

In the Day I Was Born

WE LIT STUDENT CHAPBOOK 2022



WE LIT

Goa
Lit Fes

IRREMANENTES

ON THE DAY i WAS BORN
WE lit STUDENT CHAPBOOK 2022

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

A strong foundation in English (reading and writing) improves students' academic outcomes and career prospects. However, many students from disadvantaged backgrounds lack access to quality English education and are not fully engaged through the traditional teaching methods. The pandemic has exacerbated the problem. Thousands of students face many day-to-day challenges which are not addressed in the classroom or curriculum.

We Lit is a comprehensive programme based on the idea that English language and literature can be tools for self empowerment in everyday life. The programme uses popular and ubiquitous communications technology and a range of forms of cultural expression, from live performance to film, to introduce students to books relevant to their struggles, help them write about their personal experiences and provide access to quality tuition designed to improve their academic performance in English and Literature. It also uses contemporary digital technology to reach them via their smartphones, making learning easier to access and appealing.



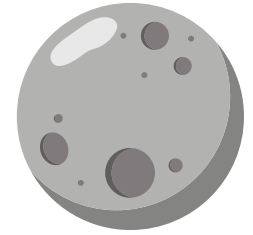
JB FERNANDES
MEMORIAL TRUST I

FOREWORD

There is something special about guiding a young group of writers from page zero to publishing. The We Lit Masterclass saw a varying collection of young writers come together from different backgrounds, and with different expectations. The goal was to allow them to look for how their past can be connected to their present and find ways to present pieces of work that illustrated that correlation. The most arbitrary occurrence on the day of their births was used as impetus to negotiate things they would have faced during their lifespans.

A few of the pieces were fiction, but the majority were based on fact. This makes the collection especially interesting as it becomes a scribed archive for the lives of many young teenagers. There is the feeling of memoir, diary and WhatsApp status in the expression of the work. Their youthful bravery and diligence are recognised in the way some of them extended metaphors and became obviously engaged in the pieces. Journey with these fourteen young writers into the day of their births and experience a piece of their lives.

Derron Sandy, November 2022



ERIS

On the day I was born, Eris,
The largest dwarf planet was discovered.
I remember the day I won
With a newfound talent.
Rather exceptional!
Silently emerging was the loudest ambition,
Unaware of this beautiful capability
A voice that was rarely heard, was revealed.

For when Eris was born, so was I,
Like this day when we both came to life,
I determined the character I aspire to be;
A girl who pursues her dreams but never sleep,
One who radiates positivity throughout
Finding warmth in the coldest of beings.
A character who defines that of good
Even if it is one against a million.

Selena Mohammed

FOUR THOUGHTS FROM ALYSSA JACKSON

1 - Phoney

On the day I was born, Ronnie Wood of The Rolling Stones (TRS) was admitted to a rehabilitation clinic to undergo treatment for his alcohol abuse. I was once an addict too. My substance was the feeling of the cheap cotton sheets against my skin as I lay in bed all day abusing my free time. My phone, social media, and the likes were my liquor. Without them I'd feel as alone as a singular rolling stone. I needed to undergo my own treatment of myself; a clinic for my inability to feel fulfilled and whole without the liquor that was my phone.

2- Stone Cold Start

On the day I was born, Ronnie Wood of The Rolling Stones (TRS) was admitted to a rehabilitation clinic to undergo treatment for his alcohol abuse. I was once admitted to a new beginning. Change was never hard for me. I look back fondly at the day I first rolled into my new secondary school with a stone cold face. I was ready to face the treatment that came with this change of environment. Negativity was never secondary. I underwent a change of role but my character stayed solid.

3 - Vodka Tears

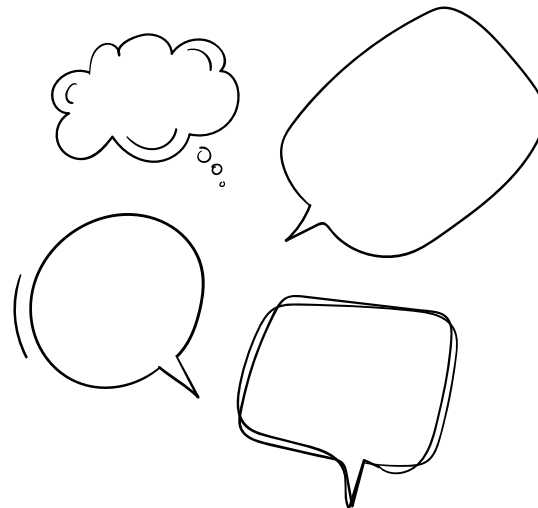
On the day I was born, Ronnie Wood of The Rolling Stones (TRS) was admitted to a rehabilitation clinic to undergo treatment for his alcohol abuse. I felt like my mother's substance when the stresses of adulthood were crashing down like rolling stones and the control

over her life slipped from under her thumb. i'd be that liquor at the end of a hard day; my body painted black in her frustration and her words made me yearn for emotional rescue. Was I supposed to be filled with delight when she drowned her sorrow in my cries? In the end was I her love for liquor or her treatment for her dilemma? Her treatment of me was a DUI that would start me up on the road to a mental health roadblock.

4 - In Tune

On the day I was born, Ronnie Wood of The Rolling Stones (TRS) was admitted to a rehabilitation clinic to undergo treatment for his alcohol abuse. Most times I feel like life's tequila when it throws me lemons and the 'lil' love life is just salt. Sometimes there's a brief ignition of motivation to be better, a jumping jack flash of hope. Then the high is over and I'm left with the drawn out hangover where my heart feels dark and it's not all brown sugar. My treatment however is Spotify. My mind is comfortably wrapped in the tunes; drowning my problems in the music is probably a bad habit but it's only rock n roll and I'm glad it's my rehab clinic.

Alyssa Jackson



MOVING OUT

On the day I was born the Queen's Pier was
officially closed by the Hong Kong Government.
Here are my memories now, being loaded onto the glass boat.
The boat barely held the weight.
There will soon be a shattering of heart and other things.

As we boarded the boat, that moving truck,
turning and twisting in a rough sea of tears.
I looked back slowly at the island of what was once my home.
My father prepared to set sail upon the rough sea.
Voyaging on the ocean we neared our destination.
A gigantic dark building stared back at me.

I began to wonder if coming here was the right choice
and which government sanctioned this.

Rachel Pickering



BAKER

On the day I was born, U.S. forces under General Winfield Scott
captured Mexico City. This was just like the day that I was able to
capture a new hobby. I became a baker, a maker of treats.
Call me General Baker, siege and claim on my floury cities.
I was able to capture my love for it and claim it as my inspiration.
It felt as if I also affirmed a part of me to perfect my craft.

Olufunmilayo Oyesanya-Ryan

BLEEDING LOVE

on the day I was born bleeding love by Leona Lewis was trending,
I use the song to sing my heart out, on stage
And my stage is my life
my beautiful life and serene but also the life that had stabbed me in
the back with a knife
my life has been changing, to say the least,
put on the stage before I was born
put on the stage with expectations flying high before I could say
my first word and while I was put on a stage with everyone looking
at me with peering eyes and while I was in that stage from the day
I was born I met my expectations and more
my life was a melody that flowed with perfect rhythm, I was what
one would say an exceptional child for at the age of 7 I would be
giving you a well-thought-out answer of how I have done well in a
poetry competition on how I just ran a 5k with my mom and how
from ever since the beginning of my education I have never had
my grade slip under an A
For my life was perfect and I wanted it to stay that way
Like a stage, it needs structure for it to stand and without structure,
it will crumble and fall
And without the structure, I needed I did like that stage and crum-
bled and fell
I fell while still being on stage, I fell whilst everyone and their
peering eyes saw but they did not notice,
for what had crumbled me in the first place was pressure
the pressure of making sure my grades never slipped, the pressure
of making sure I was fit,
the pressure of making sure everything was perfect.
but one thing is you can not blame her parents for this pressure
you can not blame the school for this pressure or relatives for this
pressure but the pressure that made her crumble and fall was put on
by none else but herself

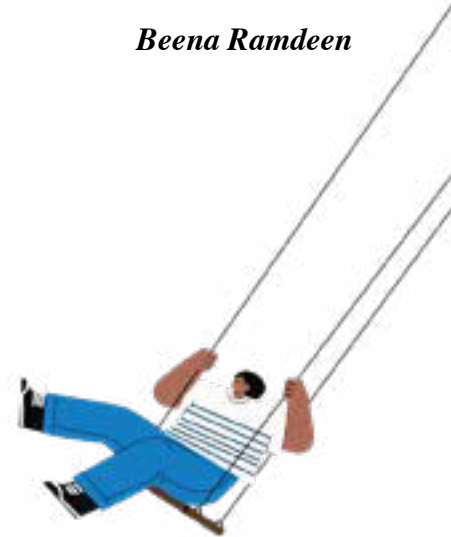
Keziah Gopaul



MOONLIGHT

On the day I was born, the moon was in the waning crescent phase.
While everyone stands looking at the moon in awe, I sit on my
swing looking into the darkness, listening to music, with millions
of thoughts racing through my head. The only lights that were
available were the stars and moon. The music I'm listening to is
trying and failing to block off the unwanted thoughts completely.
Years ago people were expecting sad days to illuminate happiness
by the next day. They say, "Every day is a new day and
tomorrow will be absolutely different." Little did they know that
that saying is only half correct. Yeah, the day will not be the same
as yesterday. It takes days, months, even years to change in
feelings. Maybe one day everyone will finally come to their senses
and understand but for now we'll suffer in the silence of
the waning moonlight.

Beena Ramdeen



THE GRADUATION CHAPTER

On the day I was born, it was National Read A Book Day somewhere. On this day, persons are encouraged to invite others to locate their favourite book.

I was once in a book; not like the books you can find in libraries. Turning the page back to 2020, the S.E.A results had just come out and my school held a drive-thru graduation due to social distancing mandates. My thoughts of my graduation did not happen as I planned them out to be. There was no graduation ceremony awarding students' achievements during their 7 years at the school nor any graduation dinner where you may see your classmates/friends for the last time.

Besides Covid stealing that moment from me, I was grateful that I at least had a graduation. I planned on making the most of it. Many reporters appeared at the drive-thru graduation and took pictures of students arriving and collecting their results. There was a MC who called out students by their driver's vehicles.

Most girls wore dresses and I wore a floral white top with a blue jeans, a flat cream shoe topped out with a pink sash and silver tiara. As cars rolled by an MC announced the arrival of students. "Here comes Little Miss Princess Shania Martin!" exclaimed the MC, as I opened the door of my father's car. It was like a red catwalk swarming with paparazzi.

Suddenly my dad started playing Jerusalema by Master KG and Nomcebo Zikode, turning my entrance into a dance floor when I burst into a dance move known as Orange Justice from Fortnite.

Both teachers and reporters were stunned by the display. Many laughed and many cheered when I collected my package and even the reporters were swarming to take my picture. Upon leaving the venue, I stuck my head through the sunroof of my dad's silver SUV, and I couldn't help but smile from ear to ear. The very next day to my surprise, I was on the front page of the newspaper. Now that was a day to remember.

Shania Martin

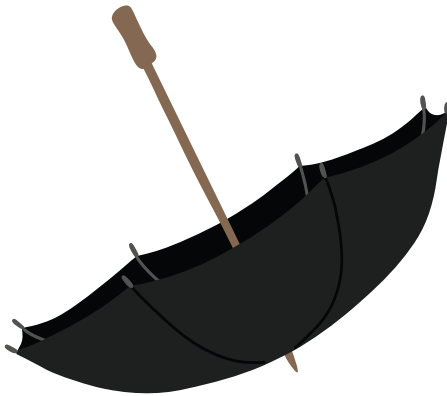


UMBRELLA

The day I was born Rihanna and Jay-Z released
a song called umbrella.

The song reminded me of a girl called Stella,
We both stood under an umbrella
I stared into her beautiful eyes,
I felt as if life flooded before my eyes,
Her love was a cloud
Her presence was a loud "I love you."

Jevon Tull



ON THE DAY I WAS BORN

1

On the day I was born violent riots broke out in northwestern China. Eleven years after, violent disturbances occurred in the form of a pandemic shocking the world. This C-19 virus originated from China.

2

On the day I was born 'Knock you Down' by Keri Hilson was one of the five top songs from the Billboard Hot 100 charts. Even today I sometimes feel knocked down when life throws out challenges but I always manage to find positivity even if it is a tiny glimmer. Once you look hard enough for something eventually you will find it.

3

On the day I was born, it was not a leap year though my parents literally leapt for joy as they have told me time and again that I am their greatest blessing. They say I am a Gen Z kid. Who knows, maybe one day soon I'll be driving a Ben Z!

4

On the day I was born, it was a Sunday, the best day of the week. Four thousand eight hundred and thirty nine days ago to be exact. A Sunday, a funday! Sundays are for sinking my teeth into Richard's bake and shark at Maracas Bay, tantalising my tastebuds. Thirteen years, 3 months and 2 days have gone by if you do the maths, maybe just maybe, you can be a Math whiz too!

Nabeel Ishmael



WAR TIME

On the day I was born, the US approved extra 2,200 military police to head to Iraq to assist in the war. Eight years later I was made to fight my own war, just as those troops moved in on Iraq, the pain moved in on my body. Thousands of troops marching on the hard ground could not compare to the pressure I felt in my stomach. I cried out, hoping for some sort of rescue but was only met with reinforced pain. The only relief came in the hands of an anaesthetic. My battle was not over, I now had to fight a bigger battle, one for my life. The doctors in my operating room were meticulous with their movements, one misstep and I was gone forever. I had a lot of thoughts before my surgery, but they all came back to one thing, “Let me make it out alive.” Doctors marched into my ward and whisked me away, my enemy was large and dangerous. “She was born with it and it grew while she grew,” the doctors said. It invaded my body and took my ovary hostage, the tumour, that is. You may be wondering how my surgery went and well 7 years later, I’m alive to tell you my story, so, good I suppose. Though I was forced to fight, what seemed like a losing battle, I made it out alive and to me, that’s a win.

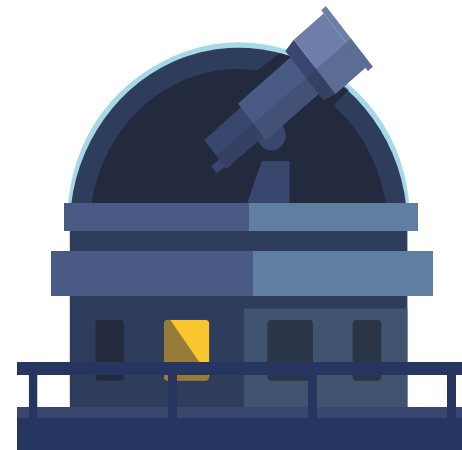
Daria Roberts



FLYING METEOR

On the day I was born, NASA took a picture of an asteroid passing the earth. The picture reminded me of a person that is successful, flying past many other people. The thought of it excited me but the question was, will I be like that one day? Space is a vast area with many different stars and planets. All stars have different potential but the main view is my star and there is room for plenty of improvement just like other stars in outer space.

Andrew Menacett





STEALING LIGHT

On the day I was born the most powerful solar flare was recorded.

The energy from the solar flare lit the room that night,

Casting a thousand stars to shine so bright

That it would even outshine the moon.

I will never forget that chilly November night

as my mother pushed out her new born baby boy.

The stars looked upon him as he winked

his eyes for the very first time and saw the wonders of life.

He felt its amazing energy and aura surrounding him as he looked up into the night sky and curled up into his mother's arms.

Little did we know the night was envied upon

By a tall curved figure, who would crawl silently into the hospital room and

Steal the joy of life that was never her blessing to keep.

Little did she know she wasn't just stealing a child,
but a mother's joy,

A mother's home, a mother's greatest blessing.

Had she no clue of the pain she would bring upon a family that

Only wanted to see their child return home from birth safely?

Who would have taught nine months of labour
could be entangled with so much heartbreak and grief?

How could you proclaim yourself to be a mother after
taking away the God-given gift of another?

You say you carry love for him your heart
but do you not live with the guilt and destruction

You've caused another?

Oh, what she would do to have her baby boy in her arms again

Oh, what she would do to have her baby boy in her arms again.

Kya Pereira

THE NEW IT

The year I was born
Google and Apple became the architects of the smart app;

Technology grew with me
All around IT was making history.

I was dropped in the fray of ideas
To create self driving cars and invisible money.

The IT was me
The newest IT.

My code was wired to tech savvy
Paired with perfection

No less than 80 on my test
I was the crest.

Fallen, a malfunction
I failed two subjects.

I had not known of this variable
Which caused my screen to freeze

But my mom encouraged me
To reboot and try again

With new data I rewired
Reworked this problem .
The next report came in
I ain't gonna fail nothing!

My code was always put to the test
My CPU became at war with itself

I could only do what I was programmed to
And if it wasn't in the code what can I tell you?

But, I didn't need a programmer
I had something it didn't

I could turn from the coded to the coder
Figure out problems that didn't match the criteria

I had to break out of the virtual box
Built by 0000s and 1111s to see the world as it truly is

I am not another cog in the machine
A perfect student or employee

I want to be one of a kind
Not a copy and paste and rewind

I want to be me
The new IT

Moriah Wong Chong

LITTLE DEATHS

I was born on the 8th of December, 2004.
I've found that our births are the beginning of our deaths.
We all die little deaths throughout our lives;

"I think we should see other people."

"We should stop talking" or even

"The ice cream shop closed down."

I remember the day a piece of me died. I felt my heart stop when Grandad's heart stopped beating in his chest and I laid myself to rest beside him, with my soul split clean in two. The ghost of me still wanders the funeral home, howling for him to come back and searching for what was once hers.



Kyriah Martinez

SPONSOR'S NOTE

JB FERNANDES
MEMORIAL TRUST I

The Trust, founded in 1999, is a proud partner of the Bocas Lit Fest; an organization that promotes the art of literature and creative writing across the Caribbean and world. The Trust values collaborating with an organization that supports the creativity and expression of young people, while teaching them skills that help them to unlock career pathways in creative arts and writing. The Trust's mission is to support the health, wellbeing and educational development of young people across Trinidad and Tobago, and through its partnership with Bocas Lit Fest, reaches many young people, especially those in secondary school, to promote a vibrant writing and storytelling community.

The Trust firmly believes in the direct relationship between early learning, exposure to the arts and their joint positive impact on the socioeconomic outcomes of every child. The Trust congratulates Bocas Lit Fest for its contributions to the world of literature, its celebration of writers from the Caribbean diaspora, and its support of young people to expand their imaginations and view writing as an essential tool for their educational and leadership development.

SELENA MOHAMMED, 17

Providence Girls Catholic School
“Eris”

ALYSSA JACKSON, 16

Woodbrook Secondary
“Four Thoughts from Alyssa Jackson”

RACHEL PICKERING, 15

Bishop Anstey High School East
“Moving Out”

OLUFUNMILAYO OYESANYA-RYAN, 16

Providence Girls Catholic School
“Baker”

KEZIAH GOPAUL, 14

St Joseph’s Convent San Fernando
“Bleeding Love”

BEENA RAMDEEN, 17

Williamsville Secondary School
“Moonlight”

SHANIA MARTIN, 14

Signal Hill Secondary School
“The Graduation Chapter”

JEVON TULL, 15

Waterloo Secondary School
“Umbrella”

NABEEL ISHMAEL, 13

ASJA Boys’ College
“On the Day I was Born”

DARIA ROBERTS, 15

Waterloo Secondary School
“War Time”

ANDREW CHARLES, 14

Waterloo Secondary School
“Star Gaze”

KYA PEREIRA, 18

Rio Claro West Secondary
“Stealing Light”

MORIAH WONG CHONG, 15

Belmont Secondary School
“The New IT”

KYRIAH MARTINEZ, 17

Tunapuna Secondary School
“Little Deaths”



A stylized night scene with dark blue trees and a starry sky. Several translucent bubbles are scattered throughout the scene. The text 'WE LIT' is centered in a white, bubbly font, with a flame icon on the letter 'I'.

WE LIT