bit about me. There is much more to me that's not described here. If we ever meet, I will be glad to tell you much more, and if you don't dance, maybe my story will inspire you to develop your creativity.

By Igor

Master of the beauty sphere

My name is Nataliia. I'm from Kiev - the heart of Ukraine. At the moment, I live in Ireland in the town of Ennis. It just so happened that Ireland became my second home and I am very happy about that.

Ireland is the emerald isle with kind and sympathetic people. Since I am a creative person, many opportunities have opened up for me in the development of my talents. My profession is a master of the beauty sphere. I have met a strong team of Irish teachers in different aspects of beauty and I am rapidly studying their techniques for my future work.

I am grateful to Ireland for the help, for the responsive people and for their unique abilities. Whatever my fate, I am very happy and I will remember the kindness of Ireland.

By Nataliia

Worried and afraid

I am worried and afraid
I wonder about my country
I hear the gunfire
I see the dead
I want to be saved
I am worried and afraid

I pretend I will die
I feel dead
I touch my mother's hand
I worry about violence
I cry for my country
I am worried and afraid

I understand in the morning it was a dream
I say it will never happen
I dream very bad dreams
I try to think positively
I hope my country will improve
I am worried and afraid

By Siam