

THE BEACON

Issue #9. May 24th 2026



A BETTER WORLD

I am not exactly who I want to be right now, but I am so much of who I wanted to be two years ago, and I owe that, to the people right in front of me.

I have sailed for seven years of my life, but until this year I haven't fully understood what a sailor is. A sailor is someone who is kind, who is hardworking, who can manage the million things flying around their head at once. But most of all, a sailor is gritty. We are the kind of people that roll up our sleeves and get to work, we climb to over 40 meters without any fear for our safety even in the pitch black of night, we look to make connections because we simply do not have time to wait around for it to happen. We are the people that dance through storms but best of all, we are the dreamers.

Tall ships draw a different kind of person than those comfortable with everyday life, mainly because it feels like everything we do is designed to make us uncomfortable. Yet even when pirating was at its peak, the crews weren't just stocked with your standard buccaneers, filling the ranks were revolutionaries. People who had run away to a system that was democratic, that was at the forefront of the new world order. They were dreamers too.

The young people in front of me are the most remarkable I have ever met, and we are going to change the world.

Perhaps you are going to be a famous director, or an engineer. A pilot, or a nurse. Yet no matter what you do, at the end of the day, everyone has the power to change the world. If and only if you are brave enough to fight for what you believe in more than anything. I suppose I am lucky having already found that one thing I believe in, and if you're wondering what it is look no further than the ceremony today; because they are your children, they are your siblings, and your friends. But most importantly they are you. Because if there is one thing sailing has taught me, is that my crew mates have my back, through absolutely anything.

So no I am not scared like I once was to go out into the 'real' world because the impact the people coming with me will have, is going to be just as good as the people they are. Im not scared because the future leaders of the world, grew up on a tall ship, with 48 other teenagers just as crazy as them.

– Claire Cuddihy, Graduation Speech

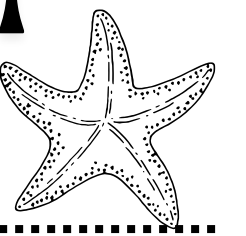


FROM THE TEACHERS:

We came into this experience with hope, excitement, and trepidation in equal measure. Leaving our families, friends, and creature comforts behind, we dove in headfirst and hoped for the best. Just like you, we wanted to find our people, settle in, and go on an adventure unlike anything we had experienced before. Well, this year has not disappointed! Every day has been filled with novelty and surprises. Looking back on it now, it's hard to pinpoint the exact moment when we truly became a community. Maybe it was on day one, as we lugged sea bags, talked a mile a minute, and settled into our new normal. Or was it on the bus back to Natura, satisfied and exhausted after a long day clearing gardens and prepping food? It could be when we fought through seasickness together and finally, thankfully, made it out the other side. Perhaps it was when we sat together watching the sun disappear behind a golden dune in perfect silence. Was it when we launched ourselves into the gloriously glittery Atlantic during our first swim call? Or maybe when we rang in the new year, lighting up the jungle with sparklers? It could have happened during the tearful semester one goodbyes under tropical palms, or the bright-eyed hellos a few days later as we welcomed new students over milk and cookies. Was it when we stood back and admired a fresh coat of paint, danced up a storm in a humid studio, or marvelled at playful dolphins swimming alongside? Maybe it was during that second Atlantic crossing, as we slid from one side of the classroom to the other in a landslide of notebooks, laptops, and coffee mugs. Most likely, it didn't happen all at once. Every caring glance, kind word, dance break, laughing fit, crying session, and peaceful pause brought us closer. We started to get vulnerable with each other, to get silly, and to get weird. There's nowhere to hide on a ship this small, so we saw all sides of each other and learned to embrace everything. No matter how it happened, we're so glad it did.

As you head into new waters, remember you've got a steady crew behind you. Wherever the current takes you, we'll be cheering you on!

THE STARFISH STORY



An old man was walking on the beach one morning after a storm. In the distance, he could see someone moving like a dancer. As he came closer, he saw that it was a young boy picking up starfish and gently throwing them into the ocean. Approaching the boy he asked

"Young man, what are you doing?"

"Throwing starfish back into the ocean. The sun is up, and the tide is going out, if I do not throw them back in they will die," he replied.

The man laughed and said "But young man, do you not realise that there are many miles of beach and thousands of starfish?"

You cannot possibly make a difference."

After listening politely, the boy bent down to pick up another starfish and threw it into the sea.

Smiling, he answered the man "It made a difference to that one."

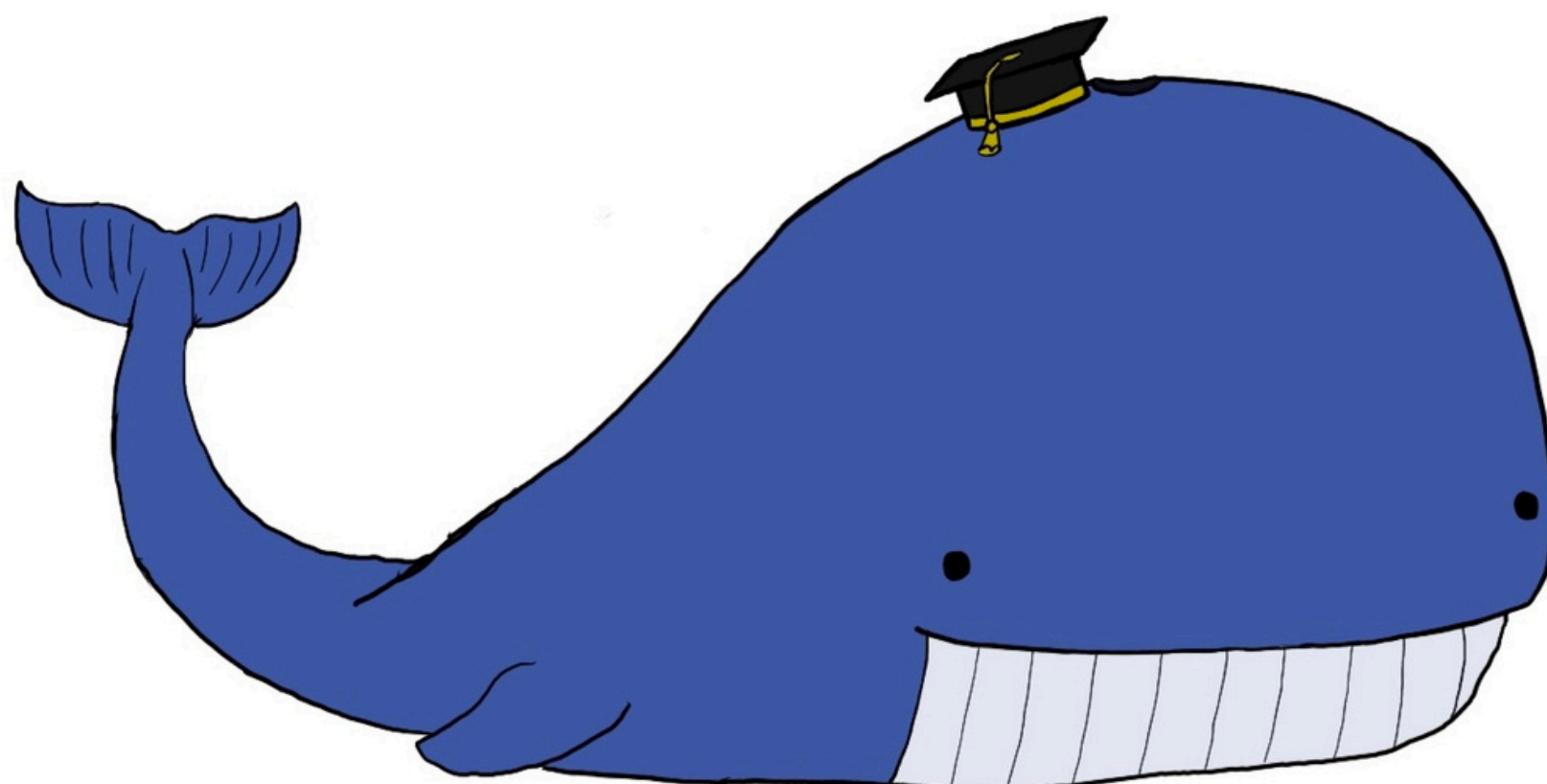
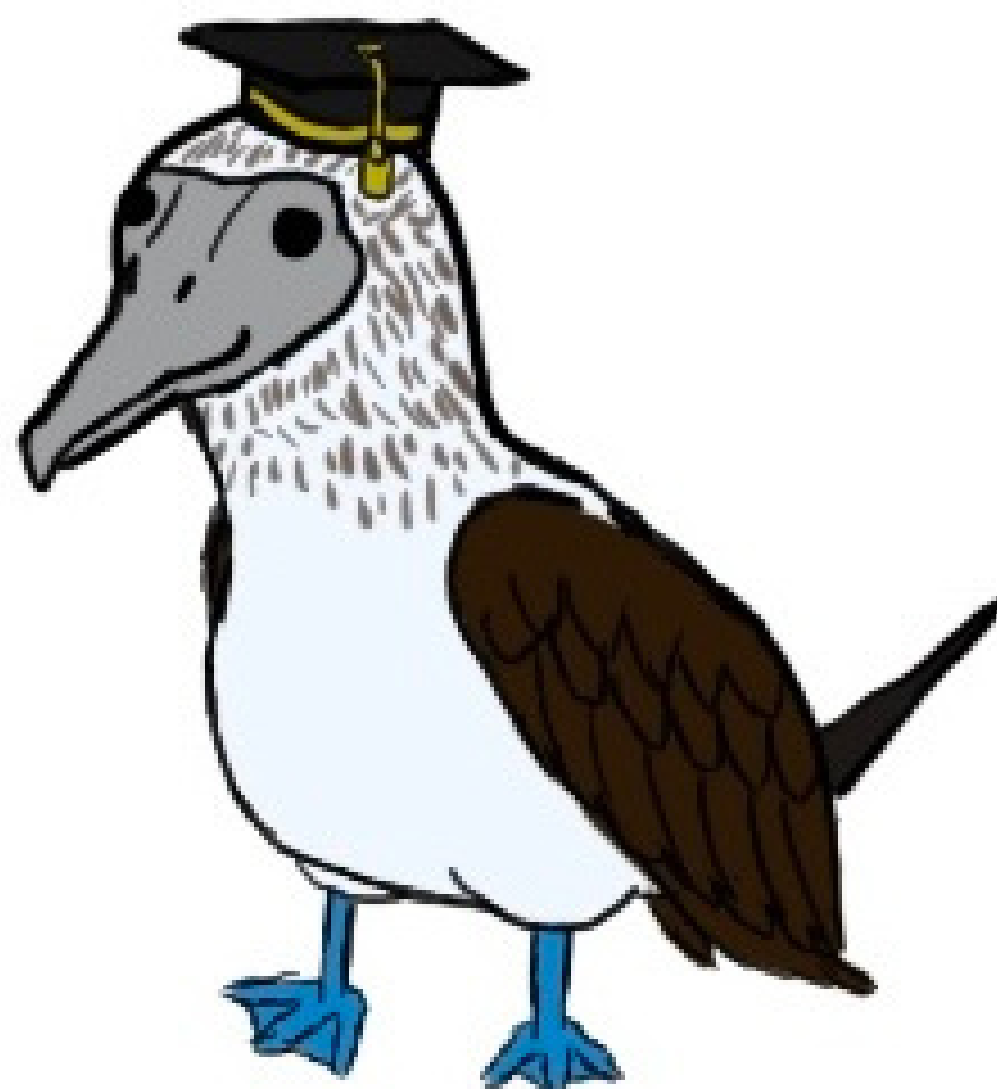
Based on *The Star Thrower* by Loren Eiseley, submitted by Grace Van Gorp



THE CONCEPT OF GRADUATION

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The concept of graduation has always struck me as so strange. Time after time, we jump into a new place, a community with fresh faces and ideas and experiences waiting to be had, and we know before it even begins that it has a definite, immovable end. Whether or not we love it or hate it, whether or not we're wishing for one more second or counting down until its over, we have no say in when it ends. Obviously, that's life. Everything is temporary. And that might not even be a bad thing - I know I'd be bored out of my mind if I was stuck in the same place for all eternity - but it can also be a little disheartening to know before you even start something, no matter how much of yourself you devote to it, there will be a day when it all stops and your chance is over. No matter how much you want to, no matter how many ideas are spinning around in your head, your time is up, and you will be judged not by your intentions but by the tangible actions and experiences you had. This is the point where someone is going to say something about trying to live life without regrets, about giving yourself grace and being grateful for all you have gotten to do, and of course they are right. It makes no sense to wallow in disappointment or longing for parts of your story that never happened. It feels much nicer to turn your thoughts to the reasons why you wish for more time in the first place. To bask in the fun memories and shared moments that leave you wishing for more, and to celebrate your triumph over the challenges that have jumped out at you through it all. I think though, that the most important lessons are sometimes those that come out of those nagging thoughts, the ones telling you that you should've done more of xyz or spent more time on abc, because those are the ones that reveal what you truly care about. When you can greet those uncomfortable, often harsh perspectives with curiosity instead of defensiveness or disappointment, you can try to get to the point where you can take what you've learned about yourself and leave behind the unhelpful unkindness that surrounds it. And then as a reward you get to do it all over again!!!

As we leave here, I think its important that we appreciate this adventure for exactly what it has been, instead of trying to block out the 'bad' parts to focus on the good.' A regret doesn't have to be a regret, it can just be an idea that you stick in your pocket and carry with you to the next place. Fair winds and following seas, As you head into new waters, remember you've got a steady crew behind you. Wherever the current takes you, we'll be cheering you on!
-Anya DeCaires



YOU ARE A MOSAIC

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Someone recently told me the quote "you are a mosaic of every person you've ever loved" and I felt it to my very core. I feel so grateful to have spent six months trapped on a ship with all of you, where when facing challenging circumstances, I've seen strength, resilience, compassion, and friendship surface and shine in each of you and it has inspired me unlike anything else.

I think a global citizen is someone who learns to see the world through eyes beyond their own.

And so, this year has been the greatest lesson on global citizenship I could have asked for.

Claire, Klava, Ali, Dawson, Anton and Tim: From you, I learned that leadership is rooted in kindness and compassion. By being reliable friends, constantly encouraging others, always being willing to lend a helping hand, and creating a bubble of light around you where people feel valued, supported and inspired to do their best.

Emeric, Shaun, Max, Alvaro, Mau, Oskar and Alyssa: From you, I've learnt that happiness is created within. No matter how bad the weather was, how long the watch was, or how tired you were, you found a way to create the joy in you, and make everyone around you smile and laugh.

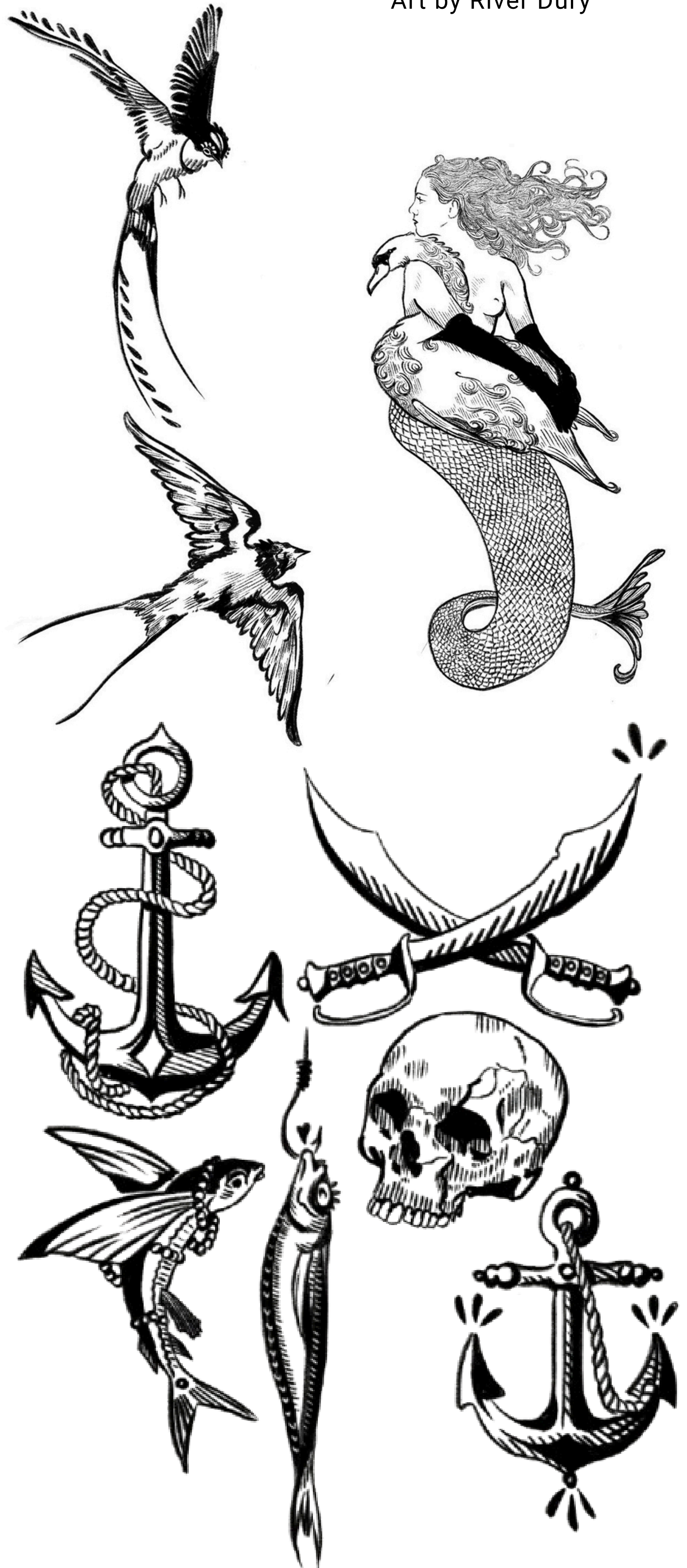
River, Nezy, Tiger, and Isabelle: From you, I learnt what it is to be authentic, and walk the world with confidence by staying true to who you are. You express yourselves with individuality, and stand firmly in your values. You live with genuine confidence and self belief, and have inspired me to do the same.

This doesn't even begin to encompass all the ways I've learnt and been inspired by each and every one of you.

"You are a mosaic of every person you've ever loved". For the rest of my life, I'll carry a piece of each of you within me. Thank you for helping me become who I am now.

-Elena Cardenas Garza, Graduation Speech

Art by River Dury



✨ We asked the crew: ♥ Which words would you use to describe your Class Afloat experience? ✨



♥ Full of love ♥ ♥

Interesting • Strict • Convivial

Fun New Boat Gritty Unimaginable Loved ♥

Surprising Fun Goofy ✨

Eye-opening • magical ✨ challenge

“Pretty damn cool” ✨

Fun intense hard “full of adventures”

Growth adventure connections

Adventure fulfilling • Social

friends seasickness ≈ experiences

Transformative adventure liberating

Boundless • memorable unforgettable

Surreal ☹️ unforgettable amazing ≈

Mind-opening adventurous life ✨

Life-changing constructive connecting

adventure fast-paced family ♥

Eye-opening “friends forever” growth 🌿

Friends fun • adventure

Sailing ≈ people • different Adventure ≈

Adventure Popcorn Rewarding - fun, adventurous and unpredictable

New • special • fun ✨

developing

✨ Thrilling captivating • Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious ✨

Adventures exciting unpredictable Adventurous

Memorable “Worth it” 🌿

Different tubular life-changing thrilling

blissful 踏实 ♥

Interesting Amusing Epic

Epic strange • life-changing

Adventure once-in-my-life cool Arduous unpredictable

Serendipity ♥ growth love ♥

World-class Invigorating Novel

Connecting influential spontaneous ☹️

Transformative Draining Aufregend Transformative Demanding Inspiring ✨



insightful and social

Night ☾ insightful and social

Inspiring Challenging Meaningful 🌿










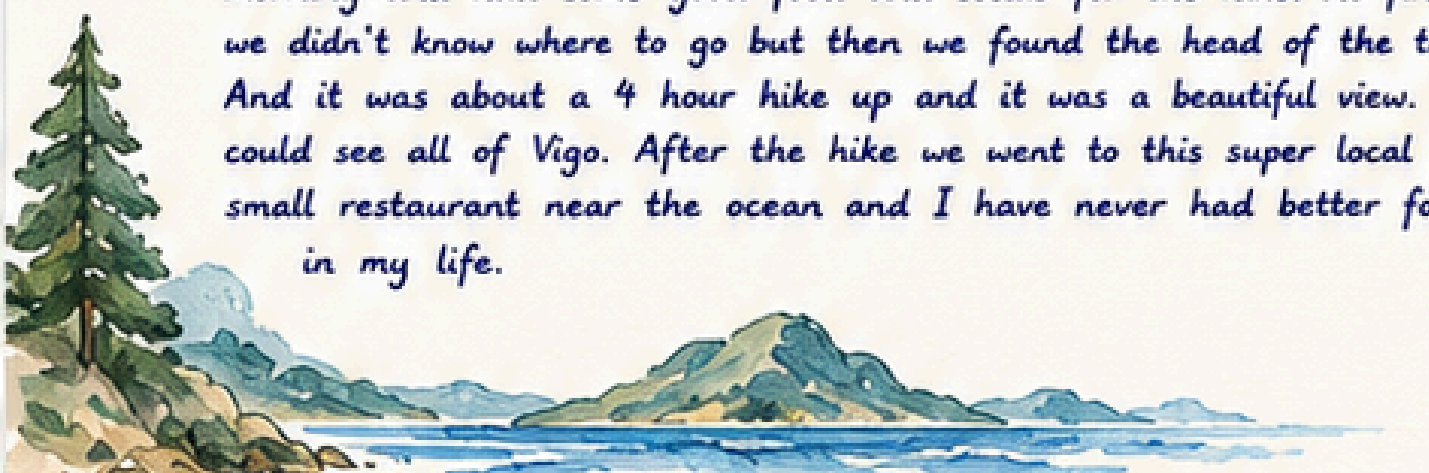
Moving inspiring challenging



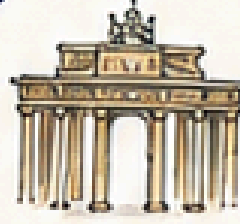








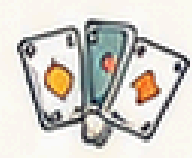




Transformative Inspiring Growth 🌿



The Crew's Favourite Memories:



- The talent show (with karaoke)
- The afternoons when me and my friends could simply spend time together playing games without stress, then going to class with them
- Winning the Christmas Helm Olympics
- Swimming in the 4 degree ocean in the Azores
- Going through Dominican Republic and hiking to a waterfall and jumping off it. Also the other half of that hike we also went to swim where Pirates of the Caribbean was filmed
- When we were on the 6-8 and we were packing the falk in the sunset as dolphins jumped in the water below
- I enjoyed the day I went to an aquarium, then an amusement park with Matt, Alex, and Amy
- Riding a camel in the Sahara desert and climbing a hill barefoot, reaching the top to look at the shooting stars
- Packing the innen Kluiver in a Storm, while dolphins appeared from underneath.
- Looking at the constellations from the sand dunes in the Sahara.
- Climbing in the rigging during sunset with Kysen, just talking, and out of nowhere we saw a whale coming up next to the boat. 
- On the second ever shore leave in Dominica being alone in the jungle with the boys and building a giant dam in the waterfall.
- Movie nights after sunset on top of the chart house, endless hours on helm in the middle of the night under the most amazing stars and watch 5's daily shenanigans :) 
- Going to Paris  
- Watch. 
- Swimming in the rivers in Suriname and staying up late talking with people since we had no curfew.
- Watch exchange with Ana
- Going on shore-leave with my watch in Cherbourg, where we did so many things in one day, from going to a fair, to having a cheese picnic, to doing a 2 hour long karaoke. It was so fun. 
- The silent sunset we had in the dunes of Morocco. It was magical.
- One of my favorite moments of the program was doing a 24 hours watch challenge with my friends, we stayed on deck for 24 hours. 
- Just working out in Switzerland 
- Doing a 24h backshaft challenge with Shaun was so fun. We started at 6am and washed every dish in the morning before breakfast. We cleaned the mess until it sparkled. We organised the shelf in the middle of the mess. In our free time, we played Super Smash Bros on his Nintendo Switch and talked all through the night to keep us awake to clean dishes left by any off going watches. We also listened to amazing music and slept the rest of the next day. 
- One of my most memorable moments is when I went on my first hike on the program. Alvaro, Mau and Emeric and I went on a hike in Vigo and it was so much fun. We left the boat at nine in the morning and had some good food and sodas for the hike. At first we didn't know where to go but then we found the head of the trail. And it was about a 4 hour hike up and it was a beautiful view. You could see all of Vigo. After the hike we went to this super local and small restaurant near the ocean and I have never had better food in my life. 

- Climbing in the rigging to pack a sail in a storm
- My favorite memory of Class Afloat is going on the awesome Hike in Vigo. Alvaro, Mau & Ezra really bonded with each other.
- Forgetting to wake up the next watch 
- Camel riding and sleeping in the desert or climbing in the rigging. 
- One of my favorite memories is when at the very beginning a big group of 14 of us did a shore leave together in Berlin and we all went and played laser tag then went to a steak supper for Ezra's birthday. 
- Teaching winstein smells good to Ayel 
- Shaun belly flopping into the water from the bow. 
- I had a night helm (舵手) before we arrived at the Azores. and that night there were 10 meter waves and 30 knots wind. I stayed there for a whole round and told a lot words to my grandfather. I survived there and was exhausted after that night watch. 
- Everyone singing karaoke at the Halloween party and all the creative outfits 
- Ok so this one time everyone was out staying in Madeira with their parents for the parent port and Edouard and I decided to stay back on the boat. This was probably the best decision I could have made because that day the crew had the first swim call. Captain Ben did a backflip off the tip of the Kluver...it was sick! Earlier in the day Adam, Johannes and I went out on the rescue boat for a joy ride around the port and anchorage. We listened to tunes, surfed the swells with the boat and ended up grabbing a fishing rod from the boat to try our best at trolling for a monster... we didn't catch anything but it was sick. Later on we all had a shower party (fully clothed)—as is Alex tradition. Overall it was one of my favourite memories from the whole program. 
- Every sweet conversation on the bow. Sleeping while wrapped up in a jib on the bowsprit, spotting ships nearly too late while chatting about magic and ghosts on night watch, every second of climbing, dangling from the royal. I got to know and understand so many of my friends for the first time on deck. 
- Falling asleep for the whole watch in the middle of the night 
- There was a storm the night before we got to the Azores, and we spent all of night watch being poured on and clipped into the railing for lookout (while trying to sing songs over the crazy wind of course). Because of how hard the boat was rocking, most people couldn't sleep and we had an amazing time all night in the mess being thrown off of the benches and into each other playing card games and Nintendo, and writing shoutouts to each other until it was time for watch again the next morning. By then the storm had mostly passed and we sailed right into port, completing our Atlantic crossing a full day early. 
- Spending quality one on one time reading tarot in the chart house with all members of watch 3, and eventually half the ship. 
- Feeling like the king of the world, climbing to the top of the mast and looking out over a sky and sea of blue. 
- "Not all treasure is silver and gold" - Captain Jack Sparrow
- I'm sorry, one isn't nearly enough. 
- The 10 minute silent sunset on the Morocco dunes all together. 
- First swim call in Cabo Verde
- A local in Dominica taking me and Teagan E on a joy ride in a dingy across the shore and past the Alex
- Everyone in the rigging at night for the last time all together in semester 1, hiding to stay up until later with my favorite people 



My personal favorite memory of this school year was when we were in the Dominican Republic, the people I bonded with during the time in the homestays ended up being my best friends today.

My strangest, but also funniest, memory to tell my friends dates back to one of our very first voyages on the boat. By the second day at sea, I was determined to push through my seasickness. Teacher Jackie had told me countless times that "seasickness is a mindset." Well, my mindset was definitely set... but unfortunately, my stomach was not. I couldn't keep a meal down for more than five minutes before rushing to the dish pit to throw up into the food waste bin. Despite feeling awful, I went to watch and confidently told everyone I was doing great, even though all I really wanted was to crawl into my bunk bed. During watch, Grace was on helm, but she ended up getting sick too, so I took over. Helm is long and gives you way too much time to think, and before long my thoughts drifted right back to seasickness. Suddenly, I felt it coming again. I sprinted to the railing as fast as I could, but the wind was blowing directly against me. And standing there, completely innocent and minding her own business, was Teagan M., peacefully enjoying the ocean view. Unfortunately for her, that beautiful view quickly became blurred by my exploding throw-up. Her reaction in that moment looked like she wanted to throw me overboard, but don't worry, she didn't. She immediately went to shower, and somehow, I went right back to helm.



As if that day was not chaotic enough, I also threw up in the middle of my math test but went back with a mint in my mouth to finish it, although I did at least make it to the bathroom in time. Later, during chemistry class, the waves were so intense that our desks kept sliding around. We ended up sitting on the floor holding onto a rope just to stay still enough to work. And of course, I threw up after every single meal that day... but at least by then I consistently made it to the food waste bin.

That day challenged me more than I expected, and there were definitely moments when I questioned why I had signed up for this experience at all. But it also taught me resilience, perseverance, and how to laugh at myself. Looking back now, I can only laugh, it's truly unforgettable and I truly do not regret any of it.

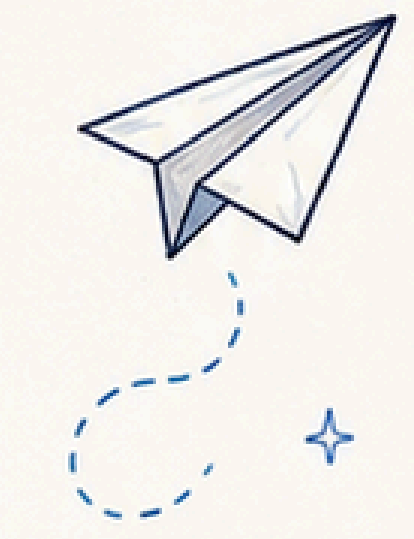


Being able to say that I turned nineteen while crossing the Atlantic Ocean is something very few people can say. My birthday is Dec 23 and everyone was in a festive mood for Christmas.

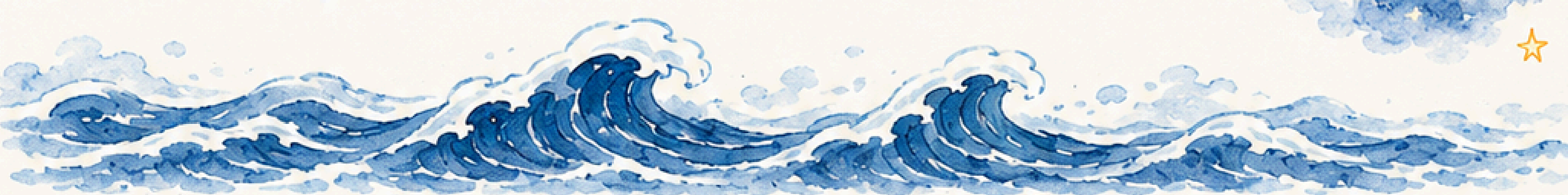
I told Sydney (the history teacher) that my family's birthday tradition is to go around the dinner table and share one memory of that person from that year. When I walked into Sydney's history class I was surprised with a big birthday sign, and everyone prepared to go around the classroom to share a memory, like I did at home. For the rest of the class we talked about our projects and painted Christmas wrapping paper—the paint eventually became face paint. History class 1st semester was practically my whole watch, and it was special to spend my birthday with my favorite people in that way. Also I got so lucky on my birthday! In the morning there were two rainbows and then after dinner there were dolphins, and that was the only time we saw either while we crossed the Atlantic Ocean!



That one time on watch during the first semester, we had just arrived in Suriname, deep ship clean was actively ongoing, but my watch 5 were up in the rigging packing some sails. We got into a light hearted argument with our watch lead and OS, Gonzo and Andi and Lydia. Teagan M. and I went back and forth with them because she had her phone on watch and they insisted on taking it which we all thought wasn't right. Anyways, we escaped handing over our phones by climbing up the rigging to pack one of the sails on the vor mast. We had an incredible time up in the sails, joking with the DSST since it had never really been a serious issue, more than a fun time!!



It was about two weeks into the program and we were still in Natura. We were all in an all hands meeting in the mess. We sat in different groups and in my group happened to have Eugene. About 5 minutes into the meeting, Gigo is leaning back on his chair and the back legs fold in half and he falls flat on the floor. He apologizes and tries to pretend like nothing happened. It was 3 minutes later when one of the other groups makes a paper airplane and throws it in Eugene's direction. It was just barely out of his reach so he leans back out of his chair and the back leg snaps, once again he's lying on the ground. This time he could tell that he was in bad trouble. Sydnie immediately told him to get out of the room. Meanwhile it was impossible to hold in our laughter.



OUR JOURNEY IS COMPLETE

Time: 1845 UTC

Ship Time: 1945 (+1 hours)

Date: 24.05.2026

Weather: 35 degrees, partial cloud

Location: Sevilla, Spain

Sailing Status: On Land

Kms Travelled: 4230

NM Travelled: 13137

Days till Graduation: 0

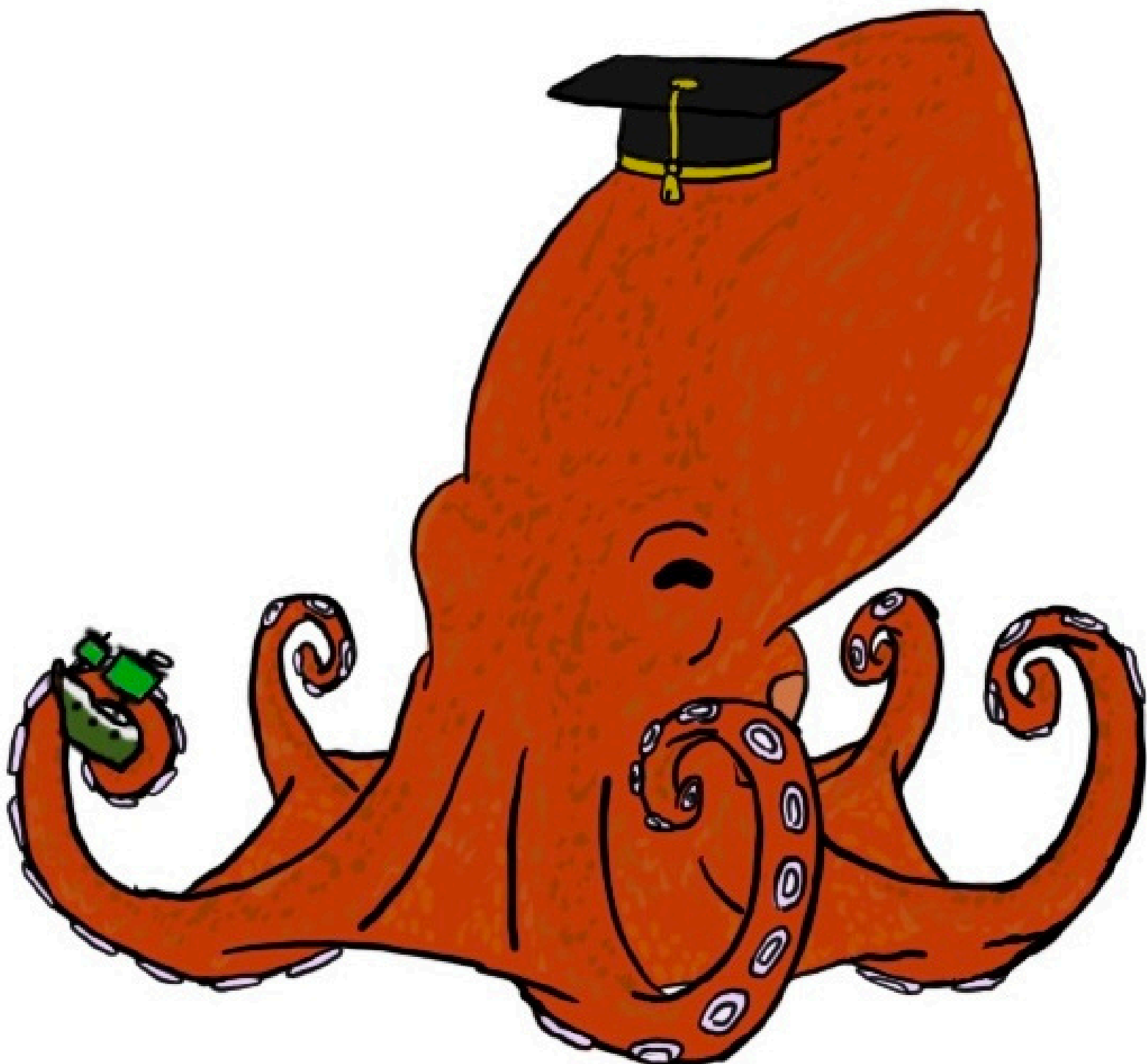


HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO...

- Indi, who turned 17
- Eugenio, who turned 18

Over the summer:

Mau, Caitlin, Beckett, Lucas, Isabelle, Ana, Nezy, Luca D, Vincent, Nyla, and Angelo



Artwork by Gavin Zoffman

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“TWENTY YEARS FROM NOW YOU WILL BE MORE DISAPPOINTED BY THE THINGS YOU DIDN'T DO THAN BY THE ONES YOU DID. SO THROW OFF THE BOWLINES. SAIL AWAY FROM THE SAFE HARBOR. CATCH THE TRADE WINDS IN YOUR SAILS.

EXPLORE.
DREAM.
DISCOVER.”

— MARK TWAIN